

inToUCH

Issue 23 | Autumn 2011 | For Retired Members of the Shropshire County Pension Fund

Theatre Competition

Win a Family ticket to see Robin Hood at The Place. Pg.17

Annual Meeting 2011

Tuesday 8th November

Telford:
The Civic Offices

Shrewsbury:
Walker Theatre
Theatre Severn

More on Pg.19



SHROPSHIRE COUNTY
PENSION FUND



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Future pay dates

Below are the dates when you can expect your money to be in your bank or building society account over the coming months.

28 October 2011
29 November 2011
22 December 2011
27 January 2012
29 February 2012
29 March 2012
27 April 2012

Welcome



Welcome to the Autumn 2011 edition of Intouch

It was so nice to see so many of you in June at the Theatre Severn, and I'm sure you'll agree that all the speakers went down very well. Now less than a year away from the 2012 games it was great to hear from Helen Cromarty from the Wenlock Olympian Society how the modern Olympic games started here in Shropshire. Chris Stratton (featured on page 10) gave a fascinating insight into the work of the National Trust in South Shropshire and space enthusiasts Mark Wiggin & Dave Woodward enlightened us about the Shropshire Astronomical Society. Please let us know of any speakers you think your colleagues would enjoy at next years meeting.

A big welcome to Rachel Musson, our new Scheme Administrator. Rachel introduces herself on page 12.

Congratulations to Denise Houseman on winning the competition for 2 tickets to the Old Market Hall Cinema

in Shrewsbury. Don't miss out on the competition in this issue. We have a family ticket to Oakengates Theatre up for grabs.

A date for your diary, this year's Annual Meeting is on Tuesday 8th November. Meetings will be held at the Civic Offices, in the morning and then two at the Walker Theatre, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury in the afternoon. I look forward to seeing some of you there for a catch up.

Finally, you may have heard a lot of information in the press about the Public Sector Pensions Reform. Lord Hutton has been looking at the affordability of the schemes and has made recommendations for change. It is important to remember that as retired members these recommendations will not usually affect your benefits that are already in payment.

I hope you enjoy this edition, don't forget we always welcome any feedback you can give us and we would be especially interested to hear your thoughts on this magazine and our service in general.

I look forward to seeing many of you in November.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Debbie Sharp'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Debbie Sharp
Pensions Manager
Shropshire County Pension Fund

Ron Talking



Ron Pugh provides you with an update on Equitable Life.

Over recent months I have received a number of queries from retired members who contributed to a With-Profits policy with the Fund's In-house AVC provider Equitable Life, and on behalf of the Fund I'd like to provide you with an update.

The Government has made funds available to enable the compensation of Equitable Life With-Profits investors who lost out due to the accepted areas of maladministration.

On behalf of the Fund our Scheme Actuary has put together a document that will be issued to all members of the Fund who had this form of policy.

A summary of the main points however, are provided below:

- To be eligible for compensation you will need to have been an Equitable Life With-Profits contributor between 1 January 1993 and 31 December 2000 who has suffered what is termed as a "Relative Loss".
- The Government have scaled back the level of compensation to 22.4% of the relative loss, being the amount "affordable from the public purse".
- Group policyholders (such as members of the local government scheme) may not learn the amounts payable if any until after June 2012.
- Any compensation due will not be paid until the second or third year of the Payment Scheme.

Shropshire County Pension Fund will provide further general updates to you when they are available.

If you have any issues that you would like me to address on your behalf please do not hesitate to contact me via the Pension team

Telephone: 01743 252 130

Email: pensions@shropshire.gov.uk

Back in our Spring Issue we featured a competition for one of our INTOUCH readers to win two tickets for the Old Market Hall Cinema. Denise Houseman's story was picked as the winner. Here is her winning story!



On Safari

by Denise Houseman

On a recent trip to South Africa's famous Kruger National game park while looking out for the BIG FIVE we had an amazing experience with what could be one of the SMALL FIVE!

On going to bed in our thatched Rondavel hut on our third night in the game park, I was already in bed reading when my partner pulled the counterpane off his bed and a local (*scrawny type*) squirrel jumped out of his bed from near the pillows. I shouted to warn my partner but by the time he reacted the squirrel had disappeared under some furniture so we let it be.

On the next night I said to my partner as I was pulling the counterpane down on my bed, "I wonder if the squirrel is still around" – and to speak of the devil the squirrel jumped out of my bed! My partner chased the squirrel into the bathroom, locked the door and then called the security guard who responded within 5 minutes with the object of catching the squirrel in a paper bag. However, he was initially unsuccessful and a glorious game of hide and seek was

played between guard and the squirrel. After about ten minutes the guard finally caught the squirrel and agreed he would release it in the wild far from our Rondavel Hut.

On the next night we joked that the squirrel could not possibly be in our beds again, but low and behold as my partner pulled down the counterpane he perceived a squirrels tail sticking out from under his pillow. So he pounced on the pillow holding it down firmly, then gathered up the pillow in a roll, squirrel and all and carried it outside and released it.

Next day we reported our experience to the camp manager who apologised for our discomfort and reassured us that this was probably a female squirrel looking for a warm and comfortable nest.

Unfortunately we disturbed the squirrels ambitions and next day as a form of a rebuke a small troop of monkeys descended onto our balcony and stole a bunch of bananas!

What more low key excitement could you ask for in a game park the size of Wales with a huge population of wild animals and a few very tame squirrels!



This is the story entered by runner up Tony Gibbons whose story made us smile so we had to share it with all INTOUCH readers. Enjoy!

Greenkeeper

by Tony Gibbons

It was a long winter. As a crown green bowler, I liked to fill my time in by visiting the various clubs to see how their green maintenance was progressing.

The greens below Town Walls in Shrewsbury had been flooded but the water had subsided so one morning I went to see Stan the green keeper at the Old Shrewsbury club. The two greens were clear but flood water remained in the surrounding gutters.

With a smile on his face Stan told me that he had spotted movement in the water in one of the gutters.

*“What was is Stan?” I said
“a perch or a pike?”*

*“Neither” said Stan
“it was a big salmon that
got trapped as the waters went
down”*

*“I suppose you tapped it on the head
and had it for your dinner” I said*

*“No way” said Stan
“I haven’t got a licence and its out of
season anyway”*

“Well what happened then?” says I

*“I decided to fill a barrow with water
and lifted the fish with a sheet out of
the gutter and into the barrow. I then
pushed the barrow across to the river
by the Greyfriars Bridge and with a
flourish I returned the salmon back
to the river”*

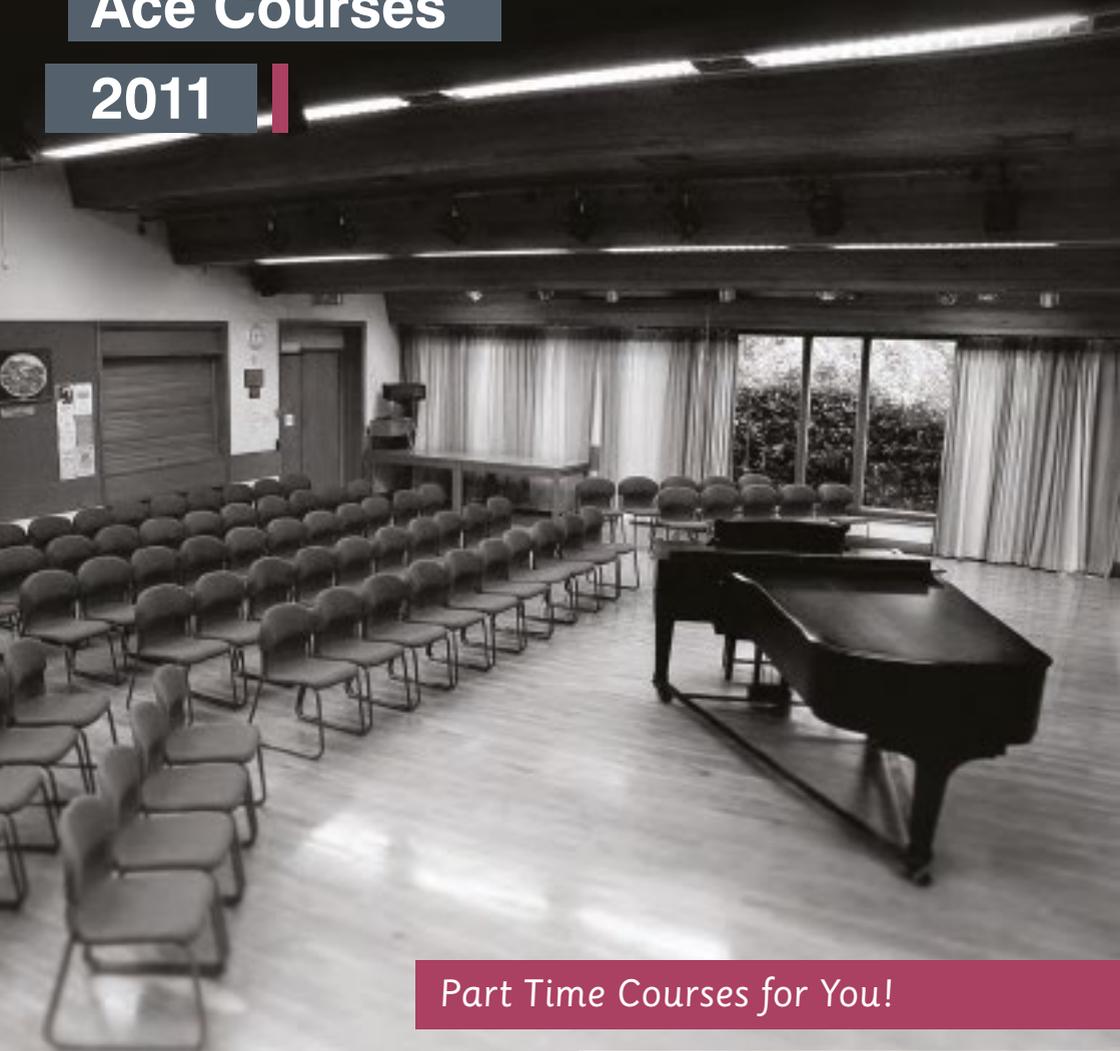
*“Funny thing” said Stan
“I could have sworn the fish briefly
surfaced, raised its head and waved
a fin in gratitude before continuing
his mission upstream”*



Gateway

Ace Courses

2011



Part Time Courses for You!

Autumn launches the latest 'ace' brochure with a wide range of courses running from September to December 2011!

Shropshire Council's Adult and Community Learning (ACL) supplement; 'ACE' is packed full of exciting courses and classes.

The 'ace' brochure provides something for everyone, whether it be fitness related, a creative course or learning a new language. Maybe you have a secret desire to learn how to belly dance, speak French, develop your IT skills or even learn to play the saxophone - ACL offers courses in all of these areas and more!

Courses take place predominately at The Gateway Education and Arts Centre. The Gateway is easily accessible from Shrewsbury's Town Centre, with a picturesque riverside view and a welcoming coffee shop.

The coffee shop is open to the public from 9am - 3pm, Monday - Friday and can even be opened outside of these hours by request. A selection of drinks and snacks are available to purchase, including a wide range of coffees, sandwiches, paninis, soups, quiches and cakes all freshly prepared each day.

Brochures are available from the Gateway reception but also distributed county-wide in places such as libraries, community centres and supermarkets. Alternatively if you would like a copy

sent to your home please contact the number below.

Concessionary rates are available to people on certain benefits. If you think you are one of these people, you may only need to pay half of the tuition fees for a course. Proof you meet this criteria will be required on enrolment. More information and concessionary costs can be found within the brochure.



Top: Coffee Shop
Bottom: Patio Area

To find out more about Adult and Community learning courses please visit the website where 'ace' can be viewed online. Alternatively if you would like to enrol on a course or speak to someone about your interests directly please contact The Gateway Arts and Education Centre on the number below.

Are Youth missing out?

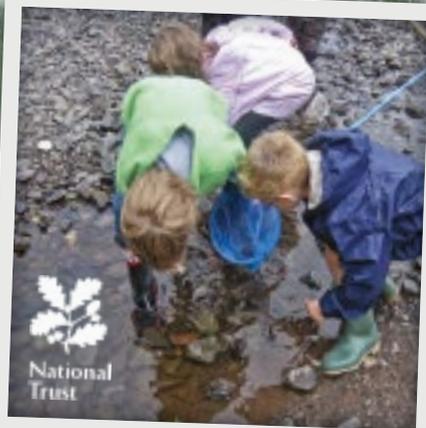
Is there something us “Oldies” took for granted that youngsters are now missing out on? In these troubled times there is a lot of debate about the “disadvantaged”. What is lacking (for many)? - **Contact with Nature.** Youngsters are spending much of their time glued to a screen and missing out on some vital experiences.

You may have heard about how The National Trust has a new campaign to bring young people closer to nature. Two south Shropshire properties - Carding Mill Valley and Dudmaston Hall are at very different stages of doing this. Each year some 30,000 school students visit CMV to conduct their river studies or work on habitats. There is a delight for all ages (*yes adults too*) in having an excuse to get wet feet! Much fun is had in turning over stones to look for “bullheads” - fish that sit under stones. We have well used labs into which students can bring a water nymph or larvae to magnify under one of our 40 microscopes and to then identify, research and sketch. We offer orienteering and habitats work but by far the most popular activity is the geography fieldwork in which students are encouraged work cooperatively in groups of 5 to conduct measurements of the stream - its velocity,

depth, widths of valley etc. These being conducted at a variety of locations to produce hypotheses about how a river changes as it moves downstream.

New this year has been our support of and encouragement for Duke of Edinburgh groups. Between 4 and 7 teenagers again work together to read a map spending at least 6 hours a day to get across the countryside (*without falling out with each other!*) to then set up camp. During their day we assist in setting their aims e.g. bird identification, pond dipping, searching flushes for certain flora etc. In the past month we have organised a camp site on the most secluded but highest part of the hill. Teenagers, some of whom have never camped or been away from home before, can gain a great sense of fulfilment and independence having to survive on their





Getting close to nature!

own or a friend's cooking! Imagine waking up early to magnificent spell-binding views that overlook the sun rising from behind Caer Caradoc. Despite sheer exhaustion self esteem is raised and a great sense of achievement attained.

But we try to promote these qualities in all the other services we offer young people too. Our holiday activities are also all about exploring nature, taking exercise up some rather steep and exhilarating hillside tracks to hunt for grasshoppers or wimberies, to listen to skylarks or to find a "magic spot" – your own special place to sit, listen and observe.

At Dudmaston this sort of activity is only just beginning. For some years we have offered services to schools in combination with the Severn Valley Railway but now want to use

some of the estate's wonderful woodlands and countryside.

Whereas I have a small army of volunteers in Carding Mill Valley, I have only two for our services at Dudmaston! Whether we work with scouts or schools we will need some support in delivering new ventures. Would you like to help? If you have already had experience of working with young people you'll know how rewarding their delight at discovery can be.

Interested?

Contact Chris Stratton or call Pension Services where your details will be passed on. Whatever your thoughts on the worlds problems - come and clear your head with some fresh air and exercise on our hills (no need to get wet feet!).

Email: chris.stratton@nationaltrust.org.uk



Shropshire County Pension Fund **Welcomes** **Rachel Musson**

Hello

I am pleased to be writing to you as the newly appointed Shropshire County Pension Fund Scheme Administrator. It is an exciting and challenging role which I am looking forward to undertaking.

I moved to Shropshire in July of this year to take up the role of Corporate Head of Finance and Commerce. As Scheme Administrator for the Shropshire County Pension Fund, I have responsibility for pension fund investment and administration.

The Fund which is currently valued at in excess of 1 billion pounds has a combined membership of approximately 35,000 members, which include just under 9,000 retired members.

As well as Shropshire Council the Fund administers the Local Government Pension Scheme, for over another 70 additional employers from Town and Parish Councils, Charities to large Schools, Colleges and Authorities.

As retired members of the scheme it is important you are kept up to date with Pension Fund issues and I will be looking forward to meeting you at the Annual Meeting being held on the 8 November 2011, details of the meeting can be found on page 19.

Gardening Tips

For all you green fingered people out there we have put together our gardening tips for autumn gardeners. Summer may be gone but there are still loads of jobs you can do to keep your garden looking good throughout the autumn and winter!

1. The first step is to clear up the beds, removing the dead leaves and foliage and making way for the groundwork which will keep your plants happy even when the weather is miserable.
2. The next job is to weed and clean the paths before spraying them with weed killer which will keep the nasties at bay. Cleaning your paths now will save you a big job in the spring when you finally brave the gardening which you've put off for the cold winter months.
3. If you are looking to expand your garden or have a complete overhaul, autumn is actually the best time of year to do this as new plants can make a strong start and 'bed in' before the cold weather takes hold and starts to make life difficult for them.
4. Think of your garden as going into hibernation over the winter, just as animals store food during the summer and autumn in order to survive the winter, so too should your garden with your help. Clear the moss or weeds from any areas of grass and give the grass one last feed before winter sets in, this will help it to stay alive.
5. Laying mulch or wood chippings between plants and shrubs before winter can help to protect the soil as well as keeping in vital nutrients which are needed for the soil to remain fertile and keep your garden looking good throughout the year.
6. If you want to make new plants from the ones you already have in the garden, take cuttings during the autumn. Cuttings should be around 10cm tall and you should remove any lower leaves before planting in small pots full of premium soil.



SHROPSHIRE
COUNTY
PENSION
FUND

PENSION NEWS BULLETIN

What happens when a pensioner is no longer capable of managing their own affairs?

In the past there was limited action that could be taken by LGPS administrators in these circumstances. Unless the pensioner had previously chosen someone to have Lasting Power of Attorney we had to ensure that a relative, friend or professional applied to the Court of Protection to be given authority to receive payments on their behalf. With effect from 30 September 2010, the LGPS Regulations have been amended to offer more flexibility where a pensioner is incapable of managing his or her affairs. An administering authority can now determine that all or part of the benefits may be paid to a person having the care of the pensioner, or to some other person chosen by the authority for this purpose. The authority may also direct how the payments are to be applied for the benefit of the pensioner.

New local government job?

Please remember, you must tell us if you get another job with any employer who offers membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme - whether or not you join the Scheme. In some cases, working for this type of employer will affect your pension. please see page 18 for our contact details if you feel this applies to you.

Planning ahead

When one of our member's dies and we are not informed straight away this can lead to an overpayment. Normally this is a genuine error, and is easily put right; you can help prevent this happening in the first place by making sure that whoever is going to look after your affairs after you've gone lets us know as soon as possible. They can let us know by phone on: 01743 252130.

That way we can stop your pension



payments and of course put into place any new pensions which may arise - for example a pension for your husband, wife or civil partner. We take part in the National Fraud Initiative, which cross checks the records from pension schemes like ours with the Department for Work & Pensions' database. This picks up cases of fraudulent claims, which are then investigated further, sometimes in conjunction with the Police.

The Hutton Report: How does this affect my pension?

You may have heard in the news that Lord Hutton has published his final report on the future of public sector pensions, which includes the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). His report makes broad recommendations which are subject to consultation and acceptance by the Government.

Please be advised that these recommendations and any subsequent changes that are brought in are not expected to affect those pensions that are already in payment. Therefore your pension will continue to be paid to you in the normal way and will increase annually in line with inflation (*currently calculated in line with the Consumer Prices Index*).



p

the place

Oakengates Theatre

A modern versatile performance space and venue housing a diverse range of live entertainment including comedy, music, drama, children's shows, pantomimes, celebrity talks, cabaret evenings, community performances, presentations, awards and celebrations.

Information about any of Oakengates Theatre's shows can be found on the following:

Box Office: 01952 382382

Web: www.theplacetelford.com



Katy Setterfield

In the past twelve months the theatre's strong reputation for comedy has attracted TV favourites like Andy Parsons, Milton Jones and Jenny Éclair. The theatre has also proved popular as a warm-up venue with top-selling comics embarking on major tours - Lee Evans' most recent appearance sold out in just 53 minutes! The new season (*Autumn/Winter 2011*) will see such diverse comedians as Jethro, Ed Byrne and comic/ventriloquist extraordinaire Paul Zerdin (*accompanied by Sam, Albert and baby*) delivering their new material.

The theatre hosts a wide variety of music including tribute acts with popular performances by Arrival (*Abba*), Gary Mullen and The Works (*Queen*) and The Upbeat Beatles to name but a few; original artists such as Raymond Froggatt and Steeleye Span; as well as all-singing all-dancing theatre shows like the musicals-based Broadway & Beyond and wartime-era celebration The Songs That Won The War.

Dance enthusiasts will appreciate the new season's ballets with performances by both European Ballet (*Coppelia*) and Vienna Festival Ballet (*The Nutcracker*). A particular treat this autumn comes in the shape of A Night of Dirty Dancing, a fast-moving, slickly-choreographed tribute to the film, which will prove popular with music and dance lovers alike.

The autumn's Special Interest events are attracting a lot of attention with talks by celebrities and family favourites. Adventurer Charley Boorman takes a break from travelling the world with an evening of tales and film clips from his escapes; Eric Knowles will be

sharing his extensive knowledge of the world of antiques; and BBC Spring Watch presenter Chris Packham will be enthralling his audience with his trademark wit and astonishing wildlife images.



Younger patrons will enjoy some fantastic children's shows including Roary The Racing Car and Bob the Builder.

With this fantastic range of comedy, music, dance and drama there really is something for everyone at Oakengates Theatre. The Autumn season culminates with the magnificent pantomime comedy, Robin Hood and The Babes in The Wood - it's where Christmas really starts!

COMPETITION

Oakengates Theatre @ The Place have kindly sent us a family ticket to (2 adults and 2 children or 1 adult and 3 children) to attend the Robin Hood Pantomime on 31 December 2011 at 2pm. For your chance to win these tickets please answer the following question correctly and send your answer along with you name and contact details to us.

QUESTION: Robin Hood is the story of this years pantomime at Oakengates Theatre. Where was Robin said to have lived?

Contact Us

If you can read this but know someone who cannot, please contact us on (01743) 252130 so we can provide this information in a more suitable format. If you wish to contact us on any issue in this magazine or have a query regarding your pension, please contact Pension Services. Office hours are *Monday to Thursday 8.45am to 5pm and Friday 8.45am to 4pm*. If you would prefer to discuss your pension in person, you are welcome to come in and see us at the address below:

Pension Services, Shropshire Council, Shirehall,
Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, SY2 6ND

Email: pensions@shropshire.gov.uk

Tel: 01743 252130 | **Fax:** 01743 252197

Web: www.shropshirecountypensionfund.gov.uk

Other useful contacts

Tax Office Tel: 0845 3667815

Pension Credit Tel: 0800 991234

Department for Work and Pensions Tel: 0845 6060265

Website: www.thepensionsservice.gov.uk/pensioncredit

Annual Meeting

Shropshire County Pension Fund is pleased to invite you to its 18th Annual Meeting on: 8th November 2011

We encourage all retired members to attend the meeting as it will provide you with information regarding your pension scheme as well as providing you with an overview of what has happened in the Fund over the last year.

If you would like to attend one of the meetings please complete and return the attached reply card to pension services or alternatively, email pensions@shropshire.gov.uk or phone 01743 252130.



I would like to attend the Annual Meeting at (please tick)



The VIP Suite
Civic Offices
Telford
10am



The Walker Theatre
Theatre Severn
Frankwell
Shrewsbury
2pm



The Walker Theatre
Theatre Severn
Frankwell
Shrewsbury
5pm

Name:

If you would like to ask a question in advance of the meeting please write here:

Post to:
Pension Services
Shirehall
Abbey Foregate
Shrewsbury
Shropshire
SY2 6ND