

The Riverporter

ST IVES AWARD WINNING NEWSPAPER

Issue 70: 16 October 2020

A TOTALLY INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER • UNCONNECTED WITH ANY GROUP OR ORGANISATION

Town Centre to face more shop closures?

Last weekend saw closing down signs placed in the windows of Edinburgh Woollen Mill and Peacocks in Market Hill, both owned by the same group which descended into administration.

TUI travel agents in Bridge Street have also closed their St Ives branch. Many local people have taken to social media to air their views on the closures but whatever your feelings on it, they simply represent another sad milestone in the story of the UK high street.

In these Covid times it's hard to see anyone snatching up these retail units leaving more empty shops. We spoke to local shoppers who expressed their sadness and best wishes for the staff who will be made redundant as further casualties of this dreadful year.

A sad sight... but has Covid put us on a faster downhill track?

Ron Westrip explains how hard retailing can be.



I spent much of my career as a retail consultant after starting as a photojournalist in London's Fleet Street. My company evolved into an advertising agency working with many of the top retail groups in the country. I think it fair to say that more than thirty years ago we held regular meetings to discuss the decline of the UK High Street.

All businesses rely on two simple tenets... supply & demand and the cost of sales. All over the country we are seeing retailers facing a double whammy of the spiralling cost of rent and the diminishing number of customers. In 2008 electrical giant Comet got into trouble when many 'would be' customers visited a store, researched the product they liked and then buying it cheaper online. Fashion retailers have lost huge numbers of customers to online shopping. People often blame local councils for allowing the wrong sort of shops, or for not helping retailers



by charging for car parks and not reducing business rates.

But the truth is that councils have very little say or control in what shops open and how they get run. Comments on social media often say 'Why can't we have this type of shop, or that named retailer?', but the truth is that nobody will open a shop based on what a handful of people would like, they need to know that they will have customers and usually a lot of them.

This problem is not only in St Ives, in fact we appear to have fewer empty stores than many neighbouring towns, but the problem is growing everywhere.

Would you risk your house or savings to start a shop?

Let's take a very loose look at what it could cost to open a small business. *The Riverporter* looked at some of the rents of local empty shops.

- £16,500 near the library
- £25,000 in Station Road
- £19,000 on The Pavement.

If we take the Pavement as an example and let's start a coffee shop, as we always need another one of those don't we?

Rent	£19,000
Rates	£8,000 (approx.)
Staff	£30,000 (2 on min wage)
PAYE	£4,000 (est. pension)
Fitting etc.	£15,000 (at mate's rates)

Total cost £76,000 first year

Now let's suppose you sell a cup of coffee for £2.50 with a 75% profit margin. You now have to sell 40,425 cups of coffee a year which is 111 cups per day before you will earn a penny out of your business.

The Riverporter supports Mayor's Charity Time Capsule!

The Mayor of St Ives, Cllr Jonathan Pallant has launched a project involving local Schools and the Community to mark the end of 2020.

An array of items, writings, pictures and publications are to be sealed in a Time Capsule which will be buried in the Garden of the Norris Museum to be unearthed in 2050!

There will be a short Ceremony carried out by the Mayor which will be available to watch via Zoom at the end of the year.

During these unprecedented times, no one has been left untouched by the trials of COVID 19. This includes those groups who strive to support our communities such as the Mayor's chosen Charities CalmTown, St Ives Day Centre, Pinpoint and St Ives Food bank. It is hoped that by capturing the essence of daily life in the Time Capsules during this notable year, we will have created a historical record for future generations and memories for others, whilst at the same time raising much needed funding for the benefit of everyone today.

So what is the answer?

We found a quote from Lord Wolfson, Chief Exec. of Next, who said there was a clear threat to thousands of jobs now 'unviable' because lockdown has triggered a permanent shift to online shopping.

Towns everywhere have been looking for an answer but the simple fact remains that if we were using our shops they would continue to trade but we are not. We all expect someone else to use them so they are there for us when we want them. In the meantime we'll order online.

There is no doubt that the current Covid 19 epidemic has hugely contributed to the shops demise.

If your business is already suffering and you now have government restricting your customers, your fate can be sealed in a very short time.

Despite some store closures there are still a lot of shops in St Ives where you can buy most of what you need. Everyone can help by shopping local to help our retailers survive and to keep St Ives a pleasant place to live in and visit.



The Riverporter will be supporting the Mayor with a special edition of our newspaper which will include the most important stories of 2020 for inclusion in the capsule.

We will also be making a donation to the Mayor's charity fund and encouraging local Businesses and

anyone who would like to support this initiative to also make a donation no matter how small. For further information, please contact civic@stivestowncouncil.gov.uk 01480 388931

The Riverporter is delighted to welcome a new contributor to our paper... 11 year-old Daniel Wiseman. Daniel wrote to us suggesting that he can write a column about the history of the town. Not only is he a fan of St Ives he also said he liked The Riverporter [a wise move - flattery gets you everywhere of course]. So here is his first excellent piece in DAN'S COLUMN.

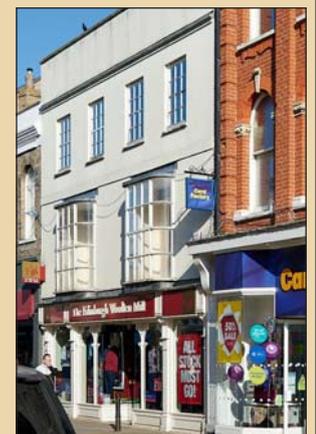
A Creepy Coincidence

by Daniel Wiseman

A few days ago, when Paula, the owner of The Crop Shop, was cutting my hair, she told me about a recent gas leak in Lloyds Bank across the road. Had there been an explosion it would have blown out her windows.

Workers in a St Ives shop a hundred years earlier, were not so lucky. It was just before one o'clock on a Thursday afternoon in 1898, when a customer in Mr. R Ruston's Ironmongers (now the Edinburgh Woollen Mill) asked to buy some gunpowder.

Two of Mr Ruston's staff, both under 18 years old, went to the safe where the gunpowder was stored. When they opened the safe, some loose gunpowder poured out onto the floor, which ignited when they trod



on it. The explosion killed one of the employees outright and the other died the following morning. (Source: Cambridge Independent Press and Stamford Mercury, as reproduced on the web blog St Ives 100 Years Ago.)

Read on-line at www.theriverporter.uk or see our Facebook page. Email: editor@theriverporter.uk

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HEIDI GETS SERIOUS

Hello dear readers (notice the change of mood?). First I am delighted to report that the dumped car I ranted on about last issue has been removed. Who should I thank? I have no idea but I derive some satisfaction from its disappearance only a few days after I got 'humpy'! The boats remain.

So, now why the stern face? It has come to my notice that some folk find me too frivolous. Moi? And, with too much corny innuendo. Well really. I speak as I find, and as I sometimes find life a tad gloomy, I try to raise a smile here and there. So far I haven't been furloughed [there's still time Heidi – Ed], and so I will continue to bring to your attention local tit bits, but spiced just a little with my own take on matters.

So – you want serious? How about this? I'm no expert on planning, but I try to keep up, and from all accounts I think the consensus is that our current approval system, although sometimes a bit frustrating, has served us well over the years.

Its checks and balances on applications, derived mostly from democratically created Local Plans, serve, among other considerations, to protect what green space we have left (precious little in our county).

And we now know how important it is for us to have access to these places for our health and well-being don't we?

We sure do.

This is one of my favourite local green spaces, Hemingford Meadow – yours too?

Photograph by John McKinnie.

On the one hand, though, the 'powers that be' encourage us to get out and exercise in the fresh air, but on the other, they now want to relax the planning restrictions on our green spaces, and other places, to facilitate and accelerate development. Well they can't have it both ways can they?

So, what can we do about it? Well our Council, bless their hearts, is examining in detail the Government's White Paper, Planning for the Future, in which it sets out all the proposed changes. That's a lot for the likes of you and me to wade through. Well, me anyway. A simpler route, which I picked up from those folk on the Great Ouse Valley Trust, is

to have a look at their quick and easy survey on their website, which you can find at:

www.greatousevalleytrust.org.uk

It's all clearly set out and will take you only a few minutes. I know they will be pleased to see you are interested. Their deadline is 21 October.

After all, unless we voice our opinions we can't really complain about anything can we?

So, there you have it. The serious side of Heidi. No frivolity. No innuendo. Better? Or shall we have a bit more fun next time? I hope so!

Bye darlings!

Heidi xx



Death of Marney Hall announced

Marney Hall, who was instrumental in the progress of St Ives in Bloom in gaining Gold Awards from Anglia in Bloom has sadly died after a period of illness.

Whilst living in St Ives she had a successful garden design business and won a much coveted gold medal at the Chelsea Flower show.

As the Chair of the St Ives in Bloom team she revitalised it, and was the inspiration behind the regeneration of the raised beds in the Park & Ride site. In particular the two that have drought resistant plants, which won an award for 'Best sustainable planting' (see picture below) and led to the first of four successive Gold Medals from Anglia in Bloom.

Marney also re-designed the Norris Museum garden after its refurbishment and acted as Habitat Consultant for the Friends of Holt Island Nature Reserve. This and the raised beds live on as an enduring memorial to her talents.



Supporting St Ives Snowman Festival 2020

There will be snow much fun in St Ives this Winter!

The annual Snowman Festival, unique to us in St Ives, has become a firm favourite with local families. Not only do the Snowmen brighten up the town but the Festival also involves all sections of our

community, all ages, businesses and especially our retailers - in fact anyone who likes snowmen!

Unfortunately, the usual Snowman Trail and Festival Day will not be possible this year due to the

Covid 19 restrictions.

But with an enthusiastic group of volunteers aiming to support our retailers, we hope there will be Snowmen filled Shop Windows leading up to Christmas!

You can get involved and possibly win a prize ...

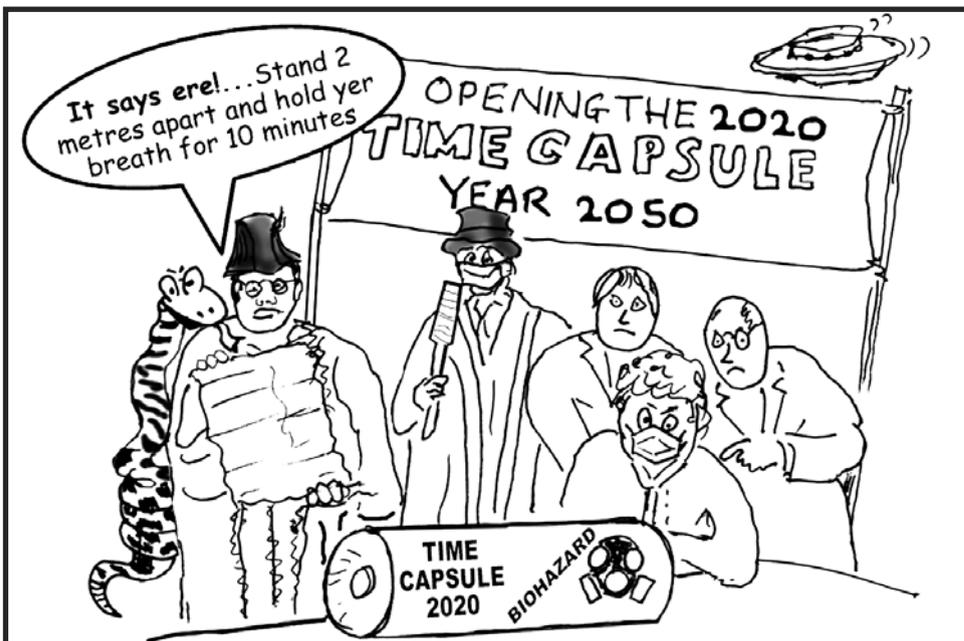
Local households will be invited to draw or make a Snowman and put it in their window (with a little flag saying 'Supporting St Ives Snowman Festival'). Think of the Rainbows everyone drew for the NHS?

Chill Bill

Of course we hope that the Giant Snowman, 'Chill Bill' will once again awake from his slumbers and greet

Thanks to Estate Agents Ellis Winters there will be a cash prize for the best dressed Snowman Christmas Shop Window, which it is hoped will encourage some really amazing displays to brighten up the Town. The talented team of volunteers are ready to support and help retailers who would like to take part. There are lots of great ideas being planned. There will be snowmen up to tricks, wearing masks (of course), and carrying messages for us all!

The Riverporter supports Mayor's Charity Time Capsule! See front page.



Mike Ellis of Ellis Winters with some of the St Ives Snowmen on a shopping spree!

The organisers are hoping to get permission from owners of empty shops in the town to set up Snowman displays in those blank windows.

Some windows will have a competition for children too. There will be a hidden message in some of the snowmen displays, so it will be fun looking for them!

us from his home on Holt Island. So please keep an eye on the Snowman Festival Facebook page for more details. It all starts in mid November.

Join in, shop local and enjoy our town

Wishing you all a Very Happy St Ives Snowman Christmas!



having your say ...

The Riverporter

Voted Best local newspaper of the year 2019/20 in the Cambridge Building Society's Community Magazine Awards

Get it off your chest, email Erik at: editor@theriverporter.uk

NEWS UPDATE

Mayor makes annual proclamation

On Monday 12th October, some of you may have seen the unusual sight, for these times, of the Mayor, Mayoress and Mace Bearer making their way to The Waits.



last week would have been the annual Michaelmas Fair, which sadly could not be held due to the social restrictions of Covid 19. However, in order to maintain the tradition of the Fair Charter, the Fair must be able to show that they do in fact have a yearly visit. The Town Council was therefore hosting the arrival – be it brief - of the Children's Tea Cup ride, accompanied by members of the Showman's Guild and their President. The Mayor, Cllr Jonathan Pallant was in attendance to ceremoniously read out the Charter, although sadly without the usual excited crowds of children eagerly awaiting their rides on the dogdems. It is hoped that with the continuation of the Charter, now secured for another year, St Ives will be able to welcome the Fair back next October. *Picture courtesy Tom Rawlinson.*

Good evening Erik,

I don't usually write emails to papers but I feel as a resident of St Ives I would ask you to look at the location of the ticket machine in the quadrant [Darwood Pond] car park.

How stupid of the council to put such a complicated machine in such a unsafe place. Nowhere to stand and if there is a queue, as it was today, you have to stand on the road.

Some traffic wanted to pass by the queue to go into the smaller part of the car park and a lady with a push chair had to keep moving out of the way. Trying to keep a social distance was a joke.

How can they [the authorities] have placed it on the corner? What about Health and safety? I thought they were big on this!

I don't go into town much, maybe it's been like that for a while? I hope I haven't bored you with my moan but I really do think that the safety of people and children is important.

Best regards to you and your team.

David Tidman

[Dear David, Erik and I went out to check the location of the pay machine and indeed it doesn't give much room to access it, especially if a car is parked next to it, as the picture on the right shows.

Of course we couldn't help but put our spin on this issue with the cartoon below. **ED**]

Toilet update

Drainage work has been undertaken in the Bus Station toilets and they are now open in the hope that the problem of the drains regularly blocking has been satisfactorily resolved.

The Council have said that if the work hasn't fully cured the problem then the toilets may have to be closed again for further investigation.

If you care about the future of St Ives

On Saturday, 17th October, St Ives EcoAction will have a stall on the Farmer's Market, where they will be engaging people in 'carbon conversations', and raising awareness of actions required to achieve Net Zero by 2030.



A bit of a squeeze!



Pledge for Nature in St Ives

Natural Cambridgeshire, the Local Nature Partnership for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, which is a coalition of environmental groups (including the RSPB), developers, local businesses, councils, charities and groups, such as the National Farmers' Union is committed to protecting the environment and ensuring Cambridgeshire will be a sustainable place to live and work.

In July 2019, Natural Cambridgeshire announced ambition plans to double wildlife habitats and natural green space across the region. The 'Doubling Nature' strategy began in September with Natural Cambridgeshire launching a series of initiatives to support community action.

Cambridgeshire currently has one of the smallest areas of land managed for nature in the country, relative to size and endeavours to double the amount of land in the county that's managed for nature from 8% to 16%, which is the national average.

Residents, businesses, parish councils and other organisations are asked to make their Pledge for Nature and this week St Ives Town Council considered their response.

St Ives EcoAction, our local group asked St Ives Town Council to: a) note receipt of the invitation to Pledge for Nature, and state what pledge they will make for nature in St Ives?

b) note receipt of the Local Nature Recovery Toolkit, and comment on its practicability as a framework for nature recovery in the Parish of St Ives, and comment on its potential as a tool to support the 'community asset (green spaces)' evaluation for the St Ives Neighbourhood Plan.

Police Appeal For Information

Police are appealing for the public's help in identifying three people who were involved in an attempted burglary at the Premier shop in Market Hill on Monday morning, 5th October.

Two men were seen getting out of a white Seat car that drew up outside the premises of 'St Ives News' at around 10:30 pm, and began trying to smash the doors and windows.

However, they fled back to the car and drove off when passers-by shouted at them. More information and pictures are on the police web-site at:

www.cambs.police.uk/news-and-appeals/cctv-appeal-following-attempted-burglary-2



And finally the latest Coronavirus information

The Government's new three-tier Covid Alert Structure came into effect on Wednesday 14th October. Huntingdonshire falls into the MEDIUM alert category.

Information on the new structure and the restrictions that apply to each level can be found on the Government website at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-covid-alert-levels-what-you-need-to-know>

HYPERION

Entries Invited for Our Winter Fine Art & Antiques Sale on 21st November



To include a good collection of Silver, Coins, Ceramics, Furniture, Local & International Art & A Specialist section of Militaria Sold In Our Last Fine Art Sale

L. S. LOWRY RBA RA (1887-1986). 'The Pond' Lithographic print Sold £2800



Antique Cast Iron Swivel Cannon Sold £750



Jaeger Le Coultre & Co Reverso 17 Jewel Late 1930's steel rectangular Sold £1200

Next Antiques & Interiors Sale: Saturday 24th October starting at 11am

Hyperion Auctions, The Salerooms, Station Road, St Ives PE27 5BH
www.hyperionauctions.co.uk 01480 464140



Remembrance Day with a difference

Over the years, the local Royal British Legion has raised around £26,000 to support the Armed Forces community. This year, with no door to door or street collections, every poppy will count.

As we approach November, many thoughts will edge towards Remembrance Sunday and the Poppy Appeal. Unfortunately, the events of 2020 force these to be held in a totally different way. 2020 is a key anniversary for St Ives' War Memorial. It will be 100 years old this year, following its unveiling in 1920 (see picture). Designed by architect Sir Reginald Bloomfield RA, the Memorial holds the names of 105 servicemen and women who gave their lives during World War I and World War II which ended 75 years ago this year.

Plans are currently being drawn up to ensure that our Town's commemoration on this year's Remembrance Sunday will happen in a safe and meaningful way. It is intended to hold a scaled-down commemoration with members of St Ives Royal British Legion, Town Councillors and some invited guests on Sunday 8th November. All will be in groups of six or less. Barriers will be erected and organisers are asking anyone attending to adhere to social distancing measures in force.

Order your poppy now

Distribution of Poppies will be dramatically reduced to avoid unnecessary person-to-person contact, but a supply of enamel 2020 Poppy Pins and enamel VE75 Pins are now available and can be obtained via Mike Robinson, Poppy Appeal Organiser. Please contact him on 01480 498959.



Poppies can be obtained for a minimum donation of £3.00 each.

Do you want to lay a wreath?

Members of the public will also be allowed to lay a wreath. Should you wish to do so please contact Mike on the above number to order the wreath and to arrange to collect it before the day.

ADVERTORIAL

CHALLENGES OF A FIRST-TIME BUYER



We often come across buyers with an unrealistic expectation of what their budget will buy in the area where they're looking.

They realise, quite quickly, the need to either increase their budget, look for something smaller or look further away from their ideal location. This is a perennial question with experienced as well as first-time buyers having to face-up to this dilemma on a daily basis.

OUR ADVICE

Our advice is simple - sort your budget out in advance, know what the costs are, know what deposit you'll need and how much your solicitor is going to charge and also what mortgage you can afford. Armed with this information, start looking on one of the main property portals, like Rightmove or

Zoopla, to see if any properties match your criteria. If you can't find anything, widen the search area by five miles and look again. Keep increasing this search area until you do find something within your budget.

Once you find a few properties, go and look at the area, look at the local amenities, shops, schools, doctor's surgery's etc. Drive to your place of work to gauge the commute time and what the traffic is like at different times of the day.

Visit at the weekend to see how many cars are parked outside and to see who is around and how busy or quiet it is, in other words to find out all the information you need before deciding whether to offer or not. There's nothing worse than buying a house only to realise the day after you move in that the neighbour breeds dogs!

CHALLENGES 2020

First-time buyer property prices have risen from £142,473 in 2010 to

£241,025 today. Despite this, the average age of a first-time buyer has remained at 31 for the last 15 years. Help to Buy and SDLT relief have helped.

Rising house prices are not the only obstacles for first-time buyers. The pandemic has led to fewer higher LTV products available and increased mortgage rates on higher LTV products.

Parents are the answer for some. 19% of house sales in 2019 were funded partly or wholly by friends and family, and this figure is expected to rise to 23% in 2020.

Source: Dataloft, Halifax, Legal and General.

ellis&co winters

