

SOUTH WALES EVENING POST - 03.04.13

SOUTH WALES EVENING POST - 09.04.13

£15,000 benefit con to pay rent

By Ruth Mosalski

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A HEAVILY pregnant Sketty mum-of-three said she claimed an extra £15,000 in benefits because she was struggling to pay the rent at the time.

Gemma Stock, 23, was eight months pregnant as she appeared at Swansea Magistrates' Court.

City magistrates were told that in 2009 she told the Department of Work and Pensions she was a single parent and had separated from her partner, but in reality they were still living together as husband and wife.

In her first interview with officers, she denied a claim from officers she was living together with her husband, but after evidence from their bank accounts was put to her, she admitted the charge.

Prosecutor Laura Carthew told the court: "She then admitted she had not separated from him and admitted her dishonesty."

The total overpayment to Stock was more than £15,000.

Dan Heard, representing Stock, said that when she made the false statement she was expecting her third child and was in "financial difficulties".

"She was in real financial difficulties and her and her husband didn't feel they were able to make the rent payments. They didn't realise they were entitled to other financial support but she panicked and was stupid," he said.

He added: "At that particular time she didn't see another other way out from the difficulties she was in."

He said his client was currently expecting her fourth child and had suffered complications with all her previous pregnancies which had led to prolonged periods in hospital.

Mr Heard said she would struggle if magistrates imposed a community order because she could not complete unpaid work or a curfew order if she had to spend prolonged amounts of time in hospital if there were similar problems with her fourth child.

He urged them to consider an alternative sentence.

"She is somebody who has not had any involvement in the criminal justice system before and I doubt very much she will again," he said.

Mr Heard said Stock, of Tycoc Road, Sketty, was already paying the money back.

She had admitted a charge of falsely making a statement to obtain benefits and a second charge of failing to notify Swansea City Council of a change in circumstances between August 2010 and 2012.

That charge alleges she did not notify them of a change in circumstances which affected her entitlement to housing and council tax benefits.

After ordering a pre-sentence report to be prepared about Stock, magistrates sentenced her to a three month term, suspended for 12 months.

Benefits cheat's £45k in payouts

A BENEFIT cheat who claimed an extra £45,800 in payouts has avoided jail.

By Ruth Mosalski

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Paul Lapping, aged 53, who is wheelchair-bound and paraplegic after a motorcycle accident when he was 17, failed to tell authorities he had been received £125,000 in 2006 after his mother's death.

He continued to claim income support, council tax and housing benefits over five years, prosecutor Stuart McLeese told Swansea Crown Court.

Lapping had used that money to buy a house in Ontario in Canada, but told the court he had lost all but £17,000 when he sold the house five years later.

Mr McLeese told the court the claim had not been false from the outset, but had become so.

Lapping, aged 53, from Alderway, West Cross, admitted three charges of benefit fraud.

Judge Paul Thomas said he had been motivated by "pure greed" and that Lapping's previous convictions showed he was a dishonest man.

"Your decision not to disclose the money was motivated by pure greed. You're a man who's shown you're a dishonest one and that appears to be continuing into middle age," he said.

"The net result is that the

country, which can ill afford it, has lost out to the sum of £45,000 which you had and weren't entitled to," added the judge.

The judge expressed dismay at the information given to him that Lapping was repaying the amount at a rate of £14.20 a fortnight.

Ian Wright, for Lapping, said money was being "clawed" back by the agencies at a rate of £120 per month.

But the judge said he would have to live to be 100 to be close to repaying the full amount he falsely claimed.

Mr Wright said: "This case has provided him with a very sharp wake-up call and he acknowledges he comes perilously close to losing his liberty, but I invite the court to drawback from that."

Judge Thomas said he had to balance Lapping's "greed" with his guilty plea and his ill-health. He then agreed to suspend the 20 month sentence for two years and told Lapping to complete 300 hours of unpaid work.

"You have taken away from society and in my view it is fit and proper you should make a contribution back to society and the only way I can seek to do that is by giving you unpaid work," he added.

Wife admits claiming an extra £38k in benefits

A WIFE claimed an extra £38,000 in benefits by not telling authorities her husband was living with her, a court heard.

Donna Glover, aged 51, of Heol Iscoed, Fforestfach, admitted two counts of fraud. She accepted that between March 2008 and September 2012 she didn't tell the Department of Work and Pensions and Swansea City Council she was no longer living as a single person.

Prosecutor Ieuan Rees said the original charge amount of £44,000 had now been reduced to £38,000.

Swansea Crown Court heard her husband was occasionally staying at the house but was using her money to buy alcohol or gamble.

Judge Paul Thomas said she was "no better off" despite the fraudulent money.

Ben Blakemore, for Glover, said

By Ruth Mosalski

court reporter

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the claim was not fraudulent from the outset and that his client was suffering from a series of health problems.

Sentencing her, Judge Paul Thomas, said: "People who claim benefits that they are not entitled to are stealing from all the rest of us because it's public money. This however is an unusual case because your husband did return to live with you from time to time and you should have declared that. However, he didn't give you money and spent yours on gambling or his drinking."

The judge imposed a 16 week term suspended for 12 months and 12 months' supervision.

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STAR TREK FAN ADMITS BENEFITS KLINGON



A WOMAN who had a Star Trek-themed civil partnership ceremony has admitted a £16,000 benefit fraud.

Magistrates handed Anita Wood a 12-week prison sentence suspended for a year after she failed to declare a change in her circumstances following the event. She said the fraud was not intentional. She

BY HELEN KEATES

said: "We had declared her as a non-dependent but not a partner. I was devastated. "My whole family has been affected by it. I've never done anything wrong in my life, or anyone in my family."

Full story — page 5

SPOCK CHECK? Star Trek-themed civil partnership couple Anita Bayliss (left) and Margaret Wood. Anita Bayliss has admitted claiming £16,000 in false benefits.

Double joy for Kayleigh

A FAMILY who wanted an expensive item of medical equipment to help change a young girl's life are raising so much they might end up buying two so they can help someone else.

Friends, family and supporters of Kayleigh Williams helped raise the £11,000 needed for the machine for the 13-year-old through a series of fundraising events.

Full story — page 7

LAUDRUP & JENKINS:



Showdown talks at the Liberty

— back page

Bells ring out

THE bells of a Swansea church will be ringing out in celebration this weekend as a specially commissioned three-hour peal is sounded to mark its centenary.

Full story — page 3

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Sci-fi ceremony woman claimed £16k benefits unlawfully Star Trek bride's fraud



TREKKIES Anita and Margaret Wood's Star Trek-themed wedding.

A WOMAN who made headlines with a sci-fi themed wedding has been handed a suspended prison sentence after admitting a £16,000 benefit fraud.

Anita Wood and her partner Margaret



By Helen Keates

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Wood took the world by storm following their Star Trek civil partnership ceremony.

But Anita Wood, of Gendros Avenue East, Gendros, failed to declare her changed circumstances and claimed more than £16,000 in benefits to which she was not entitled.

Following the prosecution Anita Wood said it had been an oversight and she never intended to make fraudulent benefit claims.

She said the outcome had been very "hurtful", adding: "It wasn't intentional. We had declared her as a non-dependent but not a partner. I was devastated. My whole

family has been affected by it. I've never done anything wrong in my life, or anyone in my family."

Anita Wood, a full-time carer, said Margaret Wood had not been paying half the bills, only her keep.

Swansea magistrates were told that following the Star Trek event at the Liberty Stadium in September 2011, Anita Wood should have declared that she and Margaret Wood were in a civil partnership because it would have reduced the amount of benefits she was entitled to claim as Margaret Wood was in full-time employment.

A member of the council's benefits team reported concerns and a joint investigation was conducted by council investigators and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

In court, Anita Wood admitted six offences of benefit fraud. She was sentenced to 12 weeks jail, suspended for a year for the first offence and the same sentence for the remaining five

offences to run concurrently. She will also have to pay back the money she claimed as well as £150 court costs and a £60 victim surcharge.

Tal Davies, Swansea Council's investigations manager, added: "We are pleased our work is getting results and will continue to find all those who steal benefits."

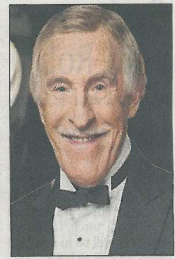
"We're working with the DWP fraud team to make that happen."

"Benefits fraud is not a victimless crime and last year 163 people were punished for benefit fraud with prison sentences, community service orders, formal cautions or fines and also had to repay their illegally-obtained benefits."

Would you tell?

Would you tell the authorities if you thought someone you knew was wrongly claiming benefits?

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CRITICISM Entertainer Sir Bruce Forsyth.

Brucie's criticism of kids on BGT

SIR Bruce Forsyth has continued to criticise Britain's Got Talent for featuring children.

The TV show's boss, Simon Cowell, recently hit back at Brucie after he said being on the show was an "ordeal" for kids and often led to tears.

Now, in a pre-recorded interview, the 85-year-old has told BBC Radio 5 Live: "The thing I object to is, I don't think they should put young children through such an emotional thing."

When host Richard Bacon pointed out Brucie began in showbiz at 14, the entertainer said: "Yeah, but not on television in front of millions. That is the difference."

He added: "Have a children's Britain's Got Talent and let all children be in it. But to put them on at that time of the evening with millions watching and the emotion, that could be maybe a bit disastrous for a child."

Simon recently called the Strictly Come Dancing host "Mr Grumpy".

● Don't miss page 20 for pictures of Pre-Skool preparing for their Britain's Got Talent performance tonight.

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TODAY & TOMORROW

Holidays for son caught out fraudster

A MOTHER who falsely claimed more than £16,000 in benefits said she had taken annual holidays abroad to help her son.

Samantha Brenda Thomas said her annual holidays to Rhodes, Tunisia, Orlando and Gran Canaria were necessary for her son, who has ADHD.

She said some of the trips were "cheap" and others were paid for through a charity.


Thomas, aged 43, of Portmead Avenue, Portmead, admitted five charges of falsely making a statement to obtain benefits after failing to declare she was living with Dennis Coffey on five occasions since 2006.


In total she received an extra £16,191.85.


Felicity Lewis, prosecuting for Swansea City Council at the city's magistrates court, said they had investigated Thomas with the Department of Work and Pensions and found Thomas and Mr Coffey had made transactions at the same times.

They had also been on shopping

By Ruth Mosalski

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trips together and travel insurance policies taken out by Thomas had named Mr Coffey in them.

Nick Stallard, for Thomas, said his client had admitted the five offences on a basis that Mr Coffey had stayed at the house, sometimes for long periods, but that she should have notified the authorities.

Thomas said Mr Coffey was living at the address, but it was to help with the care of their son aged 15, who has severe behavioural disorder and had previously been violent towards her.

She said the pair had separate rooms on their holidays.

"It's unlikely you'll ever see her before the court again," he added.

Magistrates imposed a 12 week sentence which they said they will suspend for 12 months. She was also ordered to complete unpaid work and pay £125 in costs as well as a £80 victim surcharge.

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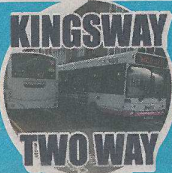
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VORM WARNING

Swans keeper remembers his last 'hostile' trip to Napoli
back page



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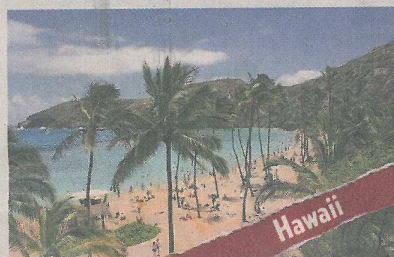


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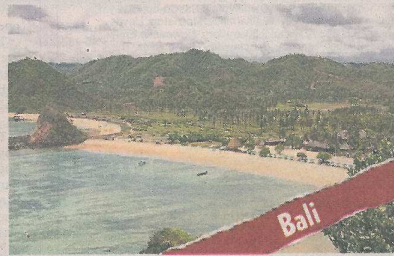
BENEFIT CHEAT'S JET-SET LIFESTYLE*

* all paid for by you

A PENSIONER who travelled the world and bought works of art while fraudulently claiming more than £36,500 in benefits has escaped jail.

Susan Mary Robinson visited a host of far-flung destinations including Hawaii, Bali and New York.

Full story page 5



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COURT

Benefit cheat's art spree



Susan Robinson has been convicted for fraudulently claiming £36,000 in benefits while travelling and collecting art.

JASON EVANS

Police & crime reporter
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A PENSIONER travelled the world and bought works of art while fraudulently claiming more than £36,500 in benefits.

Susan Mary Robinson, from Llangennith, Gower, visited a host of far-flung destinations including Hawaii, Bali and New York and spent "a large amount of money", on art — all while failing to tell the authorities about the substantial inheritance she had in a building society.

Swansea Magistrates Court heard 68-year-old Robinson dishonestly claimed housing and council tax benefits and pension credits for almost six years — investigators found she had £20,000 in a Principality account she had not declared.

Julie Sullivan, for the prosecution, said Robinson had inherited the cash from her mother, and had told investigators it was not for her benefit but for the grandchildren.

But inquiries showed she had used it for trips to New York, Hawaii, Bali, Canada and Antibes, as well as to places in Britain, and had spent "a large amount of money on art works and various other purchases."

Robinson, of Burrows Lane, pleaded guilty to two counts of dishonestly failing to notify the authorities of circumstances affecting



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her claims for benefits and pension credits between 2007 and 2013 — the court heard the total overpayment she received during that period was £36,573.42.

The court heard from probation officer Fred Matthews, who had interviewed Robinson about the background to the claims.

He said: "Miss Robinson tells me there was a misunderstanding not a deliberate attempt to defraud the public purse."

He added that she had always worked and was "not au fait with how the system worked" and felt a degree of shame about what had happened.

Nick Devonald, in mitigation, said the ordeal of being arrested, charged and taken to court was a punishment in itself, as was the upset his client had caused her own family.

He urged magistrates to suspend any custodial sentence.

The court heard Robinson — who has no previous convictions — has already paid back £11,000 of the wrongfully claimed money.

Magistrates imposed a four month jail sentence for each of the two offences to run consecutively, and suspended them both for 18 months.

She was also told to pay £85 in prosecution costs and an £80 victim surcharge.

COUNCIL

No deal on new budget

COUNTY councillors covering the Upper Swansea Valley have failed to agree on a budget.

Two controversial proposals in a £20million package of savings in Powys were thrown out by councillors this week.

Plans to cut special education services and to raise day care centre charges were shelved during a full council meeting in Llandrindod Wells disrupted by protesters.

After failure to agree a budget the meeting was adjourned to March 5.

Leaders of the different groups on the council will now meet cabinet members to thrash out new proposals.

The authority was considering closing pre-school assessment centres for special and additional learning needs in four schools and closing 18 specialist support units across 16 schools. But councillors decided to shelve the plan for a year and find from reserves the £87,500 it would have saved.

Plans for a six-fold increase in elderly day care centre charges were also dropped.

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The Police and Crime Commissioners for Dyfed-Powys, Gwent and South Wales would like to appoint a number of positions for the Independent Members of Misconduct Panels (IMMP).

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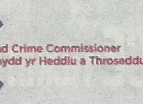
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The closing date for applications is 14 March 2014



£17k benefits falsely claimed

A WOMAN has admitted falsely claiming more than £17,000 in benefits.

Ffion Phillips, from Heol Dyfan in Morriston, had failed to tell the authorities she was living with her now husband Luke Evans.

Phillips pleaded guilty during a hearing at Swansea Crown Court to two charges.

One was that she dishonestly failed to notify a change in circumstances to the Department for Work and Pensions. The other was that she also failed to notify Swansea City Council.

The offences were committed between December 2008 and December 2012.

She pleaded guilty to the charges on a basis to the facts.

In total she claimed £17,104.

Judge Paul Thomas told her: "You have been convicted of what is a serious matter and I want to have reports on you before I decide on your sentence".

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Lee leading
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PULLOUT IN MIDDLE
OF TODAY'S PAPER

PLUS

Rival fans'
wedding day
love match

PAGE 3



IT'S THE BAD MAN IN THE MASK

Meet Mr & Mrs Jones, the
£100,000 benefit cheats.
He didn't want to show
his face...and his wife
wasn't too fussed either

A SWANSEA couple who
claimed to have split up at
their own wedding reception
have been warned they face
jail over a £100,000 benefit
fraud.

Lesley Isobel Jones and her
husband Thomas Adrian
Jones told the authorities they
didn't live together and she
claimed benefits as a lone
parent.

But they are now facing
prison sentences after a jury
found them guilty of fraud.

Full story - pages 889



Swansea v Norwich

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NEWS

Police issues on agenda

WAUNARLWYDD residents get their chance to share policing concerns with officers on Monday. A fact meeting takes place at the Community Centre from 7pm. Current priorities include parking issues on Britlwen Road. A fact meeting will also be held on the same day at the Pontarddulais Institute for town residents. Priorities include parking, speeding, and youth annoyance. That meeting also begins at 7pm.

NEWS

Pub hoping to reopen

A POPULAR Llansamlet pub which suddenly closed should be open by the end of next month. A spokesman for Marston's, the owners of the Plough and Harrow, Church Road, said: "The Plough and Harrow is closed due to unforeseen circumstances, but we endeavour to have the pub up and running again by the end of April." He said concerned customers who have paid a deposit on bookings should phone 0845 605 4545.

PEOPLE



PORT Talbot's Britain's Got Talent winner Paul Potts has been enjoying this year's Echo Awards held in Germany, although he tweeted: "Berlin is one big building site."

ENVIRONMENT

£1m tidy pledge

ALUN DAVIES, Minister for Natural Resources, has promised £1,090,000 for Keep Wales Tidy to help improve the quality of people's local environment and to make Wales a better place to live. The funding will support the Tidy Towns project that helps communities improve their local area and tackle problems such as fly tipping, vandalism and littering.

COURT

£100k benefit cheat mum's luxury hols, a BMW and a £27k caravan

BOB ARTHUR

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A MOTHER of five fiddled more than £100,000 in benefits while driving around in a BMW with a personalised number plate.

Lesley Isobel Jones, 50, took her family on an all-inclusive holiday to Turkey and enjoyed breaks in Sharm el Sheikh and Spain while claiming income support, employment support, tax credits and council tax relief.

She also bought a £27,000 luxury caravan berthed in a seaside holiday park.

Jones and her husband Thomas Adrian Jones, 52, were told yesterday they would go to jail, after a jury convicted them of fraud.

Thomas Jones had claimed that the relationship had ended when the couple split up during their wedding reception.

The fraudsters both tried to protect their identities by hiding their faces after their court appearance. Thomas Jones donned a mask as he left court, in an effort to hide from Evening Post cameras, while his wife pulled her hood across her face.

Swansea Crown Court heard that the couple told the authorities they had never lived together and Lesley Jones claimed benefits as a lone parent.

She received a total of £108,225 over a 10-year period, before she was caught.

The jury heard the couple



Lesley Jones hides her face outside Swansea Crown Court.



Thomas Jones leaving Swansea Crown Court.

managed to have twins — even though they claimed the marriage had never got off the ground.

And Thomas Jones had his Royal Mail wages sent to her address in Landore, Swansea.

The TV licence was in his name, they had a joint bank account and he paid the household bills.

The jury heard that Lesley Jones may have got away with more, but Department for Work and Pensions records went back only to 2002. She

had been claiming since 1996.

Thomas Jones told the jury he realised their marriage was a mistake on their wedding day in 2000. He said he walked out of the wedding reception and did not see his wife again for two weeks. He said he did not move in with her until 2011.

But, said Paul Hobson, prosecuting, there was ample evidence the couple had lived together as man and wife throughout their marriage. And they only



Lesley Jones enjoyed breaks in Sharm el Sheikh, a £27,000 luxury caravan berthed in a seaside holiday park and drove around in a BMW while falsely claiming benefits.

confessed to being man and wife when they knew an investigation was underway.

The jury heard that during one period examined by a financial expert Lesley Jones received £79,308 in benefits, which she claimed was her sole source of income.

But during the same period she managed to spend £190,721.

And knowing she was being investigated by fraud officers she sold her house to a relative and then claimed housing benefit to pay the rent. But she was turned down.

After unanimous verdicts of guilty were returned the jury were told that Thomas Jones had left his job for stealing mail and was already under a suspended prison sentence.

Lesley Thomas had previous convictions for theft and shoplifting.

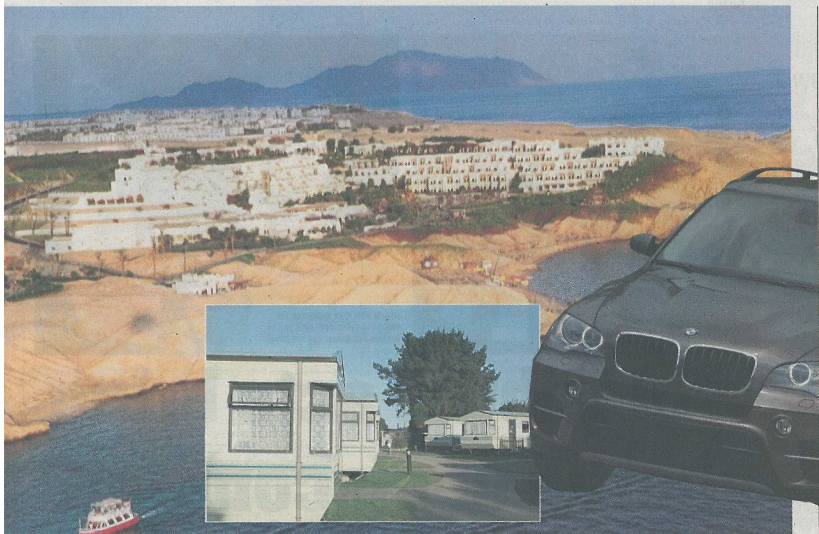
Judge Keith Thomas said he would sentence the pair after probation officers had prepared reports into their backgrounds.

But he told them: "These are offences that warrant sentences of immediate imprisonment."

"I will take some persuading that that would not be the proper outcome of the case."

He granted them bail meanwhile, but warned them "to be under no illusion. You must prepare for imprisonment."

Judge Thomas instigated a Proceeds of Crime investigation to try and recover some of the money.



Annual £1m fraud total is revealed

LAST OCTOBER Swansea Council revealed that benefit claimants in Swansea had fraudulently collected more than £1 million in a year.

The council's benefits investigation team, in conjunction with Department for Work and Pensions (DWP),

colleagues uncovered overpayments of £1,117,976 between April 2012 and March 2013.

The Post has reported a number of high profile benefit fraud cases recently, including:

● In February Swansea Magistrates' Court heard that a pensioner from Llangennith travelled the world and bought works of art while fraudulently claiming more than £36,500 in benefits, over six years, Susan Mary Robinson (pictured), from

Llangennith, Gower, visited a host of far-flung destinations including Hawaii, Bali and New York and spent "a large amount of money" on art — all while failing to tell the authorities about the inheritance she had.

Robinson, of Burrows Lane, pleaded guilty to two counts of dishonestly failing to notify the authorities of circumstances affecting her claims for benefits and pension credits — the court heard the total overpayment she received during that period was £26,724.2.

● Last month Ffion Phillips admitted falsely claiming more than £17,000 in benefits, over six years, Susan Mary Robinson (pictured), from

was that she also failed to notify Swansea City Council. In total she claimed £17,104.



Anita Wood (above, left) and her partner Margaret Wood took the world by storm following their Star Trek civil partnership ceremony.

But Anita Wood of Gendros Avenue East, failed to declare her changed circumstances and fraudulently claimed more than £16,000.

One was that she dishonestly failed to notify a change in circumstances to the Department for Work and Pensions. The other



EDWARDS COACH HOLIDAYS Open Day April SATURDAY 10am - 4pm 5th Join us for our Fantastic Spring Charity Open Day! (In aid of Maggie's Cancer Centre Charity, Swansea) A performance from Bridgend Male Voice Choir. A Grand Raffle with lots of top prizes. A family day out not to be missed! Book any holiday* of 5 days or longer from our 2014 summer brochure and receive either FREE INSURANCE (worth up to £42pp) or £10pp off the cost of your holiday. *NOT APPLICABLE TO DISNEYLAND PARIS, BRIAN ISAAC, AIR OR OCEAN CRUISING HOLIDAYS

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