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Insight

WINTER 2016



WIN!

AN iPad MINI



Meet, eat and more

Launching London's Flat Iron Square

ON TOUR

Here for the beer in old Cheshire station house



COMMUNITY

Helping disabled people in Leeds



OUT & ABOUT

WITH
INSIGHT
EDITOR
BEN HALL



The new
concourse at
London Bridge
will be the
largest in the
UK

Welcome to the Winter edition of *Insight*. Many of you will be in the thick of your busiest time of the year, so I hope you'll find a few minutes of respite here.

The tour took us to the rolling plains of Cheshire, where we met a boutique stove seller whose business is sure to heat up at this time of year, a wine merchant in good cheer, the owner of a bridal shop and a couple who've just fulfilled their dream of opening a real ale tap house in an old station - dig in on page 4.

Our cover story is about Flat Iron Square and you can read about it on pages 10-11. It's a brand new London hotspot featuring some exciting places to eat, drink and listen to music.

If you're looking for some festive cheer, have a read of our article on Sensory Leeds on page 7. The work they do for and with disabled people is fascinating, inspiring and heartwarming.

On the back page, Sean Smith gets passionate about meeting tenants in the south west as part of his role as a portfolio manager. There's also an iPad mini to win - see if you can identify the famous faces disguised as Santa to be in with a chance.

CONTACT US

If you have a story to tell or a question about the magazine

@ Email: drop us a line at insight@abcomm.co.uk

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As always, don't forget to follow us on Twitter - @InsightNR - and have a brilliant Christmas.



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LEVEL CROSSING HELP FOR THE DEAF

The Signly app is available on iPhone and Android for free

A new app - Signly Network Rail - has been launched to help sign language users cross the railway safely.

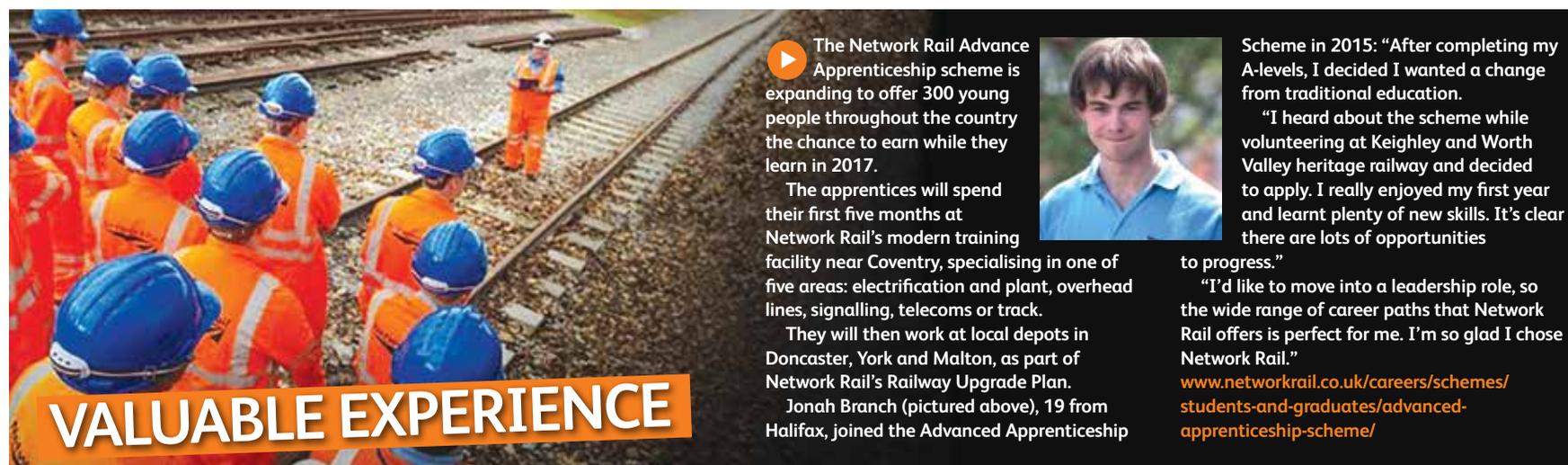
Signly is an app used by a variety of businesses, retailers, and museums to support people with visual or hearing impairment. The Network Rail version is specifically designed to help people who may face additional challenges when using a level crossing, as part of the Everyone Across Safely campaign.

The app works like a QR code, where smartphone users point their device camera at leaflets or posters. The app then provides an instant sign language and spoken version of the information on screen.

The Royal Association for Deaf

People will also be working closely with Network Rail to train level crossing managers on how to identify, communicate and support users.

Dr Jan Sheldon, Chief Executive, Royal Association for Deaf people said: "The Royal Association for Deaf people (RAD) has been delighted to work in partnership with Network Rail on this project."



VALUABLE EXPERIENCE

The Network Rail Advance Apprenticeship scheme is expanding to offer 300 young people throughout the country the chance to earn while they learn in 2017.

The apprentices will spend their first five months at Network Rail's modern training facility near Coventry, specialising in one of five areas: electrification and plant, overhead lines, signalling, telecoms or track.

They will then work at local depots in Doncaster, York and Malton, as part of Network Rail's Railway Upgrade Plan.

Jonah Branch (pictured above), 19 from Halifax, joined the Advanced Apprenticeship



Scheme in 2015: "After completing my A-levels, I decided I wanted a change from traditional education.

"I heard about the scheme while volunteering at Keighley and Worth Valley heritage railway and decided to apply. I really enjoyed my first year and learnt plenty of new skills. It's clear there are lots of opportunities

to progress."

"I'd like to move into a leadership role, so the wide range of career paths that Network Rail offers is perfect for me. I'm so glad I chose Network Rail."

www.networkrail.co.uk/careers/schemes/students-and-graduates/advanced-apprenticeship-scheme/

TOP 3

With the launch of Signly, we look at three other apps useful for people with impairments



FREE
iPhone and
Android

TapTapSee

Useful for those with visual impairments

This app describes the world around you when you upload a photo, offering a voiceover assistant that provides an accurate and detailed description, right down to colour.



FREE
iPhone and
Android

QuickBooks

Useful for those with hearing impairments

Used by huge organisations across the world, this app transcribes voicemail messages into emails and text messages.



FREE
iPhone and
Android

IFTTT

Useful for everyone

If This, Then That is an app that has been gathering speed over recent years. Soon to be embraced by the recent Amazon Echo devices, IFTTT allows smartphone users to connect their apps to create useful automation, such as having your texts read out to you.

Beryl Cotton Weddings



For three decades, Beryl Cotton Weddings has been fulfilling the dreams of brides across Cheshire and Merseyside.

Unlike many industries, the business of selling wedding dresses has remained largely unchanged over the years and Beryl's simple ethos remains the same as when she started out.

"Most brides just want a dream wedding; they've been thinking about this shopping experience since they were young and want to be made to feel special, so I'm here to fulfill that," said Beryl.

"It's a traditional business and the experience people want has remained the same, but social media platforms such as Pinterest and Instagram mean that people can do much more research before they arrive."

Being on the edge of Warrington town centre, in arches underneath its train station, works well for Beryl.

"We're close enough to the centre, but we have parking outside and the arch itself is a bit different and funky for this kind of shop," she said.

"People buy their clothes online nowadays, but we're selling a commodity they still love to see and feel."

www.berylcottonweddings.com



Embrace the way people use social media to benefit your business



Insight TOUR



COVERED: 26 MILES

- The county is famous for its salt mining industry
- 007 Daniel Craig was born in Cheshire
- The village of Willaston is home to the World Worm Charming Championships

1539

First race run at Chester racecourse, Britain's oldest continually running sporting venue



The stove business is hot property for Lee Sharp and Helen Simpson. Their showroom in Chester is packed with elegant woodburning stoves, range cookers and fireplaces.

As a stockist for high quality manufacturers, Snug bills itself as a heat boutique, and it's easy to see why.

"We've been here for nearly four years and we work with some of the world's most renowned manufacturers, many of whom are Scandinavian," said Helen.

"Stove designs vary, so once a customer

has decided if they want a wood or multi-fuel product, the heat output is what actually determines the size of what they need and narrows down the choice."

Some nifty design work also saw Lee and Helen build an elaborate chimney system in their arch, allowing them to light the showroom's fires for customers.

www.chesterstoves.co.uk

Snug



Helen Sharp with one of Snug's finest stoves



Wine Buffs



This cavernous Warrington shop is more than just a treasure trove of fine wine.

In store, customers meet wine expert Brian Marshall, who can offer advice on tipples from across the world. But Wine Buffs' sister business, Australian Wines, is also run from the same arch and reaches a vastly different market.

"Shopping in person has declined over the years, so we zeroed in on a niche online market for Australian wine," said Brian.

"We stock 350 wines on the online store and 90 per cent of our customers are in Australia, buying gifts for loved ones in the UK. The other 10 per cent are UK customers who know exactly the kind of niche, high quality wine they're looking for."

With the eight-week Christmas period accounting for more than a third of Wine Buffs' annual revenue, Brian is always keen to distance the business from supermarkets.

"I like to think of it as supermarkets selling alcohol, whereas we sell wine. Their range has to be affordable, whereas our average bottle is sold for over £10," he said.

"You'll also find that supermarkets have to stock wines that taste traditional, but we'll take a risk on something we've tasted."

www.wine-buffs.com



Beer Heroes



MY SUCCESS

Support local whenever you can



Carl and Kelly Ball's Beer Heroes business has come a long way since its early days operating from the back of a

Cheshire convenience store.

Now occupying the old waiting room at Helsby station, business is booming for the real ale enthusiasts.

"We ship an average of 100 boxes of beer a week and business is getting busier every day as the popularity of ale continues to increase," said Carl.

"Beer advent calendars are now incredibly popular at Christmas, so this is a huge time of the year for us."

The couple relocated in November this

year after they outgrew their previous premises. While Beer Heroes' new pad is perfect for a growing online retailer, it's also presented Carl and Kelly with the opportunity to open their own tap house.

"We have this great space and we love what we do, so we've opened up to the public on Fridays and weekends with eight beers on tap," said Carl.

"There are holiday cottages nearby, then we have local residents and also beer enthusiasts who can get to us by train.

"Beer Heroes used to be secondary to our convenience store business, but now it's our full-time passion."

www.beerheroes.com



The simple idea that 'we all need space to play' was the inspiration behind Sensory Leeds, a centre for therapeutic sensory stimulation for people with learning disabilities.

Based in the disused Headingley station house, Sensory Leeds has three rooms filled with activities designed for sensory stimulation, including UV lights, a ball pit, water bed, trampoline and musical instruments.

The centre was opened in 2013 by Meadow Hudson, whose aim was to create a fun, safe space where disabled people are free to explore their surroundings and be themselves.

"This kind of therapy is all about learning through exploration," said Meadow (right).

"The equipment is designed to stimulate on many different levels – smell, touch, sight and sound.

"We have service users of all ages and the majority have profound learning difficulties. In most areas of their lives they don't have an awful lot of autonomy, but that's something we can give back to them here. They can do whatever they feel like; it's a totally non-judgmental place."

Lauren Buckle (pictured above left), 15, has severe autism. She's been coming to the centre every week for four years, and although she's unable to speak, it's clear that she loves it.

"It's a very special place for us," said Lauren's mum, Anne Marie. "At home Lauren won't focus on anything for longer than a few minutes, but here we can join in and really interact with her as a family."

Sensory Leeds is the largest sensory therapy centre in the region, and the only one that is accessible to everyone. The size, location and appearance of the building were very important to Meadow when she was searching for a site, and she believes she's found the perfect spot.



The centre occupies the old Headingley station house

SPACE TO PLAY





Moving with the times

Tenant, business owner and social network aficionado Dipak Patel shares tips for starting 2017 with a bang online



Since Insight last spoke to Dipak Patel in early 2015 about how promising the use of social media could be for businesses, virtual reality headsets have become common household items, virtual assistants can control a home's temperature by voice command and Amazon has started delivering parcels by drone.

So it's no surprise that Dipak, owner of the café and cycle shop Popup Bikes in Manchester, has changed the way he uses social media too.

"The best thing you can do to keep on top of things is to talk to your customers regularly and find out what social media platforms they're using," said Dipak.

"A few years ago, everyone was on Twitter and that was where we focused our efforts online, but now we've found the next generation of customers are growing up with Instagram, so that's actually our leading social network now.

"The online world changes so quickly, but there are lots of articles out there with data on which demographics use which platforms."

That being said, Dipak believes one of the best things a business can do to kick-start their online presence next year is to dive in.

"Research isn't just about reading, it's about putting content out there on social media and seeing whether you get more followers, what sort of thing gets more likes and following your customers' profiles," he said.

Dipak has also got his staff invested in the Popup Bikes social media accounts by having them heavily involved in what is posted.

"I manage our social media accounts with the help of our staff. For example, our barista loves to post pictures of her latte art on Instagram, and our mechanic will take pictures of interesting or complex work he's done," he said.

"Social media is very much at the heart of the growth we've seen in our business over the last few years.

"Potential customers don't want to see a stagnant website that is infrequently updated, they want to see what you did as a business last week, yesterday or even just now."

The three social media platforms

that Dipak uses aren't just a form of interaction or advertisement. Posts on his business's pages by authentic customers can serve as a crucial endorsement.

He said: "Everything on social media is available for anyone to see, and so many people want to know if they can trust a business.

"People like to look to platforms such as Facebook to see if they can trust a business now."

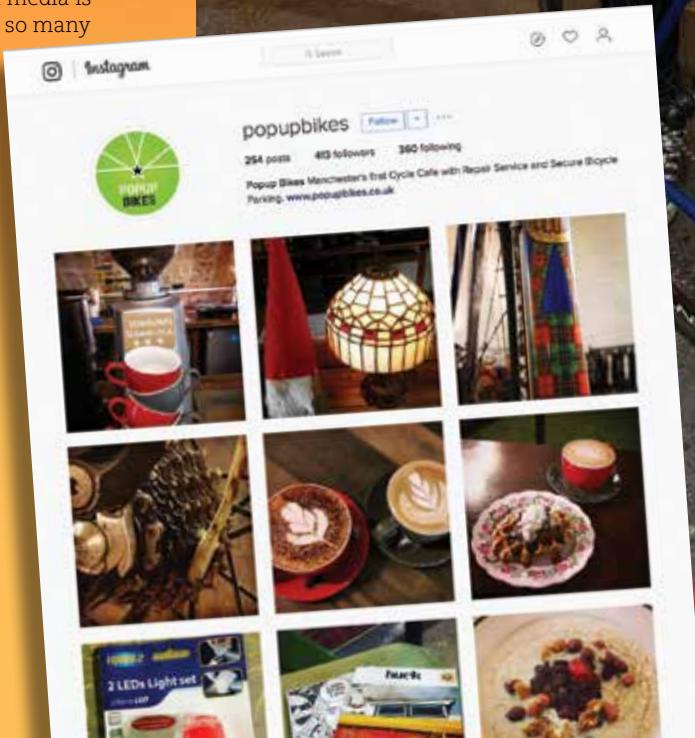
When it comes to what to post online, Dipak believes there's no shortage of material and inspiration to draw on, regardless of what the business does.

"There's always something happening here, as the world of coffee and bikes is forever expanding, and I'm sure all industries are. It's always worth thinking about innovation and how you can use it for social media," he said.

"And if you're ever in doubt, just post a picture of a cat. The internet loves it."



Popup Bikes has more than 5,500 followers across its Twitter, Facebook and Instagram profiles





IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Below right, Mediterranean street food van Laffa

All the tenants at Flat Iron Square

Below, Ben and Rosie Broad from Tinct

TIME TO DINE

An ambitious new food, drink and music venue has opened in the heart of London's **Bankside**, encompassing seven railway arches, a Grade II listed building and the surrounding open spaces.

Flat Iron Square aims to recreate the lively market atmosphere of cities like Paris and Barcelona and is the culmination of more than three years' work and a £3.5 million investment to refurbish and develop the site.

Located between Borough, London Bridge and Southwark

along the route of the Low Line, the 40,000 sq ft site blends a vibrant mix of street food outlets, bars, restaurants, food trucks, live music, theatre, and even a Sunday flea market.

"It's an amazing space to be able to add to our portfolio," said National Lettings Manager Christopher Chapman.

"We found an occupier who's using the full potential of the site, creating a blank canvas for all these fantastic businesses."

Within the site is Devonshire House, a former Georgian townhouse that is now home to a bakery, a cocktail bar, an

exhibition space and some private dining rooms.

It also hosts the pop-up leatherware shop Tinct, owned by brother and sister team Ben and Rosie Broad.

"It's an amazing location and we're thrilled to be here," said Ben.

"It already has the makings of a very popular London venue.

"The special thing about this place is how dedicated everyone is to their craft. There's so much passion here."

Contemporary Spanish chefs Eduardo Wansbrough and Daniele Pino bring a fresh

approach to traditional tapas dishes with their fusion food outlet, EDU.

"We use classic Spanish ingredients like Iberico pork, but mix in elements from other cuisines such as Japan," said Eduardo.

Daniele added: "The new venue's perfect; we're so excited to be part of it. This area is really growing and developing, so it's a great place for us to start out."



HITTING THE RAILS

Sean Smith may be based in Bristol, but the Network Rail portfolio manager for the south west spends as much time as he can meeting tenants

What does your job entail?

My role is far-reaching in that it covers everywhere from Worcester, Bristol and Bridgwater down to Exeter, Taunton and Penzance. I oversee the management of arches and identify opportunities for their future development and occupation by potential tenants.

What skills are important for the role?

Being able to deal with people and build relationships. I need to understand their business and what they want to achieve. It helps because I've run my own business in the past, so I'm familiar with many of the challenges they face.

What's the best thing about the job?

Getting on a train to see properties and meet tenants, all with a view to helping them develop. For instance, we've just granted a tenancy to a business in Worcester called Rule of Tum, which is converting a traditional arch into a brilliant gourmet burger bar with a glass frontage in an area popular with students.

It's the first step to regenerating this area and they have agreed to take on two additional arches.

What's your biggest challenge?

It's the geographical spread. I want to meet as many tenants as I can to discuss what they are aiming for and how we can help.

What's been the highlight of this year?

Seeing our tenant The Exploding Bakery, in Exeter, expanding into a retail unit next to their existing premises. It enabled them to develop while allowing us to retain a customer.

People would be surprised to know:

My family was in the forces, so I was brought up in various locations in Germany before moving to Leeds.

Hobbies: Three kids all under seven is my full-time hobby!

Favourite place:

Abersoch on the Llyn Peninsula in Wales. If you time it right with the weather, it's like being in the Mediterranean.



WIN!
AN iPad MINI

WE'RE SPREADING SOME CHRISTMAS CHEER. NAME THESE FAMOUS FACES FOR A CHANCE TO WIN!

Send your answers, with your name, place of work and contact number via email to insight@abcomm.co.uk or tweet us @Insight_NR. You can also post your answer to Insight, AB Publishing, Unit B, Gemini House, 180-182 Bermondsey Street, London SE1 3TQ. Ieva Elberga from Rota Marine in London won last issue's iPad mini.

