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Diana Packwood with some of the Wace Morgan team

Diana marks decade at helm

Diana Packwood, Wace Morgan's Managing Partner, is marking a decade in the role this month.

Diana, who joined the firm over 30 years ago, has seen the business go from strength to strength over the course of her leadership.

"I am immensely proud..."

"I am immensely proud to be celebrating my 10th anniversary as Managing Partner," said Diana, who also oversees the conveyancing team. Her main achievement during the last decade was the merging of three Shrewsbury offices into one base in 2015.

"The move to St Mary's Street, and investment in IT, was a major step forward for Wace Morgan and one which has been of enormous benefit to clients and staff," Diana said.

She has also developed the marketing function of the firm and seen staff numbers grow from around 60 to 90 in the last 10 years, which has included the recruitment of trainees.

Other milestones include the expansion into Newtown and Bishops Castle.

Diana has a keen interest in the arts and the firm is now one of the most prominent supporters of community events, such as theatre and musical productions, in Shrewsbury, giving valuable backing to local performers.

Under her guidance, Wace Morgan's work with the Armed Forces, through the Forces Law organisation, continues to grow.



Lizzie riding high



One of our latest recruits is riding high after qualifying for a national equestrian event.

Lizzie Hughes, vice president of the Shropshire Law Society, is a new member of our family team.

She specialises in family law, specifically cases involving children, including intervention by social services, adoption and custody disputes and appears regularly on the West Midlands,

Shropshire and mid Wales court circuit before all levels of judges from magistrates to circuit judges.

Lizzie represented England in dressage last year and has just taken part in the British Dressage Winter National Championships at Hartpury in Gloucestershire on her horse Jemima.

"I have been riding since I was four and compete all over the country," said Lizzie, who qualified for the British event thanks to a string of excellent results in regional competitions.

She is now aiming to qualify for the summer national championships and move up to advanced level in dressage.

'Home healthcheck' service offered

The conveyancing team at Wace Morgan Solicitors, based in Shrewsbury, is providing a 'property healthcheck' for clients.



Residential conveyancing executive **Sue Cornish**, who has over 30 years' experience in the sector, says that the service will smooth the home selling process.

"This is the time of year when a lot of people are thinking about moving and more properties are going on the market," said Sue, who specialises in freehold and leasehold residential sales and purchases and associated matters.

"It can be a stressful procedure but we are encouraging people to use our property healthcheck.

"This means that we carry out a review of their property's title, ensure that any deeds to an unregistered title are obtained in good time and advise whether to apply for a voluntary registration of the title prior to the sale.

"We also check that all the necessary planning and building regulation and consents for any work are in place and see that all rights that benefit the property are properly recorded in the deeds.

"By investigating all this we hope to cut down on the number of enquiries at a later stage and so simplify and speed up the selling process, making life easier for all parties," Sue said.

Anyone wishing to take advantage of the service should contact Sue on 01743 280100.

A new solicitor has strengthened our expanding family department.

Gemma Hughes joins the family team from another Shropshire law firm.

"Wace Morgan has an excellent reputation for family law and I am delighted to be strengthening their team of specialists even further," said Gemma, who will focus on issues relating to finance.

After attending Moreton Hall School in Oswestry she studied at St Andrew's University, Scotland, obtaining a masters degree in international relations.

A law conversion course followed at the College of Law in Chester and she qualified as a solicitor with a local firm in 2011.

Gemma lives just outside Shrewsbury and in her spare time enjoys walking her dogs in the countryside.



'Attorney card' introduced

A new emergency contact card has been developed to complement Health and Care Lasting Powers of Attorney (LPA).



Emma Jacobs, of the private client team, with the new cards

Our solicitors always advise that client's doctors keep a copy of this registered document with their medical records. However, in the event of an emergency, its existence may not be known about so the client's wishes could be compromised.

This could be, for instance, if an ambulance was called to a person and a treatment decision was made against the person's express wishes, of which their attorney was aware.

Consequently we decided to produce a free wallet-friendly card confirming that the person has a Health and Care LPA and including GP, solicitor and attorney contact details.

We are advising clients to carry the card at all times so that medical professionals know who should be contacted for decision-making in case of a crisis.

Wace Morgan is believed to be the only Shropshire legal firm to be offering this card.

We are introducing the 'Health and Care Cards' as part of our campaign to encourage clients to plan ahead.

We urge everyone to think about their future financial and health requirements and how important decisions will be made in the event of their mental or physical incapacity.

Many people are now drawing up and registering a Lasting Power of Attorney document specifically covering their health and care. This appoints someone to legally make medical and welfare decisions on their behalf if they are no longer capable of making such decisions themselves.

Bereaved families urged to act quickly to avoid fee increase

Bereaved families in Shropshire and mid Wales are being urged to act quickly to settle the financial affairs of a deceased relative due to a planned increase in administration costs.

The government has just announced that a large increase to probate fees will be introduced from May 2017.

Wace Morgan was one of the many businesses who objected to the government's proposals when announced last year.

"We expressed our concern at the plans during the consultation period but the rise is going ahead anyway and we think it will cause financial hardship for many local families," said **Emma Jacobs** of the private client team.

There is currently no fee for applying for a grant of representation, which gives you the legal right to administer a deceased person's estate, if the estate is worth less than £5,000. Over £5,000, if a personal representative is applying for the grant then the court fee is £215 and if applying through a solicitor it is £155.

From May, the applicable court fees will be calculated on the value of the deceased's estate. The new bands will see an increase of 40% to £300 for estates worth £50,000 to £300,000 and escalating to £20,000 for estates worth £2m plus - a 9,200% increase.

These fees are payable in addition to any inheritance tax due and must be paid before the grant of representation is issued.

Emma added: "It is expected that rising property prices will push many estates into higher probate fee bands

"The new probate fees will also create problems where estates predominantly consist of assets, such as property or farms, as there may not be enough cash available to pay the fee, leading to expensive bridging loans, additional administration costs and delay.

"A very small number of families - where the estate is less than £50,000 but more than £5,000 - will benefit as they will now not have to pay a fee at all but the changes will have a major financial impact on a large number of bereaved families.

"Recently bereaved families should act quickly and look to apply for the grant of representation as soon as possible to avoid paying the increased fees."

The government says this money will be a 'critical contribution to cutting the deficit and reducing the burden on the taxpayer of running the courts and tribunals'.

Sponsorship for some special shows

We will be providing backing for several Shropshire arts events this year.

As part of its community involvement, the firm has recently sponsored **A Tale of Two Cities** at the Theatre Severn, produced by Shrewsbury Amateur Operatic Society.

The show, based on Charles Dickens's great work, was a huge success with local audiences. Later this month, we are one of the main supporters of **Anything Goes**, being staged by Mad Cow Productions from April 27 to 29, also at Theatre Severn.

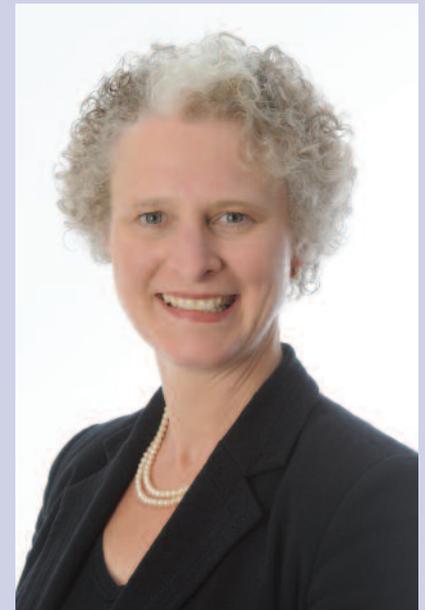
Cole Porter's joyful, exuberant, first-class comedy is regarded as one of the best musicals in theatre history.

The plot involves a crew of singing sailors, an exotic disguise and some good old-fashioned blackmail and the show is peppered with timeless classics including I Get A Kick Out Of You, You're the Top, and of course, Anything Goes.

At the end of April, Wace Morgan is sponsoring a visit by best selling author, national treasure and broadcaster **Clare Balding** as she introduces her very first children's book 'The Racehorse Who Wouldn't Gallop' at the Shrewsbury Children's Bookfest on April 28 at Prestfelde School.

She will share stories from her own childhood growing up surrounded by animals, offer expert advice and the event will end with an audience Q&A and a book signing.

The Bookfest runs from April 28 to May 1.



Sallie-Anne takes on county role

The head of our Family Department, Sallie-Anne O'Byrne, has been appointed as Deputy Under Sheriff for Shropshire.

In this role she will work with the county's Under Sheriff, Madeleine Butcher, who is a former Wace Morgan partner:

"Madeleine supports the High Sheriff, who is the Queen's representative in the county for all matters relating to the judiciary and the maintenance of law and order," explains Sallie-Anne.

"Her title is largely concerned with helping the High Sheriff at ceremonial occasions as well as assisting with other legal matters such as those relating to parliamentary elections.

"As Deputy Under Sheriff my role is to give further support, when necessary, and I am very honoured to have been selected – I look forward to the new challenge," Sallie-Anne added.



Diana Packwood, with some of the cast of A Tale of Two Cities



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