



Maidstone Town Mail

...another initiative from Town Centre Management



A very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous New Year!

That's the message from all of us at Town Centre Management (TCM) as we near the end of what has proved to be a challenging year for everyone.

Town Centre Manager Bill Moss said: "We wish all our members the very best at the festive season and we look forward to working with you all in 2010."

We also hope you've been enjoying the sight of our magnificent Christmas tree which stands proud in Romney Place – once again the only real Christmas tree in the town centre.

Many thanks to Miller House Office Management, RAP Office Interiors and Dean Johnson at Signs & Imaging for helping us make it possible.

All lit up

The town centre is decked in seasonal glory after the official switch-on of the Christmas lights on Sunday, November 22.

The Mayor and Mayoress, Cllrs Peter and Daphne Parvin, were joined on stage by stars from the Hazlitt Theatre's panto, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, for the grand switch-on. Thousands of people were in town to enjoy the festive fun, organised by Town Centre Management (TCM).

The heavens opened in the morning while the Heart of Kent Hospice's Santa Run was taking place, but that didn't deter the many soggy Santas from completing the 5km course round the town centre.

Luckily, the skies cleared later in the day, allowing all the shoppers to enjoy the street entertainment, provided by LosKaos. Among the highlights were the Gran Tourismos, a team of grannies who careered round town on their supercharged shopping trolleys.

But the main business of the day came at 5pm when, to the delight of the watching crowds, the Mayor switched on the lights from the kmfm stage outside the Town Hall, marking the official start of Maidstone's 2009 Christmas season.

Town Centre Manager Bill Moss said: "It was a fabulous day. Luckily we escaped the worst of the weather and the crowds turned out in force.

"They all seemed to enjoy the street entertainment and the whole day passed off without a hitch.

"I'd like to thank everyone who helped us make it such a successful event for the town."

Sharing the message

Maidstone Town Centre Management was asked to give a presentation at a training day for new town centre managers.

The event, organised by the Association of Town Centre Managers, took place at the headquarters of Boots in Nottingham. Town Centre Manager Bill Moss gave a talk about the way the TCM communicates with its members and the importance of keeping that dialogue going. It provided yet another opportunity for Maidstone TCM to enhance its reputation and to share its good practices with teams from other towns.



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Winners praised for their contribution

The winners of this year's MaidSafe awards were announced

at a special evening hosted by Flaming Henry's.



Restaurant success

Well done to Fortify Cafe in the High Street which has been shortlisted in the inaugural Kent Restaurant Awards being organised by OrderOnlineNow.co.uk. The shortlist in each of the 12 categories was determined by online voting. A panel of judges will now visit each shortlisted establishment. Fortify Cafe is hoping for success in the Best Bar/Cafe/Tea Room/Vegetarian category. The winners will be announced at an awards ceremony at the Ashford international Hotel on January 28.

The event was enjoyed by everyone who attended and the raffle on the night raised a magnificent £252 for Help for Heroes. Many thanks to everyone who supported it.

The winners were:

Best contribution ••• **Lynn Foster of Marks & Spencer.** The judges praised her for making good use of the radio, passing clear and precise information to other members and police, which has led to a number of good arrests. There were also special thanks to her for her care and attention to Town Centre Manager Bill Moss when he was taken ill in the store. **Runner up: Paul Turner.**

Team Award ••• **The Mall.** The Mall team were praised for always being on hand not only to help members in their own area but also throughout the whole town centre. The judges said no incident was too small to escape their attention. **Runner Up: Town Centre Unit - Police.**

Best Performance ••• **Sainsburys.** The judges said the group worked closely together, submitted good reports on every incident in their location and had been on hand to help when called out on other incidents. **Runner up: Andy Cole, Royal Star Arcade.**

Night Economy Award ••• **The Tac Team**

(John Marshall). The team were praised for working tirelessly through the night helping victims of crime. They work hard in adversity to ensure Maidstone is a safe place to socialise. **Runner up: The Muggleton.**

Special Award ••• **James Matthews.** The judges praised James for his reaction when he realised a serious incident was taking place. He made good use of the radio and responded immediately, ensuring that one offender was intercepted at the time and good information led to the arrest of an accomplice. **Runner up: Bipin Gurang.**

Vigilance Award ••• **Danny Bodgin.** Danny's geographical position means he has to work individually but that has never been a handicap to him. He is consistently vigilant and ensures that CCTV and other members are aware of local criminals entering the main part of the town centre. **Runner up: Kate Joy, Harpers.**

Timpsons Award ••• **Rod Eldridge.** Rod was praised for fully assisting MaidSafe over the years and for always being on hand to help newcomers to the security profession with his years of knowledge. He is highly respected for his accurate incident reporting and attention to detail when giving evidence to the police.

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Christmas Market Day fun contribution

The last Maidstone market day before Christmas promises to be a fantastic fun day for all the family.

As well as all the regular stalls selling everything you need for your festivities, there will be a host of entertainment on Tuesday, December 22, including a children's merry-go-round.

Among the VIP guests at the Lockmeadow market will be both Father and Mother Christmas as well as the Mayor, Cllr Peter Parvin, who will arrive at 9.30am.

At 11am visitors will be able to take a guided historical walk of the market and the Archbishop's Palace. Spaces are limited – first come, first served.

There will also be a competition to win Odeon Cinema tickets.

Town Centre Management's own Urban Blue community bus will be at the market, offering last minute advice on how to cook your Christmas dinner safely.



And you will even be able to enjoy an early Christmas dinner at the market cafe.

Streamline Taxis will be offering a free taxi service from Parkwood and Shepway to the market on the day.

You can book your seat at Parkwood Plus Healthy Living Centre, Parkwood Parade, or at the Beacon Church, Northumberland Court. Places are limited.

The market will be open from 7am to 2pm.

Helping the people of Maidstone

Town Centre Management's Volunteer Week event, Make it Maidstone – Make a Difference, proved a hugely worthwhile and successful event.

We welcomed volunteer groups, charities, churches and other organisations to the Mall Chequers during the week to highlight their activities and attract more volunteers.

Sue Towns Okorodudu, chief executive officer of Voluntary Action Maidstone wrote to TCM afterwards, praising it for what she described as "an excellent example of good partnership working".

She added: "On behalf of the voluntary organisations that took part in the

Volunteers Week at The Mall and VAM, a huge thank you for giving us all this unique and wonderful opportunity to show Maidstone's citizens what we do, inform of the services we deliver and recruit volunteers.

"Another benefit was the opportunity it gave organisations to liaise and network – the lifeblood of the sector! The feedback has been splendid, and everyone hopes it can be done again next year!"

Council priorities

Town Centre Manager Bill Moss met the borough council's head of finance, Paul Riley, council leader Cllr Chris Garland, and head of communications, Roger Adley, to discuss the council's spending priorities for the next financial year.

Mr Moss said afterwards that the council representatives had confirmed that MBC would continue to be a gold member of Town Centre Management for the financial year 2010-11. He was also reassured to hear that the High Street regeneration project remained one of the council's top priorities. "We consider it vitally important that the High Street area is improved," he said. "So we were happy to find that the council shares our view and has kept it at the top of the priority list."

Remembering those who gave their lives for us



Town Centre Management's Remembrance Day commemoration in the Mall Chequers was a very moving ceremony. Shoppers stopped to observe the silence and to watch and listen as the standards were lowered and a bugler played the Last Post. Many thanks to Capt David Hirst, Adjutant of 36 Engineer Regiment for his help and support. Our thanks, too, to Audley Retirement for hosting a wonderful lunch afterwards at Mote House for our VIP guests.

Farmers & Artists join forces

The next Bizarre Bazaar takes place outside County Hall on Saturday, November 28, from 9am to 1pm, in association with The County Town Farmers' Market.

Shoppers will be able to buy local produce as well as affordable, handmade arts and crafts created by Kentish artists. It's the ideal place to look for unusual Christmas presents as well as great food and drinks which have been produced or grown just a few miles away.

The artists selling good at this month's event include: Angela Howe, ceramics; Sue Pritchard, textiles; Lisa Evans, cards; James Gare, drawings and paintings; Neil Morton, jewellery.

New look store

Shoppers may have been puzzled when they saw a huge marquee erected in the car park of TCM member Sainsburys in the town centre. But in fact it was there to house fixtures, fittings and stock from the supermarket while its revamp was being carried out.

The new look store opened on November 11 – demonstrating once again that major retailers are showing their faith in Maidstone by investing in the town.

Christmas Craft Fayre

Maplesden Noakes School in Buckland Road is hosting a Christmas Craft Fayre on Saturday, November 28 from 10am to 4pm. Among the goods on offer will be art, pottery, chutneys, jewellery, cards, encaustic art, gifts, teas cakes and much more. Admission is free and there is ample parking.

Working together with the community

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Tomorrow's Future Today

Working together to beat the purse thieves



The problems created by bag snatchers and purse thieves are being highlighted by Town Centre Management (TCM) this Christmas - with the help of schoolchildren.

TCM launched its innovative awareness campaign at the Royal Star Arcade early in November. It has produced leaflets and posters warning about the thieves and outlining some simple measures which can help people keep their belongings safe.

Pupils from Maplesden Noakes School were at the launch as TCM has enlisted their help to thwart the thieves. TCM and police officers have given talks to pupils at Maplesden and at Cornwallis Academy about the misery that purse thieves cause. They also handed out postcards which carry simple anti-theft advice on one side. Students were asked to use the cards to spread the warnings about purse thefts among their relatives and friends - getting them to sign the back of the card to show that they have received the messages. All completed cards returned to the schools will be entered in a draw, with eight prizes of £50 vouchers to spend at the Mall Chequers.

Town Centre Manager Bill Moss said: *"We have been very encouraged by the response of the pupils. Now we are just waiting for them to return the postcards so we can see if they've succeeded in getting the message across to their family members."*

TCM is also distributing advice leaflets to shoppers and posters for traders to put on display. The simple safeguards include placing your purse at the bottom of your bag, always closing the zip or clasp of your bag and using a purse clip. Free purse chains are available from the Police Station in Palace Avenue. The purse snatchers tend to operate in pairs - one person talking to the victim to distract them while a colleague steals the purse or bag. All too often they target elderly women or mums with a baby or toddler.

Free purse chains will also be available. If you can't make it to a roadshow, the chains can be collected from the Police Station in Palace Avenue. TCM is also producing posters for traders to put up in their windows or stores.

Town Centre Guide There is still time to ensure that your business is included in the business directory in TCM's 2010 Maidstone Town Centre Guide. The cost of inclusion in the directory remains the same as last year at just £15. To make sure your business is listed or for information on display advertisements in the guide, please contact Lee Bennett at TCM on 01622 678777.



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