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'Op' provided a weighty problem

By Adam Richards

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WEIGHING in at a whopping 70 stone, he was dubbed Britain's fattest man.

But thanks to a top Basingstoke surgeon Paul Mason is turning his life around.

Consultant bariatric surgeon Shaw Somers, who practices at BMI The Hampshire Clinic in Old Basing, led the team that treated the 57stn Ipswich man.

A Channel 4 documentary on Wednesday last week put the pair into the spotlight as it followed the course of Paul's treatment.

Paul reached his size by chomping through 20,000 calories a day - eight times more than the recommended amount of 2,500.

But after Mr Somers performed a gastric bypass operation in 2010, reducing Paul's stomach size and limiting his food intake, his patient was able to shed over 20 stone and regain his mobility.

Mr Somers, who lives North of Winchester, said: "In my time as a surgeon, I have seen some similar cases, but his was by far the most extreme case.

"I generally take most cases in my stride, but I will admit I was quite taken aback by his weight



• Paul Mason was Britain's fattest man before his operation

and how he was still in relatively good health - his heart was still good and he didn't have diabetes."

In the programme, Paul explained about his pre-surgery eating habits, which saw him snack on more than 30 chocolate bars and 70 bags of crisps.

Mr Somers said that the documentary was important in high-

lighting issues around rising obesity and addiction.

He said: "The documentary highlighted the looming health issues faced in the UK. Every day in my practice, I see the devastating impact obesity can have on people's health and quality of life. Paul had his reasons for turning to food, but because food addiction is not seen as dangerous as drugs or alcohol people do not class it as a real illness."

And he defended performing the operation on tax-payers money.

He said that Paul was costing the country up to £100,000 in wel-

fare support.

Mr Somers has worked at the Old Basing practice for over two years and has more than 24 years experience as a surgeon.

He now plans to expand his role in Basingstoke by performing NHS operations at the private clinic.

He performs over 300 gastric bypass operations a year, but presented the same challenges as Paul's operation.

He said: "While a man of Paul's size did surgically present its challenges, the biggest challenge was mechanical which the whole team managed perfectly."

Police probe death of pony found in ditch

THE mutilated body of a pony was discovered in a ditch in Greywell, near Hook.

Police are appealing for anyone with information about the find to come forward.

The animal's mutilated body was dumped in a ditch on Hook Road between December 25 and January 3.

Police said the Skewbold pony had suffered a hip injury. Its gender could not be determined.

"At this stage, we are unsure

how this pony died," said Hampshire Constabulary's equine liaison officer, PC Stacy Beale

"However it would appear that its body has been mutilated to prevent it from being identified or its owners traced."

Police have not released any more information regarding the animal's death.

Anyone with information should call PC Beale at Yately police station on 101 or the Crimestoppers charity, anonymously, on 0800 555 111.

Food vans torched by vandals

ARSONISTS targeted two food vans in Basingstoke.

Police in the town are now appealing for witnesses to the raid.

The first attack happened between Wednesday December 22 and Tuesday January 4 in Rankine Road when a burger van was set on fire.

The second incident occurred between 10pm and 11pm on

Sunday January 9 in Roentgen Road on Daneshill Industrial Estate.

A kebab van parked in front of Buildbase was attacked and fire investigation officers say fire-lighters were used to set the rear tyres alight.

Officers are investigating whether the incidents are linked and are appealing for anyone who may have seen any-

one acting suspiciously or suspicious vehicles in either area over the past few weeks.

Owners of food vans are also being advised to consider where their vehicles are stored to ensure they are not damaged.

Anyone with any information should call Basingstoke police station on 101 or Crimestoppers, anonymously, on 0800 555 111

NEWS BITES

Lucky numbers

ST MICHAEL'S Hospice has announced the results of lottery 139, drawn on Friday.

First prize of £1,000 goes to 66306 Oakley, second prize of £100 to 35607 Basingstoke, third prize of £50 to 06779 Chineham and fourth prize of £20 to 72274 Basingstoke

Sixteen prizes of £5 go to 03836, 03912, 05847, 08202, 24900, 31789, 36518, 44198, 45883, 47128, 53123, 59662, 66635, 71373, 74994 and 77422.

Since the lottery launched in May 2008, it has raised over £30,000 in profit for the hospice.

For more information about joining the lottery, visit www.stmichaelshospice.org or call 08700 501677.

Textiles show

AN internationally renowned textile artist will be showcasing a new exhibition in the Willis Museum's Sainsbury Gallery in Basingstoke.

Winchester artist Alice Kettle has created a series of large scale wall hangings rich in movement and colour.

Cllr Margaret Snaith-Tempia said: "Hampshire County Council is delighted to hold this exhibition by our local internationally renowned artist.

The exhibition launches on January 15 and runs through to March 22.

Lions' share

HOOK and Odiham Lions Club's Christmas fundraising drive collected £3,292 for charity.

The club held a number of Santa sleigh tours around Basingstoke and Deane throughout December.

Club member Greta Grieg, said: "Considering how cold it was we have to say a massive thank you to all who braved the elements to support us."



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