

Quotes of the month

A selection of some of the things Bradford's movers and shakers have said

Someone said, 'you'll have to open a sweet shop', and so I thought that's what I would do after being made redundant.
— Julie Simpson, of Bierley, after opening her new venture, Sweet Memories, a traditional sweet shop at Bolton Junction.

It is definitely a missed opportunity for the nation and the industry. If things continue, we won't be able to bring through new talent and Bradford and West Yorkshire will lose out to other countries.

— Malcolm Campbell, managing director of Bradford worsted cloth design and export firm Joseph H Clissold, on the Government's decision to reject plans for a national academy for fashion and textile skills.

While tough economic times have seen many companies downsize or scrap their graduate programme altogether, we're continuing to develop and grow our graduate programme.

— Nicola Rowledge, graduate scheme co-ordinator at Yorkshire Water on plans to expand the number of graduate trainees it recruits.

This is a long-haul journey which we hope will result in direct daily flights between Leeds Bradford and New York within the next decade.

— Tony Hallwood (pictured), Leeds Bradford International Airport commercial director,

launching the Project America campaign to establish daily transatlantic flights.

We have survived for 30 years and continue to do OK, but I've noticed more of our members using the Leeds casino. The current state of things in Bradford is not attractive, and the longer the delays on development, the worse it will get.

— Ray Smith, general manager of Napoleon's in Bolton Road, on the casino's 30th anniversary.

There's no doubt that the overall economic situation remains challenging, but our own business has seen a remarkable turnaround since the early part of our financial year. We are now growing at a rate which far exceeds our expectations.

— Chris Chidley, chief executive of Bradford-based transport recruitment specialist Driver Hire, which has landed national contracts worth £2m a year and is enjoying double-digit growth.

Firms taking a big bite out of the food market

Thebigissue



As the Government unveils a 20-year strategy for the £80 billion farming and food sectors, Chris Holland talks to some local producers

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Food, glorious food, is big business, and several local firms are benefiting by satisfying a growing appetite for quality and specialist produce.

With environmental considerations now at the forefront of business, locally-produced food, which reduces the industry's carbon footprint, is set to play a key part in the Government's new food strategy launched by Environment Secretary Hilary Benn.

Unveiling the Food 2030 strategy, he said that food businesses, including supermarkets and food manufacturers, would follow consumer demand for food that is local, healthy and has been produced with a smaller environmental footprint – just as consumers have pushed the rapid expansion of Fairtrade products and free-range eggs over the last decade.

It is a framework that should benefit local food companies, of which the Bradford district has a diverse mixture.

Among those on the verge of bigger things are Tiffin Sandwiches, of Allerton, and award-winning father-and-son business Take And Bake pies of Low Moor.

Both firms are having trials of their produce in Tesco's Skipton store with the prospect of supplying more outlets on a regular basis.

Tiffin, which employs 70 people at its Prospect Works base in Allerton Road, will supply Tesco with its new Yorkshire range of sandwiches, which use local produce from around the county.

The firm, which began in 1999 as a deli bar in a small shop near Canal Road, is looking to rearrange its production line to meet the Tesco orders – and also from the NHS, for which it has become an approved supplier and already provides sandwiches for Bradford hospitals.

Tiffin also has a contract with Nisa, which operates local convenience stores.

Tiffin has become a leader in the sale-and-return sandwich market throughout the North of England, with more than 1,500 customers selling its products.

There are plans for 20 more jobs at Prospect Works where the firm moved in 2005 and which has the capacity to triple the current weekly output of more than 80,000 products.



Far left, Tiffin Sandwiches development director John Varley; left, Just Desserts managing director James O'Dwyer; right, Jonathan and James Lord, who run Take And Bake pies

Development director John Varley, who joined Tiffin in 2008 to lead the development of the what he described as the area's most advanced pizza, ready meal and sandwich plant, said: "We are a leading player in the 'grab-and-go' sandwich market, focusing mainly on favourites such as BLT, egg and cress and ham.

"Things are going very well for us at present and Tesco is very keen on our range of Yorkshire sandwiches featuring locally-sourced ingredients, and their buyers are taking a close interest in developing that relationship.

"Tiffin Foods is totally committed to creating high-quality, wholesome foods within a culture of innovation and integrity. We embrace strict food safety procedures, earn trust from our working partners and remain focused on quality."

Tiffin is also in talks with airline Virgin Atlantic about providing a range of complimentary snacks for passengers.

Tesco also holds out major prospects for pie-makers John Lord and his son Jonathan, who run Take And Bake pies. They are also having trials at the Skipton

store with a view to supplying around 20 Tesco outlets through the firm's Doncaster distribution centre.

The firm is set to supply a range of frozen bake-at-home pies.

It is a major coup for the firm with the potential to supply thousands of pies to leading high street outlets.

Jonathan Lord said: "We think this is a unique product. Not everyone likes the jelly in pork pies so we decided to give them the option by putting the jelly in a sachet.

"This is a massive opportunity for us as potentially each order will be for thousands of pies."

Take And Bake also supplies all 26 Booths supermarkets, including the Ilkley store, with its pies, and the Lords are also hoping to win contracts with Waitrose and Asda.

The business was launched in 2006 by former butcher John Lord who, after 35 years in sales and at the age of 64, decided to turn his pie-making expertise into a business.

It took off, supplying shops, pubs and golf

clubs with either ready-to-bake or fully-cooked pies which are made from premium pork. In 2008, the Lords won a gold star in the Guild Of Fine Foods Great Taste Awards.

Another specialist producer with its brands on supermarket shelves is Steeton-based Grandma Wild's biscuits, whose products are sold by around 30 Morrisons stores and in Asda.

The family business was originated by Annie Wild, great-grandmother of the current owners, who ran a bakery and boarding house in Morecambe over a century ago.

Its range of traditional biscuits has remained popular in spite of the tough economic climate. Director John Bateman said business had remained steady as people continued to cheer themselves up with special treats.

Its new Yorkshire range of traditional biscuits is proving popular, with more about to be exported to Japan, following three container loads sent last year.

Grandma Wild's, which employs 200 full and part-time staff, also exports to Spain,

the United States and China, where customers are attracted by the heritage behind its products.

John will also be making a second visit to a major international trade fair in Germany at the end of the month.

He said: "Our products remain popular in a range of markets which has helped business remain steady through the recession. Like many small businesses, we've adopted a cautious approach, but have benefited from people's desire to buy the occasional treat."

Two more Bradford food production centres have been given a new lease of life after becoming part of the Leeds-based Symington's group.

The former Trilogy Foods, now called Millerdale, has become the UK's leading producer of croutons.

Based on the Euroway trading estate, the company, which has 55 employees, has added soup croutons to its range of salad croutons following a £200,000 investment in specialist equipment by Symington's, which acquired the business a year ago.

Now, Symington's is planning to double the size of the operation on a bigger site nearby and is focusing the packing and distribution of its home-baking ranges in Bradford.

Symington's has worked with celebrity chef James Martin to develop a range of home-baking desserts, which was launched in August.

Another successful local firm is Shipley-based Just Desserts, which last year invested £50,000 in new equipment, pro-



ducts and marketing as it continued to defy the recession.

Managing director James O'Dwyer said: "We have had a better-than-expected Christmas trading period, so I am delighted.

"As we supply a wide range of desserts to restaurants, hotels and pubs, we have seen demand fluctuate, and some customers have cut back orders compared to previous years. But we have more than



Grandma Wild's are another local success story

replaced that with new business from Asian and ethnic food outlets.

"Many of our traditional English desserts such as the award-winning sticky toffee pudding seem to go down well with Asian restaurants and cafe bars. This is a section of the market we want to develop and will form part of our plans for 2010.

"We have survived the worst of the recession, and while there are signs of economic recovery, the market is still uncertain.

"Our decision to invest in extra capacity and new equipment in our craft bakery has been justified. We are in a good position to meet customers' needs in 2010, and shall be planning some exciting new products this year."

James first started in Salts Mill, Saltaire, in 1985, and after five years expanded into purpose-built premises in Shipley to meet increased demand.

Its customers include restaurants, hotels, pubs, leisure outlets, garden centres, farm shops, cafes and outside caterers. The extensive product range includes tarts and pastries, gateaux, cheesecakes, mousses, roulades, cakes and individual tarts.

Just Desserts is a member of the Guild of Fine Foods and the Yorkshire Regional Food Group.

Big hand for small operators

The Regional Food Group for Yorkshire believes the Government's new food strategy, Food 2030, is a valuable starting point to set out the challenges facing the sector.

The report outlined the need for sustainable and healthy food in the UK, and the importance of educating consumers about the benefits of this.

Chief executive Jonathan Knight (pictured) said: "Food security is a real issue and it's clear that part of the solution is to produce more food in the region.

"It's also clear that an efficient and productive local food economy is a critical ingredient to this challenge.

"Small producers are often seen as insignificant in the grand scale of things, but as the growth of some of our local producers has demonstrated, they can be real exemplars of how to innovate and grow effectively.

"Yorkshire is such a crucial player in the UK food economy, producing 23 per cent of the UK's beef, having 64 per cent of the country's pigs and producing 32 per cent of all pees and beans in the country: our contribution to the UK's future needs is very daunting.

"We are very fortunate that Yorkshire Forward set up the

Regional Food Group some years ago and we, and our growing number of local food producers, are well on the road to meeting the challenge.

"The report points out that the key challenge for local bodies and organisations like the Regional Food Group is to support small and medium-sized businesses and the group works with smaller enterprises to help them build their businesses."

The group holds annual Meet The Buyer events, which help safeguard jobs by generating millions of pounds of deals for local businesses, including £3.5m worth of new business in 2009 alone. This year's event is in April.

In line with the Government's pledge to promote traditional and regional speciality foods, the group is encouraging a greater uptake of the EU Protected Food Name scheme in the Yorkshire area.

This recently gave protected status to fish from Grimsthy, and decisions are awaited for both Wensleydale Cheese and Yorkshire Indoor Forced Rhubarb.

Jonathan said: "The Regional Food Group is dedicated to promoting local food through its delicious Yorkshire brand, which enables consumers to make informed choices of local and regional food for a healthy diet.

"We also wholeheartedly support the need to establish clear and unambiguous country-of-origin labelling."



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— Just Desserts managing director James O'Dwyer