

MK NEWS

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Holiday couple spark Devon dinghy rescue

BY DAN PALMER

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A RETIRED couple from Bletchley have been credited with saving the lives of three young men who got into trouble out at sea.

Mick Plummer, 71, and his partner Hilary Hawes, 69, pictured, were picnicking by the coast while on holiday in Ilfracombe, Devon, when the life-or-death drama started to unfold before them.

Mr Plummer, a keen bird watcher, had a telescope and a pair of binoculars with him which he used to investigate a black dot they had spotted about half a mile out to sea.

It soon became apparent that what he was looking at was the three young men in trouble in their craft.

He told the harbourmaster, who in turn alerted the coastguard and the men, who were in danger of being swept out to sea because of rough and choppy conditions, were brought safely back ashore thanks to a tow boat.

The couple were told that if they hadn't spotted the dinghy then the lunchtime incident could have ended in tragedy.

They have often spent holidays in Devon, but Mr Plummer said that this was the first time anything out of the ordinary had happened.

"We are just pleased that they are all okay," he said.

"I saw them rowing like mad but the wind was underneath them and there was no way that they could get back.

"We thought it would be best to tell somebody what we had seen."

Despite their ordeal, sparked when a broken motor caused the inflatable vessel to drift, Mr Plummer said the trio had not shown any gratitude.

"They haven't thanked us and just



seemed to think that it was all a big laugh," Mr Plummer said.

The local coastguard in Devon has slammed the men, who they say set out on their ill-fated voyage with dangerously limited supplies.

They were not prepared for their trip as they set off with no flares or life jack-

ets and only one paddle.

One of them had taken a mobile phone on board, but this got wet and as a result stopped working.

In addition they had failed to tell the relevant authorities that they were setting off.

Dave Mannering, from the coast-

guard, said that the actions of the couple had been absolutely vital.

He said: "If it hadn't been for them nobody would have known about it until it was too late."

The couple were hoping for a less incident packed remainder of their holiday before coming home today.

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MKBUSINESS

Forum's advice is some of the best in the UK

BY DAN PALMER

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IF YOU'RE worried about the potential impact of snow and ice on your business then you needn't be as a city service, regarded as one of the best of its kind in the country, is waiting to help.

Bad weather is just one of the problems which can cause firms of any size a headache, but the Milton Keynes Business Resilience Forum provides support which leaves companies as prepared as possible.

The work being done is so good that the Government

has highlighted the forum as an example of good practice which should be copied across the UK.

Chairman Tony Cutress, who works for technology services firm Unisys, said different strategies would be used with different types of business.

He said: "It's horses for courses as while a two page document might work for a small firm, it wouldn't for a major company.

"We try to understand what businesses are thinking about and want to heighten the mindset that, although there's a recession, in a couple of

weeks there could be six inches of snow which will cause you to lose money."

One in five businesses will suffer a surprising disruptive event which could cause the loss of cash and reputation, with other examples being loss of power and outbreak of illness.

People from across the country have been dipping into the city forum's knowledge as they had nothing similar available.

"If we help someone we tell them to say MK helped them," Mr Cutress said.

For more details e-mail Natasha.Alsop@digitalk.com.

Dons' Luke opens up new-look store

DONS star Luke Chadwick relaunched Wilkinson in Bletchley at a Halloween-themed opening.

The midfield ace was joined by club mascots, Donny and Mooie, chief executive of the club's Sport and Education Trust (SET), John Cove, and store manager Beaven Conniff to cut the ribbon at the new-look store.

For the first 100 'early bird' shoppers through the doors there was an extra treat as they were all given a

Hallowe'en cupcake to celebrate the new 'Wilko Boo' range available in store.

A raffle to raise money for the store's charity, Age UK, was also held and a cheque was presented to SET.

Mr Conniff said: "Reopening day has been a resounding success and I am incredibly proud of what the team has achieved.

"The store looks better than ever and we have already received some fantastic compliments from our loyal cus-

tomers about the bright and modern design, which makes all the hard work worthwhile.

"It was great to have representatives from MK Dons along to help us reopen the store.

"They really helped to make the relaunch a memorable occasion for everyone involved."

Mr Cove added: "It was an absolute pleasure joining Wilkinson as the store unveiled its rebranded image."



Clearing up: Snow clearing by Bridgman Landscapes

Snow and ice beware

THERE'S no business like snow-business for one city firm.

Bridgman Landscapes, based in Wolverton, has invested £8,000 to tackle any wintery weather which could engulf Milton Keynes in the forthcoming colder months.

The company has bought four snow ploughs, two which are attached to tractors, one to a 4x4 and one to a quad bike, and it hopes to get people going again if things grind to a halt due to snow and ice.

Commercial contracts manager, Chris Bridgman,

said: "Due to the severe weather and lack of provisions to deal with the snow last year, we have invested heavily in snow ploughing and gritting equipment for commercial and business needs, retail parks and private car parks."

A forecasting service from the Met Office will help with the gritting service, with weather bulletins providing recommendations for freezing conditions.

This means clients can be notified if problematic chilly conditions have been predicted.

MKNEWSBRIEFS

Firm helps Greek spies

CITY event company Spy Games has successfully completed its latest mission at The Mall in the Greek capital, Athens.

Last month Greece's biggest shopping complex was transformed into 'Spy HQ', offering Spy Games activities for adults and children.

More than 5,000 shoppers put their espionage skills to the test in a series of specially-devised challenges, including dodging laser alarms, an exhilarating 'shoot out', codebreaking and safe cracking.

The best performers were rewarded with 'mall dollars' which could be used to buy gifts.

Managing director, Dave Thomas, said: "The event went exceptionally well, there were some challenges but it was very special."

A shop that is fair

HOME-START Milton Keynes has launched an online fairtrade shop in time for Christmas.

The family support charity, which has a base in Acorn House in Midsummer Boulevard, is selling ethically made products to raise vital funds for its work.

You can browse for gift ideas at www.homestartmk.ethictrade.com.

Reptile store opens up

A NEW shop dedicated to all things reptile has opened its doors in Bletchley.

The grand opening of Realm of Reptiles in Queensway took place on Saturday and there were a lot of slithering and scaly customers on show to handle and interact with.

HR headmistress' seminar

STONY Stratford-based Kate Russell, a nationally renowned HR author, speaker and consultant, has been asked to present at the Great British Business Show on Friday.

Known as the 'HR headmistress', Kate will present a seminar called 'how to get the most out of your workforce,' where she will discuss the importance and the strategic measures employers can make to ensure staff perform at their best levels to help drive any business or project forward.

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