

# Stephen is here to stay - at last!

STEPHEN Barnaby's garage business is a classic example of how the most detailed of plans can be upset by events that cannot be predicted.

Also that by steely determination the most daunting of odds can be overcome.

Stephen's new business has been supported by the Local Authority's wirralbiz programme. Before any grant is given the budding entrepreneur must complete a specialist training course and produce a business plan.

The basis of Stephen's new venture was an agreement with a company to maintain their

fleet of vehicles. This work would cover his overheads leaving him time to make a profit by servicing and undertaking bodywork repairs for other motorists.

The search for suitable premises was difficult because a high entrance was required to enable access for the bigger vehicles. Eventually he found premises and started trading.

After a couple of months demolition work started nearby. The tide of dust made it impossible to spray vehicles whilst this work was being carried out. Undeterred Stephen (pictured right) would get up at

1am to work during the night.

However, realising that demolition was going to be ongoing, he started to search for new premises.

The new workshop was part of a very large building which was divided into units and sub-let to small businesses like Stephen's.

Through no fault of theirs all the occupants were forced to vacate, so, in less than 12 months Stephen was again looking for new premises.

In January, SPB Garage Services and Bodywork Repairs found its third home on the Argyle Industrial Estate. The business is now moving forward

at a pace, and Stephen has recently recruited an additional pair of hands which has prompted him to increase his promotional efforts.

In addition to general servicing, repairs and bodywork, SPB offers a very comprehensive valet service and also undertakes MOT preparation and welding work.

With winter approaching Stephen is encouraging motorists to make sensible preparation by offering a significant discount off their usual rates for vehicles booked in for servicing in the month of September.



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## A very different company

BARRY Whitehead's BCW Design Ltd is a very different company than that envisaged by its creator at the outset.

Barry had been formulating plans for his home automation business whilst working as a project manager in Africa.

Tired of living out of a suitcase and missing his family, he decided to set up his own business and work locally.

Barry attended the wirralbiz business start programme, completed his business plan and received a £1,000 grant from Wirral Waterfront.

He used the money to place a big advertisement in the paper and waited for the phone to ring.

Ring it did - but nowhere near the anticipated number of enquiries followed. Barry realised that trying to sell his wireless home automation packages to the public at large

would be a slow process.

Whilst the notion that households could control many appliances such as security, lighting, entertainment and climate control from a computer or mobile phone was appealing, most believed they had more



pressing priorities to spend their money on.

Perplexed, but not disillusioned, Barry reassessed his marketing strategy. Research told him that a specific group of individuals is very

interested in wireless home automation. These are property developers who must be able to offer prospective buyers the very latest technology, if their properties are to sell against fierce competition.

Abandoning the prospect of working locally in Wirral, he has redirected his marketing sights to cover the whole of the UK.

BCW Design Ltd today has a dedicated sales team that liaise with property developers to offer the organisation's expertise to find best value solutions on an individual basis.

Turnover from January has now topped £134k with over £1m worth of contracts currently being negotiated.

Although BCW Design Ltd has not turned out exactly as Barry expected, he definitely knows where he's going now - and it's upwards.

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Graham has a long-serving team who will all be celebrating 25 years at Shrewsbury Road in 2007.

The large Victorian building has been home to transport since horse-drawn trams rattled out of the cobblestone entrance that is still used today.

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# Shifu Liu is the *Rachel's grand designs* real McCoy...

SHIFU Liu is the real deal and he has made Wirral his home.

Born in the Jilin province of China, Shifu Liu was, at first, a sickly child. At the age of six, his parents sent him to study Tai Chi and Gung Fu in the hope that the disciplines would strengthen him and improve his health. He soon began to show great promise and quickly excelled in his studies.

He became a pupil of the Chief Warrior Monk of the Shaolin Temple-Shi Guolin.

Shifu Liu rose to the rank of 6th Dan and became an expert in a number of disciplines including Gung Fu, Tai Chi, Sanda boxing and weapons use and tuition.

He won a number of competitions ranging from local to national level and eventually rose to become a national competition judge.

Shifu Liu was invited to become one of the very few hand picked martial artists invited to join The Chinese State Circus.

This circus is like no other and features incredible martial arts skills. Artists carry out death-defying feats such as bending steel swords with their throats, having bricks broken on their heads with sledgehammers and amazing acrobatic displays.

After travelling to many parts of the world with the circus, Shifu Liu was one of two martial art experts chosen



to star in the multi-national Circus Berlin.

Shifu Liu travelled through England and Ireland with the circus for a number of seasons before deciding to settle down in a place that he and his wife had fallen in love with- the Wirral!

They made their home in the Wirral then set about providing themselves with employment. They started a Tai Chi and Gung Fu school which initially began in New Brighton and has

expanded to include New Ferry. The classes offered include adult tuition to all abilities and separate children's classes.

The expert tuition given by Shifu Liu is of the highest standard, yet Shifu Liu is as happy teaching children as he is with adults of many years experience.

The classes provide many health related benefits including fitness, flexibility, co-ordination, balance, self-control, stress release and stamina building.

Shifu Liu has another great advantage- he is a steel hand in a fitted glove.

His kindness, patience, politeness, sense of fair play and work ethic coupled with his knowledge and expertise combine to make him an exceptional human being and an asset to Wirral.

WIRRAL businesswoman Rachel Milburn has an enviable reputation for possessing a fantastic eye for colour, texture and design.

In the last 16 years, she has been responsible for transforming the look and feel to a large proportion of homes across Wirral!

Her talents were put to great use at her father's curtain emporium in Birkenhead where she learned the trade that her family had been in for well over 50 years.

Rachel has always enjoyed dealing with the public and helping them choose curtains, blinds and soft furnishings that complement their other décor choices. In recent years the emergence of 'home makeover

and property investor television programmes' has really influenced people's approach to the choices they make for their homes. Rather than replacing one element of a room, such as the curtains or wallpaper - the whole room receives a coordinated overhaul.

Rachel noticed this trend and was keen to exploit this emerging gap in the marketplace.

The concept of being able to advise, supply and install - not only professionally tailor made curtains and soft furnishings but also provide complementary wallcoverings, accessories and finishing touches -like ceramics and artwork was one that Rachel was convinced would appeal and believed she had the

talent to pull off!

Rooms on Broadway, in Higher Bebington, opened its doors last November and it is clear that Rachel's instincts were correct with first year turnover well above and beyond her predictions.

In order to cater for demand Rachel has refurbished and extended the shop to accommodate even more samples of fabric and wallpaper.

With the launch of her website this week, this really is a tale of entrepreneurial success - 'The first year has been really exciting, the demand for the service and the level of appreciation of customers for the lengths that we go to to get all aspects just right is really satisfying.'



**FORUM WARNS:** The Forum of Private Business (FPB) is warning that changes to rights for new parents are amongst the latest regulations to be heaped on small firms in October. New fire responsibilities and age discrimination laws come into force next month, as well as another increase in the minimum wage.

Chief Executive of the FPB, Nick Goulding, is calling for positive action to cut red tape's strangle hold on

smaller businesses.

"In October, we will see a another wave of extra regulations hit smaller businesses, which are already struggling to keep their heads above water.

"There will be extra responsibilities for fire safety, the need to revise practices to avoid costly age discrimination claims, the minimum wage is set to increase and changes to maternity rights could leave small firms holding the baby."

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