

WaterWhat?



South Staffordshire Water PLC

Issue No. 4

Winter 1994



Chelmarsh Reservoir At an All Time Low Full Story page Eight



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WATERWHAT COMMENT

Well another eventful year has passed in the realms of the Water Industry and we at South Staffs are now into our second year of Charter Mark.

Some dear friends in the Company have passed away, all of whom will be sadly missed.

On a happier note, 1994 was a busy year for people getting married and Customer Services seemed to have topped the league in babies - is it something in the water or "that seat" doing the rounds?

Mind you, John Anderton had twin boys and he's not for sitting down too long!

My hope to produce at least two editions of WaterWhat a year has fallen by the wayside. No doubt I shall receive criticisms yet again because I have missed something out! I'm still at the stage when unless I am passed the information - I cannot transmit it to your Magazine! So before you criticise - think about it - CONTRIBUTE. I might be able to make FOUR editions a year then!

Angi Robson - Editor

No Smoking At Work!

January 1st 1995 will be the first day when smoking at work will no longer be permitted indoors on any of the Company Premises between the hours of 10am - 4pm.

There will continue to be designated areas where employees who wish to continue to smoke outside of these hours may do so.

This is only the first stage! A total Smoking Ban will be introduced in September 1995.

What The Future Holds

The company has been set a "K-Factor" of minus 0.5 for the next 5 years. This means that the water bills of our customers will, on average, fall below the rate of inflation each year by 0.5%. So if, for example, the rate of inflation in a given year is 2%, the water bills will increase on average by 1.5%.

This is good news for our customers.

It is also good news for the Company because we believe we can reduce our costs by at least this amount each year. And the more savings we make - the more successful the Company will become.

The Director General of Water Services, Ian Byatt, set the "K-Factors" on 28th July this year for all 31 Water Companies in England and Wales. Each Company, including South Staffs, submitted a business plan which detailed how much they needed to spend to meet the needs of their customers.

Our plan included costs to cover day to day operating and maintenance activities and for investing in new mains and treatment plant etc. We also made sure that we included costs for meeting all legal water quality standards and for developing new sources of water to keep pace with the predicted demands from our customers.

The Director General was not convinced about a few of the costs that we submitted and also said we could make savings by improving efficiency. However, he accepted our argument that we were already more efficient than many other Water Companies and our "K-Factor" has taken this into account.

Some Companies were set positive "K-Factors". For example, the figure for Southern Water is plus 4%. This means that the water bills of their customers will rise by the rate of inflation - plus 4%. Southern Water have to clean up bathing beaches and improve sewage disposal, so the Director General agreed that they need to charge their customers more to pay for the necessary work.

The "K-Factor" for Severn Trent Water was set by the Director General at plus 0.5%. When our customers receive their bill, which covers both water and sewerage charges, the total of the bill will be calculated after applying each "K-Factor" to the respective parts of the bill.

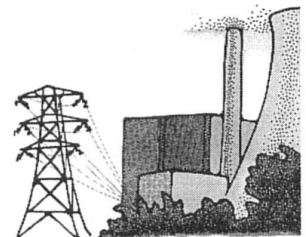
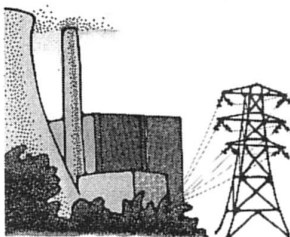
Over the next five years the Company expects to do well. The setting of "K-Factors" will enable us to plan with confidence and meet the challenges of the efficiency targets.



Electricity Suppliers

Tenders for the supply of electricity have been invited from 12 companies including Scottish Power and South Wales Electricity PLC. The budgeted electricity supply expenditure for the 1994-95 financial year is £5,700,000.

Competition for the supply of electricity now extends to 100 KW load sites of which there are 24 pumping stations included for the first time. This is in addition to the Company's three 1 MW load stations.



THE CANNOCK CHASE PROJECT

When I was asked to fill a pool on Cannock Chase for TOC H - the question I asked wasn't where, when, why or even who pays - but what's TOC H? So to save you the trouble, let me explain.

TOC H is a registered Charity that started in 1915 in war torn Belgium. The original TOC H was a house in Poperinge, Belgium, set up to provide basic comforts to the young men going to the Western Front in the First World War.

I suppose it was a forerunner of the modern "drop in centre". After the war, TOC H had no real role to fulfil and so it disbanded for a time. It was restarted by a group operating at grass roots level of communities and it is now a world wide Charity.

They don't blow their own trumpet and to a certain extent that, of late, has worked against them. Indeed some folk who don't ask the same questions as me think they are one of those "Secret Religious Sects".

TOC H makes no secret of its Christian bias or of its concern for Christian values, but don't let that put you off - there is no creedal test for membership!

It seems to me as a casual observer that they are an organisation who will help other Charities or groups with a project, hand it over, then move on to another.

In Staffordshire they started the S.P.A.C.E. Scheme which many of our children use in the Summer holidays (and no doubt some of you have used as children) prior to its take up by the Police.

Who Pays?

If you have read this far (and it gets no better) you already know.

Why?

TOC H are providing Nature Trails for the disabled around Brindley Valley on Cannock Chase over an area of 60 acres starting from the Visitor Centre in Marquis Drive.

These nature Trails are flattened and widened for wheel chairs and have log tapping rails at ground level for blind people to navigate.

For the sighted, there is a viewing platform overlooking the valley.

In the valley was the Tackeroo railway line serving the 1914-18 wartime army camp and a hospital. The bed of this railway line forms one of the current walks from the Visitor Centre and the TOC



Pool Filling in Progress

H trails use this in part. The pool itself is situated adjacent to the track bed.

For the blind and partially sighted, trails will take them through many experiences which currently remain beyond their reach. Daff as it may seem to us, tree hugging is all the rage and felled trees will be available to "feel the height".

When?

The pool was filled in late April 1994 and took 275,000 litres of water carried by our road tankers (11 loads in all) which took 3 days. The water was pumped into the pool via 350 metres of fire hose supplied by the Fire Service and laid through the bracken and shrub land by TOC H volunteers.

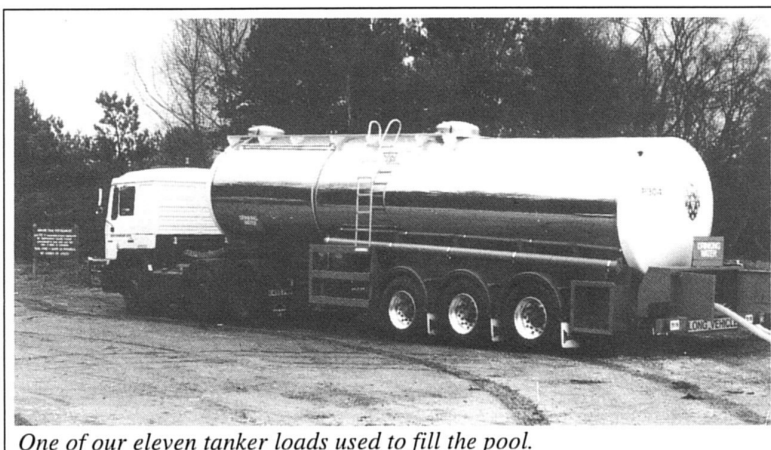
We built a float for the hose so that the jet of water always played on the top of the pool and spread over the surface by a polythene sheet. This prevented the bottom seal of the pool being washed away.

Where?

The car park we used is situated about 200 metres from the Visitor Centre entrance, heading towards Rugeley. The pool is about 350 metres down an unfinished path adjacent to the old Tackeroo railway line.

We were pleased to have offered our services for this very worthwhile project and wish TOC H continued success.

Bob Frost



One of our eleven tanker loads used to fill the pool.

New Mains for Old (or Fables of a Waterworks)

He was a very clever fellow that Aesop and wrote us a moral for every eventuality; or as they might say in the Black Country - "a plaster for every cut". For example, he said "things are not always what they seem" and this is true in the case of rehabilitation - where rumours of a MRU demise are greatly exaggerated.

In the six years since the Company commenced the process of large scale rehabilitation of its smaller diameter mains, over 264 km have been renewed. This is equivalent to laying a main from Walsall to Maidstone in Kent. Over 10,000 communication pipes have been renewed too and most of this work has been undertaken since the MRU was set up in 1990. Around 98% of this work has been undertaken by contract labour, 25% by traditional open cut methods and 75% by low dig techniques - predominately pipebursting.

In addition to the mains actually replaced, some 3 km with poor internal conditions have been rehabilitated either by scraping and re-lining or removal of corrosion using air scouring.

Aesop said "do not attempt too much at one time" and this has been true in the MRU's case. Main laying activity has been markedly down for 1994/1995. However, the supervisory staff have been kept very busy during this time in planning and prioritising the future work programme. Four teams of mainlayers are still working together with the associated teams of reinstaters. As from November there is to be a virtual explosion of activity with as many as eleven mainbursting and open cut mainlaying teams working flat out on prioritised projects.

So just how does MRU decide where it will replace mains next? How does it know it is recommending to The Board that the available

money is spent in the right areas and at the proper time? Since 1993 it has been investigating Waste Meter Districts and Parishes which divide the Company's area of supply into conveniently sized chunks for scrutiny. Aesop (or was it Mao) said "we should not make up our minds until we know the truth". The unit needs a "complete picture" of an area where there have been problems in the past and an indicator of potential difficulties for reference.

Old Aesop states "it is no use trying to hide what cannot be hidden" and here, fortunately, South Staffs is an "information rich" Company. Using the enormous amount of historical data available to us on burst mains, pipe samples, leakages, Water Quality complaints, repair costs and other SWIMS complaints, the Rehabilitation Unit is able to build a detailed picture of any chosen Waste Meter District. This information allows us to prioritise schemes for Board approval to ensure maximum benefits are realised from our budget.

Over the 4 years cost control has been an important part of our work, the majority of which is the renewal of 3", 4" and 6" diameter mains. This includes communication pipes with the overall trend in costs coming down over the last three years.

New contracts are in the pipeline (our pun not Aesop's) which will continue to improve the product quality for our customers in 1995. Thanks to enthusiastic teamwork from all the Departments involved, our reputation for excellence continues to grow.

Mike Day - MRU

Highest Day's Consumption

I can remember in the balmy days of the seventies when I was a not so raw recruit in the Operations Department. Then, checking levels of reservoirs was done by telephoning customers living next door who reported these back to us. There were rumours that often binoculars were used! We first topped the 400 mark during July 1979 - on the 13th in fact - when 403 Megalitres of water were delivered in one day phew!

The Company records the water consumed throughout the area daily and the maximum delivered is highlighted for each quarter. Eventually a high on a single day is spotlighted for the year.

The highest day's consumption for this year so far is recorded for 11th July - 454.66 Megalitres - beating the all time record of 450.96 Megalitres on 19th June 1989. No so bad eh? When you consider that back in 1926 the highest day's consumption was 106.33 Megalitres. Anyone spot the significance of 454.66?

Angi Robson

Ed: Anyone else got any interesting data of any sort? I would be happy to hear from you.

Drilling & Tapping '94

Well done all who participated at the National Competition this November!

Paul Morgan and Pete Baggelley made 3rd place!

Neck and neck, they made a very creditable time of 2mins 59secs with a clear run, one of 7 out of 49 entrants!

Welcome sponsorship came from Mick Clancy and FastFix. I know all six guys who made up the teams were pleased to have the support and encouragement of Bob Laver, Wayne Colson and Clive Fernyhough (the trainers) with Roy Jones in Reserve.

Ed.



Left to Right: - Pete Baggelley(NAO), Paul Morgan(WAO), David Coldicott(Director of Operations), Andy Stewart(TAO), Joey Wright(TAO), Mick Clarke(WAO) and Steve Broughton (NAO).

SURE SHOT BORING - THE GEOFF WHEWELL WAY

Those of you who know Geoff Whewell will know he has never been a bore but it's true to say that for sometime now Geoff has been the most boring person in the Company.

To keep us up-to-date with what's happening regarding South Staffordshire Water Services he's been boring for British Waterways and Welsh Water PLC.

Typical projects Geoff becomes involved with are the complicated little jobs like laying a main beneath the Trent & Mersey canal at Rugeley. We had to go underneath because the traditional method of crossing a canal by suspending the main from a bridge was not suitable and to use the conventional method of laying underground mains would have taken weeks.

After negotiations it was agreed to use the Sure Shot guided boring system. Detailed cross-sectional plans of the canal and the proposed route of the main were drawn

up. Because of the need to be at an exact depth beneath the canal basin at all times, careful monitoring of the drill head was necessary. This was achieved by the transmitter in the drill head housing reporting its precise position to a receiver above ground.

Some six hours after commencement, 40 metres had been drilled with spot on accuracy. The work entailed drilling at steeper angles than normal but the whole operation proved a resounding success and was carried out much quicker and with more accuracy than by conventional methods.

Another job involved Welsh Water PLC which required a 250 mm sewer installing over a length of 308 metres. The Sure Shot proved to be the ideal equipment because the sewer had to be laid along a narrow road and the job needed to be done with minimal inconvenience to the neighbourhood and to the traffic flow. This was our first attempt at installing such a large diameter pipe by the Sure-Shot method but the

operation proved so successful that further work using this technique was subsequently undertaken beneath the busy A44 Leominster/Rhayader Road.

South Staffordshire Water Services Limited holds the sole agency for selling Sure-Shot machines in the U.K. and Europe. A dedicated team was set up to operate the units both "in-house" and for outside contract work. Early success gave the Company the confidence to extend its services. These now include selling machines, providing competitive rates of finance and hiring out the equipment and supervisory personnel. Comprehensive stocks of components are readily available for both the Sure-Shot and competitors' machines. A 24 hour back-up availability for both planned maintenance and emergency break downs is also supplied as part of South Staffordshire Water Services operation.

Angi Robson

SOUTH STAFFS ENGINEER WINS TOP ENVIRONMENT AWARD

Electronic Engineer, John Lindley of the Engineering Department's TASC Unit, recently won first place in the Engineering Council's prestigious Environment Award for Engineers 1994.

Sponsored by Lloyds Register, the U.K.'s top Environment Award for Engineers was scooped by John with his computer controlled pressure management system.

The Lloyds Register Trophy is awarded each year to the best engineering scheme that is designed to save energy whilst addressing environmental problems.

Dozens of schemes were entered for the Award before the panel of judges short listed the final four. John eventually came out the winner - beating three other finalists from The British Petroleum Research Centre, British Steel and Severn-Trent Water.

John's invention uses a Programmable Logic Controller and timers to operate small solenoid valves which are automatically pulsed fully open or closed according to pressure demands. The new system overcomes the problems associated with the small orifices of conventional pressure reducing valve control which tend to become

clogged by silt and debris. PRV's are currently widely used in water distribution systems to lower pressure when demand is low. This reduces the amount of water wasted.

The award winning pressure management system is not only innovative but highly practical. The system can easily be fitted to existing valves or incorporated into new water distribution networks. It has low installation costs and recovers these costs on water and energy savings in less than a year.

An invention of inestimable value to the whole Water Supply Industry.

Congratulations John!

Ed: Update - as a result of John's pioneering work in this field, the Company has been awarded a contract to undertake a feasibility study of a large water distribution zone in London and is presently investigating the potential savings available to a large industrial user.



John pictured with Mrs Lindley receiving his award.

CHARITABLE TRUST

As many of you will know, a unique Charitable Trust was officially launched by the Company in May 1993 to help customers who have genuine difficulty in paying their water service charges.

The announcement of the Trust came at a time when figures from the Office of Water Services showed that disconnections in the Company's area fell by nearly fifty percent in the year 1992/93. The Trust is a new initiative to reduce these cut-off figures even further and to help customers with genuine problems.

The Trustees comprise Local Authority Leaders, representatives from Citizens Advice Bureaux, the Chairman of your

Customer Consultative Committee and the Company.

The main function of the Trustees is to consider requests from those customers in real need of financial help with their previously unpaid water bills. An initial donation of £50,000 has been set aside which is wholly funded by the Company's Shareholders and Enterprise Companies. Customers of South Staffordshire Water PLC will not be paying a penny towards the initiative.

The Trust will meet quarterly and report annually on its activities to the Company. A statement of accounts will be published and copies made available to all interested parties including the Shareholders.

The Charitable Trust operates totally independently from the Company, examining requests for financial help without bias before deciding whether or not the case is one of true hardship or simply default. The Trust will make a part-contribution or full payment of the customer's unpaid water services bill to help ease them out of the "debt trap" and back into regular payment of their water services bill.

Arthur Worthington is the Trust's Secretary and customers in difficulty can contact the Company itself, their Local Authority or Citizens Advice Bureau.

Arthur Worthington

HARMONISATION OF EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS

It has taken two years of long discussions to bring together a single set of Employment Conditions, i.e. the Harmonisation of Staff, Craft and Manual terms, that is the former Blue, Red and Green books.

The fusion took place on 1st April 1994. Many of the conditions were difficult to tell apart but nevertheless any difference, no matter how small, needed to be smoothed out.

Apart from standardising the working week, all major terms and conditions were harmonised.

It is important to recognise the impor-

tant part that both parties of the sub committee group, consisting of John Dunne, Brian Cawley, Ken Taylor, Carol Follos and Brian Yates played. These members of staff, along with Terry Tapper and Steven Shepherd represented all of the employees and worked, negotiated and debated alongside David Coldicott and John Morrall, who represented the employers. This necessary exercise is a fundamental step in preparing the group of Companies to meet the changing needs of the nineties.

Any move towards equalising the working conditions can only be to the benefit of all.

The new handbook consisting of over 100 pages has been passed to the P.R. Department for re-formatting into the Company style, then off to the printers. January 1995 should see copies issued to all employees who are covered by the agreement.

In the meantime, Personnel Department hold a master copy should individuals wish to view. Just ask Joyce Piper, Helen Price, Sharon Yeomans or John Morrall.

Thanks to the joint working party for their hard work over the months from Management and staff..

Angi Robson

SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE WATER HOLDINGS PROFIT SHARING SCHEME

June 1992 saw the introduction by the Board of Directors of a Profit Sharing Scheme which allowed employees of the Group to acquire shares in South Staffordshire Water Holdings PLC. The scheme offers free shares to employees as a bonus for their contribution to the success of the Group.

The decision to issue shares is based upon many factors which affect the Company's finances; to date two parcels of shares have been allocated.

The value of employees' shares has increased by almost 46% since they were first issued in 1992. This represents a very attractive capital gain in addition to the twice-yearly dividends that are paid.

The shares are held on behalf of employees by Trustees appointed by the Company. After two years, shareholders may instruct the Trustees to sell their shares or transfer them into their own name. It should be borne in mind that the proceeds of any sale of the shares within five years from the allocation date may be liable to tax.

John Hatfield

Ed: John Hatfield will be happy to supply further details of the scheme to anybody who is interested. John is based at Green Lane on extension 5350.

DATE	NO. OF SHARES	SHARE VALUE ON ALLOCATION	SHARE VALUE AT 02-12-94
June 1992	32 @ £10.60	£339.20	£587.20
June 1993	30 @ £13.20	<u>£396.00</u>	<u>£550.50</u>
Total Allocation:	62	<u>£735.00</u>	<u>£1,137.70</u> Unit Price £18.35

Drinking Water Inspectorate 1993 Report

The Company has continued to improve upon its excellent performance in compliance with its statutory obligations for water quality. For 1993, 99.7% of all samples taken complied with the relevant regulations and there were no infringements which could be considered for enforcement actions. In comparison to the rest of the Industry, and using this data, the Company can be assessed to be providing the sixth highest water quality in the United Kingdom. We hope to maintain or better this position when the DWI visit us again towards the latter part of this year.

QUALITY TALKS AT SOUTH STAFFS

At 9.00 am on a spring day in May this year, well over 50 project team members along with Senior Managers & Directors met at the Friendly Lodge Hotel to attend the very first Quality Forum.

The Forum enabled each of the teams (evolved through TQM) to present a resumé of their project. Some of these projects were chosen to be part of eight brief presentations given to the massed gathering to



Malcolm Hall, Tim Wedge, John Anderton and Arthur Worthington on the stand at the Friendly Lodge Hotel.



David Caldicott, Anthony Capener, Bill Reid and Nick Smith.

explain just what has been achieved through TQM, and how team spirit has strengthened our position in the market place.

This informal gathering also allowed teams to discuss how their conclusions were arrived at and what approach was used.

The Steering Group also took the opportunity to thank members for their stalwart efforts over the last 12 months and for the huge savings made.

A video is in preparation which will provide a summary of some of the presentations for interested employees,

VISIT TO FLAT HOLM 30TH APRIL 1994

Flat Holm is described as a tiny jewel in the middle of the Bristol Channel.

Situated half-way between Barry in South Wales and Weston Super Mare the island was farmed for seven hundred years and

Now a Nature Reserve and leased by South Glamorgan County Council, great care is being taken to protect the wildlife and features of historical interest. The island has a resident warden and an assistant during the summer, with perhaps two degree students.

The main residents are lesser backed and herring gulls. I went to the island with my daughter Marie to visit her fiancée, Andy who is doing his Ph.D studying gulls. He is looking after 380 nests - about a fifth of the total number on the island.

A farmhouse houses the warden and various parties of students, schoolchildren or Baden Powell units which come over from Barry Docks on a 30 minute boat trip. Bottled gas is used for cooking and heating

and generators for electricity. They use rainwater which is piped over three filter beds into an 80,000 gallon underground tank. It is then pumped up to a 3,000 gallon tank through an ultra violet filter and gravity fed to the farmhouse.

There are no cars, no pollution, no street lights (no streets), no cats and no dogs. Just wild flowers and gulls and gulls and gulls.

If you want a quiet weekend or just a four hour trip to get away from it all, then Flat Holm is the place. Or maybe you could offer your services for a bit of renovating. I'm sure the Flat Holm project would like to hear from you.

Mary Parker



Mary pictured with one of the more cuddly inhabitants of the island.

fortified twice. A cholera hospital was built on it and in 1897 Marconi sent the first radio message over water from Flat Holm to Lavernock Point.

OBITUARIES

It is with deep regret that we report the sad loss of the following ex-employees. All of whom will be sadly missed.

R. Groom	26-12-93	J.H. Bentley	05-03-94
G.R. Orton	08-03-94	D.A. Smith	25-03-94
J.E. Bridgewood	10-05-94	E. Pierce	18-05-94
J.N. Till	18-06-94	R.E. Mustard	24-06-94
F.G. Church	08-07-94	K.E. Brown	16-07-94
W.H. Clarke	17-07-94	A. Read	20-07-94
	S. Stanley	25-08-94	

CHELMARSH OUT OF SERVICE FOR THE FIRST TIME!

Many of you will remember the wide coverage we received in the media following a major pollution incident on the river Severn on Friday, 15th April this year.

The normal operation of Hampton Loade works is to pump water out of the river into the Chelmarsh storage reservoir. Pollution occurred further upstream of our river abstraction works and was not detected in time to prevent the pollutant entering the reservoir. With both the river and the reservoir polluted, Hampton Loade had to be shut down. With the loss of this major treatment works an emergency team quickly swung into action working from Green Lane throughout Saturday, 16th April - greatly assisted by Hampton Loade, Tipton Area Office, Customer Contact, Laboratories and other staff too numerous to mention.

Obviously the polluted water in the reservoir could not be used for supplies to our customers. Working closely with the National Rivers Authority, it was not until the 19th May that it was judged that the pollution had significantly dispersed within the reservoir and was at a level low enough to allow the stored water to be discharged back into the Severn.

Discharge commenced at a rate of 220 Megalitres a day - it took until midday on Saturday, 21st May to complete.

Refilling Chelmarsh started immediately and the reservoir was returned to normal duty at 90% full on the 31st May.

Throughout this seven week period, we continued to supply customers as normal with high quality water.



Chelmarsh as it usually is FULL.

Angi Robson

(See Emergency Procedures below.)

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Major incidents occur from time to time and we have experienced one or two major 'Incidents' over the last twelve months, that were handled by Emergency Teams on guide lines laid down in the Company's New Emergency Procedures Manual.

The manual was updated in 1992 specifically to improve the management of major operational incidents. It wasn't that it was long overdue but emergencies are things that happen to someone else aren't they?

Both incidents that spring to mind were handled professionally by the designated teams. I think all involved will agree that what held them in such good stead was the simulated exercises which tested the many requirements set out in the procedures.

To give some reality to the simulation exercises the assistance of a specialist consultancy firm was enlisted.

One exercise scenario was based upon the presence of a cryptosporidiosis in the supply from Little Hay pumping station, supplying some 120,000 inhabitants within the zone. As with past experience of major incidents other problems occur at the same time, and in this particular scenario a burst also occurred on a strategic trunk main within the same supply system.

In addition to the Emergency Procedures Manual the Company is required to have an outbreak control plan for the investigation and management of suspected waterborne cryptosporidiosis and other waterborne infections. Also included were the Outbreak Control Team of the District Authority (Heartlands Hospital, East Birmingham).

The experience gained during these exercises and actual incident will be incorporated in to the Emergency Procedures Manual.

EXTRACT FROM EUROPEAN CHEMICAL NEWS

ICI has announced the discovery of a new fire-fighting agent known as WATER (Wonderful And Total Extinguishing Resource). It is particularly suitable for dealing with fires in buildings, timber yards and warehouses, and is fairly cheap to produce. It is intended that quantities of about a million gallons should be stored in open ponds or reservoirs near urban areas and installations of high risk.

WATER is already encountering strong opposition from safety and environmental groups. Professor C.B. has pointed out that if anyone immersed their head in a bucket of WATER, it would prove fatal in as little as three minutes. Each of ICI's proposed reservoirs will contain enough WATER to fill half-a-million two-gallon buckets. Each bucketful could be used a hundred times, so there is enough WATER in one reservoir to kill the entire population in the U.K.

Did we know, asked a Fire Brigade spokesman, what would happen to this new medium when it was exposed to intense heat? It has been reported that WATER was a constituent of beer. Did this mean that firemen would be intoxicated by the fumes?

The Friends of the World said that they had obtained a sample of WATER and found it made clothes shrink. If it did this to cotton - what would it do to men?

In the House of Commons, the Home Secretary was asked if he would prohibit the manufacture and storage of this lethal new material. A full investigation was needed, he replied, and the Major Hazards Group would be asked to report.

Andrew Scudamore

GIS IS A BUZZWORD WITHIN THE COMPANY

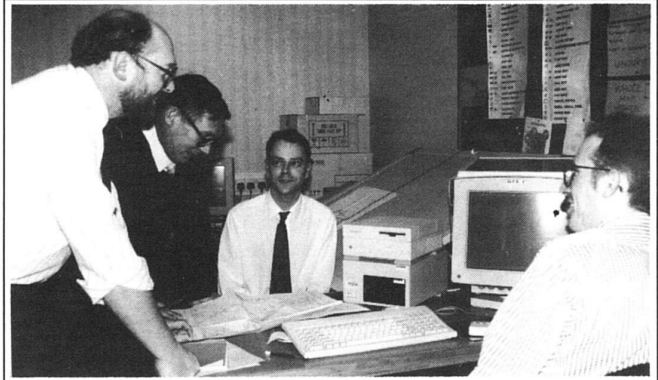
Is it Ground Identification System - or perhaps General In-House Style? WRONG!

How about Geographical Information System?

But what exactly IS GIS? Well it's a computer based system specifically designed to handle data, e.g. the use of land within a particular area, location of customers' homes and businesses and, more importantly, where water pipes and fittings are situated. In fact eventually this all encompassing piece of kit will help us in the future to plan where best to site valves and which areas would suffer loss of pressure should the wrong size main be laid. It will enable us to produce automatic warning notices if we plan an interruption to supplies and give up-to-date information about the distribution system. In fact, GIS will become a cornerstone of the business activities of the whole company.

But what of life before GIS?

Plans of the location of our mains are a bread and butter necessity and the Drawing Office would rely on clear information coming back from Inspectors working on site. Information on where mains were laid would be marked on a map and, in some instances, some information would not be recorded - but committed to memory. A pilot project established in 1990 to examine the benefits of GIS has led to a commitment to transfer all current records and plans to this system. A total of 15 personnel are now



Part of the GIS Team (Left to Right)
Brian Greenwood, Dennis Borley, Jason Hardwick and Lee Stevens.

involved with data capture from all the old maps and records with site visits to check the accuracy of these records.

A team approach was essential and close working relationships have developed involving Drawing Office Staff, Watermen and Supervisors at all Area Offices. Eventually, up-dated maps will be available for operational use and, most important of all, up-to-date information for use out on the areas, enabling our staff to give better information and a quicker service to our customers.

NATIONAL RIVERS AUTHORITY

Help the NATIONAL RIVERS AUTHORITY to prevent pollution and protect the water environment.

Every year, the National Rivers authority investigates thousands of incidents which could endanger the state of our rivers, lakes and coastal waters.

Every week, the NRA follows up hundreds of reports of suspected pollution alone - many of them identified by vigilant members of the general public. In addition, NRA staff are

constantly on the look-out for threats like poaching, rubbish dumping, flooding and illegal water abstraction.

The NRA's free emergency hotline is for public use.

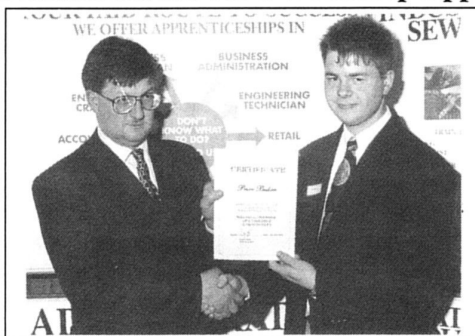
All members of Staff receiving calls about incidents affecting ground water or rivers should give the caller the

NRA FREE EMERGENCY HOTLINE

0800 80 70 60.

The NRA's Control Room is manned year round - 24 hours a day!

Achievement Award for a Workshop Apprentice



Peter Baker, a workshops mechanical apprentice fitter, has received a certificate of merit in recognition of his achievement whilst training with the Walsall Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Peter was selected to receive the award along with 16 other trainees who have all done exceedingly well in their respective working environments and studies throughout the borough.

He is seen here receiving his award from the Chief Executive of WCCI Mr. D Frost. Peter is working towards the 'ENTRA' Mechanical Maintenance NVQ3 with our Company and we wish him every success in his future career.

David Winders

Conservation, Access & Recreation Annual Report 1992-93

"A feather in our caps". We are delighted to announce that the Company received a commendation from the Department of the Environment for our Conservation, Access & Recreation Annual Report.

It may sound like "blowing our own trumpet" but I am pleased to say that the report was conceived, designed and produced by our own P.R. Department and printed by our favourite printers, Jones & Palmer of Carver Street.

The Annual Report is prepared for the Department of the Environment and outlines the Company's environmental policy, collaboration with and sponsorship of various Wildlife Trusts and our initiatives to raise environmental awareness of staff and public alike.

The Department was impressed with the clarity and information contained in our maps. They also appeared impressed by the fact that we provided visitor numbers at each of the sites detailed in our report and that we mentioned our future priorities.

Angi Robson

WATER SUPPLIES OF THE BLACK COUNTRY "SMESTOW VALLEY"

The Smestow Valley is one of the most important sources of underground water in the Midlands area. Underlain by red sandstone with beds of shingle and pebble, this fifty square mile area is capable of producing some 20 million gallons/day.

No community could exist without a dependable supply of water and this water course undoubtedly supported settlements in the past.

Smestow Brook as a potential piped supply was identified by Henry Marten as early as 1851. Marten is the forgotten Engineer of the South Staffordshire Water Works, being overshadowed by John McClean with whom he was jointly responsible for obtaining the Act of Incorporation in 1853.

Prior to his involvement with S.S.W.W., Marten was engaged as a Consulting Engineer of the South Staffordshire Mining District Waterworks Company - whose prime object was supplying water to the Black Country Towns. The chosen source of supply rose between Wednesfield and Wolverhampton and flowed South to join the River Stour near Kniver. Marten gauged the stream in 1851 and found over 10 million gallons/day capacity.

A Bill promoted in Parliament in 1851 by the Mining District Company was opposed by the Kidderminster Carpet Manufacturing Company who feared that abstractions of large amounts of water from the Brook would seriously interfere with the flow of the River Stour. Observers had reported that the River Stour possessed an ink-like appearance caused by effluent from the Carpet Works at Kidderminster.

The Bill failed at its second reading when the local M.P. drummed up support amongst fellow Members.

In the Autumn of 1852 several sources of water supply were sampled with the view to forming the South Staffordshire Water Company. Samples were again taken from Smestow Brook by Henry Marten and analysed by Henry Medlock FCS, the Analytical Chemist of London, in an endeavour to find a suitable source of water supply for the South Staffordshire District. Medlock considered the waters of the Smestow far superior to the other samples tested; beautifully clear and bright and free from decaying matter. His advice to utilize the source was disregarded because of the expected opposition

that could have again been encountered from Mill owners in the District.

Henry Marten's confidence that an abundant supply of water would be found in the Smestow Valley was proved forty years later with the opening of the Ashwood Works. Several other Pumping Stations have been established in Smestow Valley by South Staffs Water Company and Severn Trent Water PLC who took over Stations built by Wolverhampton Corporation, Bilston Corporation and Stourbridge and District Water Board. Other industrial undertakings also abstracted water for trade purposes.

The Great War Mystery

Just before the outbreak of the 1914-1918 War, mysterious excavations began at Six Ashes by a Team of Germans. The Team working under the utmost secrecy naturally caused the local villagers' imagination to run riot. So much so that headlines in the Express and Star reported that speculation was rife as to what the "furners" were up to! Then, just as the villagers' interest reached fever pitch, the Germans were rounded up in the early weeks of the war and taken by the military to an internment camp. Rumour was that the hole had been dug to hide ammunition and that a concrete pad was planned to house guns to be pointed by the enemy at munitions factories in the area. Another theory was that the 700ft. deep pit was to hide ammunition for German airships. Other, more rational explanations, suggested that the investigations were to prove the existence of coal or water. Following the armistice no one returned to complete the work and eventually water shot up from the excavation and formed a rivulet which flowed

into Smestow Brook. As you might imagine this was promptly renamed "Hun River" by the locals.

Records in the archives of South Staffs Water Company hold the key to this mystery. During the War the Company was instructed by the Ministry to provide 200,000 gallons of water to the Birmingham Metal and Munitions Company. S.S.W. were facing difficulties in providing the water as they were already supplying a large number of local factories and military camps. An application was made to take a supply from the Smestow Brook at the boring carried out by the Germans who according to records were prospecting for coal. Subsequently a quantity of approximately half-a-million gallons a day of water was found in the sandstone.

The borehole was in the district of Bilston U.D.C. who had the Bratch Pumping Station about a mile from the borehole site. The Ministry suggested that negotiations should be conducted with the landowner and Bilston U.D.C.

However, South Staffs Water wanted authority to extend their water extraction rights beyond the duration of the war but both Bilston and Seisdon District Councils objected strongly and the scheme was never pursued.

Later Development

Cookley Pumping Station near Kidderminster was developed by the South Staffs Water Company in 1960 to assist them in meeting the district demands prior to the development of the River Severn Water Scheme. The application to build the works was opposed by Kidderminster

Borough and Rural District Councils, plus seven industrial users including the British Sugar Corporation, I.C.I. Limited and Kidderminster Carpet Manufacturers due to possible depletion of their supplies. Eventually, following a public enquiry, the Minister of Housing and Local government gave permission to develop the site. Three boreholes, each 600 feet deep, were sunk into the sandstone. This will possibly be the last of the Water Pumping Stations to be developed in the Smestow Valley.

**B.J. Williams &
J. Van Leerzem**

Acknowledgments: South Staffs Water Company & Express and Star

ODE TO A WATERMAN

*Like priceless jewels raindrops fall from the sky To fill
our rivers and streams,
It is welcomed by all when it is needed But when it
upsets our lifestyle we scream.
Oft we don't value our God sent gift Or think how it
gets to our home,
We use it, defile it, we throw away, But when its
pressure is low how we groan.
We never think of the work that is done to keep water
so pure and so fresh,
The hours that are spent by folk night and day So we
may drink
and South Staffordshire "wesh".
Just let's pause for awhile, thank God for the rain And
also the waterman's toil,
To bring jewels of rain through pipe and the tap As to
make a "cuppa" with a kettle we boil.*

Ed: This poem was written by "Our Reg" - a well known local character, poet and archivist from Heath Hayes.

SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE'S GARRETT STEAM LORRY



*Truly a titan from a by-gone age but what of it's history?
What do YOU know about it? Who was the driver?
Answers to Angi please.*

NORMAN'S FAMILY TRADITION FORGED IN STEEL

When Norman Round retired as a South Staffs Water blacksmith in 1970, he closed a chapter on a family craft which began with his father, John Round, in Kates Hill, Dudley, before the end of the last century.

By the time that Norman first saw the light of day in Pitfield Street in 1906 his father was already well established as a blacksmith - specialising in shoeing horses - a skill for which there was much demand in those far off days.

Norman followed in his father's footsteps and eventually started up on his own in 1934 at Pleck before moving to Wolverhampton Street in Walsall. His reputation as a craftsman was well established when in 1956 the Walsall Forge was demolished to make way for new development. It was then Norman joined South Staffs Water as a blacksmith.

Norman recalls the days when he was apprenticed to his father. "In those days we were shoeing horses for 12 shillings a time, but

my father told me that when he started they would shoe a big shire horse and make the shoes by hand for two shillings and ninepence. They tell me that today they charge over seventy-five pounds".

Still a grand old character, Norman has many memories of his time as a blacksmith but few mementos - just a horse's hoof complete with one of his own handmade shoes. Not much of a souvenir for a working life in a hard-grafting trade; but Norman has no complaints, and no regrets - just plenty of pride in his working past!

Trevor Mills - Maple Brook

Ed: Trevor tells me that Norman is Jim Butler's father in law, and Jim tells me that Norman is in his 88th year.

(Extracts from an article first reproduced in the Black Country Bugle in November 1992).

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS



A unusual remark was passed to me the other day . . . "I'm sure 98% of the Company don't know what you do; they think you swan around all day having a good time".

Over the last 20 years or so I bet that's what most people have thought - apart from those in the know! The enlightened few realise, I hope, the dedication, sincerity and the sweat and tears which goes into making P.R. Marketing and Corporate Communications what it is today.

It's true! Where else do you go when you want information? "Who do I see about . . ."? "How do I get hold of . . ."? "Can you do . . ."? "Do you know if . . ."? It's been like that since I branched out from Management Support and Development in the mid 80's and became this nebulous department crammed into a small area on the 2nd Floor.

"Has something to do with P.R. I think"; "uses a camera you know"; "has to go out a lot"; "seems to be doing something with wallpaper". "Why is she carting around all that lighting and video equipment"? - Mention ciba chrome to anyone and they think you are talking about a holiday resort! "Why is she wasting time watering the hanging baskets"? - 'Cos that's how you win Walsall In Bloom six years running . . .!"

Get my drift? Best way to describe my role is a sort of link person between the P.R. Agency we used to have working for us and the management of the Company - dogsbody is perhaps apt! There were press releases to sort, leaflets, brochures, National Garden Festival, videos to

produce, visitors to take around, photo's to take, Open Days to organise. All sounds fun doesn't it?

Well it is and it's even better now! Instead of using an agency and all the costs that that incurs, the department now designs and develops our own customer leaflets and brochures. Over the years I've developed more material in house going directly to a printer, but what I really needed was a designer Now I've got one!

How did all this come about? It was quite by chance actually! Once upon a time Angi Robson had a weak moment (it doesn't happen very often). Almost 2 years ago, I had a call from a student fresh out of University - "I've got a degree in Visual Communications. I'd like someone to look at my work and chat over what avenues are available. Can I do work experience, please"?

Now I've been in this situation before - but in a weak moment I said yes.

When the first day arrived I immediately regretted my decision. I hadn't left for work yet and already I felt a sense of foreboding. I kicked the cat, expressed in no uncertain terms to the postman that, yes the day was okay but I've got this silly tart coming to do work experience. My workload is such that I don't know what I shall be able to do with her. I won't be able to spend time explaining how we do things. I was so used to working on my own, did I really want to put up with this person for a whole month. Then on a brighter note "Perhaps she wouldn't show up". "Perhaps she would get cold feet - she may have found a job".

I arrived at work bright and breezy - she was waiting for me! She - who shall now be known as Sarah fitted in within the first hour.

Someone wanted a front cover making up. Now when you have just recently gained your Degree in Visual Communications (drawing and colouring-in to the uninitiated), knocking up a front cover is no problem. "Where's your Applemac?" asks Sarah. (State of the Art Desk Top Publisher as used by the Print Industry). "I haven't got one", I cried - "they won't let me have one". "I used one at Uni" said Sarah.

Well I wasn't going to throw away this opportunity. Using an agency costs a lot of money, mainly because putting together a leaflet or brochure takes time thinking time/design time/writing time. Anyone who's been involved with an agency will know that most of the work put in will be by yourself because agencies never get it quite right. So cut out the middleman. Design and develop in-house. Write in-house, prepare layouts, mock-ups, visuals, send to printer. I put this to our Directors.

The cost savings swung it. I got my Applemac and Sarah as a designer.

We've been developing leaflets etc for almost two years now, with lots of print runs under our belt. A house style is definitely emerging. Our next major project is a new Corporate Brochure and then an Overseas Marketing Brochure. These are in the design stage and hopefully available early '95.

So that's a little taste of the life of P.R.

Angi Robson



FAMILY FUN DAY : BLITHFIELD - 17TH JULY 1994

It is said "the sun shines on the righteous". Oh how this was true on Sunday, 17th July when the Social Club held their 3rd Annual Family Fun Day. Twice now at Blithfield and once at Chelmarsh the weather has smiled down on the employees of SSW and their families.

To add to the summer atmosphere a steel band kept everyone's feet tapping (especially Wayne Powell's). The Reservoir played host to a raft race (with Rob Sawle executing a perfect 3.2 dive into the shark infested waters of Blithfield) and Patrick Waldron "et al" organising a testing Treasure Hunt and Ramble (three children are still missing).

And this was only for starters!

The 1994 extravaganza was centred on sporting competitions. Rifle shooting, archery and target golf were coupled with

family fun such as bouncy boxing (Patrick Waldron K.O'd. by his 10 year old son in 3 seconds flat!!), motor ball, bouncy castle and human bowling. The combination of these two themes, plus special displays, gave everyone a huge choice of activity to occupy their time when not sunbathing.

The displays were, in the main, provided or organised by employees and included the Company sponsored Rally Car, West Midland Bird Club, the Water Bus and, last but not least, the 4 wheel off-road looneys, who managed to double the U.K.'s demand for incontinence pants in their 4 hours of competition and demonstration driving.

Once again, our thanks to all the organisers; Blithfield Sailing Club, Blithfield Recreation Committee, the workforce at Blithfield and also to Dominic Phillips, the farmer who loaned us the land for the off-road driving course.

The competitions and other income generating events helped to raise £500 for MacMillan Nurses - this year's sponsor charity. Many thanks for all those 20p's.

It is rumoured that Tim Fletcher contributed approximately £499.80 of the total income trying to get a hole-in-one on the putting. His logic behind this feat of human endeavour is beyond the author as the prize was 2 bottles of wine - price approximately £5.00 (still perhaps that accounts for the fact he works in Estates!).

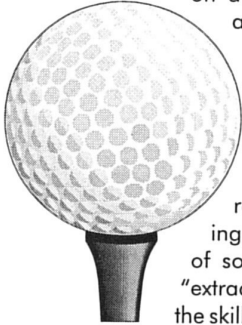
A final thank you to Suzi Hunt of Organisation Unlimited who arranged the food and many of the attractions. All 394 participants enjoyed it thoroughly.

J. Morrall

S.W.W. GOLF SOCIETY

The Society's "President's Day" took place on Friday, 20th May this year at the Hill Valley Golf & Country Club at Whitchurch, Shropshire.

The outing was well attended and after welcoming cups of tea and bacon sandwiches, S.S.W.W.'s intrepid band of golfers set out on a morning 9 hole "loosener" before the afternoon's real challenge - the 18 Hole Championship Course.



We had decided to spice up the initial 9 holes with a little side bet of 50p from each player to the winner. Our Captain, Bob Smith, returned the best card of the morning so whilst we were enjoying a lunch of soup and sandwiches, Bandit Bob "extracted" 50p from each of us with all the skill and cunning of an expert from the Credit Control Department.

After lunch (and the mandatory visit to the Clubhouse Bar - led by Pete Baggeley) we assembled at the first tee ready to test our skills against an 18 hole course - graced in the past by the Golfing Greats.

Chuck Jackson teed off first with a massive drive which, all watching members swear to this day, could have disappeared across the border into Wales.

The match got underway and we all had a most enjoyable round of golf.

Back in the Clubhouse we were joined by our President, Terry McAllister, and Tim Fletcher for the evening meal and presentations.

Dave Glen from Water Treatment was the overall winner on the day and he proudly accepted the President's Trophy and a 1st Prize of some cut glass.

Joint runners up were Bill Pritchard and yours truly with Frank

Hall receiving a special prize in true sporting tradition for coming "farthest away from the winner". Well done Frank!

Homeward bound on our coach each of us was able to reflect on a wonderful day out and savour the highlights. For me there were many, including Malcolm Sharpe's infectious grin at the "ninth", Steve Baker's "locker room mints" saga and the excuses proffered by Ian Salmon when he missed a four foot putt and so on . . . !



Some of the Golf Society Members "all ready for the off"!

Our thanks to you Mr. President. Your support, interest and enthusiasm is greatly appreciated. Thanks also to West's Plant Hire and the Golf Society Committee for donating the prizes for the day.

Finally, on behalf of the Committee, our thanks to all the Society's Members for your support, your company and your golf - long may it continue.

Bill Reid - Chairman

Ed: Bill hails from Burton Depot. Any golfers interested in joining the S.S.W.W. Golf Society should contact Bill on 0283-565751.

Memories of Sutton Depot



Sutton Depot closed in February this year after 105 years service.

The picture above was taken around 1972 and we are reliably informed seven of the people pictured are still with the Company. Can you identify them?

Answers to Angi Robson

ED: In the next issue of WaterWhat we shall be publishing some anecdotes of life at Sutton in years gone by. Have times changed for the better? You be the judge!



Nick Smith and Sarah Lawson present a cheque for £700.00 to the Pinfold Centre Bloxwich.

Sarah and Nick raised the money participating in a Raft Race!

Well Done to the Team - Angi.



WATER AID

JOIN OUR CAMPAIGN TO RAISE £5,000

£5,000! That's the amount South Staffs Water aims to raise during its special "Thirsty World" Campaign for WaterAid and we're looking to you to help make this happen.

The "Thirsty World" Campaign commenced on 10th October when Judith McNeil and Ros Skipper from WaterAid visited Green Lane. Many of you were accosted in the Dining Room and asked to join the monthly lottery which benefits WaterAid. (More on the lottery later).

Although South Staffs employees have supported WaterAid since its inception in 1981, some of you who have joined the Company in the last few years are perhaps unaware of its work.

Here are ten facts about WaterAid you may not know:

- 1) South Staffs has raised around £50,000 for WaterAid's work since the mid 1980's.
- 2) WaterAid has helped more than 1.8 million people to enjoy safe water through their own efforts.
- 3) WaterAid was created in 1981 by the men and women of the British Water Industry.
- 4) WaterAid raised more than 6 million pounds in 1993/94 and spent less than 10p in every pound on administration, fund raising and publicity.
- 5) WaterAid funds work in the nine main country programmes - Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Kenya, Nepal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe.
- 6) All projects are low in cost - on average £10 per person benefiting.
- 7) Self-help, through construction and management, is the key to every project.
- 8) Health education helps ensure that people obtain maximum benefit from their new water supply.
- 9) WaterAid works for lasting benefit - not short-term gain.
- 10) WaterAid needs your help - NOW.

Chokhane Project

During WaterAid's visit they asked if Company employees would raise funds for a project in Nepal. As many of you will know, South Staffs has strong links with that Country and the plan is to help bring a clean water supply to local people in Chokhane in rural Nepal. It's a small village of 369 people who rely on carrying water from hill streams. This back-breaking task usually falls to the women who walk miles to find water which often turns out to be polluted.

The solution to their water problems is simple. They need a water storage tank supplied by a spring in the hills and a distribution system to pipe the water by gravity to the village. But it's by no means easy. The hillsides are steep and treacherous places in which to dig trenches and lay pipes. Villagers working with the local organisation, the Himali Club, will undertake the project with WaterAid providing technical and financial help. Villagers will take responsibility for maintaining the supply and will be given training in the skills needed for this. The project will also include sanitation and health education.

The total cost of the work is nearly £11,000 - half of which will be funded by UNICEF. The other half needs to be raised by voluntary donations.

How can YOU help? Well in three ways.

Firstly why not join the monthly lottery? Forty-four pence a month buys a ticket and the deduction is made direct by the Payroll Department. The more tickets we can sell - the higher the monthly prize and the more we can donate to WaterAid. Please contact Mike Lewis at Green Lane on extension 8023 who will provide you with details.

Secondly, have you any brilliant or unusual ideas to raise funds for WaterAid? We've held raffles, run half-marathons and held race nights but somebody must have a "fresh idea" which we could use to raise funds.

Thirdly, please support those fund raising events that do take place. The first one will be a Christmas Raffle drawn at the Social Club's Disco on Saturday, 10th December.

Finally, it's worth remembering that WaterAid relies on the Water Industry for most of its fund raising and support. It's a practical charity, helping to provide lasting solutions to desperate water needs in Africa and Asia.

YOU can help in a practical way - please join the South Staffs Lottery.

Remember:

2,000,000,000

People around the world lack safe water to drink.

25,000

Of the world's children die every day from water-related diseases.

30

Gallons a day - is the average amount of water used by each person in the U.K.

2

Gallons a day - is estimated to be the average used by people in developing countries.

Makes You Think - Doesn't It Angi?

Compiled by Mike Lewis



Devi Kumare from Satu Pasal, Nepal.

CHARITY JAILBREAK

The idea of a sponsored jailbreak to raise money for a children's charity seemed like a worthwhile way to spend a Saturday. It involved being driven a hundred miles and then finding our way back in the quickest possible time. Sounds simple enough. Just a couple of proviso's - we were not allowed any money and we were all handcuffed together - in fancy dress.

The other teams had all dressed as convicts, so when Bill, Ben, Little Weed (Karen Blizzard, yours truly & Mike Bowen) and driver John Morrell arrived, there was a lot of laughing (they obviously hadn't seen John Morrell before!).

Destination - Blackpool!

We were told our departure point was to be Blackpool! On arrival we were handcuffed together and unanimously decided our best bet was to contact the "Local Force".

At the Station we explained our mission. The Duty Officer, however, was more interested in how we came to have two pairs of police issue handcuffs. Convincing him at last of our "credentials" they said they were sending a car to London to collect a prisoner and they could drop us off on the way.

We waited and waited and waited! The shift changed over and the new Duty Sergeant eventually gave us the bad news. They were not insured to carry passengers outside their district -so our lift was cancelled! Almost 3 hours after we were dropped off and we had progressed -NOWHERE!



The Jailbreakers pictured with driver John Morrell

B.R. To The Rescue

Drastic action was called for so we asked the Sergeant to give us a lift to the railway station. He kindly obliged - in a Panda Car minus the blue flashing light!

We asked a B.R. Official permission to jump on a train - we had no money remember. He told us that if we explained the exceptional circumstances to the guard of each train, they would probably turn a blind eye and they did - on all three trains back to Stafford. We arrived at 6.15 p.m. -we were supposed to be back by 5.30!

We made for the Police Station on foot and asked (practically begged) a lift back to Cannock. Sorry - no cars! So we 'phoned Hatherton Cricket Club to pick us up. 25 minutes later - cold, hungry and very tired we arrived back to the cheers and a warm welcome from the other teams - all of whom had returned hours ago.

As John Morrell said "if you can't arrive first - make a grand entrance last!". We won the prize for being last, the prize for the funniest story (Mike in the service station - ask us about it if you haven't heard) and the prize for the best fancy dress. All in all, it wasn't so bad and we managed to raise over £300.

Thank you everyone who sponsored us.

Would we do it again? Definitely maybe!

Angie Butlin

THE 24 HOUR BOOZE CRUISE

I was a bit apprehensive when Rob Sawle from Credit Control, asked me to fill the last space on a day trip to Calais. We were to cross over to France by early morning ferry, shop around the Hypermarkets, picking up some cheap drinks and then head back to Blighty. What could be simpler I thought?

The big day arrived and as we were waiting for our transport to arrive at Green Lane, a rather old coach turned into the gates. Mike Watkins remarked that it looked like something out of Heart Beat and no doubt Nick Berry would be following on his motor bike! He wasn't - did he know something we didn't?

We all climbed aboard in some astonishment and as soon as we started out the fun began. The driver was unable to close the coach door. He assured us it was a minor problem which would be speedily fixed at the Coach Depot. So we drove all the way to Birmingham in sub-zero temperatures. The Birmingham Depot was shut! Apparently the Coach Station Personnel were having their "Christmas Nosh". Ever resourceful, our driver eventually dragged out one of his Engineers from a Working Men's Club in the middle of Aston. By midnight our door had been fixed and we were on the motorway and heading South.

By the time we eventually reach Dover - we had missed the Ferry by 10 minutes! After a lot of moaning (mainly from Wayne Powell) we all retired to the Harbour Restaurant - only to be told that no hot food was available until 7.00 a.m.

We boarded the next Ferry at the ungodly hour of 5.30 in the morning to experience one of the roughest rides of my life (oh er). The first problem was trying to get to the Duty Free Shop. I had seen

less pushing and shoving in Russia for bread. After one had bathed the scars from the rush, the next queue was for currency exchange. We set to sea and stomachs started to churn. I had never seen so many green faces. The strain of several pints of lager and no sleep on the coach was obviously having an effect on the South Staffs seafarers.

Hours later (7.30 a.m. actually) we finally docked in France. After an argument with the coach driver about the location of the best Hypermarket, we arrived at the end of the next queue (along with about 17 million cockneys) to load up our trolleys with cheap lager and other bargain booze.

The rest of the day was spent in Calais - drinking and enjoying a meal in one of the traditional cafés along the main street. Then, after looking around the shops, it was time to head back home.

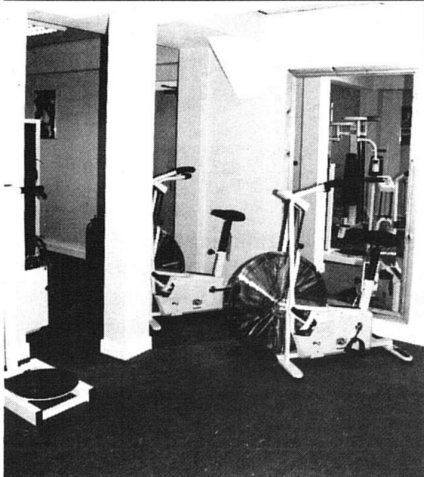
Yet another rough ferry crossing. Again we encountered the same pushing and shoving in the Duty Free Shop. Everybody was tired and just wanted to get some sleep. Eventually we docked at Dover and after waiting for an interminable age in Customs, we headed back to Birmingham - only to be stopped by the Police for a weight check! Having successfully satisfied the long arm of the law, we eventually reached the cloistered calm of Green Lane at 11.00 p.m.

WHAT A DAY!

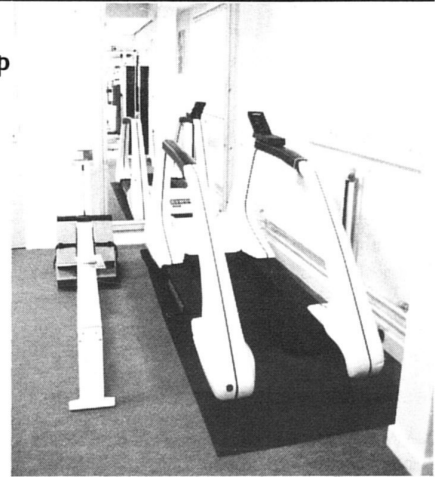
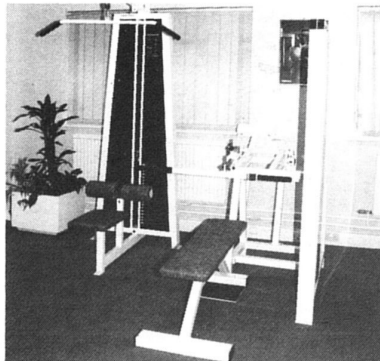
Exhausting as it was we did get some good booze bargains and a good time was had by all -I THINK!

Jason Vigrass

Fancy Pumping Iron?



The Gym - aptly named The Pumping Station - is now open with membership growing by the day.



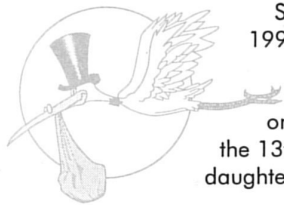
There's plenty of room for more members though! Anyone interested should contact personnel!

❖ANNOUNCEMENTS❖ANNOUNCEMENTS❖ANNOUNCEMENTS❖

Lots of babies are coming into the world!

Let's welcome into Customer Services Department:

Samantha Hollie on the 15th December 1993 to Jackie Burns. This year, Elizabeth Cassandra was born on the 2nd March to Sandra & Andrew Willmott; Hayley on the 9th July to Kathryn Morriss; Jack on the 13th August to Donna & Paul Morgan and daughter Fern to Vera Poyner.



Not to be left out - other Departments were equally productive too - Simone Jones late of Customer Services (now WAO) & Dean became the proud parents of Natalie on the 9th May and John Anderton is now the proud father of twin boys, Mark & James.

From NAO Katie & Paul Bates produced a son, James Edward, on the 6th April and last but not least Julie Cashmore from TAO gave birth to Matthew Jake on the 26th May.

It's not only the stork that's been busy this year - the Matchmaker seems to have been hard at work too!

Carol Lockett from Customer Services married Keith Watts on 30th April and 4th June saw Kath Hurst walk down the aisle with Phill James.

A couple of weeks later Ted Morris of S & P tied the knot on the 18th June - his bride was Irene.

July 16th saw Mike Morris marry Wendy and we are reliably informed that sometime earlier this year Joanne Skelton from Purchasing said "I do" to Bruce Whitehouse - unfortunately nobody's given us the date of this happy union.

Much more precise (datewise that is) was John Grocott's (WAO) wedding when he married Katie on the 6th August. This was closely followed by Annette Till from Personnel who tied the knot with Phil Foster on the 20th of the same month.

Not content with that little lot - the Matchmaker wasn't finished yet! Three September weddings took place - two on the 10th of the month. These were John Hatfield to Angi Lane and Anthony Weston (Credit Control) to Brenda. Can it be there's a little known tax advantage in marrying on September 10th? A week later on 17th September Michelle McLellan walked up the aisle and said "yes" to Paul Askey.



We Wish You All The Very Best of Health, Wealth & Happiness Folks!

