

Mourne Observer

LARGEST SALES IN COUNTY DOWN

WEDNESDAY 17 FEBRUARY, 2010

DOWN EDITION

www.mourneobserver.com

61st YEAR

95p

Local Coastguards among those to be honoured – PAGE 18



Newcastle Comhaltas takes charge of Celtic Fusion festival – PAGE 13



Year 14 Down High students Rebekah Hyndman, Colin Stewart, Anna Rea, Stewart Milligan and Charlie Nash tune up for the Downpatrick school's Spring concert which is due to be held in the Great Hall of the Downshire Hospital next month. See report on page 14. *Photo: Chris Halpin.*

South Down men in court over £2m drugs haul

TWO local men have appeared in court in connection with a £2m drugs haul in Northern Ireland and the north of England.

The pair – 27-year-old Keith Laffin, of Ballyveaghmore Road, Ballymartin, and 20-year-old Gary Stevenson, with an address at The Hawthorns in Annalong, appeared before Laganside Court in Belfast yesterday (Tuesday) afternoon.

The Mourne men were among a group of eight men charged in connection with the raids which took place in Killeel, the Greater Belfast area and in Preston, England, at the weekend.

Laffin and Stevenson, along with five others, are charged with conspiring to supply cocaine, amphetamines and herbal cannabis and intent to supply.

The eighth man was charged with possession of a class B drug, namely amphetamines.

Seven of the men are from Northern Ireland, some of no fixed abode, while the other is a Dutch national.

Both Laffin and Stevenson were remanded in custody to appear again before the court on 16 March. (See page 3)

No cutbacks for PSNI station

By Lisa Ramsden

THE Police Service has this week taken steps to quell rumours that Newcastle PSNI station has been earmarked for major cutbacks.

Fears over the base's future started to circulate at the weekend after it emerged that the general enquiry desk at the local station would be open only between 8am and 8pm, sparking concerns that police officers would not be on duty at the station at night.

However, the Service this week refuted claims that the change in opening times for the general enquiry desk at Newcastle was an indicator that other policing duties would be withdrawn from the local station, and also from Downpatrick.

Down District's PSNI Commander Deirdre Bones said the aim of the changes was to maximise resources and get more officers back on the streets to respond to calls from members of the public.

"They constantly tell us they want more police officers back on the beat to respond to the crimes that matter to them the most – anti-social behaviour, burglaries and car crime," the Chief

Inspector explained.

"This is about ensuring we have the right people in the right places at the right time. It will not mean a reduction in service, people can still report crime via 999, the non-emergency number 0845 600 8000, or they can go to the station in an emergency."

She added: "I met with DPP [District Policing Partnership] representatives to brief them on the reduction in station opening hours and I am glad to say they have been fully supportive of this decision, which will release an additional police officer to perform a frontline policing role every night," the Down Area Commander added. (to page 13)

The Perfect Hen Party (OR LADIES' MINI BREAK)



- Return trip to Dublin on luxury coach
- Complimentary bottle of champagne and chocolates
- 1 night Dinner, Bed and Breakfast in a fabulous 5-Star Hotel
- Full use of Leisure Centre and Spa facilities
- 1 x 30 minute Mini Facial
- 1 x 30 minute Anti-stress Back Massage
- The following day shopping at Dundrum Town Centre
- Evening Meal at Carrickdale on return journey

Total Cost: £150 pps (min 15 persons)

Stag Packages also available
CALL FOR DETAILS

We are also taking bookings for Easter Mini Breaks for families.

Highwayman Coaches

07718 909635 or 028 4377 1861

www.highwaymanbuses.com