

ISSUE 10

Proudly  
Southport.  
Proudly  
Independent.

# Southport's Journey

MAGAZINE

GABA

Go Anywhere. Be anything

MADE IN

# SOUTHPORT

CULTURE CREATING A LEGACY!

Threads of community, courage, and creativity running through Southport's heart.



# Studio Nine

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Are you looking for a professional, welcoming space to host your event, workshop, or client sessions?

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# Editor's Note

## SOUTHPORT'S JOURNEY

November has its own kind of magic. The days may shorten, but the stories don't — they grow bolder, brighter, and more connected.

I've always believed that a town is held together by its stories — the ones we tell, the ones we pass on, and the ones we're brave enough to begin. And this month's issue is full of them: small businesses finding their voice, community projects gaining momentum, and people who are proving, again and again, that support doesn't have to be loud to be powerful — it just has to be genuine.

What makes Southport special isn't just the work itself, but the way people show up for each other while it happens — the encouragement, the collaboration, the quiet "try it, we'll back you" support. That's how ideas become foundations, and how today's stories turn into tomorrow's legacy.

And as we look towards 2026, there's a quiet certainty rising — that what we are building now is more than seasonal. It's lasting. It matters. It will outlive the moment.

Thank you for reading, sharing, supporting, and believing in what independent platforms can do when a town chooses to lift itself.

See you around Southport — and in the stories still waiting to be written.

*Lizzie Barnett*  
**Editor-in-Chief**



### About Southport's Journey

We're an independent magazine celebrating the people, places and projects that make Southport proud—sharing warm, useful stories across print, digital and events. We champion independents, share what's on, and make it easier to discover something good every month.

### Get involved

Have a story or event? Want to advertise, pitch or partner? Email [hello@southportsjourney.com](mailto:hello@southportsjourney.com) or visit [southportsjourney.com](http://southportsjourney.com). We'd love to hear your story.



# Welcome your *Journey* starts here



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Want to be featured in the magazine?  
We're always looking for stories big or small!

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# JOHN CHARLES

## THE SCOUSE VAN GOGH

There are artists who chase attention, and there are artists who earn it. John Charles never chased it — he just worked. Relentlessly. Quietly. Consistently. Long before the global collectors, the Dubai exhibitions or the sold-out drops, he was simply someone who loved art. Even at school, before life got loud, before the chaos crept in, drawing was the one thing that made sense.

The turning point wasn't glamorous. It wasn't a lucky break or a viral moment — it was a low point. A life reduced to noise, numbness and repetition. Then came stillness: a recovery period, a bag of paints and brushes handed to him when everything could have gone either way. Make or break. He chose make — every single day after that.

### The Work Behind the Work

People see the colour, the gold lines, the scale, the confidence. What they don't see is the discipline: the early mornings, the business decisions, the reinvestment, the endless printing tests, the late-night framing, the quiet belief that no one is coming to do it for you.

His rise wasn't overnight. It was incremental — £30 print, £100 print, originals, commissions, then full collections with waiting lists. That kind of loyalty isn't bought. It's earned — one piece, one customer, one conversation at a time.

And that's who John still is: the artist who messages buyers personally, who remembers names, who gives portfolio advice to young creatives without needing a camera on him. The work has gone worldwide — the attitude has stayed local.









### **Not a Scene. A Community.**

Ask around and you'll hear the same thing: once you own a John Charles piece, you don't resell it. You add to it. Collectors become friends, friends become supporters, supporters become ambassadors. They don't follow because it's trendy — they stay because it's real.

He hasn't forgotten where he came from, which is why he still makes time for the people behind him — the emerging artists, the designers trying to start, the ones who just need someone further ahead to say, "Keep going — it's possible."

### **Southport, by Choice**

The gallery isn't a tourist stop anymore — it's open by private viewing, and public only when a new collection drops. That wasn't retreat, it was refinement. If you want to see the work, you'll make the effort. And when you do, you won't forget it.

Because it was never about being everywhere.

It was about being true — to the art, the craft, the recovery, the people.

### **The Story Now**

Fourteen years clean and sober. Collections sold worldwide. A following built on honesty, not hype. A work ethic that hasn't softened just because the price points have risen.

He paints big because he lived small for too long.

He shares success because nobody gets out alone.

He keeps going because the work — and the people it reaches — still matter.



Who is John Charles?

A grafter.

A mentor.

A survivor.

An artist whose work stops you — not because it shouts, but because it recognises you.

Amazing photography by  
[@girlbehindthecamera2025](https://www.instagram.com/girlbehindthecamera2025)







# The Knitted Spitfire

## Southport's Stitch in Time

### A symbol of creativity, remembrance, and community spirit

There are moments when Southport stops you in your tracks — and this winter, it's been the sight of a Spitfire, standing proudly outside The Atkinson, not made of metal or rivets, but of wool. The Knitted Spitfire, created by the talented team known as the Southport Hookers and gifted by the Royal British Legion, has become more than an artwork — it's a story stitched with love, dedication, and remembrance.

### A Monument of Many Hands

At first glance, it's hard not to be amazed by the sheer scale of it — the texture, the detail, the unmistakable shape that once symbolised bravery in the skies. But look a little closer, and what you'll really see is teamwork, patience, and pride woven into every single stitch.

Hours upon hours of knitting went into its creation, each square contributed by local volunteers who gave their time and skill to build something that would honour those who served — not with cold stone or polished bronze, but with warmth.

As one member of the team shared, "We wanted to do something that brought people together — something soft, human, and full of heart."

### Art That Connects Generations

What makes the Knitted Spitfire so special is the way it connects generations. Children have stopped to take photos with it, grandparents have shared their wartime memories, and passersby have paused mid-errand to reflect. It's a rare kind of public art — one that doesn't just stand in the community, but belongs to it. For some, it's a chance to learn. For others, it's a moment to remember. For everyone, it's a reminder of how creativity can keep history alive — that even through something as simple as wool and needles, stories of courage can continue to be told.

### The Heart of Southport

The Knitted Spitfire has become a quiet symbol of Southport's spirit: resilient, creative, and deeply connected to its roots. It reminds us that remembrance doesn't always need grandeur — sometimes, it's the gentle things that speak the loudest. Whether you see it by day or lit up at night, standing before The Atkinson like a soft shadow of history, it's impossible not to feel moved. This is Southport at its best — a town where community craft becomes collective memory, and where something made by many hands becomes a gift for all.



“Some memorials stand in stone. This one was made in wool — and it still stops people in their tracks.”



# CONFIDENCE

UNMUTE YOURSELF AND SHOW UP ON SOCIALS

**If the thought of posting a video makes your stomach flip — you're not alone. I built Studio Nine to be a space where creativity feels calm, and now I'm helping others find the same confidence to show up online.**

Ever watched someone speak effortlessly on camera and thought, "I could never do that"? You're not alone — but you absolutely can.

At Studio Nine, we're helping people swap nerves for confidence through our Social Media Confidence Workshops. They're designed for anyone who wants to show up online — business owners, freelancers, or those ready to grow their voice — but doesn't know where to start.

No filters, no fluff — just real confidence, practical tools, and a supportive space that helps you feel at ease in front of the camera.

You'll leave knowing how to:

- Look and sound confident (even when your hands are shaking)
- Post without overthinking
- Build genuine connection through your content

Because confidence isn't about being perfect — it's about showing up anyway. So if you've been waiting for a sign to start, this is it.

Your story deserves to be seen — and at Studio Nine, we'll help you tell it.

Next workshops now open — visit [studionine.uk](https://studionine.uk) to book your spot.



# Life's a journey

# What's on this

# Season

## Breakfast with Santa — Silcock's Funland & Pier Restaurant

Start your Christmas countdown with a magical morning at Silcock's Pier Restaurant, where Santa and his elves are hosting a festive breakfast experience the whole family will love. Choose from a hearty cooked breakfast — sausage, hash browns and baked beans — or fluffy American pancakes with fruit and syrup, served with a Christmas hot chocolate or juice.

Each child receives a goody bag, a small gift, and a ride on the iconic Carousel — plus plenty of photo opportunities with Santa himself. It's a relaxed, joyful way to make memories before the big day.

Dates: Saturday 6th, Saturday 13th, Sunday 14th, Saturday 20th, Sunday 21st, Monday 22nd, Tuesday 23rd & Wednesday 24th December — all at 10:30 am.

Tickets: £12.50 per child (plus booking fee).  
Book early via [silcock-leisure.co.uk](http://silcock-leisure.co.uk) — these mornings always sell out fast!



**Breakfast with Santa**

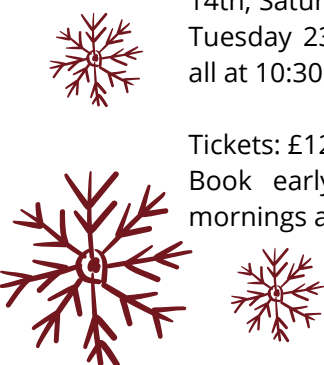
Join Santa & his elves for breakfast, a gift & a ride on our carousel

**£12.50**  
Plus booking fee  
*Take A Selfie With Santa*

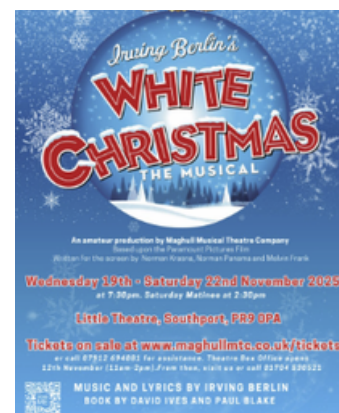
This December...

Please see our website for details  
[www.silcock-leisure.co.uk/breakfast-with-santa](http://www.silcock-leisure.co.uk/breakfast-with-santa)  
AT SILCOCKS FUNLAND PIER RESTAURANT SOUTHPORT PIER  
10.30AM

Scan for Details







Got something going on in Southport?

We're always on the lookout for local events to feature in our What's On page—from community meetups to creative workshops, charity fundraisers, live music, and everything in between. Send us the details at [southportsjourney@gmail.com](mailto:southportsjourney@gmail.com) and let us help spread the word!

[WWW.SOUTHPORTSJOURNEY.COM](http://WWW.SOUTHPORTSJOURNEY.COM)



# CONNECTING SOUTHPORT

Where Business Meets Community



How networking with purpose is reshaping the town

There's something special happening in Southport — a growing sense that business here isn't just about transactions; it's about connection, collaboration, and community. More and more local entrepreneurs are finding that when they step out from behind their desks and into a room full of like-minded people, the magic really begins.

**“It's about building a community that levels up, together.”**

## The Power of Networking

Networking has come a long way from the days of stiff handshakes and business cards. It's now about real conversations — sharing experiences, ideas, and opportunities that help both people and businesses grow. Whether you're a start-up looking for your first clients or an established name hoping to connect with the next generation of local talent, networking opens doors you didn't even know existed.

Southport's growing community of business owners is proving that when people come together with purpose, incredible things happen — partnerships are formed, ideas take shape, and a supportive ecosystem begins to thrive.

## Level Up Networking: Walking the Talk (and the Town!)

Then there's Level Up Networking — the walking network that's quite literally taking business to the doors of Southport's independent cafés.

Picture this: a group of professionals strolling through the town, stopping off at local coffee spots, chatting ideas over a cappuccino, and making genuine connections along the way. It's networking with a difference — fresh air, fresh faces, and fresh perspectives.

Each walk shines a light on the incredible independent cafés and venues that make Southport's high streets special. It's not just about swapping business cards; it's about building relationships that last — with people and with place.

## Business with a Heart

At the centre of this movement is Southport Life, a networking community that believes success should go hand in hand with giving back. It's not just about exchanging business leads — it's about creating a culture of kindness and contribution.

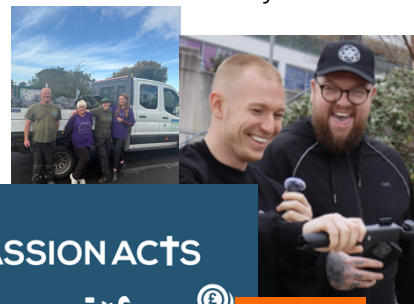
Every few months, members roll up their sleeves for local causes — from volunteering in King's Gardens to supporting Southport's independent charities and community projects. It's a network that reminds us business has the power to do good — that when we give time and energy to our hometown, it gives right back in loyalty, pride, and purpose.

Southport Life has become more than a meeting; it's a movement — one that celebrates collaboration, supports wellbeing, and encourages everyone to play their part in shaping the future of the town.

## A call to connect

So if you're a new business owner wondering where to start, this is your invitation. Join a walk. Come to a meet-up. Say hello.

Networking in Southport isn't about competition — it's about collaboration. It's where ideas are shared, friendships are made, and success is celebrated together. Because when businesses support each other — and their town — everyone wins.



Wellbeing



Families



Food



Advice







*with I CAN Education*

**“My child is bright, but their grades don’t show it — is something wrong?”**

*Not at all. Some children think in pictures, some in movement, some in conversation — and none of that fits neatly into a test score. Grades measure one type of performance on one day, not a child’s whole ability or future. Lots of students who don’t “test well” go on to thrive in work, life and learning once they’re in the right environment. A low mark can be a sign of mismatch, not lack of intelligence.*

**““Is AI helping my child learn, or doing the work for them?”**

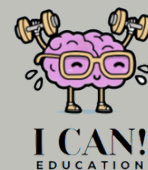
*AI can be useful when it supports learning, not replaces it. The real measure is whether your child can still think, explain and create without the tool switched on. Used well, AI can build confidence and independence — especially for children who get stuck at the first hurdle. Used badly, it can mask gaps and make work look finished when the understanding isn’t there yet. The goal isn’t to ban the tech, but to make sure the learning still belongs to the child.*

**“My child feels overwhelmed — is that just normal stress?”**

*A bit of pressure is part of growing up, but constant stress is not something children are built to carry alone. If school anxiety is daily, happening at bedtime, or affecting sleep, appetite or attendance, it needs attention, not dismissal. Many children today feel “always on” — juggling schoolwork, screens, friendships and expectations at the same time. They don’t need to be tougher — they need space to slow down, reset and feel supported. Burnout isn’t a weakness, it’s a signal.*



# THE BIG PICTURE WITH



Children aged 6–14 averaged about 2.77 hours of screen time per day, and 46.4% of them spent 2 hours or more on screens.

Among UK adults, 49% say their attention span is shorter than it used to be, showing a widespread perception of reduced focus.

Studies of homework show that, in secondary schools, well-designed homework can add around 5 months' worth of learning progress, while poor design or excess can reduce its impact.

## PRACTICAL TIPS

What Helps in Real Life?

- ✓ Movement before work, not after it
- ✓ Homework in chunks, not marathons
- ✓ Screen breaks that involve doing, not scrolling
- ✓ Letting children choose the order of tasks, not just the outcome
- ✓ Checking emotional state before academic effort — tired brains don't learn well

WRITTEN BY I CAN EDUCATION

# ATTENTION WARS

Why modern children aren't "less focused" — just differently wired

If you've ever watched your child concentrate for an hour on Minecraft but lose focus after eight minutes of maths, you're not imagining it — and it doesn't mean they're "lazy" or "unmotivated." Today's children are growing up in a world where attention works differently: faster, more visual, more interrupted, and constantly stimulated. Their brains haven't switched off — they've adapted.

### Homework vs. Headspace

Traditional homework was designed for a world with fewer distractions and fewer after-school pressures. Now, children are juggling schoolwork, notifications, social expectations, and a pace of content that moves faster than most adults can process. It's not that they can't focus — it's that focus now needs clearer conditions: breaks, movement, quieter spaces, shorter bursts, and tasks that feel meaningful, not repetitive.

### Screens Aren't the Enemy?

For children today, screens are not a "treat" or an "escape" — they're where they learn, talk, socialise, revise, even relax. Blaming screens won't solve the problem, but helping children balance active screen use (creating, learning, researching) with passive use (scrolling, consuming, zoning out) can. The goal isn't "less screen" — it's better screen.

### The 20-Minute Myth

Research now shows that attention doesn't disappear — it resets. Most children don't need a longer attention span, they just need permission to pause. A child who looks distracted may simply be mentally recharging before coming back to the task. Short bursts are not failure — they are how the modern brain protects itself from overload.

### The Takeaway

Today's children don't have broken attention — they have adaptive attention. They're navigating more stimulation, more expectation, and more noise than any generation before them. When adults shift from "pay attention" to "what do you need in order to focus?", everything changes. Because focus isn't something children automatically owe — it's something we help them build.

“ 1 IN 2 ADULTS SAY THEIR ATTENTION SPAN IS SHORTER THAN IT USED TO BE — IT'S NOT JUST THE KIDS. ”





Marshmallow is its own  
season — a squishy  
rebellion against the rush





Coast



Crozier's



Roxy's Cafe



The Grand



JT Akshaya

## A TOWN WITH TASTE

For those who know, it's already on the map. For those who don't... it should be.

There are places that shout about their food and drink scene, and there are places that don't need to. Southport belongs to the second kind — a town quietly cultivating its own culinary identity, where independents lead with craft, not trend, and where the best recommendations are still exchanged in low-voice whispers, not on billboards.

Birkdale, with its polished brunch plates and wine-by-the-glass sophistication, has long been the district locals guard like a secret. Churchtown, all cobbles and heritage charm, pairs character with seriously considered coffee, patisserie and evening pours. And in between, Southport's centre is steadily being rediscovered — not revived, but revealed — by those who understand that great hospitality doesn't need a "now open" sign to be worth finding.

This autumn's quiet coffee trail proved something important: Southport doesn't need to imitate anywhere else. It already has its own rhythm — a blend of coastal calm, village warmth and confident plates served without pretence. The flavours are thoughtful, the spaces are evolving, and the people behind them are doing something rare in hospitality: making it personal again.

Yes, there are cities with louder scenes. But very few with this balance of refinement, independence and unforced charm — where a spiced chai in Churchtown, a glass of Burgundy in Birkdale, or a late-afternoon espresso on Lord Street all feel like part of the same quietly crafted experience.

It isn't a scene you stumble into. You follow someone who knows.

And if you haven't yet — consider this your invitation.

Southport isn't up-and-coming.

It's already here. Some of us are just enjoying it before the world catches on.





# COAST

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## A magical sunday roast

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Birkdale Village is one of those magical spots where cosy corners, good company, and delicious food are a given. But every so often, you sit down to a meal that truly stands out — and this was one of those Sundays.

With their beautiful new indoor-outdoor balcony, Coast has created the perfect setting for slow, unhurried dining. Sliding into a comfy chair, a svelte glass of Argentinian Malbec in hand, I started with the curried fishcake — a conversation-silencer of a starter that set the tone for what was to come.

Then came the main event: pork with a golden crown of crackling, resting in a rich jus. Sweet glazed carrots, crisp roast potatoes, and a Yorkshire pudding with that perfect drunch (half crunch, half sponge) completed the plate, alongside vibrant greens that balanced the indulgence beautifully.

Coast is a venue of many talents — from elegant evening dining to casual nibbles, and even private events. As we roll into the festive season, it's the perfect spot to gather, feast, and toast to the simple pleasure of a Sunday well spent.





# Ready, Set, GO!

Every so often, something special takes root in Southport — a project that isn't just about bricks and mortar, but about people. The Big Onion, now open in the former Crave café on Lord Street, is one of those ideas brought to life. Created by Merseyside Expanding Horizons, the space opened in October with a well-attended soft-launch that brought together local organisations, collaborators and curious residents.

The Big Onion isn't just another venue. It's a community hub designed to spark collaboration, encourage creativity, and give people access to new opportunities. It's already attracting a mix of local groups and independents — from Clare at Freedom to Flourish, to Julie from Mums the Word, to Emmy of Artease, and Lizzie Barnett of The Studio Nine Group — each bringing something different to the table, but all sharing the same belief in community-led change.

At its core, the project aims to offer what the team calls “life-changing opportunities” — workshops, support programmes, and flexible space that helps small businesses find their feet without the barrier of high-street rents.

That's why public events — like the Christmas Market on Saturday 15th November — play a vital role. They don't just bring people together; they help raise the funds needed to keep The Big Onion open, so start-ups, community groups and new ventures can continue to access affordable town-centre space.

The Big Onion isn't just opening its doors; it's opening possibilities. Shared tables, shared ideas, shared purpose — proof that good things happen when people come together.

So next time you're walking through Town Hall Gardens, take a moment to pop in. Behind that new sign on Lord Street, you'll find more than a venue — you'll find Southport's next chapter growing, one layer at a time.



*Your community hub!*

# BIG ONION

Southport



## SUPPLEMENTS THAT ACTUALLY WORK

### ➔ Whey Protein

Supplementing with protein powder is a great way to aid recovery, hit protein goals and stay fuller for longer, especially if you're trying to lose fat while keeping your strength. A good quality whey protein is convenient, cost-effective, and backed by research.

### ➔ Creatine Monohydrate

One of the most studied supplements on the planet! Creatine supports strength, muscle growth, and even brain health. It's safe, effective, and affordable. You don't need fancy blends; plain creatine monohydrate does the job perfectly.

### ➔ Vitamin D

In the UK, most of us don't get enough sunlight, especially through the winter months. Vitamin D supports immunity, bone health, and mood. An absolute must from October to April.

### ➔ Omega -3 (fish oil)

Omega-3s support heart health, joint mobility, and cognitive function. If you don't eat oily fish a couple of times a week, a high-quality fish oil supplement can bridge the gap.

### ➔ Magnesium

Magnesium (especially for women 40+) supports muscle function, energy levels, sleep quality, and hormonal balance. As we age, absorption can decline — so supplementing can make a real difference to recovery and wellbeing.

## SUPPLEMENTS I'LL NEVER RECOMMEND

### ➔ Collagen Powder

### ➔ BCAAs (Branched Chain Amino Acids)

### ➔ "Fat Burner" Pills and Powders

#### The Bottom Line

Supplements should supplement, a good diet, solid sleep, and consistent activity.

If you're going to spend your hard-earned money on anything, make it something that's proven to work!

So, save your hard earned cash for quality food, some creatine monohydrate and a great coach who knows their stuff!



## SUPPLEMENTS: SORTING THE SCIENCE FROM THE SALES PITCH

Walk into any health shop, scroll social media, or browse the "wellness" aisle in a supermarket, and you'll be bombarded with supplements promising to boost your energy, burn fat, build muscle, and turn back the clock.

The truth?

The supplement industry is a minefield and a very profitable one. It's full of products that sound impressive but do very little. Many are marketed with clever wording and influencer hype rather than solid science.

As a coach, I see people spending hundreds a month on powders and pills that simply don't deliver. So, let's cut through the noise. Here's my list of supplements that are genuinely worth your money and the ones that aren't.





## The Story Behind GABA Clothing

Some stories begin in dark places — and then shine with the brightest light. For two sisters in Southport, that light came from a decision: to turn deep loss and trauma in July 2024 into something meaningful. After a tragic, life-shifting event, they formed GABA Clothing — the name a bold statement: Go Anywhere, Be Anything. Their mission is simple yet profound: to help others heal, connect, and grow.

GABA's logo isn't just a design — it's a story stitched into a single image. The playful monkey reflects the sisters' own spirited nature, a quiet reminder that even through grief, laughter still has a place. The scar is there too — not to spotlight pain, but to honour it. It stands for the wounds we all carry, seen or unseen, and the strength it takes to keep going anyway. And then there are the headphones, a nod to the songs that held them together when nothing else could. ➤





"It carries who we are," they say. "It's proof that healing and happiness don't cancel each other out — they can live side by side."

Wearing GABA isn't just wearing clothing. It's wearing a narrative — joy born from adversity, playfulness with purpose, and a message stitched with quiet defiance: we can still go anywhere, and be anything.

#### **Fashion with Purpose**

Every GABA purchase does more than clothe — it contributes. All sales are channelled into the GABA Foundation, which is already working towards bringing first-aid training into schools, giving young people the confidence and skills to save lives. In building the brand, the sisters are building something bigger: a legacy of empowerment, resilience, and real-world impact.

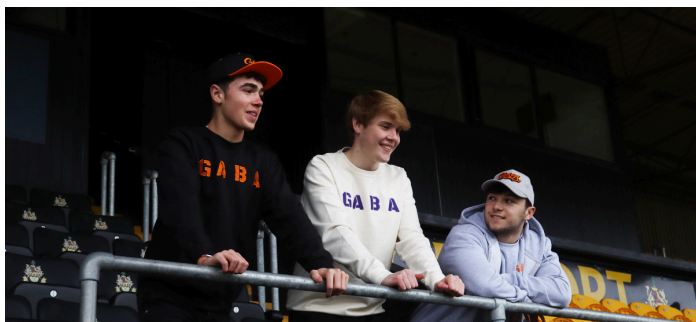


Some brands are built from trend. GABA was built from trauma, courage, and the decision to turn pain into purpose. Every stitch in their collection carries that story. Their hoodies and statement T-shirts aren't just designed — they're engineered: fully embroidered, not printed, crafted to last, and made to feel like something worth keeping. The bold chest logos, the detailed back designs, the weight of the fabric — it all reflects GABA's belief that what you wear should be more than an outfit. It should mean something. That purpose is already rooted locally. In partnership with King George V College, students from Fashion & Textiles, Photography and P.E. worked on a striking photoshoot at Southport F.C. Together they created something powerful — young talent, bold messaging, and community pride stitched together against the backdrop of the town they love. It's proof of what GABA stands for: collaboration, creativity, and giving back.

And their vision stretches far beyond clothing. They imagine a movement — one where people wear their scars without shame, where resilience is celebrated, and where young people grow up knowing they can save a life, speak up, and step forward. For GABA, Go Anywhere. Be Anything. isn't a tagline. It's a challenge. A permission slip. A promise.

Go Anywhere. Be Anything.

Because hope isn't just a feeling — it can be lived, it can be worn, and it can change everything.







# WE MUST CATCH UP SOON...

...Yes we must....but we rarely do!



My big sister is called 'Harry' [her Sunday name is Harriet] and we are only separated in age by 15 months. So, by this reckoning, I have known her all my life and we have always been great friends. We have also known our friend Celia for the vast majority of our lives [the last 49 of them at least!] It's a friendship built on proximity [Celia lived in the house opposite ours as we grew up] shared experiences [we did everything together as kids – roaming about the 1980s with a level of autonomy that my kids are certainly not afforded] and a big dollop of love [she's like another sister]

We were the trio that after A levels [for me] and during the first Summer holiday from Uni for H & C, we bought a plane tickets to Thailand and set off adventuring for a month. A friendship soundly built on rock solid foundations. It's a sad fact of life that we don't see each other as a trio, all that often. I live in Southport, Harry in Edinburgh and Celia down in Oxford, and busy lives just seem to get in the way. WhatsApp and phone calls fill in the gaps to a certain extent, but getting tougher is a rarity [not for a lack of desire or want of trying] It's just one of those things.

For the past year or so, we've been seeking for a weekend that would work for all of us, and finally, last month, we managed it! The illusive meet up. And it was brilliant.

We are the lucky ones. There is something about well-established friendships that takes the pressure off. There is an unwritten understanding that although you might not have been in the same proximity for a long time, you are able to pick up where you left off. And we did!

There was a lot of chatting, catching up, the obligatory 'do you remember when' kind of conversations that encourage you to fondly recall the past and gives you lots of reasons to laugh.

We're all quite different, we approach life in different ways and our experiences have been varied, but we are always able to come together, and to enjoy each others' company. For those of you who are old enough to remember the days of Skype, Celia's username was 'loudlaugh1' which gives you a clue to the volume of our interactions.



There was a lot of laughter, but equally it's the kind of friendship that can mean that silence is comfortable and enveloping, not awkward and to be avoided at all costs.

A time to prioritise catching up, talking, laughing and sharing the odd tearful moment, is what makes life rich and rewarding, but it feels hard fought for in our busy lives. If you need more of a reason, even the science behind it is compelling. There are many reasons why prioritising catching up and reconnecting is a very good thing for us all.

Of course we fear rejection, we fear reaching out and being ignored, or even rejected, but in my view, it is still worth the risk.

As human beings we are wired for connection, it's vital for survival and our wellbeing. Interestingly our friendships can, in certain circumstances, be even more important than family ties as a predictor of happiness. Strong social ties can be a buffer against stress and anxiety.

Reconnecting with old friends can give us a sense of identity, reminding by reminding us of where we have come from and what aspects of our personality have remained constant over time.

Shared memories can often evoke a feeling of nostalgia which can enhance our mood and provide us with a deeper sense of continuity and meaning.

The science suggests that if an old friend comes to mind, you should just reach out with a friendly, low-key message. Your action is likely to be well received and the benefits that come from connection can be significant.

So....who has come to your mind whilst reading this? Who would you love to catch up with, even if it's been a long time.

My gentle challenge to you is don't just write in your Christmas cards this year.....we must catch up soon! Set a date and look forward to reconnecting. I can totally recommend it!





# LOCAL LOVE

## Interiors Edit

ALight up your interiors this November with a design that celebrates the drama and excitement of fireworks night. Deep berry shades set a rich, moody backdrop, while touches of shimmer and metallic accents add a spark of glamour. Think plush fabrics, statement lighting and reflective finishes that play with light and shadow, creating a space that feels both sophisticated and festive—perfect for dinner parties with a touch of sparkle.

The best part? You don't have to look far. Southport has everything you need to bring the season's trends home — from statement artwork that transforms a bare wall to scents that turn your space into a cosy retreat.



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3



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4



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1. ARTIST JOHN CHARLES- ARTWORK 2. COCO BOUTIQUE-BAOBAB CANDLE 3. GIFTS DELIGHT- SCORPIO FIGURINE  
4. LAMPLIGHTERS GALLERY- CHANDELIER 5. THE MASTER BARBER'S SHOP- FLORIS LONDON- ROOM FRAGRANCE

MILLS  
INTERIORS





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### Christmas Arrives at Studio Nine

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The elves have clocked in early this year — and they've brought Santa's grotto with them. Studio Nine has been completely transformed by MAF Photography, who've turned the space into a warm, festive setting for this season's Christmas photoshoots. With the first day already fully booked, it's clear these sessions have struck a chord with families looking to make time for one another amid the December rush.





It's not hard to see why. MAF Photography have created more than a backdrop — they've built an experience. Whether it's families, couples, or the occasional four-legged friend, the team have a knack for making everyone feel at ease in front of the camera. Their relaxed, down-to-earth approach means the laughter and warmth you see in the final photos are genuine, not staged.

I brought my own dog, Horace (who's promised to start his training come January), and within minutes the whole room felt like Christmas morning — music in the background, outfit changes, a bit of chaos, and plenty of laughter.

That's the real charm of these sessions: they remind you to slow down and be present. No filters, no forced smiles — just honest, joyful moments caught in time. And in a season that always seems to move too quickly, that feels worth capturing.







## Christmas Mini Photoshoots at Studio Nine

Studio Nine, Hart Street, Southport  
 Saturday 22nd November – Fully Booked  
 Sunday 23rd November – Limited Slots Available  
 Capture the magic of the season with a festive photoshoot the whole family will love — pets included!

### What's Included:

- 10 beautifully edited digital images (prints available to purchase)

- two stunning Christmas-themed setups

- 40-minute session (time for outfit changes)

- A free hot chocolate for every guest

- Festive music and relaxed, family-friendly fun

### Who can join:

- Families up to 6 people (£10 per extra person)

- Well-behaved pets welcome

- Couples can bring their own bottle of fizz — we've got the glasses!

Price: £89

£29 deposit secures your booking (balance due on the day)

Book now — spaces for Sunday 23rd November are filling fast!



“

Let's start that conversation.

”





# Grow It, Show It, Talk About It

Because sometimes a conversation is the best thing you can grow



# MOVEMBER

Every November, moustaches start appearing everywhere — short, wispy, perfectly shaped, or full-on handlebars. They're not just for show. They're there to start a conversation.

Movember began back in 2003 with a few mates in Australia and has grown into a global movement raising awareness for men's mental health, suicide prevention, prostate cancer, and testicular cancer.

This month, keep your eyes peeled around Southport for the 'taches — on faces, in barbers, on coffee cups, and in gym selfies. Each one represents a small but powerful reminder: men's health matters.

And if you're not sure how to check in with a friend, try something simple: "You've seemed a bit quiet lately — fancy a brew and a catch-up?"

Because that's how it starts — one chat, one moment, one moustache at a time.

It's not about the moustache. It's about the message.

Want to get involved?

Grow a Mo, move 60km for the 60 men lost to suicide every hour, or simply make time for a chat that counts.

You can donate, start a fundraiser, or find ideas at [movember.com](http://movember.com) — every small action helps change the face of men's health.





# THIS MONTH LET'S EXPLORE OUR



# ADVENTUROUS SIDE

A Safari invites you into the untamed wild you have only dreamt about. Creating extraordinary encounters with some of nature's most magnificent animals and landscapes. If you are harbouring dreams of spotting the typical big 5, then the Serengeti is probably the most well-known of safari destinations.

However, there are a plethora of alternatives destinations and experiences to consider.

How about a jeep safari through the jungles in Yala National Park, Sri Lanka. This stunning reserve is home to one of the world's largest populations of leopard. Keep a watchful eye out for elephants, crocodiles, sloth bears and peacocks throughout this diverse habitat.

Heart stopping moments are guaranteed when encountering the majestic Bengal Tiger in its natural environment at Rathambore National Park, India and this should definitely be on your bucket list.

There is something captivating about primates playfully swinging through Kibale Forest, Uganda or following the footprints of majestic silverbacks in Rwanda.

One of my personal favourite safari's combines Botswana with Victoria Falls. This stunning itinerary will leave you speechless. As well as sightings of the big 5 during your game drives in the Okavango Delta, you will take in epic sunset river views along the Chobe - watching out for hippos, crocodiles and elephants. Then take in one of the natural wonders of the world at Victoria Falls, one of the largest waterfalls on Earth..

I can help plan your next safari adventure to perfection. Creating not just a trip, but a collection of unforgettable moments you'll cherish forever

For those who don't want a big adventure, Knowsley Safari park offers a chance to spot wildlife a little closer to home.

Cath X

Cath Reese Travel Counsellor  
Cath.reese@mytc.com





## A STEP BACK IN TIME

There are some places that feel less like cafés and more like portals — quiet, unassuming spaces where the clock seems to slow, and stories hang gently in the air. Ricketys, tucked away on Stanley Street in Southport, is one of those places. Once the back wing of the 1934 Conservative Club, the building has been lovingly reimagined as a vintage store and coffee house. From the moment you walk through its doors, you're greeted not just by the scent of freshly brewed coffee, but by history — one that whispers through every shelf, drawer, and teacup.

### China Cups and Charming Corners

Taking a seat at Ricketys is like being transported to another era. Your tea arrives in delicate china teapots, accompanied by matching cups, saucers, and playful milk jugs that seem to each have their own personality.



The menu is comfortingly familiar — crumpets, sweet treats, and slices of nostalgia — but what makes it special is the experience itself.

It's the kind of place where conversation naturally slows. Where the clink of porcelain replaces the buzz of phones, and you find yourself noticing the way the light catches the rim of your teacup. Every detail feels intentional.

### Letters, Postcards, and Lives Once Lived

Look closely and you'll find drawers filled with old letters, postcards from seaside holidays, and framed photographs that tell stories of lives once lived. They're not displays, exactly — more like breadcrumbs from history, scattered lovingly through the room.

As you sip your coffee, it's easy to feel that quiet connection to the past. You start to imagine the hands that once wrote those letters, the laughter behind those photographs, the families who gathered around these same kinds of tables decades ago.

### A Space That Feels Like Home

Ricketys isn't just about antiques or afternoon tea — it's about atmosphere. It's about creating a space where people can pause, reminisce, and feel part of something timeless. Whether you're browsing for a vintage treasure or settling in for a lazy afternoon with tea and crumpets, there's a sense that you're being gently looked after. As Southport continues to evolve, Ricketys offers a reminder of what makes the town special — the blend of nostalgia, warmth, and community that makes people fall in love with it all over again.

So next time you're wandering through Stanley Street, take a moment to stop by. Order the tea. Sit in the cosy corner. Open one of those drawers full of history — and lose yourself, just for a little while, in the comforting hum of the past.

# RICKETYS

Where Every Cup Tells a Story





# Finding the light

## A Lesson in Resilience

This Half term, I thought I was heading to Germany. Bags packed, playlists ready, a week's escape planned to the last detail, until the moment I reached the ferry terminal and was told my passport, though still in date, was too old. It was issued more than ten years ago. And just like that, our plans dissolved.

For a moment, it was tempting to give in to disappointment, to turn around, go home, and declare the holiday a write-off. But resilience, I've come to realise, isn't about stoically enduring hardship or pushing through suffering as if it's a badge of honour. It's not about running the ultra-marathon of life without stopping for breath.

For me, resilience is about pivoting towards the light, finding a spark of possibility in the ashes of a plan gone wrong. So instead of giving up, we regrouped. Within hours, our ferry tickets had been swapped for another route, and we found ourselves heading not to Germany, but to the Isle of Man. And what a gift that turned out to be.

There was laughter where there might have been frustration, new places where there might have been none, and a deep sense of calm that only comes when you let go of control and lean into life as it unfolds.

Resilience, I think, grows from self-belief, from the quiet confidence that you've faced storms before and found your way through. It's in the small decisions to keep going, to adapt, to believe that things can still turn out beautifully, even when they don't go to plan.

So yes, I didn't make it to Germany. But I gained something better: a reminder that resilience isn't about enduring, it's about evolving. It's about finding joy in the detour.

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### 5 Easy Ways to Build Your Resilience

- Reflect on how far you've already come  
Resilience grows from remembering your past wins, not just the big ones, but the quiet moments you got through something you thought you couldn't. Make a habit of reminding yourself what you've already survived.
- Reframe the story:  
When things go wrong, ask: "What else could this mean?" Instead of seeing failure or frustration, look for the opportunity, the lesson, or even just the funny story you'll tell later. Perspective is powerful.
- Rest, don't retreat  
Resilience isn't about running on empty. It's about knowing when to pause, breathe, and recharge. A nap, a walk, or a quiet cup of tea can do more for your strength than pushing through exhaustion ever will.
- Stay connected  
Lean on your people, friends, family, colleagues, and be someone others can lean on too. Resilience is a shared skill; it grows stronger in community, not isolation.
- Practice small acts of self-belief  
Do one thing each day that reminds you, you can. It could be ticking something off your to-do list, trying something new, or simply saying, "I've got this." Confidence compounds, it's built one small win at a time.

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**Comfortably Heard**



Sarah McEntee our expert shares her guidance and knowledge



## A funeral home built on trust, time and kindness

When a family walks through the door of Hope Funeral Care, they aren't met with a big organisation — they're met with two people: Wendy and Claire. Two women who believe that every family deserves time, patience, and kindness, especially on the hardest days of their lives.

They often say the most important part of their work isn't arranging the funeral — it's looking after the people left behind. That's why they answer the phone themselves, why every question is explained calmly, and why support doesn't end once the service is over.

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**“Independent means  
personal — you speak to us  
from the first call to the last  
goodbye.”**

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Hope is independent, but not alone. Wendy and Claire are proud members of the National Association of Funeral Directors (NAFD) — the UK's largest funeral profession body, representing more than 4,100 funeral homes. Being part of the NAFD means families can trust that Hope works to the highest standards of care, clarity and fairness. It's not a badge for display — it's a promise to do things properly.

The NAFD provides the structure — good practice, training, accountability.

Hope provides the personal touch — familiar faces, steady guidance, and a calm space where no one feels rushed or unheard.

Because when someone has died, what people need most isn't formality — it's gentleness.

Not pressure — but support.

Not a process — but people who truly care.

That is what Wendy and Claire bring to every family who walks through their door.



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### A Note as Christmas Nears

This season, Hope will once again be opening its hearts to anyone who needs a gentle place to pause, reflect, or remember. Full details are inside this issue — because grief doesn't take a holiday, and neither does care.







# A Spitfire and a waltz

November has swept in with sparkle and purpose — and as I swap my notebook for dancing shoes, I can already feel the buzz building for Queenscourt's Strictly on the 15th. Southport seems to have found its rhythm this month — balancing moments of remembrance with reasons to celebrate, and I've had the joy of being right in the middle of it all.

Helping to launch this year's Poppy Appeal and witnessing the unveiling of the Knitted Spitfire outside The Atkinson were experiences that went far beyond ceremony. Each stitch, each salute, felt like a moment of shared pride — a creative tribute that brought history and humanity together in the most touching way.

That same spirit flows into every corner of the town right now. The Queenscourt Strictly dancers are busy perfecting their steps for a cause that means so much to so many, proving once again how giving back can also bring such lightness and joy.

Meanwhile, through Southport Life Network, we've been shining a light on the incredible work of Compassion Acts, whose dedication reminds us that kindness isn't seasonal — it's a constant thread that holds our community together.

And, of course, there's a little mischief in the mix — Fear on the Pier returned with its spooky backdrop and brave visitors, bringing laughter, screams, and a shared sense of fun that Southport always does so well.



## Local highlights

# Let's hear from a local - with a twist!



This month's Hearing from a Local comes with a little extra altitude! We were sent a photo of Southport's Journey being read on top of Montaña Roja — a volcano in Lanzarote — proof that our readers really do take the magazine anywhere. A huge thank you to Clark Foster (age 5) for loving the magazine so much, and well done for taking part in the half-term Extreme Reading Challenge at Our Lady of Lourdes School, Birkdale.

SCAN  
ME! >>



THE  
QUIZ

Which Southport café recently unveiled its festive drinks menu featuring a gingerbread hot chocolate?

Which famous city is said to have been inspired by Southport's Lord Street?

GABA Clothing was born here in Southport — but what does "GABA" stand for?

Where in town can you visit The Big Onion, the new community hub connecting local projects and people?

And finally — what would you most like to see in Southport's future?  
(A new venue? More community spaces? A return of something we've lost?)

## Meet the Team



### Contributors & Credits

Mills Interiors — Creating beautiful, functional spaces with a curated edit of local interior finds.

[www.millsinteriors.com](http://www.millsinteriors.com)

Sarah McEntee — Communications coach helping people use their voice to change the world.

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Kate Miles-Roberts — Co-Director at The Clear Thinking Partnership; Vice-Chair, Southport Little Theatre — on clear thinking and calm leadership.

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Cath Reese — Our resident travel writer, sharing stories from smart staycations to worldwide adventures.

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Anna McNally — With over 15 years as a personal trainer, Anna specialises in strength training, pre- & post-natal coaching, and building lasting, science-based results — without the fads.

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ICAN Education — Practical advice, support and helpful hints for parents.

[www.icaneducation.co.uk](http://www.icaneducation.co.uk)

### Photography Credits

A huge thank you to MAF Photography for their festive images featured in the Studio Nine Christmas article, and to Real Minded Media for capturing the photos for the level up network.

[www.southportsjourney.com](http://www.southportsjourney.com)





Southport's  
**Journey**

Want to be featured, email [hello@southportsjourney.com](mailto:hello@southportsjourney.com)