

Business networking day for ladies who breakfast

Women in business in the Weald have a great opportunity to promote their companies and services at the annual Wealden Business Group (WBG) Ladies' Day, which is being held this year on Wednesday, July 2.

Says WBG member Sue Kimber, who is organising the Ladies' Day: "More and more women are working for themselves, and we are providing a showcase for them to talk about what they do, and learn about other businesses across the region".

The event – which is free of charge and includes breakfast – will be held at The Little Silver Country Hotel, Tenterden, and begins at 7am. Breakfast is at 7.15am, with networking continuing afterwards over coffee.

Ladies owning or managing a business not already represented by a WBG member (the Group has a non-compete policy) can book their place by emailing Sue Kimber at info@pastelshadesbridalwear.com, or telephone 01233 758787. Trades and professions already represented can be checked by logging onto the Group's website www.wealden-business-group.co.uk and clicking on 'Members'.

WEALDEN BUSINESS GROUP PRESENTS £5,000 CHEQUE TO THE KENT FOUNDATION FOR YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS



The Wealden Business Group (WBG), the Tenterden-based business networking organisation has presented a cheque for £5,000 to its charity of the year, the Kent Foundation for Young Entrepreneurs.

WBG raised the money over the past 12 months through a series of events, including a black tie dinner in February, and a weekly collection at the group's networking breakfasts held at The Little Silver Country Hotel, Tenterden.

The cheque was presented to Paul Barron, director of the Kent Foundation, which provides support, mentoring, training and access to finance to young people starting their own businesses.

He told members that the Foundation was launching new programmes in Sandwich, Ramsgate and Folkestone, and that WBG's contribution would help nurture the development of young people starting their own businesses, who would be so important to the future economy of Kent.

The presentation took to almost £15,000 the amount WBG has raised for local good causes in the past three years.

Picture shows WBG charity dinner committee member Anne Webster, Paul Barron (left) and WBG's immediate past chairman David Meredith.

SIMON HAMMOND ELECTED CHAIRMAN OF WEALDEN BUSINESS GROUP



Commercial insurance broker Simon Hammond has been elected chairman of the Wealden Business Group.

Simon, 44, is principal of commercial insurance specialists The Hammond Consultancy, which he founded in 2002 after a successful career with Royal Insurance, Provincial Insurance and AXA.

Says Simon: “With 34 members, all from different trades and professions, the Group is the premier business networking organisation in the area, and has never been healthier or more vibrant.

“My goal is to continue growing the membership, recruit more women members, enhance the already impressive number of business referrals, and continue to support our social and charitable activities – we have raised almost £15,000 for local good causes in the past three years.”

Educated at Oakwood Park Grammar School, Maidstone, Simon is married with one daughter and lives at Westwell near Ashford. His hobbies include cricket – he is vice chairman and opening bat for Hollingbourne CC – and golf.

Wealden Business Group welcomes applications for membership from local businessmen and women. Further information via the website www.wealden-business-group.co.uk or call secretary Dee Bateman on 07958 612937.

First Wealden Business Barometer reveals confidence with caution

Business confidence, profitability, investment and employment plans are all on the up, according to members of the Wealden Business Group (WBG). But as the recession begins to diminish, a mood of caution remains.

These are the headline findings from a new research initiative – the Wealden Business Barometer – which will regularly survey members' views on current business trends and the state of the market.

The Group, which meets for weekly networking breakfasts at The Little Silver Country Hotel, Tenterden, comprises 34 owner-managers of a diverse range of companies across the Weald, from accountancy to commercial property, creative services to painting and decorating, car sales to carpentry.

Main findings

The first Business Barometer, published today (26 March), showed that.....

- 82% of members are more confident about the business climate now than this time a year ago.
- 64% report that their profitability is improving.
- Although 36% forecast that sales growth in the coming year will be relatively modest, almost one in five respondents are looking forward to a turnover boost of up to 25%.
- More than half of the respondents are planning to invest in their businesses this year, in particular on capital equipment and computers.
- More than 40% are planning to improve staffing levels, although the majority favour part-time, freelance or sub-contract options.

Comments made by respondents reflected a largely confident mood, although some remain cautious.....

The Confident

“Good start to the year, with confirmed orders compared with the last five years. Enquiries well into the future.”

“Most businesses that we deal with locally are starting to report gradual improvement in all sectors, except retail”.

“People have more disposable income – (there is an) increase in non-essential spending.”

“As businesses get busier, they are beginning to ‘sub out’ work they might previously have done themselves”.

“This time of year is generally a fairly slow period for picking up new customers, but this year it seems that homeowners are a lot more confident about the foreseeable future.....”

The Cautious

“Only my successful clients are prepared to invest in growing their business for the long term.....the rest.....are only looking for a short-term profit”.

“...red tape...has a cost and time impact on the business. If there were less.....this cost and time would be used to focus on new business, which would generate more employment, profit and tax”.

“There is definitely more talk of activity, but people are still suffering from short hands and long pockets.”

“...the outlook for the year is encouraging. However clients have found trading tough over the past few years, and this has put cashflow under pressure, which has a knock-on effect on our business”.

Commenting on the overall results of the first WBG Business Barometer, the Group’s chairman, David Meredith said: “While many businesses are still cautious, there are clearly some healthy green shoots in some sectors, and hopefully this will spill over to benefit all Wealden businesses in the near future.

“This survey helps to confirm what real businesses feel, and what they are seeing on the ground.”

- *Note: all percentages are rounded up or down to the nearest whole number.*

26th March, 2014

Wealden Business Group celebrate fundraising success for Kent Foundation



The Wealden Business Group's annual charity dinner at The Little Silver Country Hotel, Tenterden on Saturday (1 February) was a sellout success, helping to raise more than £4,500 for the Kent Foundation for Young Entrepreneurs.

Almost 120 guests attended the function, which included entertainment from professional Kent magician Mark Gray, Tenterden choral singers The Tuesdays and an auction, which featured items ranging from a print by BAFTA award winning artist Neil Buchanan and signed gifts from chart-topping pop star Pixie Lott.

Kent Foundation chairman Allan Mowatt OBE thanked the guests for their generosity, while Daniel Warren gave a short speech explaining how the Foundation – which provides support, mentoring, training and access to finance to young people starting their own businesses – helped him launch his own company.

Wealden Business Group chairman David Meredith declared the evening “a tremendous success”, and the business networking organisation will now choose a new charity to raise funds for in the coming year.

Wealden Business Group Third charity dinner

Wealden Business Group, the Tenterden-based business networking organisation, is holding its third annual charity dinner at the Little Silver Country Hotel, Tenterden, on Saturday, 1 February.

The dinner is in aid of The Kent Foundation for Young Entrepreneurs, which provides support, mentoring, training and access to finance to young people starting their own businesses.

Fewer than 20 tickets remain for the black tie event, which includes a champagne reception, four course dinner, cabaret, auction and tombola, and are available, at £35 each, from the group's treasurer Richard Byrt, email Richard@byrtandco.co.uk

The charity dinner is part of Wealden Business Group's annual programme, which includes Wednesday breakfast meetings, networking opportunities, support and advice, and social activities including a curry club and golf society.

Cheers! Wealden Business Group enjoy a pint at Shepherd Neame



Wealden Business Group members at the brewery's oak and copper mash tun.

Members of the Wealden Business Group and guests today (Wednesday, 9 October) learned all about how Shepherd Neame of Faversham, Britain's oldest brewers, make fine Kentish beers.

Fourteen members of the Tenterden-based networking group, which represents independent businesses across the Weald, spent the morning watching a presentation on how the company brews beer, before touring the brewery and sampling some of its ales and lagers.

The outing was part of the Group's busy annual social programme, which complements the more serious business of meeting each Wednesday at The Little Silver Country Hotel, Tenterden for a networking breakfast.

Tenterden's biggest business breakfast

The Wealden Business Group is staging an Open Day breakfast on Wednesday, 25th September at the Little Silver Hotel, Tenterden, providing local business owners and managers with an opportunity to introduce themselves at the biggest networking event of its type in the area.

The Open Day, which attracted more than 75 people last year, provides the local business community with an opportunity to mix, mingle and make a personal one-minute pitch over a complementary breakfast to fellow professionals.

Says WBG chairman David Meredith: "As the economy begins to emerge from recession, this is a terrific opportunity for people to promote their businesses and sell their services to potential customers.

The event, which is completely free, is open to owners and managers of businesses not already represented by WBG members, which can be checked out on the group's website www.wealden-business-group.co.uk

Those wishing to attend the Open Day should contact WBG secretary Dee Bateman, tel: 07958 612937, or email deebateman@hotmail.co.uk

Wealden Business Group adopts Kent Foundation for young entrepreneurs as charity of the year

The Wealden Business Group has adopted the Kent Foundation for Young Entrepreneurs as its Charity of the Year.

WBG, which meets weekly to help members maximise their business opportunities and exchange information, sales leads and referrals, also has an active social calendar including charity fundraising events, and in the past two years has raised almost £10,000 for local good causes.

Explains WBG chairman David Meredith: “We believe that we can be of real help to young people starting their careers, and wanted to offer practical support to those who will own and manage the Kent businesses of tomorrow.”

The Kent Foundation was founded in 1985, and provides tailored support through business mentoring, specialist enterprise training and access to finance through the Start Up Loans initiative. It strives to offer a personal service and match the enthusiasm of the young person.

Kent Foundation director Paul Barron was delighted by the news: “Having attended WBG I was inspired by their appetite for business and their enthusiasm to support the local economy.

“There is synergy between WBG and Kent Foundation for Young Entrepreneurs, this opportunity will help us reach out to more young people with potential to be innovative and contribute to their business success”

Wealden Business Group presents £4,500 cheque to Pilgrims Hospices

The Wealden Business Group has presented a cheque for £4,500 to the Pilgrims Hospices.



The donation, raised through a series of events during the year including a black tie dinner in February, was presented to Pauline Donkin from The Pilgrims' Hospices at the Wednesday, 27 March WBG breakfast meeting.

Pilgrims Hospices were chosen as the group's charity-of-the-year in memory of late member Andy Wilson.

Picture shows Pauline Donkin receiving the cheque from WBG members David Meredith (centre) and Malcolm Elsmore.

WBG'S Big night out raises more than £4,000 for Pilgrims Hospice



More than £4,000 was raised by The Wealden Business Group at the annual charity black tie dinner held on Saturday, 2 February in aid of Pilgrims Hospices.

The dinner, at the Little Silver Country Hotel, Tenterden, was attended by almost 100 members and guests, who enjoyed a champagne reception, dinner, auction, tombola and fun casino.

They were welcomed by WBG chairman Richard Harvey, who said that Pilgrims Hospices had been chosen as the group's charity-of-the-year in memory of late member Andy Wilson.

He also thanked the event's sponsors, which included Busby's Chartered Accounts, Barry Jones florists, and the Little Silver Country Hotel.

Upbeat Wealden Business Group go back to school – Rock school!



When the members of Wealden Business Group meet up for their weekly networking breakfasts, they normally discuss business issues. But at the last meeting it was back to school – Rock School!

WBG member Peter Buongarzone owns Wired Music Kent, which teaches guitar, bass and drums to people of all ages. His mobile Rock School aims to have people who have never played an instrument in their lives rocking and rolling after an hour's tuition.

Peter's presentation to the networking group, which meets every Wednesday at The Little Silver Country Hotel, Tenterden, did precisely that, and business talk was swiftly swapped for guitars and drums, beat and bop!

For further information about Wired Music www.wiredmusickent.co.uk or call Peter on 07932 62 78 77.

Picture shows (left to right) Wealden Business Group members Trevor Bourne, Sue Kimber, Oliver Johnston and Peter Buongarzone all ready to rock and roll!

Need finance? Angels are waiting in the wings....

It's commonly recognised among the business community that while the UK – indeed the whole of Europe – is in the midst of the biggest financial crisis since the 1930s, for some as-yet-unidentified reason British business continues to flourish, generating more than one million jobs during the recession.

However, what is uncomfortable to many otherwise healthy businesses is the lack of finance available from most High Street banks for overdrafts or loans to fund equipment and growth plans.

Many business owners don't think beyond traditional big banks, but Wealden Business Group member Graham Card recently told members that there are plenty of other sources willing to lend much-needed cash.

They include....

- 'Angel' funding A network of high net worth individuals prepared to take a stake, or lend up to £500,000, to businesses which are either growing quickly, where clients take a long time to pay, or where there is a demand for capital investment;
- Trade finance for importers and exporters;
- Enterprise Finance Guarantee loans which, while still difficult to come by, are available to well-rated companies with specific needs for a loan; and
- Leasing and HP finance, including sale and leaseback of existing fully-owned plant and machinery – this can even be arranged for companies in distress.

These are just some of the financial services which can be arranged by Card and Company.

For further information, contact Graham on 01580 766066,
email g.card@corporateliquidity.com or visit his website
www.corporateliquidity.com

Wealden Business Group say "Come and join us" for charity dinner and a great night out

Wealden Business Group are issuing a 'Come and join us' invitation, as they put the finishing touches to plans for the networking organisation's annual charity dinner on Saturday, 2nd February.

More than 90 tickets have already been sold for the dinner at The Little Silver Country Hotel, Tenterden, which is in aid of The Pilgrim's Hospice, but Wealden Business Group are aiming to achieve a maximum attendance of 120.

Tickets cost just £35 each, and include a champagne and canapés reception, super three-course dinner, great entertainment, a fun casino, auction and raffle.

The Pilgrim's Hospice was chosen as the Group's charity of the year in memory of late member Andy Wilson. Last year, the Group raised £5,000 for The Caldecott Foundation with collections at their weekly breakfast meetings and a number of social events, including the charity dinner.

To reserve tickets, please email Wealden Business Group treasurer Richard Byrt at Richard@byrtandco.co.uk

Big breakfast boosts business



Business owners and executives from across the Weald flocked to Tenterden's biggest business networking breakfast on Wednesday, 26th September.

Organised by the Wealden Business Group and held at The Little Silver Country Hotel, Tenterden, the Open Day networking event was designed to help local businesses meet potential new customers and professional contacts.

More than 75 members and guests attended, and WBG chairman Richard Harvey commented: "It was a terrific morning, and a real example of what business networking can achieve – helping local business to succeed, and stimulating growth".

It was also an opportunity to explain to guests how WBG works and its ethos. Highly effective at business referrals between members – around 500 over the past 12 months – the group also has a lively social and charity calendar, including a book club, golf days, curry club, visits to local attractions and a charity fund-raising gala dinner.

WBG operates a 'non-compete' policy, so guests at the breakfast – and anyone else involved in business in the Weald area – were reminded that if they ran a business not already represented by a member, they would be entitled to attend a future WBG breakfast meeting as the group's guest, and to discover more about the benefits of membership.

Inset picture at the networking breakfast are (left to right) WBG secretary Malcolm Elsmore of Elsmore Creative Marketing; guest Spencer Card of Vivid Visions Paintworx; WBG member Simon Hammond of The Hammond Consultancy; and Laura Anstiss of Open View Landscape Design.

Application for membership

All applications require a minimum of 75% agreement by the existing membership before any application is accepted. All applications will require 2 acceptable references and a satisfactory credit check.

Please complete the form below and submit to the secretary with an application fee of £50 by cheque payable to Wealden Business Group.

If your application is approved, you will need to pay your annual subscription of £150 in advance by cheque payable to Wealden Business Group.

Your breakfast costs - which must be by standing order are £32 per month (See attached form).

Name	
Position	

Business contact details		
Business name		
Year established		
Address		
Postcode		
Telephone	Fax	
Email address		
Web address		

Home contact details (optional)		
Address		
Postcode		
Telephone	Fax	
Email		

Please give details of two referees who will vouch for you	
Name	
Address	
Email address	
Name	
Address	
Email address	

Please give a brief description of your business, Please be as precise as possible (but continue on a separate sheet, if necessary), to identify valuable business introductions you would welcome.

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Signed	Date
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Standing order mandate

To your bank

Name of bank	
Branch address	

Name of account to be debited

Name	
Branch address	
Sort code	
Account number	

To beneficiary bank please pay

Name	HSBC
Branch address	59 High Street Tenterden Kent TN30 6BE
Account name	Wealden Business Group
Sort code	40 - 44 - 08
Account number	01620428
Amount	Thirty two pounds only £32.00
Date of first payment	
Due date and frequency	Monthly
Dare of last payment	Until further notice

Signature(s)	
Date	

PLEASE CANCEL ALL PREVIOUS STANDING ORDER/ DIRECT DEBIT MANDATES IN FAVOUR OF THE WEALDEN BUSINESS GROUP

Banks may decline to accept instructions to charge Standing Orders to certain other than Current Accounts

Note

The Bank will not undertake to

- A) make any reference to Value Added Tax or pay a stated sum plus VAT or other indeterminate element.
- B) advise remitter's address to beneficiary.
- C) advise beneficiary of inability to pay
- D) request beneficiary's banker to advise beneficiary of receipt.
- E) accept instructions to pay as soon after the specified date as there are funds to meet the payment, if funds not available on the specified date.

**Payments may take three working days or more to reach the beneficiary's account.
Your branch can give further details.**

Open day attendees

NAME	BUSINESS	EMAIL ADDRESS
Adam Brown	Plastering contractor	
Adam Heustice	Lyreco	
Alan Croucher	Advanced Systems Ltd	
Alex McKellar	Portal Tax Claims	
Andy Butler	AB Supply & Fabrication Ltd	
Ally Walker-Davies	Holistic Personal Trainer	
Belinda Benton	Evenden Interiors	
Bill Fox	Developing People	
Carolina Baranski	Baranski Allen Design Architecture and Interiors	
Claire Moloney	Interior designer	
Christian	Wine kitchen	
Clair Homersham	Chart Fencing	
Daniel Warren	Mint fresh services	
Danny Elsey	Forex MoneyCorp	
David Elliot	Calendar cleaning	
Dale Allan	Baranski Allen Design, Architecture and Interiors	
David Claydon	Global Travel Robertsbridge	
Dee Bateman	Book keeper	
Dino Ragouzeos	Electrician	
Greg Freeman	Marketing & research advisor	

Greg McCarthy	National Engravers	
Gina	Wine kitchen	
Glyn Moore	Icon Business Solutions	
Jack Salisbury	Forex Money Corp	
Jamie O'Connell	CCS Solutions Ltd	
Jeanne Samuels	Ardenham Energy	
Jonathan Meades	Tax consultant	
Keith Shafto	Emagination digital , Online video	
Leanne Smith	Sports massage	
Laura Antiss	Open View Landscapes	
Lewis Woodward	Cobbler	
Lydia Wood	Tom La Dell, Landscape Architects	
Mervyn Spate	Blue Ridge designs Architectural Services	
Nicki Lane	Nicki Lane	
Paul Mitchell	Electricare	
Paul Westerham	Tanyard dental practice	
Peter Buongarzone	Wired Music Kent	
Rev Eileen Harrop	Curate, Tenterden Benefice	
Richard Goodchild	Coast to coast locksmith	
Richard Wood	NRG Plumbing and Leadwork Contractors	
Roger House	Churchill House	
Sezen Zeki	Ashford Chamber of Commerce	

Members

Name	Email address	
Advanced Limousines	Simon Collins	
Accountant	David Meredith	
Audio visual installers	Dave Lee	
Building Services	Chris Sturdy	
Carpenter	Perry Barton	
Creative Marketing and Design	Malcolm Elsmore	
Commercial Finance	Graham Card	
Property and Commercial Law	Justin Nelson	
Dor2Dor Marketing Srvices	Andrew Frisby	
Electrician	Richard Gates	
Kent and Sussex Security	Geoff Hilton	
Financial Adviser	Martin Tickner	
Florist	Daren Jones	
Healthcare	Bill and Sue Ferguson	
HSBC Bank plc	HSBC Bank plc	
Insurance broker	Simon Hammond	
IT Computer Services	Phillip Bristow	
Litigation Solicitor	Richard Byrt	
Little Silver Country Hotel	Oliver Johnston	
Painter and decorator	David Baker	
Photographer	Trevor Godfree	
Plumber	Luke Smith	
Press and public relations	Richard Harvey	
Print and Design	Martin Birchall	
Personal & business vehicle sourcing service	Terry Tho rpe	
Tree surgeon	Rob Twyman	
Telephone Communications	Mike Parmar	
Will writing service	Anne Webster	

Businesses invited to Tenterden's big breakfast

Tenterden's biggest business breakfast is being held at The Little Silver Country Hotel, Tenterden on Wednesday, 26 September.

The Wealden Business Group Open Day is expected to attract more than 60 people, who will be given the opportunity to introduce themselves and their businesses at the biggest networking event of its type in the area.

Says Wealden Business Group chairman Richard Harvey: "Networking is one of the most effective ways for businesses to sell their services, and when the economy is as challenging as it is right now, then we're delighted to do what we can to help our fellow professionals".

The event is free, and includes complementary full English breakfast.

Invitations have been extended to other business support organisations in the Weald, including Tenterden Chamber of Commerce, Cranbrook Business Association and Oxney Rural Business Group.

If you are an owner/manager of a local business and would like to attend the Wealden Business Group Open Day breakfast, please contact WBG secretary Malcolm Elsmore, tel: 01580 715518, email malcolm@elsmore.co.uk

For further information, please contact:
Richard Harvey,

Tel: 01580 763605 or 07780 607209

Government cash for care home fees to vanish – Kent families, set to lose out

FAMILIES in Kent could lose out on thousands of pounds in support when government rules on recovering care home fees change in September.

Currently, the cost of care home fees for is reimbursed for many local families following an assessment of need.

But now the government has changed the rules on when, and how, fees are recovered – and any claims made after new deadline dates will be refused.

Wealden Business Group member Anne Webster from Biddenden, a care assessor for Iniquitas Care, a company specialising in ensuring full and proper recovery of care home fees, says that many local residents don't know about this deadline or the rules governing whether care home fees can be recovered either partly or fully.

“People really do need to act before time runs out,” she says. “We have found that families are paying out an average of about £60,000 in fees when an elderly relative needs to go into a care home – money which has been earned by people who have worked hard, saved for a rainy day, paid their taxes and contributed to the economy.

“Under the present system, with average nursing home fees running at £37,000 a year, life savings quickly vanish, and an estimated 20,000 people a year are forced to sell their home.”

Families requiring information about the new government rules, and whether they are eligible for support in paying care homes fees, should contact Anne Webster on 01580 292161 or 07932 072 8244, email anne.Webster@aps-legal.co.uk.

10 August 2012

11 June 2014

Dear Cranbrook Business Association member

On behalf of the Wealden Business Group, we would like to invite you to join us at our Open Day at the Little Silver Country Hotel, Tenterden on Wednesday, 26th September, 2012.

As our guest, you will be able to enjoy a full English breakfast and network with fellow professionals from across the Weald – an unrivalled opportunity to introduce yourself and your business to potential purchasers.

This is the programme:

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 6.45am prompt | Registration at Kent Hall, Little Silver Country Hotel
(NB: Please park at the rear of the hotel, immediately outside Kent Hall).
Coffee and tea is served. |
| 7am | Breakfast is served

Brief introduction to the aims, objectives and achievements of the Wealden Business Group.

Members and guests are invited individually to briefly state their name, business and area of expertise. |
| 8.30am | Breakfast ends. Guests invited to continue networking..... |
| 9.30am | Close |

Please remember to bring plenty of business cards, plus any other marketing marketing material you wish.

We very much look forward to meeting you for what we anticipate will be a mutually profitable and successful morning.

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Elsmore
Secretary

You Don't Have To Be A Techno-Geek!



The following article appeared in the November issue of 'Kent Business', in which Wealden Business Group member Mike Parmar explains why you don't have to be a techno-geek to get the best out of office technology.

Technology – don't you just love it? Or not, particularly if you are one of the army of less technically adept people who look on in silent envy at that work colleague who can apparently make their whizzy new phone and laptop perform the Seven Wonders of the World while you're still struggling with text.

It was ever thus, since the days when technology really came to town, and big companies introduced IBM mainframe computer systems, smaller operations bought those Amstrad green screen PCs, and every self-respecting professional had a mobile phone, even if it was the size of a house brick.

Tempus fugit, and with it has come a new era in which business computer and telephone systems can be meshed. Today, for example, a busy rep on the road can send a presentation from his mobile to a client's PC and talk it through over the phone, or have customer emails sent to the office forwarded to his mobile.

Helping businesses understand how these systems - or even their existing one - can save them money and time is what I've been doing for the past five years, after setting up my Wave2 Communications consultancy at my home in Appledore (proving comprehensively that another benefit of new technology is the ability to work effectively from wherever you like).

Not that anything technical was on my mind when I was a kid. I was brought up and went to school and college in Bolton, but when it came to deciding what I wanted to do for a living, I only knew it had to be a job with plenty of day-to-day contact with people.

So I started working in a local fashion shop, then joined national retailer Jean Jeanie, and ended up as manager of their store in Oxford Circus, London. However, in the '80s it was becoming clear that computers and new generation phones were going to have an enormous influence on everyone's lives, so I went back to college to get some additional technical qualifications.

After a gap year in India, I came down to Kent to work in a small office supplies business in Maidstone. But I kept thinking about the business potential offered by computers and phones, particularly mobiles which were just coming into fashion, so I joined a firm pioneering in communications technology.

But inevitably I wanted to become my own boss, and now I now sell computer-phone network systems to clients throughout London and the southeast. It's hard work, but the business is growing, and that's helped by the fact that I'm independent, rather than representing any particular manufacturer.

Oddly, I get the biggest kick out of the money my clients save as a result of my advice, rather than anything I might sell to them. One of my major customers, a London law firm, has cut line and call charges by £1,500 a month and £6,000 a year on maintenance, while a two-employee business near Ashford is looking at annual savings of £200 a month, important to them in these difficult economic times.

Operating from home means I can keep my costs to a minimum, although I value the benefits of networking – I've just stepped down after a year as chairman of the Wealden Business Group – and invest in my website.

But like anyone who works at home, I like to get out and about and achieve that much-talked-about work/life balance. That includes going to a martial arts club twice a week, where I'm an instructor and can let off a bit of steam. It keeps me alert and focussed, vital qualities for anyone in business, particularly the self-employed!

I also enjoy visiting my 'maison secondaire' in Picardy, France, which I've had for eight years. Still haven't finished all the DIY it needs – but I'll get there one day.

Wave2 Communications. Tel: 0844 880 7610. Website: www.wave2c.com

Don't listen to the merchants of gloom – Business is bubbling in the Weald



Don't listen to the Merchants of Gloom – because there's never been a better time for local entrepreneurs to start up their own businesses.

That's the verdict of the Wealden Business Group, the Tenterden-based networking organisation whose members range from a plumber to a solicitor, electrician to finance broker.

Says WBG chairman Mike Parmar: "If people who want to run their own businesses listen to all the prophets of doom, and the claims that banks aren't lending, they're sadly misinformed.

"We're finding that it's a great time for start-ups. Two of our newest young members – a tree surgeon and a plumber – have started up since the recession started, and are going great guns.

"And our banker members are being highly positive: if you have a good business plan, then they have money to lend".

Mike, who runs telecoms consultancy Wave2 Communications from his home in Appledore, adds: "I know plenty of people who have started up businesses, many from their spare bedrooms, and they're doing very well.

"And there are members of our group who were thinking about retiring and haven't - not because they can't afford to, but because there are so many good business opportunities out there."

However, Mike stresses that new business startups need to be disciplined and professional about marketing, cash control and networking.

"People buy from people", he said. "For instance, there have been no fewer than 400 referrals between our 30 members in the past year. Put simply –networking works."

Wealden Business Group welcomes applications for membership from local businessmen and women. Further information via the website www.wealden-business-group.co.uk or call the secretary Justin Nelson on 0844 880 4698.

The group, which meets each week at Little Silver Hotel, Tenterden, have guest speakers, organise trips – visits to the European Parliament in Strasbourg, Canary Wharf and Port Lympne are on this year's schedule - and enjoy regular social occasions to raise funds for their nominated charity, The Caldecott Foundation at Smeeth, near Ashford.

Ironing – love it or hate it! Karen seeks new recruits for her Cranbrook team of Iron Maids (or misters)



Ironing is like Marmite. You either love it or hate it.

But as Karen Wilkinson, the owner of professional ironing service Iron Maids, has discovered, finding people who know how to iron – and enjoy it – is proving more than a household chore.

Says Karen, who is launching her service into the Cranbrook area in May: “I recently advertised for more people to join us. Of the seven who applied, none of them turned up for interview.

“I have a team of 10 ladies plus my male quality supervisor (there’s no discrimination in the world of ironing!). There’s never been a bigger demand for home ironing - I need more people”.

And Karen can prove it. She only launched Iron Maids two years ago, but now has 600 private and commercial customers all over the county, and is signing up more at the rate of six a week.

“They include single men, professional couples, elderly people, new mums and those who just hate ironing”, she says. “But my people absolutely love it, and get great pleasure from pressing a shirt or a skirt beautifully.”

It’s a real skill, underpinned by a quality guarantee, and Karen’s company has been recognised by the Guild of Master Craftsmen – “maybe that should be Craftswomen as well!” she jokes.

Iron Maids, based at Laddingford near Yalding, was initially launched in West Kent, and now covers an area stretching from the Medway Towns to Paddock Wood, Maidstone to Sevenoaks and Tonbridge, and into East Sussex.

Since then, Karen and her team of ironing experts have signed up customers in East Kent, from Lenham and Charing to Ashford and Tenterden and now Cranbrook. Karen is the newest member of the Wealden Business Group, the professional networking organisation which meets each week at The Little Silver Hotel, Tenterden.

Iron Maids, which offers laundry and dry cleaning as well as ironing, runs a free collection and delivery service in its own fleet of vehicles. The company has a shoal of testimonials from happy customers, which can be viewed on their website www.iron-maids.co.uk

Chris Sturdy takes the chair at Wealden Business Group



Chris Sturdy, owner of Headcorn-based building services company CS Solutions, has been elected chairman of The Wealden Business Group.

The Group is a networking organisation of local business professionals which meets each week at The Little Silver Hotel, Tenterden, has guest speakers, organises trips, and enjoys regular social occasions to raise funds for charity.

Chris founded his company three years ago, after 22 years in the Royal Engineers, during which he saw service in The Falklands, Cyprus, Kuwait, Northern Ireland and Bosnia.

Chris, who takes over from Mike Parmar, owner of Wave2 Communications of Appledore, told Wealden Business Group members at their annual meeting today (Wednesday, 6 April) that he was honoured to take the chair, and looked forward to helping the Group develop and grow.

Other new officers elected at the AGM included London solicitor Richard Byrt as treasurer, and Mike Parmar who becomes membership services officer.

Wealden Business Group welcomes applications for membership from local businessmen and women. Further information via the website www.wealden-business-group.co.uk or call the secretary Justin Nelson on 0844 880 4698.

6 April, 2011

Out of Tenterden – and into Africa!



Fourteen members and guests of the Wealden Business Group took time off from the world of commerce when they went 'on safari' at Port Lympne wild animal park.

The visit was one of a series of 'awaydays' held each year by the Tenterden-based networking organisation of business professionals, which meets each week at The Little Silver Hotel, has guest speakers, organises trips, and enjoys regular social occasions to raise funds for charity.

The group breakfasted at Port Lympne's magnificent headquarters mansion, and heard a talk about the worldwide conservation work of the Aspinall Foundation, before boarding an 'African Experience' lorry for a tour of the park.

17 May 2011

Trees a crowd – but no problem for Tenterden florist

You expect to find flowers in a flower shop. But trees.....?

However, when long-established Tenterden florist Barry Jones & Sons was asked to provide trees for a client's garden party on Saturday (11 June), the shop's staff proved as adept at potting a palm as they are at presenting a pretty posy.

Says proprietor Daren Jones: "It was probably one the most unusual request I've ever received, and it was certainly the largest order we've had in the past five years.

"We handmade 10 trees out of ivy, peonies and alchemilla – each six foot tall – potted seven palm trees, and sculpted a further four spiral topiary trees. And that was before we prepared a dozen giant glass bowls filled with fresh flowers."

The unusual order took Daren and his team of three almost a week to prepare, including delivery of the entire order to the customer in Rye.

It was the latest demonstration that the shop is prepared to go the extra mile for customers. Last winter, when Kent's snowy roads were at a virtual standstill, Daren and his team delivered 17 bouquets in a single day.

"As an independent trader in an era of multinational retailers, we have to try that bit harder – and we do", said Daren.

13th June, 2011

An awayday kiss for Wealden Business Group



Picture shows members of the Wealden Business Group at Turner Contemporary.

Members of the Wealden Business Group took time out to visit the Turner Contemporary Gallery in Margate on Wednesday (19 October) to see some of the most striking modern art in the country, as well as one of the most famous sculptures in history, Rodin's *The Kiss*.

The visit was one of a series of 'awaydays' held each year by the Tenterden-based networking organisation of business professionals, which meets each week at The Little Silver Hotel, has guest speakers, organises trips, and enjoys regular social occasions to raise funds for charity.

The Group brings together experienced and successful business people from a variety of professions and trades and is currently recruiting new members.

Interested applicants should contact secretary Justin Nelson on 0844 8804698, email secretary@wealden-business-group.co.uk, or visit the website www.wealden-business-group.co.uk

*For further information, please contact:
Richard Harvey, tel: 01580 763605 or 07780 607209*

WBG golf evening

Number	Member	Meal choice
-	charlestruelove <charlestruelove@hsbc.com>,	
2	chris <chris@cs-solutionsltd.com>, darenjones <darenjone@barryjones.freemove.co.uk>, David Bewsey <david.bewsey@travelcounsellors.com>, "david.a.baker" <david.a.baker@live.co.uk>,	
1	"Geoff <geoff@kentandsussexsecurity.com>,"	
-	Graham Card <enquiries@corporateliqidity.com>,	
1	info <info@trevorgodfree.com>,	
2	Justin Nelson <JustinNelson@nelsonslaw.co.uk>, Karen Wilkinson <karen@iron-maids.co.uk>,	
-	Little Silver Country Hotel <enquiries@little-silver.co.uk>, Luke Smith - <wps@westviewplumbing.com>,	
1	Martin Birchall <martin@pdctw.co.uk>,	
-	Martin Tickner <martin@financialchoices.co.uk>,	
1	Mike Parmar <mike.parmar@wave2c.com>,	
-	Natalie Kedge <mail@baileyfields.com>,	
-	Paul Rowe <info@paulroweassociates.co.uk>,	
1	Perry Barton <perrybarton@hotmail.co.uk>, Phil Bristow <phil@pbcs.uk.com>, "Richard Byrt <richard@byrtandco.co.uk>,"	
-	Richard Harvey <plough.cottage@btinternet.com>, rob@fernshiretrees.co.uk,	
1	Simon Collins <simonacollins@hotmail.com>, suzifinch <suzifinch@hsbc.com>,	
-	Terry Thorpe at D G East <terry@dgeast.co.uk>,	
-	Trevor Bourne trevorbourne@hsbc.com	
-	mail@billferguson.co.uk,	
1	Malcolm Elsmore	B
A	Homemade Liver and Bacon served with seasonal vegetables and potatoes	
B	Home cooked Ham on the bone served with an egg, french fries and salad	
C	Homemade Beef Lasagne served with french fries and side salad	
D	Spitroast Chicken served with french fries and side salad	
E	Homemade Vegetable Cannelloni served with french fries and side salad	

Meal included in the cost other menu choices are available at an extra cost to each member.

Wealden Business Group raises £3.500 at charity dinner in aid of The Caldecott Foundation



More than £3,500 was raised by The Wealden Business Group on Saturday (21 January) at a black tie dinner in aid of The Caldecott Foundation, the Smeeth-based charity which cares for young people who have suffered from cruelty and neglect.

The dinner, held at the Little Silver Country Hotel, Tenterden, was attended by 120 members and guests of WBG, who enthusiastically took part in an auction, raffle and fun casino.

They were welcomed by WBG chairman Chris Sturdy, while member Richard Harvey, who is also chairman of Caldecott's centenary fundraising committee, told guests that the charity was raising £750,000 to build a vocational training centre and other facilities for older teenagers to help them into the workplace and supported adult living.

21st January, 2012

Geoff's mod-ern security!

A version of the following story appeared in the January issue of 'Kent Business' magazine.



I don't suppose my customers will be aware that I was once a parka-clad lad, cruising down Southend seafront on a Vespa, when Mods and our foes the Rockers regularly made Bank Holiday headlines back in the '60s.

But that was my *modus operandi* before I left Southend High School to enrol at Hatfield Poly, and gave up my beloved Vespa for the more serious pursuit of business studies.

My economics lecturer encouraged my interest in marketing, which was good advice because I was accepted as a graduate trainee at the Knightsbridge headquarters of Bowater, the international paper products company.

My commercial baptism was as a sales rep, endeavouring to persuade reluctant factory managers to buy our new, soft toilet rolls in place of traditional, hard Bronco-style paper. They said that staff would be tempted to nick this new luxury stuff!

Soon afterwards, I was appointed an overseas marketing executive, which entailed visiting territory managers in Ireland, Norway, Denmark and Sweden. Exciting, but a lot of travel and I wanted to learn more about marketing.

So in 1976 I moved to Kent with Susan, my new wife, and joined Kimberly-Clark as a brand manager, working on sales campaigns and product development, and dealing with top London marketing agencies.

It was great experience, but after three years I decided I'd like to run a marketing department of my own, which was an offer made by shop-fitting specialists Baxter-Fell in Northfleet.

The company did well during the retail revolution, but in the late '80s it was taken over. And again. And again – we had five new owners in six years!

By 1994 I was a divisional managing director, running three companies for Rubicon, the latest owners, but seemed to be spending more time writing and presenting strategic papers and making presentations to pension funds and investors than actually managing the business.

That wasn't really what I wanted to do, so when the company was taken over yet again, I was delighted when the new owners offered me redundancy.

It meant I had the finance to start up on my own, and the security industry seemed interesting because it was growing fast, and seemed relatively recession-proof – businesses always need to keep themselves safe, regardless of the economic climate.

To learn the ropes, I initially ran a project for a company called Modern Alarms, trialling a new franchise concept selling burglar alarms to domestic customers, and setting up shop in Victoria Road, Ashford with a staff of four.

As it turned out, Modern Alarms decided not to progress the franchise project and, in any event, by then I'd already decided that the fast-growing CCTV sector represented a more lucrative side to the security business.

That opportunity was provided by a new CCTV franchise called Eye-Spy, and in 1996 I launched a branch from my Victoria Road offices. Soon after, John Jameson, who was running another Eye-Spy franchise in Dartford, joined forces with me.

But we realised the security market was broadening beyond alarms and CCTV so we relinquished the franchise, and launched Kent & Sussex security, widening our product range to include access control, automatic gates, vehicle barriers and other forms of electronic security.

It also meant we had a bigger market to aim at – local authorities, schools, hospitals, public attractions and private business throughout Kent, Sussex and London.

We've enjoyed strong growth, and have a super client list – for example, we've installed CCTV and security systems for customers as diverse as Rochester Cathedral, Benenden Hospital, Shepherd Neame, Thames Luxury Charters and schools and property developments throughout the region.

Turnover has now hit the £1 million plus mark, and we have been assiduous in earning the right industry accreditations and quality marks. Without them, you can't get on the tender list for the public sector or the bigger private sector clients.

Like everyone else, the recession has made us step back and think hard about the company - business has become lot tougher. So we're glad we broadened our product offering and client base, and we work hard on our marketing, not just the website and corporate literature, but also through networking, and I'm a member of both the Wealden Business Group and Ashford Chamber of Commerce.

Away from work, I try to keep personally fit and active – I race a Flying 15 sailing boat at Bewl Valley every weekend, play racquet ball at Biddenden Squash Club, and also golf at Hemsted Forest.

But I still miss that Vespa!

Kent & Sussex Security Ltd, The Old Bakehouse, Forge Lane, Ashford. Tel: 01233 622025.
Website: www.kentandsussexsecurity.com

January, 2012

Headcorn builders buck industry gloom with £12.5M contract wins

A Headcorn, Kent-based company is bucking the building industry gloom by winning more than £12.5 million of new contracts, including a luxury subterranean house in Hampstead, London.

Chris Sturdy and Jim Casey, joint managing directors of CS Solutions Design & Build, have also forged partnerships with a Kent architectural practice and several local sub contractors to help deliver the projects.

Mr Sturdy, who is also chairman of the Wealden Business Group, only launched his building services business three years ago after a 22-year army career, initially working on small projects such as house extensions and garage conversions.



But now he and Mr Casey are celebrating a raft of new contracts, including.....

- A 6,500 sq ft luxury home in the exclusive London suburb of Hampstead. Split into three separate buildings, with most of it underground to reduce energy costs, it includes a swimming pool, gym, cinema and six bedrooms. The project, worth more than £1.3 million, has been commissioned by a charitable foundation which owns several property developments in London, and has also awarded CS Solutions Design & Build contracts to deliver.....
- A hotel and student accommodation block in Hackney with a project value of £5.5 million;
- Four blocks of apartments and commercial units in Hackney, Lewisham and Elephant & Castle, with a combined project value of £5.3million, and
- A small housing development at Wembley, with a project value of £0.5 million.

To help manage the rapid expansion of the business, CS Solutions Design & Build has retained architectural practice Cook Associates of Faversham and hired two project managers, a quantity surveyor and finance support.

Says Mr Sturdy: "Our growth is attributable to meeting and exceeding client demands, on time and within budget, a forensic commitment to quality, and the unwavering support of our people – not least my wife Cheryl, who has backed me all the way.

"I'm also a great believer in using local, Kent suppliers and sub contractors– including Riley Fabrications, Allsands Building Supplies, Divine Roofing and Paul Boakes Joinery - and the success of CS Solutions Design & Build has benefited them as well."

As part of his commitment to supporting local businesses, Mr Sturdy is the current chairman of the Wealden Business Group.

Just how good is social media for business!

In common with all business organisations, Wealden Business Group has been more than a little exercised in recent years with social media – its implications for spreading positive messages about a company, its potential for winning new clients, its risks and rewards.

There are still people in business - perhaps of the, er, more mature variety - who glaze over at the very mention of social media, considering it a plaything for young computer geeks who ought to get out more.

However, anyone who has spent time on producing a really attractive website and getting it properly optimised, and also fully engages with sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter will be positively evangelical about their business benefits.

Nevertheless, we would appear to be entering into a new social media era, when the first flush of enthusiasm fades into a more realistic appraisal of how much time, money and benefit should be expended in online activity.

A new survey from the respected YouGov research organisation reveals that 41 percent of people are now "getting bored" with social media; 47 percent object to seeing ads based on their profile activities; and that 44 percent would not be positive about a brand on a social media site, even if they have heard something positive about it.

Note that all those figures are below 50 percent, which would indicate that more than half of those people surveyed would have more positive views on social media, and many may simply be gagging to buy anything they see on, say, YouTube.

But as Dan Brilot, media consulting director at YouGov observes: "With the ability to share, tweet and interact on any kind of site almost a given, social media services increasingly need to have an extra *raison d'être* beyond merely being 'social' to make an impact in today's crowded market".

Maybe more needs to be done to ensure that social media activity is more finely targetted towards target audiences, and that ROI can be accurately tracked - something advertising and PR agencies have had to do for years.

Richard Harvey takes chair at Wealden Business Group

Public Relations consultant Richard Harvey has been elected chairman of The Wealden Business Group.

The Group is a networking organisation for local professionals which meets each week at The Little Silver Hotel, Tenterden for business referrals over breakfast, has regular guests speaking on business topics, organises trips, and enjoys regular social occasions to raise funds for charity.

Richard, who lives and works in Tenterden, was co-owner of Edwards Harvey Associates, Kent's leading PR consultancy, before selling it nine years ago.

Since then he has specialised in director-level communications consultancy and crisis management.

Richard takes over from Chris Sturdy, founder of the CS Solutions building services group based in Headcorn.

Other new officers elected at the Group's AGM included Malcolm Elsmore of Cranbrook-based Elsmore Creative Marketing as Group secretary, and Geoff Hilton of Kent & Sussex Security, Ashford and Bethersden-based Andrew Frisby of Dor2Dor.net Letterbox Marketing as joint marketing officers.

Wealden Business Group welcomes applications for membership from local businessmen and women. Further information via the website www.wealden-business-group.co.uk or call secretary Malcolm Elsmore on 01580 715518.

For further information, please contact:

Richard Harvey, tel: 01580 763605 or 07780 607209



Wealden Business Group presents £5,000 donation to The Caldecott Foundation



The Wealden Business Group, the Tenterden-based professional networking organisation, today (Wednesday, 25 April) presented a cheque for £5,000 to the Caldecott Foundation, the Smethth-based charity which cares for young people who have suffered from cruelty and neglect.

WBG meets weekly to help members maximise their business opportunities and exchange information, sales leads and referrals, and has an active social calendar including charity fundraising events.

WBG chairman Richard Harvey (pictured left), who is also chairman of the Caldecott Foundation's centenary fundraising committee, received the cheque from last year's Group secretary, Justin Nelson.

It was also announced at the Group's meeting, held at The Little Silver Country Hotel, Tenterden, that the charity beneficiary for the coming 12 months would be the Pilgrim's Hospice, in memory of WBG member Andy Wilson who died recently after a long illness.

For further information or images, please contact:
Richard Harvey, tel: 01580 763605 (office) or 07780 607209 (mobile)

25 April 2012

Tenterden osteopath proves his point



When Tenterden osteopath Bill Ferguson gave a presentation to the Wealden Business Group, he got right to the point.

Specifically, the point of a needle. Because Bill gave a vivid demonstration of

Western medical acupuncture to members of the group, and even eased the aches and pains of two fellow members.

Tunbridge Wells solicitor Richard Byrt stepped forward – gingerly – explaining how years of half marathons, skiing and go-karting had resulted in a painful right knee.

“Bill’s skilful use of acupuncture needles certainly did the trick”, explained Richard afterwards “for which I was very grateful, because I’m just off for a climbing weekend in the Lake District!”

Likewise Robertsbridge-based IT specialist Phil Bristow, whose aching wrist was eased considerably after Bill applied one of his acupuncture needles. Said Phil: “The needle didn’t hurt a bit – it certainly works”.

Bill’s demonstration was part of a regular series of talks and presentations given to the Wealden Business Group, the business networking organisation which meets weekly at The Little Silver Country Hotel, Tenterden to help members maximise business opportunities, exchange information and arrange charity and social events.

For further information, please contact:
Richard Harvey, tel: 01580 763605 or 07780 607209

18th May, 2012

The secret of photography is making people happy.

A version of the following feature on Wealden Business Group member Trevor Godfree appeared in a recent issue of 'Kent Business', the monthly supplement which is included with all Kent Messenger group paid-for newspapers throughout the county.

I'm pretty fortunate that my prime motivation as a professional photographer is simply making people happy. How many other people in business have that as their corporate objective?

I've spent more than 30 years taking pictures for a living, and to say that it's been a varied career is putting it mildly, from shooting portraits of royalty and leading political and business figures to advertising shots for Procter & Gamble and BP.

Today, I mainly concentrate on wedding photography and taking family portraits from my base at West Farleigh near Maidstone, and I get as much buzz out of that as I ever did as a busy, London-based freelancer.

The first camera I ever owned was a 35mm Ilford Sportsman, which I bought for a school A level project. That sparked my interest in photography, and in the 1960s I enrolled at Ealing School of Art and Photography – Freddie Mercury was in the year above me, and others who went there included Pete Townshend and Ronnie Wood.

After I left, I was offered a job on cruise liners taking pictures of passengers – pretty irresistible for a lad with long hair and a silk scarf straight out of college. It was a great life: the perks included first class travel, and I travelled the world from South Africa to Sydney, the Far East to the West coast of America.

The oil crisis of '74 temporarily scuppered the cruise industry, so I decided it was time to get a serious job, not least because I was about to get married. So I knocked on doors and made phone calls, and I picked up work from advertising and PR agencies and the government's Central Office of Information.

This gave me the opportunity to photograph some of the most famous people in the world, including commissions to shoot State Visits and Royal occasions featuring the Queen, Princess Diana and Prince Charles, magazine portraits of Yasser Arafat and King Hussein of Jordan, and government ministers such as Peter Mandelson, John Prescott and – most memorably – Margaret Thatcher.

I'd turned up early at Number 10 Downing Street to take her picture, and somehow managed to walk in on her and Denis in their sitting room, reading the evening paper.

They asked if I'd like to join them for a drink, and so we sat together enjoying G&Ts! She looked after me, and was very aware of what a photographer really needed to get the best result.

You could say that my business was unconventional. I used to occasionally meet up with my business partner at 'head office' - the Army & Navy coffee shop in Victoria Street - but we were always busy, and never had to advertise. It was all word of mouth recommendation.

But I wanted to spend more time with my wife and children, so 10 years ago I decided to move into wedding and lifestyle photography, partly spurred by the change in the law which meant that people could get married in some really interesting places, and not just in church.

I still do some work in London – last year I took the directors' portraits for the BP annual report – but now I spend most of my time taking wedding pictures around Kent, as well as family portraits.



It's a change of pace and style, but I love it. Wedding photography is highly competitive, and you can only survive if you create a complete story of the day in pictures. Couples want natural shots, particularly capturing the unexpected, and the same creativity applies to taking family portraits.

I still don't do a lot of marketing, although I have a website and attend weekly networking meetings of the Wealden Business Group in Tenterden, although that's mainly to mix with people who can provide me with services, from insurance to banking to plumbing.

I love my job every bit as much as when I first picked up that Ilford camera.

It's a great career, although, to be truthful, digital photography means I'm chained to the computer during the week when I'd really rather be out taking pictures.

Trevor Godfree Photography,
Cherry Orchard Farm,
Hunt Street,
West Farleigh
ME15 0ND.

Tel: 01622 817835

Website: www.trevorgodfree.com

Insurance? It's too important for Meerkats

The following article on Wealden Business Group member and insurance specialist Simon Hammond appeared in a recent edition of 'Kent on Sunday'

You can go compare at the money supermarket, but end up as mystified as a meerkat when it comes to an insurance claim. Which is why it pays to use someone like Simon Hammond.

Simon is the principal of The Hammond Consultancy, the Ashford-based insurance company which has built a rapidly-growing roster of business clients.

Explains Simon: "The problem with buying from an online insurance comparison site is that you're on your own if you want to make a claim.



"In most cases I can match their prices anyway, but in addition I am there to help the client maximise any claim and deal with problems and paperwork."

And it's that approach to client care which has earned Simon and his colleagues an increasing share of the insurances required by Kent businesses turning over between £10,000 and £10 million.

His philosophy is simple – source the most competitive quotes, react quickly to enquiries, and check with clients before policy renewal dates to ensure they provide adequate cover.

"Of course there's always someone who will offer a cheaper service, but the real issue is providing the right cover, and making sure that policies meet the needs of businesses as they grow", says Simon.

However, he is mindful that tough times call for value-for-money, and he is justifiably proud of saving a major client £24,000 a year on a comprehensive range of policies.

Most clients, of course, will spend considerably less on insurance, and Simon is passionate about ensuring that start-up businesses have the correct cover. "I started my own business ten years ago", he says "so I know just how daunting it is, and a supportive consultancy such as ours can be tremendously reassuring".

Along with celebrating that 10th anniversary, Simon is also marking 25 years as an insurance specialist, having learned his trade representing major companies such as Royal Insurance.

And it is this combination of experience and service which has earned him a string of testimonials from satisfied clients, such as Drakes Plumbing Supplies, Neville UK and Elite Tool Hire which are displayed on his website, www.thehammondconsultancy.co.uk

While Simon provides just about every insurance that a company could possibly need – from employers liability to professional indemnity, goods in transit to group personal accident – occasionally he receives an enquiry he can't cater for.

"In that case, I look upon myself rather like a good GP: if I can't help with a particular policy, I will know a specialist who can," he says.

Which is part of Simon's business philosophy: the right insurances, speed of service, and absolute avoidance of complacency – and meerkats!

Contact Simon Hammond at The Hammond Consultancy
Tel: 01233 712812 (office) or 07815 823868 (mobile).
Email: info@thehammondconsultancy.co.uk

Terry Thorpe takes over as sole proprietor of market-leading vehicle suppliers



Wealden Business Group member Terry Thorpe has taken over as sole proprietor of D.G.East of Cranbrook, one of Britain's leading independent suppliers of vehicles to business and private clients, following the retirement of partner and co-founder Denis East.

Terry Thorpe and Denis East established the business five years ago to provide company fleet owners and individuals with independent, impartial advice on car and commercial vehicle purchase, hire, leasing and finance.

Mr Thorpe has been in the motor trade for 37 years, including experience as dealer council member for Rover group – where his dealership was in the top 10 in Rover's customer care programme – a regional panel delegate for Unipart, and is a qualified MOT tester.

He said: "Client trust and retention are the founding principals on which Denis and I established our business, and we have become one of the most successful independent suppliers in the country."

Mr East has been a high profile media spokesman for the motor industry, with a client list including Nokia, N.M.Rothschild Bank and the TI Group; designed a software system to help employees calculate the tax implications of having a company car; and worked in senior management positions for companies such as HeronDrive and Currie Motors.

For further information, please contact:
Terry Thorpe, The DG East Partnership, tel: 01580 715550, or

18th July, 2012