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Two main jets and a turntable ladder needed to battle inferno

Arsonists destroy community centre

by Georgina Butler

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A POPULAR community centre has been ravaged by fire in an arson attack.

The shell of Conniburrow Pavilion is all that remains despite the best efforts of crews from Great Holm and Broughton fire stations who battled for five hours to bring the blaze under control.

The Conniburrow Community Association Neighbourhood House was targeted in the early hours of Saturday morning by arsonists who forced the rear doors of the property.

Firefighters using two water jets and a turntable ladder, struggled to contain the flames, ensure the area was safe and prevent the fire spreading to nearby buildings, including Germander Park School.

Watch Manager Kevin Bird, from Broughton Fire Station, said: "When we arrived there was a well-developed fire in the roof that had taken hold and was quickly spreading."

"Within five minutes of our arrival the whole roof was on fire."

Eye witness Natalie Eggleston said: "I was disturbed by firemen looking for water at about 5am. I saw smoke in the distance and walked to the community centre area - it was ablaze."

"I'm quite sad about it - it was a great little place."

The brick building, home to a variety of clubs and societies, including religious groups, suffered substantial damage as the fire took hold.

Police confirmed no-one was in the



BLAZE: Left, our picture by Citizen photographer David Langfield, shows the charred remains of Conniburrow Pavilion which was destroyed by fire in an arson attack. Below, this image as the fire took hold was sent in by eye witness Natalie Eggleston.

> Anyone with information about the fire should contact Sgt Susan Herbert on 08458 505505.

property at the time of the blaze and that no-one was injured.

Great Linford South Neighbourhood Sergeant Susan Herbert who is leading the investigation for Thames Valley Police said: "On arrival at the community hall, the rear doors to the property had been forced and it is believed that the fire was started deliberately."

"The centre was used by residents and its destruction will have a massive impact within the community."

Firefighters salvaged some of the items inside the building, including religious statues but most of the equipment and memorabilia, including some medals, have been damaged or destroyed.



Revvng up for the electric revolution

See story on page 8



Get a free child's ticket for Legoland

See details on page 10



Little Busy Bees get on their trikes

See feature on page 12

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FIRST FOR NEWS

Former prison trainer seeks £300k payout

A MAN who was left severely injured after a collision with a bus has launched a legal battle for £300,000 compensation.

Jason Martindale was left with a severely injured left arm, fractured right leg, head injury and psychological trauma including depression and suicidal thoughts after the motorcycle crash.

The former prison physical trainer was rushed to Milton Keynes Hospital after the accident on a dual carriageway on August 13, 2007, but was later transferred to Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital in Stanmore for surgery on the nerves of his left, dominant arm.

But the 38-year-old, from Emerson Valley, continued to suffer severe pain and needed a second operation. He has managed to regain some use of the arm but needs to wear a splint and takes medication for pain.

Mr Martindale has been unable to return to his old job and now works in the prison's control room which he says is less rewarding and stunted promotional prospects.

He is claiming damages from bus owners Arriva, which has already admitted liability according to a High Court writ.

But the two sides are thought to be unable to agree how much compensation he should receive.

Mr Martindale brands the bus driver negligent, and says he failed to keep a proper lookout, changed lanes when it was unsafe, failed to avoid the collision, collided with him, and failed to drive with due care and attention.

His hobbies of gym, weight training and competitive sports have all been adversely affected by his injuries and he expects to experience continuing pain and disability, the writ claims.

It added that he is now very forgetful, has short-term memory problems, is at risk of degenerative changes in his right knee and is at risk of developing epilepsy.

He has also suffered multiple surgical scars.

Mr Martindale is seeking damages and an order allowing him to return to court to seek further damages if his condition later deteriorates and he develops epilepsy.

The writ was issued by New Law Solicitors.

Blood donors wanted in MK

THE National Blood Service is appealing for volunteers to attend local blood donor sessions across Milton Keynes.

Sessions will be held on Tuesday, August 17 and Wednesday, August 18 between 12pm and 3pm and 4.15pm and 7.15pm at the Church of Christ the Cornerstone in Central Milton Keynes.

On Thursday, August 19 sessions at Wolverton Community Centre will be held between 12.15pm and 3.15pm and 4.30pm and 7.15pm.

Further sessions will take place at Aylesbury Baptist Church on Friday, August 20 between 12.45pm and 3pm and 4.15pm and 6.45pm.

Call 0300 123 23 23.

Oh, I don't like to be without a bus trip

PENSIONERS that had been planning and saving for a summer seaside day trip have been left high and dry by a coach company that has gone bust.

On a Mission Coaches was booked by members of a city sheltered housing scheme to take them to Great Yarmouth later this month.

The group of 48, from Great Holm's Petworth House, were all ready for the annual outing when they learned On a Mission had gone into liquidation.

Each group member had paid £12 – money that organiser Ann Stevens explained pensioners can ill afford.

She added: "We have such a jolly good time – it's just so disappointing."

"We've lost all that money and for some people who are house-bound it's even worse."

"One lady, an 88-year-old, was heartbroken. Her chin almost hit the floor when I told her."

The pensioners are not alone in their loss.

Citizen First understands a number of other groups have been hit by On a Mission's sudden demise – and not just the elderly.

The Lakes Estate summer play

Pensioners and children alike are left stranded after coach firm goes bust

scheme also learned some 250 children, parents and community members were set to lose out on their annual seaside trip.

Volunteer Tracy McMabe said: "We'd fundraised for more than a year for the day to Skegness."

"We put a £1,250 deposit down for five coaches. Then we heard that it had gone bust. Not from the company itself but by word of mouth."

"It was awful. How do you tell all those people they've lost their money and their day out? For some of the children it would be the first and only way they'd get to see the sea."

The summer holiday group runs through the efforts of volunteers charging only 50p for a day's activities.

Part of the day trip was being paid for by a grant from Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council.

Fortunately a group volunteer turned to her employer, Mitie, which in turn

called on Konzept Travel to help the stranded group – the deposit is, however, still with On a Mission.

Citizen First understands the Soulbury-based company ceased trading on August 3 and called in Robert Day and Company Ltd insolvency practitioners.

A statement from Mr Day said: "It is hoped that the majority of bookings and contracts will be honoured by one or more other local coach companies who will re-employ a significant proportion of the company's workforce."

"However, it will not be possible to either refund deposits or forward these to other local coach companies. Any customers who have paid deposits should provide details to me at the address below in order to receive notice of the creditors' meeting in due course."

Those affected should write to Robert Day & Company at The Old Library, The Walk, Winslow, Buckinghamshire, MK18 3AJ.



ALMOST STRANDED: Lakes Estate summer scheme has been 'saved' but others are not so lucky

Police's Operation Falcon swoops on drug crime

COCAINE, cannabis and cash were found in a crime-cracking campaign that swept across Milton Keynes.

As part of Thames Valley Police's Operation Falcon, five raids targeted drug possession and dealing, as well as associated crime.

Focusing on the north of the city, two warrants were completed in Downs Barn

and New Bradwell last Tuesday. At the first property, on Bayard Avenue, herbal cannabis was found and a 33-year-old man was cautioned.

The day before – Monday – police raided two homes in Medbourne. Six cannabis plants were found at one while at the second property, cash, herbal cannabis, cannabis plants, and class

A drugs believed to be cocaine were all found. A 28-year-old man was arrested and was released on police bail until September 27.

The same day a 15-year-old boy was charged with two counts of theft after police raided a Heelands address and found property believed to be stolen in a burglary.

Cyber criminal sabotages city internet radio station

A VOLUNTEER-run radio station was hit by a malicious hacker prompting many of its faithful fans to stop tuning in.

Fresh Mix Radio Milton Keynes was the victim of a 'cyber crime' where its computers were accessed to send obscene messages to each of the station's followers.

The hacker sent the messages via social networking site Facebook, reaching more than 2,500 followers of the online station.

DJ Chris McGauley said the messages were 'absolutely disgusting' and called on the police's help.

He added: "We are all volunteers but with this kind of thing our sponsors

may drop out. That could mean the end of our community radio station."

The matter is being reviewed by Thames Valley Police but the station – which is fervently endorsed by Councillor Barbara Wright – urges its audience to stay loyal.

You can listen to Fresh Mix Radio at www.freshmixradio.co.uk

Postman Pat to go to war for Bletchley Park weekend

BLETCHLEY Park Post Office may be mistaken for Greendale over the August Bank Holiday Weekend as a Postman Pat fancy dress competition takes place.

As part of 'The Post Office Goes to War Weekend' children under 12 are invited to take part in the competition by dressing up in postman inspired costumes.

Judges are needed for the contest. They will need to be able to wear the official Postman Pat outfit themselves (size 10 – 14 or 32inches – 42 inches).

Judges will be required for two hours at a time during Sunday and Monday heats and the final on Monday.

Organisers are keen to get as many people involved as possible so whether you are a parent, grandparent, uncle or aunt, get involved and make your loved one's day with an entry into the fancy dress competition.

Some amazing prizes have been donated by business and toy shops so the efforts you make to look the very best in show will not go unrewarded.

The weekend is set to be a fun-packed event with a 1940s fashion show, plenty of music, war-time vehicles and a fly past by Battle Britain Memorial Flight.

There will be a variety of children's activities including an evacuation and writing home activity allowing children to learn about the evacuation process and understand what it would have been like for children who were evacuated.

Anyone interested in being a judge for the event should contact John Chapman on 01908 631797.

Dance in the moonlight in Edinburgh

CITY based writers Stacey Hatton and Dan Phillips will be dancing by the light of the moon as they present their new play.

'The Land Where the Bong Trees Grow' is due to play at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival later this month.

The show is a unique interpretation of the classic British poem by Edward Lear, 'The Owl and the Pussycat'.

It tells the story of a domineering woman and her down-trodden husband.

The pair are stranded on a desert island following a romantic trip in a pea-green boat.

It questions whether their newly found island friends help them rekindle their love or will it sink like the boat that found them on the island to begin with?

The show will be presented alongside the Welsh Theatre Company and will be accompanied by an original score by Ben Tansey.

It will take place at the Sweet Grassmarket at the 2010 Edinburgh Fringe Festival between August 16 and 22.

For more information and to book tickets call 0131 243 3596 or 0131 226 0000.

FIRST FOR NEWS

Garden champ talks to the WI

THE July meeting of Bradwell Women's Institute included a talk by BBC Gardener of the Year 2002, Edwin Rye.

Mr Rye talked the group through how he was crowned winner of the competition after producing 'White Garden' and brought some plants to sell.

The proceeds went to two South African schools that he and his wife sponsor.

The August meeting will be a lunch at the Milton Keynes Museum, Stacey Bushes and will be combined with a guided tour of the exhibits.

Thank your lucky health stars

SAY thank you to community health staff by nominating them for an award.

That's the message from Milton Keynes Community Health Services - MKCHS - which has launched its Dignity in Care scheme.

A MKCHS spokesman said: "Your nominee could be an administrator or health care worker; someone who has gone that extra mile in providing care."

Applications must be made by Friday, November 3. For details see www.miltonkeynes.nhs.uk/staffawards.htm or by calling MK 278801.

Save lives by donating today

A BLOOD donor session is set to take place in Bletchley today.

Blood donations are constantly required and the National Blood Service is asking people to do something amazing and give blood to save others.

The session will take place at Bletchley Masonic Centre at various times throughout the day. For further details and for times or to book an appointment call 0300 123 23 2.

Croquet, a quiz and scones

STONY Stratford Women's Institute enjoyed its August Garden Meeting at Stony Stratford Croquet Club.

As well as playing croquet, members enjoyed scones with strawberries and a quiz.

The next meeting is on Tuesday, September 7 at 2.15pm at the Scout Hall when Hazel Staten will talk on 'The Inn of the Sixth Happiness'.

Star status for country park

EMBERTON Country Park has been rated as a star tourism site by the National Tourism Boards for England, Scotland and Wales.

The 200-acre park has been recognised as a three-star rated Quality in Tourism site after investing in a new visitor centre.

A report from Quality in Tourism highlighted how the country park had improved, praising its reception area and cafe, toilet facilities and site cleanliness.

Praise for youngsters with good school attendance

STUDENTS across Milton Keynes have been praised for their high school attendance.

The council's education welfare service teamed up with MK Dons to present signed certificates to pupils for improved attendance or achievement attending school despite difficult circumstances, such

as family problems, health issues or working illegally.

Principal Education Welfare Officer, Linda Rayfield said: "We recognise that some children and young people face challenges in maintaining full attendance. We developed this reward programme with the MK Dons to show pupils that their efforts have

been recognised and to give them the incentive to continue to try as hard as they can to go to school."

Paul Mitchell, MK Dons Community Ambassador said: "We're really pleased to be able to support the education welfare service and schools to encourage pupils to attend as often as they can."

Jason Gibbs coupled studies with voluntary work

Powerlist place for bright law student

by Gerorgina Butler

01908 651241 editorial@mkcitizen.co.uk

A LAW graduate has been named in a list of the top 100 brightest students of African and African Caribbean origin in Britain.

Jason Gibbs, 21, from Crownhill, graduated from Queen Mary's University, London, in July with a 2.1 in Law.

The ambitious graduate, who attended Denbigh School before going to university, has been nominated for the Future Leaders Powerlist, compiled by media consultancy firm Powerful Media Ltd, as a student who has balanced great academic grades with remarkable outside achievements.

All students considered for the list were in their final year of study, on course for a 2.1 or first-class degree, or they were studying on a postgraduate course having already attained a top-class degree.

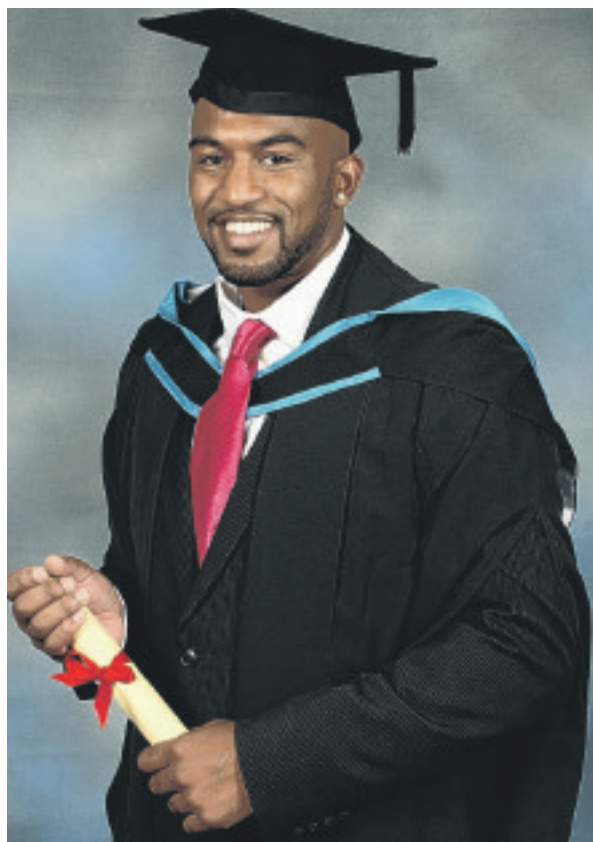
They also had to be doing something extraordinary outside of their studies. Jason balanced studying for his degree with a variety of extracurricular activities, taking an active role in the student community playing basketball for the university team.

He also enjoyed being part of the Royal Airforce University of London Air Squadron and volunteered at a Legal Advice Centre offering assistance to people around East London and as a mentor at a school in Hackney, teaching primary school children basic maths and English skills.

He said: "I am proud to be on the list and potentially be seen as a positive role model for other young people from Milton Keynes."

Jason is currently spending the next six weeks in London as a fundraiser for St John Ambulance. On September 6 he will attend the House of Lords for the official launch of the list, when he will find out his final ranking.

Jason's girlfriend Rhema Nti, also from Milton Keynes and a business graduate, made the list.



TOP 100: Jason Gibbs graduated with a 2.1 in Law

Royal railway sleeper stolen from boat maker



THE MISSING LINK: All that remains of the coupling

THIEVES have helped themselves to a sentimental heavy-duty railway chain-coupling in Wolverton.

The three-link chain which is symbolic of the town's manufacturing past and future was taken from the front doorstep of the Wolverton Superfactory.

The company, which builds narrow boats and was launched three years ago to revive industry, fear it has been sold on for scrap metal.

Director George Harlock told Citizen First: "I want it back. It has great sentimental value and is hugely symbolic of the efforts I have been making over eight years to bring some manufacturing industry back into Wolverton.

"This far exceeds its scrap value for which it was no doubt stolen."

The coupling, which stretches to more than 1.4 metres and would take two men to carry, was sited in front of the company sign in Pattison Lane, Woolstone.

Mr Harlock added: "Just as I was gearing up to start designing, ordering the engine and equipment to build a narrow boat, metal thieves stole the railway coupling that came from the Royal Train Shed in September 2003.

"It solidly symbolises the links between Wolverton past, present and future."

If you have any information call police on 08458 505505.

Police issue warning over obscene net messages

POLICE have issued advice on social networking sites after a number of city teens as young as 14 were sent obscene messages.

Officers are investigating the source of the memos but say they are unsure at this stage if the sender is a real danger or someone simply 'messing around'.

A Thames Valley Police spokesman said the messages, which were of a sexual nature, were sent via Microsoft Live - an online chat network.

She added: "Children who receive any messages of this nature should report it immediately to their parents or guardians, who should contact the police."

Police say parents should talk to their children about the dangers of talking with strangers and should always keep a close eye on who their children are speaking with on social networks, reporting concerns to the police.

The spokesman also issued the following tips: agree rules as a family; keep the computer in a family room; talk about the consequences of giving out personal information or making information public; get involved with your children online and encourage balanced use with set time limits.

Three years for teen who had fake gun

A MAN has been sentenced to three years' detention after his first criminal offence.

Brian Ndungu, 18, from Eston Court, Bradville, was placed in a Young Offenders Institution on Friday, June 30 following a trial at Huntingdon Crown Court for robbery, possession of an imitation firearm and possession of cannabis.

Ndungu was charged on April 22 in relation to a robbery he committed on a taxi driver in Cleveland, Bradville the day before.

He threatened the driver with an imitation firearm and stole cash and a mobile phone. Following a search of the area Ndungu was arrested.

Detective Constable Jennifer O'Neill, who led the investigation, said: "Even though this was Ndungu's first offence, both the police and courts take crimes of this nature very seriously and this is reflected in his sentence."

MEP VISITS MILTON KEYNES TO SEE ITS SUSTAINABLE FUTURE OF TRANSPORT

Revving up for the electric revolution

by Anna Sexton

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MILTON Keynes is already charging ahead in the race to go greener with low-carbon transport.

And it is beating the rest of the country when it comes to electric cars.

Across the city, 11 per cent of vehicles are electric while that figure in the UK is closer to just three per cent.

But Milton Keynes Council does not want to stop there – as Catherine Bearder, Member of the European Parliament for South-East England, found out last Wednesday.

She visited to see first-hand how the city's transport of the future will be less damaging and met Councillor Vanessa McPake, Milton Keynes Council cabinet member for transport, who was sampling an electric car and bicycle.

Ms Bearder said: "It's great to see Milton Keynes is taking the lead on promoting low carbon living.

"Transport is one of the main sources

of carbon emissions and we must do what we can to make the way we travel more environmentally friendly."

The council is receiving a government grant, as part of the Department for Transport's 'Plugged in Places' scheme, to help it install 250 electric vehicle charging points over the next three years.

Motorists will be able to charge their cars free of charge, with the council aiming to have 1,000 such cars on the city's roads by 2014.

It already has 280 electric cars on

its roads, excluding invalid vehicles.

Mrs McPake added: "Today Milton Keynes is proudly showing off to Catherine Bearder, our MEP, exactly what proposals we have for electric cars, electric bicycles, green parking permits, even the possibility of an electric bus.

"We're very proud of our low emissions policy in Milton Keynes."

In April, the council signed an agreement with Renault and Nissan – the Renault-Nissan Alliance – giving the city priority on orders of the two companies' electric vehicles.



SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME: above, motorists will be able to charge electric vehicles free of charge. Right, Councillor Vanessa McPake and MEP Catherine Bearder, promoting the city's drive for low-carbon transport



ENTERPRISING EMILY IS EXPERT CONSULTANT FOR LEADING BEAUTY COMPANY

Youngster's teen skincare range is spot on for peers

by Georgina Butler

01908 651241 editorial@mkcitizen.co.uk

ZAPPING zits, banishing blemishes and preventing pimples is all in a day's work for one city schoolgirl.

Emily Chandler, from Lathbury, has been working hard to help develop a brand new teen skincare range for Simple Skincare – a hugely popular firm famed for its natural approach.

The enterprising student was 'spotted' last year among over 300 entries to become one of 12 budding young entrepreneurs to join the United Kingdom's first Junior Board of Skincare Advisors.

As an aspiring business leader her role is to assist Simple Skincare in the development of a new skincare range aimed at teenagers.

The no-nonsense name of the range – Simple Spotless Skin – gets straight to the point and will hopefully deliver the results young people struggling with

outbreaks of spots need.

Cleansing, toning and moisturising must be a process that Emily now knows well as she makes it the top of her agenda to promote healthy teenage skin.

She has been consulted by the brand developers to refine the product itself and the packaging.

Key to her position on the Junior Board of Skincare Advisors is the help she offers the brand to communicate more effectively with its target market and provide what savvy young consumers want.

Emily said: "Many of my friends suffer from spots and also really dry skin, so when I was asked for my opinion about a range just for teens, I was really excited."

She added: "It's so good to have something especially for us without asking our mums for their skincare products.

"We can pop them into our school bags and use them at break time without feeling embarrassed that a spot's appeared.

"These products are cool and useful."

The products in the range have been specially formulated with zinc and chamomile as part of a blend of spot-fighting ingredients to give clearer skin.

Results may be visible after just one day, which could bring hope to all teenagers struggling with spots.

Gareth Anderson, senior account executive from Simple said: "The range, Simple Spotless Skin, is currently flying off the shelves and is going down a storm with some of the UK's leading beauty editors."

Talking about Simple as a company, Emily said: "I like the fact that Simple care about their individual customers and am very excited to be part of this."

Emily's teenage take on the Simple products continues as products are devised.

In return she will receive a full reference to use on her CV demonstrating the credible business experience, including research, writing and communication, she has obtained.



ENTERPRISING: Emily Chandler has been working hard to develop a new teen skincare range for Simple Skincare after being chosen from more than 300 entries to join the firm's first UK Junior Board of Skincare Advisors