

Debbie who? The US star no one here even knows

Ex-E Lancs lass has hit TV show and best sellers

LITTLE may be known on this side of the Atlantic about Debbie Travis but this East Lancashire-raised lass is one of most famous women in Canada and America.

Hollywood superstar Tom Hanks was once told to cut short his slot on a talk show to make way for Debbie, Oprah Winfrey has interviewed her, her books have sold tens of millions, and her design and decoration TV programmes paved the way for a revolution in makeover shows.

And yet when 52-year-old Debbie Travis returns to Blackburn, few people know how big a star she is.

Debbie is a self-made interior design guru who, after moving to Canada with her husband, studied painting, decorating and design.

The former Westholme School student, who grew up in Simonstone, saw the success of DIY shows in the UK and took the concept into an untapped US and Canadian market.

Drawing on her experience in British TV, she created hit series Debbie Travis The Painted House, which now has viewers in more than 80

countries. From there the former model's empire teaching people basic DIY, from stencilling to marble effects, was born.

The mum-of-two's success spiralled with guest slots on The Oprah Show, The Today Show and Entertainment Tonight Canada, and best selling books by leading publisher Random House.

Debbie, whose father John Travis was mayor of Ribbles Valley twice, admits she was no goody-goody at school.

"On a careers day at Westholme I was told I would be a secretary or get married.

"But I came from a big family and we didn't have any money and I was the only one to go to Westholme. We couldn't afford it. I felt privileged to go and I had to make something of myself.

"I was the kind of person who blew my own trumpet, that I was going to be this and that. But you have to have that attitude in the States."

Debbie married in Whalley Abbey in 1985, three weeks after meeting her husband Hans Rosenstein at the Cannes film festival, and tries to return to the UK at least once a year.

She has her own media company, Whalley Abbey Media, and uses a picture of the abbey for its logo.

Debbie said: "When I come back nobody knows me. But it's great nostalgia when I come back."

MAKE WAY Tom Hanks



CELEBRATED Debbie Travis took the homes makeover concept to US and Canadian TV; below left, on the cover of the National Post, and right, on holiday as a youngster



Diana signed up for Isle festival

DIANA Vickers has announced that she will be playing this year's Isle of Wight Festival.

In a post on her official website, the Huncoat singer confirmed that she will perform on Friday, June 11.

The 19-year-old former Westholme pupil joins the likes of Kings of Leon, Foo Fighters, Pulp, Iggy and the Stooges and Kasabian.

The Isle of Wight Festival takes place on June 10-12.



Shops plan for garage

PLANS for the change of use of the car showroom at Perry's Car Sales, Waterloo Road, Clitheroe, into a retail unit with alterations to the front to create two new

shop windows have been approved by planning chiefs at Ribbles Valley Borough Council.

Proposals also include new gates near the entrance.

AN application to fell twelve ash trees near 12 Church Street in Clitheroe have been submitted to the planning committee at Ribbles Valley Borough Council.



Drink penalty

GAVIN Derry, 23, of Beardwood Street, Blackburn, was given a conditional discharge for 12 months and ordered to pay £135 costs by Blackburn magistrates after pleading guilty to being drunk and disorderly.

New clinic

A CHIROPODY and podiatry clinic is set to open at the former Fylde Finance office in Mincing Lane, Blackburn, after Blackburn with Darwen Council approved plans to change the use of the building.

NEIL Aston McCartney, 21, of Central Drive, Blackpool, was remanded on bail by Blackburn magistrates after pleading not guilty to assaulting Deborah Bell in Blackburn.

'Vital' business grant is axed

A BUSINESS grant that has paid out £4.8million in the past five years to East Lancashire firms has been effectively axed, it has emerged.

Grants for Business Investment (GBI) were funded by central government but distributed by the now disbanded regional development agencies.

They have been all but phased out in a little-seen part of the government's Local Growth White Paper.

The decision has been branded a 'massive blow' for small and medium-sized manufacturing

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businesses in East Lancs, which the grants helped support.

Dave Harling, Blackburn with Darwen Council's regeneration chief, said: "The companies that are creating jobs and growth in this part of the world are the small and medium-sized ones, so this is a massive blow."

"The government wants to get the country back on its feet but at the same time it is making decisions like this."

Eion Watts, chair of regeneration body Industrial Commu-

nities Alliance, said: "GBIs are a vital piece of kit in the regeneration toolbox and firms in our areas will suffer without them."

Blackburn, Darwen and parts of Hyndburn were eligible for GBIs, but Burnley, Pendle, Rossendale and Ribbles Valley were not. Among the companies gaining grants since 2005 were Darwen's WEC, £150,000, Blackburn bus maker Optare, £760,000, and EW Cartons, Altham, £95,000.

The Department for Business said GBIs would now only be awarded in 'exceptional' circumstances in order to 'address the budget deficit'.

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