

ISSUE 11

Southport's Journey

MAGAZINE

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Proudly
Independent.

FOOD, FUN
& FESTIVITIES

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CHRISTMAS

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Editor's Note



SOUTHPORT'S JOURNEY

December arrives with its own kind of weight. The lights shine brighter, the days move faster, and there's an unspoken pressure to wrap up the year neatly — to have answers, achievements, clarity. But this year, I'm choosing something different.

Twelve months ago, my life looked nothing like it does today. I couldn't have predicted the pivots, the people, the projects, or the way Southport would become the centre of everything I'm building. Change arrived quickly, sometimes chaotically, often unexpectedly. But it brought me here — to a place where community feels real, where stories matter, and where this magazine has space to grow.

And so, instead of rushing through December or bending myself into the shape the season demands, I'm letting it move at its own rhythm. No pressure. No perfection. Just a steady step into what comes next.

Because the truth is, the year ahead holds extraordinary promise for our town. 2026 is already casting a long shadow — one filled with opportunity, reinvention, and the kind of momentum Southport hasn't felt in years. And Southport's Journey will be here for it, creating a space where stories can be held, shared, and celebrated. A place where local voices feel heard, and where the pulse of the town is documented in real time.

As we close this final issue of the year, I want to say thank you — for reading, for showing up, for believing in what independent media can do when a community chooses itself. December may carry its pressures, but it also carries hope. And this month, I'm choosing to walk toward that hope with intention.

See you around Southport — and in the stories we're ready to tell next.

Editor-in-Chief



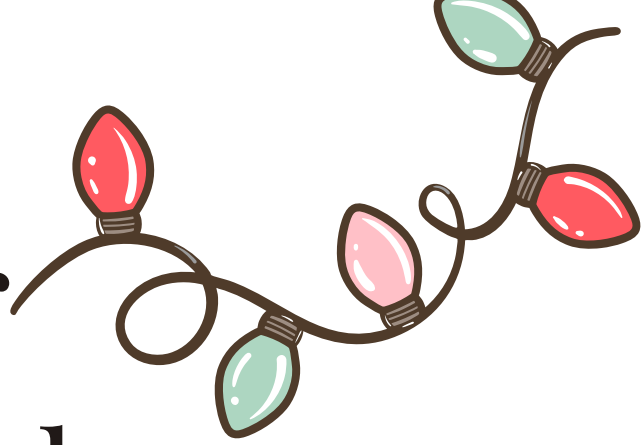
About Southport's Journey

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.

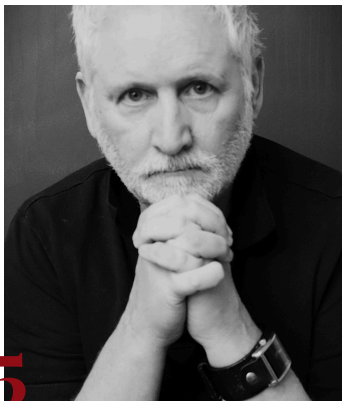
Get involved

Have a story or event? Want to advertise, pitch or partner?
Email hello@southportsjourney.com or visit southportsjourney.com.
We'd love to hear your story.

Welcome your *Journey* starts here



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Capturing the soul of the town, this artist paints the faces behind Southport's stories — offering a vivid look at the people who shape our community.



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

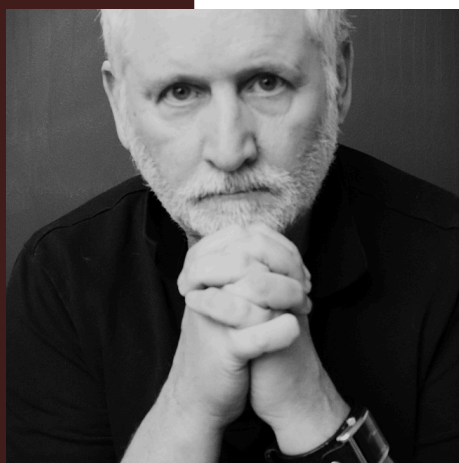
✉ hello@southportsjourney.com

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🌐 www.southportsjourney.com

STORIES YOU CAN SEE

Southport isn't the backdrop — it's the masterpiece.



Some artists chase meaning; others circle it for decades until it quietly seeps into view.

For Lazarus — a creator shaped by Manchester's punk alleyways, book illustration, fashion photography, years of street-level photojournalism in London, and even a long career inside the games industry — meaning arrived in the most unlikely of places: a reclamation yard off Cemetery Road.

Southport has been in his orbit since the 1970s, but returning as an artist at a crossroads gave the town a new clarity. It wasn't just familiar; it was fertile. A coastline full of quiet characters, a community stitched together by unspoken resilience, a place regenerating itself in real time.

It mirrored him.

And the resonance was immediate.

The first portrait began with Dennis — small in frame, vast in presence, standing among rusted metal as if carved from it. Then Christine, whose recollections of caring for Red Rum added texture and myth to the early canvases.



From there the paths widened. There was Brian Radam — Southport's eccentric gem and custodian of the British Lawnmower Museum, a man who has preserved more than 300 mechanical oddities with a showman's pride and a historian's dedication. Meeting him felt less like a conversation and more like stepping inside a living archive.

Then came Terry Tasker — gardener, volunteer, stalwart of the Southport Flower Show — a man whose fingerprints exist on decades of community graft. His story wasn't loud; it was rooted, the sort of narrative artists often spend years trying to find.

And the names continued. Kath Wilson raised millions for Southport's new lifeboat station overlooking the sea, her unwavering dedication ensuring crews have the best equipment, training and facilities available. Eddie Haworth, the mischievous mind behind the Museum of Buffoonery in Wayfarers Arcade. Jack McLean, known for his conspiratorial ideologies and sharp, spiralling intellect — a portrait already promising layers upon layers. Jack Kennedy, two-time World Champion Muay Thai fighter and owner of Imperial Gym, a figure of discipline and power with a story that stretches far beyond the ring. Karen Potter, one of Southport's most recognisable estate agents, whose influence and local knowledge have shaped the town's landscape for decades. And John Nolan — the antiques dealer known simply as "the Antiques Man," a character stitched into Southport's love of history, objects, and memory.

These encounters didn't build a project; they built a calling.

One name whispered to the next.

One story led to another.

And Southport — without fanfare — gave Lazarus a cast of characters more compelling than fiction.

But his process is what elevates this from portraiture to something more cult, more intimate. Lazarus doesn't "take a likeness." He extracts an essence. He spends hours with his sitters — listening, observing, waiting for the moment a gesture betrays the truth of the person. His life in subculture shaped the eye: the punk years taught him rebellion, photojournalism taught him patience, fashion photography taught him form, and Southport — finally — taught him stillness. What emerges on canvas is not a face, but a narrative.

Eighteen portraits are complete. Ten more are in progress. Smaller works are gathering around the edges like footnotes and future chapters. And with each new sitter, the project becomes less about documenting people and more about revealing a town's emotional architecture.

Because Southport, in its wonderfully eccentric, fiercely independent way, is undergoing its own kind of renaissance. Regeneration. Reinvention. Stubborn optimism — a pulse that echoes through Lazarus's work. What he is painting is not nostalgia; it is now. The raw, unfiltered present of a place finding its voice again.

And in that process, the artist has found his own.

For Lazarus, the Southport series has become a spiritual return to the fundamentals of art: meeting people, learning them, peeling back their layers, painting them back with care.

Not for acclaim.

Not for shock.

Not for commerce.

But for truth.

"People have always powered my work," he says.

"Southport allowed me to slow down enough to hear them."

An exhibition is forming — a gathering of faces, stories, and the strange everyday magic that only a town like this can hold. And when those works finally stand together, one thing becomes unmistakably clear:

Southport isn't just where the art was made.

It's the art itself.

And Lazarus, after a lifetime of movement, has finally landed where his work was always meant to take him — painting the soul of a town one story, one sitter, one quiet revelation at a time.



KNOW YOUR ONLINE SPACE

Why Confidence Matters More Than Filters?

Before we get into algorithms, trending audio or the latest app update, it's worth stripping social media back to its simplest truth: confidence is the real differentiator. It's the quiet force behind every post you choose to share — or don't.

People don't connect with perfect layouts or flawless editing. They connect with the moments that feel human. The way you speak. The way you show up. The way your presence feels on the screen. Confidence isn't about being loud; it's about being certain enough in who you are that the online version of you matches the real one.

And that begins with your identity — not the visual kind you can buy, but the lived-in one you build.

Your brand identity is shaped less by logos and more by the choices you repeat without thinking: the tone you write in, the colours you reach for, the way your posts feel when someone scrolls past them. It's the values you hold, the message you return to, and the quiet consistency of showing up in roughly the same way each time. When someone can recognise your post before they've even seen your name, that's identity doing its job.

To start this series, try something simple. Choose five words that describe the way you want people to feel when they land on your profile. Then create one post — just one — that reflects those words. It doesn't have to be clever, immaculate or trend-led.

A behind-the-scenes moment works. A small introduction works. A story about why you started works. What matters is that it feels like you.

If you feel brave, tag a local business or creator you admire. Online confidence grows more quickly when we stop trying to do it in isolation.

Over the next 12 issues, we'll look at what really holds people back from showing up online, how to make the tech less overwhelming, the psychology behind visibility, how trust is built through storytelling, and why imperfect video can be more powerful than anything polished. We'll explore community, rhythm, voice and long-term simplicity — the things that actually make social media sustainable.

By the end of this series, the aim isn't to turn you into an influencer. It's to help you feel clear, grounded and confident enough to show up online in a way that feels like the most honest version of you.

Not filtered.

Not forced.

Just you — with a little more ease.



Life's a journey

What's on this

Season

A Community Evening of Remembrance

Christmas can be a mix of light and longing, and Hope Funeral Care understands that this season can feel tender for many. That's why Wendy and Claire are welcoming the whole community — not just Hope families — to a peaceful evening of reflection at West Lancs Crematorium.

This non-religious gathering offers a calm space to pause, remember, and honour loved ones. Guests can enjoy live music, create a memorial bauble, and spend time in quiet thought or gentle conversation over festive refreshments.

Hope Funeral Care knows that grief doesn't end — it evolves, softens, and deserves space to be held. This event offers exactly that: a moment to breathe, connect, and feel supported.

Friday 19th December · 6:30pm
West Lancs Crematorium
All are welcome.

Hope Funeral Care's
Christmas
MEMORIAL SERVICE

To our very special families
As we approach the winter months and Christmas time, please know you are in our thoughts.
We would like to invite you to our memorial service which will be held at

West Lancashire Crematorium on Friday 19th December 2025 at 6:30pm.

The service is time for togetherness, reflection and comfort. You will be invited to place your loved ones name on a decoration and place it on our Christmas tree. Light a candle of reflection and surround yourself with love and support.

Please let us know if you are able to attend the service for seating and refreshment arrangements.
Telephone: 01704 616448 or
Email: info@hopefuneralcare.co.uk

*Our love and thoughts
Claire, Wendy and our team.*

The flyer features a light blue background with a subtle pattern of trees and snow. It includes two photographs of decorated Christmas trees with warm white lights. At the bottom, there are three small images: the exterior of the West Lancashire Crematorium, two staff members (Wendy and Claire) standing next to a memorial sign, and a close-up of the memorial sign which reads: 'Hope Funeral Care (independents) Welcome to Hope Funeral Care With love from Claire, Wendy & all the team'.



WHAT'S ON



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
AT SILCOCK'S FUNLAND PIER RESTAURANT SOUTHPORT PIER
10.30AM

Scan for Details

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 — these mornings always sell out fast!

SOUTHPORT CHRYSANTHEMUM & GARDENING SOCIETY

"The Night Before"

Thursday 11th December 2025, 7.30pm

A CHRISTMAS FLORAL ART EVENING
with Mark Entwistle

Emmanuel Church Hall, Cambridge Road, Southport PR9 9PR

£10 (including refreshments)

Get your ticket by phoning Alan on 01704 225708

My First Christmas Party



Tuesday 16th Dec 11.30am
Mandala, Birkdale

- Festive decorations
- Xmas footprint craft
- Sensory toys & fabrics
- Christmas songs
- Sleigh bells
- Watch the snow (bubbles) fall

BOOGIE BOUNCE

JANUARY BOOKS ARE OPEN NOW

WE ARE BACK MONDAY 5TH AND WEDNESDAY 7TH

TOTAL BEGINNERS ROUTINE FOR THE NEW YEAR EVERYONE WELCOME

AT LEYLAND ROAD CHURCH

Baked By Ains

Cake & Sip Workshop

Book Now!
for your next creative experience

16TH | DECEMBER | 2025

@ The Crafty Badger | Churchtown

£50pp
(Cocktail included)

Decorate & take home your own Bento cake!

Contact: @bakedbyains

A JOLLY LUNCH With Santa

Bring your little ones for a delightful experience filled with joy and wonder. Eat with the elves then visit Mr & Mrs Claus in The Grotto.



13TH, 14TH, 20TH, 21ST DECEMBER
ADVANCED BOOKING REQUIRED

SOUTHPORT MARKET

SDC LITTLE THEATRE SOUTHPORT

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK

Southport's classic family panto

19th December 2025 - 4th January 2026

littletheatresouthport.co.uk

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 and let us help spread the word!

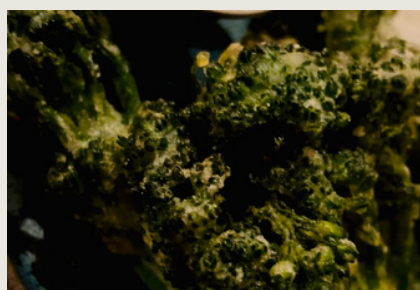
WWW.SOUTHPORTSJOURNEY.COM



“

—
Good things really do
come in small plates.

”



CHURCHTOWN'S SMALL-PLATE GEM

Nestled in the heart of Churchtown, Botanic Road Eatery is the kind of place that feels like stumbling into someone's converted cottage — warm beams, relaxed seating, and just enough buzz to feel alive without ever getting loud. It's Southport's small-plates gem, where the philosophy is simple: small plates, big flavours, and a rhythm that lets every dish shine.

We visited recently and sampled their standout plates: nduja-glazed hispi cabbage with whipped feta and toasted hazelnuts, tandoori-marinated lamb chops with butter-curry sauce and crispy onions, king-prawn crostini with chilli and garlic, herb-crusted cod, and a bubble-and-squeak potato cake topped with spinach cream. Each dish came rich in flavour and thoughtful in its combination — hearty yet refined.



King Prawn Crostini

Local praise for Botanic Road often highlights exactly this balance. Frequent diners call it “a true gem,” noting its inviting atmosphere, attentive yet unobtrusive service, and a menu that invites sharing rather than formality.

Whether you're after a spontaneous midweek meal or a slow-paced Sunday treat, Botanic Road Eatery serves up more than food — it offers comfort, connection and a delicious reminder that good dining doesn't need fuss to feel special.



with I CAN Education

My child’s routine is all over the place in December – is this going to affect their learning?

Not in a damaging long-term way. December is naturally disruptive: rehearsals, late nights, concerts, family events, excitement, tiredness — all completely normal. Children thrive on routine, but they also grow through flexibility. A few wobbly weeks won’t undo a year of progress.

If anything, the social learning — confidence on stage, teamwork in rehearsals, navigating busy classrooms — builds resilience schools can’t teach from a worksheet. Reset in January, rest, and connection are just as valuable as phonics and fractions this month.

!My child doesn’t want to be in the Christmas show and it’s causing arguments — should I push them?”

Usually, no. Christmas productions are wonderful, but not every child enjoys performing. Some feel anxious, overwhelmed by noise, or simply aren’t ready for the spotlight. This doesn’t mean they’re shy forever or missing out academically.

Offer choices: a backstage role, helping with props, or even watching from the audience. Children learn best when they feel safe, not pressured. Confidence develops when we let them take part in ways that feel manageable, not when we force bravery on a timetable.

“My teenager seems stressed and withdrawn this Christmas — is it normal?”

Yes, completely. Teens often feel the pressure of Christmas more intensely: exams loom, friendships shift, family gatherings feel exhausting, and social comparison is everywhere online. Add disrupted routines and busier households, and it’s easy for them to shut down.

You can help by keeping expectations low, offering calm pockets of space, and checking in gently (“Rough week?” works better than “What’s wrong with you?”). Most teen December stress passes once school stabilises again — what they need is understanding, not criticism or perfection.



DECEMBER MELT DOWN

Why Children Fall Apart — and How to Build Real Resilience

If it feels like your child falls apart faster in December — more tears, more tiredness, more “I can’t handle this today” moments — you’re not imagining it. Christmas might be magical, but for many children it’s also the most overwhelming month of the school year. Routines wobble, emotions spike, sleep drops, and suddenly even small frustrations feel like catastrophes. And yes, this is the time of year when you’ll hear whispers of: “Kids today are such snowflakes.”

But here’s the truth: children aren’t weaker — the world around them is stronger. Louder. Faster. More demanding. December just shines a spotlight on the cracks.

Overloaded, Not Overdramatic

Children today live in a level of stimulation that simply didn’t exist twenty years ago. Bright lights, big events, school productions, sugar, excitement, late nights, disrupted timetables, festive chaos... it’s a lot. Their nervous systems aren’t misbehaving — they’re maxed out. December is essentially: Less sleep, more pressure, higher expectation, more comparison, more noise, less routine. When you stack all that together, “falling apart” isn’t weakness — it’s biology.

Real resilience isn’t about telling children to “toughen up” — it’s about teaching their nervous system how to wobble, recover and keep going. That starts with validating what they feel, giving them small manageable challenges, encouraging retrying after a wobble, praising effort over perfection and allowing safe moments of discomfort so they learn they can cope.

December naturally provides these moments: the costume that doesn’t fit, the routine that changes, the noise that overwhelms, the forgotten line, the tiredness that hits hard. Each is a chance to model calm, teach problem-solving and guide them back to regulation.



RESILIENCE IS LEARNED, NOT INHERITED.



Children aren’t becoming snowflakes; they’re growing up in a world that demands resilience but gives fewer opportunities to practise it. December doesn’t expose weakness — it highlights where the skill gaps are. With the right support, structure and boundaries, children leave this season not just surviving the chaos but genuinely stronger because of it.

THE BIG PICTURE

WITH



I CAN!
EDUCATION

56% of UK teenagers said they felt overwhelmed in the build-up to Christmas.

33% of children feared a friend wouldn’t get any Christmas presents this year.

Among school-age children and young people, one article notes that the break from school means “daily routines inevitably alter” and that “a lack of routine can become disruptive and counterproductive.”

PRACTICAL TIPS

Keep predictable pockets of calm. Even 10 minutes of quiet resets a child’s nervous system.

Prepare them for changes. “Today will be noisy and busy — here’s what will help you cope.”

Let them struggle a little (not a lot). A wobble is not a failure; it’s training.

Debrief after tough moments. “What felt hard?” “What helped you get through it?” “What will we try next time?”

Hold firm boundaries with warmth. Kids feel safest when adults are calm, consistent anchors.

The NEXT Narrative

WHERE SOUTHPORT'S FUTURE STORYTELLERS BEGIN THEIR JOURNEY.

Southport is full of rising talent — sharp thinkers, expressive writers, creative minds bursting with ideas — and it's time we stopped letting that talent drift away. Our new Teen Writers Feature is more than a column. It's a catalyst. A bridge between education and industry. A statement that young people deserve real platforms and real opportunities right here in their hometown.

This launch is proudly created in partnership with The Learning Trust, uniting schools, educators, creatives, local businesses and community leaders to champion the next generation of writers coming through Southport.

Why This Matters

Teenagers today are perceptive, emotionally tuned-in and deeply aware of the world they're stepping into. They don't need permission to have an opinion; they need space to share it. By opening these pages to them, we're forging a genuine pipeline of local talent — talent that can feed into Southport's creative sectors, digital industries, business landscape and future leadership.

This feature brings education and real-world experience together. It gives young people published work they can stand behind, an audience beyond the classroom and a sense of belonging to something bigger. It reconnects their voices to the wider conversations happening in the town, placing them right at the heart of Southport's cultural story.

Most importantly, it builds connection — between schools and businesses, between young writers and established professionals, between local ambition and local opportunity. It shows teenagers that their future doesn't have to be elsewhere; it can be built here, supported here, and celebrated here.

A Collaborative Launchpad

Through our work with The Learning Trust, students will explore their voice, shape their ideas and experience the process of writing for publication — an experience that boosts confidence, sharpens communication skills and opens doors into the industries that need their perspective.

What's to Come

Every month, our teen contributors will share stories that are bold, honest and unmistakably theirs. Expect energy. Expect newness. Expect writing that challenges, inspires and highlights what the next chapter of Southport could look like when young people lead it.

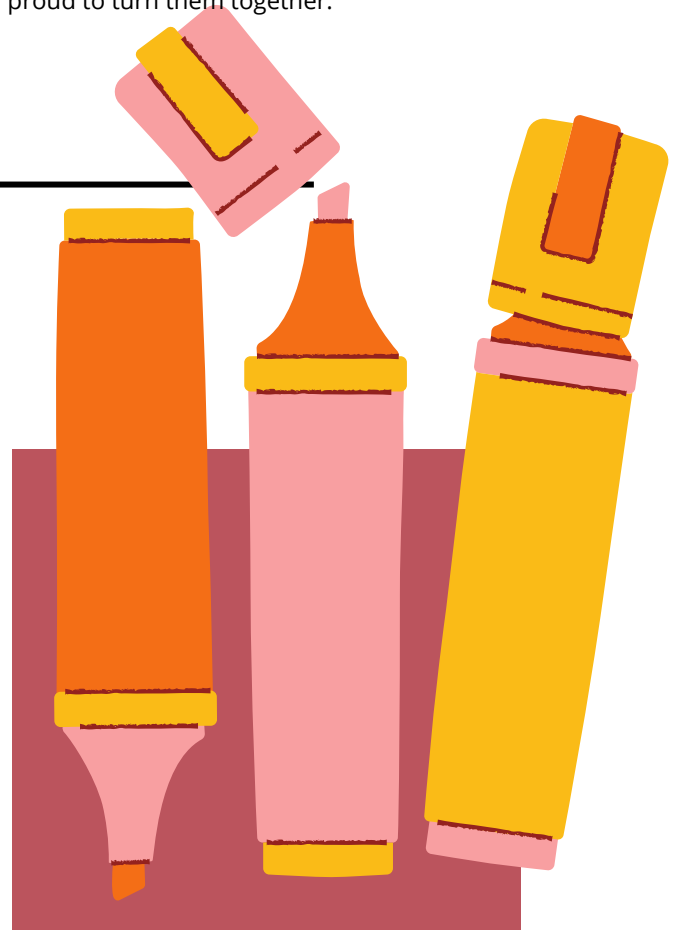
This is how a future-ready town grows:

by giving its young people the microphone — and truly listening.

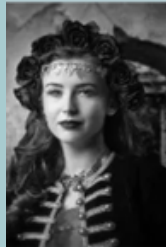
Southport's next chapter begins on these pages.

We're proud to turn them together.

“When education meets opportunity, young voices become unstoppable.”



Written by a pupil
at Meolscop
High School
Southport



Miss Zoe
Findlay



Mrs Mandy
Guiver



Mrs June
Evans

King's School of Dance is a centre of creativity and high energy. We encourage inclusivity of all types of ability. We offer dancers of all levels a place to explore and create, to build self-confidence and self-discipline. Come and connect with others who share a love of dance. We promote new talent and expose the general public to the art of beauty of dance.

HISTORY

Kings has been open since 1966. Since then, the school has been passed from generation to generation. Our students have gone on to the most prestigious dance and drama colleges in Britain including; The Royal Ballet School, Italia Conti, Northern Ballet School, The Hammond School, Liverpool Theatre School and Brighton Academy.

Our Classes

King's School of Dance classes are held at All Saints Church Hall in Hesketh Bank on Saturday mornings.

We use an airy and spacious hall that has a stage and two changing rooms. There is plenty of parking and some lovely places nearby to go and have a coffee while your child enjoys their class.

Students can take part in ALLIED Medal Exams that are the equivalent to a Grade. We prefer these exams as they are performance-based and are accepted by Performing Arts Colleges.



CONTACT DETAILS

INTERESTED? CONTACT US!

All Saints Church Hall
Station Road
Hesketh Bank
Preston
PR4 6SQ



077519639518

info@kingsschoolofdance.co.uk

Kings school of dance also offers amazing opportunities to perform. We do a lot of events throughout the year, including the Southport light switch on, Southport Flower Show and Lord Street events too!

Our dance school is perfect for those wishing to go to a Performing Arts College, or for those just wanting to have fun! "It doesn't matter how experienced you are, we accept every level of ability. No auditions, no prior experience, just bring your passion (and some dance shoes)!"

WINTER WREATH RITUAL



There's something grounding about wreath making — a small, seasonal ritual that slows the pace of December just long enough for you to breathe. Long before wreaths became a trend, they were simply a way of gathering what the season offered: evergreen sprigs, berries, pinecones, dried citrus, whatever nature was ready to give. Today, the process hasn't changed much. It's still about taking your time, working with your hands and creating something that feels like winter.

The beauty of wreath making is that there's no right or wrong. Some people build bold, structured wreaths with symmetry and ribbon; others favour the wild, "foraged on a walk" look. Both hold their own kind of charm. And whether you make yours at a workshop, at the kitchen table or with a friend over a cup of tea, the finished wreath becomes more than decoration. It's a marker that the season has turned. A quiet welcome on the front door. A reminder that sometimes the most meaningful things are the ones we make slowly.

If you don't manage anything else creative this month, let a wreath be the one thing you do. It's small, simple, and unexpectedly soothing.

Rarely do we rise to the level of our goals, we fall to the level of our environment.



“COMMUNITY IS YOUR POWER”

As the year winds down, December tends to put a spotlight on goals. We reflect, we write lists, we promise ourselves that next year will be different. But here's the uncomfortable truth: most people don't struggle because their goals aren't big enough. They struggle because their environment isn't designed to support them.

There's a saying I repeat often: we rarely rise to the level of our goals — we fall to the level of our environment. It's not a criticism of motivation; it's simply human nature. You can want something with your whole heart, but if your surroundings don't reinforce that desire, friction wins.

If your home is full of ultra-processed snacks, if your social circle normalises skipping the gym, if the people around you congratulate you more for working late than working on yourself... then your goals are fighting a losing battle.

That's where community becomes your most powerful tool.

When you place yourself in a group where effort is normal, encouragement is constant and progress is celebrated, everything changes. You start to absorb the habits, standards and energy of the people around you. Not through force, but through proximity.

Surround yourself with people who show up even on the days they don't feel like it, and you will too. Surround yourself with people who talk about solutions instead of excuses, and your language shifts. Surround yourself with a community that believes in you long before you believe in yourself, and your goals stop feeling impossible.

Your environment isn't just the physical space you're in. It's the routines you build, the boundaries you set, and the people you allow to influence you. And as we step into December, a month filled with both temptation and reflection, it's the perfect time to ask yourself:

Is my environment designed to help me grow, or is it quietly holding me back?

If your answer makes you uneasy, good. Awareness is the beginning of change. Because you don't need superhuman discipline or a fresh start on January 1st — you need a supportive environment and a community that lifts your standards.

Choose a space where you're encouraged, challenged and held accountable.

Choose people who remind you who you want to become.

Choose routines that pull you toward your goals instead of away from them.

The right environment won't just help you hit your goals — it will help you become the kind of person who doesn't have to fight so hard for them. And that is the real power of community as we close out the year.

Anna McNally

www.annamacfit.co.uk

FIND YOUR FESTIVE ALTER EGO



The Organised One!

"Everything's planned, everything's prepped, and yes — the wrapping paper does match the tree."

Their Christmas vibe:

Methodical, thoughtful, reliable. They're the people with handwritten lists, labelled gift bags and a spare roll of sellotape at the ready for anyone who needs it.

Their magic:

They bring calm to chaos. You'll never see them flustered, and Christmas morning always runs like a well-planned theatre production.

Their challenge:

They spend so much time making Christmas special for everyone else that they often forget to enjoy it themselves.

Helpful Hint:

Schedule one "nothing moment" into your December — a café hot chocolate, a walk on the beach, or an hour under a blanket with your favourite Christmas film. Your joy matters just as much as your lists.



The Chaotic Wrapper!

"Wrapped it? I barely found it."

Their Christmas vibe:

Warm-hearted, busy, slightly frazzled, but always trying their best. Nothing is ever done early, but somehow... miraculously... it all still comes together.

Their magic:

They bring spontaneity, laughter and last-minute brilliance. They're the ones who save the day with a random but perfect gift from the market.

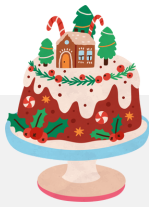
Their challenge:

Organisation. Time. Tape. Knowing where the scissors are.

Helpful Hint:

Create one tiny 'Christmas command centre': a shoebox with tape, tags, scissors, pens and leftover ribbon. It will save your life. And your sanity. And your gifts.





The Snacker!

“Here for the food, the nibbles, the treats, and the grazing table. Always.”

Their Christmas vibe:

Joyful, laid-back, comforting. They know exactly which local café has the best mince pies and always bring the tastiest dips to every gathering.

Their magic:

They make every room feel like home — warm, welcoming, full of treats and humour.

Their challenge:

They can be a bit last-minute with gifts, timings, or RSVPs (but they'll arrive... eventually... and usually with sausage rolls).

Helpful Hint:

Pick three small wins to prep just a little earlier — one gift, one event outfit, and one food shop list. That way you can enjoy the snacks without a side order of stress.



The Festive Free Spirit

If it's spontaneous, heartfelt or handmade — that's where you'll find them.”



Their Christmas vibe:

Soulful, earthy, creative. They love slow mornings, twinkly lights, long walks, and presents filled with meaning over price.

Their magic:

They remind everyone what Christmas actually feels like: connection, warmth, presence.

Their challenge:

They can get overwhelmed by the noise, the crowds, the planning... and sometimes leave things a little too late.

Helpful Hint:

Choose just one grounding ritual to return to when December gets busy — a morning breathwork moment, a mindful cuppa, or a night-time journal page. It keeps your magic intact.



ARE

YOU

A short December story about noticing

A couple of weeks ago, I found myself walking through Southport town centre, speaking to my sister on the phone about my dad, who has been very unwell. It was one of those conversations that sits heavily on the heart. As I hung up, a busker began to sing a gentle, beautiful rendition of Streets of London. It's a song threaded with sadness, and before I quite realised it, tears began to fall.

I stepped to one side, found a quiet little spot, and let myself listen. I cried openly — something I don't often do in public — but the music seemed to ask for honesty, and that was how I felt. And that's when the small miracles began.

A man paused, just for a moment, and asked kindly, "Are you OK?" No judgement, no intrusion — just care. When I nodded and thanked him, he simply smiled and carried on with his day.

A little later, a woman approached. "You look like you need a hug," she said, and she was right. I told her a little about my dad. She told me she'd recently lost her parents. She hugged me — a warm, steady hug — and for the first time that morning, something in me eased. Then she wished me well and disappeared into the Saturday crowds.

I walked away feeling strangely uplifted. The sadness was still there, of course, but threaded through it was something bright: the reminder that people notice. Even in the rush of town centres and to-do lists, kindness still taps us on the shoulder.

OK?

This December, perhaps that's the message to hold close: check in, gently. Ask the question. And if someone asks you, let yourself answer honestly. Sometimes a simple "Are you OK?" — and a hug from a stranger — is exactly the light we need.

Wishing you all a Christmas where kindness and humanity bring you a steady stream of small miracles.



“ —

A little reminder that
love doesn't leave — it
just visits differently.

”



FESTIVE WALKS TO SLOW DOWN THIS WINTER

The definition of
"Vintage style"

Christmas has a way of speeding life up just as much as it slows everything down. And when the weather allows, December becomes the perfect excuse to step outside, breathe differently, and take in the places we sometimes forget to appreciate. Southport — and the areas wrapped around it — are full of winter routes that feel entirely different this time of year: crisp mornings, sharp horizons, soft light and the kind of quiet that settles the mind.

Here are our top five festive walks this winter — from sea wall wanders to parkland loops and the sandhill paths that stop you in your tracks.



1. The Sea Wall to the Marine Lake Loop
Southport

Cold, clean, wide-open air — this is winter at its best. Start along the sea wall, let the wind wake you up, then loop around Marine Lake where the Christmas lights from the town reflect across the water. A simple route, but unbeatable for clearing your head.

2. The Sand Dunes Trail
Ainsdale Nature Reserve

A classic. The dunes feel almost otherworldly in December, with frost-tipped marram grass and sweeping views over the beach. Perfect for those reflective, end-of-year thoughts — or for blowing away the last of the Christmas chaos.



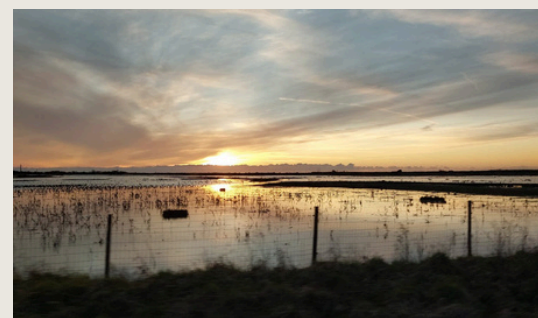
MINIMAL LIFE & VINTAGE LIFESTYLE

3. Hesketh Park Winter Circuit
Southport

A peaceful, easy-paced walk for chilly afternoons. Wander past the lake, cross the quiet bridges, and enjoy the winter stillness that settles over one of the town's most loved green spaces. A favourite for families, photographers and anyone needing a slow moment.

4. The Marshside RSPB Path
Marshside

A beautiful route for birdwatchers and quiet walkers alike. Winter brings migrating birds, big skies and a calm stretch of path perfect for a steady stroll. Ideal if you want to feel close to nature without heading too far out of town.



5. The Formby Red Squirrel & Pinewoods Walk
Formby

A neighbouring gem. Crisp pine, sandy tracks, and the chance to spot a red squirrel or two. There's a quiet magic to Formby in winter — less footfall, more stillness, and the kind of scent that makes you slow your pace without meaning to.

Self-Indulgent Spa-Breaks

When it comes to true relaxation and reconnection, few experiences can rival a luxury spa escape. From panoramic infinity pools overlooking mountain majesty to steaming open-air hammams and tropical sanctuaries hugged by rainforest, the world's finest spa destinations are more than just beautiful — they're restorative journeys for mind, body, and soul. If you imagine drifting in a heated pool surrounded by snowy peaks and pine forests, then The Alps is where you need to head for a collection of world-class spa hotels that set the standard for serene escapes.

For those who love tradition, Budapest stands as the "City of Spas." Ornate thermal baths, some dating back to the Ottoman era, promise luxury rituals in regal surroundings.

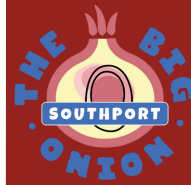
If you are after a more holistic and transformative package, Bali's jungle resorts offer open-air massage pavilions, yoga, guided meditation, and holistic therapies in seamless harmony with nature.

Whatever your spa journey requires, true luxury lies in the details — beautifully bespoke wellness menus, sunrise yoga, gourmet health cuisine, and private guides.

Wherever you choose, I can ensure your spa escape is personalised to your pace and passions, transforming your winter break or wellness holiday into something extraordinary, restoring your vitality — inside and out.

Cath X

Cath Reese Travel Counsellor
Cath.reese@mytc.com



POWERED BY
merseyside
**EXPANDING
HORIZONS**

Below are just a handful of the groups and activities set to use The Big Onion in the new year — follow our socials to keep updated as more join the line-up.



Freedom to Flourish CIC

Freedom to Flourish CIC Brings Family Wellbeing and Creative Play to The Big Onion Southport

Freedom to Flourish CIC is launching a new programme of family wellbeing sessions and child-led play opportunities at The Big Onion Southport, supported by funding from the Southport Together Mental Wellbeing and Community Cohesion Small Grant Fund. This funding enables the organisation to expand its core work around children's emotional wellbeing and create a welcoming, community-focused base for local families.



Art Ease CIC

Art Ease CIC, a grassroots, non-profit organisation she created in 2024, aimed at making art accessible and supporting wellbeing through workshops and community projects.

Emmys next workshops at The Onion will be a series of 8, weekly, evening sessions starting in January. Called "Calm and Create" it will give local people the opportunity to attend free creative wellbeing sessions led by a professional artist in a cosy and welcoming setting. These sessions will be completely free and any donations will go towards materials for Art Ease CIC. Follow along on socials for more info!

A BIG ONION CHRISTMAS

Southport's Christmas lights switch-on brought thousands into the town centre — but one of the highlights happened just off the main crowd, inside Town Hall Gardens. The Big Onion hosted its first Southport community Christmas market, and the response made one thing clear: this little hub has the potential to become a powerful support system for local businesses.

Sitting in the old Crave unit, the Big Onion isn't a permanent fixture, nor is it just a passing pop-up. It sits somewhere valuable in the middle — a flexible, community-led space designed to give small traders, start-ups and independents a chance to test ideas, showcase products, and meet customers without the pressure of long-term commitment.

It's a bridge between "just starting out" and "ready for a shopfront," and the Christmas market proved exactly how much that's needed. Being right in the town centre means visibility, footfall and opportunity meet naturally. People wandered in drawn not just by the lights outside but by the scent of hot chocolate and mulled wine drifting through Town Hall Gardens — that familiar festive pull that makes you step inside "just for a look." And once inside, visitors discovered local businesses they may never have known existed.

If this first event is anything to go by, the Big Onion is set to become a meaningful stepping stone for Southport's independents — a space that lifts emerging businesses, gives them a genuine platform, and helps them take their next step forward.



S
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CONNECTING

Southport's Big Year — Why Connection Matters Now

Southport is heading into its biggest year yet, and the businesses ready to connect will be the ones still standing long after the crowds go home. A surge of events, visitors and investment will shift the pace of the town — and with that comes opportunity, competition, and the responsibility to show up with intention. People who have never set foot here will suddenly be looking in. This is the moment small businesses can't afford to sit quietly on the sidelines.

In a year like this, connection becomes currency. The people who can walk into a room with clarity, introduce themselves without performance, and build relationships that feel genuine will be the ones who grow with the moment rather than be overshadowed by it. Modern networking isn't about rehearsed lines or loud confidence; it's about presence. Real conversations. Curiosity. Being the person people remember because you listened, not because you tried to impress.

And the truth is, collaboration isn't optional anymore. Southport thrives when its businesses cross-pollinate — when cafés support creators, creators shout about independents, hotels spotlight locals, and small brands link arms instead of competing. A rising tide genuinely can lift all boats, but only if we choose to rise together. Legacy will belong to those who built the foundations now, before 2026 turns the volume up.

There is a personal gain too. Every time you attend an event, ask a question, or introduce yourself to someone new, something shifts internally. Confidence recalibrates. Belonging strengthens. You're reminded that your work has a place in the wider picture of this town.

Networking isn't about working the room. It's about working with the room — with intention, with openness, and with the understanding that the future of Southport is something we're building collectively.

Next year will be loud.

But the connections you build now will echo far longer.

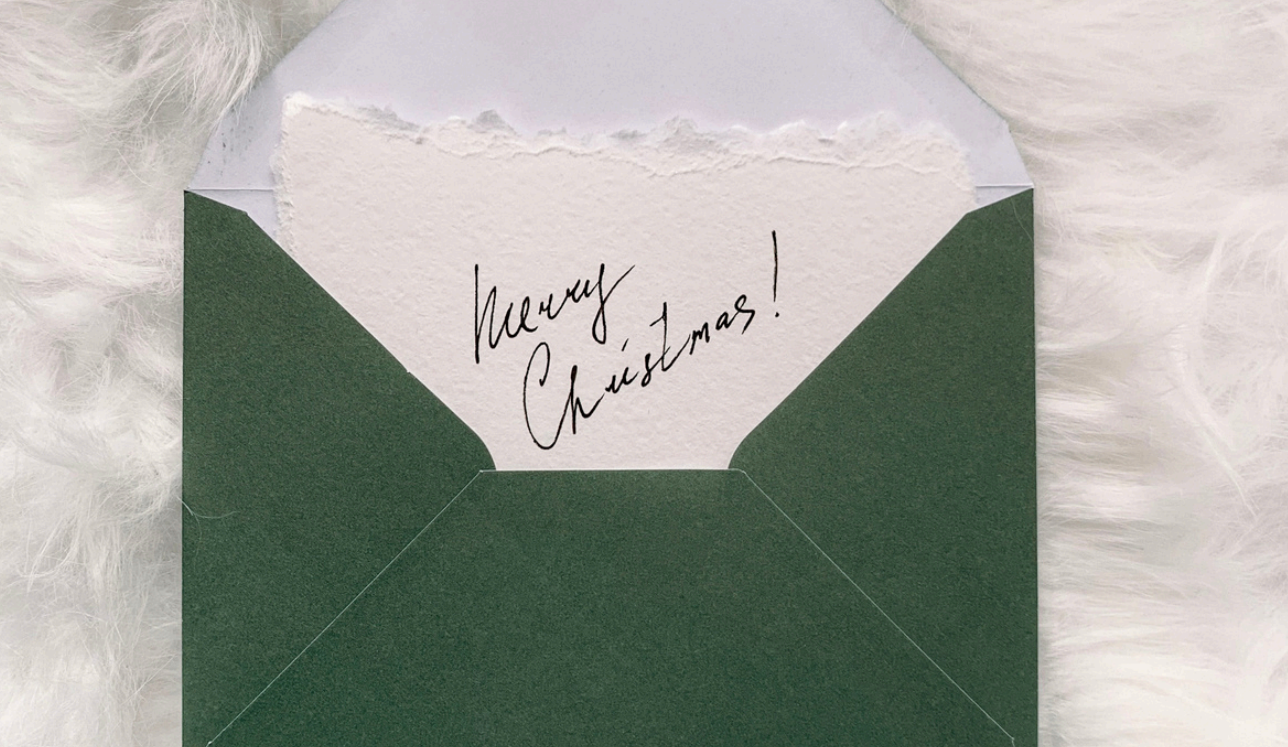
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This picture captures more than a meeting – it’s the start of a project rooted in kindness. From creating video messages for children to writing cards for those spending Christmas alone, Southport Life is turning small moments into real connection.

See the next page for how our town is quietly lifting others this Christmas.



Connection often begins with something small — and these are the moments held most dear.

Some gestures are so quiet they barely draw attention — but they're often the ones that define a community. In Southport, these acts happen year-round. Meals prepared and delivered without fuss. Care packages assembled after long workdays. Presents collected and distributed quietly by volunteers who aren't looking for recognition. It's the kind of work that rarely makes headlines, yet it underpins the town.

At Christmas, efforts like these feel especially significant. The colder months highlight the contrast between celebration and isolation, between those surrounded by family and those facing a difficult season alone. Small acts carry more impact than people realise.

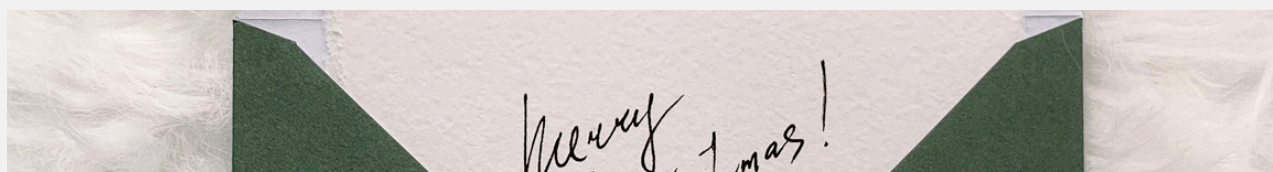
This year, one simple gesture is set to become part of that tradition of quiet support: handwritten Christmas cards, written by members of the community for residents who may need a lift this winter. There's no campaign behind it, no expectation attached

— just people taking a moment to share a few kind words with someone they may never meet. In the coming weeks, Southport Life Network, local groups, businesses and readers of Southport's Journey will come together to write these cards. Once completed, they will be distributed across care homes, hospital wards, community organisations and to individuals who might otherwise receive very little post during the festive period. Each envelope will hold a straightforward message: someone took the time to think of you.

It's a small act, but it matters — especially at this time of year.

As we head towards Christmas, it's worth looking up and noticing the people around us who might welcome a bit of support: a meal, a check-in, a smile, or even a handwritten card arriving at exactly the right moment.

Kindness doesn't need praise to be effective. It only needs to be offered. And in Southport, it remains one of the things we do best.



CHRISTMAS

The Imperfectly Perfect Season

December arrives with all the subtlety of a brass band in a library. One minute it's September and we're buying new school shoes; the next, you can't move for mince pies, fairy lights, and Mariah Carey warming up her vocal cords somewhere in the distance. Christmas doesn't so much begin in October these days it laterally launches, with the confidence of someone who's never once had to untangle their own tree lights.

And with it comes the pressure.

The pressure to have the "perfect" Christmas.

The pressure to be joyful, twinkly and serene.

The pressure to produce a magical childhood experience every single day... often with nothing more than a tired brain, dwindling bank balance, and an elf that needs posing in a new comedic scenario every single night like some sort of festive hostage.

There's a point in December where you realise:

I'm decorating vegetables as reindeer, I haven't slept properly in 12 days, and the washing machine is making a noise that sounds like it might be planning its own escape.

This, apparently, is "the most wonderful time of the year."

But here's the bit we forget: we get to choose what wonderful looks like. We can decide that "wonderful" doesn't mean flawless. Or Instagrammable. Or something pulled from a John Lewis advert storyboard.

Comfortably Heard



Sarah McEntee our expert shares her guidance and knowledge



Sometimes "wonderful" means a quiet evening where you refuse to move the elf because the elf is tired and quite frankly, so are you. Sometimes it's letting the kids have cereal for tea.

Sometimes it's saying, "No, I can't do that Christmas event, I'm at capacity."

And sometimes it's choosing grace over perfection. Grace for yourself, your energy, your limits, and your very human humanity. This season, under the banner of being Comfortably Heard, I want to encourage something simple but powerful:

Use your voice.

Tell someone when you're overwhelmed.

Tell your family what you need, not what tradition expects.

Ask for help before you're at breaking point.

Speak kindly to yourself, especially when you're juggling more than any human should reasonably be expected to juggle while maintaining a smile and locating the sellotape for the fiftieth time. And perhaps most importantly:

Give yourself permission to take time out. Not as a last resort, but as a gift, your own personal stocking filler of peace. Because the truth is, the festive season was never designed to be an endurance test. It's meant to be a moment. A pause. A reminder that connection matters more than perfection, and that you are allowed to be present without performing.

So, this December, may you feel supported. May you feel seen. May you feel heard. And may you give yourself the one thing you truly deserve: a Christmas that feels like yours.

Even if the elf stays exactly where it is.





Slow down when you
can — December isn't
meant to be rushed.

LOCAL LOVE

Interiors Edit

Christmas interiors are all about creating a warm, welcoming atmosphere that feels both festive and effortless. This season, layering rich textures—think wool throws, velvety cushions, and natural greenery—brings depth and comfort to any room. Soft, warm lighting from candles or fairy lights adds a gentle glow, while a palette of earthy neutrals mixed with metallic accents keeps the look elegant. Whether you prefer a minimalist approach or a more traditional scheme, the key is to blend style with coziness, making your home feel magical for the holidays. Southport shops has everything you need to get your Christmas glow.



1/2 WE R CHRISTMAS-WREATH & NUTCRACKER 3.REBECCA'S JEWELLERS-RING
4.RACHAEL DEAN- PRINT 5.M&S-CUSHION 6.SALLY BEE LIFESTYLE-CANDLE
7.BIRKDALE ANTIQUES-MIRROR 8.GRANT SEARL ART-PAINTING



To me with, LOVE



A December Note to the You of Tomorrow

December has a way of making everything louder — the plans, the pressure, the expectations — while at the same time asking us to remember things we barely had time to process. Christmas may look effortless on the surface, but for most people it's a complex mixture of joy, fatigue, memory and meaning. And in all of that, we rarely stop long enough to check in with ourselves.

We spend so much time preparing Christmas for everyone else that we rarely stop to check in with ourselves. This letter becomes that pause — a moment to hold onto what mattered this year before it's lost to the rush.

Writing to your future Christmas self isn't about setting goals or resolutions. It isn't about becoming a new person or "fixing" anything. It's about grounding — taking stock of where you are now, noticing what this year asked of you, and giving the next version of yourself something solid to return to.

Think of it as a quiet conversation between who you are today and the person you'll be sitting in next year's December light.

What did you carry this year that surprised you?

What softened you?

What strengthened you?

What do you hope feels lighter by this time next year?

You don't need to write beautifully or neatly. This isn't a performance. Use real language — the way you speak to a close friend or the way your thoughts sound before the world gets loud again. Mention the small things: the moments you wish you'd paid more attention to, the days that changed you, the things you're proud you got through, even if no one else saw it.

Seal your letter and save it — a simple envelope holding a snapshot of who you were at the end of this year. Next December, you'll read it with different eyes. New understanding. A different kind of compassion for the person you are right now.

Life won't pause for you over the next twelve months. But this small ritual helps you anchor yourself to the things that matter, not only during the rush of Christmas, but in the quieter days that follow.

You may be surprised by how much this simple note — written quietly, honestly, without pressure — becomes something you return to each year. A steadier tradition. A private moment of connection that reminds you that your inner life deserves space too.

Because while Christmas often pulls us outward, reflection gently brings us back in. And sometimes, that's the part we need the most.



HOPE

At Christmas

Some seasons bring both light and longing — and Christmas, for many, carries a little of both. At Hope Funeral Care, Wendy and Claire understand that this time of year can be tender. While the world around us speeds up with celebration, for some, it's a time to slow down and remember. That's why this December, they're opening their doors to everyone — not just Hope families, but to the wider community — for a quiet afternoon of reflection. It's a non-religious, open invitation to pause and honour the people who can't be here, while celebrating the love that still surrounds us.

There'll be live music, gentle moments of reflection, and the chance to make your own memorial bauble — a small but meaningful act of remembrance.

Afterwards, guests are invited to stay for divine refreshments and conversation, or simply sit quietly and take it all in. The event will be held at West Lancs Crematorium, where the calm surroundings offer space to breathe and remember without rush or expectation. Wendy and Claire know that grief doesn't end after a service — it changes, softens, and needs space to be held. This event offers that space — a chance to reconnect with memories, to share warmth with others, and to remember that even in loss, there can be light. This Christmas, Hope is more than a name — it's an invitation. A moment to gather, to reflect, and to feel the quiet comfort of being understood.



“Christmas isn't only for celebration — it's for connection, for remembrance, and for the gentle comfort of knowing you're not alone.”

Hope Funeral Care is proud to be NAFD board certified and CMA compliant, giving families the reassurance that every detail is handled with honesty, care, and clarity. For Wendy and Claire, these aren't just standards — they're promises. From the first conversation to the quiet moments of aftercare, safety, dignity, and trust guide everything they do.



Sequins & a Sprint

December seems to have arrived wrapped in glitter and gratitude — and after stepping into the ballroom for Queenscourt’s “Strictly Come Dancing,” I’m still carrying the glow of what can only be described as a truly magical evening. There was something extraordinary about watching our community come together under the lights: dancers who had trained for months, families cheering from every corner, and a room that felt less like an audience and more like one big extended family.

What struck me most wasn’t just the sparkle or the sequins — though there were plenty — but the sheer quality of the event. From the production to the choreography to the heart behind every performance, it was an evening that reminded us just how deeply Queenscourt Hospice is woven into the soul of this town. The applause felt louder, the smiles brighter, because everyone knew they were supporting a service that has held so many families with care, comfort, and compassion.

And the spirit of giving doesn’t stop at the dancefloor. As we head toward December’s Santa Sprint, excitement is already building for one of Southport’s most loved festive traditions. Queenscourt has proudly sponsored the event for the last 15 years, turning Marine Lake and the Promenade into a sea of red suits, running shoes, and unstoppable joy. It’s one of those moments where fundraising meets pure festivity — families, friends, children, pets, all racing, strolling, or sprinting together for a cause that touches every postcode in our community.

If the dancing showed us the heart of Southport, the Santa Sprint will show us its spirit — lively, generous, and ready to run full-speed into the season of giving.

Here’s to more sparkle, more community, and more moments that remind us just how special this town really is.

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



As this year draws to a close, I want to say a genuine, heartfelt thank you to everyone who has read, shared, supported, and believed in Southport's Journey. What began as an idea has grown into something held up by this town — by your encouragement, your stories, your kindness, and the quiet comradery that has carried the magazine from month to month. Wishing you all a Merry Christmas. With love, SJ x



THE QUIZ

- Which of these is something Birkdale locals are most likely to debate passionately?
The best coffee spot, the neatest shop window, or who got the last table outside on a sunny day?
- Ainsdale Beach is known for what unexpected experience?
Wildlife spotting, sunsets that make you stop walking, or losing track of time entirely?
- Formby's red squirrels are iconic — but what makes spotting one feel so magical?
Their rarity, their speed, or the way they appear only when you've finally put your phone away?
- If your perfect winter walk is along the Birkdale shoreline, what does that say about you?
You embrace calm, prefer big skies, or need fresh air to think clearly?

Meet the Team



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Photography Credits

A huge thank you to our STUDIO NINE team for photography and to the extend team that have helped along the way, @realmindedagency & @Lazarus



Southport's
Journey

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