

**LONDON HOUSE
PODIATRY PRACTICE**

LESLEY EARNSHAW
MChS SRCh DPodM

The Square
Wiveliscombe
Somerset
TA4 2JT

Telephone
01984 629189

Gift Vouchers Available

Open: Tuesday to Friday 9 am to 5 pm. Saturday 9 am to 1 pm

**LANGFORD LAKES
CHRISTMAS TREES**

Member of BRITISH CHRISTMAS TREE GROWERS ASSOCIATION

Specialists in supplying quality Christmas Trees direct from the grower at very competitive prices. Growing since 1993 we have available the

NORDMAN FIR
The Christmas Tree that is known FOR ITS NEEDLE RETENTION
'Container grown Nordman Fir available'

Middle Hill Farm, Langford Budville
01823 400476

ANTHONY JAMES

Dip.F.D.M.R.I.E., M.B.I.F.D.
Funeral Director
30 Lion d'Angers, Wiveliscombe
Tel. 01984 624149

Also

Alec James
Taunton Funeral Service
55 Bridge Street
Taunton
Tel. 01823 321077

A private local family owned business

**To advertise in the
Wiveliscombe Messenger
ring 01984 632731**

Positive moves in the Milverton Post Office saga

ON 5 September, a very crowded meeting in Milverton's Victoria Rooms saw parishioners receiving full explanations of the options available to them following the recent retirement of the postmaster, Keith Gibbons, and possible alternatives for the provision of postal services in the parish.

The Parish Council Clerk, Gwilym Wren, set out the options, which were as follows:

- The Post Office should close at the end of September, when the temporary postmaster's agreed relief contract expires.

- A new Postmaster/mistress takes over seamlessly from the end of September in the existing Post Office premises.

- A further fill-in time is agreed, while a new Postmaster/mistress is trained and can take over the existing premises.

- The Community supports a named individual to create a community-run Post Office providing a full

range of services.

- The village store, CostCutter, endeavours to provide as many crucial Post Office services as possible.

Robin Cassell, Rural Transfer Director of the Post Office, said that the Post Office needed to find a willing partner and suitable premises.

He said that, following widespread advertising, there had been three expressions of interest, but one of these had withdrawn.

Any application would take three months to process to ensure that all necessary checks and training were completed.

The person appointed would become a Post Office agent, operating stipulated hours and receiving a guaranteed salary, augmented by other units of work payments, until early 2008.

The Post Office would provide supplies and insurance but the agent would be liable for financial shortfalls.

David Horwood, a member of the committee controlling the shop and Post Office in Bradford on Tone, explained how they had set up their community

office, which necessitated them buying the stock from the previous tenant.

The shop/Post Office opened on six mornings only. Afternoons were economically unviable. Two people operated the Post Office, with a rota of others managing the shop. No one was paid anything.

David Fisher, of Village Retail Services, an organisation financially assisted by the Plunkett Foundation, said VRS operates in rural areas to help communities threatened with losing retail outlets.

The process involved creating a steering group, which could identify the needs of the community. Necessary funding could be applied for through Parish Plans or separate questionnaires. VRS could assist in analysing data and preparing a constitution.

The next stage would be to form an association with limited liability, followed by the preparation of a prospectus to be circulated to possible funding providers.

It would then be necessary to hold a public meeting to agree a mandate for eliciting funds from the benefiting community.

Membership fees could be set as appropriate between 25p to £25.00, thus providing enough funding to cover immediate needs,

e.g. stock, premises alterations, etc.

The general view of the meeting was that the significant range of services currently provided by the Post Office needed to be retained. They included the following:

- Banking - paying in and withdrawals
- Pensions
- Paying bills
- Letter and parcel posting
- Foreign exchange provision
- European Health Insurance cards
- Insurance
- National Savings
- Community Centre - chat room - provider of cricket scores
- Box office for village events
- Forms for a number of different purposes
- Savings stamps
- Local Information
- Fishing licences
- Flowers by post

Russell Jenkins of CostCutter then explained that the situation in Milverton was different from that in Bradford on Tone, where no one received a salary.

To incorporate Post Office into Costcutter would incur significant costs. Accordingly, he had reluctantly decided it was

not affordable.

CostCutter could, however, offer a number of services that parishioners had indicated were crucial to them, such as banking, bill payment, letter and parcel postage, as well as providing a village events and information service. It was CostCutter's intention to ensure that the village did not go without these essential services.

In summing up, Parish Council Clerk Gwilym Wren said that it appeared the preferred option was the seamless takeover of the Post Office. In the event of this failing a Plan B would be needed.

He asked that all those parishioners who would be prepared to assist in formulating or running a community Post Office should contact him.

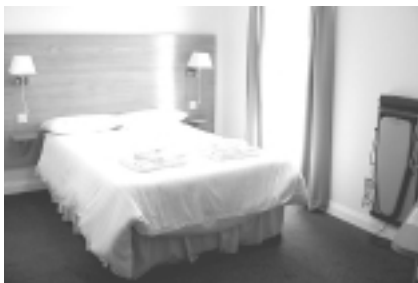
He also said that the third alternative was for CostCutter to offer the range of services that it could manage, within the existing shop facilities.

Mr Bond, Snr, a retired Postmaster from Wiveliscombe, was warmly applauded in appreciation for his helpful services to the village at a difficult time.

Readers who have any time or expertise to offer are asked to contact Parish Council Clerk, Gwilym Wren, on 01823-400657.



**White
Hart
Hotel**



- 16 en-suite letting rooms
- Sunday roast £6.95
- Non smoking restaurant
- Functions and parties catered for
- Book for Christmas Day and Christmas functions NOW

The Square, Wiveliscombe, Taunton, Somerset TA4 2JP
Tel. 01984 623344 : Fax. 01984 624748
E: reservations@whitehartwiveliscombe.co.uk
W: www.whitehartwiveliscombe.co.uk

Threat to No 25 bus route through Milverton

AT the September meeting of Milverton Parish Council, councillors heard about the background to the recent decision to remove the route of the 25 bus from the centre of the village to North Street.

Mr Miller of First Bus set out the business case for the change, beginning with the reminder that, five years ago, the 307 route was changed to North Street because it was a straighter, and therefore, safer route.

He said that for some time bus drivers had been reporting their concerns about parked cars and other hazards along the route, which had resulted in damage to the pavement. This in turn resulted in significant insurance claims to First Bus, which had become unsustainable.

Passengers had also registered their concerns about the route.

He had resisted the change for some time, but earlier this year felt that the time had come to move the route to North Street. He accepted that this was not an ideal route, but said it was significantly better than using Silver Street, Fore Street and St Michael's Hill.

He said that from 2015 all buses had to be accessible for disabled passengers and, to accommodate this change, buses were becoming bigger.

There were a few Mercedes buses left on certain routes, but these were being gradually withdrawn and replaced with larger buses.

He also pointed out that by 2015, all bus stops would have to have higher mounting points to make access easier. He warned that this was likely to create difficulties in many locations, not just Milverton.

He indicated that he was prepared to review the situation at an unspecified time in the future.

Questions and discussion then focused on several issues:

- The lack of prior consultation with the Parish, which meant that the Parish Council had been unable to discuss and perhaps try to arrange some improvement to the parking situation making change unnecessary.

- The apparent discrimination against the most vulnerable in the community causing them to walk further to access the bus service.

- The possibility of increasing yellow lines, particularly at junctions.

- The possibility of ensuring some additional police/support officer/traffic warden surveillance of the existing situation.

- First Bus is obliged by law to run an "in profit" service, unless it is subsidised by SCC. In fact, Milverton's service is subsidised by SCC only on Sundays and during the evenings.

- Take-up of the service had increased, during the summer months.

- Smaller buses operated in the Bishops Hull area. Why, then, was it not possible to transfer them to routes such as Milverton, where fewer passengers were, during off-peak hours?

- The playgroup in St. Michael's rooms was not operative during the summer, and the threat of an accident was inevitably greater when those using the playgroup were there.

Mr. Miller undertook to examine the possible use of smaller buses in the short term for off-peak use. In exchange, the Parish Council undertook to examine the possibilities of lessening the volume of parked traffic on the route.