



December 1974

NEWS REVIEW

The South Staffordshire Waterworks Company News Sheet

EDITORIAL

Since the last edition a great deal has taken place which affects us all, nationally, locally and in the Water Industry itself. A general feeling of disruption seems to be a permanent feature of today's world.

For instance, one Local Authority at least in the Black Country, which was created during the last reorganisation of Local Government in 1966, had just begun to settle down in its new role when it all happened again in 1973. The Severn-Trent Water Authority has also recently published reorganisation plans only months after its creation and the turmoil then created.

We in the South Staffs are, of course, very much affected and yet we may only seem to be onlookers. However, one thing which is apparent in these large organisations is that the inertia of such systems might well be so great that the individual has little chance of affecting events significantly.

Thus I am reminded of a recent television documentary entitled 'Small is Beautiful'. This phrase may become a proverb in the years to come as economic considerations influence us more and more.

Briefly, in the programme it was demonstrated that to manufacture many everyday items, e.g. bread and bricks to name only two, more energy (and thus fuel) was expended in large automated operations running at apparently high levels of efficiency, than in smaller, self-contained units.

Parkinson's famous law expounded the theory that 'work expands to fill the time available' which, considered in conjunction with the theory that 'small is beautiful', leads to the conclusion that medium sized, self-contained administrative units may be more efficient in manpower and energy usage than larger ones. Anyone who has tried to get a difficult problem dealt with by a large organisation will, I'm sure, already believe this to be so. Add this to the human relations factor and my hypothesis is complete.

The South Staffordshire Waterworks Company, therefore, as a medium size organisation, should not only be an efficient, satisfying organisation to work for, it may even become the preferred size in years to come!

PETER DODDS.

SUGGESTION SCHEME

The thinking caps have been hard at it this year, with 23 very well presented suggestions received so far.

A variety of ideas have surfaced, from petrol saving measures such as the use of three wheeled vehicles, to visual aids for the detection of chlorine gas contamination at treatment stations.

Awards have ranged from £3.00 to £40.00. The highest so far being paid to Joan Dawber, Deputy Tracing Pool Supervisor, for her suggestion for streamlining the key for plotting mains and fittings on O.S. maps.



Joan Dawber

ON DRAMA

(The Ups and Downs of an Amateur)

I became interested in drama quite by accident more years ago than I care to admit.

My good nature was imposed upon to stand in for the prompt, who quite by chance had decided to emigrate (I mean the play wasn't that bad!). Then, as chance would have it the maid sprained her ankle, so as the prompt usually knows the play back to front I ventured on stage, never to get off, when I found just how much enjoyment is there for the taking.

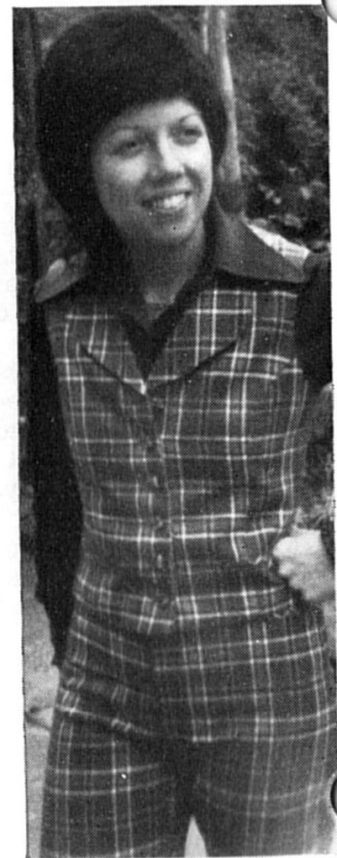
Always expect the unexpected in drama, a play is never the same two nights running; sometimes not even the same as the script! I remember playing principal boy in 'Alladin' whilst singing 'We kiss in the shadow' with two hundred or so children all eating crisps (they never like the soppy bits). Suddenly a slight rumble, a sudden gasp and I am supporting a 12 foot canvas flat that decided it wanted to get in on the act or maybe that the leading lady and myself didn't have enough shadow to hide in; needless to say everyone in the audience paid more attention to the panto in case it happened again.

Then there was the time I was playing a maiden aunt in a very serious play. She had to rush through the french windows in the second act, loaded with confetti which had to be thrown towards the happy couple who, in the second act, are married. I am calmly in the dressing room waiting for my call, suddenly someone panics to see me there and shouts 'You're on!' I grab my hat and handful of confetti, rush down the stairs, under the stage, which is complicated at the best of times, up the spiral staircase, burst through the french windows, throw the confetti and shout 'Congratulations my darlings', only to be greeted with a look of horror from everyone on the stage. It was only the first act! I muttered something about thinking that the wedding was at 10.00 a.m., walked off the stage to lie down, and the aunt developed into rather an eccentric character!

Despite learning to cope with these little happenings of which there are many more, one has to learn lines well enough to ad lib in any situation. Other important rules to remember that go towards making a play are do not whistle in the theatre; never recite lines from Macbeth; don't on any account use real flowers on stage and always wish people would break their legs before going on stage and hope against hope that the dress rehearsal is so awful that the stage will open up and swallow the cast, props and scenery, all this should bring a first night success and often does!

One pity is, in view of all the hard work of making the scenery and finding the right props and preparing the costumes, is that a small Company can only afford to hire the theatre for three nights; one feels at the end of three nights that it ought to go on forever!

One consolation, the audience always seem to enjoy live theatre, and we the Company go on to more ups and downs with a new play to do.



ANGELA ROBSON.

PERSONALIA

As the last Review appeared in October, 1973, too many events have occurred to record them all here. My apologies are extended for including only the more recent.

Engagement

ROBERTA FARNDON, typist at Head Office, became engaged on 26.10.74 to Barry Bassett.

Weddings

BARRY CLARKE, fitter at Wood Green, was married on 28.9.74 at St. Paul's Church, Wednesbury.

JANICE HEXTALL, clerical assistant in the Secretary's Department, was married on 12.10.74 at St. Andrew's Church, Handsworth (now Mrs. Bissell).

MAUREEN DONNELLY, typist in the Secretary's Department, was married on 7.12.74 at Birmingham Register Office.

Births

JOAN DEEVES — Punch card operator who left in May, gave birth to baby Robert on 8.7.74.

JEAN TOLLEY — Tracer at Head Office, who left in June, gave birth to baby Anna Jean on 1.9.74.

YVONNE BUSK — Cook at Head Office, gave birth to baby Audrey Louise in October.

KATE MURPHY — Telephonist at Walsall, who left in August, gave birth to Ian Stuart on 26.11.74.

HELEN GROVES — Typist at Tipton, gave birth to baby Robert John on 27.11.74.

Degree

FRANK PRICE, Assistant Chemist in W.Q.D., was awarded a B.Sc. in Applied Chemistry in July 1974, having successfully completed a three-year day release course.

Doctorate

MIKE HARLEY, Assistant Engineer in D.D., was awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the University of Aston in Birmingham in December 1973.



Janice and David Bissell

Retirements

TOM DODSON
Pumping Station Attendant
at Chilcote 15.2.74

JOHN SWINSCOE
Foreman at Crumpwood
28.2.74

REG HEATHCOTE
Filter Operator at Seedy Mill
18.6.74

ARTHUR WORTHINGTON (Snr.)
Waterman at Tipton 17.7.74

TED SCOTT
Clerk of Works 2.8.74

JIM PRICE
Yard Foreman at Tipton
14.8.74

BOB WIDDOWSON
Filter Operator at Seedy Mill
11.9.74

GEORGE HIGGINS
Carpenter at Wood Green
25.9.74

ARTHUR REED
Dist. Inspector at Walsall
6.10.74

JOE DUNN
Waste Inspector at Tipton
3.11.74

HARRY DYKE
Waste Inspector at Burton
7.11.74

CHARLIE BROWN
Bricklayer at Wednesbury
27.11.74

SID SMITH
Plant Attendant at
Sandfields 27.12.74

BERT CLEAVER
Trenchman at Walsall
29.12.74

Welcome

During the year MIKE UPSTONE, DAVID OUTEN and GEOFFREY HOLLAND took up senior positions with the Severn-Trent Water Authority. We have welcomed as their successors:

TONY LEACH as New Works Engineer, May 1974, being promoted from Deputy Area Engineer at Tipton.

ALAN EVERS as Deputy New Works Engineer, October 1974, joining us from the Upper Tame Water Reclamation Division of the Severn-Trent Water Authority.

DR. MICHAEL RICHARDS, our new Chief Chemist, joins us on 1st January, 1975, from Bass-Charrington at Burton-on-Trent.

ALAN JONES was promoted to Deputy Chief Electrical Mechanical Engineer in July 1974.

THE NEW COMPUTER

The Computer Department has recently been the scene of utter chaos (no, it is not always!) because the old computer has been removed and a much more powerful monster has taken its place. Due to the ever increasing demands, especially since the introduction of the Wages system, the old equipment had become heavily overloaded.

The selected equipment is a Honeywell 2041A computer, comprising 65,536 characters of memory, four magnetic tape drives, two disc drives, a console typewriter, a card reader and two line printers. Input to the machine will be by magnetic tape coded through Keytape machines instead of the punched cards previously used with the old equipment.



The existing systems can be transferred to the new computer without much difficulty, but to make full use of the larger configuration the programs will eventually need re-writing, possibly over the next two years. It has been necessary for the Computer Department staff to learn new techniques and training courses were arranged. As the Review goes to print the Computer Engineers are about to hand the machine over, and the task of catching up with a sizeable backlog of work will begin. It has taken the Computer Engineers about eight days to install the new machine, working in shifts, day and night, consuming enormous amounts of coffee. At times it became difficult to move around for the vast amount of parcels, packing cases, electronic parts and cables.

After such an intricate operation one wonders if it can possibly work or will the whole thing blow up? We have not yet decided who presses the first button.

An estimated saving of 50% running time is anticipated and this will allow time for future development and more management information. If the new machine gives the same stalwart service as the old one and performs its tasks in half the time, we shall not complain.

ERIC CRISP.

HEALTH & SAFETY AT WORK ACT 1974

This new enabling Act is designed to provide a comprehensive and integrated system of law dealing with health, safety and welfare of work people and of the public affected by work activities. The legislation will come into effect in three stages between 1st January and 1st April, 1975, and will cover five million people not previously covered by health and safety legislation.

In principle the Act places a general duty on employers to take steps to ensure the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees and to consult them concerning arrangements for joint action. It also places a duty on employees to ensure that they do not endanger themselves or anyone else affected by their work activities, and to co-operate with employers in meeting statutory requirements.

In the Company, consultation on such matters is already a long established practice. We shall, however, begin using the consultative machinery to review our arrangements in the light of the new legislation, as soon as the regulations are published.

DENIS CHAPMAN.

1000 mm MAIN

The Company is currently engaged in its largest ever direct labour mainlaying operation; the 1000mm diameter steel main from All Saints, West Bromwich to Barr Beacon Reservoir. The purpose of the main is twofold, being to reinforce supplies in the north and to support supplies in the south, in the event of a failure of the River Severn supply.

The main commences at the present end of the 45" main at All Saints and runs via Thursfield Road and Hollyhedge Road, past West Bromwich Booster Station, into which it will be connected, and follows Pennyhill Lane through grazing fields to the River Tame near the M5 motorway. Here, under the shadow of the towering motorway columns, the Company have struggled to cross the swift flowing, deep river. The earliest attempt by the Company's own men proved abortive as an attempt was made to sink a coffer-dam into what turned out to be the original river bed. Specialist contractors were called in and an interlocking steel pile coffer-dam was driven 30 feet into the waterlogged gravel in two halves.

The route of the main then crosses the flood plain and goes beneath the Wolverhampton-Birmingham railway in a concrete sleeve. Continuing beneath the motorway, in Charlemont Road the main passes along the eastern boundary of Ray Hall Sewage Works to the Tame Valley Canal. The towpaths on either side of the canal contain a high pressure gas main and a number of very high voltage electricity cables. The main was tunnelled underneath the electricity cables and crossed the canal in a coffer-dam, in a similar manner to the river.

The main then had to pass beneath the M6 motorway and more very high voltage electricity cables. This was achieved by a further concrete sleeve being driven beneath the embankment for a length of 90 metres. When completed the sleeve was only two inches out of line. Rock was encountered in the heading and before being permitted to use explosives beneath the motorway, the Company was obliged to carry out vibration tests to establish the safety of the operation.

Mainlaying was relatively straightforward through the fields up to Dartmouth High School, where the large steel pipe was dexterously wriggled between 240 kV electricity cables, past a large tree and beneath a gas main into the cornfield in Wilderness Lane. A further concrete sleeve was driven beneath the A34 Birmingham Road, which again met with rock, requiring the use of explosives.

Another difficult section follows, in fields alongside Chapel Lane, where the main must cross 132 kV cables before emerging into Chapel Lane itself, a road three or four metres wide already accommodating two water mains, a gas main, a sewer and an electricity cable. If the pipe could be squashed a bit, it might be a little easier! The main leaves Chapel Lane and heads for Barr Beacon Reservoir across open fields.

The main was designed and is being built by Distribution Department. The Project Engineer was Paul Symons, who led the design team of Bev Sim, John Bird and Tony Prendergast. Bev Sim became Resident Engineer when work commenced but he and Paul Symons have recently left to further their careers elsewhere. One perhaps is led to wonder why they left more or less together . . . some mysterious secret about the job not revealed? Stepping into the Resident Engineer's position came Peter Dodds, the rest of the site engineering team being Terry Tapper, Mervin Penny and Stan Lawrence.

Men who are doing the work are Senior Mainlaying Inspector Alf Riley, wizard of large diameter plumbing, and Inspectors Jack Parsons and Frank Duffield, and two of the Company's more experienced mainlaying gangs, led by John Meyer from Walsall and Bert Langston from Cannock. Valuable assistance has also been received from staff at Walsall Area Office throughout the work.

Everyone on the site is conscious of the importance of the job, both from its size and the problems thus encountered and also, perhaps, that all eyes are on them, carrying out the Company's largest direct labour project. Teamwork is essential and has been and will be maintained to the line's successful conclusion.

PETER DODDS.

INNOCENTS ABROAD!

Last year, in May, my wife and I, having travelled no further than Southern Ireland in the previous 30 years, went from the sublime to the ridiculous and spent two weeks on the American Eastern Seaboard.

The reason for our visit was to see our daughter and son-in-law who had settled near the Potomac River 15 miles south of Washington. We flew by Jumbo Jet to Kennedy Field, New York, where we had to circle for about an hour before landing as it was pouring with rain—just like home! Met by our daughter's 'in-laws', we were whisked away to their home at Pleasantville, 12 miles north of New York. What a surprise!—we found ourselves in beautifully wooded countryside with masses of wild flowers and a maximum building density of one house per acre. We left New York after three days, during which time we were shown around the UN building, lunched on Fifth Avenue and took a 35 mile boat trip right round New York island, going down the Hudson River, round the Statue of Liberty, up the East River, through the Harlem Canal and back down the Hudson.

On the way to Potomac—350 miles on six lane highways—we got some more surprises. First, they don't move into the outside lane to overtake in America, so you could be driving in the middle lane and be overtaken by 50 ton diesel juggernauts on both sides. The highway restaurants are super-clean with dolly bird waitress service, but the menu can catch you out! I played safe and ordered a turkey sandwich but was surprised to get a bread roll stuffed with about half a pound of turkey accompanied by fried potatoes.



Twelve miles north of New York

Maryland was very English like, with wooded slopes full of wonderful wild flowers. Very un-English like, however, were the jet black butterflies, lemon coloured bees with black bottoms, bright red cardinal birds and robins as big as blackbirds.

Whilst staying at Potomac we visited Washington which is a beautiful, clean city—we had to see the Watergate building of course, which is opposite to the very impressive Kennedy Memorial Centre.

We also went to some sleepy villages where the local bobbies lazily stood in the sunshine at the street corners with their revolvers slung from their belts! In Leesburgh in Virginia we were surprised to see more English antique papier mache, manufactured in Victorian times, than we had ever seen in this country.

We also found the American bathrooms interesting, with lavatory pans apparently made for pygmies and baths not more than 4' 6" long. Sit up or lie down and put your feet on the wall—take your choice!

Finally, before returning to New York we drove down the Blue Ridge Mountains to Virginia where we stayed at a swish hotel in Charlottesville called, of all things, 'The Boar's Head'. We also ate the best Chinese food imaginable, picnicked on pizzas and luke warm beer and finally had hamburgers at McDonalds, where they boasted they had already served 11 billion hamburgers before we got there—I don't doubt it!

PETER THOMAS.

THE HISTORY OF CRUMPWOOD

On the 3rd September, 1811, the extension of the Caldon Canal was officially opened from Froghall to Uttoxeter.

The weir at Crumpwood had been built so that the canal could cross the river at that point.

To celebrate the opening of the canal, seven boats left Uttoxeter in the morning, carrying proprietors and guests. The boats arrived at Crumpwood with their one hundred and fifty passengers at about 2 o'clock. They disembarked and, I quote, "partook of a cold collation provided in a superior style by Chamberlain and Garle of Uttoxeter".

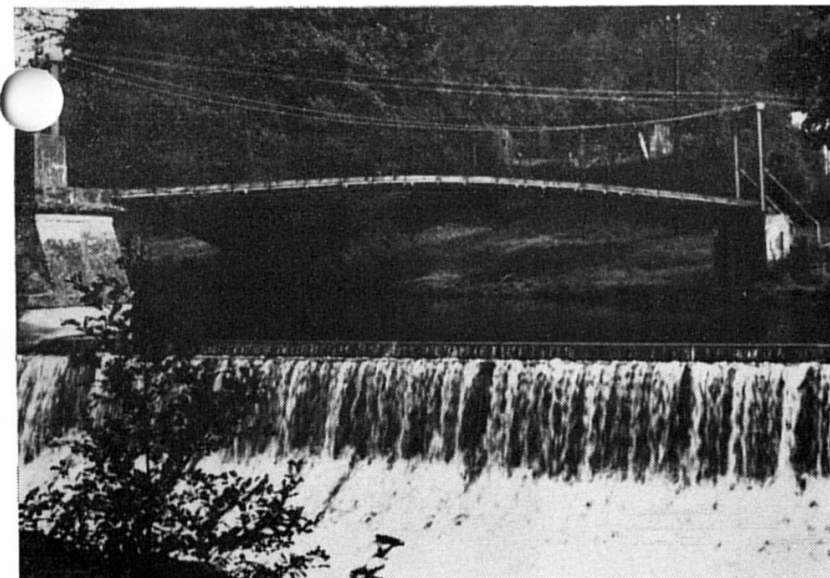


Despite the fact that the use of the canal was discontinued in the 1840's, parts of it still remain. The weir is still intact and has provided water to drive the turbine pumps which were installed in 1924 to supply water to Uttoxeter.

When the Company took over Crumpwood pumping station from Uttoxeter Urban and Rural District Council in 1968, John Swinscoe was the Foreman living at the cottage, which was originally the lock keeper's cottage.

There are two locks, the flood lock which is situated across the river from the pumping station and is virtually intact. The other lock, which brought the canal down to river level, was partially filled in during the construction of the road to the new pumping station which was built in 1973, but the position of the lock gate can be clearly seen and part of the hinge has been removed to the Museum at Brindley Bank. During the construction of the road the sluice conduits alongside the lock were un-earthed.

Adjacent to the new pumping station is Seventy Bridge, so named because it is the seventieth bridge from the start of the canal at Etruria. This bridge was repaired by the Company and will probably be scheduled as an ancient monument.



Mr. John Swinscoe retired as Foreman in February, 1974. We congratulate him and his wife on the way they coped with the various problems encountered during flood, power restrictions and the use of temporary plant during reconstruction. We welcomed Mr. Ronald Dixon to the Company in January, 1974 and he is now Foreman at the Station.

GORDON SIMS.

An Article for Members of the Company's Superannuation Fund

TO OPT OR NOT TO OPT—THAT IS THE QUESTION

As you are a member of the Company's Superannuation Fund the reading of this article will no doubt remind you about the bumper collection of papers (8 sheets) and books (2) that came your way recently.

Regrettably the amount of print you are expected to digest is considerable but necessary in order that this important matter be fully understood.

The documents refer to two separate pension matters and we will deal with them separately.

1. The Company's Fund

The Extraordinary Meeting on 16th December, 1974, was called to ask members to approve a new method of altering the benefits and provisions of the Fund in order that better progress could be made towards implementing the improvements that have been promised for some time.

The rules which members approved in 1973 have not yet received the Inland Revenue "blessing" although it is understood that formal approval is imminent. The length of time taken to negotiate the rules with the Inland Revenue is the main reason for the suggested change in the system and whilst this article has been written in advance of the result of the meeting it is hoped that the members would have approved the alteration so that the Committee can proceed to put into operation the new benefits as set out in the handbook.

2. The Water Companies' Association Pension Scheme (W.C.A.P.S.)

This scheme came into operation on 1st April, 1974, by virtue of a provision of the 1973 Water Act and all details are in the papers circulated to you.

The important fact which faces you now is that you have a choice between remaining in your present fund or becoming a member of the W.C.A.P.S. This choice may be difficult and as it is not practicable to discuss individually with every member his own particular case, meetings have been arranged at which full explanation will be given and general discussion will take place; we hope you will be able to attend one of these meetings. In the meantime, the handbooks containing details of each scheme are in your possession and should enable you to assess your own particular case or select matters to raise at the meetings.

This article opened with a reference to the amount of print put before you and in closing we would remind you that it all amounts to improvements in your security both during working life and in your retirement all of which have been generously supported by the Board of Directors.

Finally, we would remind you that the meetings of members will be of an explanatory nature only and will not be considering amendments or other such items.

A. W. TIBBENHAM, *Secretary*
R. G. CLARKE, *Asst. Secretary*

SOUTH STAFFS WATERWORKS F.C.

The team have kicked off once again for their fourth season in the Bloxwich Combination League, maintaining their Division 2 status.

Following a promising start to last season the end results were not so favourable, finishing fourth in the League and being losing finalists in the Walsall F.C. Charity Cup. Player of the season was M. Walklate from Cannock Area Office, the top goal scorer was P. Head.

With players from Cannock, Tipton, Head Office and Wood Green an encouraging start to the new season has been made with fine results in both cup and league games.

The team members would like to express their appreciation to the people that purchase the weekly draw tickets so enabling the finances of the team to be sound.

TERRY TA...

