

News in brief

Open House thanks for Christmas lunch

STAFF and clients at Crawley Open House were still enjoying Christmas dinner leftovers a full week after the big day. The High Sheriff of West Sussex and former chairwoman of Open House Elizabeth Bennett was one of a dedicated team of volunteers who gave up their Christmas day to help cook the meal. She said: "I was part of a very small group who helped cook the Christmas lunch. It was fairly brief but I know the Open House well and so I saw a lot of old friends. "They do a brilliant job, making wonderful little parcels, it was beautiful.

"Everyone had a really good time." Open House director Peter Mansfield-Clarke toasted a successful Christmas and paid tribute to the donors and volunteers who helped make the special day what it was.

He said: "It was a very, very good Christmas. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed it and we're still getting through some of it!

"I want to say thank you to everyone who helped out – it really does make a big difference."

The Christmas dinner was the result of a campaign led by the Observer and county councillor Chris Oxlade, with Tulley's Farm, Flanagan's Butchers, Marks & Spencer, ASDA and others providing food for the festive feast.

Youth gets two years for string of offences

A 17-YEAR-OLD boy was sentenced to two years in custody after admitting a string of offences including robbery, burglary, assault, theft and possession of drugs. The teenager, who cannot be named for legal reasons, was given a 24 month detention and training order – the maximum sentence that can be given in a youth court.

He admitted to one count of robbery, four counts of burglary, two counts of assault, one count of theft, one count of taking without of consent, one count of possession of cannabis and two counts of failing to surrender at Crawley Youth Court on Thursday (December 30).

The sentence included breaches of an earlier youth rehabilitation order (YRO).

An application for an anti-social behaviour order (ASBO) was not granted on the grounds that the teenager will be subject to 12 months of supervision from the probation service upon his release after serving half his sentence.

Dam wall renovation at Buchan Park pond

BUCHAN Country Park's Douster Pond is getting its dam wall renovated in the new year. Work on the £63,000 project began yesterday (Tuesday January 4). The West Sussex County Council scheme will involve repairing parts of the existing dam wall around the pond in the Crawley park. It is scheduled to take up to six weeks to complete, weather permitting.

Work will be carried out Monday to Friday from 7am to 5pm, and occasionally on Saturdays from 7am to 1pm.

Chas 'n' Dave? Not a Patch on singing cabby



A TAXI-driving granddad is giving punters more than just a lift home – he's throwing in a sing-song along with the ride.

Patrick Jones, better known as Patch, has been showcasing his chirpy witticisms to customers and offering them the chance to snap up his demo CDs.

He sold 600 copies of the satirical Blair's Ukelele, which won him first prize in a competition thanks to cabby vignettes like: "You drive along, in your car, you've had it from brand new,

"You've got the kids, in the back, your wife is next to you,

"Things go so fine, at least at first, till gone in for a service,

But then beware, when driving home, you really don't deserve this."

The Chas 'n' Dave-style singer lays his trademark patter over George Formby standards, with help from Stock, Aitkin and Waterman engineer and friend Peter Hammond.

His common sense wisdom has struck a chord and he is equally at home singing about government policy, terrorist attacks and personal battles with depression.

by **FINN SCOTT-DELANY**
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He said: "I can do a bit of rock and I can do ballads but what I do is write factual comedy.

"When I write something it nearly always starts out as poetry.

"I go all quiet for two or three weeks and sit in private when I'm writing, I don't want to be influenced by any kind of lyrics or music."

A poet of some 25 years, Patch made his TV debut on Men and Motors in 2001 before more going on to win a songwriting competition.

He credits his passion for poetry with turning his life around after a bout of depression and unemployment in the 1980s.

He said: "'The Last Drink' is all jolly but what it's actually is about is depression, about being locked inside your own mind.

"One of first poems I ever wrote was literally cognitive therapy. Writing poems helped me, I definitely wouldn't have got through it otherwise because you can't always see it yourself."

Patch's music, youtube videos, poetry and pictures can be found at www.desktopmoods.com which was set up with a little help from granddaughter Gemma.

'My hero!'

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And Josef was stunned to learn that, not only have Crawley Town rewarded him with a season ticket, but Sussex Police will be putting his name forward for a community award.

He said: "It's very humbling. "I've been a paramedic for 24 years and it's the first time anyone has thanked me like this.

"It's very hard to take in because you just do your best and hope for the best and you don't think of awards or anything else."

Terry said: "What can I say – the man saved my life. What a hero! It feels fantastic to meet him. My admiration goes a long, long way."

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