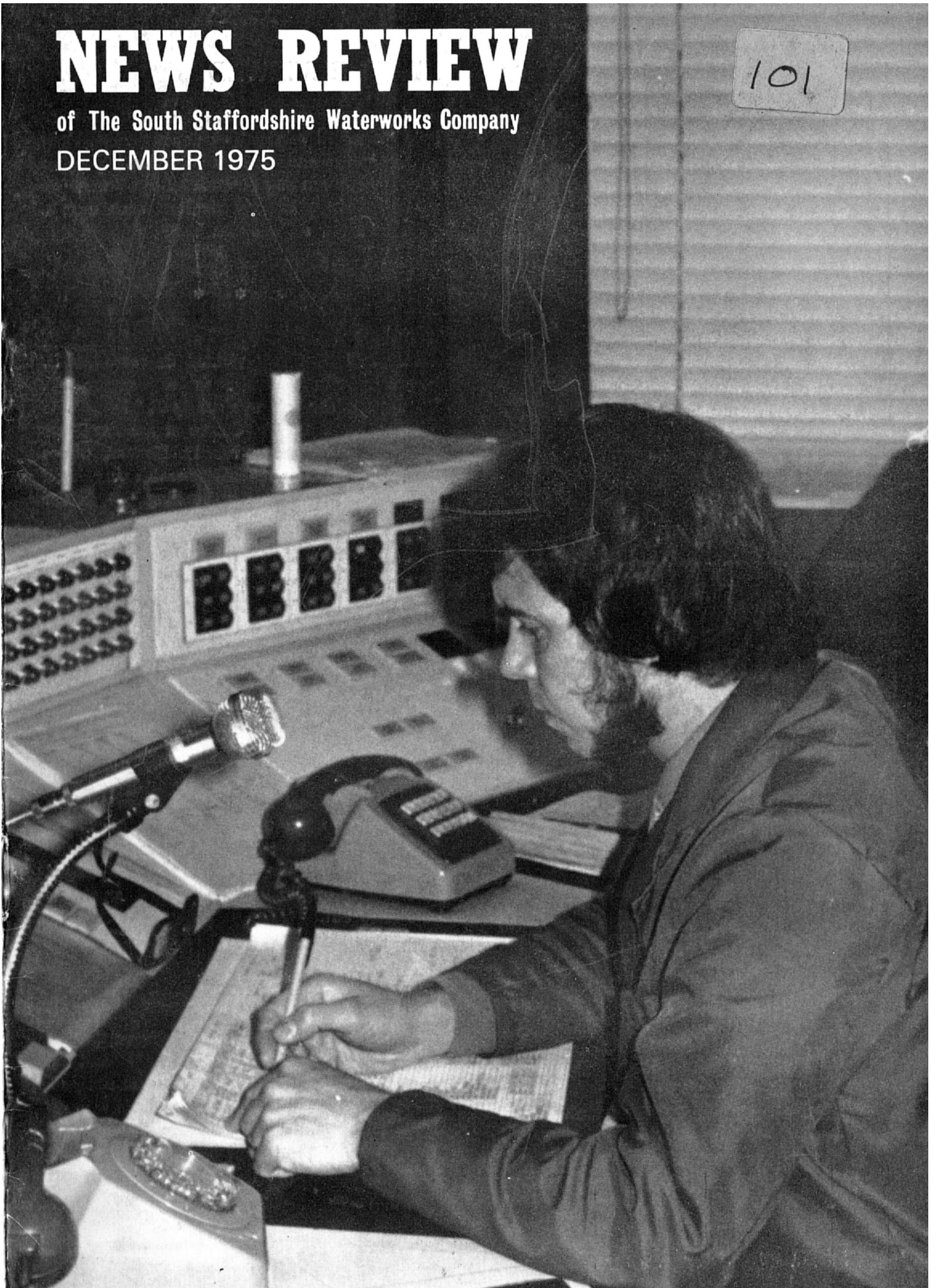


NEWS REVIEW

of The South Staffordshire Waterworks Company
DECEMBER 1975





*Walsall Control Office today
(see feature page 11)*

NEWS REVIEWED

Wolverhampton Corporation have brought in a "hundred minute" clock as part of their newly introduced flexitime scheme. Credited centiminutes can be accumulated to a maximum of half a day's leave equivalent, each month. Who said our scheme was bad?

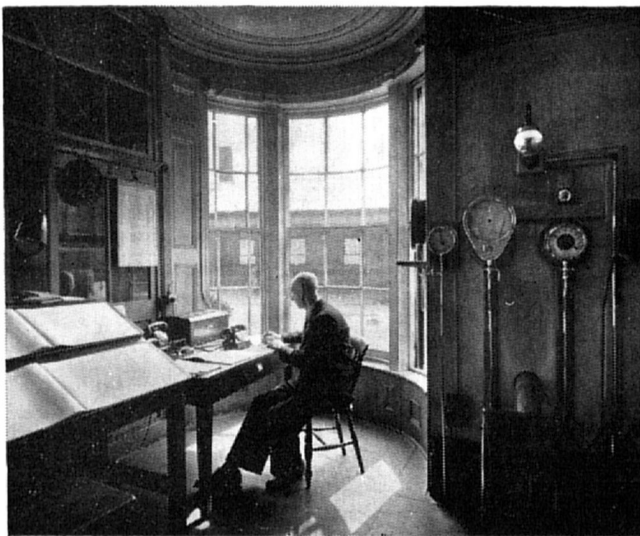
* * *

Blithfield Reservoir yielded its record 8 lb. brown trout in September to local angler, Mr. W. Coxon. The fish was nearly 25" long, with a 15" girth. With Mr. Coxon at the time, was previous record holder Mr. D. Henson, whose 7 lb. 12 oz. fish was taken earlier this year. With these two gone, who will be king fish, in the reservoir, now?

* * *

A considerable length of 36" diameter main from Seedy Mill Treatment Works to Barr Beacon Reservoir has recently been relined with concrete, by a team of specialists. The original bitumen lining had been deteriorating for a number of years. This main was, until the completion of the 1000 mm main from West Bromwich to Barr Beacon, the major lifeline, on which supplies to a large area depended. Only when the new 1000 mm main was commissioned was it possible to take the damaged main out of service long enough for repairs to be carried out.

* * *



... and as it used to be

IN THIS ISSUE . . .

Mini Tunnel at Wednesbury
The History of Plumbing
New Maps for Old
Burton Beer from Blithfield Water
Model Making
Walsall Control — Nerve Centre
Plus our regular features and personal notes

Owing to the length of time between the last issue of News Review, in October '75 and the previous one in November '74, it was not possible to include all the names of people who retired or who joined the Company in the intervening gap. Several well known personalities were left out and we should like to offer them our apologies.

News Review

December 1975

The Magazine of the South Staffordshire Waterworks Company

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

EDITORIAL COMMENT

After browsing through the October News Review some of you could be forgiven for thinking that the Company's operations are still conducted with the aid of steam engines and bicycles. There are some who might consider that no bad thing anyway!

To put the cynics to shame, however, some of the articles in this issue highlight the up-to-date methods of a modern Water Company. It may not quite warrant shouting "We are the greatest", but I think we can be proud of the improvements the Company has carried out in recent years, including telemetry, automation of pumping stations, interconnection of major sources, stepping up of the already stringent financial controls and computerisation of many administrative functions.

You may be of the opinion that many of the features in the current News Review and also October's issue concern the activities of only one or two departments within the Company. The reason for this is simple — only those who contribute articles and information can be represented. The solution is also simple — write something! Items of news can be passed to me either by telephone or on the back of a cigarette packet even, and we can do the rest. The magazine is yours, and your help is needed to make it topical, lively and representative.

Christmas is with us again amid the now familiar "Save it" campaign. (Incidentally, don't forget to save it, by watching your use of windows and radiators, please). Everyone can help by sending old Christmas cards to local charities, collecting discarded wrapping paper for salvage (or use next year) and postage stamps for hospital charities. Whilst we will probably break all the records in the shops for the "nth" year running, spare a thought for the less fortunate. Your own enjoyment will be all the richer. Happy Christmas. **ED.**

Mini Tunnel at Wednesbury



A recent development in small diameter tunnelling has just been used successfully, as part of a scheme for a diversionary main around Wednesbury Reservoir, implementation of which was delayed pending redevelopment of adjoining properties.

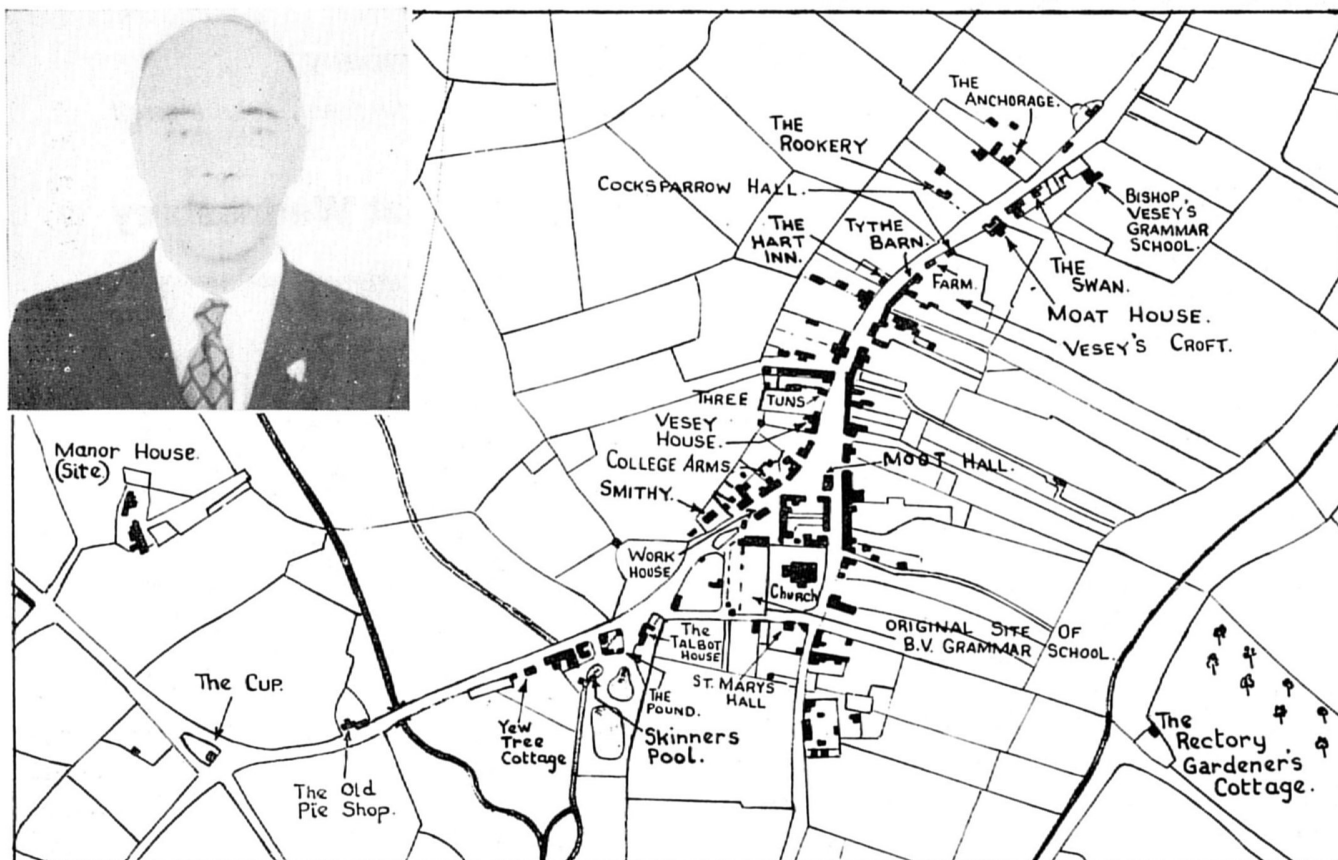
A complete system of tunnelling has been developed, by the Civil Engineering industry, with miniature rails, trucks and electric locomotive and specially designed, 3 segment, concrete lining rings. This enables tunnels to be driven in small diameters, frequently more cheaply than open trench work where access is difficult.

At Wednesbury, proximity of the existing reservoir structure and a number of environmentally important mature trees, made the driving of the one metre diameter tunnel an economic proposition.

Starting from a shaft at the top of Squires Walk, the tunnel was driven towards Wednesbury Booster station for 42 metres. Coal was met with in the shaft and throughout most of the tunnel; a not uncommon experience in the Black Country, in many of the old mining areas.

The coal was of poor quality, however, and a coal rush did not ensue!

NEW MAPS FOR OLD



John Hill's (inset) map of Sutton of 1810

Have you ever stopped to think how we would get on without maps — with difficulty to say the least, and most of us only use them as direction finders. Maps are essential to assist in property matters, recording of boundaries, services, land use and a host of other purposes. So it is not surprising that maps have been around for a long time.

Many old maps survive today, though being on fragile material like paper or parchment, are often in a very dilapidated condition. To the rescue come dedicated people like John Hill, Design Draughtsman in New Works Department, whose hobby is the preservation of the content of old maps. He delves into Public Records Offices, Libraries and Private Collections looking for old maps, then he painstakingly re-draws every detail. He also pieces together a number of small maps to make a comprehensive one of quite a large area.

John, who is married with two grown children, began his hobby in 1948 by tracing the early history of Birmingham. This proved a Herculean task as the area was too big to be covered by one person, so he concentrated on Sutton Coldfield where he lives. He has pro-

duced a comprehensive map of the Sutton of 1810, from the old Corn Rent Records, locating the names of many of the original landowners.

He is currently working on a map of Sutton of 1765 from an original by one John Snape. He has drawn a new and faithful copy, in the decorative style of the period and has discovered small maps of adjoining areas which he will add to the main map.

Part of the fascination, John says, is in the discovery of many of the features and buildings which still exist today. For instance Sutton Parade was once a dam, holding back a large lake, which fed water to a mill at the bottom of Mill Street. The mill stream was eventually diverted and can still be seen today where it crosses the main road near Woolworths.

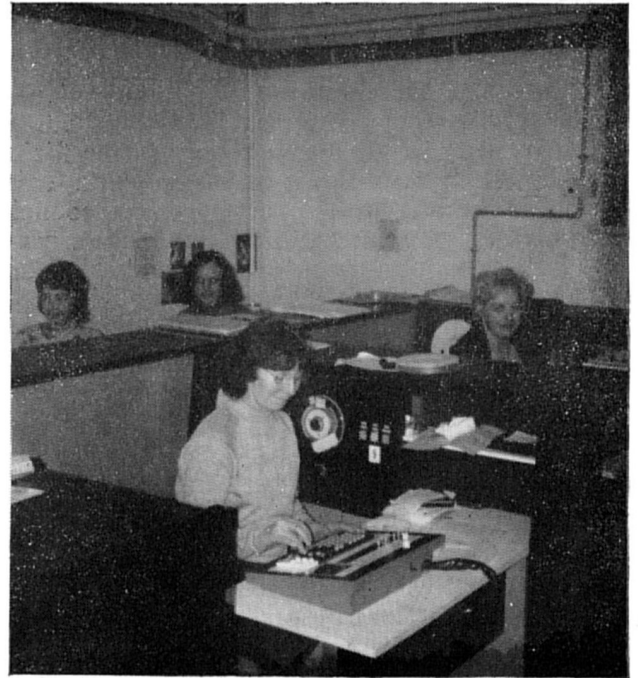
As an officer of 23 years' service in the Boys' Brigade, John takes his group of lads searching out these old clues. It helps him and keeps them well occupied.

John's other projects include a map of the railway through Sutton Park, and another showing the location and alleged actions which took place in a foul murder of 1817 in Penns Lane.

THE NEW COMPUTER

It is now twelve months since the new computer was installed, and after a lot of hard work (at times under very heavy pressure) by the staff in the Computer Department, a satisfactory changeover has been accomplished. The input to the machine was changed from punched cards to magnetic tape and, apart from the fact that the punch operators had to learn new punch machines and still continue with the day to day work, a large number of the existing computer programs had to be amended to accept magnetic tape input. Having overcome these initial problems, a big task faced the Department because, to make full use of the power of the new equipment, the three hundred and twenty-five Computer programs had to be amended or re-written. This work is still being carried out and it is estimated that about half of the programs have been updated.

Many additional troubles have been caused by the air conditioning equipment, which is being asked to do much heavier work than before, as the new machine gives out approximately one third more heat than the old one. A computer, being very sensitive equipment, requires to operate in perfect environmental conditions, and a fluctuation of four degrees either side of



70°F has been proved to cause malfunction. The computer hardware has caused very few problems bearing in mind the complexity of the machine.

The Computer Department staff feel that they have just come through a very trying time, but can hopefully look forward to a more settled period ahead.

ERIC CRISP,
Computer Manager.



DAD'S ARMY

This photograph first appeared in the News Review, published in October, 1938, price one shilling. It shows a few of the many Company employees who joined the Home Guard (South Staffs. Works Defence) Company prior

to World War II. I should be pleased to hear from anyone who can recall any of the people in the picture.

Young as we are even we know Ernie Horobin, D.I. from Walsall, who retired in January, this year.

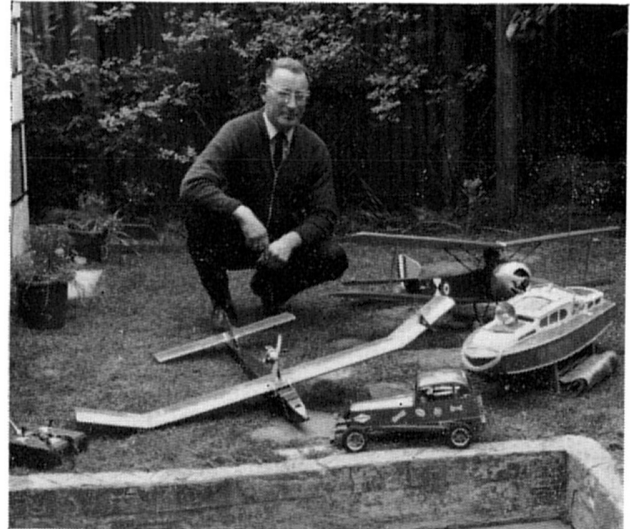
MODEL MAKING

I first became interested in model planes after leaving the Army in 1952, graduating from small balsa gliders to powered free flight models, which were flown at Sutton Park. This being the nearest large open space, the council allocated an area for us to fly our models near the Boldmere entrance. Most weekends brought windy weather, which meant that models were carried away downwind and breakages were frequent. By 1964 my thoughts turned to radio control so that even if the engine cut out the model could be guided back to you in the glide.

Radio control of models gathered interest in this country from America. However, most of the early equipment was not too reliable and rather heavy as the receiver and transmitter contained valves and required large batteries to be carried. Control of the plane was by rudder alone and one plane could be flown at a time. Due to interference with other receivers the Post Office allocated us one frequency of 27 m/c's.

By 1969 transistors were replacing valves in radio and T.V. and have been put to good use in models. Also dry batteries have been replaced by 1" dia. cylindrical, nickel cadmium cells, which are rechargeable and can be used over and over again. Control signals can now be applied to the rudder, engine, elevator, aileron and undercart. The transmitter is hand held and houses two short joysticks which allow steering movements just like flying a full size aircraft.

I have also built model boats and stock cars which are the latest craze. Even working



models can produce some hair-raising moments. When I first tested the model stock car it went out of control, sped out of the unfenced park and shot across the busy Hagley Road. I arrived breathless on the scene to find that a mini had mounted the pavement in an effort to avoid the model, which surprisingly, was intact, in the middle of the road.

Currently I am working on a scale model of a 1914-18 Sopwith Scout plane, with a 48" wing span. Receivers are now crystal controlled and are superheterodyne, which means 12 models can be flown together at any one time. My next venture will be in the realm of helicopters, quite expensive at £160.

EDDIE PALMER



Who hasn't felt like this at some time?

Rainmaker Required

After a delightful summer and an idyllic, warm autumn, apart from a couple of sharp frosts, where oh where is the rain????

To the north, Severn Trent Derwent Division have only a few weeks' supply left and we are assisting by replacing from our own resources the larger part of the Derby bulk supply, using a temporary, road side, mobile booster.

Our own Blithfield Reservoir is well down too, with less than 50% of its normal storage at the end of November. However, action was taken in late July, in anticipation of a continuing dry period, to reduce the take.

Dear Marge . . .

"For four months I have been going out with a boy. A little while ago at a party, where he left me to go home, I met another boy. We became friendly, and when my boy came back from camp he said he didn't want any more to do with me. How can I get him back?" . . . Shy.

How often must I say that a girl cannot and should not try to "get a man back", unless he is her husband — Boys should pursue; when they don't it is a sign they care for someone else, or, at all events, do not wish to tie themselves up. Girls must control themselves and "speak when they are spoken to".

(Sunday Dispatch 15.9.1935).

The good old days, girls???



Annual General Meeting

At the A.G.M. of the South Staffordshire Waterworks Company Branch of Nalگو held on 27th November, the following representatives were elected as Branch Officers for 1975/76:

<i>President</i>	Ms. B. Thurston
<i>Chairman</i>	Mr. J. P. N. Dunne
<i>Branch Secretary</i>	Mr. B. A. Morrall
<i>Branch Treasurer</i>	Mr. C. L. Pattison
<i>Auditors</i>	Mr. S. Edwards Mr. P. Shaw
<i>Education Secretary</i>	Mr. H. A. Newman
<i>Publicity Officer</i>	Mr. E. J. Escombe
<i>Welfare Officer</i>	Mr. A. D. Baker
<i>Head Office Representatives</i>	Ms. A. Robson Mr. J. Morrall Mr. M. J. Kilminster
<i>Wood Green Representative</i>	Mr. A. Noakes
<i>Walsall Representative</i>	Mr. G. Whewell
<i>Tipton Representative</i>	Mr. J. Chater
<i>Hampton Loade Representative</i>	Mr. R. Goodwill
<i>Sandfields/Seedy Mill Representative</i>	Mr. J. Harris

Wedding 'Belles'

DORAN — YOUNG

Sally Doran (New Works Admin.) and Gordon Young (Transport—EMD) were married on October 18th.



SMEETON — WYKE

Ruth Smeeton (Tracing Section—DD) and Kelvin Wyke were married on October 25th.



TRIBUTE TO JACK DREW

On 19th September Jack Drew suddenly died, at his home in Walsall, at the age of 64.

Jack was well known to many in the Company for his conscientious approach to his work as a plumber at Walsall Area Office. He was also noted as one of the Company's finest exponents of the plumbers' wiped soldered joint, a talent he frequently demonstrated to would-be service layers at Wednesbury training centre.

He joined the Company in June 1938, having served a plumbing apprenticeship with a local contractor and gaining membership of the Worshipful Company of Plumbers as a registered plumber. This was a constant reminder to Jack that it was quality that mattered.

The photograph shows Jack demonstrating the method of wiping soldered joints at the Wednesbury training centre earlier this year, a



Jack Drew

particular aspect of Jack's work that will be greatly missed.

THE HISTORY OF PLUMBING

Have you ever ruminated whilst in the smallest room in the house? Many subjects are meditated upon during the usual daily performance but one, I bet, that won't have crossed your mind is who invented the thing you are sitting on.

The use of the water closet is something which today we take for granted, only thinking about the splendid system of drains which carries away our human waste products when there is a blockage!

Things have not always been so satisfactory; for centuries people had room to perform and move on, letting nature take care of its own. However, as men settled in towns this proved impossible.

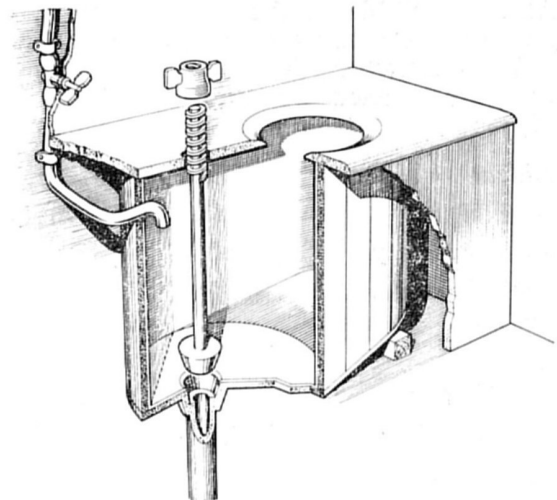
Most dwellings in mediaeval Europe were without gardens and all rubbish was disposed of from the upstairs window, at the peril of the passer-by. The air was foul and infection rife. By 1350 the infamous Black Death plague reached England and highlighted the need for organised sanitation.

Little was done, however, and by 1388 conditions were so terrible that Richard II issued a proclamation forbidding the casting out of "such annoyances, issues and dung", without risking a £20 fine, which today would be something like £4,000 (according to Dr. Harley's calculations).

The severity of the proclamation did little to improve things and it was not until the reign of Henry VIII (1509-1547) that a Royal Commission on sewers was set up, empowered to build sewers to transport water-borne refuse

away from city streets (usually to rivers, but that is another story!)

Having done something about the transport system, thought had to be given to the 'inlet'. Sir John Harington, a kinsman of Queen Elizabeth I, published his invention of a contraption, very like the modern closet, in 1596.



Artist's impression by Peter Bosley, Draughtsman, DD

The pan was made from stone or wood, lined with lead and flushed at the turn of a tap from an elevated cistern.

Sir John, however, was like Leonardo Da Vinci years before his time, and it was not until 1777 that the next serious attempt was made at perfecting the water closet, as we shall see in the next issue.

GRAHAM WATKINS

COMPETITION

October's competition proved popular and generated much head scratching. The winning entry was submitted by Jean Tolley, a Tracer at Head Office. Hers was the third entry opened but first all correct.

Congratulations Jean!

The answers left to right were: Bert Spink, Wood Green; Marsh Hancock, Head Office garage; Bob Wright, Distribution Department; Ernie Cattell, Walsall Area Office; Irene Phillips, Reception at Head Office.



Spot the deliberate mistake!

In this issue a deliberate mistake has been incorporated to test your powers of observation. To make it interesting, no clue is to be given as to what type of mistake it may be, except that it will not be merely a spelling or printing error. Entries, submitted in sealed envelopes, should be returned to the Editor by 31st January and £5 will be awarded to the sender of the first correct entry opened.

PETER DODDS
Editor

GOLD WATCHES

Gold watches were presented by the Chairman, Sir Charles Burman, in commemoration of 25 years' service to:

October

JOHN STOCK, deputy section head, Secretary's department, at Head Office.

BOB SWINGLER, deputy section head, Secretary's department, at Head Office.

November

BILL HARLEY, leading hand, at Blithfield.

December

PHILIP SMITH, station attendant, at Seedy Mill.

Congratulations!



WATERWORDS

WATER

Water . . . lead me to the altar!

TAP

The sound of typists.

MAIN

The sentence that would replace the whole report.

DISTRIBUTION

. . . of copies to all concerned.

RESERVOIR

Central Filing.

PRESSURE

Board reports!

FLOW

. . . measured in words per minute.

ACTION

Occurs if the words dry up!

D.M.S. PRESENTATION



Congratulations are in order for Messrs. Tony Leach (New Works Engineer), Ron Reed (Admin. Dept.) and Geoff Thomason (Elec./Mech. Dept.), who recently successfully completed the Diploma course in Management Studies.

The formal presentation of their Diplomas was made by the Mayor of Wolverhampton at Himley Hall, Wolverhampton Polytechnic's Management Centre.

Accompanied by their wives, the successful trio later enjoyed a buffet supper and the opportunity for renewing acquaintances with former colleagues and lecturers and congratulating each other on finally achieving their goal.



RETIREMENTS

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

TED HODKINSON, labourer,
at Blithfield, on 28.11.75.

GEORGE WHITEHOUSE, outside representative (recovery officer), Revenue Dept.,
on 31.12.75.

We wish you a long and happy retirement.

Target Reached

The Judi Avery Kidney Machine Fund sailed past its target of £5,000 on 16th November...

This was achieved when Mike Fletcher (Admin. Dept.), treasurer of the Youth Fellowship at Old Hill Tabernacle Methodist Church, presented the organisers with a cheque for £2,100, on behalf of the church.

The Appeal was also generously supported here at South Staffs., where Judi formerly worked as a clerical assistant in Revenue Department, from 1969 to 73. John Dixon (Accounts Dept.) organised the collection which raised £40.00.

WELCOME

to newcomers who recently joined us:

MAUREEN CHAPMAN, telephonist/clerk,
at Burton, on 15.9.75.

RICHARD HORSELEY, clerical assistant,
at Head Office, on 22.9.75.

JANIS NELSON, clerical assistant,
at Head Office, on 22.9.75.

TIM NOBLET, trainee waterworks operative,
at Burton, on 20.10.75.

DOREEN BROMLEY, cook,
at Head Office, on 13.11.75.

WINE MAKING

An increasingly popular pastime is amateur winemaking. The would-be winemaker can choose from a wide variety of readily available materials marketed to help him.

The art is simple and non time-consuming, so may appeal to those too busy for more involved hobbies. The best way to start is with a grape juice concentrate kit from Boots. These make quite pleasant wines which mature quickly.

Full instructions are given on the label of the kit, but the following refinement will improve the wine. To the jar of dissolved juice add 2 teaspoonsful of yeast nutrient, tronzymol is especially good, and $\frac{1}{2}$ a teaspoonful of bentonite, both available from winemakers' suppliers. The ferment will be more vigorous and the wine will clear more quickly as a result of these additions.

Do not be in a hurry to bottle the wine. Bottling can usually be carried out two months after fermentation has stopped. The wine should be drinkable in a further two months, and will be really good for Christmas... '76.

WALSALL CONTROL — NERVE CENTRE

When all of us are sound asleep in our beds, a few of the Company's employees keep a lonely vigil over the water supply, ensuring that when a new day breaks, water will be there on tap for our one and a quarter million customers.

One of those on watch is the Control Assistant, a member of a team of six highly trained men who man Control 24 hours a day, ensuring the security of water supplies by regulating pumping station output and reservoir levels.

During the day the Control Office is just another cog in the Company wheel, playing its part like the rest of us. In Control, telephone and radio messages are received and relayed to the appropriate person for action; meter reading and reservoir levels are passed to Head Office for consumption calculations and a watch is maintained over the system for anomalies which require swift attention or investigation.

As the day ends and we all go home, the Control Assistant settles down to fill in the daily record of consumption and watch the evening activities of the consumers out there on the end of several million taps. Teatime; and the pressure gauge needles dip as kettles are filled and washing-up is done. Coronation Street, and the gauges flicker up with the tenseness of the drama and suddenly downwards as the adverts give time to put the kettle on once again. As the evening draws on reservoir levels begin to rise as the consumption drops and pumping stations deliver more to storage than to the consumer.

By 1.00 a.m. most people are in bed and the gauges settle. Only the low but steady demand of all-night industry and a much reduced domestic consumption show on the dials. The early risers make themselves known by 5.00 a.m., when the pressure begins to drop, slowly at first and then more rapidly, until by 7.30 a.m. the usual day-time pressures are reached. Due to the range of pressures involved some regulation is required and is achieved by the Control Assistants, who operate valves by remote control from the office.

The Control Assistants have many modern aids to their work, a computer to scan the incoming reservoir levels and digital display of these levels on a wall panel. A large central console, covered in flashing lights, switches and knobs gives the unfamiliar visitor an impression of being on the bridge of the 'Starship Enterprise'. At the insertion of an appropriate code,



Dave Walker and Mike Farrow discuss a supply problem

stored information can easily be recalled on a Visual Display Unit, rather like a television.

The Assistants themselves enjoy their work though they come from differing backgrounds. Longest-serving members of the team are Sid Cooper, one time steam locomotive driver, who recently spent six weeks visiting relatives in the U.S.A. and Dennis Drew, who came to the Company as a meter reader and became interested in Control long before the advent of modern aids. More recently Mike Farrow, Dave Pearson, Derek Corbett and Dave Walker have joined the office and quickly settled into the sometimes hectic life of Control, from backgrounds as varied as factory foreman and trainee store manager.

PETER DODDS

GARDENING

Preparation for a good gardening year starts in the autumn, and by now I hope your digging is completed and that all annual weeds and fallen leaves have been collected and put on the compost heap.

If your lawn is like mine it has suffered greatly during the wonderful summer. A terrific amount of moss has accumulated which must be treated as soon as possible with one of the proprietary preparations which, unfortunately, is a rather costly operation if you have a large expanse of lawn in this condition. Some relief from this scourge can be obtained by frequent and energetic use of a springbok, but be careful, unless you are very fit do not exceed a period of half an hour a day until your muscles get into trim, otherwise you will suffer.

Hollow tine or indeed forking the lawn with a good strong digging fork will improve aeration and this too must be done in small doses except by the young and fit or by the hardened veteran.

Seed catalogues should soon be arriving and most of us can improve on last year's efforts by careful planning, remembering that with gardening, as indeed with most things in life, the best results are obtained by carrying out the work at the right time. Good preparation of the soil is essential and I believe in planting not by the calendar but by the condition of the soil. In spite of this I feel that perhaps a few notes on the approximate time for various jobs due from January to March might be helpful for the less experienced gardeners and here are a few suggestions:

January

Protect early-flowering rock plants and bulbs particularly saxifrages, crocus and iris, with straw or bracken. Pruning of fruit trees should be completed when the weather is favourable. Burn all the prunings. If you intend to spray the trees with tar oil wash (to kill hibernating insects and aphid eggs) now is the time.

Check your lawn mower and if it is due for a service send it now. Under glass chrysanthemum cuttings should be taken. Sweet peas can be sown if you overlooked doing it in the autumn. Seed potatoes can be stood up in boxes or trays in a light, frost-proof place to sprout ready for Spring planting.

February

Prune late summer flowering shrubs such as buddleia, deciduous ceanothus, hydrangeas and spireas, cut back newly planted raspberries to a few inches above ground. Plant onion sets and sow parsnip seeds.

March

Plant herbaceous perennials and gladioli corms, sow seeds of onions in drills $\frac{1}{2}$ " deep and 1' apart, also seeds of peas, leeks, parsley, etc.

RICHARD CHAMBERLAIN



NET DEFICIT

The 'net deficit' so far this season is 6 goals—22 for and 28 against, which on face value is pretty disappointing. The team having been promoted to Division I, of Bloxwich Combination football league, is finding the opposition much tougher and this is reflected in the results.

Though our performances in the league have been far from consistent our effort has not flagged and we hope for a brighter future in the second half.

Apart from League games we are in the semi-finals of the 'Billy Nicholls' Shield Cup Competition. On December 6th the first round proper of the Walsall and District F.A. Challenge Cup was played and we drew tough opponents in Goscote from the Staffs. County Div. II.

The Manager's player of the month award for September and October went to Terry Smith (Secretary's Department) and John Barnfield (Wednesbury—New Works Department), respectively.

LEAGUE RESULTS:

Played 7, Won 1, Lost 4, Drawn 2, For 10, Against 18, Points 4.

JOHN MORRALL