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Your Community Magazine

Issue 191 February 2017 FREE

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Buying to Let coming under more pressure

Just when you may have thought it could not get much worse for people wanting to purchase property for investment, it has. Coming into effect in April this year are a host of new more penal tax rules if you are planning to buy property to rent out. Up until now you could purchase a 2nd home using a mortgage with attractively low interest rates and claim tax relief on your mortgage interest payments. Well from April you can no longer do this. The proportion of finance costs available to offset rental income at the marginal rate of tax is reduced as follows:

- 2017-2018 75% available, 25% relief at basic rate
- 2018-2019 50% available, 50% relief at basic rate
- 2019-2020 25% available, 75% relief at basic rate
- 2020-2021 100% relief at basic rate

Put simply, in 2021 you will receive rent but no longer able to offset any of your finance costs, if you are a **higher rate tax payer**. The finance costs not only include mortgage repayments, but also interest on loans to buy furnishings, and fees

incurred when taking out the loan.

In addition, you now pay 3% stamp duty (another tax) on any loan to purchase a 2nd home valued at a miserly £40k. And finally, the treasury get you at the end when you sell the property with 28% Capital gains Tax.

And if all of that is not bad enough radical plans backed by Jeremy Corbyn to allow private tenants to have the right to buy their homes from a private landlord. Now I know people could say, but that's just Jeremy Corbyn and he's not likely to be elected. But remember it was a conservative Prime Minister that introduced the right to buy for council tenants in the 1980's. And if private landlords were **forced by law** to sell their property (possibly at reduced rates – like local authorities were encouraged to do) wouldn't that help the governments housing shortage?

So then suddenly it isn't as daft an idea as you first thought. But its not an exciting thought if you have ploughed all your efforts into building a property portfolio for your retirement, is it?



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Report calls for right to buy for private tenants

Thinktank argues for a discount to counter 'generational inequality'

by Toby Helm
Political Editor

Radical plans floated by Jeremy Corbyn to extend the right to buy to tenants of private landlords have won the backing of a major centre-right thinktank as a way to address the affordability crisis facing young, aspiring homeowners.

In a report to be published tomorrow, the pro-market organisation Civitas also argues that the Bank of England should be placed under a statutory duty to keep

the ratio of average house prices to average earnings within a defined range, in order to help control demand and limit price rises.

Support for such far-reaching policy shifts is evidence of deep concern among experts that the housing market is falling so-called "generational rent" – those people, mainly in their 20s and 30s, who are increasingly unable to get a foot on the ladder as prices soar.

The report's author, Peter Saunders, a research fellow at Civitas, says "generational inequality" has deepened over the last two decades as house prices have raced ahead of earnings. "The result is that the younger generation is now expected to pay a much bigger multiple of its earnings to buy a home than its parents did," he says.

"The baby boomers are now making capital gains at the expense of their children. Between 2000 and 2014, average earnings rose by 51%, but average house prices rose by 132%."

During his campaign for the Labour leadership last summer Corbyn put forward his own plan to extend the right to buy to the private rented sector. He suggested funding subsidised mortgages for private tenants by withdrawing £14bn of tax allowances that were at the time given to buy-to-let landlords.

Because George Osborne has now clawed back the tax allowances that Corbyn proposed using, that plan is no longer viable. But Civitas suggests other ways to achieve the same result and prevent the private rental market adding to the housing problem.

Saunders says that aspirant purchasers should be subject to the same right-to-buy eligibility rules as those who can currently buy their council or housing association homes, and that they should enjoy the same rates of discount. But there would also be measures to ensure landlords were not unfairly punished, including capital gains tax allowances at the point of sale.

He says: "Like council and housing

association tenants, private tenants who exercise their right to buy would be entitled to a 35% discount off the market value of the house, up to a maximum currently set at £77,900 outside London and £103,900 in London. The same rules should apply to private-sector tenants who wish to buy their homes, but with two important riders.

"First, the discount should never be so high as to impose losses on the landlord. In the social rented sector, tenants cannot be given discounts which exceed the amount spent on the property by their landlords in the last 10 years, and discounts in the private sector should similarly be reduced to take account of recent improvements costs incurred by landlords. But in addition to this, the discount should be capped so the price at which the tenant purchases is never



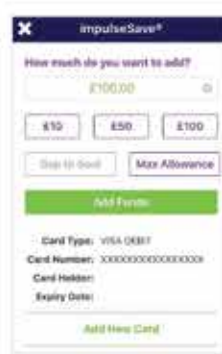
During the Labour leadership election Corbyn suggested right to buy could be extended to the private sector.



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Editor's comment

It is entirely appropriate that this year's Stockton Heath Festival should be seen as a tribute to its founder, Tudor Pole, who passed away on January 5. But in fact, for as long as it exists, the festival will be a memorial to a man who, although not even an Englishman, became so much a part of the Stockton Heath community.

Tudor was originally from South Wales but from 1996, when he moved to Stockton Heath with his wife, Joan, he made the village his home.

We remember well the parish council meeting when he first suggested

starting a village festival. It would be fair to say that his idea was greeted by only polite interest at first. But such was Tudor's enthusiasm that he soon had a team of councillors and other residents ready and willing to back the project. And so the Stockton Heath Festival was born and became what it is today – the highlight of the village calendar.

But of course he did much more for Stockton Heath. He was a valued member of the parish council, always there with wise counsel, always full of enthusiasm and always ready to do anything he could to help local people.



No-one deserved the honour of being granted the Freedom of the Parish more than he.

We feel privileged to have known Tudor Pole and we sympathise deeply with his wife, Joan, and his family.

He will be greatly missed, but never forgotten.

Bizzie Beans celebrate first birthday

BIZZIE Beans community cafe and deli on Bridge Lane, Appleton, is celebrating its first year in business.

Owner Karen Howard said: "As with all new businesses the first year is always the toughest, and here at Bizzie Beans it has been no exception.

"However, we would like to thank all our customers for their continued support, we couldn't of done it without them so THANK YOU."

It has become a venue for the local Police Community Support Officers, who hold their police surgery once a month from 9.30am-11am.

The next surgery takes place on

Thursday, February 2, followed by Thursday March 9 and Thursday April 13.

It provides the ideal opportunity for residents to raise issues of concern and find out about any crimes going on in the area and to meet their PCSOs.



Isabelle has designs on a future in fashion

A YOUNG fashion trendsetter from Stretton with designs on a future in the industry has been awarded a prestigious scholarship.

Isabelle Pennington-Edmead, who studied Art Foundation at Priestley College, has received one of this year's Alexander McQueen Sarabande foundation scholarships.

Only seven were given out and as well as paying her tuition fees it will mean she is offered a studio in Sarabande's London HQ after her degree.

Isabelle said: "I feel thrilled and still in shock at the amazing opportunity I have been given."

Isabelle studied A-Levels in Fine Art, History and Textiles before completing an Art Foundation course at Priestley College.

After receiving unconditional offers from all of her university choices the former Bridgewater High School pupil decided to study BA (Hons) Fashion at Nottingham Trent.

Priestley tutor Christina Tyler said: "This opportunity is well deserved not only for Isabelle's creative merits, but also because she continually worked hard and supported others and the college."

"She really embodied the Art Foundation ethos and it seems right that many doors are now opening for her."

To secure her scholarship Isabelle met designer Todd Lynn – who counts Bono, Beyoncé and Mick Jagger among his clients – to discuss her portfolio and aspirations.

As the appointment was within the first few weeks of her degree she used work from her Priestley portfolio in her interview.

"I was really nervous and didn't think it had gone that well, but it obviously had," said Isabelle.

Sarabande ensures the creative talent of gifted students can flourish regardless of financial status.

With the guidance of its patrons and industry professionals, it offers scholarships to creatives studying at graduate level.

These include complete bursaries for both fees and subsistence and access to experts from creative industries as well as Sarabande patrons who include supermodel Naomi Campbell and film director Sam Taylor-Johnson.

After they have completed their course, scholars are also offered a studio space at Sarabande HQ to continue their work and relationship with creatives.

Among the pieces Isabelle produced at Priestley College was a dress made from tampons, which she used to highlight the injustice she felt surrounded the tax that existed

on these sanitary items.

"I want to use fashion as a medium to highlight the political and socio-economic issues that I believe in," said Isabelle.



Bridgewater Players "desperately short of members"

FOUNDED 66 years ago Bridgewater Players Drama group is appealing for new members to ensure it keeps going.

Formerly known as Lymm Dramatic Society the group changed its name when it moved to Thelwall in 1969.

Many of its members and also its supporters still come from Lymm but its productions are now staged at Thelwall Parish Hall.

Chairman Andy Rushman said: "We are desperately short of members to both act or help backstage. We are appealing for new members."

The society was launched with six members in 1951 and its first production was "The Rotters" at the schoolroom in Eagle Brow.

After two or three productions the group moved to the former Lymm Cinema, only to move back to Eagle Brow when productions at the cinema proved to be non-profitable.

In 1968 the society found itself homeless as the hall in Eagle Brow was needed for other purposes. Their last play there was "The Captives."

The following year they moved to Thelwall and, once it became clear it was to become their permanent home, changed their name to The Bridgewater Players.

Their next show – Alan Ayckbourn's comedy "Relatively Speaking" – will be their 178th production.

It opens on Thursday, February 23 and will continue until Saturday, February 25. Tickets are available from Thelwall Post Office or by calling 01925 755846.

Mr Rushman added: "Our main concern, of course, is to continue to entertain you, our audience. We hope that in the past we have managed to amuse you, perhaps frighten you and sometimes even to reduce you to tears, but always we hope we have managed to hold your interest and given you something to think about."



Casual cruising

Do not expect enormous cabins or designer shower gels! However, do expect to be overwhelmed! The Croatian coast and her islands are beautiful beyond belief. The dramatic coastline with over 1000 islands, the pristine state of the sea itself (Blue Flag International) and the vivid colours makes the Croatian Adriatic so very special. Tiny ports, hidden coves, wonderful panoramas, historic cities and unspoilt locations. If you love massive ocean going cruise liners with pools and spas, then this is not for you!

You don't need 'sea legs' or any special skills to enjoy a selection of casual cruises from Opatija, Split, Trogir and from Dubrovnik. This is the perfect way to discover the Croatian Adriatic. All of the cruises are casual. No Ritz of the Seas, no ball gowns. Leave your dinner jacket and tiara at home. Casual clothes and a relaxed attitude are the order of the Adriatic!

Similar to the gulet cruises that operate around the coast of Turkey, 'Casual' is the key word and various itineraries are available, all offering plenty of time for swimming, snorkelling and taking in the sights. You can even extend your trip with a hotel stay. These cruises are perfect for couples and

groups of friends.

Generally the cabins are smaller than hotel rooms, therefore, storage space is limited so it is best to take soft luggage rather than hard cases. Meals are usually Continental / Mediterranean style, simple and fresh. No celebrity chefs! As evening falls the boats dock at a different town each night allowing you to explore the local culture, cuisine and hospitality. The cabins are air-conditioned with en-suite bathrooms. The Captain knows all the best spots to stop for swimming in secret coves and hidden bays. Also, the Captain has discretion to change the itinerary for operational or weather reasons.

When to go? The climate is surprisingly uniform across the North and South of Croatia. Along the coast, you can expect a Mediterranean climate made up of long hot summers and mild winters. The best time to take a holiday is between early June and late September.

Sample Itinerary:

Split - The city of white stone, Diocletian's Palace and boutique shopping
Korcula - Walled town with towers and a strong maritime history
Mijet - Green wooded island, stunning coves and tranquility



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What are you waiting for? Book your holiday to Croatia now!



■ Jacquie Ahmed – Stockton Heath Travel



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Stockton Heath Festival will be tribute to founder

THIS year's 10th anniversary Stockton Heath Festival will be a tribute to its founder Tudor Pole who sadly passed away recently.

Ian Simpson, who is Tudor's son-in-law and Chairman of the Trustees said: "This year will be the 10th annual Stockton Heath Festival and this was all due to a great man Tudor Pole, who sadly passed away on the 5th January, aged 85. We all owe

Tudor a great debt for being one of the founders of our very successful annual festival which has gone from strength to strength, based on the strong foundations that he helped set up."

Tudor died at home on January 5 after battles with a number of illnesses. His wife Joan, his daughter Karen and his son Julian were all with him.

Ian added: "The health services and

friends and neighbours have all given fantastic support, particularly over the last month; this has been much appreciated. Tudor was of course one of the founders of the Stockton Heath Festival, previous Director, Trustee and our Honorary President.

"Tudor was always there to give advice and guidance to us, the Committee, and a great ambassador and supporter of the Festival following his retirement from the Festival Committee in 2015. Only last year we saw him on the Festival Field on the Sunday giving out the raffle prizes with his usual beaming smile, and a special prize for the Art Exhibition has been named in honour

of him. He was also honoured with the 'freedom of Stockton Heath' in 2016 and will be much missed by all who knew him."

Festival Director, David Craggs added: "Tudor, when I moved to Stockton Heath, inspired me as a volunteer to take on the role of Festival Director. With all the Committee's support in memory of Tudor we will ensure that our 10th Anniversary Festival to be held 29th June to 2nd July will be a fitting tribute to a true Community inspiration."

If any would like to join the festival team visit their facebook/ Twitter pages or website www.stocktonheathfestival.co.uk

After four years, Ray has "nothing to hide"

FOUR years after releasing his debut album, Appleton singer-songwriter Ray Humphries has followed it up with another.

"Nothing to Hide" is a collection of his own songs, with backing vocals by Ken Mellor, Mike Evans and Dave Hollington, who appeared on his first album, and newcomer Suzie Lowe. It is attracting favourable comments in the music world as well as getting plenty of airplay around the world.

The response, says Ray, has been good.

Ray, who plays guitar, mandolin, and keyboards has been around in musical circles for many years, playing in various bands, including Spruce and Tribal Elders, before going solo.

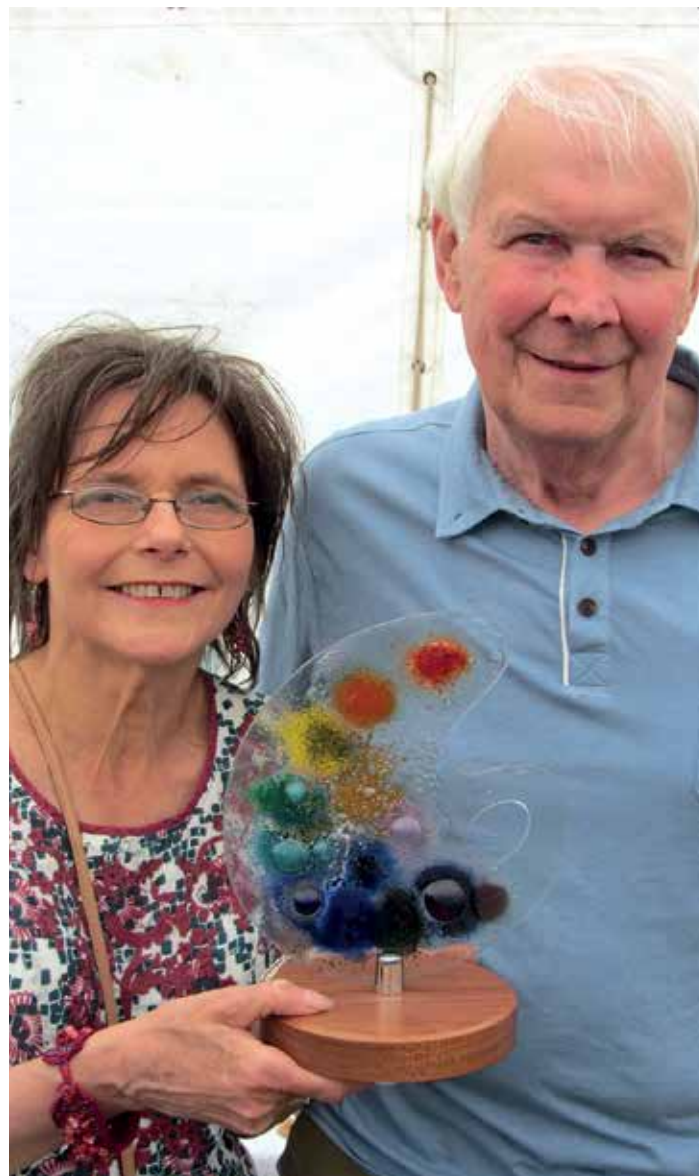
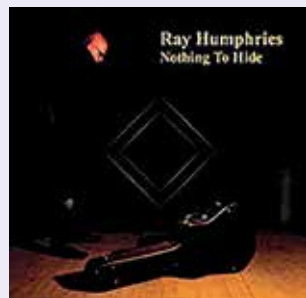
He has mixed feelings about the music scene as it is today. In some ways, he likes being able to use social media to get his music before a worldwide audience, without having

to go on tour.

But on the other hand he feels that audiences are missing out because of the dwindling amount of live gigs.

Ray's first album was "Is it that time already?" and those in the know still rate it highly.

The question they frequently ask is: Why has there been a four year gap?"



■ Tudor with local craftswoman Ally Noble displaying the annual Honorary President's prize, created 2015, awarded to art work receiving the most public votes at the Art exhibition held during the Festival at St Thomas' Church.

Morris Men raise £450 for charity

MEMBERS of Thelwall Morris Men raised more than £450 for charity before and after Christmas by touring the area with a performance of a traditional folk play, The Thelwall Mummies.

They put on the show 16 times at various venues and raised money for the St Joseph's Family Centre, in Warrington, which provides a variety of family support services such as parenting courses, and child and relationship counselling.



Hopes high that village library can be saved

HOPES are high that Stockton Heath Library will stay open following the major public consultation carried out by library operator LiveWire last year.

The people of Stockton Heath, Appleton, Stretton, Walton and other areas within the catchment area of the library made it clear in their responses to the consultation that they did not like any of the options suggested as a replacement facility.

They did not like the idea of moving the library to Broomfields Leisure Centre.

They were opposed to any form of locker system, they were concerned about the effect on elderly residents and on children's reading and learning.

And they believed the loss of the existing library building would rob the area of a much-valued focal point for social events.

As a result, a draft report on responses to the consultation, seen by "Village Life" suggests continuing discussions with the parish councils in the area and other potential partner organisations.

A joint statement on behalf of LiveWire and the borough council – who will make the final decision – said: "This report is currently in draft form and awaiting final comments and feedback from both the LiveWire board and senior council officials.

"As the report has not yet been

finalised, it would be inappropriate to comment on its findings or recommendations. Further information on the report will be made publicly available in the near future."

It is understood, it is likely to be March before any final decisions are made.

Stockton Heath Parish Council chairman Cllr Peter Walker, said the parish was firmly of the view that the existing Stockton Heath branch library – the best used in the borough – should stay open.

The parish had contacted other parish councils in the south of the borough to enquire if they were interested in joining together to help fund the library.

"There is no way Stockton Heath could fund the library on its own," he said. "But the library serves a much wider area, including un-parished areas of the borough on the other side of the Manchester Ship Canal."

Among ideas put forward by the public to make the library sustainable were increased promotion, an increased range of activities, a café in the building and more use of the library by local schools.

During the consultation, LiveWire was approached by a local organisation expressing an interest in operating services from the existing building from 2018.

Walton Lea Partnership scoop 14 Hidden Heroes awards

LOCAL charity Walton Lea Partnership were honoured to have their staff and volunteers chosen as part of ASDA's Hidden Heroes campaign, after receiving a total of 14 awards.

Asda awarded 2,000 Community Heroes Awards throughout the UK this Christmas, with Asda Warrington, Westbrook and Birchwood presenting 14 awards to Walton Lea Partnership staff and volunteers working at Long Lane Garden Centre.

Julie Groom, Head of Community Outreach, Fundraising and Horticulture, said: "The management team and board have always known what heroes we have working and volunteering on our sites, it is just great to get some external recognition.

"Thanks to ASDA and the judging panel and again a massive thanks to all those who put so much effort into keeping Walton Lea on top of the game."

Liz Cottrell of Asda Community Team said: "Having worked with them for several years, we are proud to present these unique and rare awards to staff and volunteers as we see the amazing work they do for our community."

Walton Lea Partnership provides work experience for adults with learning difficulties at two sites in Warrington, one at Long Lane and one at Walton Lea.

They aim to improve the self esteem and status of adults with learning difficulties, helping them to play a full part in the local community.

Awards went to, staff: Kevin Brear, Anita Frangleton, Paula Tidswell, Frances Gosling, Diane Lowe, Martin Graysmark, Stephen Pennlington, Simon Hardcastle, Chris Owen, Graham Lowe, Katie Jones

Volunteers: Sylvia Drewe, Zack Fowler



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An eyesore that could last for 41 years

PEOPLE living near the abandoned rugby field off Bridge Lane, Appleton, face the worrying prospect of it remaining a weed-strewn eyesore until at least the year 2058.

Giant weeds – described by local councillors as “an impenetrable jungle” – are encroaching into neighbouring gardens and the former playing area itself is covered in dog faeces.

As a result, Warrington Rugby Club, which abandoned the ground some 14 years ago after a disastrous fire destroyed the club house, say they cannot resume using the ground for health and safety reasons.

Last year, the club, now based at Warrington Sports Club at Walton Lea, announced it was to resume using the

Bridge Lane site for junior matches. But despite employing contractors to carry out a clean-up, the dog faeces problem persisted and the club had to drop its proposals.

The field is owned by Warrington Borough Council but the rugby club has a 99-year lease, ending in 2058, which it maintains despite not using the ground.

Several years ago, plans were put forward to build 55 houses on the site but these were never progressed.

Cllr Brian Axcell, chairman of Appleton Parish Council, said: “We would like to see the field brought back into use. It is an eyesore and a health hazard and certainly causes problems for local residents.

“But it seems no agreement can be reached between the rugby club and

the borough council and, as a result, the field remains overgrown and an eyesore.”

The borough council says it is still holding talks with the club and, although it has no responsibility to do so, has cut back vegetation, including Japanese Knotweed, to maintain a reasonable environment for local people. The rugby club says it would welcome talks to progress matters, but any solution has to make financial sense to all parties.



Millennium Green improvements planned

FURTHER improvements are planned for the Lumb Brook Millennium Green, Appleton this year – including regenerating the Maze area as a play space for younger children.

Funding is being provided for the project by the Co-op Community Fund.

Julie Kueres a director and trustee of the Green said: “We were really lucky to be chosen as one of three community projects who will receive funding from this round of the Co-op Community Fund.

“Work will start in late spring and by mid – summer the area should be ready for the children to use. Updates on progress will be posted on our website – www.millenniumgreen.moonfruit.com”

The annual general meeting of the Lumb Brook Millennium Green will be held on Wednesday, February 8 at 7.30pm in St Mary Magdalene’s Church Hall, Bridge Lane, Appleton. Everyone is welcome to attend.



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Money Column

By Margaret Black

Facing change

As we look forward after the pressures of the annual tax return season one thing is certain. Everyone is facing change, and the scale of that change is becoming clearer, but not much clearer.

Firstly, there is Brexit. We have now heard Theresa May's speech setting out the government's view on the process of leaving the EU. Although the official process of leaving has still not started, the Prime Minister made it clear that the government is aiming at a "hard" Brexit when she said that:

- Leaving the EU means that we will be leaving the single market, and that we will be leaving the custom union.
- Negotiations over the next two years will have the aim of obtaining the best possible fiscal deal between the UK and Europe commensurate with "safeguarding" the UK borders from uncontrolled immigration
- Having left the customs union with the EU we will be able to negotiate our own terms with the rest of the world rather than relying on the existing agreements between Europe and the world
- Parliament will have a vote on whether to accept the negotiated terms, but
- If the terms are rejected then we will still leave the EU but will rely instead on World Trade Organisation rules and regulations

Secondly, there is Donald Trump. If you are reading this then we can at least safely assume that we have survived the first two weeks of Trump's finger hovering over the nuclear button. Therefore, we must consider how he sees the future, and in his inaugural speech Trump defined his view of that future by stating that:

- "We must protect our borders from the ravages of other countries making our products, stealing our companies and destroying our jobs";
- The decades of America "enriching foreign industry at the expense of American industry" stops "right here and right now";
- "From this day forward Every decision on trade will be made to benefit American workers and American families"; and that
- "We will bring back our borders. We will bring back our wealth."

People's opinion of above will vary, but everyone must surely agree that things will not be the same. Perhaps these changes will bring increased prosperity, in which case we must all ensure that we are in a position to take advantage of the opportunities. Alternatively, we may be facing more difficult trading conditions, in which case we must minimise the effect that it has on our jobs and businesses. Most probably, we will all be affected in different ways.

One thing is very certain. The next few years will not be boring!

WatkinsonBlack are pleased to advise on these and other matters. They have considerable experience in all areas of taxation and business services, including providing a very cost-effective payroll bureau service. If you want to arrange a no-obligation initial meeting on any taxation or accounting matter then please contact us. Please note that these ideas are intended to inform rather than advise and you should always obtain professional advice before taking any action.

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David Watkinson and
Margaret Black

Elderly woman left waiting 45 minutes for ambulance after fall

PRESSURES on the local ambulance service meant an 83-year-old woman was left waiting 45 minutes after suffering a head injury following a fall at a Stockton Heath car park.

The woman fell on the Forge car park at Stockton Heath and was lying on cold damp ground until members of the public came to her assistance, along with staff from the nearby M&S store and local medical centre.

Local shopper Mavis McCue, who alerted the ambulance service, said: "It was lucky there was a few of us to help out.

"I rang for an ambulance and it took quite a while to get through. After telling them where we were and about the lady they said they would send an ambulance. However it was 45 minutes before it arrived.

"She was cold lying on the cold wet ground. We got blankets etc to keep her as warm as we could. Staff from M&S and the doctors surgery were brilliant – but the main issue is the length of time it took for the ambulance to arrive. It was disgraceful really."

A spokesperson for North West

Ambulance Service said: "The Trust did receive a phone call at 8:53 on Monday 9 January to an elderly female who had fallen in the street. An ambulance arrived at 09:44 and took the patient to hospital.

"Based on the information that was given to our Emergency Medical Dispatcher, this was not categorised as an immediately life-threatening emergency and therefore priority was given to more serious incidents in the area at the same time.

"In Warrington on that date between 8:30am and 9:30am there were seven potentially life-threatening incidents including patients suffering seizures, loss of consciousness and difficulty in breathing which meant we were unable to reach the patient as quickly as we would have liked.

"We do understand that, although the patient was thankfully in the care of nearby medical professionals, waiting for an ambulance is very distressing and as soon as one became available, it was dispatched.

"If the patient or her family would like to get in touch with us to discuss this further, they can contact our patient experience team who will be happy to help."

Parish objects to green bin surcharge

APPLETON Parish Council has lodged an objection to the borough council's new policy of charging to empty green bins – but not about the £30 charge itself.

Their objection is to the £3 surcharge residents must pay if they don't pay online.

Chairman Cllr Brian Axcell said: "We don't think it is unreasonable to charge people for emptying the bin, particularly as it means people without gardens don't have to pay. But we think it most unfair to charge

people extra because they don't have computers or may not use the internet."

Cllr John Price said: "This came to my knowledge via the internet so I personally can avoid the £3 surcharge. But I think it is unfair and discriminatory to charge some people extra because they can't, or don't want to, pay online.

"There are plenty of fees you can pay online where they don't charge extra for not doing so and I don't see why the borough council should be different."

Festive collection raised £3,000



MORE than £3,000 was raised by Santa and his helpers – Round Table, Ex-Tablers, Lions and others – in the Grappenhall, Stockton Heath and Appleton areas over the festive period.

Organised by Round Table's Andrew Butcher, the team travelled around with their new Santa's Sleigh in all sorts of weather.

They were, as usual, amazed at the generosity of local people and would like to thank all who donated.

The money collected is donated to various local worthy causes.

Ex-Tablers Club chairman Paul Swindell praised the collectors.

He said: "Without their help, giving up their time free to tramp the streets in all weathers, it wouldn't be possible."

Parish councillor asks: "Are village parking charges illegal?"

COULD the new charges being levied on Stockton Heath's Forge Car Park be illegal?

The charges are estimated to boost the borough council's annual income from car parking charges by £212,000 – and according to at least one parish councillor they are unfair, discriminatory and illegal.

Stockton Heath Parish Council, Appleton Parish Council and Lymm Parish Council have all objected to the charging regime which allows only 15 minutes free parking and charges a minimum of £1 for up to three hours.

They claim the charges, which also apply on borough council-owned car parks at Lymm, are causing serious damage to trade in village shopping centres.

Cllr Anna Fradgley, a Liberal Democrat member of Lymm Parish Council, has carried out detailed research into the borough's decision-making process and claims it was illegal.

She is calling for an internal review of the decision and says if she does not receive satisfactory answers from the borough's legal department she will have no option but to take the matter to the Local Government Ombudsman.

She has already asked a number of Freedom of Information questions and says she is appalled by the poor

information given to the borough's parking task group last July when they decided to abolish the one hour free parking option at Stockton Heath and Lymm.

The task group was given no information on how the parking charges would affect traffic congestion, nor on how they would affect local trade, she claims.

Cllr Fradgley said: "This contravenes the Traffic Management Act 2004, which says that 'Consultation and communication are the foundation of a fair and effective parking policy'. As a minimum, local authorities should consult the police, businesses, residents, motorists and the general public."

However, the task group did receive information about the budget details for last year and the financial targets for 2016-17.

Cllr Fradgley said the Traffic Management Act stated that parking charges should not be used as a local tax. Their main use was to improve transport provision in the area so that road users would benefit.

But it was clear that the borough council was using income from the Lymm and Stockton Heath car parks to subsidise free car parks in other parts of the borough.

"I have written to the legal department requesting a review into how the decision was made, the legality of using cross-subsidisation

income and the democratic process involved. I have copied in the council's leader and chief executive and our MP.

"If I am not satisfied by the response I will have no option but to take the matter to the Local Government Ombudsman.

"In summary I want the one hour free parking to be re-instated on all the car parks as soon as possible and the 'free after 3pm' to remain."

Cllr Peter Walker, chairman of Stockton Heath Parish Council, said his council was concerned that the new system would result in fewer

parking spaces on the Forge Car Park, resulting in a worsening of the already serious parking problems across the village.

They had asked the borough to look at increasing the number of spaces at The Forge by using a strip of unused land between the car park and St Thomas's Church.

Cllr Brian Axcell, chairman of Appleton Parish Council, said: "We have always believed the borough was treating Stockton Heath and Lymm as 'cash cows' to subsidise other car parks in the borough which remain completely free."



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Why councillors refused disabled woman's plan plea

A PLANNING chief has explained why a disabled woman's application for a conservatory bedroom was turned down despite her having the support of more than 40 neighbours.

Cllr Tony McCarthy, chairman of Warrington's development management committee said: "The committee had sympathy for the applicant but it was a difficult one."

"It was the sort of application that tugs at your heartstrings. But the Government's advice is that an applicant's personal circumstances seldom outweigh more general planning considerations."

It was the second time Mrs Christine Tickle's retrospective application for the conservatory at her home in Warren Road, Appleton, had been refused.

An appeal has been made against the first refusal and the result is expected around the end of January or beginning of February.

Cllr McCarthy said: "It may be that the inspector who hears the appeal decides to overturn the committee's decision, in which case the conservatory will be able to stay as it is."

"But although the committee had

great sympathy with the applicant, we have to draw the line somewhere. If we approve one such application, what do we say to the next one."

"After the first refusal we suggested that the glass walls be replaced with brickwork. But the applicant did not want to do that."

Planning officers had recommended the scheme be refused, despite hearing that the applicant's GP had informed the council that the applicant had

multiple medical problems, was significantly disabled and as a result, had difficulty climbing the stairs to go to bed.

The conservatory had been added to provide a ground floor bedroom.

But officers said the conservatory was highly visible on the street scene and failed to harmonise with the original building.

"The conservatory appears overly prominent and incongruous with the

character of the area to the detriment of wider visual amenity," they said.

Although the personal circumstances of an applicant could be considered, the Government's advice was that they seldom outweigh more general planning considerations.

Neighbours and local councillor Judith Wheeler supported the applicant and claimed the development had no detrimental impact on the area.



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stopped you losing weight before. You can then move forward by developing new habits and beliefs that support your Weight Loss. You deserve to look and feel great!

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To win this fantastic prize, simply email info@cheshirenaturalhealth.co.uk with the answer to the following question:

Does hypnotherapy work on: A) the conscious thought process; or B) the subconscious thought process.

Closing date is February 7 2017.



Former villagers listed in Who's Who

FORMER residents of Stretton and Appleton have been listed in the latest edition of "Who's Who" – the famous reference book which contains 33,000 biographies of the world's most influential people.

The Rev Lewis Shand Smith is chief executive of the Daresbury-based Ombudsman Services, the not-for-profit organisation which mediates in disputes between consumers and firms in the energy communications, property, home improvement and copyright licensing sectors. He lived in Stretton but now lives in Chester

Martin Sixsmith, author and broadcaster, was born in Appleton but now lives in London. He was a BBC correspondent in Moscow, Washington, Brussels and Warsaw but left the BBC in 1997 to work for Tony Blair's New Labour government. More recently he has written a number of novels and worked on documentary programmes for the BBC.

Mr Shand Smith is a priest of the Scottish Episcopal Church and served congregations in Motherwell, Shetland and Dumfries and was a canon of St Andrew's Cathedral Aberdeen. He was a member of the Shetland Islands Council from 1990 to 1999 and from 2002 to 2007 was the Scottish Public Services Deputy Ombudsman, before joining Ombudsman Services as chief executive and Chief Ombudsman in 2009.

People are listed in "Who's Who" only by invitation and write their own biographies.

What's on in the villages

February 9

LIVE AT ST WILFRID'S

Violist Jennifer Pike and pianist Tom Poster provide a programme ranging from Paderewski to Vaughan Williams.
St Wilfrid's Church, Grappenhall. 7.30pm.

February 14

STOCKTON HEATH PARISH COUNCIL

Sandy Lane Centre, Stockton Heath. 7.30pm

February 21

APPLETON PARISH COUNCIL

Appleton Parish Hall, Dudlow Green Road 7.30pm

February 16

GRAPPENHALL & THELWALL PARISH COUNCIL

Council Offices, Bellhouse Lane. 7.30pm

Every Saturday & Sunday

GRAPPENHALL HEYS WALLED GARDEN

Witherwin Avenue, Grappenhall Heys, WA4 3DS.
Café open from 10am-5pm serving teas, coffee, home-made cakes and savouries.

Every Monday

COFFEE TIME, St Mary Magdalene's Church, Appleton, 9-11am.

COUNTRY DANCING CLUB

St Thomas' Primary School, Parkgate Road, Stockton Heath. 8-10pm. Details: 01925 262356

BRIDGE CLUB

Belong Warrington, Loushers Lane 7.20pm. Details 01925 262534

LADIES' FRIENDSHIP CLUB

The Quays Community Centre, Thelwall New Road, Thelwall. 8pm. Details: 01925 264099

HIGH LEGH BRIDGE CLUB

Village Hall, 7-10pm. Rubber, Duplicate and Chicago played. Details: Audrey Greaves 0161 904 0120

Every second Monday

PARK (APPLETON) WI

Appleton Parish Hall, Dudlow Green Road. 7.30pm

Second and fourth Monday

WARRINGTON ART GROUP

Bellhouse Community Centre, Bellhouse Lane, Grappenhall. 7-9pm.

Every third Monday

NATIONAL VEGETABLE SOCIETY

Cheshire District meeting
Grappenhall Ex-Servicemen's Club, Chester Road, Grappenhall. 8pm. Details: 01925 265773.

Every fourth Monday

MARLFIELD WI

Grappenhall Community Library, Albert Road, Grappenhall. 7.30pm

Every Tuesday

COFFEE MORNING

St Cross Church, Appleton Thorn. All welcome. 10am-12 noon

PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

Quays Community Centre, Thelwall New Road, Thelwall. 7.30pm.
Contact: 01925 757582.

COFFEE MORNING

Appleton Independent Methodist Church
Appleton Parish Hall, 10am-12 noon

Every second Tuesday

STOCKTON HEATH LIONS CLUB

London Bridge Inn, 8pm
Contact: GrahamCisse58@outlook.com. Tel 01925 262669

BOOK CLUB

Bizzie Beans Coffee House, Bridge Lane, Appleton 11am-12 noon

Every Wednesday

APPLETON HALL BADMINTON CLUB

October - July at Hall Drive, Appleton. 7.30-10pm.
Details: 01925 262356

Every first Wednesday

WALTON WI

St John's Church Community Hall. 7.30pm
Details: 01925 604384

STOCKTON HEATH PROBUS CLUB

Warrington Sports Club, Walton Lea Road, Higher Walton. Details: 01925 268540

Every third Wednesday

HIGHER WALTON WI, St John's Community Hall, 7.45pm. Details 01925 262001.

Every fourth Wednesday

ALZHEIMER'S SOCIETY

Support Group, Brampton Lodge Day Centre, Bridge Lane, Appleton. 6.30-8.30pm

Every Thursday

THE SILVER QUAYS Senior Citizen's Club

The Quays Community Centre, Thelwall New Road, Thelwall. Details: 01925 753474.

BRIDGE CLUB

Belong Warrington, Loushers Lane 7.20pm. Details 01925 262534

Every second Thursday

STRETTON WI

Appleton Parish Hall, Dudlow Green Road. 2.30pm.

GRAPPENHALL PROBUS CLUB

Grappenhall Community Centre, Bellhouse Lane, 10am. Details: 01925 264427.

Every third Thursday

NORTH EAST CHESHIRE FLOWER CLUB

Warrington Golf Club, London Road, Appleton. WA4 5HR 2pm

Details: 01925 740419

GRAPPENHALL WI

Grappenhall Community Centre, Bellhouse Lane 2.15pm

Every Friday

APPLETOTS TODDLER GROUP

Appleton Parish Hall, Dudlow Green Road. 9.45-11.30am. Details: 01925 268153.

To list your event call Village Life on

01925 623632



Grappers sign two players from neighbours

GRAPPENHALL Cricket Club have started preparations for the new season by signing two players from neighbouring clubs.

Adam Green will move from Warrington and Luke McCoy from Widnes.

They will join an unchanged squad from last summer when winter training starts at Bridgewater High School on February 6.

Behind the scenes, "Grappers" are also working actively to recruit an exciting overseas player, hoping to bring in someone capable of being a leading players in the Cheshire County

League premier division.

Grappenhall bounced back up to the premier division last year after spending one season in division one.

They were promoted as runners-up – just three points behind Didsbury – after looking like champions for most of the summer.

First XI captain Adam Roylance will again be at the helm, looking to cement his team's place in the premier division. But the side will have a tough start with their first match away at champions Alderley Edge on April 22.

Second XI skipper Jack Critchley and Third XI skipper David Seed will

also stay in harness.

A thriving junior section with more than 150 members provides the club with a foundation for future success.

The Broad Lane ground at Grappenhall promises to be an exiting place to be over the next few years. With three senior teams, an over 40s team and junior teams from Under 7s to Under 18s all competing this year there is plenty of cricket to be played, and any prospective new players are welcome to join the club to help it achieve their aims.

Anyone interested should contact secretary Paul Tyreman on 07912 966236.





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Village plans a "big weekend" to show what it has to offer

THE village of High Legh is planning a "Big Weekend" in May – designed to show residents and villages just what the village and its many organisations have to offer.

There will be an "invasion" of scarecrows, rides on the miniature railway at High Legh Garden Centre, free rides round the parish in a vintage London double decker bus and home made cakes, sandwiches and scones from the famous High Legh Sunday teas team who have been operating from the Village Hall for more than 35 years.

A flower festival is planned at the beautiful St John's Church – rebuilt in 1891 after being destroyed by fire – and a chance to look for sunspots using a special telescope at the recently built High Legh Community Observatory.

Children will be able to see newly hatched chickens at Abbey Leys Farm Shop.

High Legh Bowling Club and High Legh Tennis Club will open for visitors to try out their skills.

The weekend is being organised by High Legh Parish Council and High Legh Community Association.

Parish Council chairman Gail Coenen said: "We are still working up the final agenda for the weekend but hope it will be a fabulous event."

"We are really looking forward to giving visitors a wonderful experience of the range of special and traditional activities that we enjoy in our community."

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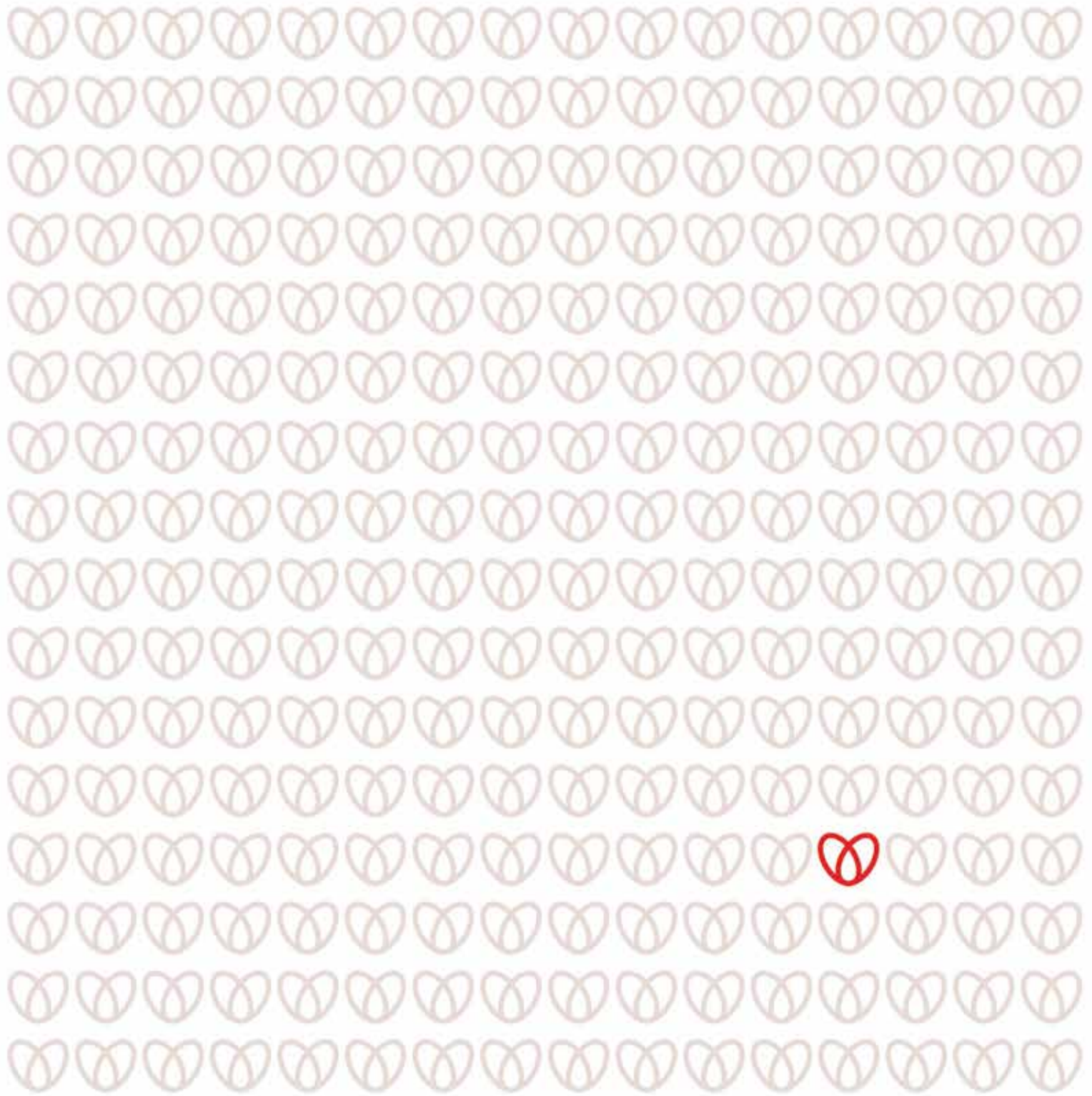
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