

the blakemore

The Magazine for Employees of A.F. Blakemore & Son Ltd



2015

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A.F. Blakemore Outlines 2020 Growth Strategy



More than 300 delegates gathered at A.F. Blakemore's 2014 management conference in November to hear the company's plans for future growth.

At the event, which took place at the Birmingham Metropole, A.F. Blakemore Group Managing Director Peter Blakemore announced the company's 2020 strategy and called upon the company's management team to focus upon collaboration and innovation to enable the business to achieve its strategic goals.

Key speakers from across A.F. Blakemore's divisions and central functions joined Peter Blakemore on stage to present on initiatives to support the group-wide strategy.



“Our strategy for the coming years is about generating sustainable growth & long-term prosperity for the company, not just short-term success”

A.F. Blakemore Group Managing Director Peter Blakemore presented on A.F. Blakemore's 2020 Group strategy.

Peter started by providing an overview of last year's financial results. The A.F. Blakemore Group recorded annual sales of £1.192 billion for the 2013/14 financial year, up five per cent year-on-year from £1.135bn, while pre-tax profits were recorded at £7.6 million, up by 7.4 per cent from £7.1 million in 2012/13. Net assets grew by 10.9% to £78.6 million.

He commented: “The last financial year saw a very steady and solid performance across all divisions of the company, which is promising given the changing retail landscape of the past year.”

In his review of the grocery market, Peter highlighted that the business mainly operates in the fastest growing sector, but that there is growing competition as all of the major competitors continue to open new stores.

2020 Strategy

Moving on to future strategy, Peter outlined his 2020 plans for the company, explaining the need for each of A.F. Blakemore's divisions to clearly define the role that they will play in achieving the overall plan.

He said: “Whereas the company's previous growth strategies have focused on growing sales, our attention towards 2020 is on innovation and collaboration. As a business we have ambitious plans for the future and great opportunities for growth.”

Highlighting the progress that A.F. Blakemore has already made towards achieving its 2020 goals, Peter reflected

on the significant sales growth that the company has already witnessed in recent years. Since 2006/7 sales for the A.F. Blakemore Group have nearly doubled, increasing from £643 million to £1.19 billion in 2013/14. Sales for the 2014/15 financial year have been forecasted to reach £1.3 billion.

Values

Peter stressed that the company's strong family values will continue to provide a competitive edge in the marketplace and form an important part of A.F. Blakemore's future business strategy.

He concluded: “The company is now in a strong position to grow sales, profits and market share further, and with market predictions pointing to significant future growth in the convenience sector I am confident that we will reach our goals by 2020.”

“Our strategy for the coming years is about generating sustainable growth and long-term prosperity for the company, not just short-term success.”



Jerry Marwood Presents Growth Strategy for Blakemore Trade Partners

Blakemore Trade Partners Managing Director Jerry Marwood outlined key initiatives to grow the independent SPAR estate.

Jerry explained that his division's 2020 strategy revolves around seven key aspects: finding new consumers, developing new retail space, upgrading existing stores, improving retailer loyalty, improving wholesale buying, becoming less reliant on tobacco sales and remaining competitive.

Progress

He highlighted some of the progress that has already been made towards achieving these plans, beginning by pointing to the successful year that Blakemore Trade Partners has had with store recruitment. In the first six periods of the year alone, Blakemore Trade Partners welcomed 44 new stores to its SPAR estate. Jerry commented: "This is Blakemore Trade Partners' second year of record recruitment numbers in recent history, which tells us that retailers have great faith in us and the SPAR brand."

He stated that the division has also made progress towards improving retailers' buying loyalty by investing £1.8 million in wholesale pricing last year. A further £2 million was invested in capital, to help retailers remain competitive.

Stand Out Stores

Jerry highlighted the work that Blakemore Trade Partners has done to develop new store formats and "stand out" retail stores. He explained: "We want the best stores in the industry, and this means offering multiple solutions across the SPAR brand so that we can recruit the widest range of retailers possible. We've got some brilliant new stores in the pipeline and our existing retailers have enjoyed a string of success at national retail industry awards."

Also celebrated was the work that Blakemore Trade Partners has carried out in collaboration with A.F. Blakemore's wholesale divisions to reduce wholesale cost prices and strengthen the buying power of the Blakemore group.

Plans were outlined to make the business less reliant on tobacco sales by replacing them with more profitable products and growing SPAR brand sales.

Jerry pointed to the success of SPAR UK's television marketing campaign and Shop & Win initiative in driving footfall to SPAR stores and stressed the opportunity to take advantage of digital marketing further in the future.

Key Assets

In support of the Blakemore Trade Partners growth strategy, he identified the key assets that will enable Blakemore Trade Partners to stand out from its competitors: leading convenience brands, class-leading technology and support solutions, innovative store formats, brilliantly executed business partnerships, ethical and competitive wholesale and retail pricing, and investing in staff, customers and the community for the long term.

Looking at 2020 market projections for the convenience sector, Jerry stressed



DCSJ Ltd's "stand out" SPAR store in Hackney, London

that there are plenty of opportunities for Blakemore Trade Partners to grow its estate, with both the number of convenience stores in the UK and independent store ownership on the increase.

In the first six periods of the year alone, Blakemore Trade Partners welcomed 44 new stores to its SPAR estate



Geoff Hallam Delivers Blakemore Retail's 2020 Vision

Blakemore Retail Managing Director Geoff Hallam presented Blakemore Retail's 2020 vision.

Geoff highlighted the increasing demand for local shopping and the opportunity for Blakemore Retail to grow sales by increasing customer spend and frequency of visit.

Improvement Plans

Blakemore Retail's key improvement plans include the acquisition of new stores, development of existing stores, new franchises, investment in its post office network and new Food To Go initiatives.

Each year the division will target the acquisition of approximately five trading stores as well as building 10 new stores. This is alongside significant investment in the existing stores estate, with £12



Blakemore Retail outlines plans for further Subway franchises

million having already been set aside for store development this financial year.

A significant part of Blakemore Retail's growth plan will be the rollout of further Subway and Costa franchises across the estate. Geoff outlined the benefits of Blakemore Retail aligning the SPAR name with other leading brands: "Our Subway and Costa franchises have proved to be great footfall drivers and have significantly helped to increase sales across the estate. Subway has great brand strength and complements Blakemore Retail's foodservice offering, meaning that there is still plenty of opportunity to grow SPAR's Food To Go range alongside it."

This year Blakemore Retail also became the first business to introduce a Greggs bakery franchise into a convenience store when it opened a Greggs counter at Brumby Corner in July, as part of a three-store trial.

Moving on, Geoff explained that Blakemore Retail has partnered with the Post Office to roll out new post office formats across its estate. Post office services are being introduced to stores' main retail checkout counters as well as



Blakemore Retail's new forecourt store in Louth, Lincolnshire

traditional fortress counters in order to extend the availability of postal services in line with store opening hours.

Delegates also heard about Blakemore Retail's future plans to develop SPAR Food To Go, with new product ranges and branding already proving popular with customers.

Design & Shopfitting

To support the growth and development of the SPAR estate, recent investment has also been made in Blakemore Design & Shopfitting, with the relocation of its warehouse to new premises and set up of a new workshop, helping to reduce fixed costs by 77%.

Geoff concluded: "I am confident that both Blakemore Retail and Blakemore Design & Shopfitting will beat budget this year. We're now working a lot more closely together with other divisions across the Blakemore group and are very much heading in the right direction."

“Our Subway & Costa franchises have proved to be great footfall drivers & have significantly helped to increase sales across the estate”



Sam Wilcox Leads Wholesale Group 2020 Strategy

Wholesale Group Managing Director Sam Wilcox collaborated with Blakemore Wholesale Commercial Director Russell Grant and Blakemore Fine Foods Commercial Director Caoire Blakemore to provide an update on A.F. Blakemore's wholesale divisions.



Wholesale Group Managing Director Sam Wilcox

In his overview of the group, Sam highlighted the solid foundations in place to enable each of the wholesale divisions to grow, with recent business acquisitions and investment in new facilities helping to increase the group's buying power, storage capacity and share of the market.

Since 2009 these acquisitions have included a new Wholesale Distribution depot in the West Midlands, new Foodservice depot in Wakefield and new meat storage and processing facilities for Fresh Foods in South Staffordshire, as well as five Lowries and BA Cash & Carry depots during 2013/14.

Sam commented: "Whilst the investment we have made in these new depots has increased the business's fixed costs, it is all part of a long-term plan that will enable us to achieve growth. Since the opening of these new facilities we have seen Wholesale Distribution sales grow by 300%, Foodservice sales increase by 120% and Fresh Foods sales grow by 210%."



Blakemore Wholesale Commercial Director Russell Grant

Blakemore Wholesale

Following on from Sam's group overview, Blakemore Wholesale Commercial Director Russell Grant presented strategy growth plans for the Blakemore Wholesale division.

He outlined initiatives to grow sales of fresh produce and fresh meat within depots and create a sustainable delivered service to reinforce the business's position as a credible alternative to major wholesalers.

Brand new for 2014 was an export strategy to establish Blakemore Wholesale and the wider A.F. Blakemore group as a major player in the wholesale export market.

Russell also presented plans to re-launch Blakemore Wholesale's retail club with new contracts, new EPOS, an improved online offering and Click & Collect service, and new three-tier system for store standards. Blakemore Wholesale will target 82% growth of its Retail Club by 2020, aiming to increase store numbers from 500 to more than 900.

Russell reported that the acquisitions of Lowries and BA Cash & Carry depots have put Blakemore Wholesale in a strong position, establishing the business as a clear number three in the cash & carry market. He highlighted the opportunity to introduce best practice from across these newly acquired depots into existing depots, announcing plans to grow sales of ice cream and Chinese products across the estate.

Blakemore Wholesale Distribution

Moving on to Blakemore Wholesale Distribution, Sam stressed that the focus needs to be on winning new business, with contractual work in particular providing opportunity for significant sales growth. Plans are in place to extend the range of suppliers that the business deals with and also to raise the profile of Wholesale Distribution through press coverage, in-depot supplier days and new web pages on the company website.

Blakemore Foodservice

In his review of Blakemore Foodservice, Sam highlighted the division's strong number three positioning in the food service market and provided an overview of new initiatives to help grow the

business, including an improved frozen food range, new trade shows and the development of new online ordering facilities to reduce delivery lead times. The division has invested in new sales team members to help win more free trade.

Blakemore Fresh Foods

Sam celebrated the recent success of Blakemore Fresh Foods, with the division confidently surpassing its sales budget for the 2013/14 year and continuing to win contracts to supply restaurant chains, aided by recent investment in new portion control and burger production facilities as well as additional sales team members. Looking forwards Sam highlighted opportunities to extend the Fresh Foods product range into new markets and announced plans to set up a satellite operation in the South West to grow business in this area.

Blakemore Fine Foods

Blakemore Fine Foods Commercial Director Caoire Blakemore outlined Blakemore Fine Foods' 2020 strategy. Included in this were plans to continue to diversify the Fine Foods "Best of British" range and improve the Fine Foods customer offering, alongside ongoing investment in producers.



Blakemore Fine Foods Commercial Director Caoire Blakemore

Caoire reflected on the strong foundations in place for Fine Foods to grow, with the recent rebranding of the division and move to new warehouse premises increasing storage capacity by five times. The division has also undergone a recent restructure, with the Fine Foods warehouse operation now being supported by Blakemore Foodservice and the transport operation by Blakemore Logistics.

Caoire also covered Fine Foods' ambitions to expand into new markets, work more closely with other Blakemore divisions, increase efficiencies and develop IT.

The Role of Innovation in Achieving A.F. Blakemore's 2020 Objectives

Caoire Blakemore took to the stage to present on the role of innovation in achieving A.F. Blakemore's 2020 objectives.

Caoire called on delegates to look beyond the business to the technological advancement and creative new ideas revolutionising the wider marketplace.

She said: "Over the years A.F. Blakemore has led the way in the retail, wholesale and distribution sectors with its innovation, from my great grandparents' first venture into wholesaling with the sale of paper bags to the key role the business played in the launch of SPAR's pioneering 'Eight 'til Late' concept. It is this kind of innovation that is going to take us into the future."

Caoire highlighted how technology is constantly changing the marketplace and shopping habits, with 60% of shoppers now using a smartphone or tablet when out shopping to inform their purchasing choices.

She also remarked on the growth of social networking and sharing economies, where businesses share their resources

with each other to reduce costs, and the growing popularity of online ordering and Click & Collect services.

Caoire said: "Innovation isn't always about re-inventing the wheel but looking at what other businesses are doing. It's vital that we look forward even further than 2020 in order to future-proof our business and remain ahead of our competitors."



“Innovation isn't always about re-inventing the wheel but looking at what other businesses are doing”

Establishing Class-leading Technical Services

Group Finance & IT Director Scott Munro-Morris provided an overview of plans to establish class-leading technical services across the company.

Scott stressed that A.F. Blakemore's IT strategy has a key role to play in enabling the company to achieve its profit improvement plans, with technology playing an increasingly important role in business.

He said: "Our ultimate aim is for A.F. Blakemore to be viewed as a class-leading provider of IT systems, infrastructure and services. This will enable the company to achieve its profit improvement plans, improve efficiencies and reduce costs. As a result of IT projects carried out by Technical Services we will generate £2m worth of savings across the next five years alone."

In order to achieve A.F. Blakemore's 2020 goal of establishing class-leading technical services, Scott explained that the company had undertaken a professional review of its technical systems, which revealed that the majority require significant modification to meet both current and future requirements.

Scott outlined several key areas for the IT team to focus on in the lead up to 2020: transitioning IT systems acquired as a result of recent company acquisitions, improving management information reporting, a company-wide EPOS strategy, improving customers' online experience and ordering processes, a customer relationship management system and increasing the speed of trial and innovation of new IT initiatives.



Embedding the Blakemore Way Culture



Group HR Director Ian Diment and Head of Corporate Affairs Paul Cowley presented on the importance of embedding the Blakemore Way culture and principles of responsible business across the group.

Ian Diment explained that in order for the company to achieve its 2020 goals, it is essential for the business to have the right attitudes and behaviours, leadership, processes and systems in place.

He said: "The aim is to establish a unique culture across the Blakemore group that engenders loyalty and commitment, generates competitive advantage and ensures that the company lives up to the purpose and values outlined in the Blakemore Way."

Leading the Blakemore Way

Ian highlighted the significant investment made in the company's Leading the Blakemore Way development programme, which has been introduced to help colleagues across the group develop the leadership attitudes, skills and capability to lead the Blakemore Way effectively.

A new performance development review has also been introduced this year to help engage employees with the company's vision and empower them to deliver the business's plans.



A.F. Blakemore's educational programme achieves recognition at the BITC Responsible Business Awards

"The aim is to establish a unique culture across the Blakemore group that engenders loyalty & commitment"



Group HR Director Ian Diment

Responsible Business

Paul Cowley celebrated the progress that the Blakemore group has already made towards establishing a culture of responsible business by drawing attention to its unprecedented success at Business in the Community's national Responsible Business awards and highlighting the 14,800 hours of work time donated to the company's educational programme since 2008.

Meanwhile, the number of charitable donations given to good causes via the Blakemore Foundation has doubled since the 2011/12 financial year.

Paul concluded by looking to the future: "Moving to the next level, the focus will be on looking at the ways in which we can improve how we communicate our culture of responsible business and commitment to the Blakemore Way values."

The number of charitable donations given to good causes has doubled since the 2011/12 financial year



Head of Corporate Affairs Paul Cowley

Your 'Ask the Board' Questions Answered

At this year's management conference delegates were invited to pose questions to the presenters via iPads.



Here is a selection of the 106 questions that were answered by the senior team.

You can find the full list of questions on the Staff Zone area of the A.F. Blakemore website, where you can also submit your own questions and ideas to improve the business.

Simply visit:

www.afblakemore.com/staff-zone/ask-the-board.

Questions for Blakemore Trade Partners Managing Director Jerry Marwood

Nisa are on TV with cheap beers, wines & spirits promotions – will we be?

We are on TV this winter featuring recipes that can be constructed at a low cost. The message we want to send to consumers is that they can rely on SPAR for value. We also aim to help them with ideas for "tonight's tea", which is still our biggest opportunity to grow basket size and shopper visit numbers. The campaign at Easter will feature a range of own-brand wines.

How many independent stores do we need to achieve our 2020 growth forecast?

The exact number is unclear as some new stores are bigger than others. However, our projection is that this year we need to grow by 40 stores, next year by 60, the following by 80 and finally by 100. As you can see this requires our current success at recruiting stores to continue and to improve incrementally by 20 stores every year.

We would love to use Blakemore Creative Print more but we do not know what is available or in stock, and

it is harder to order from and more expensive than our present supplier. Is there any help available with this?

In the first instance talk to Maia Riley or Perry Lloyd about your requirements. The evidence we have so far is that when the company has switched its business to Blakemore Creative Print the savings have been between 10 and 40%. Don't take my word for it, give them the challenge and see what they can do by contacting Maia directly. If you have any feedback on what you discover then please let me know.

Questions for Blakemore Retail Managing Director Geoff Hallam

How many Subways is Blakemore Retail planning to add to its estate in the next 12 months?

By the end of the 2014/15 financial year Blakemore Retail will have around 30 Subway stores. Twelve months from now, by the end of the 2015 calendar year, we aim to have implemented a Subway franchise in about 50 stores.

Are there any other branded franchises that Blakemore Retail is looking to work with and can you tell us the names of any potential franchise partners?

Blakemore Retail is in the process of talking with other franchise companies at the moment. We are looking at the possibility of a sit-down coffee offer similar to Costa or Starbucks, but not those particular brands.

How do Blakemore Retail's franchise partnerships work?

All of Blakemore Retail's franchises are operated by the company and managed by our own staff. We pay a royalty fee to Subway and Greggs based on a percentage of the turnover generated by them.

Questions for Wholesale Group Managing Director Sam Wilcox

What is Blakemore Wholesale's stores group?

The Wholesale stores group consists of independent retailers across our trading estate who we supply a fascia, internal and external imagery, merchandising advice, ongoing support and comprehensive promotional plans.

Is Lifestyle a strong enough brand to compete with Premier and Best One?

I think that for certain retailers the answer is yes. However, for quality

retailers in specific trading areas we believe that there may be an increasing need to develop a new package and offering that we will be working upon over the next few months.

Could Blakemore Fresh Foods supply retail packs of fresh meat and fish for our SPAR stores or other divisions?

Our Fresh Foods operation continues to grow and expand and we have plans to extend our product range and move into new markets over the next few years. The supply of retail packs is certainly an option that we are exploring. However, this would require a capital investment in equipment in excess of £500,000 and we do not believe that there is the demand to supply sufficient volumes at the current time.

Questions for Blakemore Fine Foods Commercial Director Caoire Blakemore

Will independent SPAR retailers ever be able to order Fine Foods products via their back office SparPoS system?

Yes, we should have a solution to launch in January. The link is currently in the final stages of testing with a pilot store trailing it.

Is Blakemore Fine Foods expanding its local supplier base to other areas of the UK i.e. south, southeast etc?

Yes, we've been gradually expanding where we get producers from over the past two years and will continue to do so. If customers ever want us to take on a particular producer we're more than happy to do so.

Are there any plans for Blakemore Fine Foods to reduce their delivery lead times for SPAR stores? It is currently day 1 for day 4/5.

This is part of developing our customer offering strategy. Historically we've built our business to support producers and we are now reviewing our processes from a customer perspective. Our lead time has come out as the largest barrier for customers and therefore we'll be looking at ways to shorten this. Because we pick up so much of our product this is not as straightforward as you might imagine and therefore we need to consult all stakeholders.

Questions for Group Finance & IT Director Scott Munro-Morris

Where are we currently in terms of profit in line with the "Forward to 2025" vision?

Our 2020 goal is 2% profit before tax and we are currently at 0.64% (year ending April 2014). No financial targets have been set as yet for 2025.

Will there be an AFB app for smartphones?

We are currently talking to a company called GoCart to enable BTP customers to have their PLOF made available via a smartphone. We are also developing our first AFB app in conjunction with the Wholesale team. Once this prototype is working, we will then be in a better position to develop further applications.

Whilst making £400k of savings annually what is the predicted level of short-term capital investment planned to be in hardware (i.e. iPads) to improve customer service?

We have not received requests for iPads outside of those currently being used; however, we would consider any requests if there was a business case around improving efficiency and customer service. Outside of iPads, we are looking to invest in an improved support structure for the IT customer service helpdesk, to include a review of support hours and systems used.

How long will it take to have the EPOS system in place to compete with Booker's?

SPARPoS should be ready for rollout in January 2015 within the Wholesale Cash & Carry estate, and we believe that SparPoS is on a par with the current Booker system. In terms of any replacement for SPARPoS it will take the best part of a year to undertake a feasibility study and the interfacing work that would be required to move to a store trial position. Following any trial, it would then take some time to roll out across our whole estate, independents etc.

What is the timescale for the full integration of the IT strategy?

We have proposed a four-year plan, with the majority of projects being completed across the first three years. This will become a rolling plan, reviewed and updated by the IT Steering Committee to ensure that benefits and continuous improvement are ongoing.

Questions for Group HR Director Ian Diment

When will the 2020 vision be briefed out to staff?

This will be done in numerous ways.

The delegates pack provided to all who attended the management conference included a memory stick with all the slides from the various presentations along with a 2020 Strategy briefing document. We would encourage all managers to share this information with their teams. Key strands of divisional strategies should form part of ongoing briefing documents and team/individual PDR objectives.

What is the plan for Leading the Blakemore Way once all line managers have been trained?

We now have the internal capability to deliver Leading the Blakemore Way to all management and key specialist positions across the company via a two-day programme. As this is a leadership programme it is predominantly aimed at colleagues with people responsibilities. However, we are looking into ways that the behaviours can be cascaded across the entire business through ongoing learning & development programmes. We have also introduced an advanced programme for senior managers across the business to reinforce and develop levels of understanding.

Questions for Head of Corporate Affairs Paul Cowley

How do we sign up for e-newsletters?

There is an option to sign up to the e-newsletter through the Staff Zone area of the website. Simply visit www.afblakemore.com/staff-zone/e-newsletter-sign-up. Alternatively contact AFB Communications Officer Rachel Adams, who will do this for you. I would urge managers to encourage their teams to sign up to the e-newsletter, via their work or personal email address, as it is an excellent way of keeping colleagues across our business up to date with the latest news.

Are there any plans to utilise Facebook considering this is one of the most used social media platforms?

Facebook is already in place across the Wholesale division, with plans being developed to introduce it to other areas of the business. Discussions have taken place in relation to introducing an AFB Facebook page and this will be explored further in 2015 as part of a wider discussion around social media. However, I would only recommend introducing this if it has a clear purpose and we have the resources to regularly update it with relevant and engaging content.

A.F. Blakemore Celebrates Industry Awards Success

A.F. Blakemore has celebrated a number of industry awards successes during the last six months across its independent retail and wholesale divisions.

Here are the winners:



SPAR Boston Road

SPAR Boston Road, owned by independent retailer Jacqui Dales, picked up Most Improved Store at the Retail Industry Awards, whilst SPAR was crowned Symbol Group Fascia of the Year.



SPAR Parkfoot

SPAR Parkfoot, owned by independent retailer David Charman, was recognised at the Forecourt Trader Awards in the London & South East 2.5 MLPA Plus category.



Blakemore Wholesale

Blakemore Wholesale scooped three titles at the Landmark Wholesale Awards. The business was named Catering Business Development Member of the Year whilst Penrith was named Delivered Depot of the Year and Barnsley picked up Own Brand Depot of the Year.



Martin Hancox

Blakemore Foodservice Driver Martin Hancox was recognised at the FWD Gold Medal Awards with the title of Delivered Wholesale Driver of the Year.



Bay Bashir

Blakemore Wholesale Lifestyle Express retailer Bay Bashir took the title of Responsible Retailer of the Year at both the Asian Trader and Independent Achievers Academy awards.



Conrad Davies

SPAR independent retailer Conrad Davies was crowned winner of the Retail Innovation category at the Independent Achievers Academy awards.



Caoire Blakemore

Blakemore Fine Foods Commercial Director Caoire Blakemore was recognised in The Grocer Top New Talent list, which recognises those who have made an outstanding contribution to the grocery industry.

Cardiff and Swansea C&C Depots Celebrate Top Retailers

Blakemore Wholesale's Cardiff and Swansea cash & carry depots acknowledged their top Retail Club members at their annual Business Achievers Awards Dinner.

The awards evening, held at Cardiff's National Indoor Cricket Centre at SWALEC Stadium in September, recognised the achievements of retailers and acknowledged their loyalty, support and commitment to the Retail Club over the last 12 months.

This was the twelfth annual event hosted by the two depots and saw 440 customers, suppliers and staff in attendance.

A total of seven awards were presented on the night, which included Member of the Year, Runner Up Member of the Year, On-trade Retailer of the Year, Most Improved Retailer, Lifestyle Own Label, Best Newcomer and Supplier of the Year.

In addition to the awards ceremony, guests enjoyed a three-course dinner and entertainment from comedian Milton Jones, and danced the night away with a



Retailer Rashed Aziz from Lifestyle Express Gendros in Swansea collects the Member of the Year award in recognition of his loyalty and commitment to the Lifestyle Express brand

performance from A.F. Blakemore's very own band, No Direction.

A charity raffle and auction on the night raised £5,195 for the Ty Hafan children's hospice.

Blakemore Wholesale Stores Group

Director Nick Rose commented: "The event was held to reward and recognise the hard work put in by our retailers. So many retailers go the extra mile to support us and contribute so much to our retail club, so this is our way of saying thank you."

Blakemore Foodservice Celebrates Top Caterers

Blakemore Foodservice celebrated the achievements of its catering customers at its annual Catering Awards in November.

The Blakemore Foodservice Catering Awards, which are now in their eleventh year, acknowledge and reward the



Blakemore Foodservice Sales & Marketing Director Jim Dudley co-hosts the awards evening with comedian Rob Brydon

company's customers for their initiative, skill and dedication to their businesses.

This year's event took place at the East Midlands Conference Centre in Nottingham and was attended by 260 guests, including Blakemore Foodservice's customers, suppliers and staff.

Blakemore Foodservice Sales & Marketing Director commented: "Our Catering Awards recognise excellence amongst our customers, ranging from local authorities to independent schools, workplace caterers, leisure sites, pubs and universities.

"Over the years the awards have become recognised as one of the very best, if not the best, in the UK foodservice market."

At the event guests enjoyed a three-course meal as well as entertainment provided by ventriloquist Paul Zerdin and comedian Rob Brydon, who went on to co-host the awards ceremony with Jim Dudley.

Derby's Royal School for the Deaf was crowned Overall Winner of the Public Sector whilst the University of Chester picked up the title of Overall Winner of the Private Sector. Both received a £1,000 prize.

One attendee commented: "As ever it was a lovely evening and the schools that attended had a wonderful time. Winning was the icing on the cake for two of them, but they were all just so pleased to be there and you made them feel very special."

Wholesale Distribution Appoints New Managing Director

A.F. Blakemore has announced the appointment of a new managing director, with specific responsibility for the company's Wholesale Distribution division.

James Russell took on the role of Blakemore Wholesale Distribution Managing Director on January 5th, reporting to the A.F. Blakemore Group Wholesale Managing Director, Sam Wilcox.

The move follows a strategic review of A.F. Blakemore's wholesale business, with James responsible for steering the company's overall wholesale distribution service, in addition the company's new export operation.

James previously held the position of Managing Director at Rowan International and has experience of working across a number of different wholesale sectors from both a supplier and wholesaler perspective.



Sam Wilcox said: "This is a very exciting appointment for our Wholesale Distribution division, which represents a clear growth area for our business.

"James has the experience and credentials to steer this important part of our operation to the next level and help us achieve our longer-term strategic objectives."

We invited James to tell us a bit more about himself:

Career and previous work experience:

I was born in Melbourne, Australia, where I went to school and university. I moved to the UK in 2001 and joined Gallaher tobacco, working in a number of different roles within finance, supply chain and finally sales, where I led the distributive trade business. It was during this period that I first came into contact with A.F. Blakemore. I spent nearly four years at Britvic Soft Drinks and was responsible for their wholesale business, before moving to Rowan International where I have worked for the past three years. I am looking forward to bringing my experience of pan-European trade, and in particular an inside view of the discount channel to help lead the delivery of the exciting growth outlined in the 2020 strategy.

Why did you decide to join A.F. Blakemore?

Firstly I feel a real affinity to the culture and the Blakemore Way in particular. A.F. Blakemore is leading the industry in the way it approaches, engages and develops its team, suppliers and customers – who would not want to be a part of that? Secondly, I am really excited by the opportunities that exist for A.F. Blakemore moving forward and am delighted to have the opportunity to come onboard and play a role in leading the delivery of the next phase of growth for the business.

What are your first impressions of the company?

I have always been impressed with the culture and professionalism of A.F. Blakemore. This has been reinforced through all the interactions I have already had across the business. I am really positive about the opportunities that exist for us and know that we have the team and infrastructure to deliver our objectives.

Do you have any initial plans or objectives in relation to your new role with us?

I am looking forward to working with the team to deliver a fast start to the calendar year. Our principal objectives over the years ahead will be to win new, profitable business. We will be looking to do this by building our existing business, while expanding our customer footprint, both in the UK and abroad.

Tell us a little bit about yourself outside of work:

I am married with two children – Ella (7) and Hamish (5). My wife Claire has just started her own business (homebrewtique.com), which stems from our shared interest in brewing beer. I love all sports – particularly when the Aussies are doing well. I enjoy listening to all kinds of music and reckon that Spotify has to be just about the best invention in my lifetime.

“ I am really excited by the opportunities that exist for A.F. Blakemore moving forward ”

Blakemore Trade Partners Appoints New Trading Director

Blakemore Trade Partners has appointed a new trading director, Brigid Davidson, who joined the company from Iceland Foods on January 5th.

While Brigid reports to Blakemore Trade Partners Managing Director Jerry Marwood, she will sit on both the Trade Partners and Retail Boards, with Blakemore Retail Managing Director Geoff Hallam having been involved throughout the recruitment process.

Jerry said: "The Trading Director role is pivotal to the commercial success of both Blakemore Trade Partners and Blakemore Retail and is integral to the company's relationships with SPAR UK and our supplier base.

"I am delighted to welcome Brigid to A.F. Blakemore & Son Ltd. She joins us with an excellent track record across the sector and will be a key player in the delivery of our 2020 business objectives.

We invited Brigid to tell us a bit more about herself:

Career and previous work experience:

I have worked in wholesale and retail for nearly 30 years. I started my career with Makro as a graduate trainee, being promoted to Department Manager at the Eccles store, and it is from there that I got my first buying position. As soon as I started working in buying I knew that this was the job for me. Most recently I was Head of Buying with Iceland Foods. I worked up through the ranks having started with them as Senior Buyer for Ice Cream and Desserts. I progressed to cover all categories: frozen, chilled and grocery, before taking responsibility for the buying, merchandising and administration functions of the business. I also worked for the Co-op and Safeway prior to the Morrisons acquisition.

Why did you decide to join A.F. Blakemore?

Meeting Peter Blakemore, Jerry Marwood, Geoff Hallam and Ian Diment has given me the clear impression of a business with a strong family heritage

and where people come first. The senior leadership team recognise the challenges the business faces both internally and from a fiercely competitive market. Understanding and overcoming this with the 2020 strategy is a realistic and strong position to enable success.

What are your first impressions of the company?

Everyone I have met so far within the team has been very friendly and helpful. Joining a new business can be a very daunting experience so the support of all your colleagues is important.

Do you have any initial plans or objectives in relation to your new role with us?

Firstly, I want to get to know the team and start learning about the business. Jerry and Ian are pulling together a very comprehensive induction for me. The business has many dimensions, SPAR Brand, franchise customers, our own stores and the other divisions that make up the group....lots to learn! I will bring a focus on our customer, and first-rate customer service is number one. That may be in the delivery of great products, prices, deals or just simply never letting your customer down on service and quality. We need to be better than our competitors to win. There is the 2020 blueprint in the business so I have a good idea where my priorities will be to drive the profit results required for a strong future.

Tell us a little bit about yourself outside of work:

I am originally from Chester Le Street in the North East. You may know it for Durham County Cricket Ground, Lumley Castle and Pease Pudding. Then again, maybe not! Even though I have lived away from the North East a long time I still have the

accent. There is also a bit of Manchester in there so adding in some Midlands will be interesting. I am married to Alasdair and we have been together for more than 20 years. We both love the outdoors and do a lot of cycling, walking, and sailing. Alasdair has sailed from a very young age and patiently taught me the ropes. That's a bit like teaching your nearest and dearest to drive but we both survived the experience! I am currently reading Bradley Wiggins' autobiography about winning the Tour de France. I find his story inspiring and it just goes to show that with dedication and focus you can achieve anything. On to my next chapter in buying!

"I will bring a focus on our customer, and first-rate customer service is number one"



Caoire Blakemore Promoted to Fine Foods Commercial Director

Caoire Blakemore was appointed Commercial Director for Blakemore Fine Foods in 2014 to reflect the day-to-day leadership role that she has played in developing the business over the past seven years and the more strategic role that she will play in the future.

Caoire Blakemore is the fourth generation of the Blakemore family to work at A.F. Blakemore and began her career with a Sunday job in Blakemore Wholesale's Cash & Carry division.

She has since progressed through the business, working in SPAR retail stores and participating in the company's trainee manager programme shortly after completing her degree at Birmingham University.

After spending six months travelling, Caoire returned to the business as part of the head office marketing function before turning her attention to the regionally sourced fine foods sector.

Blakemore Fine Foods, which was initially established under the name of Heart Distribution, was set up in partnership with a group of local producers in 2007,

as a means to connect small British producers with their customers.

The division was re-launched under its current name last year when it moved to larger premises to help meet the demand of its expanding business, with Caoire being promoted to the role of commercial director in July.

We invited Caoire to tell us a bit more about herself:

How long have you worked for A.F. Blakemore?

Since I was little and used to go into the office with Dad to help Karen Saunders with the post. As for paid and proper hours, since graduating nine years ago.

What has been your career path within the business?

Mum and Dad have always been tough pocket money negotiators, so I had a good work ethic instilled into me from a pretty young age. I got my first paid job when I was 13 and worked Sundays at our Wolverhampton cash & carry. From there I moved into Blakemore Retail, which was then known as our Tates division, and worked in our Coseley SPAR store on weekends and in the holidays. I then moved to Brindley Place and worked for Fran Campbell, learning about store supervisor responsibilities and doing a lot of stock control work. From here I moved to SPAR Kings Norton, where I worked through university and completed the Tates management programme. After helping to set up two Birmingham University stores, I moved into a role for Sarah Deakin in the marketing department at Willenhall. Seven years ago we started looking at a project to help British producers, and Blakemore Fine Foods was first created. It only required me to work part-time initially but I eventually went into this role full-time and have been there since.

What does the role of Fine Foods Commercial Director entail?

Looking after my team, who are responsible for sales and trading and liaising with the operation to develop our business. I often meet with producers and customers, which gives me a great mix of meetings in muddy fields and nice offices.

What are your plans for developing Fine Foods in the future?

I'm really excited about the future of Fine Foods. Since we moved into the old Blakemore Design & Shopfitting building last year we've really developed the business in all aspects. I'm excited about diversifying our range and trading in new areas.

What do you like about working for A.F. Blakemore?

The culture of the business. I'm really proud of what Dad has created over the years and it is pretty humbling to meet so many great people throughout the business. As the next generation I believe it is our role to safeguard the hard work people have put in over the years – not spending it on a yacht in the Med!

Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

Travelling is my main passion. I'm hoping to fit in a ski trip in early 2015 and hopefully a trip to see the Northern Lights next year. I love reading, although as I'm a fairly active person I struggle to find the time. I currently live in London and often meet up with friends to go to new and exciting pubs and restaurants. I love food in all ways – growing, cooking and eating! When I'm around the Midlands at the weekend I go to the Molineux – we have season tickets there.

“I began my career with a Sunday job in Blakemore Wholesale's Cash & Carry division”



Simon Wiltshire Joins Blakemore Trade Partners Board

IT Strategic Projects Director Simon Wiltshire was appointed to the Blakemore Trade Partners Board in October 2014.

As well as continuing to oversee IT projects for the A.F. Blakemore group, Simon now supports Blakemore Trade Partners as a business partner, ensuring that the division is utilising the IT function efficiently as well as identifying operational areas for improvement and developing class-leading IT solutions for SPAR retailers.

Simon will continue to manage strategic IT projects across the A.F. Blakemore group, reporting to Group IT Director Roy Kidd.



The Blakemore Way magazine caught up with Simon to find out more about his background and new responsibilities.

How long have you worked for A.F. Blakemore?

I joined A.F. Blakemore in 2011, when the company acquired fellow SPAR wholesaler Capper & Co, which I was working for at the time. At that point I had already achieved 20 years' service for Capper, having started with the company back in December 1990. All in all that's 24 years' service for SPAR.

What has been your career path within the business?

I began working at Capper as an IT support analyst, and then in 1996 took on the role of IT operations manager. In 2006 I was promoted to IT director. In 2011, following A.F. Blakemore's acquisition of Capper, I was appointed IT strategic projects director. In October I took on the additional role of BTP business partner.

What does your IT business partner role entail?

The role essentially provides a conduit between Blakemore Trade Partners and the IT department. The business partner is the eyes and ears of specific divisional needs, and will provide the 'go between' for information and actions required on both sides of the partnership for day-to-day, project and strategic work. Working closely within the division, the business partner can help identify where the most appropriate use can be made of information technology.

What key projects are you currently working on?

At the moment I am working on multi-depot system (MDS) implementation for the Talbot Green depot and electronic proof of delivery (EPOD) and 'in-cab' technology for the delivery fleet. I am also currently involved in a project management group, which is developing a standardised methodology for effective project leadership across A.F. Blakemore. Alongside that I am working on a remote data management process for a prospective independent customer.

What do you like about working for A.F. Blakemore?

The diversity of the business and 'can do' approach from most people I encounter.

Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

I am married to Debbie with two sons, Alex, 15, and Luke, 11, who are all kept in check by Ollie the family dog. I love all forms of motorsport, with particular interest in MotoGP. I personally am a keen (fair weather only!) sports motorcyclist, but to avoid the winter weather on two wheels I switch to four, involving both my sons in karting at two local tracks – yes it is getting extremely competitive now! As a family we enjoy village life socially with friends and evenings out, but also try to make time for exercise together with cycling, walking and even ice skating too.

“ I began working at Capper & Co. in 1990 as an IT Support Analyst & in 2011 was appointed IT Strategic Projects Director ”

SPAR Retail Show 2014 Best Yet



Blakemore Trade Partners celebrated its most successful SPAR Retail Show yet in September, with record turnout and follow-up sales.

The SPAR Retail Show, which took place at the NEC in Birmingham, was attended by 600 delegates and comprised a conference, guild dinner and tradeshow. Leading SPAR stores showcased their ongoing success alongside suppliers, industry experts and retailers interested

in joining Blakemore Trade Partners.

Reviewing the event, Blakemore Trade Partners Sales Director Neil Mercer commented, "I want to express my deep appreciation for the help and support that colleagues from across the Blakemore divisions provided for this year's SPAR Retail Show.

"Attendance grew by a staggering 57% compared to last year, and we had double

the number of prospective retailers from competitor symbol groups. We even had one group commit to joining SPAR the day after the conference!"

"Thank you once again for showing your unprecedented support in ensuring this year's SRS was the best to date. The challenge is now on to improve on this success to make SRS 15 even more spectacular!"



Six hundred delegates gather at Blakemore Trade Partners' annual SPAR Retail Show at the NEC in Birmingham

Blakemore Band Takes to the Stage

This year's SPAR Retail Show also made history by welcoming on stage its very first Blakemore band, No Direction.

The five-piece musical supergroup made up of A.F. Blakemore employees took to the stage to provide live evening entertainment following the conference.

The band featured Blakemore Wholesale Sales & Data Administrator Nat Wilcox on lead guitar, Blakemore Wholesale Managing Director Sam Wilcox on rhythm guitar, Blakemore Trade Partners Development Director Louis Drake on bass and backing vocals, Group HR



L-R: Ian Diment, guest artist Rob Helm, Nat Wilcox, Neil Mercer, Sam Wilcox and Louis Drake

Director Ian Diment on drums and Blakemore Trade Partners Sales Director Neil Mercer on lead vocals and the tambourine. Blakemore Trade Partners Retail Operations Manager Steph Bonnar also made an appearance on stage as the guest singer.

Ian said: "Our first practice, back in March or April, took place in the Logistics training room with Barry Davies as our manager, and from then on we rehearsed in the evenings after work. It was great fun and a really good opportunity for us to get to know our work colleagues in a different setting.

"I was amazed at how well received we were at SRS, but I don't think we'll be giving up the day job just yet!"

No Direction's live performance at the SPAR

Retail Show raised almost £12,000 for SPAR UK's nominated charity of the year, ChildLine, and the Blakemore Foundation.

The band even recorded a few tracks for a charity CD and got their very own t-shirts printed.

Rumour has it that No Direction will be making its next appearance at the Meridian & Welsh Guild Conference taking place in Barcelona in May.



Blakemore supergroup No Direction take to the stage at the SPAR Retail Show

Blakemore Retail Welcomes New Stores

Blakemore Retail has got its 2020 strategy for store acquisition and development well underway with a series of impressive new store openings and refurbishments.

Over the course of the 2013/14 financial year Blakemore Retail opened eleven new stores across its estate, and another four have already followed so far during 2014/15.

Blakemore Retail Managing Director Geoff Hallam commented:

“These new developments involve a substantial investment from the company and are part of an ongoing programme of investment in our stores estate, involving both the acquisition of new stores and renovation of existing ones.”

“During the 2013/14 financial year, Blakemore Retail opened 11 new stores across its estate”

Here is a snapshot of the division’s new stores:

Fairfield

Louth, Lincolnshire - Opened October 2014



The brand new purpose-built petrol forecourt store is the first of Blakemore Retail’s sites to combine a SPAR convenience offer with both Greggs and Subway franchises, providing motorists and local residents with a one-stop fuel, convenience, restaurant and takeaway solution. The store is Louth’s first 24-hour forecourt.

Wath-upon-Dearne

Rotherham, South Yorkshire - Opened Feb 2014



Wath-upon-Dearne is Blakemore Retail’s first store to open on a retail park. The store benefits from an abundance of free parking and proximity to major roads, as well as the draw of other big-name retailers on the same park.

Kings Lynn

Kings Lynn, Norfolk - Opened July 2014



Kings Lynn is one of Blakemore Retail’s first stores to be purpose-built with a Subway. As part of its strategy for 2020, Blakemore Retail has outlined plans for 100 new Subways over the course of the next two years.

Blakemore Retail Partners with Greggs Bakery



The Greggs franchise at Brumby Corner

Building on the success of its franchise partnership with Subway, Blakemore Retail has begun a trial with iconic high street brand Greggs.

As part of the trial, three Blakemore Retail SPAR stores have implemented a Greggs franchise: Brumby Corner in Scunthorpe, Leegomery in Telford and the division's brand new forecourt development in Louth.

Blakemore Retail Fresh Food Development Manager Matt Teague explained: "The company's franchise partnership with Subway has shown us that the SPAR brand can benefit from trading with other strong brands.

"It is hoped that the well-recognised

Greggs brand will add value to the SPAR brand, giving existing and new customers a further reason to shop in SPAR stores. The strategy is to improve Blakemore Retail's existing Food To Go offer, generate substantial additional income for the business and help drive footfall in stores."

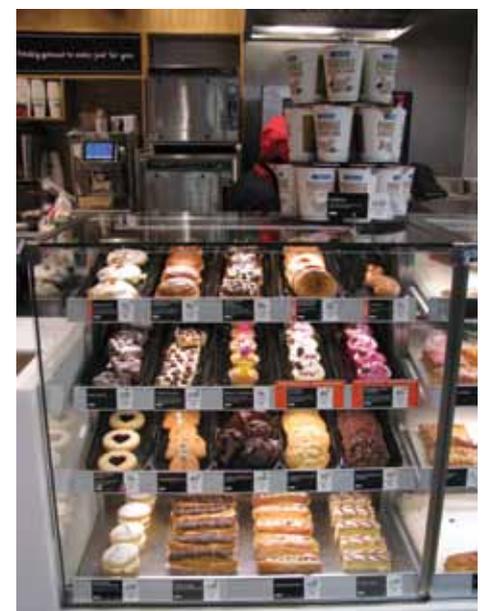
The Greggs franchises are managed by Blakemore Retail employees as departments within SPAR stores and offer a product range typical of modern Greggs stores, consisting of sandwiches, a cake counter, hot savouries, coffee and a small fresh bread offer.

Blakemore Retail opened its first Greggs department at SPAR Brumby Corner in July.

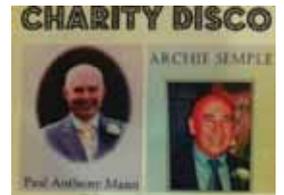
Brumby Corner's regional manager, John Brooks, said: "So far customers have been pleased with the introduction of Greggs. The franchise offers a smaller range than you would expect to see in a large town centre or high street Greggs store, but we have the top-selling savouries, confectionery and sandwich offer, as well as Greggs special offers.

"With a college campus nearby and a large influx of student shoppers during the school terms, the store is perfect for the Greggs trial."

If the trial proves successful the new Greggs franchises will be introduced to further stores across Blakemore Retail's estate.



Blakemore Drivers Remember Paul & Archie



Last year drivers from the Blakemore Logistics Transport department in Willenhall came together for a charity disco in memory of two former drivers, Paul Mann and Archie Semple, who sadly passed away last year.

The charity evening, which took place at Shepwell Green Working Men's Club in Willenhall, raised an impressive £900 through ticket sales alone.

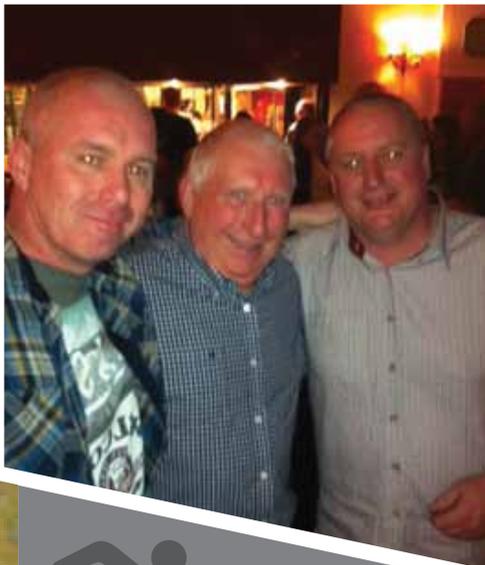
As well as a disco, there was also a raffle which raised £370, with gifts kindly donated from stores, drivers and suppliers.

All money raised from the event was donated to four good causes chosen at the funerals of the two drivers: the Midlands Air Ambulance, St Giles Hospice, the British Heart Foundation and the Chemotherapy Unit at Stafford Hospital.

Event organiser Mark Steed commented: "I would like to say a big thank you to all who attended and helped me organise this event, especially Steve Smith and his wife Michelle. It was great to get all former and current drivers into one room and celebrate Paul and Archie's lives and reminisce on old times."



Former colleagues, past & present celebrate the lives of Paul and Archie



Paul Vinnell Swims a Thousand Miles for Cancer Charity

Blakemore Trade Partners Recruitment Manager Paul Vinnell raised more than £200 for Cancer Research UK by taking on a one-thousand mile swimming challenge.

Paul, who undertook the challenge as a way of keeping fit, swam 1,000 miles in 1,000 days.

Initially he set himself the target of swimming one mile a day for 100

days, but with his enthusiasm and motivation this soon increased.

Paul commented: "It took me 32 minutes to swim a mile, which is 50 lengths of a pool. I have had so much support from my family and the staff at Strode Swimming Pool, and I feel so good fitness wise."

Paul takes on his 1,000-mile challenge at Strode Swimming Pool

Blakemore Logistics Identifies People with Potential



Nineteen promising leaders from Blakemore Logistics took part in an interactive assessment day to identify future talent for the business.

The annual People with Potential event, organised by Blakemore Logistics in conjunction with the Learning & Development department, was held in October in order to identify future team leaders.

Candidates were invited to attend the assessment day at the Village Hotel in Walsall following an open application

process. All were tasked with a number of exercises designed to highlight the attributes of good leaders.

In addition to the practical assessments, candidates took part in interviews based around the values of the Blakemore Way to ensure that future leaders of the business not only possess the right practical skills but also live the ethos of the company.

Logistics Manager Marc Deakin said: "This is the fourth year that we have run People with Potential and I believe it's a great

way to demonstrate our commitment to maximising staff potential.

"We had some high-calibre candidates this year and it's great to see so many aspiring to progress through the ranks."

Out of the 19 candidates assessed, two were identified as new team leaders. Stephen Higgs and Samantha Ball will spend the next 12 months at Axxess 10 in Darlaston gaining the essential knowledge and experience needed to become a team leader.

Meet the New Team Leaders



Stephen Higgs

Previous job role

Prior to being appointed as a team leader, Stephen worked as a chilled despatch operative in Willenhall. He has worked for the business for six years.

Ambitions for the team leader role

Stephen is most looking forward to the challenges he will face in his new role. He enjoys problem solving so thinks that this will suit him well.



Samantha Ball

Previous job role

Samantha joined the business in 2006 as part of the Blakemore Trade Partners team. She also worked for Blakemore Wholesale before joining Logistics in 2014 as an ambient despatch assistant.

Ambitions for the team leader role

Samantha is looking forward to learning more about the business and developing herself and others.

A.F. Blakemore Opens Doors to Apprentices

A.F. Blakemore has helped young people across the West Midlands gain a foot on the career ladder by hosting a series of apprenticeships.

Blakemore Logistics Develops Drivers for the Future

Blakemore Logistics has opened the door to a career in LGV driving for several young people by hosting a driver apprenticeship scheme.

Working in partnership with the Logistics Apprenticeship Training Academy, Blakemore Logistics has provided a number of work placements that have helped apprentices to gain the qualifications and experience required for a career in professional LGV driving.

In August the company celebrated its first apprenticeship success when one of the candidates on its programme, 22-year-old Ben Hilton, gained full-time employment at A.F. Blakemore after qualifying as an LGV Class 2 driver.

Blakemore Logistics Transport Manager Dave Higgs commented: "The driver

apprenticeship scheme provides trainees with the opportunity to earn while they learn as well as acquire vital experience in the logistics sector, hands-on training and nationally recognised qualifications.

"Meanwhile the company is developing potential future employees who have been provided with training tailored to suit the individual needs of the business."

Ben added: "The apprenticeship scheme has enabled me to gain real driving experience and as a result a job with great prospects.

"Before taking part in the programme I had no LGV driving experience or qualifications, so it would have been incredibly difficult for me to get a foot in the door without it."

After Ben has completed six months working for Blakemore Fine Foods, Blakemore Logistics will then provide the training necessary for him to qualify as a Class 1 driver.

To help promote the value of apprenticeships across the West Midlands, Transport Manager Dave Higgs and A.F. Blakemore Community Affairs Officer Liz Bell also attended an apprenticeships event hosted by the region's Express & Star newspaper, which is running a Ladder for the Black Country apprenticeship campaign.



Blakemore Logistics apprentice Ben Hilton, who gained full-time employment as a Class 2 driver in August

Finance Dept Takes on Trainee Accountants

Meanwhile, A.F. Blakemore's Finance department has provided a series of work placements in Willenhall to help apprentices gain the qualifications and experience required for a career in accountancy.

Working in partnership with the Express & Star's Ladder for the Black Country apprenticeship campaign and training provider Performance Through People, the department has provided a series of work placements to enable apprentices to gain experience of accounting practices at the same time as nationally-recognised accounting qualifications.

One of the apprentices to be welcomed into the business is 20-year-old Stephanie Lloyd, who started a 12-month work placement with the treasury department in October.

Stephanie commented: "The apprenticeship scheme has enabled me to gain real accounts experience which I hope will help me gain full-time employment and a career for the future."

The apprenticeship scheme forms part of A.F. Blakemore's longstanding community engagement programme, which is focussed upon developing education, enterprise and employability skills across the Black Country and beyond.

A.F. Blakemore Head of Corporate Affairs Paul Cowley added: "As a business we are committed to supporting the local communities we serve, and a central part of this commitment is to offer young people opportunities within our business."



Trainee treasurer Stephanie Lloyd (front) with Treasury Supervisor Karen Tolley (left) and Association of Accounting Technicians tutor Danielle Smith

Blakemore Trade Partners Celebrates Record Store Recruitment

Blakemore Trade Partners has enjoyed record numbers for inbound store recruitment this financial year.

In the first six periods of 2014/15 Blakemore Trade Partners welcomed 44 new SPAR stores to its estate, which is an 18% increase year on year.

Blakemore Trade Partners Development Director Louis Drake said: "We've already revised our inbound recruitment target upwards due to the hugely successful start to the year, and with an ever-expanding pipeline of retailers wanting to join, recruitment shows no sign of slowing down."

Blakemore Trade Partners Managing Director Jerry Marwood added: "Our success in recruiting new retailers demonstrates how highly Blakemore Trade Partners is regarded for helping independent retailers to develop their businesses."

"Our innovative new store formats, flexible partnership approach and breadth of services, in addition to the leading SPAR brand name, mean that we have a very strong proposition for retailers."

"All of this effort recruiting new stores is matched by continuous investment in

our existing independent retail estate, with our store development programme continuing to deliver increased sales and profitability, both at wholesale and retail levels."



HKS Retail, a nationwide operator of filling stations and convenience stores, launched its first SPAR store with Blakemore Trade Partners in Ibstock, Leicestershire, in August



Chris Carter

Warehouse Team Leader
Blakemore Logistics

What does your job involve?

The day-to-day running of the Axxess 10 depot, including problem solving, decision making, talking to customers and a lot more

What is your idea of a perfect day?

Christmas day with all the family

Where is your favourite place?

At the poolside, fishing....it's peaceful

If you won a lot of money, what would you do with it?

Open my own business. Not sure what business, but a business...maybe a café?

Which three people would you invite to your dream dinner party?

Eminem, Mark Wahlberg and Rihanna

In the Spotlight

What is your favourite book?

I don't really do a lot of reading, but if I had to pick, it would probably be Wonders of the Solar System

Who is your favourite star of film or TV?

Mark Wahlberg (brilliant films)

What is your favourite song?

At this moment, I would say Ellie Goulding's How Long Will I Love You

Who makes you laugh?

My little girl Maizee – some of the things she comes out with for a three-year-old are so funny

If you could be born in any year, which one would you choose?

1940 – that way I would have been old enough to have a chance to travel to the moon on the Apollo missions.

Not saying I would have done, but it would have been in my hands

What is the best thing you have ever achieved?

I know my daughter is only three, but to see how she has grown up, from a baby, I don't think there's a better sense of achievement, knowing you have done everything you can

Which superpower would you like to have and why?

The power of life. This is the ultimate gift, so why not have it as a power?

What is your most vivid childhood memory?

My seventh birthday. I can't remember a lot of my birthdays, but my seventh birthday I can remember clear as day. Bonfire, fireworks, big cake and family

What is your biggest regret to date?

At this moment I don't think I have any. Maybe as I get older and make bigger decisions, I might regret one, but hopefully not

When you were younger, what did you want to be when you grew up?

A pilot – didn't every lad want to be either a footballer or a pilot when they were little?

What three words best describe you?

Spontaneous, adventurous and passionate

What three words best describe how you would like to be?

Businessman, passionate and content

A.F. Blakemore Joins Forces with Barclays

Eighteen volunteers from A.F. Blakemore's Finance department joined forces with Barclays to support 100 young people across the Black Country in an enterprise challenge.

At the event Year 10 pupils from seven West Midlands schools were tasked with setting up an innovative retail

business in teams of eight, with help from the employee volunteers. Each team then presented their unique business proposals to a panel of judges.

The aim of the challenge was to develop pupils' business, communication, teamwork, creativity and presentation skills.

Lorenzo Cosco from Education Business Solutions commented: "A.F. Blakemore and Barclays have proved that working in partnership to develop skills in schools and the community can have a hugely positive effect. Without their support and sponsorship the young people would not have had this experience. I would like to thank both companies for the hard work and effort they put into making this a successful event."

Corporate Director Richard Craven from Barclays Corporate Banking added: "Being able to combine the resources of both A.F. Blakemore and Barclays to create an event of this scale which benefited so many young people in the West Midlands has been extremely pleasing and fulfilling for all involved."

"The feedback received on the day and afterwards from all who took part has been excellent and is a testament to the dedication of both workforces to really making a positive impact in their local community."



Aldridge School picks up the trophy for their 'Sweet Art' business idea

School Pupils Learn the Rules of the Road

For the second year running, primary school children from across all three Blakemore Logistics distribution hub areas have been educated on the rules of the road as part of A.F. Blakemore's annual road safety campaign.

A total of 1,175 pupils from 14 schools across the West Midlands, South Wales and Hastings took part in the road safety event, which ran alongside Brake's National Road Safety campaign and was supported by the Fire Service.

Schoolchildren were given a demonstration of an A.F. Blakemore vehicle to highlight the dangers of playing near large HGV vehicles, and for the first year learnt about bike safety too.

In addition to this, the Fire Service provided pupils with a mock road traffic collision demonstration and CPR training and allowed them to take a turn sitting in their fire engine.



All children who took part were given a goody bag full of road safety-related products including reflective wristbands to help improve their visibility when out at night.

Warehouse Manager Bhapy Kaliray from Blakemore Logistics commented: "This was the first time I have run Road Safety Week in the West Midlands, and I thoroughly enjoyed the experience. The event demonstrates A.F. Blakemore's commitment to the community and the safety of future generations."



Year 1 pupils from Cheslyn Hay Primary School in Walsall learn the rules of the road with Blakemore Logistics

Warehouse to Wheels Drivers Celebrate Success

Last year four Blakemore employees successfully qualified as LGV drivers on the company's Warehouse to Wheels driver training programme.

Xhimi Tafani from Foodservice Wakefield, Andrew Bilboe from Foodservice James Bridge, Paul Simmons from Logistics Ambient and Chris Yates from Logistics Chilled all took to the road as LGV drivers for the first time after passing their LGV driving tests in 2014.

A.F. Blakemore's Warehouse to Wheels driver training programme was launched

in 2008 to provide warehouse employees with the opportunity to train as LGV drivers.

For the first time last year the programme was offered to staff from Blakemore Foodservice in addition to Blakemore Logistics.

General Manager Mark Flynn from Foodservice Wakefield said, "It's fantastic that this programme has been extended to the Foodservice division. The programme just goes to show the investment that Blakemore's has put into

their in-house development programmes for staff across the country."

All employees who took part in the most recent training programme have qualified as Class 2 LGV drivers. Employees from Blakemore Logistics were all trained by workplace trainers within their division, whilst Blakemore Foodservice employees were trained by an external training provider.

Xhimi Tafani, who was employed as a warehouse operative prior to taking part in the programme, said, "All I had to do to get a place on the Warehouse to Wheels training programme was submit an application and attend an interview. Once I was on the programme Blakemore's paid for all of my driver training and my driving test."

Fifteen further employees from Blakemore Logistics are currently undertaking training to become qualified LGV drivers on the Warehouse to Wheels programme.

Wakefield Transport Manager Paul Bryan congratulates Xhimi Tafani (left) on qualifying as an LGV driver



Blakemore Fresh Foods Employee Skates to Victory

A driver from Blakemore Fresh Foods has scooped two bronze and three silver medals at the British Inline Speed Skating Championships.

Derrick Ritchie began skating at school and soon discovered that he had the stamina and speed to take up inline speed skating.

Since starting his skating career, Derrick has been crowned British champion nine times, ranked eleventh in Europe and represented Great Britain for the last eight years. In

addition to this, he is currently ranked number one Marathon Champion for Masters and represented England at the recent European Championships in Gessingen.

Derrick said, "I train at Birmingham Wheels and Stourport Cycle Track. Training consists of a seven-day rota, broken down into skate training, distance and sprint sessions, and technique, which runs alongside 50-mile sessions on a weekend and three sessions of weight training per week."

Champion speed skater Derrick Ritchie with just a few of his medals



Successful Start to BTS Leadership Development Programme

A leadership development programme launched across Blakemore Technical Services has been introduced to help the division support the company in achieving its 2020 vision.

The programme has resulted from a partnership between members of the senior BTS team and the Learning & Development department and has focused upon delivering change and process improvement across the Finance and IT teams.

The initial focus of the programme has been upon Finance, with 17 managers, supervisors and team leaders attending four sets of two-day modules between August and December 2014.

Learning & Development Officer David Cartwright has designed and delivered the programme, which has focused upon four core modules including leadership, coaching, communication and planning change.



Delegates have now been tasked with reviewing the impacts of the programme on themselves, their teams and the wider business and will identify the five key performance indicators that they will use to demonstrate improvements within their department in the future.

These results will be fed back to the senior BTS team in February along with an overview of activities that they have stopped, started and continued as a result of the programme.

Group Finance & IT Director Scott Munro-Morris said: "This programme has come as a result of a true partnership between BTS and Learning & Development, and David Cartwright has done a fantastic job in delivering a thought-provoking and impactful course to our management team.

"The senior BTS team has been



Finance delegates participating in the Blakemore Technical Services development programme

committed to this programme since our initial planning meetings in early 2014 and will continue to support managers in making the changes required to enable us to help the business meet its future objectives.

"I look forward to hearing back from delegates in February when we will begin to understand the wider impacts of the programme, with the IT programme commencing in early 2015."

“Since the leadership course, I think that the department in general is moving in the right direction. It probably helps that other members of the department are on the course. I seem to give myself more time to plan and to take a step back to look at the bigger picture for what I, the department and the company need”

Here is some feedback from delegates on the programme:

| Evaluation Statement | Combined Evaluation Scores / 10 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| What I learned on this course will help me on the job | 9.1 |
| I feel confident about applying what I learned back on the job | 9.0 |
| I am committed to applying what I learned at work | 9.4 |

“I am committed to applying what I have learned because this will give me the confidence I need to move forward and help the company achieve its 2020 vision”



“Change has to start with yourself. Applying techniques from this course will inspire others to follow you on the journey”

A.F. Blakemore ILM Programme Goes from Strength to Strength

It was a busy 2014 for internal Institute of Leadership & Management (ILM) training across A.F. Blakemore.

A total of 35 colleagues from across eight divisions embarked on training with a view to achieving nationally recognised professional qualifications.

Overall 19 delegates from across Foodservice, Logistics, Wholesale Distribution, Retail, Trade Partners, Creative Print, Finance and IT were split across two cohorts undertaking the ILM Level 2 Certificate in Leadership & Team Skills. In addition, a further 16 colleagues from Finance, Logistics, Foodservice and SPAR Customer Service took part in one of two Effective Team Member programmes.

Well done to all those who have taken part in training and to those who received their certificates for successfully completing their assessments in 2014.

2015 looks to be another eventful year on the ILM front, with the latest cohort on the Level 2 Certificate in Leadership & Team Skills kicking off their programme in February, including delegates from across Logistics, SPAR Customer Service, Foodservice and Creative Print. Following on from that, an Effective Team Member programme will begin in March, featuring members of the Retail, Trade Partners and Design & Shopfitting teams.

In addition, the A.F. Blakemore Learning & Development department is planning to re-launch the ILM Level 3 Certificate in Leadership & Management later in the year. For further information please contact L&D Admin Manager **Julie Knowles** on **0121 568 2906** or email **jknowles@afblakemore.com**.



Wakefield General Manager Mark Flynn presents Dave Robinson with his ILM Level 2 Certificate in Team Leading



Wakefield General Manager Mark Flynn presents Lee Blackburn with his ILM Level 2 Certificate in Team Leading



Colleagues from across Foodservice receive their ILM Effective Team Member certificates. From left: Nick Hursthouse (L&D Officer), Julie Law, Sarah Broadhurst, Sharon Garner, Louise Farmer, Emma Carter, Pat Lester and Andy Grinsell (Foodservice Operations Director)



Members of the Finance team are presented with their ILM Effective Team Member certificates by Group Finance & IT Director Scott Munro-Morris. From top left: Tanya Sandhu, Rebecca Challenor, David Thomas, Jack Slater, Rebecca Steadman, Eleni Kavalieros and front Amanda Owen



Delegates from across the two cohorts who participated in the 2014 ILM Level 2 Certificate in Leadership & Team Skills programme

For further information on the ILM programmes on offer across A.F. Blakemore please consult the Staff Zone area on the A.F. Blakemore website, where a breakdown of course content is available www.afblakemore.com/staff-zone/learning-and-development

Leading the Blakemore Way Update

The past 12 months have seen an expansion of the company's bespoke leadership development programme – Leading the Blakemore Way.

The programme, which develops leadership attitudes, skills and capability, was delivered to 199 colleagues from across the company in 2014 via a variety of different platforms.

One of the most significant areas of expansion has involved the rollout of the internally run two-day programme.

In 2013 the company worked in collaboration with consultants from Mind at Work to train 10 internal learning & development professionals to deliver the two-day Leading the Blakemore Way course.

Over the past 12 months, 156 managers and specialists have received training from the internal team, with 107 of these coming from Blakemore Retail.

The Blakemore Retail rollout, which began in June 2014, requires all store and post office managers to attend the two-day programme and is due to finish by June 2015.

Another new aspect of Leading the Blakemore Way has been an Advanced programme for directors and senior managers. This seeks to build upon and reinforce the key tools and techniques that form part of Leading the Blakemore Way and has so far been delivered to 32 delegates.

The three-day residential programme, delivered by Mind at Work for middle and senior managers, also continued in 2014, with a total of 11 delegates participating.

Since Leading the Blakemore Way was launched in 2009 more than 350 managers have attended the three-day residential programme, 76 directors and senior managers have attended the Advanced course and 200 specialists and junior managers have attended the two-day internal programme.

Group HR Director Ian Diment said: "Leading the Blakemore Way forms an integral part of the company's business strategy and is a key strand of how we will deliver our 2020 objectives."

"This programme represents a large investment by the company but it is critical that we have leaders at all levels of the business with the self-awareness, attitudes and behaviours required to help shape an effective and responsive business culture for the future."



Store and post office managers from across Blakemore Retail who attended two-day internal Leading the Blakemore Way courses in 2014

New Development Programme for Wholesale Management Team

A total of 62 operations managers from across Blakemore Wholesale, Foodservice, Wholesale Distribution and Fine Foods have embarked upon an internal leadership development programme.

The course, designed and delivered by A.F. Blakemore Learning & Development Officer Nick Hursthouse, aims to develop key leadership behaviours across all general and operations managers and introduce the key skills of coaching, process improvement and leading change.

All delegates were the focus of a 360° review prior to joining the course, which includes core modules relating to the new performance development review process, managing underperformance, assertiveness, coaching and leading change.

Fifteen general managers from the Cash & Carry and Wholesale Distribution estate completed two three-day sessions in September. A further 47 delegates are currently participating in three two-day programmes aimed at operations managers from across the wider wholesale divisions.

Initial feedback from the course has been positive, with the focus in 2015 upon bringing the training to life in the workplace through the implementation of improvement plans with clear lines of accountability across all depots.



Delegates participating in the Wholesale Operations Manager Development Programme

Training News in Brief



Ryan Flowers and Donna Harper from the Payroll department receive their Level 2 Certificate in Payroll from Group Finance Director Scott Munro-Morris



Teresa Vaughan, Julie Haynes and Natalie Snape from the Finance department are presented with their Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT) Level 2 Certificate in Accountancy by Group Finance Director Scott Munro-Morris

Blakemore Retail Fundraises a Further £47,000 for ChildLine

Blakemore Retail stores raised £47,361 for the NSPCC's ChildLine Schools Service in the last quarter of the company's fundraising year.

The division, which has raised more than £1.9 million for the good cause since 2006, made its latest donation in November. Throughout the 2013/14 fundraising year stores raised a total of £342,354 for the good cause.

Employees across Blakemore Retail supported the children's charity through a range of fundraising initiatives including fun days, raffles, bike rides and sponsored walks to name but a few.

Top fundraisers included a 400-mile sponsored cycle carried out by area managers John Kelly and John Dyson that raised £8,000, a sponsored walk up Mount Snowdon organised by store employees from Worcestershire that raised £2,810 and a five-a-side football competition that raised £1,000.

The ChildLine Schools Service works in schools across the UK, with specially trained volunteers going into primary schools to teach children aged between nine and eleven how to keep themselves safe from abuse and neglect.

NSPCC Corporate Fundraising Manager Kirsty White commented: "Every year we are blown away by the support from the employees and customers of Blakemore Retail.

"This donation will enable the NSPCC's ChildLine Schools Service to keep delivering this ground-breaking service which aims to help prevent abuse. Thank you to every single person who has donated to the service."



Blakemore Retail Managing Director Geoff Hallam and Liz Bell and Kate Senter from A.F. Blakemore's Community Affairs department hand over a cheque to Kirsty White and Maribeth Lloyd from the NSPCC



Blakemore Wholesale Donates £5,000 to Guide Dogs Charity

Blakemore Wholesale has donated £5,000 to the Guide Dogs charity following its sponsorship of a guide dog, Blakey, which began over a year ago.



Guide Dogs Community Fundraiser Sarah Knox with Blakemore Wholesale Marketing Manager Ellie Jack

The charity received a cheque for £5,000 following Blakemore Wholesale's annual Charity Golf Day and visited the company's head office at Wolverhampton Science Park in October to provide an update on Blakey's progress.

Having spent a year with a volunteer learning commands and being socialised, Blakey has recently entered a training school at Leamington to start the next stage of his training. Blakemore Wholesale will receive updates on Blakey until he is fully trained.

Community Fundraiser Sarah Knox from the Guide Dogs charity said: "We are so very grateful to Blakemore's for their ongoing support. They have given Blakey the best start in life for becoming a working guide dog, and ultimately they will be changing the life of a blind or partially sighted person."

Blakemore Wholesale Marketing Manager Ellie Jack added: "We have thoroughly enjoyed our experience with the Guide Dogs. Sponsoring a puppy has been a delight and we have all loved learning about what these incredible puppies are capable of. It's so great to be in a position to be able to give to such a worthwhile cause."



New Cycle to Work Scheme



A.F. Blakemore has partnered with Halfords to offer employees a Cycle to Work scheme.

The scheme, which launched in June 2014, enables staff to make significant cost savings on bike purchases. So far, 178 employees from across the Blakemore group have already benefited.

Cycle to Work is a government-approved salary sacrifice scheme which enables employees to hire a bike up to the value of £1,000 from the company and save money on tax and national insurance contributions by sacrificing their salary over an 18-month period.

The company intends to operate two four-week application windows each year, during which employees can register for a bike.

HR Business Partner Rob Clement said: "The Cycle to Work scheme is a great new staff benefit that also encourages healthier lifestyles and helps to reduce CO₂ emissions at the same time.

"We anticipated a good level of participation in the scheme but were really surprised at how popular it was in the summer.

"Employees will be able to register for the scheme again in January 2015. We are also planning a cycling fundraising event in spring 2015 to link in with our CR and Health & Wellbeing plans, targeted primarily at participants in the Cycle to Work scheme."

How do I Sign Up to the Scheme?

A.F. Blakemore's Cycle to Work Scheme will be open for applications again between January 12th and February 6th 2015.

For more information, please visit the Cycle to Work page on the Staff Zone area of A.F. Blakemore's website: www.afblakemore.com/staff-zone/cycle-to-work-scheme

What are the Benefits of the Cycle to Work Scheme?

By registering for the Cycle to Work scheme you can:

- Save between **32% and 42%** on the cost of a brand new bike
- Get **10%** free accessories based on the value of your collection voucher
- Save **20%** off cycle accessories for the duration of your hire agreement
- Have the chance to win a Garmin forerunner 10 GPS sports watch RRP £89.99
- Access sales prices and promotions in Halfords stores



Cycle to Work Prize Draw

All participants who registered on the Cycle to Work scheme in the summer were entered into a prize draw. Congratulations to the two winners:



Mary Sherlock from Blakemore Retail's Sutton-on-Sea store won £50 worth of Halfords gifts



Doug Farnell from Blakemore Logistics won a fit band worth more than £100



Blakemore Foodservice Wins New Northern Local Authority Contracts

Blakemore Foodservice has won two new local authority contracts since October to supply North Tyneside Council and Leeds City Council, worth a combined £6.1 million in sales.

The North Tyneside Council contract, which is worth £1m over the course of two years, began in November and is being serviced by Blakemore Foodservice's Wakefield depot. The business win is the first dedicated frozen goods local authority contract for the Wakefield site.

Blakemore Wholesale, which already supplied dry goods to North Tyneside Council from its Killingworth depot prior to the new Foodservice contract, was also successful in retaining its business with the local authority.

Blakemore Foodservice Sales & Marketing Director Jim Dudley commented: "This is a real example of cross-divisional co-operation,

with both Blakemore Wholesale and Blakemore Foodservice benefiting."

In addition, Blakemore Foodservice has won a new contract to supply Leeds City Council for the first time. This contract, which began in January 2015, will also be served by Blakemore Foodservice's Wakefield site and will involve the supply of frozen goods. The business is worth £5.1 million over the course of the three-year contract.

Jim added: "During 2014 we were awarded a significant amount of frozen food business at the expense of our competitors.

"We now believe that we have the right range along with significant purchasing power to give us a competitive edge when tendering for business. We are set up very nicely moving into 2015 to make further inroads into our competitors' business."

In November Blakemore Foodservice also commenced a £150-million five-year contract supplying leading holiday and leisure group Bourne Leisure.

The division's Darlaston and Wakefield depots now supply Butlins, Haven Holidays and Warner Leisure sites across the UK with fresh, ambient, chilled and frozen goods. Other than Marston's, Bourne Leisure is Blakemore Foodservice's largest customer.



Elaine Cullen
A.F. Blakemore
Head Office

What does your job involve?

Cleaning and general housekeeping at main reception in Willenhall

What is your idea of a perfect day?

Everything running smoothly and stress-free

Where is your favourite place?

Las Vegas

In the Spotlight

If you won a lot of money, what would you do with it?

I would treat myself to a holiday in Las Vegas and make sure that all my children are looked after

Which three people would you invite to your dream dinner party?

Bradley Walsh, John Bishop and Gary Barlow

What is your favourite book?

I haven't read for a very long time

Who is your favourite star of film or TV?

Brad Pitt

What is your favourite song?

Anything by the Beatles

Who makes you laugh?

John Bishop

If you could be born in any year, which one would you choose?

The 60s

What is the best thing you have ever achieved?

Having two healthy sons

Which superpower would you like to have and why?

Invisibility

What is your most vivid childhood memory?

Christmas at home with the family

What is your biggest regret to date?

None

When you were younger, what did you want to be when you grew up?

A beautician – which I was

What words best describe you?

Honest, trustworthy and silly

Blakemore Wholesale Achieves Online Sales Boost



Blakemore Wholesale has begun to reap the rewards of a new IT-based marketing strategy after achieving an almost 50% growth in online sales.

“This will greatly improve the shopper experience and provide a wealth of additional features that will make it easier for retailers to do business with us and in turn grow their own sales.”

The business reported a 42% year-on-year growth for September and October and is also set to launch a new online ordering platform early this year.

Blakemore Wholesale Commercial Director Russell Grant said: “We are always looking at new ways to engage customers and our online sales growth has exceeded all of our expectations.

“Initiatives such as Click & Collect and our customer e-newsletter and text services have supported this growth along with the increasing levels of interest in our website, Facebook and Twitter accounts.

“Retailers are clearly seeing the benefits of utilising technology and we are committed to serving their needs further with the launch of a new online ordering platform over the coming months.



Blakemore Wholesale's new online ordering platform set to launch this year

A.F. Blakemore Rewards 100% Attendance

So far this financial year, 89 members of staff with 100% attendance have been rewarded with a cash prize thanks to A.F. Blakemore's attendance draw scheme.

Employees with six months of no absence can win £250 (£125 for 29.75 hours per week or less).

The company-wide scheme recognises and rewards employees who have achieved 100% attendance over a period of six or 12 months.

Staff members with 100% attendance are entered into a quarterly draw with the opportunity of receiving up to £500 in recognition of their contribution to the business.

The draw takes place four times per year on the first Friday of January, April, July and October.

Employees with 12 months of no absence can win £500 (£250 for 29.75 hours per week or less).

Could you be eligible for a long service, retirement or attendance award?

Full details of A.F. Blakemore's long service, retirement and attendance draw awards schemes can be found in the company's Your Care Programme, which is available at www.afblakemore.com/staff-zone.



Blakemore Retail Regional Manager Owen Davies hands over a £250 attendance draw award to Carole Colloby at SPAR Brunswick Road

We asked two recent attendance draw winners how they intended to spend their winnings.

Craig MacMenigall from Blakemore Trade Partners' Retail Operations department, who won a 12-month attendance award in October, said: "It will help contribute towards a holiday in Amsterdam and will go towards Christmas."



Rebecca Challenor from Credit Control, who won a six-month attendance award in October, said: "I will be putting the money towards Christmas gifts."



The Blakemore Foundation Gives to More Good Causes



Match Fund Donations

The Blakemore Foundation had yet another record-breaking year in 2013/14, donating more than £150,000 to 2,493 local good causes.

The level of interest in the Foundation has continued to rise again this year, with the trust having already received more than 2,300 requests for charitable donations since April 2014.

If you are looking to support a local good cause then the Blakemore Foundation may be able to assist. For further information or an application form, please contact Community Affairs Officer **Kate Senter** on 0121 568 2910 or email ksenter@afblakemore.com.

Take a look at some of the great causes supported by our staff and the Blakemore Foundation so far this financial year.



“ The Blakemore Foundation donated more than £150,000 to 2,493 local good causes last year ”



Chief Financial Officer Simon Loveland raised more than £600 by taking on the Lichfield Half Marathon for Coeliac UK



Swansea Cash & Carry raised £504 for the Royal National Lifeboat Institution at their depot fun day



Richard Hill from Blakemore Foodservice raised £338 for Acorns Children's Hospice by running the Birmingham Half Marathon



Guild Academy Training Officer Antonia Smith raised £200 for the 1st Watton-at-Stone Guides



Blakemore Wholesale's Killingworth depot raised £400 for St Oswald's Hospice



An A.F. Blakemore football competition raised £282 for Acorns Children's Hospice



SPAR Upton held a series of fundraising events for Alder Hey Children's Hospital and raised £400



Craig Sturman from Blakemore Wholesale's Wolverhampton Cash & Carry visited 20 football clubs in 24 hours for Macmillan Cancer Support, travelling all the way from Sunderland to Southampton

Standard Donations



Lawrence Smith at Gateshead Cash & Carry donated funds to Newcastle's Royal Victoria Infirmary hospital



SPAR Lakeside supported Lakeside Primary School's playgroup project



SPAR Bradley Cross Roads made a donation towards the ongoing running costs of St Andrew's Hospice



SPAR Newark donated money towards new kit for the Fernwood Foxes Under 8s football team



SPAR Reepham donated funds to Reepham Methodist Church



Lawrence Smith at Gateshead Cash & Carry presented £100 to the founder of Whickham Gardens

In Kind Donations



Customer Service & Business Support Manager Jo Bird from Blakemore Logistics donated extension leads to Walsall Manor Hospital



SPAR Crewe supported their local Salvation Army's Christmas food appeal



SPAR Crewe donated food goods to their local YMCA



SPAR Upton made up a variety of hampers to donate to various local good causes



Penrith Cash & Carry donated refreshments to Bampton Rovers Football Club's sponsored cycle in aid of the club and the Great North Air Ambulance



SPAR Rhos donated goods to a local rugby club



Store Manager Rachel Staniforth from SPAR Stannington donated refreshments for Stannington Infant School's sports day



SPAR Upton donated water to Hospice of the Good Shepherd's Big Colour Run



Staff Social Events

Since the beginning of the 2014/15 financial year, more than 2,500 colleagues across A.F. Blakemore have taken part in staff social events. Here is a snapshot of what has taken place:

Alton Towers Staff Fun Day



More than 2,800 Blakemore employees, friends and family members enjoyed a day out at Alton Towers theme park in Staffordshire in September.

Employees got to enjoy some of the UK's best white-knuckle rollercoasters and children's attractions free of charge, whilst friends and family members enjoyed a discounted rate. Free transport to the theme park was provided as well as a contribution towards food and drink.

Heidi Sampson from Blakemore Retail's Wyberton store commented:

"As somebody who does not drive I thought it was brilliant that transport was provided for staff. I thoroughly enjoyed the day and watching everybody have a good time.

"The whole event was very well organised and it was nice that even food was provided for you. This is definitely something that I will do again and I would recommend the experience to all other staff, however young or old."



Blakemore staff enjoy their day out at Alton Towers

Hastings Golf Day



In July eight golfers from A.F. Blakemore's Hastings depot battled unfavourable weather to take on 18 holes of links golf at Romney Warren Golf Course in Kent.

Driver Roy McInnes finished in first place with 39 points, followed by Driver Steven Smith who took second place with 36 points, and Warehouse Operative Alex Page who finished third with 28 points.

All of the golf players: Karl Curtis, Bob Kilden, Alex Page, Lee Holewell, Steve Smith, Sue Kilden, Roy McInnes and Tim Farrant

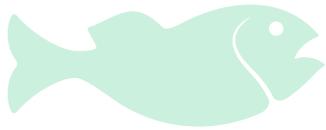


West Midlands Fishing Competition



Also in July, 12 Blakemore employees from the West Midlands took part in a fishing competition.

Staff from Blakemore Logistics, Blakemore Foodservice and Blakemore Wholesale's Apex II distribution depot visited the Tower Pool at Millride Pools in Essington, Staffordshire.



The fishing competition winners were:

1st place: **Ashley Thompson**
(Logistics Scheduling): weight 36lb

2nd place: **Scott Lloyd**
(Logistics Access 10): weight 13lb 8oz

3rd place: **James Kennedy**
(Logistics Access 10): weight 10lb



Competition winners James Kennedy, Ashley Thompson and Scott Lloyd

Hastings Distribution Centre Goes Paintballing

In September staff from A.F. Blakemore's Hastings depot donned camouflage overalls for a day at 1066 Paintballing.

After two hours of paintball firing the green team were crowned champions, before everyone was let loose for a 'free for all' to use up any remaining paintballs.



The Hastings team prepare for paintballing



Talbot Green Team Visits Chepstow and Bath



Staff from the Talbot Green SPAR distribution centre could take advantage of two days out in autumn.

In October staff were offered a free ticket to an Oktoberfest event at Chepstow Racecourse, involving an afternoon of horse racing, Bavarian beers and live band entertainment.

Then, at the end of November, the depot organised a shopping trip to Bath, just in time for Christmas!



Talbot Green get into the Christmas spirit

Retail & Wholesale Divisions Support World's Biggest Coffee Morning

A.F. Blakemore's Retail and Wholesale divisions donated more than £1,800 worth of tea, coffee, squash and cakes to fundraisers in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support's World's Biggest Coffee Morning in September.



Wolverhampton Cash & Carry's Macmillan cake sale

Across the trading area of England and Wales, Blakemore employees from company-owned SPAR stores and cash & carry depots gave 60 in-kind donations worth more than £1,800 to community fundraisers via the Blakemore Foundation.

The donated goods helped to raise more than £3,200 for Macmillan's biggest fundraising event.

Employees from SPAR Droitwich and Blakemore Wholesale's Trading department and Wolverhampton, Walsall and Middlesbrough depots also hosted



Middlesbrough Cash & Carry hand over £500 to Macmillan Cancer Support

their own coffee mornings, which raised more than £1,000 for the charity.

All money raised has gone towards helping change the lives of people affected by cancer.

Blakemore Foodservice's Darlaston Depot Raises More Than £4,000

Employees from Blakemore Foodservice's James Bridge depot have raised more than £4,000 for good causes chosen by members of staff this financial year.

Colleagues from the Darlaston depot nominated Acorns Children's Hospice and the Alzheimer's Society as their charities of the year for 2014/15.

In addition to regular cake sales and office fundraisers, several members of staff also took part in fundraising challenges beyond the workplace. Transport Manager Damon Andrews and Senior Workplace Trainer Mark Rigg took on a Tough Guy obstacle course, Driver Richard Hill ran the Birmingham Half Marathon and the Foodservice ladies

took part in a sponsored swimathon and Pretty Muddy race.

Blakemore Foodservice Senior Administration Manager Julie Astley said: "We are very proud of the commitment to fundraising shown by everyone at the depot.

"The team's hard work and unique fundraising ideas never fail to impress, and there is always lots going on. Not only do these fundraising activities support fantastic good causes, but they're a great opportunity for staff to get together and have fun."

All funds raised will be shared between the two charities at the end of the financial year.



The Blakemore Foodservice ladies take on their sponsored swimathon

SPAR Dolgellau Ladies Plunge 10,000 Feet for Prostate Cancer

Suzanne Williams, Bernese Jones and Emma Davies from Blakemore Retail's Dolgellau SPAR and Post Office took part in a 10,000 feet sky dive in order to raise money for Prostate Cancer UK.

The trio, who completed their challenge at Whitchurch in Shropshire, raised more than £2,000 for the good cause.

In the run-up to the sky dive a countdown to the challenge was displayed in the Post Office shop window.

Post Office Manager Suzanne, who previously raised funds for Cancer Research UK with Bernese, said: "Last year we did the Race for Life so we thought we'd do something for the men this time.

"So many people have had the cancer, including my dad who died from it three years ago, so we just wanted to raise awareness of it, and I think we've done that quite well."



SPAR Dolgellau trio Suzanne Williams, Bernese Jones and Emma Davies prepare for freefall

Blakemore Design & Shopfitting Opens New Joinery Workshop

Following the relocation of its premises last year, Blakemore Design & Shopfitting has set up a new joinery workshop to enable it to manufacture new store fittings and fixtures.

The joinery workshop is located within the division's new warehouse on the Longacres Industrial Estate in Willenhall and features new machinery that will enable the business to manufacture more in-house and become less reliant on external suppliers.

Newly appointed Workshop Manager Russell Alanthwaite has started on the production of end panels and has been cutting timber for specific onsite projects, which in turn is now helping to reduce the fitting team's time onsite.

Olumide Akinsola, who is on a 12-month university placement at BDS in the drawing office, is working with Russell on the detail and design of prototype shop counters, which will be produced using

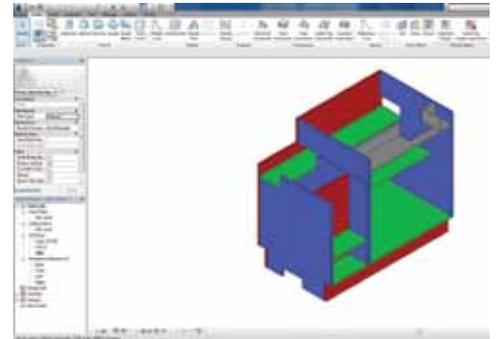
BDS's new CNC machine, which uses computer technology to control it.

Olumide has already created a number of computer models which can be sent directly to the CNC machine to enable store counter components to be fabricated and assembled ready for testing.

Property Development Director Alastair Haigh said, "I am delighted with the progress of the new joinery workshop and look forward to commencing the manufacture of shop counters, once the various prototypes have been tested and approved."

"Not having to rely on third-party manufacturers will be a very positive step for BDS and will help us improve our operation and profitability."

BDS's new CNC machine and building design software



In the Spotlight



Lyn Thompson

Fresh Food Business Development Manager
Blakemore Wholesale

What does your job involve?

Liaising with existing customers and going to see new customers to grow the delivered business

What is your idea of a perfect day?

When my phone doesn't ring and I get new customers signed up

Where is your favourite place?

My caravan in Stourport, where I can go and relax

If you won a lot of money, what would you do with it?

I would share it with my family and friends as I have a large family (six brothers and eight sisters)

Which three people would you invite to your dream dinner party?

Julie Walters, Bradley Walsh and John Bishop

What is your favourite book?

Anybody's autobiography

Who is your favourite star of film or TV?

Sally Lindsay

What is your favourite song?

Dancing Queen by ABBA

Who makes you laugh?

My lovely grandsons (who once quoted "get a life Gran")

If you could be born in any year, which one would you choose? I wouldn't change the one I was born in

What is the best thing you have ever achieved?

My two sons and my grandchildren

Which superpower would you like to have and why?

To read people's minds

What is your most vivid childhood memory?

Learning to ride my bike at seven years of age

What is your biggest regret to date?

None – it's too late!

When you were younger, what did you want to be when you grew up?

A teacher

What words best describe you?

Loud, funny, happy and honest

What words best describe how you would like to be?

More confident

Long Service Awards

A.F. Blakemore's long service awards recognise employees who have reached service milestones with the company.

Here are just a few of the long service award presentations that have taken place over the last few months:



1. **Brian Pickering - 25 years**
Blakemore Wholesale, Barnsley

2. **Margaret Want - 45 years**
Blakemore Retail, Halesworth

3. **Paul Watts - 30 years**
Blakemore Wholesale, Gateshead

4. **Jeffrey Castle - 10 years**
Blakemore Logistics, Talbot Green

5. **Ken Blower - 35 years**
Blakemore Wholesale, Trading

6. **William Witheral - 20 years**
Blakemore Logistics, Talbot Green

7. **Julian Winter - 20 years**
Blakemore Logistics, Talbot Green

8. **Tim Cronin - 30 years**
Blakemore Wholesale, Middlesbrough

9. **Trevor Evans - 25 years**
Blakemore Logistics, Talbot Green

10. **Stephen Farnham - 20 years**
Blakemore Logistics, Talbot Green

11. **Ray Emery & Debbie Dodd - 25 years**
Blakemore Wholesale, Science Park

12. **Violet Humphreys - 45 years**
Blakemore Retail, Newtown

Since 2004, A.F. Blakemore has awarded more than **£1.5m** to **10,000** long-serving members of staff to reward their commitment to the company.

A.F. Blakemore recognises long service as follows:

3 Years Service

30 hours or more
- £50
Less than 30 hours
- £25

5 Years Service

30 hours or more
- £100
Less than 30 hours
- £50

10 Years Service

30 hours or more
- £150
Less than 30 hours
- £75

15 Years Service

30 hours or more
- £250
Less than 30 hours
- £125

20 Years Service

30 hours or more
- £400
Less than 30 hours
- £200

25+ Years Service

30 hours or more
- £500+
Less than 30 hours
- £250+



1



2



3



4



5



7



8



6



12



9



10



11



13

- 1. Denise Carter - 15 years
Payroll
- 2. Eileen Jones - 15 years
Blakemore Foodservice, James Bridge
- 3. Lee Pritchard - 20 years
IT
- 4. Joe Booker - 15 years
Blakemore Foodservice, Wakefield
- 5. Kerry Jakeman - 5 years
Finance

- 6. Mike Bingham - 45 years
IT
- 7. Roy Kidd - 20 years
IT
- 8. Tiffany Grant & Daljit Bhangu - 5 years
Finance
- 9. Liz Bell - 5 years
David Yates - 15 years
HR
- 10. Julie Astley - 25 years
Blakemore Foodservice, James Bridge

- 11. Maia Riley - 25 years
Blakemore Creative Print
- 12. Michelle Walker - 3 years
Sukey Sangha - 3 years
Rebecca Challenor - 3 years
Jack Slater - 3 years
Luke Rosser - 3 years
Finance
- 13. Linda Fitzpatrick - 3 years
Blakemore Trade Partners,
Retail Operations

A.F. Blakemore Spreads Christmas Cheer

A.F. Blakemore employees sparkled in the community this Christmas with their support for festive fundraisers and volunteering events in aid of local good causes.

Staff from across the Blakemore estate brightened up their local communities with a range of fundraising activities ranging from Christmas jumper days to scrumptious cake sales for causes such as ChildLine, Macmillan Cancer Support and Save the Children.

Enthusiastic teams across Blakemore Retail and Blakemore Wholesale also sprinkled their magic by volunteering their time to help make Christmas that little bit more special. Blakemore Retail's Elstead, Worthing, Goring, St Leonards and St Helens stores all helped to support their local hospices' Santa Dash charity runs and the Blakemore Wholesale Trading team wrapped presents for Birmingham City Mission.

Last but not least, the Blakemore Foundation helped staff across the estate to award more than 180 in-kind goods donations, worth almost £7,000. Just a handful of good causes which benefited were Woodlands Park Association in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tŷ Olwen Hospice in Swansea and Colneis Junior School in Suffolk.

Blakemore Foodservice also continued its support of the Crisis at Christmas Appeal with a donation of 21,136 eggs worth £1,416, which helped make a real difference to thousands of homeless people at Christmas.

Community Affairs Officer Kate Senter said: "It is fabulous to see the dedication and commitment shown by employees across the Blakemore estate.

"Everyone's hard work and creativity never fails to amaze us, and it is heart warming to see the lengths that colleagues will go to in order to make people smile and bring communities together.

"Community activities are not only great for staff team building but also supporting local causes which really matter."



SPAR Warndon collected gifts for the NSPCC's local service centre



Staff from Access 10 raised money for Save the Children by wearing Christmas jumpers to work. Blakemore Logistics Customer Service Advisor Emma Knowles also organised a cake sale



Middlesbrough Cash & Carry organised a Christmas toy collection for the Salvation Army



Gateshead Cash & Carry donated selection boxes worth £160 to Whickham Rotary Club for local children



Finance and IT got into the festive spirit with a Christmas jumper day



Middlesbrough Cash & Carry organised a Christmas toy collection for the Salvation Army



Volunteers from St Helens and St Leonards SPAR stores supported their local Santa Dash charity run in Hastings



Volunteers from Blakemore Wholesale's Trading department wrapped presents for Birmingham City Mission



Santa Stops Early for Blakemore's Kids Christmas Parties

Santa Claus stopped in town a little earlier than usual in December for A.F. Blakemore's two Kids Christmas Party events.

More than 200 children and 200 adults attended the company's annual festive celebrations, organised especially for colleagues and their family members in the West Midlands and South Wales.

The first party took place on December 6th at Talbot Green's Western House, followed by the second on December 13th at GTG Training in Wednesfield.

At both events attendees enjoyed festive food, music and party games laid on by an entertainer. Each child was also invited into Santa's Grotto to meet Father Christmas, who presented them with a special gift.

HR Business Partner Rob Clement commented: "The kids Christmas parties are always great for bringing people together and are enjoyed by parents and children alike. We've had plenty of positive feedback saying that this year's events were thoroughly enjoyed by all.

"Thank you to all of the staff who volunteered their time to making the two events a success. There are too many to mention, but the parties wouldn't have taken place without everyone's effort."

Here is a selection of photos from the two events in the West Midlands and South Wales:



A great time was had by all in the West Midlands & South Wales



Community Volunteering

Since the last edition of the company magazine, employees have donated more than 8,000 hours of work time to community activities.

A total of 753 colleagues have offered their support with work placements, reading partnerships, practice interviews, study tours, enterprise events, student mentoring and regeneration projects.

For more information on community volunteering, please contact Community Affairs Officer Liz Bell on 0121 568 2908 or email lbell@afblakemore.co.uk.

Here is a snapshot of the volunteering that has taken place:

Work Experience Placements

Placements taken place: 37

Work experience placements are typically unpaid and run for up to 15 continuous working days or a day each week for up to six weeks within the business.



Blakemore Logistics took on six work experience students from St Thomas More School across their Ambient, Chilled, Access 10 and Transport departments and gave them an insight into working within the division.



The Customer Service team offered a work experience student an insight into their department.



Gateshead Cash & Carry offered a placement to a young person from The Prince's Trust, which helped her gain qualifications to use in future employment.

Reading Partnerships

Partnerships taken place: 9

Volunteers commit to spending one hour every other week for a school term to helping improve a child's literacy skills.



Barbara Williams from the IT department in Talbot Green, along with two other members of staff, spent a school year reading with pupils from Tonyrefail Primary School in South Wales.



Danielle Russell and Tracey Harrison from Middlesbrough Cash & Carry spent a school year at Hemlington Hall Academy reading with a selection of pupils.



HR Advisor Lisa Parry spent a year taking part in Read to Succeed with a pupil from Tonyrefail Primary School in South Wales and has just started a second partnership with Dolau Primary.

Practice Interviews

Events taken place: 18

Practice interviews are held on a one-to-one basis with students or adults. The aim is to equip young people with the skills needed to enter the world of work and to give employees real-life interviewing experience.



A.F. Blakemore colleagues spent the day at Bescot Stadium in Walsall interviewing students from Joseph Leckie Secondary School.



Fourteen members of staff from across A.F. Blakemore took part in practice interviews with Year 9 students from St Thomas More.



Students from St Thomas More were given CV and practice interview advice from eight colleagues from the company.

Study Tours

Events taken place: 13

Study tours are one-off events where a tour of a company site is offered to local businesses or schools. The aim is to share examples of best practice with other businesses and to help support the school curriculum.



Pupils from Acresfield Primary school spent the morning at SPAR Upton learning about the jobs on offer at SPAR.



SPAR Whitestone opened its doors to children from Whitestone Primary School in support of their healthy eating module at school.



Ten volunteers from Logistics, Trade Partners and A.F. Blakemore's central functions took part in a study tour and 'Guess My Job' activity at Talbot Green with pupils from Aboardare Secondary School.

Enterprise Events

Events taken place: 11

Enterprise events are one-day events hosted at schools and typically take the form of a 'Dragons' Den' challenge. Business supporters are asked to look after a group of students throughout their activity and judge presentations at the end of the event.



Jack Slater from Finance supported pupils from Aldridge Secondary School at their Enterprise Day.



Three members of staff supported a day-long enterprise event at St Thomas More Secondary School, where pupils' entrepreneurial skills were put to the test.

Mentoring

Partnerships taken place: 6

Mentoring involves the company or an individual making a long-term commitment to supporting a school, local business or community organisation.

Examples include helping social enterprises with particular business issues, providing individuals with support to enable them to enter the workplace and volunteering for the ChildLine Schools Service.



Five A.F. Blakemore employees volunteered for the ChildLine Schools Service, which gives primary school children the awareness they need to recognise abuse and seek help sooner. Trained volunteers visit primary schools to deliver assemblies and workshops.

Regeneration Projects

Events taken place: 83

Regeneration projects involve a team of volunteers transforming sites used by local communities.



A team of volunteers from Retail Accounts spent the day creating a wild flower garden at St Peter's Church in Dudley.



IT volunteers from Willenhall and Talbot Green spent two days painting the outside of a charity-run hotel for the elderly and improving its garden area.



A team of volunteers from Blakemore Wholesale's Trading department transformed the outdoor area of a domestic violence centre into a useable garden space.



Volunteers from Blakemore Wholesale's Apex II, Birmingham and Wolverhampton depots collaborated to redecorate the inside of a church so that it could be used as a food bank.



A team of volunteers from the Blakemore Logistics Stock Control department spent a weekend giving an elderly care home garden a new lease of life.



A team of volunteers from Foodservice James Bridge spent a week painting corridors at Salisbury Primary School. This is the third project that the division has completed with the school.



Staff from SPAR Herlington spent the day at Baybrook Community School preparing a garden for the pupils to work on.



Staff Survey Results Are In

In 2014 A.F. Blakemore launched its first online group staff survey, which saw an incredible response rate of **58%** (4,496 responses) and an overall agreement rating of **75.5%**.

The results were presented to the AFB Main Board in December and divisional action plans are currently being developed.

Head of Corporate Affairs Paul Cowley said: "We have had a great response to our first group staff survey, and overall we had a good set of results".

"In total the survey was split across 10 divisions and comprised 92 sub-sections. We have now analysed the full set of results with divisional breakdowns.

"We have also reviewed the 4,264 separate comments that were made via the survey and some key themes have been identified from these.

"An overview of the survey was presented to the AFB Board in December, with a view to communicating results and action plans across all divisions in early 2015.

"Thank you to Julie Knowles, Clare Knowles and Dave Hackney, who have all played a huge role in implementing and analysing the survey, and thank you to everyone who took part.

"Remember to look out for your divisional-specific results in 2015!"



A big thank you to everyone who took the time to complete the first group wide colleague survey.
Here is a snapshot of the A.F. Blakemore overall results:

| | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------|
| Overall Response Rate | 4,496 | 58% |
| Overall Agreement Rating | 3.02 (out of 4) | 75.5% |

| To what extent do you believe that A.F. Blakemore lives the following values: | Agreement Rating (out of 4) |
|---|-----------------------------|
| Maximises Staff Potential | 2.80 |
| Gives Great Customer Service | 3.16 |
| Positively Contributes to the Community | 3.26 |
| Behaves with Honesty & Integrity | 3.08 |
| Attains Excellence | 3.01 |

Where we scored well:

| Question | Rating (out of 4) |
|--|-------------------|
| I am committed to providing the best possible service to my colleagues and customers | 3.49 |
| I take pride in my job | 3.47 |
| I know what is expected of me at work | 3.37 |
| I am prepared to "go the extra mile" for the company | 3.32 |
| I enjoy my job | 3.10 |

| To what extent does your manager do the following: | Agreement Rating (out of 4) |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Inspires and motivates the team with clear purpose | 2.89 |
| Provides direction through the communication of clear plans to achieve business success | 2.92 |
| Encourages, supports and involves team members | 2.94 |
| Is committed to high standards and fairness when dealing with people and delivering projects | 3.01 |

Where we need to improve:

| Question | Rating (out of 4) |
|--|-------------------|
| I regularly receive recognition or praise for good work | 2.66 |
| I am excited about the direction that my division is going | 2.74 |
| I know what my division is trying to achieve over the next 3-4 years | 2.78 |
| I am well informed about changes in my workplace that will affect me | 2.79 |
| I have opportunities to learn and develop at work | 2.85 |

Please keep an eye out for communications highlighting your division's results and action plans in the coming weeks.
If you require any further information, please contact the Corporate Affairs team on 0121 568 2908.

“ We have had a great response to our first group staff survey, and overall we had a good set of results. ”

Celebrations



Colleagues across A.F. Blakemore have been busy celebrating a range of landmark events over the course of the last year.

If you have a special occasion you'd like to share with the business, please email a photo and accompanying details to radams@afblakemore.com.

Births



Congratulations to **Danielle Russell** and **David Cronin** from Blakemore Wholesale's Middlesbrough Cash & Carry on the birth of their daughter, Paige, born on September 4th.

Paige



Congratulations to **Claire Turner** and **Adam Bailey** from Finance on the birth of their daughter, Georgia Grace, born on November 14th.

Georgia Grace



Congratulations to **Sally** and **Gary Timmins** on the birth of their granddaughter Isobelle Elizabeth, born on August 5th.

Isobelle Elizabeth



Congratulations to **Cheryl Norman** on the birth of her son, Rhys James Norman, born on March 21st.

Rhys James



Leavers



Staff from across A.F. Blakemore gathered on October 24th to thank **Paula Millard** for 29 years of dedicated service to the company and wish her the best of luck for the future.

*Good luck
Paula!*

Paula Millard

Retirements



Blakemore Wholesale would like to wish **Pamela Thompson** a very happy retirement. Pamela retired in September after 24 years' service at Killingworth Cash & Carry.

Pamela Thompson



Blakemore Wholesale's Newport Cash & Carry would like to wish **Rob Tutton** the best of luck for his retirement. Rob retired in December after 24 years in the catering department.

Rob Tutton



Dial Ram from Blakemore Logistics also said goodbye to colleagues and friends from Blakemore Logistics after nearly 11 years with the business.

Dial Ram



Thank you and best wishes to **Lesley Lacey** from the Blakemore Logistics Customer Service team, who retired from the business in November after 18 years.

Lesley Lacey



In November colleagues and friends from Blakemore Logistics bid farewell to **Harold Yates**, known to all as "H". Harold retired from the business after an impressive 28 years.

Harold Yates

Congratulations from all at A.F. Blakemore

a.f. **blakemore**
..... & son Ltd

Competition Corner



Your chance to **win £20 worth of vouchers** of your choice!!

Spot the Difference

Take a look at the two photographs of staff from Blakemore Retail who spent a day volunteering at the Santa Dash fun run on Littlehampton Seafront in aid of St Barnabas House hospice. **Can you spot the five changes we have made to Photo 2?**



Congratulations

...to Credit Control's Julie Haynes, who won the Spot the Difference competition featured in the last Blakemore Way newsletter.

Julie won a
£20
Gift Voucher



Photo 1

L-R: Worthing Store Manager Rinat Yusupov, Fresh Food Coach Christine Harrison, Area Manager David Evenden, Goring Store Manager Colin Nicholson, Isabel Arksey from Worthing and Greg Poplawski from Worthing



Photo 2

Circle the differences and return your entry along with your name and contact details to Rachel Adams, A.F. Blakemore, Unit 401, Access 10 Business Park, Bentley Road South, Darlaston, WS10 8LQ / radams@afblakemore.com



Victoria Gwilt
Communications Officer
Blakemore Trade Partners

In the Spotlight

What does your job involve?

Communicating relevant information to the independent SPAR estate

What is your idea of a perfect day?

Either just relaxing at home with a nice cup of tea, or being out in the sun somewhere lovely and warm

Where is your favourite place? Italy!

If you won a lot of money, what would you do with it? Travel round Italy!

Which three people would you invite to your dream dinner party? Stephen Fry, Billy Connolly and Winston Churchill

What is your favourite book?

1984 by George Orwell

Who is your favourite star of film or TV?

Simon Pegg...or Martin Freeman....can't choose.....

What is your favourite song?

Such a hard question! Land of 1000 Dances by Wilson Pickett

Who makes you laugh?

Linda Fitzpatrick!

If you could be born in any year, which one would you choose? 1937

What is the best thing you have ever achieved?

I'm quite proud of my little home....

Which superpower would you like to have and why? I would love to be able to stop time so I could get things done – there are never enough hours in the day!

What is your most vivid childhood memory? Going to Llandudno with my Nan and Grandad and crying my eyes

out at the end of a Buddy Holly tribute act, on finding out that it wasn't the real Buddy Holly, because he was, in fact, dead! And I've never lived down saying I was from 'England' when they asked where I was from!

What is your biggest regret to date?

I don't think you should regret what you've done as it makes you the person you are today, but I do wish I'd have taken advantage of one of the many global volunteering programmes offered to 18-25 year olds to do development work abroad. I think that would have been an amazing experience.

When you were younger, what did you want to be when you grew up? A vet,

until I realised part of the job involved putting animals down!

What three words best describe you?

Self-conscious, gullible and artistic

What three words best describe how you would like to be? Multilingual, self-assured and less-of-a-worrier



COMING SOON

A.F. Blakemore Graduate Scheme

In 2015 A.F. Blakemore will be piloting a graduate programme.

If you or anyone you know would like to apply for the A.F. Blakemore Graduate Scheme, please contact Community Affairs Officer Liz Bell on 0121 568 2910 or email lbell@afblakemore.co.uk



Keep Up to Date with the Latest News

There are several ways that you can follow the latest news from across A.F. Blakemore

Staff Zone

Visit the Staff Zone area on the A.F. Blakemore website:

www.afblakemore.com/staff-zone

The Staff Zone features a wide range of employee-focused information including business and staff news, employee benefits, attendance draw winners, job vacancies and a monthly message from Peter Blakemore.



Scan the QR code on your smartphone to be taken directly to the Staff Zone



e-newsletter

Sign up to A.F. Blakemore's monthly e-newsletter:

www.afblakemore.com/staff-zone/e-newsletter-sign-up

The e-newsletter provides a monthly overview of all the key news taking place across the company. A monthly *Blakemore News* email is sent out to all company PCs but can also be distributed to personal email addresses.



On Social Media

Find us on Twitter



@AFBWholesale

@HeartLocalFood

@AFBGuildAcademy

@AFBCommunity

@AFBCareers

Find us on Facebook



Blakemore in the Community

Blakemore Wholesale

For more information on the Staff Zone or e-newsletter, please contact A.F. Blakemore Communications Officer Rachel Adams (radams@afblakemore.com / 0121 568 2908)