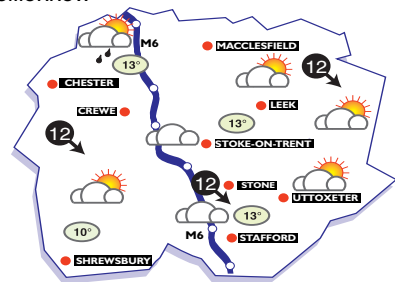


## Info Desk

## Weather

TOMORROW



Information supplied by PA WeatherCentre

**TONIGHT:** There will be plenty of cloud around during the first half of the night, and it will be mostly dry. Cloud will break through during the early hours to leave some clear spells. A moderate north-westerly wind. Low 5-8C (42-46F).

**TOMORROW:** It will be a cool and breezy day. There will be some sunshine, but cloud will bring a scattering of showers, some heavy. Moderate to fresh north-westerly winds, easing a little later in the day. High 11-14C (52-57F).

**Air Pollution:** Rural: 3; Towns and Cities: 3; Roadside: 3. Low (1-3), Moderate (4-6), High (7-9), Very High (10).

**Hours of Darkness:** 9.14pm to 4.56am. Data supplied by the Science and Engineering Research Council.

## Chemists

**AUDLEY:** Co-op, Church Street, 5.30-6.30pm.

**CHEADLE:** Ratcliffe, High Street, 6-6.30pm.

**CONGLETON:** Boots, Bridge Street, 6-7pm.

**CREWE:** Williams, Nantwich Road, 9-8pm.

**ECCLESHALL:** Eccleshall Pharmacy, High Street, 5.30-6.30pm.

**NANTWICH:** Williams, High Street, 9am-5.30pm.

**SHELTON:** Lloyds, Stoke Road, 9am-10pm.

**STONE:** Birchill & Watson, High Street, 5.30-6.30pm.

**TEAN:** Lawton, High Street, 5.30-6.30pm.

**UTTOXETER:** Uttoxeter Pharmacy, Market Place, 5.30-6.30pm.

## Shares

Prices at 3.30pm yesterday

## PRIVATISATION

Alliance & L ..... 834.5 +7  
Aviva ..... 602.5 +1.5  
Brad & B ..... 302 nc  
Brit Airways ..... 244.75 +1.5  
Br Energy ..... 316.25 -2.5  
BAA ..... 583.5 +0.5  
BG Grp ..... 405.75 nc  
BP ..... 539 +1  
BT Grp ..... 200 -1.25  
Corus Grp ..... 44.5 +0.5  
Base Grp ..... 0.10 -0.02  
Centrica ..... 219.5 -2.75  
HBOS ..... 781 -2.5  
Lloyd TSB ..... 458 +4  
MMO2 ..... 116.25 nc  
R Royce ..... 244.5 +0.25  
NatGrid ..... 508.75 -0.5  
Severn Trt ..... 966.5 -5.5  
Int Power ..... 183.75 -2  
Viridian ..... 746 -10.5

## LOCAL COMPANIES

B'ford Ord ..... 0.15 nc  
Churchill ..... 207 nc  
CobraBioMan ..... 58 +2.5

Cookson ..... 34.75 -0.25  
Dechra ..... 194 nc  
Goodwin ..... 340 nc  
Halstead (J) ..... 505 nc  
J Matthey ..... 914 nc  
Smart Grp ..... 9.5 nc  
K3BsTechGp ..... 75 nc  
N Foods ..... 152.25 -1.25  
Pearson ..... 635 -1.5  
Portmeirion ..... 155 nc  
Slimma ..... 65 nc  
St M'wen ..... 391.5 +2.75  
UCM Group ..... 68 -0.5  
W'ford Wd ..... 60.5 +0.02  
A J Worth ..... 21 +0.5  
FTSE Index: Down 2.8 at 4858.4. Prices (for selling) supplied by Brewin Dolphin Securities Ltd of Hanley.

## Tourist Rates

Eurozone 1.41 euro  
America 1.83 dollars  
Australia 2.38 dollars  
Canada 2.28 dollars

## National Lottery

Saturday's Lottery numbers: 30, 35, 38, 41, 45, 48. The bonus ball was 46.

Thunderball draw: 5, 9, 16, 27, 32. Thunderball: 5.

Lottery Extra draw: 7, 16, 33, 34, 41, 43.

Lotto Daily: 6, 9, 10, 14, 16, 20, 22.

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# Community devastated after loss of popular venue

## Families evacuated as club burns down



**BLAZE BATTLE:** firefighters tackle the flames at Silverdale, below, some of the firefighters don breathing gear to check inside the building  
Pictures: Jon Bartholomew

BY NICK MCDERMOTT

FAMILIES were evacuated from their homes last night as a blaze gutted a working men's club.

A 200-yard stretch of road was sealed off, as 50 firefighters battled the blaze at Silverdale Working Men's Club from 4.45pm yesterday.

Police are investigating the cause of the fire.

Three people inside the club at the time of the fire managed to escape unharmed. Fire investigators today confirmed the club would have to be demolished.

Club committee member, Dennis Johnson, said today: "Everybody from Silverdale comes in the club, both young and old. It's at the heart of the community and lots of groups and sports teams use the building. Every night of the week there's something going on."

"It's a massive blow to the vil-



lage, but we are determined that the club will rise again from the ashes. It's one of the best clubs in the area as far as we're concerned."

Lynda Brookes, who used to work at the club, said the blaze has left the community heartbroken.

She said: "It's one of the most friendly clubs. It's a great social club, so it's heartbreaking to lose

it. I'm gutted because we have had some happy times at that club."

"The most important thing is that we get the club back up and running as soon as possible."

Silverdale resident Ian Gilmore said: "The club is part of the community. Everyone meets in the club and lots of community groups use the building as well. It is a massive loss to the com-

munity as it's the only club in the village."

Fire crews were today continuing to monitor the fire.

A fire service spokesman said: "On arrival, fire crews were confronted by a severe fire, which engulfed the entire building."

"The premises were totally destroyed by fire, and on advice of the building inspector will be demolished. At the height of the fire, 50 firefighters were involved to extinguish the blaze and residents immediately opposite the club were evacuated."

A police spokesman said: "A number of residents left their homes due to the amount of smoke. The area was cordoned off by the police while the fire and rescue service tackled the blaze."

Anyone with information should contact Staffordshire Police on 08453 302010.

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## O'Reilly pledges company's commitment to England

From Page 1

effective way. Once we tick that box we can look to making the most beautiful products in the world."

The latest restructuring will be funded by a seven for 11 rights issue which will offer shareholders the right to buy 11 new shares at 4.1p for every seven that they own. The current market price is 2.7p a share.

It is expected that cash from the rights issue will start to ease cashflow difficulties which have resulted in delays in paying creditors. Mr O'Reilly said: "Obviously, we are working a tight fiscal line when you're trying to put two global businesses together

and there's a lot of investment required. At the end of the day, we will be raising a lot of money over the next six weeks which should make things a lot easier."

Mr O'Reilly dismissed suggestions that the offer was deliberately priced to allow his father Sir Anthony and Peter Goulandris, who are underwriting the fund-raising exercise, to build their existing stake of ownership. They currently hold 24.6 per cent of the group's share capital.

He said: "This is not a case

of back door stake building. They are simply two large shareholders who want to recapitalise the business."

He also flatly ruled out the possible sale or flotation of Wedgwood as well as speculation that the stock market listed group could be taken private.

Mr O'Reilly said: "No, there's no intention. We are part of a group, an integral part of a group, of Waterford Wedgwood, and form part of its past and its future."

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## Cost of streamlining

THE restructuring by Waterford Wedgwood is the latest bout undertaken by the firm since 1997. In that year it announced a one-off rationalisation scheme costing £24 million to streamline the business across the UK and Ireland. Now its current bill is almost £200 million and has led to the loss of 2,000 jobs in North Staffordshire.

This has led the workforce of Wedgwood in the city to drop from 4,000 shopfloor staff — as well as substantial levels of administration workers — to around 2,500 people. In 1998 the company cut 500 jobs and a further 500 administrative posts went in 2001. In 2003, the company shed a further 700 people following its decision to shift production of its Johnson Brothers' brand out of Stoke-on-Trent to China — a plan that has cost the business £44 million over two years. Waterford said 950 jobs will be lost as a result of the merger between the two pottery giants — although 450 have already gone after the closure of the Nile Street factory in Burslem. About 100 retail and 200 distribution jobs are targeted to go worldwide as the operations of Royal Doulton and Wedgwood unite.