

## Buzz

# Toton residents get to say their bit as travellers moved on *by the Editor*

A GROUP of 18 'travellers' in caravans 'moved in' overnight to an area in Toton in early October. They only moved on when the council issued an eviction notice – the residents in Toton who had been shocked to wake up to their new neighbours attended a meeting called by MP Nick Palmer last week, to discuss what could be done.

The travellers initially took up residence on publicly owned land around the Greenwood Centre, Toton. They arrived on a Friday night and, residents alleged, are fully aware of how the law works and that the earliest Broxtowe Borough Council would be able to start the necessary

legal proceedings to raise an eviction notice would be the following Monday.

In the end, it took ten days for the notice to be served. The travellers then disappeared for 24 hours before pitching up on privately owned land opposite Lidl on Nottingham Road, from where they were moved after just 24 hours under a different section of the law.

They were subsequently given a police escort to Awsworth, where they found access to any open land blocked, and so they finally left the borough.

About 80 concerned residents attended the MP's public meeting at Coronation Hall on Portland Road. People commented that, generally, travellers should be allowed to live their alternative lifestyle in a peaceful and law-abiding manner – but not when the number of criminal 'incidents' in any one area appears to rocket roughly at

the same time as travellers arrive. Everyone agreed that it was the smaller faction of less law-abiding travellers that give travellers a bad name overall.

Mr Palmer outlined the law as it stands, explaining that it is currently under review, and now would be a good time for first-hand input.

Until about 20 years ago, councils across the country were obliged to find a site within their boundary where travellers could stay, but this was abolished and the sites eventually closed.

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to calculate that, with no legal site, travellers would have to make their temporary home on illegal sites, and this is where the law is likely to be changed.

Ideas already under discussion include the reinstatement of legal sites. At the meeting, Toton residents suggested licensing legal sites and

keeping them away from the centre of communities, applying stricter checks on the education of travellers' children, creating a national register of legitimate travellers and asking private landowners to make sure land wasn't an open invitation for someone looking to drop by for a few days.

Other sites in Toton that residents thought might be vulnerable included the open spaces at the top of Stapleford Lane.

Mr Palmer commented: "I thought the large turnout and moderate tone of the debate was really helpful, and I'm taking it as encouragement for pursuing my two-pronged strategy (a better network of legal sites; faster eviction from illegal sites) in Westminster. We were also able to identify half a dozen weak spots in the area and I'll be taking this up with the council."

# Seat dedicated to club's founder member

MEMBERS of The Inner Wheel Club of Beeston were delighted to have past Mayor of Broxtowe Cllr Sue Wildey attend the dedication ceremony of a bench seat, purchased in memory of Jessie Barrs, a founder member of the local Inner Wheel Club.

Jessie died last year at the age of 103 years, leaving a bequest to the club. The members decided that this

money should be put towards a bench seat for community use in the rose garden area of the grounds of Beeston parish church. With some additional funds, this was made possible.

Club President Gabrielle Arandhara was pleased to welcome Mrs Barr's nephew, Philip Emmans, and his wife, who had travelled from London for the ceremony.

## Christmas Lights Event

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It's possible that, should a Christian, making their home in a country in which people practise a different religion start trying to insist that the indigenous inhabitants don't call their festival by its proper title because it might offend their sensitive Christian ears, might find themselves a little, how shall we say, unwelcome?

It's also possible that Broxtowe Borough Council might need to retain some perspective – we know we live in a liberally-minded **Christian** country. People of other religions, whether they were born here or they've come to live here, also like to think this is a liberal country, and that's why they're here.

I can cope with being thought of as a member of a liberally minded country. I'm not so keen on the thought that people of other religions might think the British are a bunch of utter dimwits too scared to stand by even the *name* of the religious festivals celebrating this country's beliefs.

And tell me, what are you planning to do with Easter?

*The Editor*

# Between you and me...

*BROXTOWE MP Nick Palmer writes his monthly column for the Beeston Express to keep us, his constituents, up-to-date and informed. We would like to remind you, however, that the views he expresses are his own and do not necessarily reflect those of The Beeston Express. If you would like to comment on any of the issues he raises, please write to the address on page 2.*

*The Beeston Express has no allegiance to any political party.*

AS reported elsewhere in *The Beeston Express*, Beeston became an official Fair Trade town this week. Since this can sound like a token gesture that doesn't actually mean anything, I thought it might be helpful to discuss the philosophy behind it, because it's a part of a way of thinking that goes way beyond trade.

To get a Fair Trade mark of approval, the vendors of a product have to satisfy the Fair Trade Foundation that they are giving Third World farmers and workers a consistently fair deal. This doesn't, as one might think, mean that the price paid is over the world market price, or that Fair Trade goods are necessarily more expensive

(look at the current price of Fair Trade bananas – in many shops under £1 for a large bunch). What it means is that the company gives the producers security through longer-term contracts.

What would a non-Fair Trade company do? It would demand massive price reductions from producers every time there is an increase in supply or drop in demand. Fair Trade means that we are opting out of this sort of cut-throat behaviour: we don't want to pay exorbitant prices, but we're willing to have our vendors treat people reasonably in bad years.

Aren't price fluctuations part of the free market? Well, if you're a robust

company negotiating as an equal in a large market, you expect this and can take it on the chin – next year the position may well reverse and you can then force a higher price. However, if you're (say) a coffee grower on a smallish farm in Africa, you are probably living from hand to mouth already, and a random dip on world prices will push you into bankruptcy. The price might rise again in a year or two, but that will be too late for you: at best you've had to sell your land, at worst you're dead because you couldn't maintain adequate food and medical care.

By not insisting on grabbing every penny of trade advantage, we're

doing more than just saving some farmers. We're adding another thread to the delicate skein of solidarity that links communities across the world. This sort of action is a small sign that the human race is not just advancing technologically, but inching forward ethically too. So far as we know, we only have one life on this earth, in a world that often seems irrational and unfair. It's likely that we will each have times in our lives when we are dependent on the goodwill of others. So, although it is possible for each of us to try to optimise our own situation at the expense of others, in the long run, it doesn't make sense, does it?

The basic idea of society based on mutual support is what led me to join the Labour Party nearly 40 years ago, and stick with it through many difficult times. Others will have found other outlets for the same attitude – in other parties, in churches, or the myriad of small voluntary groups who do so much to hold our society together. It's not the only way to live. But in the end I think most of us will have reason to be grateful sometimes – and we'll make friends rather than sullen victims around the world.

