

County brewery bucking UK trend

A south Shropshire brewery is bucking the trend of falling sales of beer in the UK.

The publication of the annual Local Brewing Industry Report shows sales from local brewers grew by 10 per cent last year, including Corvedale Brewery, Corfton, Craven Arms.

This shows a contrast to the five per cent decrease in the beer market as overall beer sales in the UK decline.

The report, published by the Society of Independent Brewers paints a picture of a local brewing industry that is thriving despite conditions, including a 17.8 per cent hike in beer taxation over the past year, and the increased cost of ingredients, fuel and utilities.

Norman Pearce, head brewer at Corvedale Brewery, said: "Customers' desire to shop ethically, and their willingness to pay a premium to do so, are holding firm through the recession."

"Local beers tick all the boxes for the ethical consumer - genuine provenance, low food miles, sustainable production and contribution to the local economy. If there was ever a right time to be a local brewer, it is surely now."

The growth of the local brewery industry has been achieved through increased distribution and increased rate of sale.

The average number of pubs each brewer supplies grew from 79 to 94 last year and the sale of beers grew by an average of nine per cent over the last two years.

Draught ale is the mainstay of the local brewer, accounting for 86 per cent of volumes.

Gamers to view films on consoles

Video game players can now watch even more films on their Xbox consoles.

The entertainment company signed a deal with Universal Pictures allowing it to show more than 30 of its films to gamers who sign up to Xbox Live.

The films include recent releases like Incredible Hulk as well as classics such as Scarface and The Blues Brothers.

Vice-president of marketing for Xbox Europe David Gosen said: "NBC Universal have a fantastic reputation in the film world and have some true blockbusters in their portfolio."

"We are delighted to be working with them to bring major titles from Universal Pictures into Xbox Live living rooms - this is all part of our ongoing strategy to make Xbox a major entertainment hub."

Xbox Live costs users £39.99 a year.

Volunteer call to help church

St Mary's Church in Shrewsbury is looking for volunteers to help show visitors around the preserved building.

The volunteer stewards will be required to open up the church and be around to welcome visitors and guide them around the building.

The church is owned by the Churches Conservation Trust. Call Voluntary Action Shrewsbury on 0845 873 5851.

Bingo fundraiser

All Saints Church in Gobowen will hold a prize bingo tonight to raise funds for a church organ restoration. The bingo evening will be held in the church hall, starting at 7.30pm prompt. All are welcome to attend.



Ex-nurse Pat Davies

Former nurse's book is to aid appeal

A former nurse who ended her career in the 1980s as Shropshire's senior health education officer, has published a second book.

The Past and The Present by Pat Davies of Shrewsbury is a tribute to her late husband, Frank, and to help raise funds for the Lingen Davies Cancer Appeal, which he co-founded in 1979 with former town mayor, Bernard Lingen.

Like her first book, Long Days - Long Nights, the new work is a series of fascinating recollections from Pat of a career spanning more than 42 years as well as of her childhood and schooling.

Pat, 84, who was born and raised in Shrewsbury, maintains a keen interest in the NHS, and voices some concerns in the book about the current service.

For example, she says that many of the new treatments now available, combined with new technology, have resulted in a longer life span and an ever increasing aging population.

"These factors have caused increasing difficulties with bed occupancy," she writes. "Made even worse by the closure of hospitals and the closing of cottage hospitals."

She is critical too of mixed wards. But she also has "immense sympathy" for hospital staff who work under great pressure.

Those she has met have impressed her with their empathy.

The book is priced at £10 and is available from Pengwern Books in Shrewsbury or from the Lingen Davies Cancer Appeal office at the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital.

Members marking scheme's final days

Councillors in Bridgnorth have been marking the end of an arts scheme which over the years has been awarded more than £120,000 in grants.

As the unitary council moves in to take over from April 1, groups at Bridgnorth District Council are coming to an end. This includes the Bridgnorth district arts scheme.

Councillor Ed Shirley presented Councillor Peter Drabble with a glass decanter, to thank him for his dedication and continuing support for the arts within the district over the past 15 years.

Councillor Shirley said: "Councillor Drabble has been a dedicated chairman, raising the profile of arts development within the council and giving residents living within the Bridgnorth district the opportunity to become involved in arts activity, experience the quality and diversity of art and have sheer enjoyment."

Over the past 15 years, £122,382 has been awarded in grants, with 87 organisations benefiting. The grants have supported a wide range of groups and activity from dance and music to drama and visual art.

A Bridgnorth District Council spokesman said: "Councillor Drabble will no longer be standing as a councillor when the unitary comes in so the presentation was held to thank him for his work."

"The new unitary council's arts development team is building on the foundations laid by councillors within the district councils to develop the new arts grants scheme."

Free travel for visitors in costume

Visitors to Llangollen Railway have the chance to travel for free on Sunday, if they turn up for the first train in Welsh Costume.

To celebrate St David's Day on Sunday one of the locomotives on the steam heritage line will be running with a bi-lingual headboard.

Welsh teas will be available at Carrog station and Llangollen station will be decorated for the day.

Ladies and accompanied children who arrive in the traditional Welsh national costume at Llangollen before 11am on Sunday will be awarded free return travel to Carrog on board the first train of the day, departing 11am, at the discretion of the Llangollen station master.

Neil Evans, railway director, said: "The special headboard on the locomotive is to celebrate an important day in the life of the Welsh nation."

Chance to meet the neighbours

Newcomers to Lilleshall are invited to get to know their neighbours at a special event on Sunday at 4pm.

A Newcomers Tea is being held at The Vicarage on Church Road for everyone who has moved to the area within the last year.

Think-tank calls for police forces to split

By Sunita Patel

West Mercia Constabulary should be split into four county police forces because it is too big to combat local crime, a critical report has said.

Under the proposals by academics at think-tank Reform, new police forces would be established for Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin, Herefordshire and Worcestershire. They said police forces were no longer accountable to their communities for performance in tackling either serious or local crime.

Parents stump up for private Sats tutoring

Some parents are paying out for private tutors to see their primary school children through Sats tests and Key Stage Two children are the most likely to be given help according to research.

Human feet unchanged for about 1.5m years

Human feet have stayed much the same for 1.5 million years, a study of ancient footprints has shown.

The two sets of prints, found in separate rock layers near Ileret in northern Kenya, were left by Homo ergaster, an early ancestor of modern humans.

Laser scanning revealed that the creature walked the same way as people do today. The prints bore all the hallmarks of a modern human stride, including an arched foot, short toes, and a big toe that was parallel to the other toes.

As in modern humans, weight was transferred from the heel to the ball of the foot and then to the big toe with each step.

The find is the first of its kind since the famous discovery 30 years ago of footprints dating back 3.75 million years at Laetoli, Tanzania.

These older prints are thought to have been left by the more primitive and ape-like Australopithecus.

Although this creature also appears to have walked upright, it had a shallow arch and a splayed big toe characteristic of apes.

The Ileret prints, pressed into solidified layers of ancient mud, consisted of an upper and lower set.

The top layer contained three trails. The deeper layer preserved one trail of two prints and a single isolated smaller print.

It also said they were "expensive" and "lacking in public confidence".

The report said the 43 police forces in England and Wales should be split and be responsible for local policing, and for sharing information on serious crime.

This would leave the Metropolitan Police, which has a £3.5 billion annual budget and already acts as a de facto national lead force, with the responsibility to lead the response to serious and organised crime.

Academics said greater accountability could be achieved with the appointment of police commissioners in each smaller police force, who would have control of the budget and be able to set a clear direction.

Answerable

This could be an elected mayor, council leader, or a new elected police commissioner or criminal justice commissioner, who would not only be answerable to community leaders, but the entire electorate.

Nationally, the changes would see many regional forces split into 95 city, town and county forces, along the lines of basic command units that already exist.

Voters would be able to decide whether they wanted to stay within the existing force structure or have a more local police force, such as the Wolverhampton City Police Force or Walsall Town Police Force.

Elizabeth Truss, deputy director of Reform, said: "The threat of crime is changing and growing. "But the police force has been hampered by the obsolete structure of 43 regional forces."

She added: "Data shows that small police forces catch more criminals than larger ones."

"The current 43 forces should be split - into a total of around 95 - so that police forces can properly reflect their local communities."

Help hope for those in debt

Shropshire borrowers who are victims of so-called "hard sell" deals could get their debts written off.

Dan Jackson, Shropshire representative for Credit Compensation UK, said in some cases people could qualify for compensation or even a 100 per cent write-off of their outstanding debt.

Call 0845 0038181.

Service bids to stop heart attacks

A new "rapid response" emergency service aimed at preventing heart attacks is to be launched at a major teaching hospital.

Doctors from Barts and The London NHS Trust will target patients with chest pains who have partially blocked coronary arteries.

Often the condition goes undetected for weeks or months before a patient is diagnosed and treated. Under the new system, high risk patients will be identified and transferred immediately from local accident and emergency departments to the London Chest Hospital in Bethnal Green.

There they will be tested for arteries which are severely narrowed or blocked by blood clots.

The new service, to be launched in April, aims to prevent heart attacks in around 1,800 at-risk patients a year.

Professor Martin Rothman, senior cardiologist at Barts and The London Heart and Chest Centre, said: "By doing this we will be saving patients now from having heart attacks in the future. The new service will act as an early warning system for heart attack which is probably the best contingency measure one could ask for."

Fashion show to aid appeal

A group of women are preparing to strut their stuff at a Shrewsbury fashion show in aid of charity.

Fashions from Smarty's will go on show on April 22 at Westbury Village Hall.

Proceeds will go to Westbury Women's Institute group and the Lingen Davies Cancer Appeal. For £5 tickets call (01743) 884449.

Poetry recital success



Owain Pryce, eight, from Leominster, jumps for joy

Owain, eight, wows judges with reading

By Rachael Lowe

A pupil from a south Shropshire border school has wowed judges with his poetry recital skills and is set to represent the West Midlands in a national competition.

Owain Pryce, eight, from Kimbolton Primary School, just over the Shropshire border, has been selected as the West Midlands finalist in the BBC's National "Off By Heart" poetry recital competition. He is set to appear in the final on April 5 in Oxford.

Heats

Owain, from Eye, near Leominster, was selected for the final after poetry recital heats were held at his school, followed by regional heats at Leominster Library earlier this month.

Headteacher Sarah Tudor said Owain would be joining the other 11 regional finalists at a master class in London this week-end to get expert advice from memory and performance experts.

She said: "They will be given a list of 30

poems and the children will pick two they want to recite. I think they will also be given one on the day of the final.

"TV's Jeremy Paxman is presenting the competition, which is part of the Oxford Literary Festival and a TV crew will be filming the children for a 90-minute documentary to be screened later this year.

"Crews will be visiting Owain here at school and at his home as well as during the competition itself."

Mrs Tudor said Owain was "ecstatic" to find that he had been chosen as one of the West Midlands finalists.

She said: "This is an amazing achievement for a small rural school with only 84 pupils. Owain has beat pupils from schools in Shropshire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire and all other regions to be the West Midland's finalist."

Boss says junk food main threat to model's health

Models are eating too many Big Mac burgers and chips, the head of a leading model agency has said.

Carole White, founder of Premier Model Management, said that rather than anorexia, the main threat to models' health was their junk food diet.

"Our biggest problem with models and diet is they usually eat too many chips and Big Macs," she said.

More than 200 female models at Premier have waist sizes of 23.5 inches or below, according to its website. But their diets were typical of those of girls their age, Ms White said.