

## Bookies plan for butcher's

A former butcher's could become a bookies in Cheddar.

Winning Post wants to convert boarded-up Chicks Butchers into a betting office at 2 Bath Street.

Planning applications registered by Sedgemoor District Council between August 2 and 8.

■ Mr J Simpson wants to build a two-storey rear extension, a single-storey extension to the north side of the garage, with a link extension to the home and convert the first floor of the garage from a store into a bedroom/study annexe at Round Hay Cottage, Cheddar Road, **Axbridge**.

■ Mr J Tilbee wants to build a yard cover at Bow Farm, Poolbridge Road, **Blackford**.

■ Darwin Property Investment Management Ltd seeks permission to amend a planning application to change the layout of static caravans due to overhead cables at Broadway House Caravan and Camping Park, Axbridge Road, **Cheddar**.

■ Mr J Morton would like to reduce the crowns of two horse chestnut trees by 30 per cent at Gables, Round Oak Road, **Cheddar**.

■ Mr and Mrs J Crawford want to build a single-storey rear extension front entrance porch at 26 Church Lane, **Compton Bishop**.

■ Mr P Mugford wishes to create an agricultural building at Wintine, Mudgley Road, **Rooksbridge**.

■ Mr and Mrs Smith would like to change the use of a former agricultural building and convert it into a business unit and holiday let with altered access on land at Hart House, The Causeway, **Mark**.

■ Mr J Coombes wishes to create an agricultural building on land northeast of Stevelon House, Slade Lane, **Tarnock**.

■ Mr A Curtis seeks permission to retain a 6ft high fence to the southwest boundary of 1 Pipers Close, **Weare**.

Planning decisions by Sedgemoor between July 26 and August 8:

■ Mr A Hebden may paint the front of his house light pink with light grey windows and door surrounds and re-roof the front slope, replace torn felt and brace timbers with bespoke steel straps at The Cottage, St. Marys Street, **Axbridge**.

■ Mr K Westwood has won his appeal to allow the change of use of a barn and convert it into a home west of Kilrymont, Wick Lane, **Brent Knoll**.

■ Mr P Duckett is allowed to build a home, garage and access on land adjoining Hillcroft, **Chapel Allerton**.

■ Mr and Mrs C Gale can build a single-storey rear extension at 1 Braysbridge, **Cheddar**.

■ Mr J and Mrs R Stevens have permission to replace a garage with a double garage and workshop on 1 Mendip Villas, The Barrows, **Cheddar**.

■ Mr C Jennings is not allowed to build a home on land southeast of Fernwood, The Barrows, **Cheddar**.

■ Mr A Parsons is allowed to build an agricultural worker's home on land south of Bounds Hedge Farm, Cheddar Moor Drove, **Cheddar**.

■ Mrs T Ledger is allowed to build a single-storey extension to the side of Glebe House, Vicarage Lane, **Compton Bishop**.

■ East Brent Village Hall Management Committee may widen access to the car park at East Brent Village Hall, Brent Road, **East Brent**.

■ Mr R Bradley may build a detached garage/workshop at Duffield Cottage, Vicarage Lane, **Mark**.

■ Mr P Mugford can create an agricultural building at Wintine, Mudgley Road, **Rooksbridge**.

■ Mr IE and Mrs LM Marshall can create an agricultural building on land west of Fletchers Lane, **Tarnock**.

■ Mrs M Hughes has lost her appeal to retain the use of land to site two mobile homes and two touring caravans at OS field number 2464 west of Yeo Moor Drove, **Theale**.

■ Mr KH Tucker is allowed to build a steep portal-framed building to cover the livestock yard at Court Farm, Mudgley Hill, **Wedmore**.

■ Mrs Buckley can fell two cupressus macrocarpa at Four Winds, Mill Lane, **Wedmore**.

The Cheddar Valley Gazette publishes planning information retrospectively so as not to omit any backdated applications.

# Alan Webb – the man in the shadows that nobody sees

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*"I was neat, clean, shaved and sober, and I didn't care who knew it. I was everything the well-dressed private detective ought to be."*

The opening description of Raymond Chandler's famous sleuth Richard Marlowe fits Cheddar private eye Alan Webb like a suit.

Would you notice him in Tesco while reaching for milk? No, but you'd know it when your employer presents photographic evidence to stop your sick pay, seeing as you were "bed bound with a bad back".

Alan, 66, said: "You are not there to judge. You just record the facts as you see them."

Exposing fraud remains a mainstay of private investigators: taking on clients who want something uncovered. Like affairs.

"Generally speaking it was the wife who rang you up and you took photos of the situation," said Alan. "These days relationships are more causal with no need to prove anything. The only time you get called in is for jealousy, not legal reasons."

Alan has been a private investigator 32 of the 34 years he's lived in Cheddar. His firm is Marron & Cooke, after the maiden names of his mother and wife. "When I started out I looked to see what names were used and one was the 007 Detective Agency," said Alan. "I didn't wish to immediately let people see I was a PI. Plus a lot of my business comes from the commercial world."

While anyone can call themselves a PI, the true ones come from a discipline. Like the military, where Alan learnt CROPS (covert rural operations), aka hiding behind trees unseen for two days.

The military supplied the skills, the business acumen came from careers in sales and commercial management.

"Private investigation is a business," says Alan. "You have to charge prices and manage your time. A lot of work comes from solicitors. Process serving is 33 per cent of my business."

His favourite job is surveillance. Suspect a company car is being abused? He will attach a tracker and monitor the car's route via computer.

Alan said: "I can go to the client and say it is at this address. Then I start taking photos."

Inside his grab bag is a bridge camera, GPS and dongle, a pen which records voices and takes photos, a dictation machine and thumbnail cameras for ties.

The pen proved mightier than a Bristol optician, whose employer wondered where he went while on sick leave. Turns out it was to work at a rival, pocketing him two pay packets a month.

Alan thinks it is a shame bosses confront staff with



Alan Webb and the private eye's paraphernalia

damning evidence to make them "walk away" instead of prosecuting, where cases would gain publicity as deterrents.

The hardest surveillance is following a car. Try it for five miles and keep two cars between you. "It's impossible with British traffic," said Alan.

Two cars with radio contact should follow – one in front, one behind – as luck can scarper on any corner or rob you of parking space at the suspect's destination.

Then there is going undercover. Before a PI enters the workforce he must check man-

agement has done everything with due diligence before resorting to this. Then there is doing the job, but "jobs like that tend to be menial," said Alan. "Not everyone could do it but a good PI could at any age."

In 32 years Alan has been caught out once, recently, in a village near Shepton Mallet. He was in his blacked-out plain white van when a police officer knocked on his door.

"I showed my ID and she said you've been rumbled," he said. "This estate was renowned for police writing down licence plates and my van had turned up twice in two

days. If you don't admit to getting pinged in your career you're not telling the truth."

The trustworthiness of a PI is upheld by the Association of British Investigators (ABI), of which Alan is secretary for the South West.

As well as making team-ups easy between members – of which there are three or four in Somerset – it puts PIs in touch with their 450-odd counterparts across the country. To get into the ABI you have to pass an exam, a Criminal Records Bureau check, a financial check, a disciplinary panel and hold professional indemnity insurance. Selec-

tion remains tough.

The reward is the ABI brings links with the DVLA and the Law Society and reinforces the notion PIs want to regulate themselves, not become a political football under Government control.

"We believe it would be a particular enthusiasm which would die a death like any quango," said Alan. "We also don't want them to turn us into cash cows by, say, putting on a £1,000 registration fee a year."

All of which keeps the PI business neat, clean, shaved and sober. Everything a private detective ought to be.