

Driven mad in May

THERE has been a quite understandable traffic problem at the top of Northgate and past the Primary School in North Street whilst the building work on Tuckers Meadow has been going on.

The new pavement has made the road narrower and safe parking difficult; one would expect drivers would be particularly aware of the need for care and consideration in the circumstances.

But no, parents dropping children off at school in the morning are causing other drivers frustration and creating potential hazards by parking on both sides of the already narrower road; even parking diagonally across the corners at Pulsford Lodge and Northgate restricting visibility on to the main road.

What is particularly enraging is that some parents tend to stand around having a leisurely chat whilst the bus and other car drivers perform complicated manoeuvres in order to get through.

It shouldn't be beyond anyone's wit to see that it isn't safe or sensible to jam up an already narrower road; or is it just laziness and selfishness?

Wanna buy a motor?

IT must be Spring. A selection of cars with 'for sale' notices has sprung up along the road at the top of North Street car park.

With parking already at a premium in the town, do these entrepreneurs know, or care, how annoying they are in blocking spaces for days?

They presumably pay no business tax, no advertising costs and more importantly don't bung up parking outside their own houses!

These pubs place a lot of emphasis on providing quality dining space as well as a bar for drinking. Being a person who prefers a good meal and a glass or two of good wine in preference to a night out at the bar I welcomed the changes, and have consequently visited most of the refurbished pubs in the area.



SPEAKERS' CORNER

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Restaurant Rant

OVER the last couple of years there has been an emergence of restaurants in gastro pubs in the area.

These pubs place a lot of emphasis on providing quality dining space as well as a bar for drinking.

Being a person who prefers a good meal and a glass or two of good wine in preference to a night out at the bar I welcomed the changes, and have consequently visited most of the refurbished pubs in the area.

However I would like to pose the question as to whether these establishments have actually got it right, and I refer to all in general rather than one particular place.

There appears to be a common theme - starters are £4-£7, main meals £11-16 and desserts £4-£6, prices which are equiva-

lent and in some cases more than you would pay in Bristol or London. The food in most cases has been adequately cooked but is neither stunning nor particularly memorable.

Going out for a meal should be more than just the food; it is a combination of the food, the setting, the service, and the atmosphere that you are paying for.

Some of the experiences I've had include being left without food for over an hour, with no explanation or apology or even a bread basket or nibbles to go with the wine while you're waiting; narrow tables and chairs not built for dining; cutlery wrapped in a paper napkin which is more in keeping with a bar meal at a third of the price; waiting staff rushing the customers through the meal so they could go off duty; waiting staff who have no idea of what is in the dishes for which they are taking orders; food being served that is unfortunately only too obviously rank; fillet steak that must have been cooked from frozen to make it too tough to eat (almost an impossibility with fillet!).

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However, for the restaurants to remain busy enough to be viable, they need satisfied customers, and satisfied customers are people who feel that their hard earned money has been well spent.

Am I alone in this view, what do other Messenger readers think?

To me this illustrates that the managers of these establishments do not understand that when they are charging prices at the higher end of the market customers expect more than just food on a plate.

Going out for a meal should provide a congenial atmosphere and attentive service, so that the customers feel that they are getting value for money and are therefore more likely to return for another good experience.

If managers find they are unable to provide the appropriate service, perhaps they should consider lowering the prices so that expectations are not so high.

I am writing this not just to have a whinge but because I would be really disappointed to see these restaurants disappear for lack of custom once the first flush of enthusiasm is over.

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Rural dream - I don't think so . . .

A Sunday in May; warm with a gentle breeze, sit in garden and read papers before a bit of desultory weeding.

Calm shattered by low flying helicopter; pilot has blue eyes - I can see them, swarm of screeching trail

and dirt bikes, revving and jarring mini-bike nearby, thunk thunk of tunes from passing car and then a microlight buzzing around the sky like a great wasp.

Oh hell - if you can't blot it out join in . . . get out the strimmer and the lawnmower and make lots and lots of noise.

Charity stamps

FOR several years now I have been cajoling readers of The Messenger to save their stamps, dig out old collections or swaps and pass them on to me - thanks to all who have kept me supplied.

Some of you have asked me what I do with them and I could only reply that they go to St Margaret's Somerset Hospice once I have sorted them and have a big enough supply. But I, too, wanted to know more.

The man at the hospice who deals with the stamps is a volunteer; he gets stamps from all over the world, even Australia. Most stamps are sold through the hospice shop in Street, where there is a separate stamp table and sales can be £60 to £80 per week. Over the years more than £43,000 has been raised.

All the money goes to the hospice in Taunton for the care of patients who come from all over Somerset and are cared for free of charge and based on clinical need.

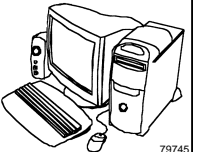
So all the stamps go to a worthy cause and the hospice expresses thanks to everyone who collects and passes them on.

So keep them coming, please, to Ken Hughes 01984 624 213, or stamps can be left at Wiveliscombe House for me to collect.

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Faster broadband, smarter shopping, safer surfing

YOU may not have noticed yet, but broadband internet access is getting faster.

As of 1st April 2006, British Telecom released the full potential of ADSL Broadband, instead of the capped speeds that we had been enjoying over the last couple of years.

No doubt some of you have enjoyed 2mb broadband for some time, with those further from the exchange perhaps only receiving 512kb.

Well, ADSL Max is now here, with up to 8mb possible. Yes, that's 8mb! Woo Hoo! What's more, all of the 10 Parishes exchanges are now ADSL enabled, and at the full speed too!

Distance is still an issue, but under the new scheme, instead of arbitrary limits imposed by BT, the broadband signal will now work as fast as possible depending on the distance, and therefore line quality, of your telephone line.

Even those previously beyond reach may now find themselves viable, as the lower limit has been reduced too, so do try again.

I've already opted to switch, and my old 1mb maximum has now gone as high as 4.8mbs. However, it should be noted that there is a 10 day 'profiling' period after the line is upgraded, when it will try several different speeds to find the most reliable.

You may experience periodic disconnections during this period, although it will reconnect immediately. However this could cause interruptions to file downloads, chat sessions or internet telephony.

Some ISPs have opted to automatically upgrade their customers, although given the number of connections to be changed this will be phased over a period of 3-6 months in some cases.

Other ISPs have opted to only upgrade customers on request, so you may need to ask. Contact your ISP and find out what the options are.

In many cases, there is no cost to upgrade, and possibly a reduced monthly rental, as you may be on an old tariff anyway.

What about cheap phone and free broadband deals? There is currently a spate of them led notably by Talk Talk from Carphone Warehouse, but some of these are not available in this area.

They are often dependant on the supplier installing their own equipment in the telephone exchange, and that is only likely to happen in the larger urban areas.

Wiveliscombe is unlikely to be unbundled in this way, and the other local exchanges even less so. There are cheap combined deals though, so do read the fine print carefully to understand what is on offer. Don't just go by the headline rate.

And so, what can you do with all of the extra speed? Well, internet shopping is one thing. Broadband really helps there, but if your browsing sites with lots of product images, that perhaps will now be a much more speedy experience.

If your not sure about internet shopping, there isn't all that much to worry about. The vast majority of online

retailers now make secure shopping a priority, and as a result there is a good deal of protection.

If you are at all worried, why not request a new credit card with a lower credit limit? This way, the chances of fraud are much limited, although in many cases it is the retailer and the card issuer who are ultimately responsible for picking up the cost of fraud.

As long as you show some care in who you provide your card details to, you are unlikely to experience any problems.

Do be careful about scam emails though. It's one of the top ways the baddies will try and con you out of your hard earned cash these days.

You are far more likely to receive unsolicited emails asking for personal information, passwords and account numbers, and if you succumb, you are exposing yourself to risk.

Always check the authenticity of emails received, no matter how much they may look like you bank emails etc. Never follow a link from an email to the website in question - always open your browser yourself and type the website address yourself. This way, you can't be spoofed into entering details into a fraudulent website.

A few simple steps, and you can be enjoying the added convenience, and in some cases, significant discounts over high street prices.

Of course, don't forget your local retailers, as they provide convenience that online retailers can only dream about! Happy shopping! **DM**

READER'S LETTER

Concern over homes plan

Dear Messenger — I am a concerned about a planning application for 20 dwellings on land north of Plain Pond which appeared in the Gazette (31March).

I wonder how many people have noticed it and would like to bring to people's attention through the 'Messenger'?

I have written to the planning department with my views and would like to encourage others to do so in the hope that this proposed development doesn't set a precedent for even more growth into the surrounding farmland in the future.

The resources in the town are already overstretched with all the recent developments and more housing in such an inappropriate area of the town will only exacerbate this.

Wiveliscombe is such a beautiful place to live and if this development is allowed to go ahead it will change the character of the place forever.

Christine Rose

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