

TIS THE SEASON TO BE DEADLY

A suitably chilling place name is a key setting in a new crime thriller by best-selling Bishop's Stortford author Alastair Gunn. In the fourth book in the DCI Antonia Hawkins series, the detective is called to inspect three dead men lying neatly in a row in an abandoned London flat. There's no damage to the bodies, no obvious cause of death. One by one the deceased are identified: a mechanic, a journalist and an entrepreneur. What or who brought them together?

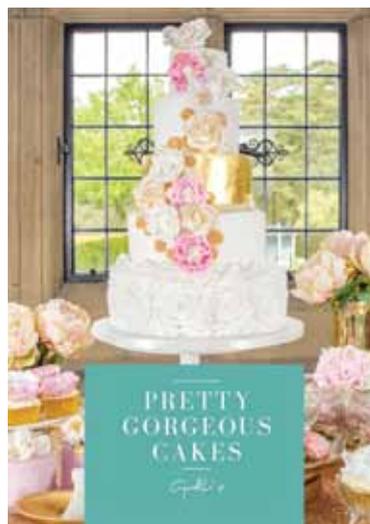
The investigation leads to a church in the East Hertfordshire hamlet of Cold Christmas, which Gunn describes as a 'fascinating and atmospheric place'. Expect twists and the paranormal.

Cold Christmas is published by Penguin Books, priced £7.99.

Beautiful baking guide

Inspired by *The Great British Bake Off*? Award-winning Hertford cake maker and owner of the Pretty Gorgeous Cake Company, Cynthia Stroud, is passing on some of the tricks of the trade with her first book, *Pretty Gorgeous Cakes* (Austin Macauley £14.99). The guide for bakers of all abilities goes through simple steps to baking beautiful cakes in the latest trends.

There are tips on how to achieve perfect results, using not only expert tools but also everyday objects, including a quick and easy way to make stunning sugar roses. Recipes include gold dripping cake and baroque scrolls and the book is packed with mouth-watering photos - a perfect present for a budding baker.



POWER OF THE SPIRIT

Chipperfield resident Henry Fraser was just 17 when an accident severely crushed his spinal cord. Paralysed from the shoulders down, he embraced his new life by teaching himself to paint using his mouth - becoming an accomplished artist and inspiring others with his motivational talks.

His memoir, *The Little Big Things* (Seven Dials, £12.99) is an inspirational account of overcoming adversity. It combines wisdom and insight into finding the positive in life's challenges and will resonate with anyone facing obstacles, big or small.

Henry's philosophy is that every day is a good day. He says, 'Being challenged in life is inevitable, but being defeated is optional.'

A feature on Henry and his artwork was published in *Hertfordshire Life* last year (July 2016) and can be viewed online at hertfordshirelife.co.uk



WHAT I'VE BEEN READING

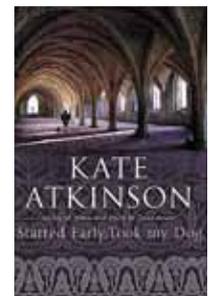
Abi Silver, Radlett author of The Pinocchio Brief

THE ORIGINAL ILLUSTRATED SHERLOCK HOLMES

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle Aged 10, I was constantly caught out reading this under the bedclothes late at night. Apart from the description of the hound of the Baskervilles, which will never leave me, Holmes' pronouncement, in *The Red-Headed League*, that 'as a rule the more bizarre a thing is the less mysterious it proves to be' has stuck with me to this day.

MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN

Salman Rushdie I still have the severely dog-eared version which accompanied me on my travels around India - the story of two boys born on the stroke of midnight on the day India declared independence. But it was the language which amazed me - repetition and jarring sounds to create the backdrop of the new country heading into chaos and confrontation. What a read.



STARTED EARLY, TOOK MY DOG

Kate Atkinson This is a fabulous book. The fourth in the Jackson Brodie series, it's full of dead bodies and secrets, mixing past and present but quirky and funny at the same time. It contains lots of nuggets on human nature and allusions to people, places and events I remember from my youth. Satisfying yet thought provoking and sad.