

# The Riverporter



ST IVES AWARD WINNING NEWSPAPER

COVERING THE NEWS FOR ST IVES AND AROUND

Issue 139: 21 July 2023

A TOTALLY INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER • UNCONNECTED WITH ANY GROUP OR ORGANISATION

## Can you believe it?

**D**isgraced former Cambridgeshire Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC), Jason Ablewhite, has been co-opted to the Conduct Committee of Fenland District Council.

Cllr Ablewhite is a member of Benwick Parish Council (see RP132) and will join Cllr Martin Field of March Town Council on the committee. They were the only two candidates to apply for the £140 a year role after Fenland Council emailed all town and parish councils. Fenland's Conduct Committee has met only once in the past four years and last Thursday's meeting, led by the new Chair, ex CC Leader, Steve Count, lasted just 10 minutes. Last Wednesday Lib Dem Councillor, Gavin Booth, sought to have Cllr

Ablewhite's appointment overturned. But this failed as 26 councillors out of 34 voted for his appointment. It is hard to understand why Fenland have accepted Cllr Ablewhite to this role considering his reason for resigning as PCC (see RP50). *Riverporter* readers will no doubt see the irony of Ablewhite sitting in judgement on the behaviour of other councillors. One reason might be that Fenland has a Conservative majority of 27 and Ablewhite's application was endorsed by Council leader, Chris Boden and Communications

portfolio holder Cllr Steve Tierney. Both new conduct committee members will sit in an advisory role; they can speak, raise questions and 'seek to influence the debate' but do not have formal voting rights.

In his application, Cllr Ablewhite informed the committee that he had extensive experience within the local government arena for over 22 years. *'I believe I can bring experience, impartiality and duty to the role,'* he said.

Cllr Ablewhite also told the committee that he had been involved in the original set up and consultation of the Standards Board of England and Wales *'albeit in a different guise, now, I can appreciate the need for an effective and fair process.'*

### In case you do not know ...

Cllr Ablewhite is a former Mayor of St Ives, was Executive leader of Huntingdonshire District Council and Chairman of the East of England Local Government Association.

He was Cambridgeshire's Police & Crime Commissioner when, in 2019, he resigned after sending a picture of his 'truncheon' to a woman who visited Police headquarters.

The Independent Office for Police Conduct investigation of the matter did not result in criminal charges (see RP 013 May 2020) and therefore Mr Ablewhite has no convictions and is 'able' to resume his political career.



Over 80 people enjoyed the charity concert at Noon on Saturday 8 July in the Free Church. Featuring guitarists Sebastian Pompilio and Justin Hyer. The concert organised by St Ives Town Team raised £500 for Amnesty International.

## St Ives & Music - Don't miss ...

**FRIDAY 28TH JULY**

**Max de Bernardi  
& Veronica Sbergia**



Fresh from appearing at the Upton Blues Festival, Max and Veronica, who hail from California will enthral you with their repertoire of American Roots music, from Country and Folk, to Ragtime and Swing and from Gospel to Blues.

Max (vocals, acoustic guitars) & Veronica (vocals, washboard, baritone ukulele) are well-known international musicians. Respected individually, together Max and Veronica are something quite special.

**7.30pm in the Riverport Café Bar**  
**Tickets: £10 from [www.ticketsource.co.uk/cexevents](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/cexevents) or can be purchased from the Riverport Café Bar.**

## DIARY OF EVENTS

### JULY

**Wednesday 19th to Saturday 22 July** - **Imaginary** A new musical from St Ives Youth Theatre at the Burgess Hall. Tickets [www.siyt.co.uk](http://www.siyt.co.uk).

**Sunday 23rd** - **Music on The Waits**. The Lightwaves, 2.30pm

**Saturday 29th** - **Raise The Roof Fundraiser**. Corn Exchange from 11am.

### AUGUST

**Music on The Waits**. Every Sunday 2.30pm until 4pm. Free.

**6th** - Manea Silver Band, **13th** - Upwood Ukuleles, **20th** - Musical Amigos, **27th** - Acoustics Anonymous.

### SEPTEMBER

**Sunday 10th** - **The official opening of the bandstand**. Free entertainment with Split Whiskers and The Lighwaves.

**Thursday 14th** - **The Best of Broadway and The West End**. Neil Richardson and Mark Burton at 2pm in St Ives Corn Exchange.

**Thursday 14th – Sunday 17th** - **The Old Riverport Jazz & Blues Festival**. 25 Free concerts over four days in a variety of venues. See the programme at: [www.stivescambridgeshire.co.uk](http://www.stivescambridgeshire.co.uk)

**Friday 29th** - **Chapel Arts concert with the Tapestry Singers**. The Corn Exchange 7.30pm. Tickets £10 from [www.ticketsource.co.uk/cexevents](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/cexevents) or from the Riverport Café Bar.

### OCTOBER

**Friday 6th** - **Chapel Arts concert with Danilo Vignola**. A chance to experience incredible Flamenco music played on a Ukulele by this passionate Italian. The Corn Exchange 7.30pm. Tickets £10 from [www.ticketsource.co.uk/cexevents](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/cexevents) or from the Riverport Café Bar.

**Saturday 7th** - **The Old Riverport Ukulele Festival**. The Corn Exchange 9.30am. An all-day Festival with workshops and performances by visiting groups ending with a concert featuring the A D Cooke Girls. Tickets £10 from [www.ticketsource.co.uk/eventsstives](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/eventsstives). Hurry this event is nearly sold out.

**Saturday 14th** - **The Illuminated Boat Parade**. Another Free event to enjoy from The Town Team and FEST. Watch the 'parade' of boats illuminate the river with a theme of 'Musicals'. Picture from 2021 Festival.

# Community hopes HDC can remove lights

It is normally unwise for a journalist to take sides on a local issue, because there are always two sides to every story. In this case I am pretty certain that hardly any resident of St Ives will disagree with the comment that The Dolphin Hotel is poorly run and becoming an eyesore.

Prior to the hotel being used by Centrica for housing asylum seekers the hotel's reputation was declining and frequently featured in *The Riverporter* (see RP93).

The fact that it is no longer operating as a hotel is unfortunate as St Ives has few hotel beds to accommodate visitors who wish to stay here. It's current 'asylum service' may continue a while yet and no doubt the income the hotel receives from the Government is welcomed by the owners but at some point that contract may end and then what for The Dolphin?

## Can it be run as a hotel again?

Whatever happens we will see in the future but right now three important community groups have written to *The Riverporter* to voice their concern about what they consider to be inappropriate lighting along the hotel's riverfront (see picture above). The Great Ouse Valley Trust (GOVT), the Civic Society and the Town Team are urging Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) to seek removal of the hotel's fluorescent lights.

**GOVT** said ... *The lighting is completely unsuitable for a conservation area. It is harsh and completely excessive to any real nighttime requirements and more suitable for a down market nightclub.*

Christine Phillpotts, Chair of the **Civic Society** told *The Riverporter*: *The recent neon illuminations along the boundaries of The Dolphin hotel are highly unsuitable, an unwelcome*



*garish anomaly in the old town's conservation area and also inappropriate, as they give the impression the hotel is perhaps a nightclub, a part of the town's night time economy when its role is as a hostel for the homeless, so has not been available to the townspeople or visitors to St Ives for some years and actually ceased offering mooring to boating visitors. The harshness of neon lighting will cause light pollution to nearby riverside residents and could also be a disorienting distraction to boaters looking for a suitable mooring place. It is harsh, unsuitable given its conservation setting and its function, and should be removed.*

**St Ives Town Team's** Chair, Sheila Stones said ...

*As Chair of the Town Team, I am of the view that we should draw Huntingdonshire District Council's Planning Enforcement attention to the unauthorised continuous strip of vibrant blue LED lighting that has recently been installed along almost*

*the entire river frontage and to the side of the five steps that lead to the terrace in front of the entrance to the Hotel.*

*The Hotel is in a highly sensitive location, immediately adjacent to the 15th century scheduled and grade I listed St Ives Bridge within the St Ives Conservation Area. The extremely bright blue LED lighting is reflected in the river; thereby doubling its contextually inappropriate impact within the setting of the bridge and numerous other designated heritage assets within the vicinity.*

*If the local authority is not already aware of the unauthorised installation of the lighting, then we should be urging them to ensure that it is removed as a matter of urgency, as we are at the height of the summer when many visitors are coming to St Ives and it creates a very negative impression at the heart of the historic Town Centre.*

*The Riverporter* will be sending these comments to HDC's Enforcement Officer.

## 40 items saved from landfill in an afternoon

OK, so we can't fix the economy ... but we can fix a host of other things at the St Ives Repair Cafe. The town held its 3rd pop-up Repair Cafe in June and over 40 broken items were fixed and saved from landfill.

Curtains, zips and a pyjama waistband; a cuckoo clock, an art deco lamp, a radio and numerous blunt tools; food mixers, a mobile and a record player ... all these and more were mended by our team of repairers, variously described as 'excellent', 'helpful', 'creative', 'persistent and expert' and 'very

capable' by satisfied owners, who watched their repairers in action, and whose donations, along with the sale of homemade cake and drinks, covered our running costs. *As always I'm immensely grateful to the Repairers*, says Fiona Ford, Coordinator of the Repair Cafes. *They give their expert services free, rewarded simply by seeing a valued article rescued and its owner satisfied, plus, of course, all the cake they can eat! I'm also proud of our excellent support team who plan the cafes and make everything run smoothly.*



**The 4th Cafe is on Saturday 30th September 1-4pm at St Ives Methodist Church.**  
To book in an item for repair email [stivesrepaircafe@gmail.com](mailto:stivesrepaircafe@gmail.com) and the repair team will be glad to help.

## Anglia in Bloom judges visit



The judges from Anglia in Bloom visited St Ives last Friday, and enjoyed their tour in spite of the rain.

The Waits was looking its very best, and the judges included Holt Island, Kings Hedges, the allotments and Ramsey Road and Broad Leas cemeteries in their visit.

Thank you to the Norris Museum, Friends of Holt Island, Hill Rise Allotments Association and Dennis Easton for helping St Ives in Bloom to host the tour, and especial thanks to Francis for providing us with a fantastic, though soggy!, river trip on the St Ives Electric Riverboat.

We will hear the result in September.

## Filling Station wins another award



Pictured: Manager Ben Harradine and Matthew Kelly with the retailers award. (Image: Newsquest)

The Filling Station, situated on Abbey Retail Park in a 40ft shipping container, has been named East of England's best food and drink startup in 2023. They came up against four other businesses in the finals, including an organic chocolate company and a new alcohol-free beer brand.

Earlier this year, The Filling Station was crowned the best independent beer and cider shop in the UK at the prestigious Drinks Retailing Awards 2023.

The judges 'loved' the environmental and local angle of the shop, which utilises US-style beer growlers for sustainable refilling and has 10 ever-changing draught beer taps on their wall sourced from local breweries, which helped them to 'stand out from the crowd.'

## A further update on the Landing stage

HDC's enforcement Officer has written the following ...

*As you may already be aware, an application has been submitted to the local planning authority for consideration (Ref:23/00123/FUL). This is not something that the local planning authority can choose to reject and the developer has the right to submit a retrospective application. The validation of the application has taken longer than expected and our enforcement case is still proceeding despite the submission of the application. In line with our corporate*

*enforcement policy, we are monitoring the outcome of this decision and will allow for the planning process to consider the works. Should the application be refused formal enforcement action can still be taken.*

*We are continuing with the required actions needed to be taken before any formal notices can be served. The next update will be provided when we have further information that we can share.*

*Well that's pretty much what we said in our last issue. You can object by going to HDC's planning portal and go to Ref:23/00123/FUL where you should be able to register your comment.*

## The new town 'with no heart'

1,200 homes are now occupied in Northstowe, however there is no still no shop or GP surgery for what will be the UK's biggest new town since Milton Keynes in the 1960s. The BBC reported that six years after the first people moved in, it still does not have a single shop, café or GP surgery.



Northstowe was supposed to be an eco-community, (as above) built to help ease the housing crisis in one of the least affordable parts of the country. They delivered on the first part - new homes but many residents are not happy with the lack of community facilities.

It will eventually see 10,000 new homes, housing around 26,000 people making it far bigger than St Ives (17,000 population). Paperwork lodged by the developer with South Cambridgeshire District Council said a 'community centre building will be provided' before the 900th home was occupied. A sports pavilion, it added, 'will be completed' before someone moved into the 500th home. But with more than 1,200 homes occupied there are no shops or community facilities, beyond the two schools.

When Northstowe was still a concept, South Cambridgeshire District Council drew up strategies about how it should be built. The Northstowe Area Action Plan, adopted in 2007, set a goal of ensuring the 'early provision of local centres to help create community identity from the outset'.

In April, nine Portakabins were delivered to the site and were fitted out as a temporary community facility. Bill Handley, South Cambridgeshire's lead councillor for communities said that residents should 'manage expectations'. He also said 'Phasing means the land and all the legal obligations go over at that point. That's not when the buildings will be delivered.'





Having your say ...

Get it off your chest,  
email Erik at:  
editor@theriverporter.uk

Dear Erik,

**The Conduct Commissar**

As you drive through Fenland District, look out. Misconduct Commissar Ablewhite's about. Don't stop for luncheon, He'll be on you with his truncheon! Don't think you'd get a trial, That's not this Commissar's style.

**Doberman**

Dear Erik,

My name is Irene Carter, I am a resident of St Ives and to thank The Free Church for all the help and contact they gave us through the Pandemic while isolating, eg. online Church Services, phone calls to ask how we were managing and a Newsletter K I T (Keeping Us Together), where we could all contribute items of interest.



I began writing a weekly poem for the Newsletter and now I have put them all into a book.

The poems record a mini history of that time in a thoughtful, humorous, serious, topical and hopeful way, to bring a smile, but also remember those we lost.

There are 73 poems and the cost is £7.00 (or more if you're feeling generous). After printing cost deduction donations will go to The Free Church, St Ives, Cambs.

Telephone me on 01480 493228 if you would like a copy.

LICENSING ACT 2003

## NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR A PREMISES LICENCE

Notice is given that I, Matthew Philip Kelly have on the 17th July 2023 applied to Huntingdonshire District Council as the Licensing Authority for a Premises Licence for The Snug of 3 The Mill, Free Church Passage, St Ives, Cambridgeshire, PE27 5AY for a small bar and shop selling alcohol for consumption on and off the premises. The shop and Bar will be open Monday to Sunday 12.00-23.00 and serving alcohol at these times.

Anyone wishing to make representations concerning this application should do so in writing to: **Huntingdonshire District Council, Licensing Section, Pathfinder House, St. Mary's Street, Huntingdon, Cambs, PE29 3TN**

Representations in respect of this application must reach the Licensing Authority by the 14th August 2023.

Persons wishing to inspect the register or the record of this application may do so by attending the office of the Licensing Section, during office hours, Monday to Friday inclusive.

It is an offence knowingly or recklessly to make a false statement in connection with an application, the maximum fine for which on summary conviction is £5000.

## HIGHLIGHTING THE BANDS

playing at this year's  
**Old Riverport Jazz & Blues Festival**

### Claudio & Friends



Claudio Citarella is an Italian bassist/producer, born in Benevento, Italy. He has collaborated with several international artists. Since 2005 he's created and produced the music for Spot Scavolini and collaborates as a producer with Italiano Jazz and Unknown Pleasures Sound. He currently has over 7K Spotify followers. Claudio will be joined by his friends, including the prolific Freddie Hall, for a lunchtime concert in the Golden Lion. A chance to have some food and listen to some cool music. See the full programme at [www.stivescambridgeshire.co.uk](http://www.stivescambridgeshire.co.uk)

### T-Shirts on sale NOW!

Once again you will be able to support the Festival by buying one of our limited edition T-Shirts. We are particularly proud of them this year and the Team are grateful to Gilly James of Mercato who did the fabulous design.

They cost £10 and are on sale at the Corn Exchange, Nelson's Head, Floods Tavern and the Haywain.

They are proving popular, so don't delay get yours today!



## Investments raises questions



An exclusive disclosure in The Guardian, about Jonathan Djanogly, turns the spotlight on a controversial mechanism used by MPs to buy shares. The investments have come to light as part of the paper's investigation into what are in effect secret shareholdings of MPs. These shareholdings have not been publicly declared in parliamentary registers because, as Mr Djanogly says, they are held in a blind trust, a key mechanism used by ministers to distance themselves from their financial interests.

Since last October, Mr Djanogly has been on the public accounts committee, which scrutinises government expenditure and regularly deals with matters concerning commercial companies. It is currently reviewing progress on the emergency services network, which is using network infrastructure from EE, part of BT Group. Djanogly has questioned officials working on the project whilst owning shares worth more than £40,000 in the company, something he had not declared because of the blind trust.

Blind trusts are used by ministers including by Rishi Sunak and the Chancellor, Jeremy Hunt. They involve moving shares owned prior to ministerial office into a trust run by an independent fund manager, who handles the investments on behalf of the beneficiary. MPs do not have to declare shares held in blind trusts. The fact that Djanogly's holdings are listed in shareholder registers under his own name and at an address owned jointly with his father suggests the trust cannot be truly 'blind'. Djanogly did not dispute that the shares were in his name but said he did not 'pick up post from the property to which information about the shareholdings would have been sent'. [So that's okay then?]

The findings raise questions about much-criticised blind trust arrangements and whether they truly protect ministers from real and perceived conflicts of interest. Richard Murphy, a professor of accounting practice at Sheffield University management school, told the Guardian: *'The difficulties with the blind trust is it isn't publicly registered. We don't know who created it, who the trustee is, how the accountability works.'*

Djanogly registered shareholdings in FTSE 100 companies in the past and kept his shares on his register of interests until 2010 when he became a minister and moved them into a blind trust. Dr Daniel Beisley, a Spotlight on Corruption policy consultant, said: *'Blind trusts can only work if MPs are truly 'blind' to their contents. If MPs are able to track the performance of their financial interests from company disclosures then this is clearly not the case.'*

*'I maintain that I have made all appropriate declarations to the register of members' interests and the public accounts committee,'* Djanogly told The Guardian and added that he was *'taking advice on what I do or do not need to declare'* now that he had been made aware of the fuller details of his financial interests.

Jonathan Djanogly announced he will not be standing at the next election after being deselected by local Tories (see RP 133). Some people have remarked how little there is to show for his 22 years as the local MP, which has often been marred with controversy. In 2019 he was listed 645th out of 650 MPs for openness and responsiveness. But don't feel sorry for him losing his job. He is listed in shareholder registers as personally owning stakes in companies worth nearly £500,000 with shares in Lloyds Bank worth more than £180,000, an investment worth £120,000 in the house building company Persimmon and a stake worth almost £80,000 in Sainsbury's, plus smaller stakes in six other companies including the energy supplier Centrica.

## St Ivo brings in 'brilliant leader'

So announced the St Ivo Academy, part of Astrea Academy Trust. Tony Meneaugh (right), will take up the principal's post this September. Tony Meneaugh is currently the vice principal and designated safeguarding lead at Longsands Academy in St Neots, also part of the Astrea Academy Trust family of schools. Prior to this he was the Senior Deputy Headteacher at The Deepings School.

Astrea say that Tony is an experienced school leader with 15 years in senior leadership positions, and his areas of expertise are school development and improvement. In every school he has worked in as a senior leader, there has been an improvement in the Ofsted rating. Astrea also said *'It is an exciting time at St Ivo, and the school has already made so much progress under its interim principal Tim Blake.'*

As we have reported before, some 500 plus parents and carers of pupils at St Ivo joined a Forum to bring concerns to the fore. And as the forum said *'start to build a pathway that helps our children and teachers enjoy their learning and teaching, in a safe and happy environment'*.

They listed their main concerns as: The behaviour and uniform policy and their implementation, The curriculum and GCSE changes announced by Astrea and the negative, mental-health impact the atmosphere at St Ivo Academy is having on students and teachers.

They lodged a formal complaint on 20th February 2023 with Astrea because over 100 parents had tried to raise their own complaints and did not receive a satisfactory response or even a response at all, said the Forum. The Forum is yet to comment publicly on the new principal's appointment.

Time will tell if the 'brilliant' Mr Meneaugh will succeed in making the 'improvements' required by Ofsted and in dealing with the concerns raised by parents.



# The Corn Exchange faces a major challenge and needs your support

Following Covid lockdowns the St Ives Corn Exchange emerged with a great new business model including:

- The comfy Riverport Lounge Café
- The amazing diary of music and art events
- Supporting local talent
- A winter time 'warm space'
- Many charity events.

But unexpected events and repairs have brought about a series of challenges that the management team are facing.

Next **Saturday the 29th July** the Corn Exchange will open its doors for a day of free music and comedy and they are hoping St Ives will drop by to give support and have some fun.

The reason for the day is to raise funds and awareness of the serious challenge ahead this year while the main roof is replaced and the Corn Exchange team face the huge rise in overheads that has recently occurred.

A great day is planned with comedians from the highly successful Comedy Club and a great selection of musicians and bands getting the party going from 11am until late evening.

**Please join us for a lot of fun.**



In the heart of St Ives at Hyperion Salerooms is The Courtyard with a vast range of gifts and crafts ranging from handmade dog treats, candles, soap, art, origami, craft kits, beads, watches, books, furniture, handbags, vapes, make up, antiques & collectables. There is something for everyone!



We have a range of Olive Trees ranging from small stock to large Gnarled aged trees, perfect for your patios as they are ideally suited to the English climate!

We also have our very own café, selling various coffee's, tea and homemade cake

The Courtyard, The Salerooms, Station Road, St Ives PE27 5BH  
[www.hyperionauctions.co.uk/the-courtyard-shopping](http://www.hyperionauctions.co.uk/the-courtyard-shopping)  
Tel: 01480 464140

