

Express Series Slough, Windsor



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Contact us

Express Series:
 487 Ipswich Road, Slough
 SL1 4EP

Editor: **Martin Trepte**
 Deputy Editor: **Glenn Mitchell**
 Deputy Chief Sub: **Darren Redick**
 News Editor: **Francis Batt**
 Sports Editor: **Graeme Copas**

Newsroom:
 Tel: 01753 849537
 Fax: 01753 849545

Email: expressnews@baylismedia.co.uk

Advertising:

Advertising Manager: **Sara Keogh**
 Advertising Team Leader: **Amanda Bailey**

Classified and display ads: 01753 825111
 Fax: 01753 550908

Email: expressads@baylismedia.co.uk

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 Recruitment: **Wednesday, 2pm**

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Distribution Manager: **Andrew Farley**
 Subscriptions: 01628 410574
 Leaflet enquiries: 01628 410574

Published by:
Baylis Media Ltd.
 Newspaper House, 48 Bell Street,
 Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 1HX
 Hays DX 6431 Maidenhead 1



News

Court finds in favour of blacklisted woman

Ex-care worker wins £12,000 after 'violent' claims prove false

By Court Reporter
news@baylismedia.co.uk

A WOMAN unjustly blacklisted as a 'potentially violent' troublemaker by Slough Borough Council has been awarded £12,000 libel damages.

Jane Clift, 43, was 'outraged' in December 2005 on learning she had been put on the council's 'register of potentially violent persons', with officials warned only to approach her in pairs, a High Court jury heard during a week-long trial. Her QC, Hugh Tomlinson, said she was unfairly branded a troublemaker in order to 'get rid of her' due to her persistence in pursuing complaints

against the council and its staff. The court heard that in August 2005 Mrs Clift confronted an abusive drunk in the town's Sheffield Road Rest Gardens after she objected to a small boy vandalising a flower bed.

Her deadlock with the council developed over Mrs Clift's claims that staff in its anti-social behaviour unit took no action over her complaints.

Mr Tomlinson told the jury: "The council was so irritated by her persistence that they thought the way to deal with this was by putting her on the violent person's register because nobody would then take her seriously."

Slough's lawyers called as a witness the anti-social behav-

iour officer who initially dealt with Mrs Clift's complaint, Fozia Rashid. She said Mrs Clift, who has since moved to Birmingham, became 'very difficult' during a telephone conversation in August 2005 and claimed Mrs Clift asked her, 'Why are you sitting on your fat arse?'

Former care worker, Mrs Clift, claimed damages for libel from the council and its then-head of public protection, Patrick Kelleher, both of whom denied the claims. Each insisted that they acted in good faith.

On Wednesday, the jury rejected allegations that Mr Kelleher had acted maliciously, but upheld Mrs Clift's libel claim, awarding £12,000 dam-

ages. Mrs Clift sued for libel over the insertion of her name on the violent persons' register and over an email distributed by Mr Kelleher.

The jury found the disputed register entry and email were not 'substantially true', but cleared Mr Kelleher of allegations of malice in composing the email.

Mrs Clift fought her case under a 'no win no fee' arrangement with her legal team. The jury's verdict leaves Slough Borough Council facing a legal costs bill approaching half-a-million pounds - although the council said yesterday (Thursday) the bill would be met by insurers and it would only need to pay a £2,000 excess.

Fire authority awards itself allowance rise

OFFICIALS who want to save money by shutting Windsor's fire station at night have voted themselves a massive 400 per cent increase in allowances.

Members of Berkshire Fire Authority awarded themselves the pay hike at the annual meeting on Wednesday, only minutes after their county chief fire officer, Iain Cox, rejected a call by campaigner Richard Coates to rethink the night closure plan that opponents say will put lives in Windsor at risk.

Councillors on the fire authority will now receive a basic £1,800 a year allowance instead of £412 - not to mention new mileage, subsistence and accommodation allowances if they undertake special duties.

After the meeting, a seething Mr Coates said: "Members have voted themselves a rise in their allowances, plus extra travel and accommodation expenses which, over the course of a year, will be the equivalent of three whole-time firemen's salaries, enough to keep Windsor station open during the night hours."

"All this extra finance comes out of the fire budget - it is an absolute disgrace." The Royal Borough has four members on the fire authority - all of whom refused to support the rise. The three Conservative members, Christine Bateson, Phillip Bicknell and John Lenton, abstained in the vote while Lib Dem Kathy Newbound voted against.

The Royal Borough has already announced it hopes to take control of the fire service in its area in a last-ditch bid to keep it open 24 hours a day.

For breaking news see our website at: www.sloughexpress.co.uk

Motorcyclist reunited with old friend

MOTORCYCLE fan Graham Sinclair could not believe his eyes when he visited the classic cars exhibition of his village fair on Saturday.

There on display among the cars at Wraysbury Fair was the motorcycle he had raced on all over the country as a young man.

He said: "It was remarkable, quite emotional, seeing the old bike. I recognised it in a second. It had not been restored or anything. It was just as it was when I competed on it 50 years ago."

Graham, 73, who lives at Riverside, Wraysbury, bought the 1926 mobile B Triumph for £7 10s (£7.50 in decimal currency) when he was an apprentice at Vickers Armstrong engineers.

In 1962, he won the Auto Cycle Union National Rally riding the bike 600 miles, starting off in Wraysbury and crossing the country before ending up back at Battersea.

In the same year, he took a part in the Motorcycle Club's Isle of Man Vintage Rally 600-mile distance event.

Motorcyclist magazine

named him 'motorcyclist of the year' after he finished the last 150 miles of the Saundersfoot Village rally with a petrol can on his lap after the engine split.

He also made the front page of the Windsor Express.

Soon after, Graham joined his dad's tipping and haulage business Sinclair Transport in Wraysbury - later taking over its running until his retirement. He sold the bike 25 years ago to a man who lived in Kent and concentrated on car racing instead.

The bike was only a distant memory on Saturday when Graham took part in Wraysbury Fair where he was on the Magna Carta Classic Car Club float dressed as Fred Flinstone.

It was club member Jim Swanson who had bought a vintage bike and mentioned to Graham that he had brought it along to the fair. It sounded familiar so Graham went to have a look and a touching reunion ensued.

He said: "It felt incredible sitting on that bike again."

"The years just fell away."



WHAT A TRIUMPH: Graham Sinclair and his old bike.

Fraudster jailed

A MIDWIFE supervisor has been jailed for 15 months after falsifying time sheets and cheating the NHS out of more than £63,000.

Kim Ying Yap - who worked at Heatherwood and Wexham Park Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust in Slough and Ascot - was sentenced at Reading Crown Court on Wednesday.

She had earlier admitted 16 charges of theft and fraud and agreed to a further 28 counts being taken into consideration.

Local counter-fraud specialist John Micklewright was carrying out an exercise for the trust comparing time sheets to ward rotas when discrepancies came to light. Thames Valley Police were informed and Yap, 52, was arrested on April 9, last year.

Yap, of North Hyde Lane, Southall, Middlesex, was also ordered to pay £63,812 in compensation.

Concerns grow over school's future

FEARS that Slough will lose one of its prize grammar schools deepened this week after it emerged a date has already been set for St Bernard's to be replaced by a new academy.

Under the proposals, first revealed in the Slough Express in October, the successful Langley Road school will merge with St Joseph's Secondary School to form a Catholic college.

In a 'Statement of Intent' letter to Slough Borough Council, a co-sponsor, an official from the Department for Children, Schools and Families, said: "Following recent discussions between Slough Borough Council and department officials, it has been agreed that the new academy will

open in September 2011 in existing buildings with new-build accommodation opening no earlier than 2014."

The letter was sent on March 23 this year without any formal consultation with parents.

Parents campaigning to save St Bernard's Grammar have accused education officials of making decisions behind closed doors.

In a statement published on the Save St Bernard's website, campaigner Tony O' Shea said: "The formal academy process has started and it is clear that communication to parents will only come after all the decisions have been made and St Bernard's is to become an academy. Where is the consultation?"

But Francis Image, schools commissioner for Northampton Diocese, the lead sponsor of the project, said the Letter of Intent from the DCFS contained an unfortunate omission.

She said: "The Academy will only open in 2011 if the project goes ahead."

"It's important to stress that whatever the Statement of Intent said, no one has committed to anything at this stage. We haven't written an Expression of Interest yet and the consultation cannot take place before then. Parents will get the chance to make their views heard."

For campaign information and updates, visit the website www.savestbernards.co.uk

Express reporting staff



Francis Batt
 News Editor
 01753 849543

francisb@baylismedia.co.uk



Lisa De Sousa
 Slough Reporter
 01753 849527

lisad@baylismedia.co.uk



Terry Pattinson
 Slough Reporter
 01753 849531

terryp@baylismedia.co.uk



Gareth McPherson
 Burnham Reporter
 01628 678238

garethm@baylismedia.co.uk



Kelly Rawlings
 Web Editor
 01628 678222

kellyr@baylismedia.co.uk



Graeme Copas
 Sports Editor
 01628 678232

graemec@baylismedia.co.uk