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Spud king sprouts a cool \$150m

CHRIS HUTCHING

Alan Pye, the "spud king" of South Canterbury, is worth \$350 million in this year's *National Business Review's* rich list - \$150m more than last year.

"They used to have me on the list at \$200m, but I was dropped off last year for some unknown reason. Now I've made a comeback at \$350m."

Pye is one of the more unusual multi-millionaires to be included in the "bible of wealth" published yesterday - happiest when driving a combine harvester on one of his many farms.

For an entrepreneur who says he seldom sells anything, Pye did quite well 18 months ago when he disposed of his \$100m shareholding in one of the country's largest dairy enterprises, Dairy Holdings.

"I guess you could say I've had a couple of wins lately," Pye said.

So how wealthy does he think he is? "It depends how things are going. I told the reporter who rang me it could be \$400m or it could be \$100m, but probably closer to \$300m."

The Pye family fortune straddles the Tasman with sons in Australia who supply tonnes of vegetables from their farms there.

Former Christchurch builder turned property investor John Butterfield spends most of his time in Fiji but was back in town this week and interested to learn he was worth \$75m.

"I was worth \$80m last year. I've gone backwards.

"I bought the Smiths City site last year and along with South City Shopping Centre I'm now the largest property owner in Christchurch with about 50,000 square metres of retail space," Butterfield said.

Butterfield said he was seldom approached by people asking for money as a result of his rich-list status, "except my mates".

He did not think banks took much notice of the rich list.

"I never have trouble

borrowing money, I've always paid it back."

Central Christchurch property investor Antony Gough learned his family members were collectively worth \$350m. "We share the same surname but I have no idea what Ben (a wider family member) is up to and my brother, Harcourt, is overseas and so is my sister, Avenal."

Gough said his stalled central Christchurch entertainment development had hit "banking thresholds". "Rome wasn't built in a day."

No one asks Gough for money as a result of being on the rich list. "There wouldn't be much point. I might end up like one of those poor people on the sidewalk yet," he said.

Other South Islanders on the list include Dunedin's elite - Arrow International co-founder Ron Anderson, of Dunedin, (\$120m), media magnates Sir Julian and Nick Smith (\$75m) and Sir Clifford Skeggs (\$175m).

Queenstown's richest tourism entrepreneur Sir John Davies (\$115m), investor Barry Thomas (\$100m), and Sir Eion Edgar (\$130m). Invercargill contributes the Richardson family (\$295m), while from Blenheim are wine maker Peter Yealands (\$125m) and the Talley family (\$350m).

Other Cantabrians on the list include property investor and developer Philip Carter (\$200m), Meadow Mushrooms founder Philip Burdon (\$85m), Arrow International founder Bob Foster (\$120m), Ryman co-founder Kevin Hickman (\$400m) and fellow founder John Ryder (\$75m), Scenic Hotel owners Earl and Lani Hagaman (\$190m), while the combined Stewart family holding is estimated at \$330m.

Rich-listers of note A8

SOUTHERN MONEY BIG ON RICH LIST



\$350m
Antony Gough
(Gough family)



\$400m
Kevin Hickman



\$190m
Earl and Lani Hagaman



\$200m
Philip Carter



\$350m
Alan Pye



The Pye family fortune straddles the Tasman with sons in Australia who supply tonnes of vegetables from their farms there.

PHOTO: SUSAN SANDY'S/ASHBURTON GUARDIAN

* Figures based on NBR rich list

Body discovered in charred remains of fire-ravaged flat

SAM SHERWOOD

A body has been found in the remains of a Christchurch property where two women were saved from an inferno.

Police and fire investigators discovered the body in a self-contained flat at the back of the Rutherford St, Woolston, building yesterday.

It came a day after passers-by saved two women, who were asleep inside a room at the front of the house when the blaze started just after 6.10am on Wednesday.

The fire is thought to have started in the flat, which was attached to the house and a work-

shop once used as an ice-cream cone factory. The homeowner had no idea anyone was in the flat.

The body was yet to be identified. An autopsy would be carried out today.

Detective Elliot Western said police did not yet know the person's gender - nor the cause of the fire. When asked if the person might have been a squatter, he said, "We're keeping an open mind as to how that person might have got there."

"We're taking the investigation slow and thorough," he added.

The flat and workshop were extensively damaged. The home sustained minor damage.

"At the time of the fire was

believed to have been vacant. The focus of the investigation is identifying the unknown person and determining how the fire started," police said.

Neighbour Michael Reynolds was "pretty shocked to be honest". "Going over there and making sure she was out of the house and then to find out that someone else was there, it's a bit of a shock."

"The property backs onto a school. So I guess a squatter could quite easily jump over the back fence and get into the property without being seen."

Glenn Williams, who helped save the two women, said he was surprised to hear someone had died in the fire.



The fire is thought to have started in the flat, which was attached to the house and a workshop once used as an ice-cream cone factory.

"It's bizarre because when I smashed the window, I said, 'I hope we've got the right house', and he said, 'yes it is'."

"I don't know if it was someone from the spirit world telling me that help was not actually needed here, it's needed next door. I spent a lot of time thinking about it afterwards."

A neighbour said the flat had been "derelict for quite some time".

The discovery of the body was "very sad, it's tragic news".

She said the blaze was "very fierce".

"Me and my husband were both up, the whole house just blew up," she said.

The Fire Service received several calls about the Woolston blaze as the fire created "a lot of smoke", a spokeswoman said.

Glenn Williams, Christian Eric and several others smashed their way into the home after noticing the flames.

Eric ran over and "started screaming, top of my voice, get out, get out and no-one was coming out".

Williams said: "I saw the house was uninhabited, there was a stack of firewood beside the door so I grabbed the log, smashed the window, put my hand through and opened up the door."

"Other people followed me in and we managed to get these

people up and out of the house.

"If it was left any longer, they wouldn't have survived if we hadn't got them out, they were asleep and oblivious to the fire."

The property owner said the workshop was destroyed, but their animals escaped the building, which was "the main thing".

"[The dog] was barking, glass was smashing, people were yelling - that's what I woke up to," said Gail, who did not want her last name published.

Police asked anyone who witnessed the fire or had any information or images to contact the Christchurch Central Police Station on (03) 363 7400 or Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

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