

the blakemore

2016/17

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



Foreword



You will have heard in the monthly e-newsletter that the company made good steady progress during the 2015/16 financial year. Our sales increased by 2.5% and our profits are expected to be very similar to the previous year.

This result is subject to the final audit that will be agreed in the next few weeks.

I think it is a splendid result when many of our competitors have really been suffering at both wholesale and retail level.

We have made a good start to our current financial year, with both sales and profits increasing on last year. A decent summer has helped the company across all parts.

Our 2020 plan to improve our results over the next few years is still valid, although progress has been slower than we hoped. We have made great progress with our Profit Improvement Plans together with new initiatives for Process Improvement and Project Management. I think that these new initiatives have

been a major factor in steadying our results in times of strong headwinds – market conditions, the National Living Wage and increased competition.

We have started many new projects in the last 12 months that are changing the business for the better, and you will be reading about many of them in this magazine. The benefits of these initiatives will flow through to our bottom line in the next few years. There is a massive amount of change going on across the whole company.

The biggest change that I am seeing is the amount of cross-divisional co-operation and exchange of ideas across all parts of the business, and we have several important projects that we shall be starting over the next few months.

Our culture and position in the marketplace has never been so important. The company and you continue to make a big positive impact in the communities where we trade through our volunteering schemes, donations from the Blakemore Foundation and fundraising for many charities, of which the NSPCC has been the biggest recipient.

These attributes together with our family ownership and financial strengths will continue to serve us well in uncertain times.

There has been a great erosion of trust across society with politicians (Brexit) and companies (BHS) acting in such ways to damage confidence across many parts of society.

We are ideally placed to take advantage of all these uncertainties and I'd like to thank you all for your contribution to such a steady performance.

Well done everybody and thank you.

Peter Blakemore
A.F. Blakemore & Son Ltd Chairman
September 2016

“Thank you all for your contribution to such a steady performance.”

Blakemore Retail Opens New Flagship Store



Blakemore Retail has opened a brand new flagship petrol forecourt store in Laceby, North East Lincolnshire.

The 5,000 sq ft store combines a SPAR convenience offer with Greggs and Subway franchises as well as the business's very first Insomnia coffee café, providing motorists and local residents with a one-stop fuel, convenience, restaurant and takeaway solution.

Blakemore Retail Managing Director Geoff Hallam said: “The new site has involved more than 12 months of planning and is part of an ongoing programme of investment across our stores.

“The store represents an exciting new partnership with Irish coffee brand Insomnia, which, together with the Greggs and Subway should help drive sales and footfall as well as ensure that the store appeals to both commuters and the local neighbourhood.”

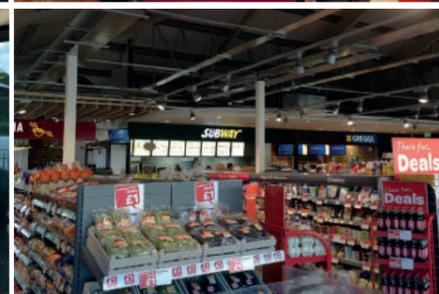
The deputy mayor of North East Lincolnshire officially opened the Laceby site in August. The store organised a fun day for members of the local community involving a range of competitions and free food giveaways.

In addition to a wide range of everyday essentials, the SPAR offers a comprehensive hot and cold food-to-go range and fresh self-serve Costa Coffee.

The site offers seating for up to 114 customers, with a mix of internal coffee-shop-style seating and picnic benches to the front and rear of the forecourt. It is estimated that 20,000 vehicles pass the forecourt on a weekly basis.

Blakemore Retail Store Operations Director Chris Bacon commented: “We are delighted to bring our latest SPAR convenience offer to Laceby, creating full- and part-time employment for 40 members of the local community.

“The launch day was a resounding success and we hope that the station will prove popular with both residents and visitors to North East Lincolnshire.”



Blakemore Wholesale Launches New Bmorelocal Fascia



Blakemore Wholesale's new premium fascia to attract retailers with the highest store standards

Blakemore Wholesale has unveiled a brand new fascia to the independent retail market called Bmorelocal.

Bmorelocal is Blakemore Wholesale's premium store format, attracting the best retailers with the highest store standards.

Retailers have access to a full symbol group package alongside electronic point of sale and a strong food-to-go proposition provided by Costa and Country Choice.

The first Bmorelocal store launched in Grimsby, in June.

Blakemore Wholesale Stores Director Nick Rose commented: "The Bmorelocal fascia has been developed in response to increasing demand from retail club members for a more premium fascia option.

"We are delighted with our first Bmorelocal store. The interest from those that have either read the trade press or have been to visit has been very impressive and we are in dialogue with numerous potential customers about developing their stores."

Retailer Pardeep Sakaria, who launched the store in Grimsby, added: "Bmorelocal was the best choice for me. The standard of finish and attention to detail is amazing and I am proud to tell my friends and family what my fascia is. I look forward to seeing other stores opening in the near future."

As part of Blakemore Wholesale's commitment to making a significant, positive contribution to the communities it serves, the Blakemore Foundation has pledged to award each Bmorelocal store £200 to donate to a charity of their choice.



A.F. Blakemore Invests £1 Million in Penrith Depot



The newly refurbished Penrith depot

A.F. Blakemore has invested £1 million in re-launching its Penrith depot as it looks to significantly expand its customer base across Cumbria.

The depot, which was purchased from Lowries Wholesale in 2013, is now set to target the hospitality and tourism industry in the Lake District and surrounding region following a full refurbishment and rebranding.

Serving both the food service and retail industry, the site has been dual branded with Blakemore Wholesale and Blakemore Foodservice signage and will target hotels, bed & breakfasts, caterers and local businesses.

The depot currently employs 15 members of staff, with a view to growing this number to 50 warehouse, transport and sales staff in the future.

Customers will be able to take full advantage of a brand new butchery that supplies locally sourced products, a new fresh fruit and vegetable offering, and enhanced chilled and frozen ranges.

In addition, the business has invested in a 300-pallet-capacity freezer, specifically to serve its food service customer base, and a fleet of multi-temperature vehicles.

Blakemore Foodservice Sales & Marketing Director Jim Dudley said: "Our long-term strategy is to grow our current customer base of retailers and caterers in addition to targeting the hospitality and tourism market in the area.

"We undertook a large sales drive in February where we met with guesthouses, hotels, bed & breakfasts, restaurants and takeaways to promote our full food service offering.

"Throughout the whole process the team at Penrith have remained loyal to Blakemore's, and they are now immensely proud of their improved facility.

"This will be a fantastic opportunity for caterers and retailers across the Lake District and wider Cumbria region."



Blakemore Foodservice Exhibits at Lakes Hospitality Trade Show

To help promote the business to caterers in Cumbria prior to the re-launch of the Penrith depot, Blakemore Foodservice exhibited at the Lakes Hospitality Trade Show in February.

Representatives from Blakemore Foodservice and Blakemore Fine Foods put on a display of catering and Fine Foods products to demonstrate the wide breadth of catering, retail and speciality lines that the business has to offer.

Blakemore Foodservice Sales & Marketing Director Jim Dudley said: "We wanted to show the Blakemore heritage and our product range as well as educate our competitors on the scale of our business and our intent to win new customers. Over the two-day event 150 new leads were secured."

Supporting marketing material was provided by Blakemore Creative Print.



From left to right: Rory Seager (Fine Foods), Rob Smith (Foodservice), Paul Swailes (Foodservice) and Helen Barker (Fine Foods)

Blakemore Retail Welcomes Seven My Local Stores



Blakemore Retail's new store in Rhyl, North Wales

Blakemore Retail has expanded its estate to 301 stores after acquiring seven My Local sites across England and Wales.

The new SPAR stores, with sales areas ranging from 204 to 270 sq m, are located in Rugeley, Staffordshire; South Benfleet and Witham, Essex; Lambeth, London; Chatham, Kent; Rhyl, North Wales and Cardiff, South Wales.

Blakemore Retail Managing Director Geoff Hallam commented: "I am confident that the seven new stores will prove to be a fantastic addition to the business and I am delighted to welcome all My Local staff and management teams to the Blakemore Retail family."

"Thank you to all the teams involved for the fantastic support and hard work to ensure that stores were operational just 48 hours after the acquisition."

The sites have all been re-launched under the SPAR fascia and merchandised in a SPAR format.

So far in 2016/17 Blakemore Retail has also acquired new sites at Yaxley, Conwy, Laceby Lodge and Hagley.

In 2015/16 Blakemore Retail opened seven new stores across England and Wales.



Blakemore Wholesale Distribution Opens New Retail Accounts

Blakemore Wholesale Distribution has opened a series of new accounts with leading retailers including Halfords, Peacocks and Hobbycraft.

The new trade partnerships, which have all begun since April, involve the supply of retail confectionery.

Blakemore Wholesale Distribution now supplies 430 Halfords sites, 230 Peacocks sites and 81 Hobbycraft sites, all across the UK and Ireland.

Blakemore Wholesale Distribution Sales Director Raj Krishan commented: "These new partnerships are significant because the company is taking its business into new channels."

"We are developing successful models that will help us win more business supplying impulse categories to non-food retailers in the future."

"This is just one of the areas that Blakemore Wholesale Distribution is looking to grow sales within, and we are hopeful of securing similar accounts over the course of the year."

These latest ventures will add to Blakemore Wholesale Distribution's growing portfolio of accounts with leading retailers, which include Primark, WH Smith, Staples and Wickes.

Utilising the scale, infrastructure and expertise of the wider Blakemore Group,

Blakemore Wholesale Distribution has ambitions to achieve a significant expansion of its customer base across multiple channels, including retail, catering, hospitality, wholesale, vending and export.



Blakemore Wholesale Distribution already supplies leading retailers Primark, WH Smith, Staples and Wickes

Blakemore Trade Partners Achieves Record Recruitment



One of the stores opened by Blakemore Trade Partners in August, at Roadchef's Clacket Lane Services

Blakemore Trade Partners recorded its best ever set of recruitment figures in 2015/16, with net growth of 133 stores.

Over the course of the year ending in April 2016 the business welcomed more than 200 new stores to its independent SPAR estate,

eclipsing the 89 stores that were recruited in 2014/15.

Blakemore Trade Partners currently serves 800 independent stores across SPAR UK's Meridian & Welsh Guild.

Blakemore Trade Partners Development Director Louis Drake commented: "The strength of the proposition offered by Blakemore Trade Partners is becoming increasingly attractive as retailers look for partners who can provide a strategic support package designed to enable retailers to continue to compete in an increasingly competitive market."

"When you add in the innovation in SPAR store formats, the strength of our award-winning SPAR brand range and a multichannel marketing strategy you can see why so many retailers are moving to us."

The 2015/16 year saw Blakemore Trade Partners begin several significant national agreements with industry-leading multisite operators, including Euro Garages, Roadchef and Rontec.

The business welcomed 102 Euro Garages forecourts to its estate, making the forecourt operator the division's largest multiple account customer.

Retailer recruitment for 2016/17 has already got off to a strong start, with more than 30 stores opening across A.F. Blakemore's independent SPAR estate during the first four months of the financial year.

Blakemore Retail Crowned Best Independent Retail Chain

Blakemore Retail picked up the highly coveted title of 'Best Independent Retail Chain' at the Grocer Gold Awards in June.

Since their launch in 2003, the Grocer Gold Awards have grown to become the most prestigious awards in the food and drink industry, recognising the very best standards in grocery retail.

The 'Best Independent Retail Chain' award recognises the huge success enjoyed by Blakemore Retail over the course of the past year. In 2015 the division opened 16 Subway franchises and its fourth Greggs franchise.

The awards event took place at the historic Guildhall in London.

Blakemore Retail Managing Director Geoff Hallam commented: "I am extremely proud that Blakemore Retail has been recognised as 'Best Independent Retail Chain' at the Grocer Gold Awards."

"This is a great achievement for Blakemore Retail. Everyone in the entire organisation has worked very hard and is very deserving of this title."

In May Blakemore Retail also scooped two titles at the Him! Convenience Tracking Programme Awards: Best Convenience Retailer for Fresh & Chilled and Best Convenience Retailer for Promotions.

The Him! CTP Awards celebrate the best of the convenience sector and are judged by more than 20,000 convenience store shoppers and store staff.



Blakemore Retail Managing Director Geoff Hallam picks up the award for 'Best Independent Retail Chain' at the Grocer Gold Awards

Also at the Grocer Gold Awards:

- Eat 17 was shortlisted for Fine Foods Retailer of the Year.
- High Noon Stores were shortlisted for Independent Retail Chain of the Year.
- SPAR UK was shortlisted for Symbol Retailer of the Year.



Blakemore Retail Achieves Investors in People Silver

Blakemore Retail's commitment to developing colleagues has been recognised with the achievement of the highly prestigious Investors in People Silver accolade.

Investors in People is a nationally recognised quality standard that looks for continuous improvement in ways that businesses communicate as well as develop and prepare staff for the future.

Less than three per cent of companies that have been awarded the Investors in People standard have achieved Silver status.

Blakemore Retail has held Investors in People accreditation since 2002. The Silver status comes just three years after the business achieved Bronze in 2013.

As part of the Investors in People assessment process, more than 200 colleagues from across all areas of the business were interviewed.

Investors in People Practitioner Kathryn Shepherd commented: "Silver accreditation is a fantastic outcome given the size of the company and complexity of the working environment."

"Many congratulations to everyone for their contribution to this success; it could only have been realised through the participation of people at all levels throughout Blakemore Retail."

Blakemore Retail Training Manager Kerry Hunt added: "I would like to extend a big thank you to all those that took part in or assisted with the assessment."

"A very special thanks goes to all those that are out there working hard week in, week out, as this has resulted in making the Silver accreditation possible."



Blakemore Retail is one of less than three per cent of IIP-accredited companies that have achieved Silver status

A.F. Blakemore & Son Recognised in Top Track 100

A.F. Blakemore & Son has been named the 39th largest privately owned company in Britain in the Sunday Times HSBC Top Track 100.

Published in July, the annual Sunday Times HSBC Top Track 100 league table ranks Britain's 100 private companies with the biggest sales.

In the financial year ending in April 2015 A.F. Blakemore recorded sales of £1.276 billion, up 7.1% on the previous year.

A.F. Blakemore Group Finance Director Scott Munro-Morris commented: "Being recognised in The Sunday Times HSBC Top Track 100 shows that we are not only a key player in the retail, wholesale and distribution sectors, but in British business as a whole."

"A.F. Blakemore is a 100% family-owned company that is committed to growing in ways that are profitable and sustainable

for the benefit of staff, customers and the community. Last year we invested 98% of profits back into improving the business."

A.F. Blakemore is one of 25 family-owned companies featured in the league table and one of just five Midlands companies to have appeared on the list every year since the first Top Track 100 was published in 2002.

The company has climbed four places in the league table since last year, when it ranked at number 43.

HSBC Head of UK Corporate Banking Dan Howlett commented: "At a time of unprecedented uncertainty, we can take real comfort from the dynamic private companies across the UK as recognised by the Top Track 100 league table."

"Firms such as these are fundamental in helping to get Britain back to business during this post-Brexit period of

uncertainty and the inevitable challenges ahead."

"These businesses are ambitious, agile and passionate about what they do and will play an important part in helping to drive the British economy forward, domestically and internationally."

Since 2007 A.F. Blakemore has more than doubled its turnover from £643 million to £1.3 billion. The company currently employs more than 8,000 people.

A.F. Blakemore appears on the league table alongside leading businesses from across Britain, including high-profile national brands such as Clarks, Dyson, Specsavers and Virgin Atlantic.



A.F. Blakemore Welcomes New Wholesale Trading Director

A.F. Blakemore has appointed Richard Jorden as the new Wholesale Trading Director.

Richard joined the business in June and will serve both Blakemore Wholesale and Blakemore Wholesale Distribution.

We caught up with Richard to find out more about his career so far and his first impressions of A.F. Blakemore:

Tell us about your career and previous work experience.

Having started my buying career with Morrisons in 1988, I moved into the independent sector when I joined Batleys as the buyer for the Leeds depot in 1990.

In 1995 I moved down to the Midlands to join a new family-run wholesale business in Stratford upon Avon called DCS.

As the first non-family employee I was responsible for buying and selling toiletries both in the UK and abroad.

In 1999 we launched the distribution division that some of you will know as DCS Central, with Makro and Landmark being our first customers.

Over the course of the next 16 years I covered most roles within the company, including buying, sales and marketing.

This year the company will turn over in excess of £200m. It currently employs 320 people.

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

Having dealt with A.F. Blakemore for the best part of 15 years, I have watched the growth and acquisition trail with interest.

I believe that the company has made the transition from "family business" to "large corporate", but without losing sight of traditional family values and principles. Having worked for family businesses for nearly 30 years, this is very important to me.

Also, I wanted to join a company where I can make a difference, not just in the way that we trade, but also in the way that we work. This role certainly gives me the opportunity to impact many areas of the business.

What are your first impressions of the company?

First impressions count! I can say that, without exception, everybody I have met over the course of my induction has been incredibly helpful and has made me feel very welcome.

Trade at the moment is incredibly tough throughout both retail and wholesale; as a business we have to evolve to meet the demands of the marketplace. Change is a good thing, and it is encouraging to work within a business that recognises it's not "business as usual" – that is half the battle!

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

Lots, but my absolute number one priority is to fix Wholesale availability – there is no point doing anything if you haven't got stock on shelves!

Tell us a little bit about yourself outside of work.

I live (next door to a pub!) in a small village called Broom just outside Stratford upon Avon. My wife Sacha and I have seven children, so home and family play a huge part of our lives!

I have to say I am not massively sporty, but music is very important to me and I have been lucky enough to see all my favourite bands play live at least once. I have been riding motorbikes since I was 16 and currently own a Honda VTX 1800!

"I believe that the company has made the transition from family business to large corporate, but without losing sight of traditional family values and principles."



Blakemore Fresh Foods Achieves another Year of Record Sales



Blakemore Fresh Foods achieved record sales of £42.8m in 2015/16 and has ambitious plans to expand across a wider geographical area in 2016/17

Blakemore Fresh Foods' expansion into new trading areas has been identified as the key reason for the company achieving a consecutive year of record sales.

The fresh meat wholesaler and importer has achieved sales of £42.8m for the 2015/16 financial year, which smashes the previous year's record of £38.9m.

In addition to the company's £3.5m bespoke cutting, storage facility and head offices, located at Hilton Cross, in South Staffordshire, Blakemore Fresh Foods has now expanded to four regional trading offices in London, Cardiff, Nottingham and Bristol.

Trading Director Richard Brownjohn said that the company's most recent expansion across the West Country has already proven a huge success and contributed to the overall sales boost.

Richard said: "There are many reasons for our success but there have been solid

contributions from all five of our trading offices and we have certainly reaped the benefits from a first full year's worth of trading out of the Bristol office.

"The team has done an excellent job since launching this new part of our operation in January 2015 and we are positive that they will continue to increase our sales across the West Country, from Gloucestershire through to Cornwall in the months ahead.

"The South Wales office has also improved its performance from 2014/15 and it is great to see how the team there continues to exceed expectations."

Richard pointed to the continuing growth of lamb and mutton sales across the business, with further sales attributed to the slicing, dicing and other value added products provided through the Hilton Cross facility, which is BRC Version 7 Grade A accredited.

Operations Director Bob Cash said that the company has invested in four new EURO 6 vehicles in anticipation of another successful year for 2016/17, which will increase the company's distribution payload by 16 tonnes.

Bob added: "We are now seeking to expand our operation further so that we can distribute to a wider geographical area, with an increasing focus upon the area to the east of the M40.

"In addition to the introduction of new vehicles we are also seeking to invest in a new integrated IT system across our operation to improve efficiencies and the way that we trade and partner our customers and supplier base.

"While there are currently a number of uncertainties across the marketplace we are building solid foundations and are well placed to achieve another successful year in 2016/17."

Blakemore Trade Partners Gets Set to Expand University Portfolio



The University of Nottingham's new SPAR store in the Portland Building on the University Park Campus

Blakemore Trade Partners has opened two new stores at the University of Nottingham with a view to growing its university-based estate.

The new stores offer students an extensive convenience range that comprises healthy choices alongside more conventional student products. This includes fresh produce, meal deals and SPAR's new Daily Deli food service concept.

Blakemore Trade Partners Development Director Louis Drake commented: "With SPAR being an international brand that is popular across the UK and abroad, we believe that the symbol group is the perfect partner for universities and their high volume of overseas students. We will now look to expand to further universities within the UK.

"The A.F. Blakemore Group is also in the unique position of being able to provide universities with a proposition that

extends beyond retail and shop fitting services to complete wholesale and catering solutions."

The two new stores are run by the University of Nottingham's Students' Union, with all profits generated by the sites reinvested into the work of the Students' Union.

Shops Manager Kristian Bennett commented: "We're excited about the new partnership with SPAR because it allows us to offer really great value, while also providing students with healthy alternatives that won't break the bank.

"Since opening in mid-April, both sites have seen impressive sales growth – particularly the shop in the Portland Building on University Park, where week-in-week-out sales growth has been double-digit like for like.

"The relationship thus far between ourselves and A.F. Blakemore has been fantastic, and we're looking forward to many years ahead in partnership together to bring a branded retail offer to the students of the University of Nottingham."

Blakemore Trade Partners currently trades with three universities, with further stores at the University of Essex and De Montfort University.

Blakemore Retail Launches Dual-Brand SPAR Forecourts

Blakemore Retail has announced a long-term supply contract with fuel brand Jet, which has seen the launch of two dual-brand SPAR forecourts.

The two sites, based in Buckley, Flintshire, and Newark, Nottinghamshire, joined the Jet network in April.

Blakemore Retail Area Manager David Garside said: "We see this as a great opportunity to test the water with

a convenience brand we're already familiar with, and a new fuel supplier.

"We want to determine the value of the SPAR brand on the forecourt on sites which are heavily convenience led, but also have the backing of a trusted fuel brand."

Jet Group Dealer Manager Graham Clout said: "Both of these sites are immaculately maintained and will be



Blakemore Retail's Buckley forecourt

a real credit to the Jet network. We're confident they would already score highly in our award-winning 'Proud to be Jet' services and standards programme."

The UK's first Jet and SPAR dual-branded site opened last summer following the launch of the new convenience partnership in April 2015.

New Operations Director for Blakemore Wholesale

Blakemore Wholesale has appointed Paul Rabone as the division's new Operations Director.

In his new role, Paul will oversee the running of Blakemore Wholesale's 14 cash & carry depots.

Paul joined A.F. Blakemore in February from the Bestway Group, where he spent 28 years. He previously worked for A.F. Blakemore for seven years between 1980 and 1987.



We invited Paul to tell us a bit more about himself, as he embarks on this latest phase of his career with the company:

Briefly outline your career prior to your return to A.F. Blakemore:

I have joined Blakemore Wholesale following 28 years' service for the Bestway Group. I was originally employed by Batleys as Provisions Manager at the company's new West Bromwich depot and was later promoted to management roles at the company's Coventry and Nottingham depots, before being invited to manage Batleys' flagship cash & carry at Birmingham in 2004.

I spent six incredibly successful years there and won five major Bestway and Batley Depot of the Year and Manager of the Year awards.

I was then promoted to Trading Manager, which included responsibility for the central buying team, stockholding and sales development.

My final role for the company began in 2013, as Group Catering Controller, which included the launch of the Bestway/Batleys food service operation.

What was your previous experience with Blakemore's?

I started work with Blakemore's when I was 17 years old back in 1980 as a Frozen Foods Assistant at the Walsall depot.

In my seven years with the company, I worked on most sections, which included butchery, provisions, catering, beers, wines and spirits, and grocery. I also worked as Depot Buyer in my final year before I moved to Batleys.

What were the key reasons behind your return to the company?

The promotion to a director position within the operations side of the business was obviously a big attraction but I am also excited about returning to a family-run business, particularly one which I have always had a soft spot for.

I previously had seven happy years at Blakemore, where I have many fond memories from the past. I actually met my wife at the Walsall depot some 36 years ago.

Have you any initial thoughts about your new role?

Since joining the company I have been spending time understanding where the cash & carry depots are at, visiting all of the 14 sites along with their management and staff teams.

We are now beginning to get some depot plans in place and build upon the depots' successes.

The key to all of this is communication, and I look forward to finding out more about what suggestions people have to drive the company forward.

Tell us about yourself outside of work:

I am aged 52 and will have been married to my wife Karen for 29 years this year. We have three children, Ashley (27), Daniel (23) and daughter Sophie (14 going on 32).

I am a huge Liverpool supporter (I know!), I enjoy cooking and eating Indian curry and I am also a massive Bruce Springsteen fan, having seen him 26 times in the past eight years.

“I am excited about returning to a family-run business, particularly one which I have always had a soft spot for.”

Blakemore Logistics Experiences Record Case Volumes

Blakemore Logistics announced its highest ever case volumes in the summer as warm weather helped boost retail sales across A.F. Blakemore's SPAR estate.

Week 12 of the 2015/16 financial year was a record week for the distribution operation following a spell of sunshine in July.

Case volumes throughout the network increased significantly year on year. Ambient volumes were up by 30%, chilled volumes by 10% and frozen volumes by a massive 61%.

The rise in demand required more than 170 additional delivery routes to be scheduled over the course of the week, and the number of cages distributed to stores to increase by 5,000 year on year.

Staff across the retail distribution centres worked extremely hard, with many committing to additional hours. Colleagues from A.F. Blakemore's Wholesale and Foodservice depots also lent a helping hand.

Group Logistics Director Andy Grinsell commented: "While it has proven to be a tiring and demanding time, Blakemore

Logistics colleagues have done a fantastic job.

"On behalf of myself, Logistics Manager Marc Deakin and the Trade Partners and Retail boards I would like to thank everyone involved for their ongoing commitment and support."

In addition to the warm weather generating additional sales for retail customers, the record volumes can be attributed to the significant growth of A.F. Blakemore's independent and company-owned SPAR estates over the course of the last year.

Blakemore Logistics now distributes to more than 1,100 stores across the Meridian & Welsh Guild.



Blakemore Logistics' main depot in Willenhall, West Midlands

Warehouse to Wheels Success

Twenty colleagues from A.F. Blakemore's Logistics, Wholesale, Foodservice and Fine Foods divisions have been given the opportunity to develop a career in driving thanks to an internal development programme.

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.

All training is carried out in-house by the company's qualified LGV trainers, which enables the scheme to be

tailored to the needs of the business and staff members on the course.

Since the start of 2016/17, 12 delegates have completed the programme. Eight colleagues are currently on the scheme.

Group Logistics Manager Andy Grinsell commented: "Warehouse to Wheels is a fantastic opportunity for colleagues that want to develop a career in driving and a great example of the investment that the company is putting into its in-house development programmes."



A.F. Blakemore's most recent Warehouse to Wheels graduate, Gurjit Banga, based at Axxess 10

Blakemore Colleagues Donate 11,000 Hours to Community Volunteering

Community volunteering once again surpassed all expectations in 2015/16, with A.F. Blakemore employees donating 11,414 hours of work time to activities supporting their local communities.

Over the 12-month period, 1,058 colleagues got involved in regeneration projects, student work placements, reading partnerships, practice interviews, study tours, enterprise events and student mentoring.

In total this support reached out to 56,489 community members.

For more information on community volunteering, please contact Community Affairs Officer Liz Bell on 0121 568 2910 or email lbell@afblakemore.co.uk.



Here is a snapshot of the volunteering that took place in 2015/16:



Colleagues from SPAR Bannerbrook carried out a litter pick in their local community.



A team of volunteers from Wholesale Trading spent the day at Sifa Fireside, a Birmingham-based homeless charity, supporting its service users.



Three staff from Gateshead Cash & Carry partnered with a local primary school and completed one-to-one reading with their pupils.



Staff from the Blakemore Logistics Ambient team spent a week building an outdoor covered seating area for the residents of Action on Hearing Loss.



Students from Thomas Telford School in Shropshire spent a morning touring Wolverhampton Cash & Carry and purchasing goods to donate to a local food bank.



Tickhill SPAR and Post Office spent a day taking part in a clear up of their local area.



Blakemore Logistics spent a week visiting 10 primary schools across Walsall and Wolverhampton to educate them on the dangers of the road.



Blakemore Foodservice and Blakemore Logistics collaborated for a week to paint the corridors of Salisbury Primary School.



Two members of the Recruitment and Development team from Blakemore Trade Partners transformed the offices of a local community group in Tipton.



Stores from across Blakemore Retail's West region spent a day transforming a local outdoor activity centre.



Blakemore Logistics hosted a five-a-side children's football competition at Tipton Sports Academy for eight local primary schools.



Staff from SPAR Newtown spent a day at Newtown Rugby Club giving the outdoor facilities a fresh lick of paint.



Trading team members from Blakemore Trade Partners transformed King's Hill Primary School in Walsall by painting its corridors.



SPAR Pinchbeck celebrated its store re-launch by inviting children from Pinchbeck Primary School in for a tour and providing them with a free packed lunch.



Colleagues from Blakemore Foodservice's James Bridge depot spent a week at Salisbury Primary School painting the corridors.



Staff from SPAR Newport spent a day at a local primary school giving their garden area and walkways a spruce up.



Sales and Recruitment teams in Blakemore Trade Partners joined forces for a day at Hill End Outdoor Education Centre in Oxfordshire to carry out forestry and painting projects.



A team of volunteers from Accounts brought a new lease of life to a garden in Wolverhampton that is used by women affected by domestic violence.

11,414
employee volunteering hours donated to good causes in 2015/16

56,489
members of the community supported by employee volunteering in 2015/16

1,058
A.F. Blakemore employees involved in volunteering in 2015/16



Volunteers from Valley SPAR and Subway spent a day in two primary schools in North Wales educating children on the healthy options at Subway.



A team of staff from Accounts designed and built a new rockery for Caldmore Gardens in Walsall.



Volunteers from Accounts spent a day helping with food parcels at The Well food bank in Wolverhampton.



Blakemore Foodservice's Wakefield depot completed a painting and gardening project with a local community centre that offers day activities for the elderly and a food bank for local people.

Project Leadership Training Update

A.F. Blakemore's focus upon internal project leadership capability has continued throughout 2016 to support the delivery of the Profit Improvement Plans (PIPs) that form part of the Group 2020 Strategy.

The A.F. Blakemore Project Leadership toolkit was developed in 2015 and is built around the four key stages of delivering successful projects – namely definition, planning, implementation and review.

Since February 2015 a total of 150 delegates have received some form of project leadership training, whether it be via a one-day project sponsor session, the full two-day

project leadership course, facilitated project planning sessions or part of the ILM Level 3 Certificate in Leadership & Management.

A full evaluation of the progress of the project leadership programme took place in the summer, with recommendations for next steps presented and discussed at the Process Improvement and Project Leadership Steering Group.

As a result, a number of improvements to the toolkit, training programme and ongoing support to those embarking on projects will be introduced over the coming months.



Delegates participating in the July 2016 two-day project leadership course

Process Improvement Takes Next Step

A wide range of process improvement activity has taken place in 2016 with the purpose of reducing waste and enhancing the customer experience across the operation.

A total of 29 delegates from across Finance, IT, HR and Wholesale Distribution have participated in Managing Everyday Excellence (MEDE) courses run by consultants PMI, with further courses planned for Logistics and Creative Print before the end of the year.

The MEDE course focuses upon the everyday work that needs to be done in order to meet customer expectations. The programme is based around the principles of standardisation, maintenance and improvement to help process managers consistently achieve excellent business results.

A further 42 delegates have participated in Process Operator courses to support in the delivery of the MEDE programme.

High-level "System Maps" have also been finalised across Blakemore Trade Partners, HR, Finance and IT to identify core processes and enable a clearer understanding of both customers and suppliers.

Centre of Excellence

Blakemore Wholesale Distribution's Apex II depot is working towards becoming a Process Improvement Centre of Excellence as part of the company's commitment to sustainable long-term growth.

The joint initiative between A.F. Blakemore and PMI officially began in March and builds

upon the process improvement activity that has taken place across the depot since July 2015.

The purpose of the project is to establish Apex II as a Centre of Excellence that will serve as a shining example of process management and improvement in action.

The initiative will also provide a learning opportunity to enable best practice to be shared across the wider group and help embed a culture of process management and improvement as a way of life.

Visual Management

The Blakemore Retail Management Accounts team has taken the next step in the company's process improvement journey by trailblazing a new method of visual management.

Blakemore Retail Management Accountant Stephen Marklew has developed and piloted a new visual display board that showcases the people, process, plan, performance and actions required to achieve continuous improvement across the department.

Stephen said that daily huddles, involving all members of the team, are delivered around the visual management board from 8.15am to 8.30am every morning as part of the accounting process, and that the board is also referred to on an ad-hoc basis during the course of a typical working day.

Stephen explained the benefits that the board has provided: "Previously during busy periods



Stephen Marklew, Scott Middleton, Keely Peace and Eleni Kavalieros alongside the departmental visual management board



Paul Moorcroft, Lee Parker, Martin Taylor and Sarah Riaz map out the processes as part of the Apex II Centre of Excellence initiative

there was very much a culture of getting our heads down to get the figures out," he said.

"We now have a much clearer purpose as a team and more insight into what we need to do to improve our performance against this purpose.

"As this activity is also taking place in other areas of the Finance department we are also gaining greater insight into the interdependencies across Finance and how the work that we do impacts and is linked to that of other teams."

Blakemore Wholesale Distribution Unveils New Sales Director

Blakemore Wholesale Distribution has appointed Raj Krishan as the division's new Sales Director.

Raj originally began his career with A.F. Blakemore in 1988 and undertook a number of senior roles across the company's Retail and Wholesale divisions.

His new role within Blakemore Wholesale Distribution commenced in July following Tony Bromwich's decision to leave the business in the summer.

Since departing from A.F. Blakemore, Raj has built a solid reputation as a leading player across the wholesale and retail sectors with a series of high profile roles within Landmark Wholesale, the Today's Group, Nisa and more recently the My Local Convenience Group, as Format & Development Director.

Raj said that he was delighted to be returning to A.F. Blakemore and has a clear ambition to build upon Wholesale Distribution's reputation as one of the UK's leading delivered wholesalers.

He added: "This move is certainly a good fit for me as the company's culture fits with my own outlook. It is also a great opportunity for me to work with a great team and develop this new and exciting part of the Blakemore business."

Raj went on to explain how his experiences since leaving the company in 2004 can support the company in meeting its future objectives.

He said: "I have expanded my knowledge and experience in the last 12-and-a-half years working in buying groups, retail, wholesale, development roles and start-up retailers and have learnt a great deal through the different businesses, jobs and people that I have been involved with.

"I now want to bring this experience back to A.F. Blakemore by building stronger partnerships with our existing customer base and by expanding the reach of the business across the variety of channels that we serve and deliver greater value."

Blakemore Wholesale Distribution Managing Director James Russell welcomed Raj back to A.F. Blakemore and looked ahead to the contribution that he will make to the company in the future.

James said: "Raj will be a great asset to our business and has the breadth of industry knowledge and experience required to help us meet our ambitious plans for the future.

"While I would like to thank Tony Bromwich for the role that he has played in establishing Wholesale Distribution over the past two years, I am confident that Raj will be able to build upon these foundations and will play a key role in taking this business to the next level."

We invited Raj to tell us about his decision to re-join A.F. Blakemore and his life outside of work:

Why did you decide to re-join A.F. Blakemore after 12 years away?

In many ways I grew up with Blakemore's and have always held affection for the business, as I have watched it grow over the past decade or so from afar. It certainly wasn't a difficult decision to re-join the company. It is a winning family business with a great reputation – why wouldn't I want to be part of the success story once again and play my part in developing it further?

What are the immediate differences that you have noticed between A.F. Blakemore past and present?

The obvious difference is in the size and scale of the business. All parts of A.F. Blakemore have grown exponentially over the past decade, with new depots and acquisitions forming a key part of this growth. Symbolically the company has also grown and is now regarded as a "big beast" in the marketplace; it is important that we build upon this position of strength in the future.

Tell us a bit about yourself:

I was born in Liverpool but grew up in Walsall and now live in Gnosall, which is a small village outside Stafford. I like to spend time walking

my dog, watching football (I am a keen Liverpool supporter), watching F1 and using the gym as best as I can. I am also a bit of a movie buff!

A recent passion of mine is cycling, which I took up about four years ago; before then I hadn't ridden a bike since I was 16. After deciding to return to cycling, I have completed a series of fundraising challenges, which have included a 100km night ride around Paris and a series of bike rides across South East Asia, taking in Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia and Sri Lanka, with a number of industry friends and colleagues that have raised money for the Mines Action Group, which seeks to remove the ongoing threat of landmines.



NSPCC Fundraising Surpasses £2.3 Million

Thanks to the longstanding dedication of colleagues, Blakemore Retail has donated more than £2.3 million to the NSPCC since SPAR UK's partnership with the charity began in 2006.



Sarah Deakin (left) and A.F. Blakemore Community Affairs Officer Liz Bell (right) collect the West Midlands Corporate Partner of the Year award on behalf of Blakemore Retail

In 2015/16 alone, Blakemore Retail made a £314,316 contribution to the good cause, helping SPAR UK's fundraising total for the year to surpass £0.5 million.

NSPCC Partnership Manager Kirsty White commented: "This money has been raised through the hard work and determination of store and office-based employees via activities such as dress-down days, cake sales and even a 500-mile bike ride.

"The funds help the NSPCC to reach thousands of primary school children aged 4 to 11 through the Speak Out Stay Safe programme, giving a generation of children the knowledge and understanding they need to stay safe from abuse and neglect."

In recognition of the business's outstanding fundraising achievement, Blakemore Retail was crowned West Midlands Corporate Partner of the Year at the NSPCC Childhood Champion Awards in July.

The event took place at the Banking Hall in Central London to celebrate the commitment made to the NSPCC's fight for every childhood.

Blakemore Retail Operations Support & Marketing Manager Sarah Deakin commented: "I was delighted and honoured to accept the award on behalf of Blakemore Retail.

"Our staff and customers are passionate about fundraising for the NSPCC and the fantastic service they deliver to our primary schools."

In addition to fundraising for the good cause, nine A.F. Blakemore employees have also volunteered during work time to help the NSPCC deliver their Speak Out Stay Safe programme in schools across the UK.

Coaching Programme Pilot Update

A pilot learning & development programme aimed at increasing the effectiveness of leaders across A.F. Blakemore has been launched.

The course is aimed at managers from all levels across the business who would like to increase their effectiveness through the coaching of others and consists of a one-day facilitated workshop, preceded by a self-assessment.

In addition to making direct links with coaching and tools and techniques from Leading the Blakemore Way, delegates will also be invited to set themselves a clear Coaching Contract, where they will outline key objectives related to self, others and business that they would like to achieve through the coaching of others.

Colleagues from across Retail, Logistics, Wholesale Distribution and Human Resources participated in the pilot workshop and their feedback is now being used to improve the programme in advance of a wider rollout across the company.

The workshop received some strong feedback from delegates, which included:

"I have improved my ability to ask searching questions, share purpose, use playback effectively and support others through coaching."

"Applying what I have learned will benefit not only me but my team and the business."

A.F. Blakemore Learning & Development Officer Nick Hursthouse, who developed the programme, said that he was pleased with the commitment and feedback from those who had participated in the initial course and that he now intends to develop this further.

He added: "A coaching culture is a vital element of any successful business and this course is the first stage of a wider programme that we intend to roll out

across the business to help leaders improve in this area."

Bookings are now being taken for the second pilot course.

For further information in relation to the coaching programme or other learning & development opportunities please contact Learning & Development Administration Manager **Julie Knowles** on **0121 568 2906** or email jknowles@afblakemore.com.



Blakemore Retail's Steve Holcombe gets to grips with the coaching workshop

Charity Ball Raises £32,000 for NSPCC

To celebrate raising more than £2 million for the NSPCC, Blakemore Retail held its very first Charity Ball for the children's charity in March.

The event, which took place at Coombe Abbey in Warwickshire, raised £32,000.

More than 200 guests, including suppliers and staff, attended the ball, which was hosted by Blakemore Retail Managing Director Geoff Hallam and NSPCC Director of Fundraising Paul Farthing.

Guests enjoyed a drinks reception, a four-course meal and an evening of fundraising, staff recognition and entertainment from Take That cover band Rule the World.

Paul Farthing commented: "Each and every employee involved has shown great enthusiasm in fundraising for the NSPCC and ChildLine, and reaching the £2 million milestone is testament to this dedication."

Blakemore Retail Managing Director Geoff Hallam said: "I'd like to give recognition to all Blakemore Retail employees who have lived and breathed fundraising for the NSPCC over the past 10 years. Your continued support is unbelievable.

"We are so grateful to the people who have assisted our staff's fundraising throughout our partnership. From those



Blakemore Retail's inaugural charity ball at Coombe Abbey in Warwickshire

who give spare change to our collection tins to those who back our stores' wild and courageous fundraising events, they are all incredibly generous and without their support reaching our milestone of £2 million wouldn't have been possible.

"Our charity ball has really helped us to celebrate this achievement and give special thanks to those that have made it possible! Thank you to everyone involved."

Blakemore Fine Foods Publishes New Best of British Alcohol Catalogue

Blakemore Fine Foods has launched a new edition of its 'Best of British' alcohol catalogue showcasing the best of British ales, ciders, wines and spirits.

Fine Foods Commercial Manager Patrice Garrigues said that the Fine Foods team has been working hard to refine the range on offer since the first edition of the catalogue was issued in 2015.

The latest brochure features in excess of 470 products from more than 75 different distilleries, cider mills and breweries from across the UK.

Patrice commented: "We are doing what nobody else is currently doing in the marketplace by bringing such a comprehensive range of quality British alcohol together, with customers able to order bulk, gift packs or single-pick bottles."

The catalogue has been distributed to 1,500 retailers, independent pubs and farm shops, and lines will also be sold into Blakemore Wholesale's cash & carry estate.

Blakemore Fine Foods now supplies 3,450 'Best of British' product lines from more than 260 producers across Britain.



Sarah Ellis Appointed Blakemore Trade Partners Marketing Director

Blakemore Trade Partners has appointed Sarah Ellis to the position of Marketing Director.

Sarah Ellis joined Blakemore Trade Partners as Head of Marketing in March 2014 and over the past two years has been responsible for delivering a marketing strategy to help drive footfall and basket spend for retailers across SPAR UK's Meridian & Welsh Guild.

Alongside the development of a new business-to-business multichannel marketing strategy and the launch of a retailer marketing club, Sarah has created a bespoke local area marketing programme enabling retailers to work with the marketing team to develop, launch and manage campaigns that reflect the individual needs of their store and the community that they serve.

We caught up with Sarah to find out more about her career so far:

Can you tell us about your career path so far?

Since leaving university I've always worked in marketing agencies, which is a great grounding for not only experiencing lots of different areas of marketing but also how this can be applied across different client groups – I've worked on everything from Railway Supplies to House of Fraser.

Before I joined BTP two years ago, I'd spent 14 years working for McCann Manchester, with the last 10 years focused on the Aldi marketing account.

What does your role as Marketing Director entail?

As Marketing Director you're always trying to bring the customer proposition to the discussion – whether that's one of our retail customers or at a wholesale level. The Marketing department will also act as the brand guardian – every time a customer sees our logo it forms a perception and it's vital that all of our communications relay the same message about our brand values.

At the moment I'm looking at how we can drive our additional basket spend – in convenience we know that our customers have a significant amount of money that they don't currently spend with us, so how do we get them to put that one extra item in their basket each time they visit us?

I'm also looking at how we can use digital channels in the shopper journey – SMS notifications when customers are near a store, digital couponing when in-store and then social media for sharing and reviews of experience.

Digital provides an opportunity to create bespoke store-level marketing that can be very effectively targeted – more so than can be achieved with any other channel of communication.

What are your ambitions for the future?

I have seen first-hand the impact that successful marketing can have on a business – I'd like to create the same kind of impact here at Blakemore's, working closely with colleagues in other departments to deliver a marketing strategy that has audience insight at the heart.

What do you like about working for A.F. Blakemore and your role in marketing?

I like the diversity of working at Blakemore's. On the agency side your role is focused entirely on the marketing output, whereas when you're client side you need to take the whole operation of the business into consideration – I've learnt so much as I now need to understand trading, logistics and store operations etc.

I'm sure everyone says this but the people here make a huge difference. Blakemore's has the most warm, friendly working environment – you work hard and colleagues genuinely support each other and share in success – I've absolutely loved the last two years I've been here.

Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

I live with my partner Andrew and our 11-year-old son, William – I have no choice but to be a sports enthusiast as my spare time is either spent on a cricket pitch, at a swimming pool or "watching" Sky Sports. I was born in Liverpool, so I've been a Liverpool supporter since I was a child.

I love to shop (I'm a sucker for a good marketing ploy) and continuously invest in my ever-growing shoe collection....

"I'm sure everyone says this but the people here make a huge difference."

Peter Blakemore Calls for Greater Supplier Collaboration

A.F. Blakemore & Son Chairman Peter Blakemore has called for greater collaboration with the company's supplier base to help drive mutual success.

This message was delivered at A.F. Blakemore's inaugural IGD Supplier Seminar, attended by senior representatives from the company's major suppliers.

The sold-out event, which took place in February at The Belfry Hotel in the West Midlands, provided a unique chance for suppliers to get up to date with the latest developments across the A.F. Blakemore Group and learn about opportunities to develop their sales in partnership with the business.

Addressing suppliers, Peter said: "I would like to invite you to develop a new strategic partnership with the Blakemore Group as we embark upon the most exciting period in the company's history.

"I believe that recent investment and innovation across all areas of the company and a group-wide 2020 Strategy mean that we now have the diversity, scale and ambition to achieve long-term sustainable growth across the retail and wholesale sectors.

"Since 2007 A.F. Blakemore has more than doubled its turnover from £643m to £1.3bn. Working in partnership with A.F. Blakemore can achieve sustainable growth for all."

The event was compered by the IGD's Head of Retail Insight, Steve Jones, who also provided an update on the strength of the UK convenience market. The convenience store sector will grow by a further 11% to £41.9bn over the next five years to 2021, according to the latest forecasts from the IGD.

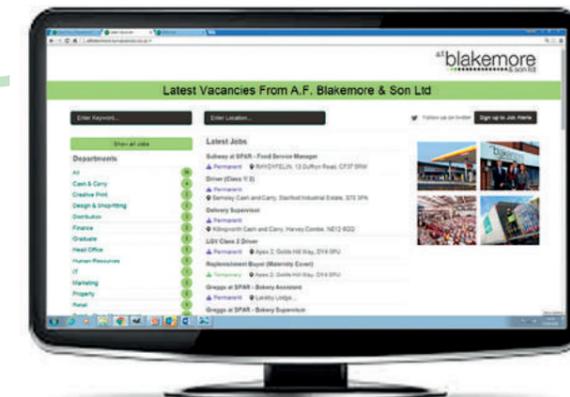
Senior directors from across the A.F. Blakemore Group followed with presentations on the company's divisional

growth plans and the role that they will play in the context of the group-wide 2020 Strategy.



Peter Blakemore calls for greater collaboration with the company's suppliers

New Online Recruitment System



In February A.F. Blakemore launched a new recruitment webpage and online job application system to streamline the recruitment process across the company.

All job vacancies across the A.F. Blakemore Group are now listed at afblakemore.ourvacancies.co.uk, where job seekers can apply for opportunities via online application forms.

HR Business Partner & Head of HR Shared Services Pamela Watts commented: "This new online recruitment platform has significantly improved the quality of

A.F. Blakemore's recruitment process by providing a much more efficient, consistent and professional approach to all stages.

"From the job applicant's perspective, the new online application system offers a secure and convenient way to apply for advertised roles, with all application forms and job vacancy listings easily accessible on mobile and desktop devices.

"Meanwhile, for the business, the more contemporary look of the new webpage and consistent format of the application

forms will improve A.F. Blakemore's employer brand and aid in the continued hiring of quality employees."

All job applicants automatically receive an email confirming the receipt of their job application as well as an update on the status of their application within one week of vacancy closing dates.

Job seekers can either visit afblakemore.ourvacancies.co.uk directly or access the webpage via the Current Vacancies page in the Careers section of the A.F. Blakemore website.

A.F. Blakemore Opens Doors to Work Experience Students

A.F. Blakemore opened its doors to 23 work experience students across England and Wales in the summer as part of its Work Inspiration Programme.

The programme aims to inspire students by providing a meaningful experience of the world of work.

A.F. Blakemore Community Affairs Officer Liz Bell commented: "Every year we are getting more and more young people approaching our business for work experience."

"I would like to say a huge thank you to all of the departments that hosted students and donated time to giving them hands-on experience of the workplace."

In June A.F. Blakemore also welcomed an intern from SPAR Italy on an 11-week work placement.

University student Valentin Santa, whose family run a SPAR store in Italy, is part of SPAR International's Next Generation Programme.

Valentin spent his placement learning about A.F. Blakemore's SPAR operations, focusing on areas such as store recruitment, shop fitting, business development, logistics and property management.

He said: "Living for 11 weeks in another country and adapting myself to a totally different lifestyle made my summer very enjoyable."



University student Valentin Santa, from SPAR Italy, on his placement in the West Midlands

"All of the managers I met are good at what they do and all of them love what they do. That is the most important thing that I learnt."

"Some very good operational methods, like promotional offers, shop formats,

shelf layouts and simple tricks I will keep in mind and implement in my father's shop shortly."

"All in all, I now understand better what I would like to do in my future."

Justin Davy Abseils for Cancer Research UK

Business Development Manager Justin Davy from Blakemore Trade Partners has raised almost £500 for Cancer Research UK by abseiling 70 feet down Norwich Castle.

Justin was one of almost 100 daredevils to abseil down Norwich's iconic landmark for the charity in March.

All money raised will go towards supporting the charity's mission to help to beat cancer sooner.



Justin descends the 70-foot castle wall

Blakemore Employees Support National Day of Volunteering

One hundred A.F. Blakemore employees donated more than 800 work hours to Business in the Community's national day of volunteering, Give & Gain Day, in May.

Colleagues from across the company took part in a series of community volunteering events alongside hundreds of businesses across the UK.

Trade Partners, Logistics, HR and IT employees from A.F. Blakemore's South Wales operation spent two days regenerating an outdoor space at Penygraig Junior School. The team replaced hanging baskets, re-painted decking, fencing and planters, and supplied flowers and bedding plants.

Team leader Ryan Ware commented: "Considering it was my first community project I was extremely nervous going into it, but with tremendous support leading up to the project and having an amazing team of volunteers we completed what we set out to do, even in the torrential downpour."



Volunteers from SPAR stores in North Wales at Ty Mawr Country Park

"Everyone put in 100% and the school looked amazing when we were done. I'd like to say a massive thank you to all my volunteers who made my first project a success."

Meanwhile, in North Wales 50 employees from Blakemore Retail's Wrexham, Gresford, Llangollen and Gweryllt stores spent the day helping out at Ty Mawr Country Park and the Leonard Cheshire Disability Group.

Then, in North East England a team of four volunteers from Blakemore Wholesale's Gateshead Cash & Carry re-decorated an

area at Bede's World in Jarrow, Tyne and Wear.

Finally, two teams from A.F. Blakemore's Finance department helped run 'Fit for Fun' athletics events for secondary school students from across the Black Country at Tipton Sports Academy.

A.F. Blakemore Community Affairs Officer Liz Bell said: "As a business with strong links in the local community, it is great for our employees to get out of their normal work environment and work as a team."

"Volunteering in the community is a fantastic way for our employees to learn new skills that they can take back to the workplace."



Colleagues from South Wales at Penygraig Junior School

In the Spotlight



Jamie Walkden

Group Expense Ledger Clerk, Credit Control, Finance

What does your job involve?

Processing payments and direct debits, assisting with customer requests and chasing any overdue invoices

What is your idea of a perfect day?

30 degrees and a white sandy beach

Where is your favourite place?

Definitely Ibiza!

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

Buy a villa abroad and open up my own bar

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

Sir Alex Ferguson, Donald Trump and Keith Lemon

What is your favourite book?

I'm ashamed to say I've never finished reading one

Who is your favourite star of film or TV?

Tom Hardy (man crush)

What is your favourite song?

Clocks by Coldplay

Who makes you laugh?

Peter Kay

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

1998, so I could be 18 again

What is the best thing you have ever achieved?

Passing my driving test

Which superpower would you like to have and why?

The ability to fly, so I could go to a hot country whenever I was looking a little pale

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

A fireman (huge fan of Fireman Sam)

What three words best describe you?

Clumsy, happy go lucky and helpful

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

Confident, brave and outgoing

Blakemore's Welcomes Apprentices

A.F. Blakemore has welcomed 23 apprentices to the business in the 12 months up to August 2016, with new recruits joining the Finance, IT, Payroll, Retail, Logistics, Design & Shopfitting, Foodservice and Fresh Foods teams.

Apprenticeships provide young people with the opportunity to gain work experience, develop skills and gain a nationally recognised qualification to help them on the career ladder.

In return apprenticeships provide the company with a pipeline of dedicated and increasingly skilled young workers of the future.

Marianne Ball, a Warehouse & Distribution Apprentice based at Axxess 10, said: "I am enjoying my apprenticeship programme as it challenges me daily, and I feel I can finally show my full potential in my work."

Customer Services Manager Jo Bird provided a glowing reference for Andrew Howell, who is currently completing a Business Admin apprenticeship in her

team: "Andrew has the right attitude and right commitment for his role and has made a really positive contribution to the office."

The company is currently in the process of developing a formal apprenticeship



Warehouse & Distribution Apprentice Marianne Ball

Business Admin Apprentice Andrew Howell

strategy that will be launched in April 2017 to maximise the opportunities that this type of activity can provide to the business and other rising stars of the future.

Paul Cowley Appointed Director of Corporate Affairs

Paul Cowley has been promoted to the new position of Director of Corporate Affairs for the A.F. Blakemore Group.

Paul joined the company as Community & Communications Officer in 2002 and over the past 14 years has established a Corporate Affairs function across the company, which is responsible for corporate responsibility, community engagement and internal and external communications.

We caught up with Paul to find out more about his career with A.F. Blakemore so far:

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

I've worked for Blakemore's in a permanent full-time position for the past 14 years. However, I have worked on and off for the company since my late teens.

My mum worked for the company for 25 years before she retired in 2008 and used to keep me out of trouble during school and university holidays by regularly finding me work in different parts of the company, whether it be the old print room, warehouse or more often than not in Personnel, where I spent many an hour photocopying and sticking things into folders for Rob Clement.

What has been your career path within the business?

After leaving university I spent a few years working as a regional journalist on the Shropshire Star and Express & Star newspapers before returning to A.F. Blakemore in 2002 as Community & Communications Officer.

This was a new position and my initial jobs related to setting up a new AFB magazine and developing a community

volunteering programme across the business. This role evolved in time and I was appointed Corporate Affairs Manager as the company began to establish a corporate responsibility programme, which was linked to the Blakemore Way values.

Following the acquisition of Capper & Co, I was appointed Head of Corporate Affairs, overseeing internal and external communications, the corporate website, corporate responsibility and community engagement.

In addition, I also manage learning & development for the wholesale, logistics and Technical Services divisions.

What does your new role as Director of Corporate Affairs entail?

I very much see it as a continuation and build upon the work that is already taking place across the department.

We undertook a review of our corporate responsibility and community engagement programmes last year and as a result are in the process of developing a new strategy which aims to take our work in these areas to the next level.

I strongly believe that the more a company engages and develops its employees, the better it will perform and service its customers. I also think that it is vital that a company makes a positive contribution to the communities it serves to grow sustainably in the long term.

We should always be on the lookout for new ways to promote the great work that goes on across the company.

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

A.F. Blakemore has its own unique culture and has always been part of my life. Over the years I've met lots of great

people who work hard and are extremely committed to what they do, no more so than the HR team at Axxess 10, who individually and collectively are an extremely talented group of people, who also regularly make me laugh for one reason or another.

Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

Outside of work I like to spend time with my family and am regularly given the run around on the football pitch by my two sons, Joseph (11) and Thomas (8).

Joe has also grown to become a huge Walsall FC fan over the past couple of years and has got me back into going to the Bescot on a regular basis after many years away. I still try and play six-a-side football on Monday evenings and enjoy being beaten at badminton by Rob Clement every Thursday.

Outside of that I am a huge music fan and have collected vinyl records since my early teens. I pretty much like anything from old blues and jazz, through to stuff like the Velvet Underground, the Fall and electronic music. I always try to go to a couple of music festivals every year.



"I strongly believe that the more a company engages and develops its employees, the better it will perform and service its customers."

Presentation Skills Training



Delegates on the presentation skills workshop

A total of 13 delegates from across Blakemore Retail, Blakemore Trade Partners and IT have successfully completed a new learning & development programme aimed at embedding skills to effectively deliver business presentations.

Two cohorts of delegates have now attended two half-day workshops, delivered by A.F. Blakemore Learning & Development Officer David Cartwright.

David said that he was delighted with both the contribution of all the delegates during the workshop and the standard of the presentations delivered as part of the training.

He added: "The course focused upon the difficulties associated with presentations and how specific Leading the Blakemore Way tools and techniques can enable presenters to deliver with purpose."

"The course highlights the importance of planning and preparation, with delegates required to deliver an effective presentation to their peers, who then provide feedback."

The workshop received some strong feedback from delegates, which included:

"I deliver presentations frequently, and this course will aid me in being prepared and avoiding becoming flustered."

"I have opinions, ideas and knowledge of the business that I think I can deliver in a more effective way now."

Candidates were invited to complete self-assessments based on how they would rate their effectiveness in delivering presentations before and after the course, with all delegates increasing their individual scores across the programme.

For further information in relation to either of the two new courses, please contact Learning & Development Administration Manager **Julie Knowles** on **0121 568 2906** or email **jknowles@afblakemore.com**.



A.F. Blakemore Graduate Scheme Returns for 2016

Following its successful launch last year, A.F. Blakemore's Graduate Scheme has returned for 2016.

Three new graduates were welcomed into the business in June: Ashley Howell joined the IT department as a Project Support Officer; Asif Mohammed joined the Blakemore Trade Partners Trading department as a Pricing & Promotional Analyst; and Anthony Edwards joined Blakemore Foodservice as a Contract Income Administrator.

Group HR Director Ian Diment commented: "This is the second year that we have run a graduate scheme and I am delighted with the calibre that we have attracted and recruited.

"The scheme demonstrates A.F. Blakemore's commitment to developing future leaders to help us continue to be a profitable and sustainable business for the long term.

"I am sure that you will all join me in extending a warm welcome to our new recruits and will provide them with all the support that they need as they embark upon their careers with us."

The 2016 Graduate Scheme, which was advertised for four weeks in spring, received more than 200 applications.

The three new starters all undertook a four-week induction on joining the company and are now working in different roles across the business.



Ashley, Asif and Anthony with fellow graduates Edward Cheadle, Jessica Bates, Emily Gladman, Charlotte James, Robyn Owen, David Sanderson and Joe Kennedy, who joined the business last year after applying for A.F. Blakemore's 2015 Graduate Scheme

Meet the Graduates

Ashley Howell

Project Support Officer, IT



What attracted you to apply to work for A.F. Blakemore?

The first thing that attracted me to A.F. Blakemore honestly was the opportunity to pursue a career in project management, but after researching the company and looking at what it did as an organisation and what it stood for, I realised that this was a company that fitted my own morals and views and I felt like it was a place I could grow.

What does your role entail?

As my role is a new position within the company, I would say that what it entails will keep evolving. A standard description would be "Provides the support function to IT strategic projects", but so far I have not only been doing the documentation and organisational side of projects, but I have also been given the opportunity to actually project manage certain aspects.

Since joining I have been managing the move of the IT department to its new building, working with KPMG on a project looking at supplier payment terms, and have just started kicking off the CRM (customer relationship management) project, which I will be facilitating and partially managing.

What is your favourite thing about A.F. Blakemore and your job?

I think I would say that my favourite thing about A.F. Blakemore so far is the people. I have found everyone so accommodating and always ready to help. In terms of the actual job, I think my favourite thing is the fact that I am constantly challenged and that no two days are ever the same.

Location: Willenhall Head Office
Degree: Computer Games Design
University: University of Bolton

Asif Mohammed

Pricing & Promotional Analyst, Blakemore Trade Partners



What attracted you to apply to work for A.F. Blakemore?

I wanted to work for a big business with lots of opportunities and an organisation that cares about people. I was fascinated by the fact that A.F. Blakemore has grown dramatically and is now one of the largest family-owned private companies in the UK. A.F. Blakemore's graduate programme stood out for me; I was impressed by the training and support provided as well as the opportunity, upon completion of the graduate programme, to be placed in a fundamental role matching with the skills, knowledge and experience I will have gained.

What does your role entail?

My role is a brand new role where I will be analysing the pricing and promotions strategies for Blakemore Trade Partners, which supports the independent SPAR estate of A.F. Blakemore. My role will be to work with the commercial traders, analysing performance and data to build plans for the team to improve in terms of competitiveness and drive margin forward.

During my first four weeks, I went on a comprehensive company induction visiting different sites across all of A.F. Blakemore's divisions. I was also involved in a two-day Project Management training session, which provided an insight into a new approach to project leadership across the company.

What is your favourite thing about A.F. Blakemore and your job?

At A.F. Blakemore you are surrounded by specialists who are experts in their field, which means that you can learn about different issues within the industry or areas of the business from the best in their respective area of work. My favourite thing about my job is the opportunity to work with a broad mix of contacts, enabling me to learn and receive support that has really helped me settle in well.

Location: Apex II, Great Bridge
Degree: Accounting & Finance
University: Birmingham City University

Anthony Edwards

Contract Income Administrator, Blakemore Foodservice



What attracted you to apply to work for A.F. Blakemore?

A.F. Blakemore is a massively successful family-run company that has its roots firmly established in a community local to where I have lived my entire life. The A.F. Blakemore Graduate Scheme presented me with the opportunity to begin my career within a winning organisation that values its employees and has a clear strategy in place to further develop in the long term. It is a company that I am now proud to be a part of and eager to assist by making a contribution to its future successes.

What does your role entail?

My role is a completely new role within Blakemore Foodservice, but one that is exciting, and I expect it to continually evolve over the duration of the two-year graduate scheme. A core part of my role has been maintaining the database I'll be running reports from. Data analysis is a significant part of the role, and being able to identify trends and anomalies in reports will be pivotal.

As well as learning about the various aspects of my own role, during my four-week induction I spent time becoming acquainted with different individuals to gain an understanding of their roles within the business. A day was also spent at an education catering exhibition in Birmingham, during which I was able to witness some of the strong relationships that A.F. Blakemore has established with a number of well-known suppliers.

What is your favourite thing about A.F. Blakemore and your job?

My favourite thing so far about A.F. Blakemore is the people that work within it. Every person I've encountered has been welcoming and assistive in making me feel at home here, despite any nerves I may have had prior to starting. Therefore, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all those that have assisted in making me feel welcome since I started my role at A.F. Blakemore.

Location: Blakemore Foodservice, Darlaston
Degree: Computing Science
University: Staffordshire University

Blakemore Foundation Celebrates Record Year



Match Fund Donations...

The Blakemore Foundation had yet another record-breaking year in 2015/16, donating £236,263 to local good causes.

The £236,263, which was awarded via 3,668 in-kind and monetary donations, is estimated to have leveraged a further £448,993 for its beneficiaries.

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.

You can also now apply for support from the Blakemore Foundation online; simply fill in one of the Blakemore Foundation application forms in the Our Community section of A.F. Blakemore's website.

Take a look at some of the great causes recently supported by A.F. Blakemore colleagues and the Blakemore Foundation:



£236,263
donated to good causes in 2015/16



3,668
donations awarded to good causes in 2015/16



Blakemore Wholesale's Swansea Cash & Carry raised £370 for Oxfam at its Chinese New Year celebrations.



Tom Williams from SPAR Bethesda cycled 193 miles from Bethesda to Cardiff over the course of two days to raise £735 for the NSPCC and £2,270 for Hospice at Home.



SPAR St Fagans held a series of fundraising events and supported a memorial walk that raised circa £5,000 for 2Wishuponastar and the Sudden Unexplained Death in Childhood charity.



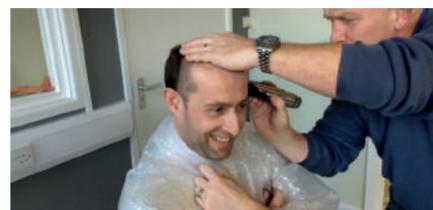
A team from Blakemore Foodservice's James Bridge depot climbed Mount Snowdon to raise more than £2,500 for Guide Dogs for the Blind and Cancer Research UK.



Blakemore Wholesale's Trading team raised more than £800 for homeless charity St Basil's by holding a sleep out in Wolverhampton.



Shannon Brindle from Credit Control braved a sponsored haircut for the Little Princess Trust, which provides wigs and hair pieces for children who suffer from hair loss.



Blakemore Creative Print organised a sponsored haircut, dress-down day and raffle that raised almost £400 for Children in Need.



Cy Wisenden from Blakemore Trade Partners raised almost £2,000 for two charities, 2 Wish Upon a Star and BLISS, by taking on two cycling challenges.



Iestyn Rhodes from Blakemore Trade Partners raised almost £400 for Scope by completing the London Marathon.

Standard Donations...



Ian Holyhead from Management Accounts awarded a donation to Wyrley Tigers Football Club to help fund new kit for their Under 8s team.



SPAR Chepstow donated funds to help Cromwell Youth Football Club purchase new kit.



SPAR Llangollen donated funds to the Llangollen Male Voice Choir.



SPAR Dolgellau store and post office donated funds towards new equipment for Cader Idris Gymnastics Club.



SPAR Beddau made a donation to Bryn Celynnog Comprehensive School's car building project to help them compete in the Penarth Downhill Derby.



Foodservice James Bridge donated funds to Charlee's Angels Cheerleading Group.

In Kind Donations...



SPAR Bannerbrook provided healthy sandwiches, drinks and snacks for the Firefighter Rangers' Woodlands football tournament.



SPAR Gresford provided a voucher prize for the Gresford & Marford Scarecrow Trail.



SPAR Gwersyllt donated a bundle of Easter eggs to St Anne's After School Club.



Dolgellau Post Office donated seasonal treats to Dolgellau Community Hospital.



SPAR Abbots Langley donated bottled water to their village's annual Tough Ten Races.



SPAR Gorseinon donated long-life carrier bags to Swansea Foodbank.



SPAR Wollaston donated toiletries to support refugee work at St Chad's Sanctuary.



Newport Cash & Carry donated refreshments to the Great Gwent Poppy Run.



Wolverhampton Cash & Carry donated non-perishable foods to Essington Food Bank.

Eat 17 Opens Third Store in Whitstable

Award-winning retail and restaurant business Eat 17 has opened a new SPAR store in the Kent seaside town of Whitstable.

The new store represents the latest chapter in the highly successful partnership between A.F. Blakemore & Son and entrepreneurs James Brundle and Chris O'Connor, who have been behind the award-winning Walthamstow and Hackney SPAR and Eat 17 restaurant sites.

The Whitstable SPAR, which is a former My Local store, stocks an extensive range of everyday essentials, including SPAR brand products, as well as 1,800 local and regional lines.



Eat 17 co-owner James Brundle commented: "We are really excited to have acquired this site. Whitstable is a great fit for our brand – the perfect mix of tradition and trendiness."

"Working in partnership with Blakemore Trade Partners has been hugely beneficial in getting us across the line with the development of this site. We are also delighted to be able to keep all eleven staff and will be looking to recruit more."

In addition to hundreds of locally sourced lines and handpicked products from around the world, the store's offering includes Eat 17's renowned homemade ready meals and Bacon Jam, fresh sandwiches made in-store, artisan bread from a local bakery and wine and prosecco taps from which customers can fill empty wine bottles.

The store is set to launch a brand new ice cream parlour serving unique flavours of ice cream, all made onsite using locally sourced ingredients.



Co-founders of Eat 17, Chris O'Connor (left) & James Brundle (right)

A.F. Blakemore Commercial Director Caoire Blakemore said: "We are delighted to open this new store in Whitstable."

"The SPAR and Eat 17 brands have proven to work successfully and flawlessly alongside each other since the concept first launched in 2010. The business has moved onto the next stage and we are very excited about the future."

Triple Success for A.F. Blakemore's Responsible Business Programmes



A.F. Blakemore colleagues collect the certificates of reaccreditation at the Responsible Business Awards



Three of A.F. Blakemore's responsible business programmes were reaccredited with a Big Tick for a second year running at Business in the Community's Responsible Business Awards in June.

Blakemore Fine Foods' Producer Growth Scheme, Blakemore Logistics' Sustainability Programme and A.F. Blakemore's Education Matters Programme were all successfully reaccredited with a Big Tick in the Enterprise Growth, Sustainable Products and Services, and Education categories respectively.

The 2016 Responsible Business Awards, which took place at the Botanical Gardens in Birmingham, celebrated

businesses that are making a significant difference by taking action to improve their local communities, create more inclusive workplaces and tackle environmental challenges.

Blakemore Fine Foods, which was recognised as a national winner at the 2014 Responsible Business Awards, received accreditation for the work it has undertaken to support food and drink producers by giving them a cost-effective means to reach retailers through A.F. Blakemore's logistics infrastructure.

The Blakemore Logistics Sustainability Programme was recognised for the work undertaken to reduce the environmental impact of both its distribution operation and the retail estate it serves.

Between 2010/11 and 2014/15 the division saw an 11.46% reduction in CO₂ emissions and a 12.19% reduction in energy usage.

Finally, A.F. Blakemore's Education Matters Programme was reaccredited with a Big Tick in acknowledgement of its commitment to supporting schools within its trading area.

Since the programme began in 2008, A.F. Blakemore has supported more than 61,000 students across more than 260 schools.

Business in the Community Chief Executive Stephen Howard said: "We know that every day businesses contribute towards more resilient communities, stimulate local economies, help to create skilled and healthy workforces and tackle environmental challenges."

"The companies recognised in the Responsible Business Awards represent the very best of business. Celebrating their stories helps to raise awareness of business as a powerful force for good."



Students Explore Blakemore Design & Shopfitting

Blakemore Design & Shopfitting hosted a study tour for students from a local academy in the West Midlands in June.

The open-door visit was attended by Year 11 students from Ormiston Sheffield Community Academy who had expressed prior interest in pursuing a career in design or construction.

Students were given a behind-the-scenes tour of Blakemore Design & Shopfitting's offices, where they were given the opportunity to hear about the latest developments in computer-aided design technology and understand the design process from start to finish.

In addition, the students took part in a competition where they had to work in teams to design the layout of a convenience store.

Finally, they took a tour around the joinery workshop to see Blakemore Design & Shopfitting's computer numerical control machine in action.

If you would like to organise a study tour within your area or get involved with A.F. Blakemore's volunteering programme, please contact Community Affairs Officer **Liz Bell** (lbell@afblakemore.co.uk / **0121 568 2910**).



Students explore Blakemore Design & Shopfitting's offices and joinery workshop

Blakemore's Celebrates ILM Success

Successful candidates from A.F. Blakemore's ILM Level 3 Certificate in Leadership & Management programme have now been presented with their certificates.

The purpose of the Level 3 programme is to equip managers with a range of leadership skills to enable them to attain excellence through managing performance and leading change in the business.

The programme also further embeds the principles of Leading the Blakemore Way and project leadership, with delegates completing a work-based change project as part of their assessment.

John Dolman (BTP Development Manager), Mike Davies (IT Applications Development Team Leader), Ben Horgan (Chilled Foods Shift Supervisor), Jonathan Johns (IT Training Manager), Alistair MacMenigall (BTP Merchandising Team Leader), Adam Wassell (Ambient Shift Supervisor), Caroline Wills (Retail Operations Support & Marketing Co-ordinator) and Rebecca Howe (BTP Trading Assistant) have now all received their certificates for the programme which took place in 2015/16.



Some of the successful candidates from the recent ILM Level 3 programme in Leadership & Management are presented with their certificates by Tom Blakemore. From left: Caroline Wills, Alistair MacMenigall, Ben Horgan, John Dolman and Jonathan Johns

A.F. Blakemore Learning & Development Officer David Cartwright commended all the delegates who completed the course and the commitment that they demonstrated to achieve their qualifications.

David said: "The ILM Level 3 programme consists of a rigorous assessment that the delegates have

successfully completed in addition to introducing a series of work-based improvement projects.

"It is great to witness this cohort grow and develop during the programme and I look forward to seeing how they will use their new-found skills as they continue to build successful careers within A.F. Blakemore."

ILM Level 2 Delegates Await Results

A total of 10 delegates from across Blakemore Logistics and Technical Services are now awaiting their results from the ILM Level 2 course in Leadership & Team Skills that began in February 2016.

Kes Abbas, Chloe Ball and Liam Horgan from Access 10; Ricky Hunt, Loukas Nicolaou and David Philpott from Hastings; Gavin James and Ryan Ware from Talbot Green; and Donna Nutting and Tracy Owen from Blakemore Technical Services completed their final modules in July, with the deadline for their final submissions due at the end of September.

The course is ideal for practising team leaders, helping them become more effective and confident in their role. Following an induction, the programme is based upon four core modules linked to the Blakemore Way values of great customer service, maximising staff potential, honesty & integrity and attaining excellence, in addition to running a community volunteering event.

A fresh cohort of ILM Level 2 delegates is due to commence a new programme in November 2016, and another course is anticipated to be launched in 2017.



New Online Payroll Giving Platform



A.F. Blakemore has launched an online platform to make it as easy as possible for employees to sign up to Payroll Giving.

Donations can be made to any local or national charity, or recognised good cause, such as places of worship, schools and scout groups.

Once authorised, A.F. Blakemore's Payroll department deducts regular charitable donations from your pay and distributes them to your charity of choice via the Charities Trust.

Corporate Affairs Officer Clare Knowles commented: "Not only is Payroll Giving simple, but it is also tax effective as the donation is deducted before you pay the taxman. For example, if you donate £5, only £4 comes out of your salary and the taxman pays the rest."

If you would like to register online, please go to www.afblakemore.givingonline.org.uk.



Donations can be made to any local or national charity, or recognised good cause

Foodservice Darlaston Depot Raises £6,000 for Charities of the Year

Colleagues handed over a £3,000 cheque to Guide Dogs for the Blind in April and a £3,000 cheque to Cancer Research in May.

As well as cake sales, raffles and dress-up days, several staff members braved challenges beyond the workplace in aid of the good causes.

Hilary Hollington took on the Manchester Marathon in March, and eleven depot employees climbed Mount Snowdon in September.

The team of Snowdon walkers raised £2,500 for the two charities, with the

Blakemore Foundation contributing a £1,250 match-fund donation.

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."



Guide Dogs for the Blind collect a £3,000 cheque



Colleagues hand over £3,000 to Cancer Research UK



The Blakemore Foodservice team at the top of Mount Snowdon

SPAR and Wholesale Golf Days Swing into Action



This summer keen golfers from across A.F. Blakemore's wholesale and retail estates were invited to attend two golf days hosted by the company.

In June Blakemore Wholesale laid on its annual Charity Golf Day at The Carden Park Hotel, Golf Resort and Spa near Chester.

A total of 180 Blakemore colleagues and suppliers attended the event, with 100 golfers competing in the golf tournament. The Blakemore Foodservice team won the trophy.

All guests enjoyed a charity gala dinner, which included a raffle and evening entertainment from comedian Rod Woodward.

The golf day raised £10,000, which will be donated to charities and local good causes via the Blakemore Foundation.

Community Affairs Officer Kate Senter commented: "This is an incredible amount of money that will go a long way towards helping local good causes across A.F. Blakemore's trading area.

"The £10,000 raised will enable the Blakemore Foundation to support an estimated 150 charities and organisations nominated by colleagues and the communities served by the business.

"Thank you to everyone who organised, sponsored and attended the event. Without your help raising this much money wouldn't have been possible."

Following on from this event, in July 355 SPAR retailers, Blakemore colleagues and suppliers attended the annual Meridian & Welsh Guild Golf & Leisure Day at the Belfry Hotel & Resort in Sutton Coldfield.

The day offered a range of golf and leisure activities for golfers and non-golfers alike. In addition to the golf tournament, families could take advantage of a trip to Drayton Manor Theme Park or spa treatments at the hotel venue.

The evening gala dinner was followed by a raffle in aid of the NSPCC and the Blakemore Foundation, with the £1,170 raised being split between the two good causes.

The Meridian & Welsh Guild Golf & Leisure Day has grown in popularity year on year, with the 2016 event being the biggest to date.

This year's golf tournament was won by Stephen Bradley, who was a guest of Guild Board Director Richard Barron.



Mark Evans from the Blakemore Foodservice winning team collects the winner's trophy at Blakemore Wholesale's Golf Day



Stephen Bradley is awarded the winner's trophy at the Meridian & Welsh Guild Golf & Leisure Day



Ami Sandhu
Marketing Manager,
Blakemore Wholesale

What does your job involve?
Running the daily marketing function within the Wholesale division

What is your idea of a perfect day?
Enjoying afternoon tea at the Savoy with friends

Where is your favourite place?
Rome in Italy – I love the architecture that surrounds this beautiful city

If you won a lot of money, what would you do with it?
Go on a world cruise or build a school for children in a third-world country where education is not freely available

In the Spotlight

Which three people would you invite to your dream dinner party?
David Beckham, Emma Watson and Michael Jackson (if he was still with us). Nigella Lawson if I cannot have MJ

What is your favourite book?
I have so many, but one of the recent ones I have read and really enjoyed has been After the Crash by Michael Bussi

Who is your favourite star of film or TV?
Leonardo DiCaprio and Keanu Reeves – they are not only great actors but genuine people who do a lot for others

What is your favourite song?
Ohh I have so many, but I love...Wind beneath My Wings by Bette Midler

Who makes you laugh?
My younger brother – he is a comedian in the making

If you could be born in any year, which one would you choose?
1930 – I love the style from this era

What is the best thing you have ever achieved?
Having a brand identity I created put on billboards, cars and buildings

Which superpower would you like to have and why?
The power to heal, which would enable me to help those in pain

What is your biggest regret to date?
Not asking for Juan Mata's number when I met him

When you were younger, what did you want to be when you grew up?
A doctor – I got my first doctors set at the age of four, but when I had to dissect a frog I fainted and quickly realised that I did not have the heart for this career

What three words best describe you?
Creative, bubbly and honest

What three words best describe how you would like to be?
Taller, greener and healthier

Future Sports Stars Battle It Out at Blakemore Logistics Junior Football Competition



Children from schools across the West Midlands show off their football skills at the Blakemore Logistics Junior Football Competition

As the Euros played out in France, football fever descended on the Black Country this summer for the Blakemore Logistics Junior Football Competition.

More than 50 primary school children from across the West Midlands congregated at the Goals Soccer Centre in Darlaston on July 13th to take part in the annual tournament.

Eight teams from four schools across Walsall and Wolverhampton battled it out in a series of football fixtures for the Blakemore trophy. The children were also invited to participate in football training and sports activities between games, including inflatable sumo wrestling.

Seventeen volunteers from Blakemore Logistics organised the event, refereed the competition and were on hand to provide cold drinks and snacks throughout the day.

The grand final saw two teams from Radleys Primary School in Walsall compete against each other. The winning team was awarded a trophy, whilst all tournament competitors were awarded a participation medal.

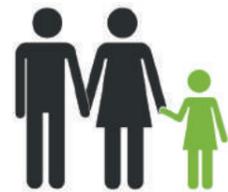
A.F. Blakemore has hosted an inter-school five-a-side football competition for children in the West Midlands every year since 2002 as part of its award-winning education programme.

Community Affairs Officer Liz Bell commented: "The junior football competition was once again a really enjoyable event, and we are delighted that so many local schools came along to support it.

"Thank you to all of the volunteers from Blakemore Logistics who made the day such a success.

"A special mention should go to Access 10 Team Leader Chloe Ball, who did a fantastic job of leading the event."

Find Out More about blakemore benefits



Did you know that you can find out more about A.F. Blakemore's benefits package online?

The company has set up a range of benefits for employees across the A.F. Blakemore Group to acknowledge and reward your contribution to the business.

To find out more, please visit the Blakemore Benefits page on the Staff Zone area of A.F. Blakemore's website at www.afblakemore.com/staff-zone/blakemore-benefits.

Employee benefits include a company pension scheme, life insurance, health cash plan, childcare voucher scheme, Cycle to Work scheme, long service awards, discounts in Blakemore Retail stores, employee volunteering opportunities and more.

 Company Pension Scheme	 Life Cover	 Health Cash Plan	 Childcare Voucher Scheme	 Company Paternity Pay
 Staff Discount (Blakemore Retail SPAR stores)	 Cycle to Work Scheme	 Long Service Awards	 Retirement Gifts	
 Community Volunteering	 Blakemore Foundation	 Payroll Giving	 Retail Trust	

blakemore retail rewards

Blakemore Retail colleagues have their own dedicated benefits package, Blakemore Retail Rewards.

To find out more, please visit the Retail Rewards page on the Staff Zone area of A.F. Blakemore's website at www.afblakemore.com/staff-zone/blakemore-retail-rewards.

 Staff Discount (Blakemore Retail SPAR stores)	 Company Pension Scheme	 Life Cover	 Health Cash Plan	 Childcare Voucher Scheme	 Company Paternity Pay	 Cycle to Work Scheme
 Long Service Awards	 Retirement Gifts	 Staff Lottery	 Community Volunteering	 Blakemore Foundation	 Payroll Giving	 Retail Trust

Free, Confidential Services to Support Your Wellbeing

A.F. Blakemore has partnered with the Retail Trust, the leading charity for all involved in retail, to provide valuable support services to employees.

Services are available to all colleagues across the Blakemore Group, whether you work in retail or associated areas such as sales, wholesale, distribution, shop fitting or finance.

From financial planning to stress management, health advice and career development, Retail Hub services can help you to be healthier and happier.

Free, confidential wellbeing services for all involved in retail

- Advice and Information
- Support for Managers
- Emotional Support
- Financial Planning and Support
- Legal Support
- Health and Wellbeing Advice



Contact the Retail Hub

You can get in touch with the Retail Hub via their freephone helpline on 0808 801 0808.

Experienced advisors are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Alternatively, you can email helpline@retailtrust.org.uk or find out more at www.retailtrust.org.uk/products/retailhub.

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. Neil Mercer,
Blakemore Trade Partners 3 years | 6. Dave Hadfield,
Blakemore Wholesale 20 years | 11. Trevor Fisher,
Blakemore Foodservice 25 years |
| 2. John Bowman,
Blakemore Trade Partners 10 years | 7. Sue Tester,
Blakemore Logistics 20 years | 12. Viv Belcher,
Blakemore Wholesale 25 years |
| 3. Martyn Barrett,
Blakemore Wholesale 10 years | 8. Julie John,
Blakemore Trade Partners 25 years | 13. Robert Lindlay,
Blakemore Wholesale 40 years |
| 4. Quinton Price,
Blakemore Wholesale 10 years | 9. Dot Davies,
Blakemore Wholesale 25 years | |
| 5. Chris Bradley and Luke Hamill,
Blakemore Wholesale 10 years | 10. Marylyn Lancaster,
Blakemore Wholesale 25 years | |



Andy Hargreaves
Compliance Manager,
Blakemore Logistics

What does your job involve?
As Compliance Manager I try to ensure that our warehouses meet the statutory legal requirements – this includes all aspects of training and health and safety – a very varied job which keeps me busy

What is your idea of a perfect day?
Any day that starts with a full English breakfast (including a fried slice if my wife isn't looking!!!)

Where is your favourite place?
Yorkshire – born and bred!

If you won a lot of money, what would you do with it?
I certainly wouldn't tell the wife – she has enough shoes already

Which three people would you invite to your dream dinner party?
My mum, brother and sister – we don't spend as much time together as we should as a family – I really should make more of

In the Spotlight

an effort to see my family but everyone seems busy and we all live in different parts of the UK. Time just seems to pass by without seeing them

What is your favourite book?
I only possess four books, all of which are the A-Z of Birmingham – despite having a sat nav in my car (which I can't work out). This book will get you to virtually all the places you need to go – a highly recommended read

Who is your favourite star of film or TV?
Michael Caine has done some quality films (and a few rubbish ones) – I do rate him as being up there with the best

What is your favourite song?
Anything by The Smiths – although I do enjoy a good Christmas carol

Who makes you laugh?
Del Boy from Only Fools and Horses – no matter how often I watch the programme it still makes me laugh

If you could be born in any year, which one would you choose?
I am happy with the year I was born in – we grew up without computers, TVs and games consoles, and I think the quality of life in the 60s and 70s for kids was so much better than today

What is the best thing you have ever achieved?
I passed my driving test within two days

of learning to drive. However, a few years later I was advised by the law that my licence was invalid so I had to resit my test!

Which superpower would you like to have and why?
Being invisible would be fun – imagine what you could get away with

What is your most vivid childhood memory?
My mum putting me on the local bus with a 'for sale' sign hanging around my neck – I have never forgiven my mum for this and often tell her she would be locked up if she did it today – must have been really naughty that day!!!

What is your biggest regret to date?
Not learning to cook – I am useless if it doesn't come in a tin

When you were younger, what did you want to be when you grew up?
I wanted to be a pilot. I didn't study that hard at school so I failed the test – I joined the RAF when I was 16 but didn't get my 'Wings'

What three words best describe you?
Punctual, reliable and blunt

What three words best describe how you would like to be?
Handsome, sophisticated and young

Blakemore Wholesale Fun Days Raise Hundreds for Good Causes

Blakemore Wholesale colleagues raised £1,212 for good causes in the summer by hosting two depot fun days.

In May colleagues from Wolverhampton Cash & Carry and Blakemore Wholesale's Trading department joined forces to host a jam-packed day of fundraising in aid of the Guide Dogs for the Blind.

The fun day, which involved a tombola, bucking Shaun the Sheep, barbecued food, a charity car wash and customer giveaways, raised £688.

Then, in July, Barnsley Cash & Carry held a depot fun day that raised £524 for Bluebell Wood Children's Hospice.

The depot organised customer refreshments, one-off deals and live music as well as fundraising activities that included an in-store cycle and wet sponge throwing game.

Barnsley Cash & Carry General Manager David Hadfield commented: "We had a fantastic day! I would like to thank everyone who helped me to organise it. It's fair to say that staff morale was boosted too."



Live music gets underway at Barnsley



Bucking Shaun the Sheep in action at Wolverhampton

Celebrations

Colleagues across A.F. Blakemore have celebrated 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 **Ben Horgan** from Blakemore Logistics on the birth of his son Charlie, born on November 14th.

Charlie 



Congratulations to **Donna Cooper** from Blakemore Retail on the birth of her daughter Bella, born on November 19th.

Bella 

Marriages



Congratulations to **Emma Knowles**, from Blakemore Logistics, who got married in May.



Congratulations to **Rebecca and Ryan Howe** from Blakemore Trade Partners and Finance, who tied the knot in May.

Leavers



Colleagues from across A.F. Blakemore gathered in February to bid farewell to **Steph Bonnar** from Blakemore Trade Partners and thank her for 10 years of dedicated service to the company.

Good luck Steph!

Retirements



Happy retirement to **Lyn Noon**, who retired from Blakemore Foodservice in January after 15 years.



Best wishes to **Gail Passey**, who retired from Management Services after seven years.



Happy Retirement Jean Jones

Colleagues from across Blakemore Wholesale and the wider A.F. Blakemore Group joined together to bid farewell to Jean Jones in January.

Jean retired from the company after 40 years of loyal service, which saw her play a vital role in the implementation of operational IT systems across the cash & carry estate and beyond.

At an emotional retirement presentation, colleagues from across the length and breadth of the country passed on their best wishes.

A.F. Blakemore Managing Director Peter Blakemore, Group Wholesale Managing Director Sam Wilcox and close colleague Rachel Waldron all spoke about Jean's commitment to the company and the huge impact that she has had upon the Blakemore success story.

We contacted Jean and invited her to reflect upon her 40 years with the company.

Tell us about your early years with the company:

I was initially taken on as a temporary member of staff in 1968, where I worked on wines & spirits in the depot for Frank Blakemore. Tony Salisbury then offered me a part-time job at Walsall Cash & Carry and I eventually left the company in 1975 to have my daughter Samantha.

I came back full-time in 1982 where I worked in admin and at the cashpoint at Bloxwich Lane. Shortly afterwards an outside company was brought in to develop IT systems for the depot and I was brought in to help map this out and ensure that it was fit for purpose.

From there on in my focus in the business has been centred upon IT and how we scope, develop and train operational IT systems across our depots.

What are some of the key IT projects that you have been involved with?

While I've predominantly worked across the cash & carry division I've worked in all areas of the business. I helped introduce the depot bulk storage system, worked in the setup of Apex II, supported Andy Grinsell on the Foodservice systems and have introduced the operational IT system to 12 of the 14 Blakemore cash & carry depots. I also managed the SPAR Helpdesk when John Giles was a director here.



What would you say is your biggest achievement at A.F. Blakemore?

I think that the project that has had the biggest impact is probably the in-house, paperless picking system that was introduced to SPAR at the turn of the millennium. This was the first time that anything like this was implemented at Blakemore's and the system is still being used today.

What have you most enjoyed about working for the company?

I can honestly say that I've loved my job and I've never once woken up in the morning and dreaded coming into work. If anything my problem has been spending too much time at work and not knowing when to go home.

With that said, I think that the best thing about A.F. Blakemore is the loyalty shown by Peter and the Blakemore family over the years. It is very rare to see that level of commitment from businesses nowadays and having worked with Frank and Peter during my time here, I always found them approachable and interested in what people have to say.

What advice would you give to people who want to develop their careers with A.F. Blakemore today?

When I started working here we were a small company and things have changed a lot as the business has grown. For me one of the major reasons for the company's success is the hard work and commitment demonstrated by the people who have worked here.

I still believe that anyone who wants to get on can get on in Blakemore's. If people are willing to work and wait for their opportunities then they will come.

How do you see the future of A.F. Blakemore?

The trading conditions have been difficult for a number of years now but people will always want to eat food, and if the business continues to adapt and change then the company's success will likewise continue. I think that delivered wholesaling is vital and will be an important part of the future direction of the company.

What does retirement hold for you?

I am absolutely loving my retirement and am enjoying spending time with my family. I am married to David, have two daughters, Samantha and Stephanie, and five grandchildren, who I love to see.

I am also seeing much more of my sister, who I didn't see much of before but am now seeing four times a week. We both do circuit training and pilates and while I am new to all this, I am really enjoying myself.

“I can honestly say that I've loved my job and I've never once woken up in the morning and dreaded coming into work.”

Judith Bids Farewell after 37 Years



Group Fleet Manager Judith Penko took early retirement in spring after 37 years' loyal service to A.F. Blakemore.

A farewell luncheon, attended by 16 of Judith's closest colleagues, took place in March to celebrate a long and successful career with the company.

Judith, however, will continue to support the business from home, where she will maintain responsibility for purchasing vehicles for company car drivers.

Chief Financial Officer and Company Secretary Simon Loveland said: "Judith has worked in a variety of roles during her career, predominantly in the fleet department, where she has earned a reputation for purchasing cars at heavily discounted prices and being available 24/7, offering a truly personalised service for the benefit of all company car drivers.

"A.F. Blakemore will certainly miss her professional and diligent approach to fleet matters and we all wish her a long and happy retirement."

We spoke to Judith about her 37-year career with A.F. Blakemore:

What roles have you undertaken during your career with the company?

I started with the company 37 years ago as General Office Junior before

being employed as a Receptionist. From there I moved to Development Administrator and then Development Administration Manager, where I took on the responsibility of a vehicle fleet of approximately 30 cars back in 1986.

Since then I have worked as Property Administration Manager and Administration Manager for Logistics whilst maintaining my responsibilities for the fleet.

Following the acquisition of Capper & Co, I moved to the Finance department as Group Fleet Manager with responsibility for 370 cars and small vans and retaining the management of fleet insurance for HGVs and cars. Cars were always my thing and something that I adore so my job was never a chore.

What are your happiest memories at A.F. Blakemore?

This is a really difficult question as during the past 37 years I have had so many. I would say that my happiest memories involve the great friends and colleagues that I have made and will never forget.

I hope that I will always keep in contact with people like Mark Titley and Jody Alanthwaite, Kate Deakin, Diane Terry, Andy Grinsell, Tina Perks, and last but not least Geoff Hallam, who I used to share an office with years ago and who used to torment me terribly (he still does!).

Geoff gave me the nickname Penks! My friends at A.F. Blakemore have given me so much support over the past 12 months when I have needed it.

What have you most liked about working for the company?

A.F. Blakemore has allowed me to grow and to voice my opinion, which I have on many occasions. I did straight talking before Leading the Blakemore Way but this has always been for the good of the company.

I believe that it is important to listen to the people who do jobs on a daily basis and allow them to have an input on any workplace changes that are required. I

have always asked colleagues within the teams that I have managed whether they know of a better way of doing things, and if there is, we will look to change it.

What advice would you give to people who want to develop their careers within A.F. Blakemore today?

I have supported two young apprentices over the past 12 months, Amy Hunt and Nick Kelly, and although it can be time consuming this has also been an extremely rewarding experience.

I feel very proud of what I have achieved with them and hope they go on to greater things, as I did.

My advice to people wanting to develop their careers with A.F. Blakemore is to stay open minded and take every opportunity that is offered to you. Who knows where it will take you?

How do you see the future of the company?

I love this company like it were my own and I hope and pray that A.F. Blakemore goes on forever and that everyone gives a great company a great deal of support to achieve its goals. We all have to want it to work for it to work.

What does retirement hold for you?

Retirement for me will be caring for my dearly loved and amazing parents, who I owe so much and are the main reason for my decision to leave. I also hope to have more time to spend with my husband Jon, who has helped me so much to continue working whilst looking after Mom and Dad. I do not know what I would have done without him.

And I will still be purchasing cars for the company for as long as Peter and A.F. Blakemore need me. So I will have lots to keep me busy. I still have a lot of great deals on cars in me yet!

“My advice to people wanting to develop their careers with A.F. Blakemore is to stay open minded and take every opportunity that is offered to you.”

Competition Corner



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

Spot the Difference

Take a look at the two photographs of students from Ormiston Shelfield Community Academy taking part in a team challenge on a study tour of Blakemore Design & Shopfitting (featured on page 30). **Can you spot the five changes we have made to Photo 2?**

Photo 1



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



Congratulations

Congratulations to Marketing Assistant Serina Mehta, from Blakemore Foodservice, who won the Spot the Difference competition featured in the last Blakemore Way newspaper.

Serina won a **£20** gift voucher



Keep Up To Date with the Latest News

Follow the latest news from across A.F. Blakemore by checking the company website and signing up to the monthly staff e-newsletter

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, learning & development opportunities, company policies, health & wellbeing tips and a monthly message from Peter Blakemore.

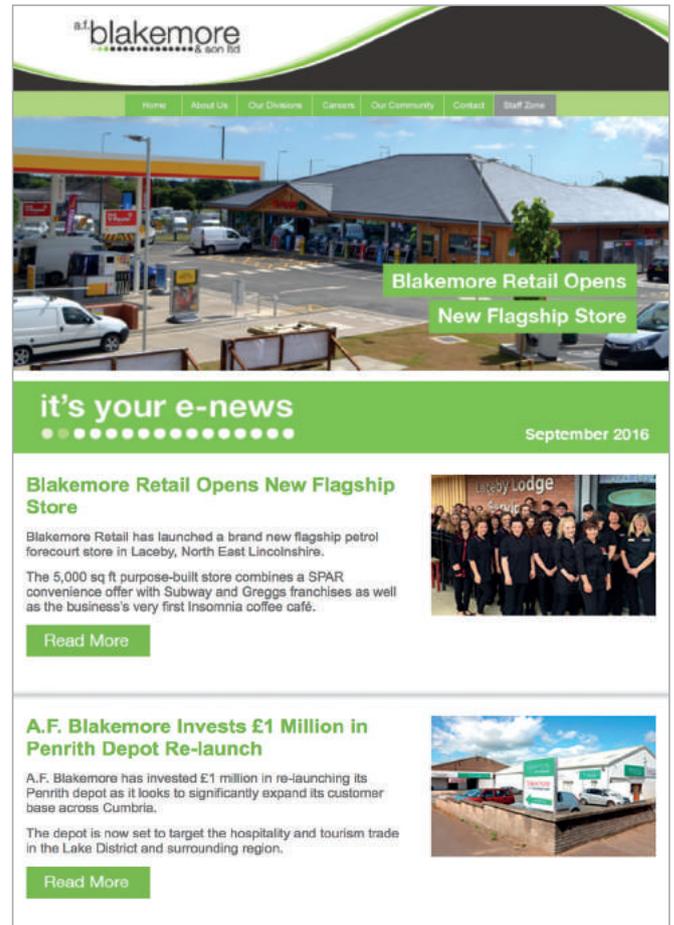


e-newsletter

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

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

The e-newsletter provides an overview of recent news from across the company. A monthly Blakemore News email is sent out to all company email addresses but can also be distributed to personal email addresses.



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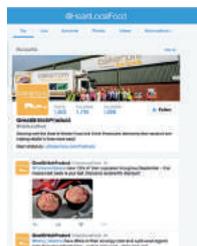
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For more information on the Staff Zone or e-newsletter, please contact A.F. Blakemore Communications Officer Rachel Adams (radams@afblakemore.com / 0121 568 2908)