



blakemore retail blakemore trade partners blakemore logistics blakemore design & shopping blakemore creative print blakemore property blakemore wholesale blakemore wholesale distribution blakemore foodservice blakemore fresh foods blakemore fine foods

Blakemore Trade Partners Takes a Fresh Look

Blakemore Trade Partners Managing Director Jerry Marwood called upon delegates to take a fresh look at the potential of the convenience sector and the numerous ways that his division can help retailers succeed in the marketplace.

Jerry highlighted the strong position of the UK convenience sector, explaining that by 2020 it is expected to be worth more than £44bn. He said: "With the convenience sector growing and experiencing the biggest cash growth in the grocery market, this is a fantastic place to be."



Jerry Marwood

Jerry then presented some of the initiatives that Blakemore Trade Partners is embarking on in response to the growing demands of retailers, including the development of a customer relationship management system and new digital business-to-business strategy.

He explained that the business has invested £1.5 million in its Retail Partners Scheme for 2015/16 to help retailers improve their margins. This is in addition to £2 million that has been set aside to co-invest with retailers in store development.

Looking forward, Jerry described plans for Blakemore Trade Partners to develop a much closer working relationship with Blakemore Fine Foods in order to make it easier for SPAR retailers to introduce 'Best of British' products into their stores.

He also highlighted ambitions for A.F. Blakemore to continue to develop its expertise in the food service sector, citing the company's new joint venture with the entrepreneurial convenience and restaurant business EAT 17 and aspirations to develop up to 10 new stores with them over the course of the next five years.

Store Recruitment on the Up

Jerry Marwood then welcomed to the stage Blakemore Trade Partners Development Director Louis Drake, who celebrated the division's recent success with retailer recruitment and store development.

Blakemore Trade Partners is on track to secure its second consecutive year of net store growth in 2015/16, with 120 new stores forecasted to have joined its estate by the end of the financial year.



Louis Drake

This projection for 2015/16 is a significant increase on 2014/15, when the division welcomed 89 new stores to its estate,

and more than double the 55 new sites recruited three years ago in 2012/13.

By the end of 2015/16 the last two years' success with recruiting new retailers and developing existing partnerships will have generated incremental sales of circa £76m for the business.

Louis said: "Our strategy is to recruit more great retailers and stores by providing retail solutions that customers want and need, which in turn will help increase our turnover, profit and market share.

"At the same time we are constantly developing great stores across our estate to ensure that we retain existing business. Our focus is on supplying products and services which consumers want in order to encourage more footfall, basket spend and profit, and ultimately achieve happier retailers who want to be with us."

Blakemore Retail Presents Latest Initiatives

Blakemore Retail Managing Director Geoff Hallam presented on new initiatives across the company's store estate and showcased new sites for the future.

Geoff provided an overview of some of the latest focus areas for Blakemore Retail, including fresh foods, food service and meal solutions.



Geoff Hallam

He commented: "Meal solutions is an area that provides a massive opportunity for Blakemore Retail, with 42% of shoppers in convenience multiple stores looking for meal inspiration."

To take advantage of this opportunity, Blakemore Retail will be allocating more space to meal making and ready meals, with range expansion dominated by SPAR

brand products and supported by improved merchandising and signage.

Moving on to store investment, Geoff showcased four of this year's new store openings as well as eight new sites in the pipeline. He explained that Blakemore Retail has set aside £7m for store refits in 2015/16.

In other recent changes across the estate, Geoff highlighted the significant growth in popularity of contactless payments, with circa 20% of all payments made in Blakemore Retail stores now contactless. New to Blakemore Retail and independent SPAR stores in 2016 are money-off vouchers to help boost basket spend and attract and retain customers.

Geoff concluded his presentation by thanking delegates for the huge team effort that has helped Blakemore Retail raise £2.2m for the NSPCC over the course of its six-year partnership.

New Ambitions for Food Service

Geoff Hallam handed over to Fresh Food Development Manager Matt Teague, who spoke about Blakemore Retail's latest ambitions for its food service offering.

Matt began by explaining the key role that food service has to play in the business. He said: "Food service is a dynamic and exciting area for Blakemore Retail, of vital importance for creating a point of difference for our stores and ensuring the profitability of our estate moving forwards."



Matt Teague

In the first six periods of 2015/16 the division saw its food service sales increase by 29.8% on the previous year.

Matt announced plans for Blakemore Retail to expand its Subway, Greggs and Costa

Coffee franchise estate, with targets for 44 Subway franchises by the end of 2015/16 as well as ten Greggs franchises within five years. The business has a further 30 stores in the pipeline for Costa Express machines, to add to the 110 sites it already has offering Costa coffee.

Matt also presented on two new SPAR food service sub-brands which have recently been introduced to Blakemore Retail stores. Daily Deli, which brings all SPAR food service and snacking ranges together under one name, will replace SPAR's existing food-to-range. Meanwhile, Bargain Bites is a vibrantly branded '£1 Value' food service range.

With 62% of Blakemore Retail stores already offering some form of food service, Matt stressed to delegates that the business is already ahead of many of its competitors in this sector.

Developing Talent to Grow a Sustainable Business



Ian Diment

Group HR Director Ian Diment presented on new strategies to help the business develop talent.

Ian cited the launch of A.F. Blakemore's new graduate scheme in 2015 and ongoing work with apprentices as initiatives to help grow a sustainable business.

He said: "A.F. Blakemore's graduate scheme was set up in recognition of the need to develop future leaders within the business and will support the company in becoming an employer of choice."

Ian also explained A.F. Blakemore's intentions to develop a more structured approach to apprenticeship programmes and the company's continued investment in its leadership development programme, Leading the Blakemore Way, to develop existing and future leaders. More than 1,200 employees have been on the course to date.

Ian concluded with a celebration of A.F. Blakemore's community work in 2014/15, during which period employees donated 9,568 hours of work time to volunteering for good causes, in support of 48,334 people.

Blakemore Design & Shopfitting Strives towards 2020 Goals

Property Development Director Alastair Haigh reported on the recent progress that Blakemore Design & Shopfitting has made towards achieving its 2020 vision.

Alastair explained that one of the business’s key focus areas has been the procurement of equipment. As a result of sourcing new suppliers, the division has not only made its customer offering more competitive but managed to reduce its stock holding by more than 68% between 2011/12 and 2014/15.



Alastair Haigh

This has been supported by the relocation of the business to smaller premises on the Longacres Industrial Estate as well as the launch of a new joinery workshop and investment in staff training to enable the business to manufacture its own store counters and equipment.

Over the last five years the division has also rebranded, implemented a new organisational structure and introduced new terms and conditions to control debtors.

In 2015 BDS celebrated its 25th anniversary. Alastair commented: “In the shop fitting industry 25 years of trading is a fantastic achievement. Our business continues to go from strength to strength, and we have identified a number of growth areas and opportunities to extend our services way beyond the company’s existing SPAR business.”

Group Logistics Embraces Change

Group Logistics Director Andy Grinsell was next up to report on A.F. Blakemore’s new group logistics function.

Andy explained that the company has now combined all of its divisional logistics operations under one banner to reduce costs and ensure a consistent approach. This group function includes all Logistics, Foodservice, Fine Foods and Wholesale Distribution warehouse operations.



Andy Grinsell

He said: “By maximising the opportunities provided by greater collaboration, scale

and infrastructure we will be able to make considerable improvements to the efficiency of our operation and customer service levels.

“We will be in a better position to attract new customers under the Blakemore group banner and improve profits, which in turn will enable us to invest further in our operation.”

Opportunities provided by the new group logistics approach include a more consistent approach to fleet management and planning, warehouse operating systems, customer service and quality and environmental standards across the Blakemore group.

Andy closed by stressing the importance of embracing change and called on colleagues across the Blakemore Group for support in successfully delivering the Blakemore Logistics 2020 strategy.

Wholesale Divisions Target Growth

Group Wholesale Managing Director Sam Wilcox outlined growth plans for the company’s wholesale divisions.

Starting with Blakemore Foodservice, Sam explained that the cornerstone of the division’s 2020 strategy will be the development of its free-trade business, with a five-year plan to grow sales via Blakemore Wholesale’s Penrith depot.



Sam Wilcox

Sam showcased some of the recent contracts won by Blakemore Foodservice in 2015, worth £40m in additional sales. Last year the division also made a £0.5m investment in expanding the frozen storage capacity of its Wakefield depot.

Turning to Blakemore Fresh Foods, Sam explained that the division is on track to achieve its best sales and profit results yet in 2015/16. A recent extension of the business’s trading area into South West England has helped to generate additional sales of £2.6m.

He said: “One of the division’s key profit improvement plans to drive future growth is focused on investigating opportunities to supply retail meats to SPAR. This has the potential to not only benefit Fresh Foods but the wider Blakemore group.”

An update on the latest developments across Blakemore Wholesale was also provided. Recent initiatives to improve the business have included a restructure of the Trading team, the re-launch of Blakemore Wholesale’s Retail Club package and increased promotional activity with customers.

A £1m investment in the relocation of Bangor Cash & Carry to a brand new purpose-built site will provide opportunity for the business to develop in the catering sector.

Also new for 2015 was the launch of a new premium store fascia, B More Local, for Blakemore Wholesale’s Retail Club. The fascia demands a higher commitment from retailers but offers increased support from the business in return.

The division plans to improve its delivered service capability for both retail and catering customers in South Wales and to focus on growing its on-trade business.

The Power of Partnership

Blakemore Wholesale Distribution Managing Director James Russell followed Sam Wilcox and spoke about the power of partnership in helping the company and its trade partners achieve mutual success.

James explained how Blakemore Wholesale Distribution will utilise the scale, infrastructure and expertise of the wider Blakemore Group to achieve a significant expansion of both its customer and supplier base.



James Russell

He said: “Blakemore Wholesale Distribution is here to leverage A.F. Blakemore’s group infrastructure, building a more sustainable business by adding value to new customers.”

James provided an overview of future plans to achieve growth across the vending, managed retail, forecourt, central distribution and export strands to his division.

He stressed the huge opportunity in the vending sector, which is worth £1.4bn in the UK. Blakemore Wholesale Distribution has taken on a new vending trader to help grow business in this area.

James also expanded on Blakemore Wholesale Distribution’s ambitions to grow its export division, explaining that expansion into new markets will enable the business to grow in scale. A new project team is in place to help deliver growth in this sector.

Process Improvement and Project Leadership



Tom Blakemore

Group Business Improvement Manager Tom Blakemore outlined the role that Process Improvement and Project Leadership have to play in the delivery of A.F. Blakemore’s 2020 goals.

Tom said: “Process Improvement and Project Leadership are two new key strategies that will help create a stronger and more profitable business that is consistently dedicated to meeting the needs of both internal and external customers.”

Process Improvement has been introduced to the Blakemore Group to help eliminate waste across all aspects of its operation with the ultimate aim of ensuring that customer

requirements are met accurately and on time, every time.

Meanwhile, Project Leadership offers a standardised approach to delivering new or improved business activities that will help the company achieve a consistent and effective approach to projects.

To date 65 delegates have been trained in Project Leadership, which now forms part of the company’s ILM Level 3 programme to help ensure that it is embedded within the culture of the business. All of A.F. Blakemore’s profit improvement plans are also being put through the Project Leadership framework.

A.F. Blakemore Bids Farewell to Bill

In December Bill Capper retired from A.F. Blakemore's Main Board after 51 years with SPAR.



Bill began his career with SPAR back in 1964, when he joined his family's business, Capper & Co. Ltd, after university.

Capper & Co. had been the SPAR wholesaler for South Wales since 1959, with John Capper, Bill's father, being one of the founder directors of SPAR in the UK.

Following the death of his father in 1968, Bill became Managing Director of Capper & Co. just before his 26th birthday. Three years later he became Chairman as well.

Bill was also SPAR UK's National Guild Chairman from 1984 to 1991 and again from 1997 to 2003.

He joined the A.F. Blakemore Main Board of Directors in 2011, following A.F. Blakemore's acquisition of Capper & Co.

The Blakemore Way newspaper interviewed Bill to find out more about his career with SPAR:

What have been your greatest achievements during your career?

The first was when Capper acquired the VG franchise for South Wales, Bristol and Avon in 1987.

Then, in 1993, in conjunction with Peter Blakemore, we negotiated the acquisition of SPAR territory from Watson & Philip. For us the new region was the M4 corridor and the South East of England, and we acquired the Hastings depot at the same time.

Again in conjunction with Peter Blakemore we acquired a group of stores from LoCost in 1994. Our share was 29 stores. By the time A.F. Blakemore took over Capper & Co. we supplied 435 SPAR stores in our area.

What changes have you seen the grocery industry go through?

Throughout my career, the grocery multiples have increased their share of the grocery market. As wholesalers have acquired independent stores to operate as convenience stores of their own, businesses have merged and combined, resulting in the wholesale and retail markets becoming concentrated into the hands of fewer operators.

What do you miss most about the past?

I miss the relationships between the family wholesaler and family retailers, which were fostered at SPAR conferences and study tours. These were great events for communicating with our customers.

What has your role at A.F. Blakemore involved?

I have been a non-executive director on A.F. Blakemore's Main Board for nearly five years. I have been able to contribute from my own experience and to come to board meetings as an outsider detached from the day-to-day business.

What do you think of A.F. Blakemore's future?

A.F. Blakemore is a strong business with many strings to its bow. The market in which the company has traded over these last few years has been difficult, and it remains so, but the performance of the business has been very commendable against this background, resulting in a strong balance sheet.

As reported at a recent Management Group Meeting there are lots of great things going on and ideas for the future development of the business. I believe there are good opportunities for growing profitably and enabling the company to face inevitable rising costs, and there is an excellent team in place to bring that about.

What are your plans for retirement?

My family is widely spread out, so keeping up involves time and travel. I have an active Christian faith and there are plenty of opportunities for service arising from it. As someone said recently, retirement is an opportunity to do what you are already doing a bit better.

Colleagues Wish Lyn Gibbons a Happy Retirement

Staff from across A.F. Blakemore came together in November to wish Lyn Gibbons from Human Resources a happy retirement after 29 years of service.

Group HR Director Ian Diment commented: "Lyn has played an integral role in the Human Resources department over the years and will take a wealth of knowledge and experience with her.

"I would like to thank Lyn for her contribution to the business and wish her all the very best for a happy and healthy retirement."

The Blakemore Way newspaper caught up with Lyn to find out more about her time at A.F. Blakemore and what she has enjoyed most about working at the company.

What was your first role at A.F. Blakemore and what roles have followed since?

I first joined the company in May 1986, working two days per week in the Payroll department, and for those of you who remember her, my boss was a lady named Betty Connolly, affectionately known as 'the dragon' and I was terrified of her.

Once my children were settled into school I accepted a position in the 'Personnel department' as we were known back then, when the department was in its infancy and the Training department was first established.

I studied for my CIPD qualification and gradually progressed to the role of Personnel Manager for the Blakemore Group.

What are the biggest changes you have seen the company go through?

When I first joined the company we had only 350 employees, a handful of cash & carry depots and a couple of own stores.

Over the years the company has evolved into what it is today, with almost 8,000 staff, 14



cash & carry sites and more than 290 own stores.

I think the secret of its success is the ability to change; I am proud to have been part of that change and long may it continue!

What have you enjoyed most about working here?

The most enjoyable part of my job has been meeting the people from all divisions of the company, for whatever reason, good or bad!

I have loved the feel of being part of a family business, and along with my sister Julie, my nieces Clare and Emma, and Clare's partner, Craig, we have clocked up almost 70 years' service between us.

It is great to come to work and see so many members of your family on a daily basis and this is one thing that I will miss, but I am sure they will keep me updated on how everyone is doing!

Have you got any plans for how you will be spending your retirement?

I have a couple of holidays planned over the next few months so I will sit back and think of you all then!

Bill Tomlinson Looks Back on 27 Years

A.F. Blakemore Company Secretary Bill Tomlinson bid farewell to the company in September after 27 years' service for the company.



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During this period, Bill served as Financial Accountant, Financial Controller and Finance Director for the company's wholesale divisions, Blakemore Design & Shopfitting and Blakemore Property in addition to Company Secretary, which he was appointed to in 2012.

A.F. Blakemore Group Managing Director Peter Blakemore said: "It has been a pleasure to have worked with Bill over the past 27 years, and on behalf of the Blakemore family and everyone across A.F. Blakemore, I would like to thank him for his contribution to the ongoing success of the company.

"Bill's insight and sense of humour will be greatly missed by the A.F. Blakemore Board and we all wish him a well-earned and happy retirement."

Here Bill reflects on his 27 years with A.F. Blakemore:

Can you remember your first day at A.F. Blakemore?

Yes. John Giles, who was the Finance Director at the time, showed me where my office was and then told me that the leg on my desk was unstable. He informed me that there was a spare screw and screwdriver in the top drawer, which meant that I spent much of my first day repairing my own desk. I've had a screw loose ever since!

What is it that makes A.F. Blakemore special to you?

The one thing that has always amazed me is how A.F. Blakemore has had the ability to consistently recruit raw talented people into the business and then develop them to play significant roles in creating such a large and successful company.

What are some of your greatest memories at A.F. Blakemore?

From my early years I remember the numerous acquisitions we undertook. There has always been growth in the company throughout my 27 years.

From a personal point of view, one of my most nervous moments came when I decided to film a presentation to be shown at the Finance and IT meeting at the Bescot a few years back. I was on holiday on the day of the meeting, so we filmed my presentation beforehand in my office but jokingly pretended that it was live footage from Barmouth. I was extremely nervous as to how it was going to be received, especially as I'd included a few light-hearted asides.

What does the future hold for you outside of A.F. Blakemore?

I want to spend time with my family. I'm also a local councillor for the Shawburch ward in Telford and a steam railway enthusiast so will spend a lot of my time visiting steam railways across the UK.

With all that said I will remain an A.F. Blakemore pension trustee, so will still need to keep an eye on the business to fulfil my role there.

Russell Grant Appointed New Blakemore Wholesale Managing Director

Russell Grant was appointed Blakemore Wholesale Managing Director on December 14th.



Russell joined the business in November 2003 as Cash & Carry Trading Director and was appointed Wholesale Commercial Director in September 2009.

In his new position, Russell will report directly to Group Wholesale Managing Director Sam Wilcox and be responsible for Blakemore Wholesale's cash & carry estate and stores group.

Sam Wilcox said: "Russell has made a significant contribution to the business over the past 12 years and has the knowledge

and experience to deliver Blakemore Wholesale's vision as we work towards our 2020 strategic objectives.

"I would like to congratulate Russell and wish him every success in his new role."

We invited Russell to tell us a bit more about himself and his ambitions for his new role:

What was your previous work experience before joining A.F. Blakemore?

Before I joined A.F. Blakemore I was the Trading Director at Nisa, and before then I had various senior marketing, operations and trading roles at Victoria Wines, Bejam/Iceland, Amalgamated Foods and Watson & Philip. Interestingly Watson & Philip now forms part of the A.F. Blakemore SPAR business.

Tell us about your role and achievements since joining the company.

I joined the company in November 2003 as Trading Director for Blakemore Cash & Carry. Since then a great deal of work has taken place in relation to centralising the marketing, pricing and stock control functions. I also introduced central distribution to the business and have since launched this

service to other Landmark members. These initiatives have collectively been key factors in the business being able to significantly enhance our trading terms with suppliers.

Other new initiatives to have been introduced to the business include the new Wholesale .net website and social media platforms, the creation of a telesales function at the Science Park and the launch of the Blakemore Business Intelligence service, which is a data sharing service for suppliers.

I was also appointed Commercial Director for Wholesale and Foodservice in 2009, which has enabled these two divisions to identify opportunities for joint trading deals with suppliers.

What do you like about working at A.F. Blakemore & Son Ltd?

It is important for me to be working in a family business that has a clear plan to invest in the long term. Over the past 12 years I have also worked with a number of dedicated and committed colleagues, many of whom have worked for the company for many more years than I have.

What are your initial plans and objectives for your new role?

My main focus is to make Blakemore Wholesale an even more customer focussed organisation and to work with colleagues from across the business to develop the growth areas for the future. We have already begun to implement a number of exciting new initiatives, which includes a new data platform to help us work more collaboratively with suppliers that will launch in March.

We are also set to launch a new scheme to encourage greater loyalty from our Lifestyle and retail club customers. Other areas of focus include developing our on-trade and delivered catering businesses along with a wider focus upon achieving operational excellence across all parts of Blakemore Wholesale.

What are your interests outside of work?

I'm married with two children, Olivia, aged nine, and Ava, aged two. In my spare time I enjoy amateur drama and I am also interested in going to the gym and going to the pub (which can cancel out the benefit of the gym!).

Simon Loveland Appointed New Company Secretary



Following the retirement of Bill Tomlinson in September, Simon Loveland has taken on the role of Company Secretary in addition to his current role as Chief Financial Officer.

Derek Clifton will add to his role as Blakemore Retail Finance Director by taking on Bill's responsibilities as Finance Director

for Blakemore Design & Shopfitting and Blakemore Property.

In addition, Fine Foods Commercial Director Caoire Blakemore and Business Improvement Manager Tom Blakemore will alternate minute taking duties at A.F. Blakemore Group Board meetings to help grow their experience and knowledge of the company.

Group Financial Director Scott Munro-Morris commented: "I would like to take this opportunity to once again thank Bill for his service to the company over the past 27 years and acknowledge Simon, Derek, Caoire and Tom in their new roles."

Chief Information Officer Appointed

A.F. Blakemore has announced the appointment of a new Chief Information Officer for Blakemore Technical Services.



Robert Geere took on the newly created role in August and will hold responsibility for developing A.F. Blakemore's Group IT strategy, following the recommendations of an external review of IT undertaken by advisers KPMG.

With a wealth of experience in IT, Robert joins the company from Flogas, where he served as Head of IT and led the transformation of IT across the business, from strategy through to delivery and business change programmes.

A.F. Blakemore Group IT Director Roy Kidd will continue in his current role, reporting to Robert, with continuing responsibility for running day-to-day IT operations and playing a significant role in major projects.

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

Tell us about your career and previous work experience.

My most recent role before A.F. Blakemore was with Flogas (part of DCC plc), where I spent 12 years. I led the transformation of the IT function to support major acquisitions, enhance efficiency and facilitate growth. At the DCC level I was part of a small forum of IT directors who formulated the group's IT thinking and strategies.

Prior to this, I spent 15 years with Electrocomponents plc in a variety of IT and business roles in the UK, Europe and Asia. During my time with Electrocomponents I spent extended periods of time in various countries in Europe and lived in Hong Kong for three years, which was a great life experience. I found learning to adapt to and respect different cultures fascinating.

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

I was impressed by the culture. On meeting Scott Munro-Morris, Ian Diment and other board members I felt an immediate affinity with the Blakemore Way. I believe that a cultural fit is critical.

I also wanted the challenge. The senior management team recognises the challenges that the business faces and that IT must develop and adapt to meet these challenges. The commissioning of the KPMG review was an excellent early step in this process.

Working with business and IT colleagues and innovative suppliers to formulate and deliver the required IT strategy is an exciting prospect. The speed of technological change is breathtaking, and harnessing these technologies to innovate and improve our business provides a wonderful opportunity for us all.

What are your first impressions of the company?

Without exception everybody has made me very welcome. I have found the company to be open, honest, friendly, professional and committed.

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

My initial plan is to get to know the business: the processes, the systems, the future strategies and most importantly the people. A.F. Blakemore is a very diverse business and there is a lot to learn! This will form an excellent foundation to formulate the development of the IT strategy.

Tell us a little bit about yourself outside of work.

I was born and went to school in Loughborough. I graduated from the University of Manchester and also have an MBA from Loughborough University. When I was younger I played a lot of football and cricket, both to a modest standard.

I have been married to my wife, Helen, for 19 years and have a 12-year-old daughter, Elisabeth. I also have two dogs, Noodles and Dumpling.

In my spare time I enjoy walking our two dogs in a local country park and performing badly at a local pub quiz. I have a season ticket for Leicester Tigers rugby and recently joined a local archery club with my daughter.

Blakemore Wholesale Launches New Bangor Depot

Blakemore Wholesale has enhanced its offering to customers in North West Wales with the launch of a brand new depot.



The business has relocated its Bangor cash & carry to a new, purpose-built site that offers a whole host of new and improved services.

Bangor Cash & Carry ceased trading from its former premises on Caernarfon Road on November 21st and opened at a new premises on Llandegai Industrial Estate on November 23rd.

Bangor General Manager Allan Jones said: "This is a fantastic move for Blakemore Wholesale. The new premises enables us to offer an improved range of products, including a new Chinese range.

"Customers can also benefit from a new Click & Collect service, an improved delivery service and in-house butchery and produce departments."



The new Chinese range includes fresh meat, grocery and non-food items in addition to an extensive range of products recognised in both the retail and catering industries. Meanwhile, an expert butcher offers a fantastic range of fresh meat, cut to suit individual business needs.

The extensive fresh produce department offers a wide range of seasonal fruit and vegetables, delivered to the depot twice daily.

The site relocation has enabled Bangor Cash & Carry to introduce a brand new Click & Collect service, which is offered to customers free of charge with no minimum order requirements.

To celebrate the opening of the new Llandegai Industrial Estate premises, Blakemore Wholesale held a grand opening event on November 30th. Customers could take advantage of exclusive one-day deals, a meet and greet with suppliers, competitions and raffles, and free food and refreshments.



Blakemore Wholesale Hosts Inaugural Retailer of the Year Awards Evening

Blakemore Wholesale celebrated its annual Retailer of the Year awards with a brand new gala dinner event in October.



The glittering black-tie occasion, held at St George's Park in Burton-upon-Trent, Staffordshire, recognised exceptional retailers who have gone the extra mile to deliver excellent service and store standards.

The awards consisted of 12 regional awards and four category awards, including Best Work in the Community, Best Promotional Execution, Best Own Brand Compliance and Best Core Range Compliance. There were two additional awards for Best New Store and Overall Retailer of the Year.

Belle Vue Convenience Store in Middlesbrough fought off tough competition from 650 retailers across England and Wales to win Blakemore Wholesale's prestigious Retailer of the Year title for a third time.

Winning store owner Bay Bashir said: "To be crowned Blakemore Wholesale Retailer of the Year for the third time is a great honour for my staff and store.

"I would like to thank the entire Blakemore Wholesale team for making this possible; without their continued support and backing none of this would have been possible."

Belle Vue Convenience walked away from the competition with a prize fund of £11,500 plus a £700 donation for their chosen charity, the South Cleveland Heart Fund.

Blakemore Wholesale Stores Group Director Nick Rose commented: "Our first Retailer of the Year Grand Awards Evening was a resounding success.

"The awards demonstrated how suppliers, wholesalers and retailers can work together to showcase the best of what independent local stores have to offer."

In addition to the awards ceremony, guests enjoyed a three-course dinner and entertainment from impressionist and comedian Jon Culshaw. A charity raffle raised £3,125, with all proceeds being donated to local charities via the Blakemore Foundation.

Also new for Blakemore Wholesale in 2015 was a series of one-day trade shows, offering customers exclusive deals, free samples and advice. Three events in Cardiff, Newcastle and Wolverhampton generated sales of £1.3m for the business.

Blakemore Fine Foods Celebrates Best of British Alcohol

Blakemore Fine Foods has launched a new catalogue that showcases the best of British ales, ciders, wines and spirits.

The catalogue features in excess of 400 products from more than 80 different distilleries, cider mills and breweries.

Fine Foods Commercial Director Caoire Blakemore said: "Britain now has more breweries per person than anywhere else in the world, and we want to help raise the profile of these producers and give them access to a wider market.

"The craftsmanship demonstrated by the manufacturers that we have listed is of the highest quality and helps explain why consumer demand for such products is growing faster than ever before."

The British Beer and Pub Association has recorded that beer sales are in growth for the first time in a decade, with off-trade sales overtaking on-trade sales for the first time ever.

Caoire said that while sales to the mature, traditional real ale drinker remain strong, there is also growing demand from the younger, non-gender specific ale drinker increasingly being spotted at craft beer festivals nationwide.

Fine Foods Trading Controller Patrice Garrigues said: "Our catalogue reflects the latest trends by showcasing traditional long-established producers such as Yorkshire's oldest brewery, Samuel Smith, right through to relative newcomers such as Tiny Rebel, the creators of Cwtch, which was recently awarded the title of Britain's Best Beer by CAMRA.

"However, our range is far more extensive than ales and includes products such as Penderyn Welsh Malt Whisky through to Two Birds Absinthe, Chase Marmalade Vodka and Cornish Pastis from the Southwestern Distillery."

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

Patrice added: "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 Blakemore Fine Foods team at their warehouse on the Longacres Industrial Estate in Willenhall

Blakemore Design & Shopfitting Celebrates 25 Years

Blakemore Design & Shopfitting has celebrated its 25th anniversary with one of its most successful years since the company’s inception.

The division, which specialises in providing bespoke, cutting-edge shopfitting solutions for the company’s Retail and independent SPAR estate, looks set to achieve one of its most profitable years to date.



One of Blakemore Design & Shopfitting’s latest store refits at Roadchef’s Strensham motorway service station

Property Development Director Alastair Haigh commented: “In the shop fitting industry 25 years of trading is a fantastic achievement.

“Our business continues to go from strength to strength and we have identified a number of growth areas and opportunities to extend our services way beyond the company’s existing SPAR business.”

Since the division was first incorporated as Complete Shopfitting Limited on February 13th 1990, the shop fitting team has completed more than 3,000 projects, ranging from major store refits to minor refurbishments.

Amongst the thousands of refits undertaken, one in particular stands out from 1999, when the company was commissioned to undertake a complete NAAFI refurbishment at an MOD store on the Falkland Islands.

In 2011 CSL was rebranded as Blakemore Design & Shopfitting, which also led to a number of structural and strategic changes that have helped make the company more competitive and flexible.

Amongst the changes were the relocation of the business to new premises, a reduction in stock holding and the launch of a new joinery workshop to enable the business to manufacture store service counters and equipment.

This new approach to business has paved the way for the company to continue to meet ever more diverse customer needs, particularly in relation to market-leading, contemporary store design and the installation of energy-efficient refrigeration and lighting.

Blakemore Design & Shopfitting has also adapted to the evolving needs of the SPAR business and has completed more than 40 Subway installations across A.F. Blakemore’s store estate.

The company now employs 27 staff, with sales for the division growing significantly over the past 25 years, from £1.3m in 1990/91 to £7.7m in 2014/15.

In 2014/15 BDS achieved a £550,000 profit, which represents its best performance for 17 years. The division is well on target to hit budget in 2015/16.

Alastair added: “During the current climate it is great that we are having one of our busiest and most successful years,

and thanks must go to Blakemore Retail and Blakemore Trade Partners for the support that they have given us.

“However, I especially want to thank the loyal and hardworking staff that we have across the division, many of whom have worked for the company for more than 10 years, and in some cases 20.

“There are a lot of highly skilled and committed colleagues across the division, and they remain the key to our ongoing success story.”



From the archives: Complete Shopfitting’s NAAFI refurbishment at an MOD store on the Falkland Islands in 1999



Blakemore Foodservice Celebrates Top Caterers at Awards

Blakemore Foodservice celebrated its top catering customers at its annual Catering Awards.

A total of 260 guests, including Blakemore Foodservice customers, staff and suppliers were invited to attend the event, which took place in December at the East Midlands Conference Centre in Nottingham.



IM House in Coleshill, Birmingham, picks up the title of Overall Winner for the private sector

Guests enjoyed a three-course meal followed by entertainment from magician Paul Zenon, who treated the audience to an array of magical tricks.

The Blakemore Foodservice Catering Awards, which are now in their twelfth year, are held annually to acknowledge and reward customers for their initiative, skill and dedication to their businesses.

Attendees included publicans, school caterers, hoteliers, universities and representatives from across the business and industry sector.

Entrants competed in categories that included Best Menu, Community Interaction, Customer Service, Catering Team and the Peter Blakemore Award.

Paul’s performance was then followed by comedian and actor Omid Djalili, who went on to co-host the event with Blakemore Foodservice Sales & Marketing Director Jim Dudley. Wholesale Group Managing Director Sam Wilcox congratulated all of the winners along with each of the award sponsors.

The Overall Winner award for the private sector was handed to IM House, a contract caterer based in Coleshill, Birmingham, whilst the Overall Winner award for the public sector went to St Anne’s Stanley C of E School in Liverpool. Both winners received £1,000.

Suzanne Halsall from Liverpool City Council commented: “The event was fabulous and our staff were absolutely thrilled at being shortlisted. It was an incredible morale booster and a real pleasure to be part of a special evening.”



St Anne’s Stanley C of E School in Liverpool picks up the title of Overall Winner for the public sector

Blakemore Apprentices Recognised at the Houses of Parliament

Three A.F. Blakemore apprentices have been recognised for their hard work and commitment to the wholesale sector at an awards ceremony at the Houses of Parliament.

Driver apprentices Jamie Daniels and Callum McCombs from Blakemore Foodservice and Ben Hilton from Blakemore Fine Foods were among 18 young trainees acknowledged at the Federation of Wholesale Distributors Skills and Development Awards in London in November.

All three received certificates of recognition for their outstanding commitment to skills and careers development in wholesale distribution.

The event was organised by the Federation of Wholesale Distributors to not only celebrate the individuals’ successes, but to send a clear message to the government about wholesale distribution’s commitment to skills and training, and to equipping young people for careers in the sector.

Jamie, Callum and Ben were accompanied to the awards by Blakemore Logistics Distribution General Manager Dave

Higgs and Blakemore Foodservice General Manager Dirk Bickley.

Dave commented: “I found great pride in seeing the apprentices receive their awards at the FWD event, especially as I was heavily involved in introducing the driving goods apprenticeship scheme to the Logistics division.

“Ben was the first apprentice on the scheme, and within two years he has progressed from a drivers mate to a Class 1 driver, so he is definitely deserving of this recognition.”

Meanwhile, both Jamie and Callum are now employed by Blakemore Foodservice as drivers after achieving their Class 2 HGV driving licences within just three weeks in the summer as part of an apprentice scheme based at the division’s James Bridge depot. They will be continuing with their apprenticeships until they complete their NVQs in spring.

Jamie commented: “Just visiting the Houses of Parliament and rubbing shoulders with politicians was an experience in itself.”

Callum added: “As I used to be a chef, my apprenticeship at Blakemore Foodservice has given me an excellent opportunity to change the direction of my career, something I had been thinking about for a while.

“Knowing that I was joining a striving business that is constantly expanding has given me a great sense of security, and Blakemore’s is always offering new opportunities.”

All three apprentices collected their awards from the FWD’s James Bielby (left) and MP Nadhim Zahawi (right):



Centre: Jamie Daniels, Blakemore Foodservice



Centre: Callum McCombs, Blakemore Foodservice



Centre: Ben Hilton, Blakemore Fine Foods

New Retail Partnerships

A.F. Blakemore has embarked on a series of new retail partnerships that have resulted in more than 180 new sites joining its independent SPAR estate since May 2015.



Blakemore Trade Partners has welcomed 101 new Euro Garages sites to its estate since June

Since June Blakemore Trade Partners has welcomed 101 new forecourt sites to its estate as part of SPAR UK’s national contract with Euro Garages, which owns 360 forecourt sites.

Euro Garages has been serviced by SPAR retail distribution centre James Hall & Co Ltd since 2008 but has recently increased its estate substantially, resulting in it becoming a national SPAR customer supported by four out of the five SPAR UK regional distribution centres.

Blakemore Trade Partners Development Director Louis Drake commented: “Forecourt retailing is an area of expansion for SPAR, and a strong partner with ambitious development plans such as Euro Garages will help us develop even further in a sector where our profile continues to grow.”

In addition, Blakemore Trade Partners has welcomed more than 80 further new sites to its stores group so far this financial year, meaning that the division is well on track to secure its second year of net store growth, excluding Euro Garages.

This year Blakemore Trade Partners also recently played a key role in SPAR UK’s new trial retail partnership with UK motorway service operator Roadchef, launching SPAR’s first service station store at Roadchef’s Strensham Services on the M5 in Worcestershire in July and a second store at Roadchef’s Northampton site on the M1 and A43 at the end of September.

The two motorway service area sites feature SPAR’s latest store design, combining the value proposition that the symbol group is renowned for with fresh foods on the go including Daily Deli, in-store bakery offerings and a wide choice of evening meals to meet increasing demand from motorists for healthy, fresh produce.

Moving forwards, Blakemore Trade Partners has reached an agreement to supply the vast majority of the forecourt estate owned and operated by HKS Retail, a family business that operates 55 forecourts. Blakemore Trade Partners currently has seventeen sites trading with HKS and plans to convert the remaining sites plus any further acquisitions over the remainder of its 2015/16 financial year.

West Midlands Schools Learn Rules of the Road

More than 700 pupils across the West Midlands were educated on the rules of the road in November as part of Blakemore Logistics’ annual Road Safety Week.



Primary school children take part in a series of activities led by Blakemore volunteers aimed at promoting road safety

Primary school children from 10 schools across the region took part in the week-long event, which ran alongside Brake’s national Road Safety campaign and was supported by the West Midlands Fire Service and Spillard Safety Systems.

Pupils were given a demonstration of a Blakemore Logistics HGV vehicle to highlight the dangers of playing nearby and were also given a lesson on bike safety.

Meanwhile, the West Midlands Fire Service’s Road Casualty Reduction team raised awareness of child car-seat safety. Each pupil was measured to determine whether they needed a booster seat and was given a sticker and letter to inform their parents.

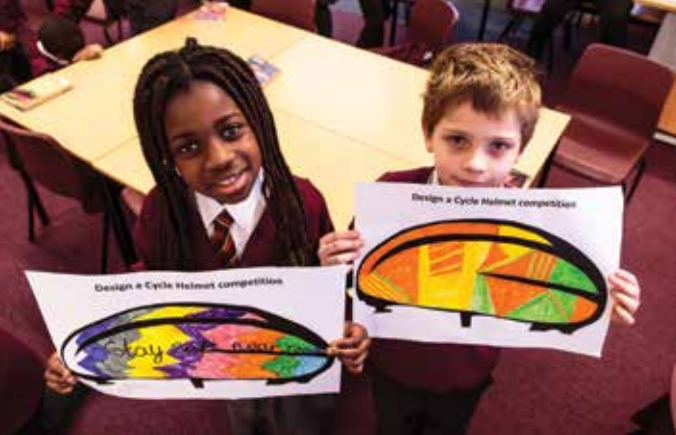
All children took home a goody bag full of road safety products, including a reflective backpack, safety leaflets, reflective snap bands and a drink and snack.

Since A.F. Blakemore’s Road Safety campaign began in 2008, a total of 4,000 pupils across 27 schools have taken part in the annual road safety event.



A.F. Blakemore Community Affairs Officer Liz Bell said: “As a food and drink distributor with more than 300 vehicles out on the roads each day we have a responsibility to educate pupils on the importance of road safety.”

Road Casualty Reduction Team Manager Juliet Malone from the West Midlands Fire Service added: “We are thrilled to be working in partnership with Blakemore’s and Spillard’s to support Brake’s Road Safety Week.



“Our work in educating and therefore preventing the injuries and loss of life caused by road traffic collisions is essential to helping us in our mission to ‘Make the West Midlands Safer’.”



a.f. **blakemore**
..... & son ltd

COLLEAGUE ENGAGEMENT SURVEY RESULTS ARE IN... AFB OVERALL: 53% RESPONSE RATE AFB OVERALL: 3.01/4 SATISFACTION SCORE

WHAT WE DO WELL

- I am committed to providing the best possible service to my colleagues and customers = 3.48/4
- I take pride in my work = 3.46/4
- I know what is expected of me at work = 3.35/4

WHERE WE NEED TO IMPROVE

- I regularly receive recognition or praise for good work = 2.69/4
- I am excited about the direction that my division is going = 2.71/4
- I know what my division is trying to achieve over the next 3-4 years = 2.77/4

The results are currently being analysed by divisional management teams, with action plans due to be communicated in the coming months.

COMING SOON

A.F. Blakemore Graduate Scheme

A.F. Blakemore's graduate programme is back for 2016.

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

a.f. blakemore & son
..... group of companies



Industry Awards Success

A.F. Blakemore's employees and retail partners have achieved a string of industry awards since the summer, making recent months some of the company's most successful yet.

Blakemore Wholesale was recognised with four titles at the Landmark Wholesale Awards in November.



Blakemore Wholesale won Retail Business Development of the Year.



Middlesbrough General Manager Tim Cronin won Depot Execution Team Leader of the Year.



Penrith Cash & Carry won Foodservice Delivered Depot of the Year.



Wolverhampton Cash & Carry won Own-Brand Depot of the Year.



SPAR UK won the highly coveted Symbol Retailer of the Year award at the Grocer Gold Awards in June and then Symbol/Fascia Group of the Year for the second year running at the Retail Industry Awards in September. In September SPAR UK also celebrated success at the Wholesale Q Awards, picking up an incredible 31 titles, including Wholesaler of the Year.



EAT 17's SPAR Hackney beat off competition from retailers across the UK's food and grocery industry to be crowned Innovative Store of the Year at the IGD Awards in October.



Independent retailers across Blakemore Trade Partners' SPAR estate picked up four Forecourt Trader awards in September. Blakemore Retail's Battlefield was also crowned Best Soft Drinks Outlet.



Julie Sutton from Blakemore Retail's Sleaford store was crowned the UK's Best Multiple Symbol Sales Assistant at Convenience Store magazine's national Sales Assistant of the Year Awards in November.

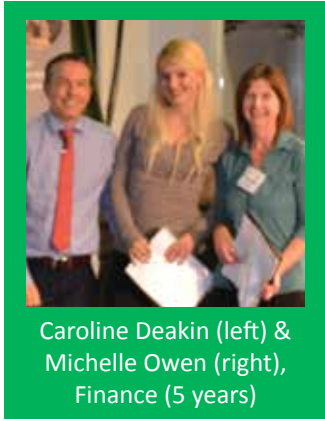
Celebrating Long Service

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

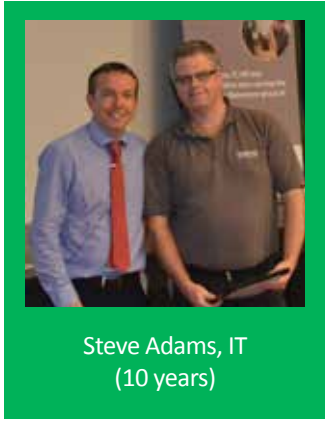
Since 2004, A.F. Blakemore has awarded around £1.5m to 9,500 long-serving members of staff to reward their commitment to the company. Here is a selection of some of the long service award presentations that have taken place in recent months:



David Cartwright, HR
(5 years)



Caroline Deakin (left) &
Michelle Owen (right),
Finance (5 years)



Steve Adams, IT
(10 years)



Brian Cherry,
Blakemore Retail
(10 years)



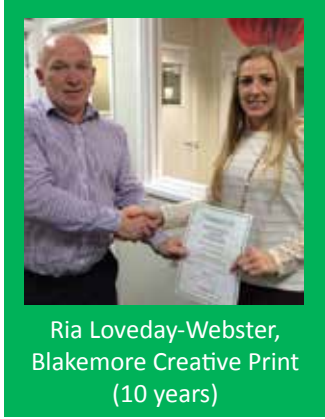
Steph Bonnar, Blakemore
Trade Partners
(10 years)



Mandy Gasson,
Blakemore Retail
(10 years)



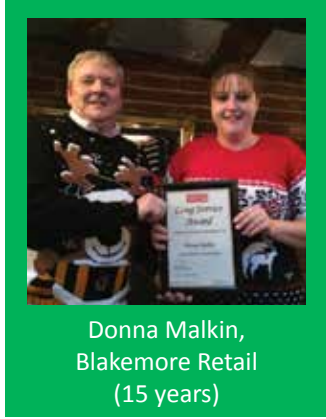
Julie Pepper,
Blakemore Retail
(10 years)



Ria Loveday-Webster,
Blakemore Creative Print
(10 years)



Charles Richards, IT
(10 years)



Donna Malkin,
Blakemore Retail
(15 years)



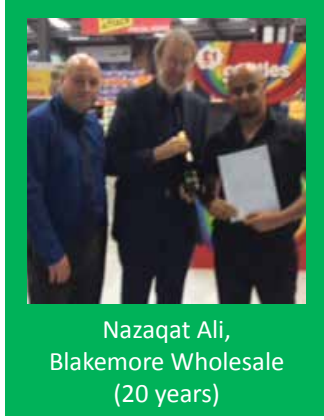
Stephen Marklew,
Finance
(15 years)



Terry Bourne,
Blakemore Trade Partners
(20 years)



Marc Deakin,
Blakemore Logistics
(20 years)



Nazaqat Ali,
Blakemore Wholesale
(20 years)



Naseem Nawaz,
Blakemore Wholesale
(20 years)



Owen Davies,
Blakemore Retail
(25 years)



Julie Knowles, HR
(25 years)



Martin Rushton,
Blakemore Retail
(25 years)



Elaine Peach,
Finance
(30 years)



Peter Blakemore, A.F.
Blakemore Group Managing
Director (50 years)

People with Potential Days Identify Future Logistics Leaders

A.F. Blakemore has hosted three People with Potential assessment days since the summer to identify future logistics leaders for the business.

People with Potential assessment days were first set up by the business five years ago to help identify colleagues with the potential for leadership positions.



Candidates at the People with Potential assessment day held in Hastings take on a team challenge designed to test their leadership skills

This year warehouse colleagues from across A.F. Blakemore’s West Midlands, Talbot Green, Hastings and Wakefield depots were invited to attend.

During the assessment days colleagues participated in practical team exercises designed to highlight the attributes of good leaders. Candidates were also interviewed by senior members of staff to ensure that they have the right practical skills and attitudes required.

The successful candidates from the Hastings event held in August were named as David Philpot, who has been promoted to a distribution team leader, and Ricky Hunt, who has taken on

the role of a warehouse operations team leader.

Ricky commented: “I enjoyed working alongside colleagues from other departments, and while the day was challenging it was very enjoyable.”

Meanwhile, following the West Midlands event held in October the successful candidates were named as Chloe Ball, Kes Abbas, Richard Graham and Liam Horgan. They have initially taken on roles as team leaders at the Axxess 10 depot.

As well as being promoted to team leaders, all successful candidates will attend an ILM Level 2 programme in Leadership and Team Skills, led by A.F. Blakemore’s Learning & Development department.

Logistics Manager Marc Deakin said: “People with Potential continues to be a significant part of our people development and demonstrates our commitment to maximising staff potential.

“Congratulations to the successful candidates and well done to all those who attended the assessment days. It was really positive to see so many individuals aspiring to develop and progress within the business.”

Santa Stops at Blakemore's

Christmas came early for children of colleagues across the Blakemore estate at the company's annual Kids Christmas Party celebrations.



More than 200 children attended two parties held at the GTG Training centre in Wolverhampton and Pontyclun Athletics Club in South Wales.

Children enjoyed party food and bouncy castle fun as well as discos, balloon modelling and party games laid on by children's entertainers. The Talbot Green party even had face painting and a craft corner where children were able to make Christmas decorations and decorate gingerbread men.

Children at both parties also had the opportunity to have their photo taken with Santa and received a wrapped gift and selection box.



Commenting on the West Midlands event, HR Officer Lorna Harris said: "It was great to see children ranging all the way from five weeks old to 10 enjoying the entertainment and the opportunity to see Santa. We had some lovely comments thanking us for our hard work organising the event."



Competition Corner



Congratulations to Sarv Saggi, from Blakemore Foodservice's James Bridge depot, who won the Spot the Difference competition featured in the last Blakemore Way newspaper.

Sarv won a £20 gift voucher.



Photo 1

Your Chance to Win

For this newspaper's competition, take a look at the two photographs opposite from a recent Blakemore Retail community project with Operation Christmas Child.

More than 30 Blakemore Retail volunteers donated circa 300 hours of work time to packing and wrapping Christmas shoeboxes for children in Africa, Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

Can you spot the five changes we have made to Photo One?

If so, you could win £20 worth of vouchers of your choice.

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



Photo 2

Keep Up To Date with the Latest News

A.F. Blakemore publishes a monthly e-newsletter with all the latest news from across the group.

Check your inbox for your monthly "It's Your E-news" email, or follow the latest news at www.afblakemore.com/staff-zone.

If you don't have an afblakemore.com email address you can sign up to A.F. Blakemore's e-newsletter at www.afblakemore.com/staff-zone.

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



Get in Touch

The Blakemore Way newspaper relies upon your feedback and input for stories. If you have any comments or story suggestions, please contact:

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