

# NEWS REVIEW

of The South Staffordshire Waterworks Company

OCTOBER 1975



## Cover Subject



*Walter Winwood*

**WALTER WINWOOD**, the last of the pedal powered watermen, took off his cycle clips, on Friday, 2nd May, for good.

Before the modern era of petrol propulsion, most of the inspectorate were equipped with bikes and it was a familiar sight to see a uniformed 'turncock', complete with bar and key strapped to the crossbar, going about his work on the district.

Even now, Walter swears by his bike and says "very often I could get to the scene of a burst much quicker than a van, being able to weave in and out of stationary traffic and take short cuts along alleys. Contact with the consumer is also closer when cycling. People call out to you, giving advance information about poor pressure or water leaking in the road, whereas with a van you have to wait for people to phone in with complaints."

Walter was engaged by the Company in 1931, as a trenchman and quickly progressed to service layer. After three years he was promoted to waste inspector, when he was issued with his cycle. Also standard issue were the Cambridge carbide lamps, which burned acetylene produced by reaction with water. Often they ran out of water and the filler hole being so small, the men sometimes resorted to filling them with waste liquid from another 'waterworks system'!

During the war Walter extended his duties to include fire watching at Wood Green. Three times a week, from 7 p.m. to 6 a.m. he watched for falling incendiaries and then at 8 a.m. started his normal day's work. In 1945 he was promoted to waterman, a position he has held ever since, covering many thousands of miles on that cycle.

GRAHAM WATKINS.

# News Review

October 1975

*The Magazine of the South Staffordshire Waterworks Company*

*Editorial Staff: Peter Dodds, Bron Thurston, Graham Watkins, Jack Billingham, John Morrall*

## A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

— Sir Charles Burman, J.P., D.L.

Everyone must by now be well aware of the current national and world economic crisis and of the urgent need to reduce the rate of inflation to a tolerable figure. Details of the Government's anti-inflation policy have been announced and every effort is being made here to reduce costs as far as practicable. Ultimately, though, it will be the contributions made by individuals which will determine the success of the efforts being made. In the interests of our consumers and of the nation, I ask all of you to co-operate with the Company in achieving the economies which are so vitally necessary at the present time.

Charles Burman,

1st September, 1975.

### *Editorial Comment*

#### **REFLECTING ON FLEXI-TIME**

From July flexible working hours have been in operation at Head Office. At first the new green time sheets were puzzled over as the staff struggled with the ins and outs of the scheme.

It appears that most people have taken advantage of shortening their lunch breaks and starting earlier in order to take a day off or an extended lunch break once a month.

Broadly speaking most of us arrive half an hour earlier at 8.00 a.m. and finish at 4.30 p.m., when only the late risers and the essential staff remain on the premises.

Coffee break chat echoes misgivings about the half hour starting and finishing bands but I have yet to meet anyone who does not welcome the basic idea of flexi-time.

#### **NO NEWS . . .**

The last issue of *News Review* was published for Christmas '74. Another issue was in preparation earlier this year but had to be shelved due to unforeseen delays. I should like to apologise to those who contributed and are wondering what happened, again!

I hope that with this issue, *News Review* can start afresh, with renewed vigour and most important, regularity. To achieve these aims a new production team has been formed but we need your help.

You are bound to disagree with opinions expressed by the editor and contributors — why not write and tell us so that we can start a letters column in the Christmas '75 issue, which is already being planned.

## SAVING OUR STEAMERS

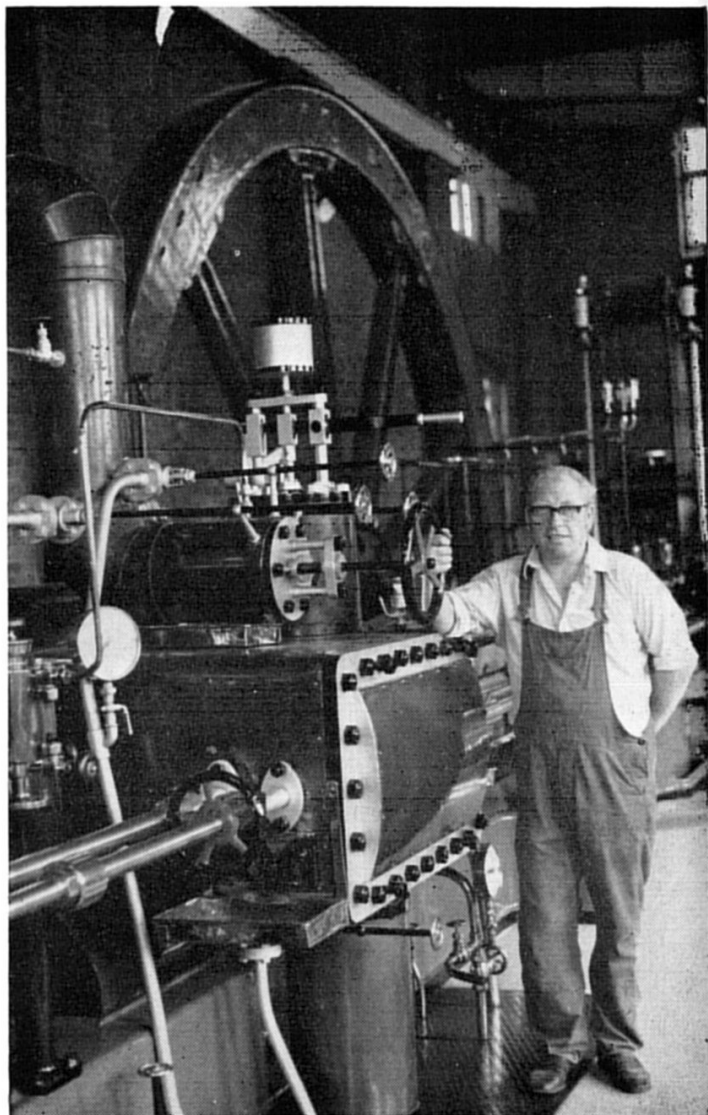
In the words of the popular Rugby Club song, "Round and round went the ruddy great wheel", and so it did in the age of steam. Then, Edwin Fletcher, seen here with his hand on the throttle valve, turned such a valve in earnest, to drive the huge steam engine at Pipe Hill.

Like many of the Company's pumping station employees, Edwin regrets the passing of these leviathans of the steam age; with the acrid smell of hot oil, the gleaming brass and the muffled thud of the exhaust on each stroke. To all who drove them, they were warm friends, with a personality of their own. One did not merely switch them on, they had to be nursed into life, talked to and coaxed to haul several tons of water out of the borehole each minute.

Slow moving and thoroughly reliable as steam engines were, the high costs of fuel and labour led to their eventual replacement by electric pumps.

At Brindley Bank, the Company has preserved some of the atmosphere, by leaving the old engine, in situ, and converting part of the boiler house into a small museum. Displayed here are some of the items of historical equipment, including the borehole pump valves of one of the late 19th century, Boulton and Watt beam engines, from Moors Gorse, a Barring engine from Pipe Hill, a length of wooden water main and early electrical switchgear. The early history of the Company is illustrated by contemporary documents and photographs. (Did you know that Hednesford Raceway was once a Company reservoir?)

In addition to the items at Brindley Bank, the Company has saved a number of other engines from the breakers. Pride of place being taken by the Cornish Beam engine at Sandfields, the lone survivor of four beam engines, originally on the site. At Maple Brook, an example of a triple expansion vertical engine has been left. This engine extracted the maximum energy from steam by passing it through three cylinders of ascending size.



*Edwin Fletcher at Brindley Bank*

There are many problems associated with maintaining an industrial museum, however small. The difficult decisions of what to save and what to scrap require careful thought and comprehensive photographic records have to cover the rest. Lack of space is always a problem, and items like the huge engines can only be economically preserved in situ. Unfortunately, those who cry 'shame', when a relic is destroyed, are rarely prepared to pay the high cost of keeping it. In creating its museum, the Company is performing a public service, which, it is hoped, future generations will appreciate.

PETER DODDS.



## WATER RATS

Action for the recovery of unpaid water charges was, until the 1960's, a fairly simple procedure. From the lists supplied by the district collectors, summonses would be prepared by the Magistrates' clerks' staffs and passed to the police for service. At the court any orders, distress warrants, judgement summonses and if necessary committal orders, were granted and effected by the police.

However, in the Sixties, a combination of unrelated circumstances, i.e. changes in the law dealing with civil debts and police procedure, and closure of the Company's collecting offices, led to the creation of a recovery section within the Revenue Department.

The number of summonses issued each half year now runs into thousands and this is apart from a considerable number of cut-offs carried out by the Engineer's staff, some of which may also eventually require court action.

Once the summonses have been issued a good proportion of the recipients will send in their payment. Some may also relate their reactions, for example:

### The Sarcastic One:

*"Dear Computer,*

*So sorry to trouble you with my parochial worries but the cheque for this amount was sent some time ago. If I am going to diddle anybody, be assured that it will be for far more than this amount. See you in the reservoir."*

### The Angry One:

He scrawls his complaint about the Company's *"dirty methods of getting money out of people"* across the summons and has paid court costs, every half year for the last ten, for the privilege.

### The Sad One:

*"You will be pleased to learn that your summons arrived with our cards, on Christmas Eve, and quite spoiled the festive season for us."*

### The Confused One:

*"I am very surprised at your summons as I never owed you any money in my life. I have a shilling in the slot meter and every time your collector has called he has found more money in the meter than I have had to pay."*

Then there was The Furious One, who told me what to do with the summons but lack of space prevents me from going into details . . .

JACK BILLINGHAM.

## IT'S WHO? . . . YOU KNOW!



Do you recognise these well known faces? They are all people with whom you may come into contact at work. The first all correct entry opened by the Editor, at Head Office, on Wednesday, 22nd October will received a £5 prize.

Entries, on a postcard please, to P. W. Dodds, Editor, News Review, at Head Office.

## CAPTAIN OF ENGLAND

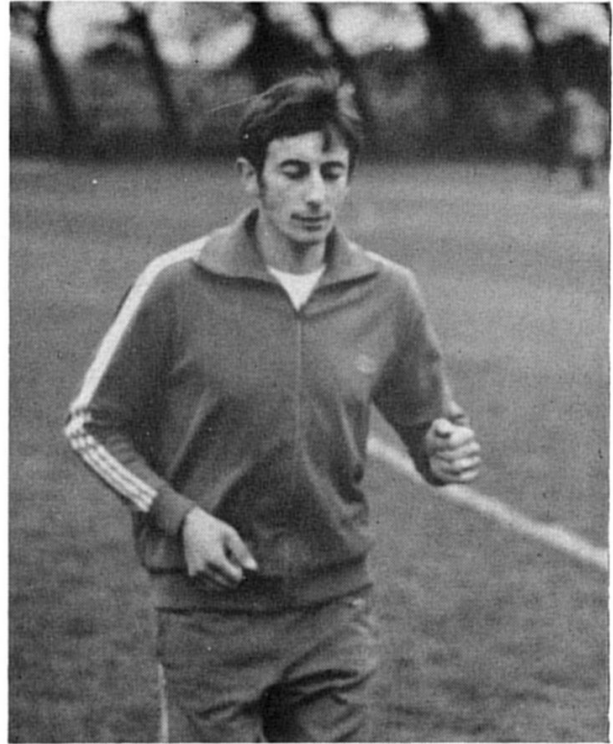
Congratulations to Trevor Wright, electrician at Wood Green, who was selected as captain of the English cross-country team, for the international meeting held at Rabat, in Morocco last March. His selection was particularly rewarding for Trevor, who had just returned to his best form, after an Achilles tendon operation, finishing fifth in a field of 1,162 runners at the National Championships at Luton.

Off the track Trevor is quiet, unassuming, almost shy and his slight build, lean features and sallow complexion belie his wiry muscularity and inherent determination. He was born in Sheffield in 1946 and at 29 may be considered to be coming to the end of his career on the track, but cross-country is a different proposition. Providing he can avoid a recurrence of his old injury problem, he should be good for another ten years. In addition he also intends to try the marathon, the most demanding of all races.

Apart from boxing there is no more gruelling sport than distance running—it is a constant battle for correct mental attitude and physical condition, no place for those afraid to suffer. The motivation which enables Trevor to endure the torture of the big race and the hardships of a rigorous training schedule, is common to all top sportsmen; the desire, the urge and the need to prove themselves better than the next chap—in a phrase, 'competitive spirit'. It is this spirit which transcends the pain barrier of pounding heart, heaving chest, nausea and leaden legs, and gives them the will to continue and perhaps to triumph.

As a nation we are not great athletics fans. Unless the sport is on T.V. we are not prepared to brave the elements and attend meetings. This is one of the reasons why Trevor has been somewhat over-shadowed by his wife Rosemary. She, then Rosemary Sterling, really jumped from the T.V. screen into our living rooms with her magnificent performances in the 1970 Edinburgh Commonwealth Games. Of course, with masses of kilted Celtic fervour in vociferous support, any Scottish competitor doing tolerably well was acclaimed a national hero. However, Rosemary really earned the praise lavished on her.

For the benefit of all non-sporting types who think that a 'Marathon' is a chocolate bar, here



*Trevor Wright*

are a few facts about Trevor. He first came on to the international scene in 1965, when he represented England in a junior international. Since then he has run about a dozen times for England or Great Britain in full internationals. His versatility, even at top level, is revealed by the differing events for which he has worn the English vest—5,000 metres, 10,000 metres, marathon and cross-country. Some of the countries he has visited include France, Belgium, Spain, Brazil, Germany, Portugal, Czechoslovakia, Italy and Finland. His proudest moment, was the medal ceremony for the marathon in the 1971 European Games in Helsinki, when he was presented with the silver.

During the current season he has competed almost every weekend and one of his best achievements was in the A.A.A. Michelin Marathon, when he finished seventh, less than two minutes behind the winner. If Trevor maintains the progress he has shown this season, we may well see him, along with Rosemary, in Montreal next year.

Lack of space precludes the listing of the many other outstanding performances by these two talented individuals, but I cannot close without wishing them every good fortune in the Olympic year; sentiments I am sure which will be echoed by everyone in the Company.

ALAN LANDER.

# FROST IN JUNE



*Graham Watkins explains*

Graham Watkins explains to the Wood Green fitters how small bore pipework can be frozen to isolate damaged sections for repair.

A durable, thermal pad is wrapped around the pipe, either side of the damaged part, and CO<sub>2</sub> gas is injected, at high pressure, between the pipe and the pad, where it forms a solid, dry ice pack, at -78°C. This pack freezes the water in the pipe and forms an ice plug, which effectively seals and retains the pressure, allowing the repairs to be carried out; provided the necessary precautions of wearing protective gloves and goggles and avoiding confined spaces are observed.

DAVE WINDERS.



*Roger Hilton demonstrates the dry ice pack, watched by the fitters*

## BOUNCING BELLES

In May this year, a group of girls at Head Office decided to form a netball team.

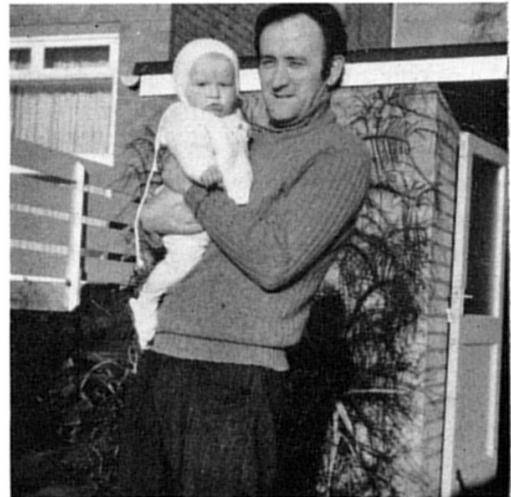
Thursday evenings are set aside for coaching and practice games, the first of which, against Tube Investments, was a great boost to our morale, with a win of 29-2.

However, the strength of the side has yet to be proved but we hope expertise will come as the season progresses. Since late September, we have trained at a new indoor gym, in Moseley, under the eye of an experienced coach.

We run a weekly tote and, with the aid of the Company's donation, have bought a smart kit for our first season in the Birmingham Netball League.

CAROL LEECHMERE.

## CONGRATULATIONS



*Norman Pearson*

... to NORMAN PEARSON, electrical assistant at Wood Green, on obtaining his B.A. degree at the Open University, following three years of intensive part-time study.

... and to all those whose examination results have been pouring into Personnel over the last few weeks.

also to ...

... JAYNE and TONY BLOORE on the birth of daughter Samantha, on Tuesday, 2nd September.

## HODSON'S CHOICE

Keith Hodson, who began work as a junior clerk in EMD, was encouraged by Gordon Sims to take advantage of the Company's apprentice training scheme. Following a rigorous four years of study and practical work he became the Company's first apprentice to qualify as a fitter, in 1971.

With the bit firmly between his teeth he continued his study by taking and passing the Higher National Certificate in Production Engineering in 1973 and then went on to take endorsements in 1974.

For the work which he did for these endorsements, in metrology, engineering design and industrial administration, Keith was recommended by Warley College for the "H. Garratt Prize" donated by Birmid Qualcast Ltd. The presentation was made on March 25th, 1975, and Keith chose the Readers' Digest—Repair Manual; as a married man, with the experience of buying his own house, he has to be a keen do-it-yourself man.

Now working at Head Office, as a Mechanical Draughtsman, Keith is still plodding the path of learning, having embarked on a four-year, part-time B.Sc. course in Mechanical Engineering. Who knows where we shall see the one-time junior clerk by 1980?



Keith Hodson

## KICK ABOUT

The task of bringing out the best from the South Staffs. Waterworks F.C., this year, lies with Maurice Astbury, the new manager. As a player with the club since its formation in 1970, he has the best knowledge of the players and the league.

Once again our home pitch will be the King George playing fields, Stafford Road, nearly opposite Bloxwich golf course. I mention this as it was noticeable last season that there was a lack of vocal support at our matches, home and away. Messrs. Wallis, Crowe, Jones and Marshall ran around the pitch pretending to be a crowd. We at least promise you some laughs so do come along and have a look occasionally. All fixtures and results will be posted on the main notice boards, as well as written reports in future *News Reviews*.

Our thanks once again go to the Company for its support in starting the season and to Mr. Wallis for accepting the presidency.

JOHN MORRALL.

## Growing Daffodils and Hyacinths in Bowls

*An extract of do's and don'ts by David Lloyd, of the Royal Horticultural Society*

Avoid that fabulous cheap bulb offer, buy from a bulb specialist.

Choose good, deep bowls or pots, and use bulb fibre for bowls and good, porous soil for pots.

Plant one variety in each bowl, leaving bulb noses just above well damped fibre  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. below bowl top; not later than early October.

Place planted bowls in coldest, shadiest part of garden, not under the stairs, and cover with 1ft. of peat or very light soil, leave for 12 weeks, watering at intervals if the weather is dry.

Acclimatise by degrees to light and heat when bringing indoors.

Keep moist and feed occasionally with Boots Compure K.

Nil desperandum, if you haven't a garden, carry on under the bed!

PEGGY THOMAS.



## BLOOMING ORCHIDS



*Cymbidium unguis-soshin* × *Rosalita*

Late November until the end of April is the main flowering season of most species of orchid. This is when the grower sees the results, or non-results, of his efforts during the previous summer's growing period, when the flower buds are formed.

A mystique has traditionally, but unfortunately, shrouded orchid cultivation, dating back to Victorian times, when vast sums of money were exchanged for new plants brought back from all corners of the world's tropical forests.

With increasing knowledge of the plant's needs and life cycle, specialists have been able to hybridise, or cross various species. It is the many hundreds of these hybrids, which today make up the bulk of most collections. Fortunately, this has almost totally removed the demand for wild plants, many of which were nearly exterminated as a result of the greed of the early collectors.

Probably the most popular orchid today, is the *Cymbidium*; there are very few with English names! This is the orchid chiefly used for button-holes and comes in unusual shades of bronze, green, ochreous yellow and pink. A single bloom of this variety, which produces its flowers on large sprays with anything up to 30 blooms on each, given good cultivation, will last in water for up to two months.

Having a liking for relatively cool conditions, between 50°F. and 55°F. in winter, *Cymbidiums* are fairly economic to maintain, which makes them popular with amateurs like myself. Ever increasing fuel costs make the growing of the more delicate species prohibitively expensive, though I have managed to overcome this, to a certain extent, by building, inside the greenhouse, a glass case (4ft. x 2ft. x 1½ft.) in which, for a few pence a week, I can maintain a temperature of 75°F., using a 150 watt soil-warming cable.

One of the most important points to be remembered by anyone tempted to try rearing these plants, is not to regard them as something which, given the slightest opportunity, will die to spite you. For anyone keen enough to succeed with the average house plant, orchids should present few difficulties. Given a reasonable temperature, all that is needed is to shade the plants from hot sunshine, spray with water on hot days (or in my case when the mood takes me!), keep the compost nicely damp but never wet, and there is absolutely no reason why they should not thrive. I have grown odd plants among ordinary things like *Busy Lizzie*, on the living-room window-sill.

Basically, adherence to the few do's and don'ts listed above could bring the pleasure of orchids into many more people's homes or greenhouses, and after all they are surely more interesting than a crop of tomatoes. Why not give them a try?

CEDRIC BLOOMER.

## FAREWELL GIFT TO JEFF GUY

After 50 years with the Company, Jeffrey Guy retired from Tipton, on Friday, 25th July.

On behalf of all his friends, Mr. Guy was presented with a camera by David Brown, who paid tribute to Mr. Guy's loyalty and long service which started in November 1925.

Mr. Guy was joined for the presentation by his wife and many ex-members of staff attended to wish them well.

His knowledge of the Company and his willingness to help others have made Mr. Guy an invaluable colleague. It is with real regret that we say 'au revoir' and with sincerity that we wish Mr. and Mrs. Guy a long and happy retirement.

ANITA PHILLIPS.



*David Brown, Distribution Engineer  
with Jeff Guy and his wife*



## RETIREMENTS

TOM HOOD, foreman,  
at Maple Brook, on 16.4.75.

SAM STANLEY, caretaker,  
at Head Office, on 17.4.75.

ARTHUR WILKINSON, attendant,  
at Ashwood, on 30.4.75.

FRANK JARVIS, waste inspector,  
at Burton, on 30.4.75.

WALTER WINWOOD, waterman,  
at Walsall, on 2.5.75.

SID DAVIES, foreman,  
at Fradley, on 3.5.75.

JOE LAPPAGE, waterman,  
at Tipton, on 27.6.75.

STAN BARTRAM, bricklayer,  
at Wednesbury, on 15.7.75.

JEFF GUY, chief clerk,  
at Tipton, on 7.8.75.

BILL SIMPSON, waterman,  
at Burton, on 8.8.75.

JACK WISE, general foreman,  
at Tipton, on 9.8.75.

SAM TAPPER, waterman,  
at Walsall, on 19.8.75.

ALBERT MOORE, operative,  
at Cannock, on 14.9.75.

JACK MIDGLEY, telephonist,  
at Burton, on 26.9.75.

JOHN WILLIAMSON, labourer,  
at Chilcote, on 30.9.75.

WALTER WAIN, yardman,  
at Burton, on 18.10.75.

BILL HARLEY, leading hand,  
at Blithfield, on 28.11.75.

We wish you all a long and happy retirement.

## GOLD AWARD

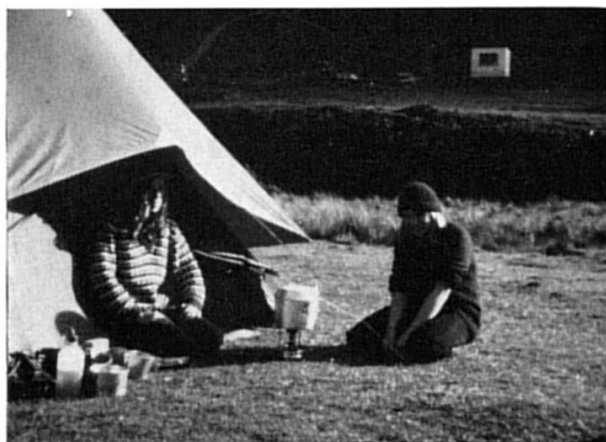
While still at school I entered for the Duke of Edinburgh Award, attracted by a course involving a trip to the Isle of Arran, visiting old people and looking after a pair of Guinea pigs.

The course is in three parts. After completing the first over nine months, I was awarded the Bronze medal. A further year of projects and visits resulted in my being presented with the Silver Award by the Lord Mayor of Birmingham. Having got that far I decided to carry on for another two years to try and get the Gold.

The most exciting part of the course was the visit to Arran. Five days of non-stop rain and sleet found us waterlogged and wretched in our camp but fortunately on the Thursday the sun greeted us and we were able to start our 36-mile survival test. Using compass and map we followed tracks in the wilderness, sometimes nearly overcome with fright at the thought of being lost without trace, but we made it, amazed at our own courage and endurance.

Having passed the final hurdle, which was a week in Wales, clearing up an area of forest, I hope to collect my Gold Award at Buckingham Palace in November. If in residence the Duke presents the awards himself. He had better be there, after all my effort!

SUSAN ROGERS.



*Susan, right, watches the billy boil !*

## WELCOME

to newcomers, who recently joined us:

ERNEST CARTWRIGHT, attendant,  
at Seedy Mill, on 1.5.75.

DAVID SMITH, operator,  
at Chilcote, on 8.5.75.

STEPHEN NICKLIN, trenchman,  
at Cannock, on 8.5.75.

MARGARET HARRIS, clerical assistant,  
at Head Office, on 28.5.75.

WILLIAM DREVER, trenchman,  
at Burton, on 19.5.75.

PETER SMITH, technical assistant,  
at Head Office, on 19.5.75.

GORDON MOORE, estimator,  
at Wood Green, on 9.6.75.

ANTHONY HEATH, biologist,  
at Sandfields, on 1.7.75.

CHRISTINE HULL, programmer,  
at Head Office, on 7.7.75.

LINDA WRIGHT, punch operator,  
at Head Office, on 7.7.75.

RAYMOND SUMMERS, labourer,  
at Wood Green, on 7.7.75.

BRIAN JONES, draughtsman,  
at Head Office, on 14.7.75.

SHEILA PHIPPS, clerical assistant,  
at Head Office, on 21.7.75.

DENNIS BROWN, programmer,  
at Head Office, on 11.8.75.

IAN SILCOX, trainee programmer,  
at Head Office, on 11.8.75.

ANNE SIMMONDS, copy typist,  
at Head Office, on 19.8.75.

## GARDENING IN OCTOBER

GARDENING IN OCTOBER will surely only be for the enthusiasts, since for many people it ends with the tedious duty of cutting the lawn. However, there are some, who, like myself, enjoy even the most strenuous jobs and are greatly rewarded by success in propagating cuttings and raising unusual plants from seed.

The present financial situation must have made gardeners look around, this season, to see whether they could find room for a few vegetables. Many vegetables can be grown, quite successfully in the herbaceous border, without detriment. I have in mind such things as beetroot, carrots, small Tom Thumb lettuce, radishes and the very quick growing, Golden Acre, summer cabbages, which have a very solid, compact heart, so useful for cole slaw.

In the winter months, most of us tend to forget all about preparation for the coming Spring. Make the most of fine weekends by getting all your digging and tidying up done. If you have room, excavate a trench for next year's runner beans, and leave it open to the frost, or if you are able to get hold of farmyard manure dig this into the bottom of the trench.

I like to look back over the previous months to see if there is anything to be learned from past mistakes. The lesson we should have learned this summer, is that every possible effort must be made to put humus into the soil. Don't burn fallen leaves, collect them and make compost with your grass cuttings and any other vegetable matter. Peat is very good but has become very expensive bearing in mind that it is only a moisture retainer and has virtually no food value.

RICHARD CHAMBERLAIN.

## ALL SYSTEMS BLOW

Sunday, 31st August dawned a dull day but as I journeyed north towards Shildon the weather improved to give a clear blue sky and brilliant sunshine. The largest collection of historic locomotives ever assembled were to travel from Shildon to Darlington, to commemorate the opening of the Stockton and Darlington Railway in 1825.

Eventually I came to the lineside at Newton Aycliffe, a mile or so from Shildon and here on either side of the track people were gathering to witness this unique spectacle.

As the time approached for the first engine to leave Shildon the atmosphere grew tense with expectation and eventually in the distance a wisp of smoke could be seen. "Locomotion" came slowly down the line, just as the original did 150 years before, but this time a passenger coach formed its load instead of coal trucks. This engine, built especially for this historic day, is a replica of the original and incorporates a few refinements of 150 years' design experience.

For the next two hours there slowly passed a collection of engines, ranging in size from a diminutive Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway tank engine to the massive LMS "Princess Elizabeth"; from the sombre blackberry black of LNWR "Hardwick" to the apple green of "Flying Scotsman".

With the exception of the great Northern Railway's "Single", with its one pair of 8ft. diameter driving wheels, and two others, all the engines travelled under their own steam. Brasswork and copper pipes shone and steel burnished, even the coal on a LBSCR tank engine was whitewashed.

Bringing up the rear was the last steam engine built for British Railways, "Evening Star", which was built at Swindon in 1960. To emphasise a by-gone age British Rail's latest diesel train, which has just entered service between London and Bristol, was the final exhibit in a gloriously nostalgic afternoon.

DAVID PEARSON.



Stanier "Black 5" locomotive on Beatock Bank, Dumfriesshire