

What relief – more loos for public

WHILE most councils are closing public toilets, one town is making sure people are not short of a convenient place to spend a penny.

Crowborough now has five community toilets in addition to its usual public loos.

They have opened in shops, pubs and offices as part of the Wealden Community Toilet Scheme.

Latest additions to the scheme are Waitrose in Croft Road, Crowborough Town Council's offices in The Broadway, the Crowborough Cross pub in Beacon Road and Wealden District Council's offices in Pine Grove.

Wealden councillor Sylvia Tidy said: "The idea is that the public can just pop into a shop, pub or office displaying the sign and ask to use the toilet."

"There will be no charge and the customer has no obligation to buy anything."

"Because the premises are always staffed, the toilets are clean and safe to use."

The new additions to the scheme will help make up for the loss of public toilets at Croft Road car park which are closed for repair.

Scheme members receive a small payment for making their loos available to the public.

They are inspected by the council before being accepted onto the scheme.

MP's anger over landfill

AN MP has criticised proposals to deal with waste by building landfill sites in the countryside.

Lewes MP Norman Baker and residents in rural towns and villages are furious that East Sussex County Council and Brighton and Hove City Council are considering the use of so-called "landraise" sites – where rubbish is piled up – near Golden Cross, at a sewage works near Berwick and at a landfill site at Glynde.

East Sussex County Council said the consultation document, known as the preferred strategy, did not allocate specific sites but broadly defined the kind of areas in East Sussex and Brighton and Hove that might be suitable for such facilities.

To air your views on landraise sites, visit www.eastsussex.gov.uk/haveyoursay.

A23 blocked after crash

A BUSY road was blocked after two vehicles crashed.

The accident involved a 4x4 car and a van. One of the vehicles crashed into the central reservation.

It happened on the south-bound carriageway of the A23 near the BP garage at Pyecombe, near Brighton.

Emergency services were called to the scene at about 3pm on Friday.

One man, believed to be the driver of the car, was taken to Royal Sussex County Hospital in Brighton with minor injuries.

Sussex Police said the road was reopened at 4pm.

Ghostbusters search for spectres in the bowels of the town hall and have an encounter with the former Chief Constable

IS THERE ANYBODY THERE?



LOOKING FOR CLUES: Tammy Stevenson, left, and Clare House



SPOOK SNAPPER: Johan Jansen sets up one of his cameras



INVESTIGATORS: Jill Brittoon, Christine Hicklyn and Davina Sinclair



WHAT WAS THAT? Reporter Tim Ridgway with Johan

PICTURES: SAM STEPHENSON



To see our video report on this story, go to theargus.co.uk/video

GHOSTBUSTERS: Nathan Harrison, Tammy Stevenson, Clare House and Johan Jansen in Brighton Town Hall

BRIGHTON AND HOVE is a hotbed of paranormal activity. Ghosts and spirits have been spotted at a number of spooky properties and pubs in the city. One of the most popular haunts is Brighton Town Hall where, more than 160 years ago, the town's Chief Constable was killed by a crook in the building's basement. Reporter TIM RIDGWAY joined a group of paranormal investigators in the search for the ghost of Henry Solomon.

THERE are not many people who would choose to be locked up in a dark empty police cell on a Friday night.

But for a group of eager ghosthunters this was one of the most exciting nights of the year.

The location was the cells underneath Brighton Town Hall.

The subject of the hunt was Henry Solomon – the only Chief Constable in British policing history to be killed while on duty.

The aim, according to the Sussex Paranormal Investigators (SPI), was to make contact with the police chief and discover more about the final hours of his life.

The group of four friends, who all say they have had their fair share of otherworldly experiences, were guiding a small group of brave ghosthunters around five locations in an eerily quiet city centre building.

SPI member Johan Jansen explained the reasoning behind the hunt.

Before the lights were turned off, he



IN THE DARK: Investigator Johan Jansen on the hunt

said: "I don't think ghost is the right term for it – they are more like spirits.

"Anything can happen. There have already been a number of energy black-outs with batteries going dead.

"That's normally a good sign so we should be in for an interesting evening.

"Our job is to record anything that happens and present a balanced review of it."

As soon as the lights were turned off, strange things happened.

Nathan Harrison is the group's intuitive – the person who makes contact with the spirits.

Throughout the evening he lead the

group in calling out and encouraging the ghost of Henry to make contact.

It did not take too long before Henry allegedly made his presence known.

Nathan shouted out, declaring the Chief Constable had struck him on the arm.

Nathan, who has seen spooky things since he was young, said: "To be struck like I was is pretty rare. I think it was his truncheon.

"I often get feelings and emotions from a place but tonight I have had this piercing headache, which began as soon as we entered the building.

"I don't think the spirit was being aggressive. I think he just presumed we

should know who he was. Henry is obviously a man who is used to control."

Johan, who was busy shining red light across the walls, claimed anybody could join the hunt.

He said: "The equipment we use is not anything too specialist. A basic kit can include dictaphones, digital cameras, thermometers and camcorders.

"We also use an electromagnetic field meter to see if we can pick up any disturbances.

"But essentially paranormal activity can be anything – it may be a slight headache, it may be a drop in temperature, any changes in emotion – it all points to some form being present."

Kerry Robertson, 32, from Shoreham, came on the escapade with two friends.

She said: "It was a very interesting evening and something I think I'll do again.

"At one point I did see some little lights cross the room, which was a little weird. There were also some moments when the temperature of the room definitely changed – whether that was something, I do not know."

Johan said: "Tonight has definitely been a success. I've been on nights where we have been sat out and not seen anything."

"So for Nathan to have been struck is pretty impressive.

"It's obviously a haunted place and I would look to come back, make contact with Henry again, and find out a little bit more of his story."

tim.ridgway@theargus.co.uk

Have you had a spooky experience? Email letters@theargus.co.uk or let us know at

theargus.co.uk/news

A SPOOKY HISTORY OF THE TOWN HALL

BRIGHTON Town Hall was built in 1830 in Bartholomew Square on land which used to belong to a priory in Lewes.

The upper parts of the building are apparently haunted by a monk, dating from when a monastery stood on the site.

The town's first police station was in the basement of the building.

In 1836, Henry Solomon was made Chief Constable of Brighton police.

Twelve years later, 23-year-old John Lawrence was arrested with another man in St James's Street for stealing a roll of carpet from a shop.

While being interviewed by the Chief Constable, Lawrence crossed to the open fire, grabbed a poker and struck Solomon on the side of the head. He later died from his injuries.

There were three witnesses to the attack and Lawrence was charged, found guilty at Lewes Assizes and publicly hanged at Horsham.

The former officer's ghost reportedly haunts the basement to this day.



OTHER BRIGHTON GHOSTS

● The ship Nicholas was returning from the Middle East when it sunk off the Brighton coast in the 12th century with all hands on board.

She is still occasionally seen on the horizon.

● Deryck Carver, thought to have been the first brewer in Brighton, was burned at the stake in 1555. His ghost is said to haunt the cellar of The Black Lion pub in Black Lion Street, below left.

● Next door, The Cricketers Inn pub, below right, is apparently not only haunted by the figure of a pale man wearing a long black cloak, but also by a nun just outside the inn.

● 19th century businessman Sir Harry Preston, right, has been seen haunting the hallways of The Royal Albion Hotel. Visitors have experienced sudden drafts of cold air, doors opening and closing on their own, and the hotel's lift is said to have moved up and down for no apparent reason. Staff have observed that these incidents almost always occur on a Sunday evening.



Hear stories behind the cemetery

HISTORIAN Chris Hare is planning a series of lectures on a Victorian cemetery.

He is aiming to run them on Saturdays at the Sydney Walter Centre, Sussex Road, Worthing, between April and September, excluding August.

There will be eight themes based on people buried at Broadwater Cemetery in South Farm Road, Worthing.

The themes include aldermen and other VIPs, the typhoid epidemic, military campaigns, tradesmen, religious groups, literary personalities and curiosities.

Paul Robards is writing a detailed history of the cemetery, while Tom Wye, chairman of the Friends' group, and Worthing Sentinel editor Paul Holden will co-ordinate the publication of booklets and pamphlets.

Schools are being contacted to conduct research into the 25,000 or so people buried in the cemetery since 1863.

Tribe's funeral directors in Broadwater Road, Worthing, will be holding memorial restoration and maintenance courses.

The Lottery granted the cemetery just over £31,000, some of which will be used to install information boards.

In addition, it is hoped that wildlife and plants will be recorded with the help of natural historians.

Club faces cash crisis

CAMPAIGNERS say a community centre is too important to close.

Councillor Ben Duncan, the Green Party's parliamentary hopeful for Brighton Kemp-town, said the Crew Club in Whitehawk, which is threatened by budget cuts, must be saved by Brighton and Hove City Council and Sussex Police.

He said: "It's heartbreaking that there isn't enough cash in the council's pot to keep the club open and that the people of Whitehawk are having to pay the price for cuts.

"The police and the council must find the money to secure the club's long-term future.

"I have received informal commitments the money could be found from other budgets."

The city council's chief executive is reconsidering a bid for £25,000 which was initially turned down.

Tree festival at church

A VILLAGE church is raising cash for charities by staging a Christmas tree festival.

St John the Baptist Church, Findon, near Worthing, is holding the event at the weekend.

The first festival last year attracted more than 1,000 people and raised £1,600 for worthy causes. This year, proceeds will go to causes including Findon Village Pre-School, St John the Baptist Primary School and 1st Findon Valley Beavers.

St John's will be open from 10am to 5pm on Saturday and noon to 5pm on Sunday. The event will conclude with a Christingle service on Sunday.