The Chronicle COMMENT

THE life sentence imposed on Norfolk farmer Tony Martin for shooting a young burglar who broke into his isolated home has sparked a massive debate on the right of homeowners to defend their property.

The case brings the question of rural crime into sharp focus, especially in counties like Flintshire where there are many off-the-beaten-track farmhouses.

Many country dwellers feel vulnerable, living miles from the nearest police station. So it is almost inevitable they will take measures to protect themselves and their families in the event of intruders breaking in.

The question is how much force are they allowed to use to defend themselves and their loved ones.

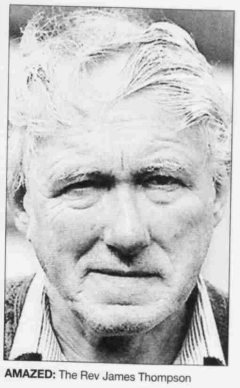
Tory leader William Hague insists the rights of the individual to repel burglars must be strengthened and promises legislation if he wins the next election.

Out-of-town folk who feel vulnerable in their own homes will welcome the way the spotlight has fallen on the issue of rural crime.

There is great sympathy for Tony Martin, who is now preparing an appeal.

The wave of public sympathy which followed his conviction has left many people with a sense of unease about the present state of the law.

It will be up to the appeal court to rule on Mr Martin's fate, but it will be left to politicians to judge the mood of the nation on the sensitive issue of the rights of individuals to defend their home and property.



AMAZED: The Rev James Thompson

Car park fiasco is insult to motorists

THE utter meanness of Flintshire County Council over Holywell car parks never ceases to amaze me.

Little over a month ago a lady solicitor from Mold received a £20 fine because she moved her car from one of the town's council-run car parks to another off the same high street.

She was told she would not be excused as the ticket was not transferable. Consequently she has affirmed that it will be a long time before she shops again in Holywell.

Can you blame her when parking is free in other towns to encourage local shopping?

Now this week I learn of a school-teacher from Connah's Quay who has been similarly insulted.

She parked outside Holywell Leisure Centre after having acquired her ticket from the lower car park adjacent and ended up also with a £20 fine.

The ticket for the lower car park was, presumably, not acceptable for the sports area. Yet both are run by the same crazy council.

I use the word crazy because I want to give these councillors the benefit of the doubt. I honestly do not want to believe for one moment that their motives are devious.

But it has to be pointed out that this regime also presses to raise car parking charges further while simultaneously giving the go ahead for a Tesco, with free parking, on a Green Belt at Holywell.

Yes, and far enough from the town centre shops to bankrupt them.

Daily I find the line between simple and sinister more difficult to define.

The Rev JAMES THOMPSON
Fron Park Road,
Holywell

CHARITY CYCLE: Anthea Turner invites readers to take up the Mencap challenge.

Theatre still lacks suitable commercial manager

WHAT a relief to know that the future of Clwyd Theatr Cymru is safe.

I must however confess that I would be even more convinced if Terry Hands waved goodbye to Flintshire and Keith McDonogh and Margaret Hanson removed their blinkers and appointed someone to manage the theatre on a commercial basis.

A little time spent in the real world outside the cloistered walls of County Hall may do them some good.

The fatuous comment that there will be no major productions during the summer months because of lack of air conditioning beggars belief.

Isn't the chairman of the governors aware that since the theatre opened it was common to see packed houses during the summer in the Anthony Hopkins Theatre watching the latest films without air conditioning?

Perhaps they should consider requesting financial help from theatres in South Wales which manage to run their establishments on a surer financial footing and offer a wider choice of entertainment.

NAME AND ADDRESS SUPPLIED

Open debate needed on Irving's historical beliefs

ON April 11 David Irving lost his High Court libel case against Professor Deborah Lipstadt.

The major national newspapers claim Irving is racist, dangerous, even a lion of neo-Nazism – *The Express*, April 12 – and that his assertions about the Holocaust are racist lies.

This may or may not be the case, but astonishingly, they never say where and why he is so incorrect in his texts and speeches.

Neither is there any open forum debate with Irving himself. And yet in the face of this, they still expect us, the readers, to believe them in their description of Irving and his works.

It is one thing to be simply ignorant of the history of the Second World War and still criticise Irving, but the wilful suppression of views that are not of one's own, or not to one's liking, is another.

The media, unlike with other matters of serious public interest, did not keep us, the readers, informed of the developments within the Irving-Lipstadt case as it was happening.

Instead we got as many as two and three pages of articles after the case and all in condemnation of Irving, right across the board. Strangely it was as if it has been prescripted.

Only when we have before us all the evidence, investigation, research and an open debate will we not have to rely on the suspect opinion of others.

K JONES
Coed Onn Road,
Flint

Join Mencap challenge for a ride of a lifetime

IF you want to widen your horizons, help others, improve your fitness and meet new people then I have the perfect way for you to achieve these goals.

Royal Mencap, the leading charity for people with a learning disability, has organised two exciting cycle challenges for November.

How about embarking on an 11-day, 420km cycling adventure across Costa Rica from the north western beaches of the Pacific to the Caribbean coast of the south east.

Ride through jungle and rainforest, raft through rapids and camp under an active volcano.

Alternatively you may prefer to experience the beauty and culture of India on a 10-day 400km cycle ride through the winding Himalayas to the Ganges with a climactic visit to the Taj Mahal.

Both rides will be a physical challenge and will help raise vital funds for people with learning disabilities to live full and active lives.

All you need to do is pay a £200 registration fee and minimum sponsorship requirement and then flights, food and accommodation are covered.

For further details on Mencap's International Challenge Events telephone 0645 777 779 or to receive your event pack write to Cycle Costa Rica-India, Mencap, FREEPOST, London EC1B 1AA.

ANTHEA TURNER

Humour is no substitute for real politics

CONGRATULATIONS to John Ellis (*Chronicle* letters, April 20) on both his grasp of British history and gift for creative fiction.

His tongue-in-cheek response to a serious point employs the popular New Labour method of avoiding the message and attacking the messenger.

Whatever the composition of the Upper Chamber in Parliament, it has a vital constitutional role to play as a check and balance on the executive which must not be neutralised if our parliamentary democracy and freedom under the law is to continue in the future.

It is therefore vital that Tony Blair now moves on to full second stage reform of the House of Lords with a strong elected element – a requirement which not surprisingly his own proposals reject because it would give the House of Lords legitimacy to challenge his own world plan.

Conservatism is about a dislike of extremes and the championing of evolutionary change as vital to the avoidance of stagnation.

Fortunately for John Ellis we also retain a good sense of humour.

MARK ISHERWOOD
Alyn & Deeside Conservative Association

Strange weather reports required

I AM making a climate change documentary about the effects of global warming on Britain and would like to hear about any experiences your readers may have had with regards to unseasonal weather – early springs, exceptionally warm winter days – the arrival of strange insects and birds, and extreme weather events such as flooding, drought, storms and coastal erosion.

What are their feelings about climate change? I am also keen to learn about the existence of any relevant video clips or photographs that might exist and whether or not they would be prepared to be interviewed. The address to write to is below.

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Chronicle Newspapers

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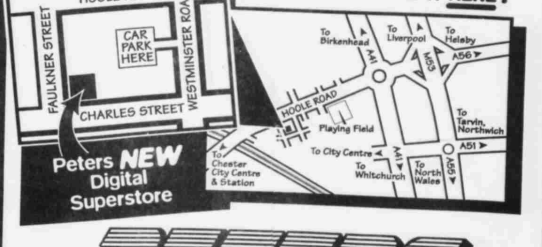

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