

## Forum happy to come first

MEMBERS of a business forum are celebrating after their village scooped first prize in the business category of the Calor Kent Village of the Year competition 2009.

Widely lauded for having helped boost the economic fortunes of the area, Marden Business Forum (MBF) collected the certificate and £250 cheque after Marden was announced winner of the business section of this year's awards on September 1.

Since starting three years ago the forum has grown to more than 130 members, ranging in size from Claygate – a multi-million pound international trading company – to many sole professionals and tradesmen.

Elaine Collins Chairman of the MBF said: "These awards are recognition that the judges agreed with us."

"Marden Business Forum we feel is unique, incredibly useful and successful to businesses in difficult times."



Members of the Marden Business Forum with the winning cheque and certificates



## WI put their produce on show

YALDING Women's Institute showed off its members' wares at the annual produce show.

The show was part of the WI meeting at Yalding Village hall on Tuesday, September 8.

Our picture shows Barbara Hazlewood, secretary Mary Smith, Joan Godden and president Pamela Curley with one of the flower arrangements

Picture: Matthew Walker PD1620801

## New homes plan

BUILDING work on six new homes in Chestnut Lane, Matfield is due to start later this year. The £900,000 development includes one-bed flats, two-bed houses and three-bed houses and is aimed at attracting local people who previously could not afford to live in the village.

## Club's cash help

AN American Pairs Tournament organised by the Cranbrook Bowls Club raised £791 for the Hospice in the Weald.

## Blood donor date

THE National Blood Service will be collecting donations of blood at the Camden Centre, Royal Victoria Place, in Tunbridge Wells, on Monday from 2pm to 4.30pm and from 5.30pm to 8pm.

## Promise auction

THERE will be an auction of promises at Kilndown Village Hall on Saturday, October 17, to raise funds for the Kilndown Recreation Hall Trust. Tickets are £7.50. Details from Sarah Heaton on 01580 211691.

# Sheena enjoys life – stammer free

by Mary Graham  
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FOR more than 50 years simple things such as eating out, attending a work meeting or even picking up a phone were potential hazards for Sheena Crompton.

The 58-year-old has stammered since the age of three and any form of speaking could easily turn into a nightmare.

But since attending a course taken and endorsed by singer Gareth Gates, who famously overcame a stammer, Mrs Crompton of Knaves Acre, Headcorn, is enjoying a new life packed with the things she used to dread.

She has completed three sessions of the McGuire programme, which uses a combination of speech training, and vocal and breathing techniques.

### Ongoing

People going through the programme never describe themselves as "cured." But during a 30-minute phone interview for this article, Mrs Crompton never faltered and instead describes the process as "ongoing recovery".

Mrs Crompton found that the problem worsened as she progressed through school, with even simple things like answering the register or being questioned in class becoming a major problem.

And the problem did not pass as she got older. She said: "I learnt to hold back and avoid certain situations or phrases.



Sheena Crompton with her husband Roger

"I would never give my mobile phone number out, as it has a lot of sevens in it and that word caused me problems.

"In restaurants I never ordered what I really wanted to eat. Instead I would be scanning the menu looking for something I could say. If I had a work meeting coming up I would lie awake worrying about it."

The McGuire programme has had such an effect that Mrs Crompton has become an applications liaison officer and has met Gareth Gates several times.

When the British Stammering Association found out about her

recovery they asked her to speak at its conference and she took to the stage in front of 200 people, without any problems.

She added: "Stammering is a depressing and isolating experience. For me it became about avoiding certain situations.

"My journey involves recovering from stammering and becoming an eloquent speaker and I positively throw myself into speaking situations I used to find stressful. I am enjoying a degree of fluency beyond my wildest dreams."

Information available from [mcguireprogramme.com](http://mcguireprogramme.com) and [stammering.org](http://stammering.org)

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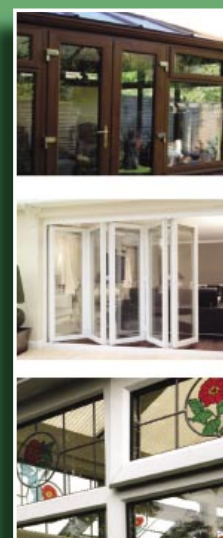
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