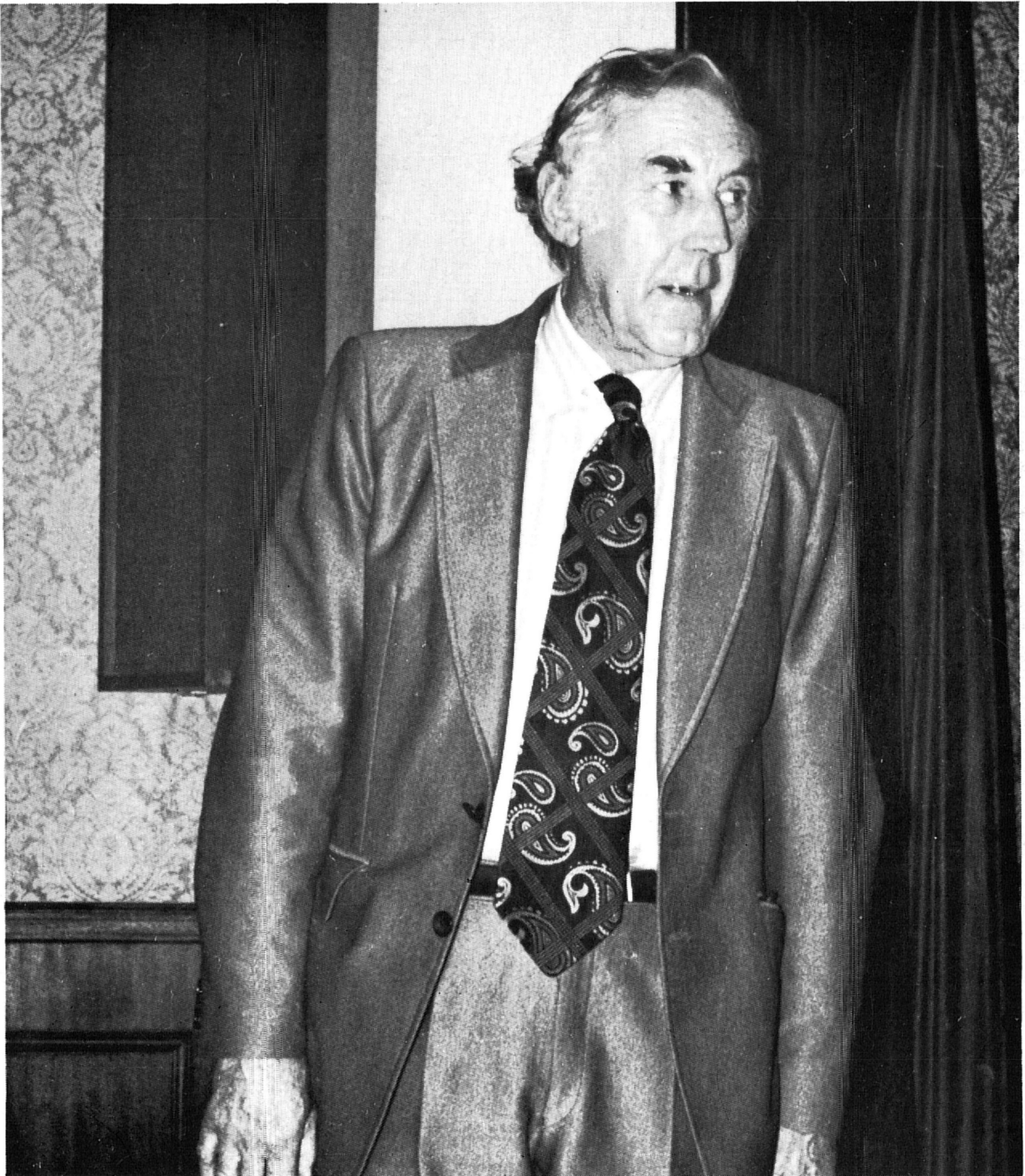


News Review

109

THE SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE
WATERWORKS COMPANY

JULY 1978



THE SOCIAL CLUB
(BIRMINGHAM)
**NOTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
OF THE SOCIAL CLUB (BIRMINGHAM)
HELD ON 23rd FEBRUARY**

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman recalled the highly successful year of social activities in 1977 including the Annual Dinner Dance, an outing to London during the Silver Jubilee celebrations, a sports competition with Tame Division (which was won by the Company), a Bonfire Night Party and a Children's Party. In addition, many other functions, both social and sporting, were held.

Events for 1978 were being organised on similar lines and attention was drawn to the forthcoming Annual Dinner Dance on Friday, 31st March, two outings on different days to meet different interests, another contest with Tame Division, a pensioners' evening in the Autumn and the usual number of other minor but important functions.

The membership had not varied substantially but the upward trend of 1977 was gratifying. The figures were :-

	1975	1976	1977
Head Office	202	178	191
District Employees	51	50	50
	253	228	241

The financial position of The Social Club had improved during the year despite the membership fees remaining unchanged and was a satisfactory condition. Details would be provided by the Honorary Secretary later.

The opening of membership to all employees of the Company was embodied in an amendment to the Constitution in November 1977 and, as expected, there had as yet, been no increase in the number of district members. They were very welcome to join The Social Club and notices would be circulated to all work centres shortly.

Mr. Markham said that there had been three meetings of the Co-Ordination Committee of Social and Sporting Clubs during the year. A complete review of social and sporting activities within the Company had been made and submitted, with recommendations, to the management of the Company. As a result all social clubs now received a subsidy equivalent, in total, to nearly a third of their forecast expenditure in 1978 of £4,100. The Co-Ordination Committee regretted the termination of the two football teams and looked forward to supporting their revival one day and, also, would be pleased to assist in the formation of a Social Club in the Cannock and Burton areas of the Company, providing there was local enthusiasm for it.

Looking to the future the Chairman said that both the Executive Committees of The Social Club (Birmingham) and the Walsall Social Club were in touch with the management of the Company about the provision of social recreation facilities at the new Green Lane Central Office. Preliminary consideration had been given to the consequences of a transfer of a number of Head Office staff there.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Tibbenham for his continuing interest in the former Staff Association and The Social Club and for his help and advice over many years and wished him a long and happy retirement. Congratulations were offered to Mr. Wallis on his appointment as Secretary and The Social Club confidently looked forward to a similar relationship with him.

Mr. Markham expressed appreciation to Mr. Lamont for his ever ready help and guidance in social and recreational matters and for his continued interest in the welfare of employees.

It was deeply regretted that Mr. John Dixon, after ten years, was giving up his position as Hon. Secretary. Mr. Markham paid tribute to his willing dedication, his organising ability and his steady maintenance of the very high standards of The Social Club.

Finally, the Chairman thanked the Vice-Chairman, Mr. A. Evers, the Hon. Treasurer, Mr. T. A. Smith, members of the Committee and the many others whose contributions had created the success of the year's activities.

Executive Committee :

Chairman : Mr. W. A. Markham
Vice-Chairman : Mr. A. Evers
Hon. Secretary : Mr. J. Morrall
Hon. Treasurer : Mr. T. A. Smith

Head Office (Engineers) :

Mr. J. Wilson : D.D.
Miss C. Haggerty : Admin.
Mr. A. Jones : E.M.D.
Mr. B. Greenwood : N.W.D.

Head Office (Secretary's) :

Miss E. Clarke : Revenue
Miss A. Davies : Computer
Mr. S. Edwards : Accounts
Miss P. Lander : Revenue

Area Offices :

Tipton and Hampton Loade : Mr. E. Smith
Walsall and Wood Green : Mr. K. Hodson
Burton and Cannock : Mr. M. Morgan
Lichfield, Blithfield and employees on
Construction work : Mr. A. D. Heath

MR. TIBBENHAM RETIRES

The thirtyfirst of March, 1978 was the occasion of a fairly rare happening in the Company - the retirement of its Secretary. In keeping with our best traditions there were a number of presentations and messages of goodwill.

Aubrey Tibbenham joined us as Assistant Secretary in 1949 coming from Luton where he had been Deputy Treasurer, he was appointed Secretary in 1954 upon the retirement of the late Herbert Kirk. It was not long before his colleagues realised that his quiet manner and apparently troubled brow disguised an exceedingly sharp wit and a fount of wisdom.

In the earlier part of his service he participated in all the sporting and like activities which abounded at that time, these ranged from Bridge, Table Tennis to Cricket and many more besides, he also held active offices in the Staff Association Club and the Joint Sports Committee. These interests remained throughout his service.

From the start he was closely connected with the accounting functions of the Company and in 1962 introduced mechanised accounting which he progressed to the sophisticated computer system in operation today.

His contribution to the life of the Company in all aspects is well known and widespread so too his interest and concern for all the employees. The Company's Superannuation Fund which is so highly regarded is perhaps a good example but his efforts and experience benefitted many other areas such as the Thrift Fund where he was Chairman for 24 years.

The present of fishing rods from his colleagues in the Dining Room and a pair of binoculars from the staff we hope will enable him to pass many a happy hour at his retirement home in the New Forest where, with his wife Margaret, it is our hope and wish that a long and happy retirement will be fully enjoyed.

Mr. I. E. Wallis who has been Assistant Secretary for the past 24 years was appointed Secretary from 1st April, 1978.

News Review

JULY 1978

The Magazine of the South Staffordshire Waterworks Company

Editor: PETER DODDS; **Assistant Editor:** BRON THURSTON; **Secretary:** YVONNE ELSDON
Photography: GRAHAM WATKINS; **Sport and Social Events:** JOHN MORRALL
Secretary's Department: JACK BILLINGHAM; **Illustrator and Cartoonist:** PETE BOSLEY

The Editor is always pleased to receive articles on any subjects, etc. However, the right is reserved to adjust material received to fit the space available.

EDITORIAL

It is with mixed feelings that I write this editorial, since it will be my last. Having worked on the magazine team for four years and as Editor for three, I feel it is time for a change and perhaps a change of policy.

I have endeavoured to keep the magazine lively and balanced; with an emphasis on the activities of Company personnel within and outside work, rather than just a record of the Company's professional achievements. I have tried to include a little spice, balancing official policy information with gentle knocks at the establishment, although there has been pressure from both sides to either say nothing or be positively aggressive.

So it is not an easy job, it has its moments, but on the whole it's very enjoyable. Since, however, I have an increasingly time-consuming job and my spare time will be increasingly committed as I now serve on three committees associated with Britain's Waterways, plus trying to maintain a boat on the canal (and to many, that alone is a full time hobby), something, as it says in the song, has got to give.

My best wishes to all fans of the magazine (thank you, Mother!) and whoever takes over can be assured of my help and support until he/she finds his/her feet.

PETER DODDS



BRIAN AND HIS TELESCOPE.

THE ASTRONOMICAL SUBJECT

Of all the intellectual pursuits that man aspires to, I think Astronomy is the most awe-inspiring.

Because space is infinite, it seems that every answered question leads to ten more new ones.

Astronomy holds its appeal because it is attractive to both amateurs and professionals alike, and even the casual observer can speculate to his heart's delight on so many of the observed universe.

Amateur astronomers usually confine themselves to the visual study of the solar system (Sun and planets), while the professionals are invariably totally taken up with the highly technical studies of stars and groups of stars (galaxies) with radio telescopes.

I have been interested in Astronomy since about the age of ten, but it was some years after that before I was able to afford the telescope you see in the photograph. When I first turned my telescope skywards in 1964, I felt some of the thrill that Galileo must have felt in 1609 after constructing the first telescope ever. Of course, what I was to see had been seen thousands of times before by countless people, but even now, an hour or so viewing on an interesting evening is fascinating.

The telescope you see in the photograph is called a Newtonian reflector type and is named after the inventor Sir Isaac Newton. The design is too complex to discuss in such a short article but basically it consists of mirrors instead of lenses and the cost is thereby reduced greatly. The main mirror is 6" diameter and magnification is about 300 times maximum.

With this telescope I have observed Sunspots, Venus, Mars, Jupiter (and five of its twelve moons), Saturn with its ring system, some glorious star fields, and most spectacular of all, the Moon's surface with literally thousands of mountains and craters (down to about 1 mile across).

Astronomy — truly a thought-provoking and fascinating study.

BRIAN JONES, E.M.D.



FORTY FIVE YEARS AGO

The centre pages spread is reproduced fac simile from "Review" volume 1, No. 1 dated January, 1933 from a copy loaned by Mr. F.C.S. Ward, a retired member of staff who still calls in to Head Office occasionally.

COMPANY PRAISED

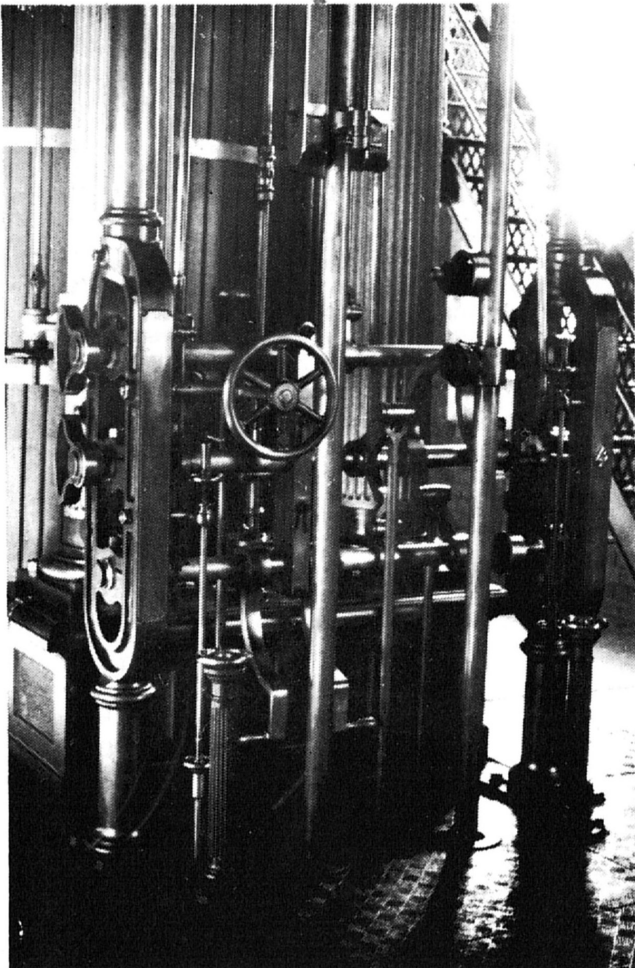
Under the South Staffordshire Waterworks Act, 1853, the Company was authorised to supply water to Lichfield, Walsall, Wednesbury and other Black Country towns. At first the sole source of supply was Sandfields Pumping Station opened, as a tablet records, by Lord Ward on 26th October, 1858. The original complex, designed by John Robinson McClean, engineer, and Edward Adams, architect, comprised a single engine house with houses for nine boilers to the east. McClean, Adams and the builders, Branson and Gwyther of Birmingham, were all associated with railways, hence the influence of railway architecture.

The engine house until 1967 contained two horizontal uniflow condensing steam-engines, very similar to a gas-engine. Built by Sulzer Brothers, London, they were installed in 1924 to meet the situation created by the construction of a comprehensive filtration plant. Previously, as a tablet records, there had been three James Watt single-cylinder rotative beam-engines originally intended for the ill-fated South Devon Atmospheric Railway Company to drive vacuum pumps. Each engine had a double-acting steam cylinder 46 in. diameter, 8 ft. stroke. The total cost of the works was about £130,000.

In 1873 a Cornish beam-engine by J. Davies of Tipton was added. Although no longer in use, this survives in an engine house styled like the original buildings, and now the only part of the complex to be retained. It has a 65 in. cylinder and 9 ft. stroke. Ram and bucket pumps on the same pump-rod were worked from the beam and it could pump 2 million gallons per day at 7 strokes per minute. A Tuscan arcade of three arches with fluted keystones supports the bearings for the beam. The whole construction — even the smallest moulding — illustrates the close relationship between architecture and engineering that was still instinctive in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The South Staffordshire Waterworks Company are to be congratulated on the public spirit and foresight that has preserved this, the most monumental of the Staffordshire pumping engines.

(from *The Industrial Archaeology of Staffordshire*
published by David & Charles)



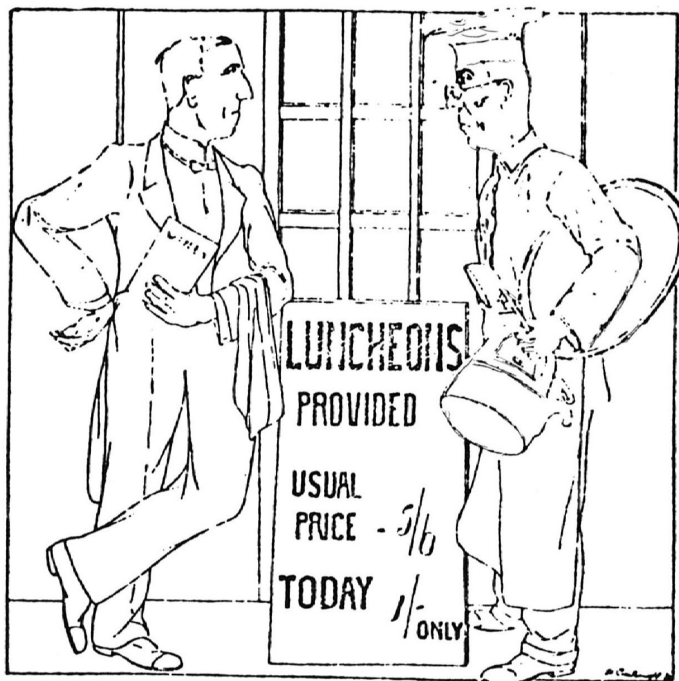
Left: The beam floor



Right: the Cornish valve gear.

Two views of the 65" Davies' Engine at Sandfields

CANTEEN COMMENTS



CHEF.: "How was the lunch to-day, Jack?"

WAITER: "Not so good, George. They say the roast chicken is not half as nice as the cottage pie they had on Tuesday."

CHEF.: "It ought to be—it's made from the same rabbit."

DIFFICULTY is being experienced by certain members of the Staff in obtaining suitable facilities in the neighbourhood for hair cutting, and it is suggested that a properly equipped Hair-cutting Saloon might be attached to the Canteen. Several members of the Staff are reputed to be expert in hair splitting, and it is recommended that these be invited to form a Committee to go into this very important question. Mr. W. Head might be put in charge of the Saloon, working under the nom de plume of "Tonsorial Artists Ltd."

"WHAT'S IN A NAME?"

The word "Canteen" seems to offend the refinements of a few members of the Staff, and whilst the writer has no objection to the term, he puts forward the following alternatives for consideration:—

Alma Mater.
The Refectory.
The Offal Bar.
The Eats.
The Chamber Laid.
Cafe It's worth.
G.P.'s Daily.

It is stated that several patrons of the Canteen are "putting on weight," and while this is "stoutly" denied by the persons concerned, it is gratifying to note that no one seems to be going into a decline.

The rumour that the food is dosed with medicine should be refuted at once. In this connection it would perhaps be as well to publish the report of the Analysts, which read as follows:--

"Dear Sir,

We have taken various samples of food from your Canteen (without payment), and have to report that no germs could be induced to live in it after 24 hours.

Yours faithfully,

UTTER PIFFLE & Co.,
Bacteriologists."

It is rather remarkable that no one has yet been clever enough to use the Canteen as an excuse for illness. What would be easier than for an office boy to return to business after a day's absence with the plausible explanation that "The spotted dog got stuck in my gullet, sir"? Such an excuse is calculated to pass the most exacting Departmental Head. (Office boys, take note).

* * * * *

We are pleased to note that fruit is now on sale in the Canteen. The Committee hope to be able to supply Spear's Mint at an early date.

* * * * *

It is suggested that the Secretary of the Thrift Fund has received a letter from a person who signs himself "Anxious One." It appears "Anxious One" is distressed to find that both the Secretary and Assistant Secretary of the Thrift Fund have been chosen as Auditors of the Canteen Funds. He fears that the funds may be getting mixed up and that the Canteen's success is accounted for by augmenting its funds from the Thrift Fund. No, "Anxious One," you are quite wrong. The Thrift Fund's money is deposited in the Tower of London. Further, there is no loss in working the Canteen. What we lose on the

sauce we gain on the "Worthington." (Directors, kindly note).

* * * * *

The Architectural Department informs us that the reason the doors of the Canteen open outwards is to comply with the Building Regulations. We suspect, however, the members of that long-suffering Department, bearing in mind their probable condition after smoking concerts, have their own view on the matter. If they haven't, we have.

* * * * *

A screen is required for the back of the stage. Free lunches for a month are offered to the one who undertakes to paint a scene guaranteed to please everyone.

* * * * *

"Too much music," was the keynote of the criticism of the Concert given on October 31st, 1932. What is needed is a little more variety

* * * * *

It is suggested that an acrobatic display might be given by the Electrical Engineering Department, or a conjuring trick by the Filing Department. What would be more interesting (or unusual) than for a document to be spirited from nowhere or for an important letter to vanish into space?

* * * * *

The versatility of the members of the Civil Engineering Department is well known, but even the best informed circles could not but express surprise at the extraordinary skill they displayed as waiters on the evening of the Concert. Everyone was pleased with their agility, and as the evening advanced this became the more noticeable. One rude member of the Staff is reported to have attributed their dexterity to the "treatment" they received at the hands of their customers. but the writer merely ascribes it to the experience they have gained at various times while borehole testing. At any rate, no one can say that any member of C.E.D. did not insist upon C.O.D.



The last issue's 'competition' produced a large number of entries — a record in fact. The best of them are reproduced below, for your entertainment. As you might expect, Green Lane was a favourite topic.

"Excuse me, Mr. Brown, Samaritans on the line" — The Editors.

"The Boss wants to know if you've clocked out?" — A. M. Prendergast, Distribution Department.

"It's alright Sir, there aren't two more Tappers starting at Walsall" — E. Glasse, Walsall.

"It's Eamon Andrews" — D. R. Fletcher, Revenue, Uttoxeter.

"Ron Perks wants you to jump off the other side, he's having a fire practice." — A. L. Rogers, Distribution.

"They only want to know where Green Lane is?" — G. Blundy, Walsall.

"It's Littlewoods Pools, shall I ask them to ring back?" — G. Prendergast, Walsall.

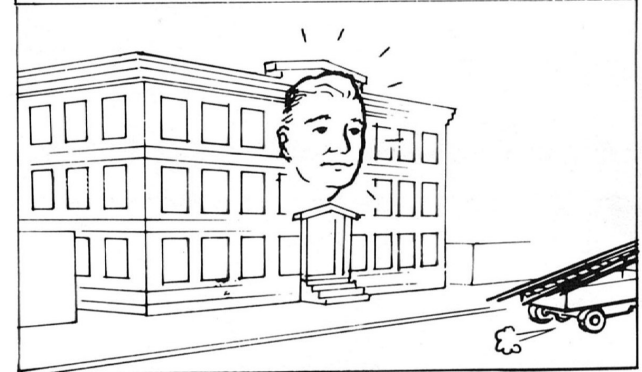
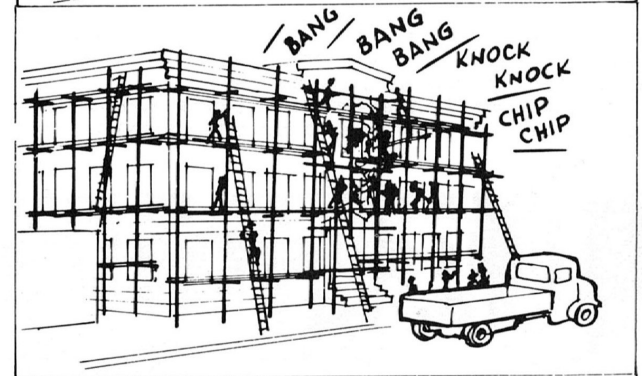
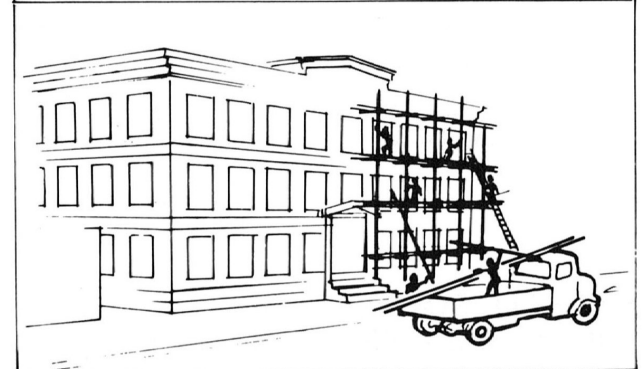
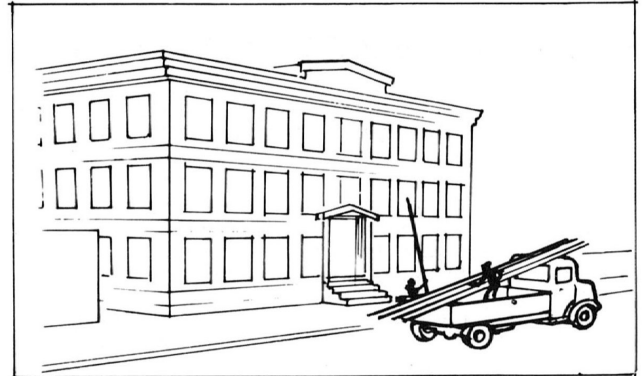
— and the winner: —

"The Boss said he meant A Green Line" from Stan Morris, New Works Department.

SAY THAT AGAIN?

Somewhere in the top security wing of Shipcoats House, a grand edifice of indeterminate age, a small team of hand picked highly trained men are working. Your roving reporter failed to get past the impenetrable, unbribable security guard Mr. Coughy McHine to interview these men. However, disguised as a New Works Engineering Assistant (New Projects branch, New Ideas section), access to the level two security zone was obtained. Here, with the assistance of a stethoscope loaned by the Chief Waist Inspector (and other things), all was at last revealed.

The top security team, led by the cool and ruthless Brian (alias Stratford) John, and his assistant Two Loo's Lotrech were heard discussing the scheme. It seems they are about to launch an inter-departmental brickpile on an unsuspecting world. The brickpile is code named Blue Street, to mislead the innocent. I can blow the plan wide open, however, for the Blue Street brickpile is in fact the GREEN LANE. Help! They've come to take me away . . .



APOLOGIES

Due to a number of problems not all within the editor's control, this issue is very late and in an effort to get it to the printer's before going on leave, the Personalia page has been omitted, since I have had to hastily put together the material I already had to hand. Next time there will be a bumper "Who's Who" page.

Mr. LAMONT'S WATERMAN RETIRES

Cyril While retired on 16th November, 1977 after 25 years service with the Company, serving the whole of the time as the District Waterman for the Four Oaks, Streetly and Little Aston Area.

Cyril who is always a methodical and meticulous man, cheerfulness and even temper were his unfailing characteristics. He would always help anyone if he could and I am sure that he planned his retirement date so as not to cause any inconvenience. He retired on Wednesday night, the end of the pay week, having completed his full week's standby duty. Also having completed 25 years, he retired on his sixty-fifth birthday to the day.

In all of the 25 years and more that I have known Cyril, I have yet to hear him swear, speak ill of anybody or talk of them behind their backs. (A few of us could do with taking a page out of Cyril's book).

On Wednesday, 16th November, 1977 all of his colleagues from the old Sutton Depot and a few from

Walsall Depot gathered with Mr. Astbury, Mr. Brown and Mr. Lamont. Mr. Astbury presented Cyril with a Black & Decker Workmate Bench from his colleagues. Mr. Brown, on behalf of the Company, thanked Cyril for his services to the Company.

Mr. Lamont also thanked Cyril for his long and conscientious service, and referred to him as his own personal District Waterman (for those who are not aware, Mr. Lamont resides in the Four Oaks area) and wished Cyril and his wife Nora a long and happy retirement.

On the following evening, Thursday, 17th November, 1977, having given Cyril a day to get used to his retirement, a small party from Sutton and Walsall Depot entertained Cyril and Nora with a night out to a Dinner Dance and Cabaret at the 'La Reserve' at Sutton Park, where Mrs. While was presented with a bouquet of flowers and again both of them were wished a long and happy retirement.

GERRY PRENDERGAST

WALSALL SOCIAL CLUB CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PARTY

Worta Werks!! screamed an orchestra of voices. "Waterworks" jeered Uncle Ray on the mike. WORTA WERKS!! shouted the youngsters again, so went the password at the annual Christmas Party.

The party was held at Caldmore Liberal Club and as usual, thanks to the many volunteering helpers, went

like a bomb. After a well laid out spread (upon which descended the plague of locusts) entertainment was provided by Uncle Ron — cartoon films, Uncle Jim and Uncle Sid — comedians, Uncle Ray — party games and dancing. Uncle Bob kindly officiated as Father Christmas and no fewer than 111 children received a present.

A comment overheard summed up the success of the function "Tay bad fur a shillin a wick."



THE BATTLE OF BIRMINGHAM, APRIL 1643



Not far away from Birmingham at the village of Curdworth, an incident took place which was later to become something of historical importance.

In August 1642 a small party of Royalist soldiers left Kenilworth to join King Charles I at Nottingham. They were soon to be pursued by a similar party of Parliamentary supporters from Coventry and Birmingham.

At Curdworth the Royalists halted to face these men and on a hill just alongside the church, a small skirmish took place ending with the Royalists beating off their pursuers.

This incident, small as it was, and probably involving only a few men did mark the beginning of the fighting of the Civil War.

However, in nearby Birmingham, a much more serious incident was to take place which later came to be known locally as the 'battle of Birmingham'. It started in the spring of 1643 when Prince Rupert received orders from the King to march with his men and open communications between Oxford and York. Part of the route was to be through Birmingham and Lichfield.

In Birmingham some of the local manufacturers had made and supplied weapons for the Parliamentarians, so the inhabitants had good cause to fear Prince Rupert's arrival. Also by reputation he was known in Birmingham as the 'Prince of Robbers'.

Preparations for the defence of the town were quickly put in hand, but while this was taking place news came that Prince Rupert was already marching through Warwickshire and heading in the direction of Birmingham.

Even at this stage, it was hoped that Prince Rupert's forces might bypass the town and make their way up to Staffordshire, but this was not to be.

At 3 o'clock on Easter Monday, April 3rd, 1643 Prince Rupert with at least 2,000 men, attacked Birmingham.

The defenders were mostly untrained civilians, together with some 140 musketeers. These brave men twice beat off the attacking force, but there were too many entrances into the town to defend.

In several places, fires were started and soon the defenders were forced to retire to new positions in the Digbeth area. Others retreated through the houses and over the garden walls, some of them trying to escape through to the adjoining fields and lanes.

Soon the main force of the Cavaliers led by the Earl of Denbigh swept through the town singing, shouting and shooting all on sight without distinction. They eventually came out of the northern end of the town intending to make their way on to Lichfield without any more trouble, but here they encountered a small troop of cavalry under the command of Captain Greaves of the Parliamentary army and started to pursue them.

After a distance of two miles Captain Greaves managed to quickly turn his men and, although badly out-numbered, he charged his pursuers. In this engagement, the Earl of Denbigh was knocked off his horse and was mortally wounded and quite a number of his men were killed. This gave the Parliamentary forces time to retreat towards Lichfield.

Although Prince Rupert wanted to push on to York as quickly as possible, he was so enraged at the loss of so many of his officers and men that he turned back to wreak his vengeance on Birmingham. Here they stayed the night and the next morning, after plundering the town, they set fire to it. Eighty-seven houses were destroyed and about 350 people were left homeless.

Within a few days a pamphlet was printed recording Prince Rupert's barbarous cruelty and we have reproduced the title page.

After leaving Birmingham, Prince Rupert's Cavaliers passed through Sutton Coldfield without incident, making their way along the High Street and on towards Lichfield.

J. HILL

CONCRETE AND MARS BARS

As if working for a Water Company were not enough, and Distribution Department at that, your Editor's principle leisure pursuit is Waterways. I make no apology for including this article, since firstly no-one else has demanded these pages in this issue, and secondly, it is a fascinating subject.

Waterways can be different things to different people. Some fish in them, some walk alongside them, some go canoeing or cruising, others just study their history, or paint them, or photograph them. Some

throw their rubbish in them, some clean them out and restore them.

I have done most of the above at some time or other, but predominantly my interest is in the old cargo carrying narrowboats with their colourful tradition, which is, even at the hands of enthusiasts, rapidly disappearing. These boats make ideal house-boats or large and often luxurious cruisers, so the majority that have survived (about 400 in total) have been converted in this way. During the conversion, some of the character and many of the traditional items of equipment are lost or destroyed.



It was for this reason that I decided that the narrowboat I bought in 1968, when they were still being sold at almost scrap prices, should be restored to full working condition. This I set out to do, incorporating the painting, fancy ropework and item of equipment normally lost during conversions.

Easter 1973 was very wet and I was obliged to entertain my family and a large group of volunteer 'navvies' in the tiny 8 feet by 7 feet original boatman's cabin of my boat. The female half of the family objected to the over-crowding, but knowing my purist views came up with the ideal compromise.

The external appearance of a fully equipped working boat could be maintained, she argued, if the boat was loaded and sheeted up over the cargo space, but instead of cargo under the sheets — a fully fitted houseboat conversion. Space would be somewhat reduced and there would be no windows in the side, but a large window in the front would go a long way to providing sufficient light.

So that's what we did. With 10 tons of concrete slabs for ballast, the boat sits deep enough in the water to be authentic. I can have my cratch, box-mast, thumb lines, kneestrings, lubies and dollies, plus the convenience of fitted kitchen, pinewood lounge, shower cubicle and accommodation for 8 people.

It is convincing enough for enthusiasts, at least the less observant ones, to say "What are you carrying?" We never tire of being asked that question, for it means our 'conversion' is a success!

We always carry a large supply of Mars Bars for 'iron rations' and one trip a catering mistake meant we had double our usual supply. An enthusiast greeted us with the usual question, "What are you carrying?", to which, cheekily, I replied "concrete and Mars Bars". Quite earnestly he said "Mars Bars are made in Slough, aren't they? I bet you have to travel fast to prevent the concrete hardening!"

Follow that!

P. W. DODDS

