

# the LOOP

September 2015

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South Staffordshire Plc

# A changing landscape

With his new role as Wholesale Service Director at South Staffs Water, we asked Pete Aspley to outline his views on the changing landscape in the UK's water industry as the market opens up to retail competition.

Having begun his career in the Group on the 5 November 1990, Pete has certainly seen many changes impacting the UK's water industry but, in his opinion, none more so than what is set to happen with OpenWater over the next 18 months, when the non-household sector opens to retail competition.

Pete spent 10 years in the production and water treatment environment before moving to OnSite and the non-regulated part of the Group in 2002. In 2004, he helped set up IWS and over the last 10 years has grown the business into a major player in the water sector. "I am tremendously proud of what we achieved at IWS and as I re-join South Staffs Water, I am confident that IWS will continue to flourish and grow."

## What prompted you to come back into the regulated part of the Group?

It's the opportunity to re-engage with the regulated business at a time of the most significant changes seen since privatisation. The decision was tough, but one I felt compelled to take up. OpenWater will require a massive change both culturally and on a day to day basis. The challenge should not be underestimated and is very exciting.

I share our collective desire to be industry leaders. I think we have a huge amount of work to do and we will be driven by an increasingly competitive market. Some of our larger peers are some way ahead in terms of their wholesale/retail offering. We need to

catch up and I am sure the wealth of knowledge and experience we have within the business will allow us to do this quickly.

Through the Outcome Delivery Incentives (ODIs) which have been set as part of our business plan, we now have measures that will both reward and penalise us. It's all very embryonic but I feel my commercial background will help support the Exec team and the business as we rise to these challenges. Being penalised financially for poor service certainly focuses the mind on what is important within the business!

## What's your view on the landscape post 2017?

In my view, we will see the water industry continue to evolve with competition in the non-household sector. This new competitive environment could pave the way for the likes of Tesco or other utility retailers such as British Gas to offer bundled utility packages (water, gas and electricity).

I think our regulator will want to see greater levels of competition once the market opens up as it is their belief that competition will deliver enhanced service and reduce costs. I, like others in the industry, aren't entirely convinced that this will be the outcome but we will have to wait and see!

## How about the wholesale business?

I believe wholesale will become a more customer orientated business.



Photo above: Pete Aspley, Wholesale Service Director

Historically it's been about supplying water but we will need to re-focus the wholesale business to become more customer centric. We will become more aligned to a production facility with an enhanced level of focus upon client satisfaction.

Finally...

The services offered through our Group companies potentially puts us in a strong position. Our culture and the way we think shouldn't be different across our Group. Our decision making process should be mapped against true commercialism. Get this right and we will secure our position as an industry leading organisation.

For more information on OpenWater see pages 4 and 5.

## OnSite Specialist Maintenance team up with TATA Steel

Congratulations go to OnSite Specialist Maintenance (OSM) for the project with TATA Steel in Scunthorpe.

The company – which prides itself on leading the market in structural remediation – is carrying out repair work at TATA Steel's coal handling plant.

This has involved the use of concrete repair and crack injection techniques as well as the application of carbon fibre banding and anti-carbonation coating.





# Volunteers enjoy a day out at 'By the sea with WHG'

A team of South Staffs Water volunteers enjoyed a day helping at Walsall Housing Group's 'By the sea with WHG'; a community event held on Thursday 13 August.

Activities included sand castle making, donkey rides and zumba classes. There was also loads of free ice cream.

Volunteers Chris Watson, Steve Colella, Scott Hutchinson, Leanne Allen and Caroline Maddox talked to tenants about water services and offered water saving advice as well as giving away free water saving goodies.

Commenting on the day, Head of Communications and Key Accounts, Caroline Maddox, said: "This annual event gave us an ideal platform to continue to develop our partnership with WHG and open up communication channels with our customers."



Customer Liaison Officer, Scott Hutchinson, added: "This has been a great event and I have really enjoyed talking to our customers about how they can save money and water at the same time. I'd be happy to volunteer for another event and encourage others to make a difference in our communities."

*Photo at the top: Scott Hutchinson helping out at the community event.  
Photo bottom, right: (l to r) Steve Colella, tenant, Caroline Maddox, Leanne Allen and Scott Hutchinson.*



## Merlot Programme - bringing OpenWater to South Staffs

**The OpenWater Programme was set up by the UK Government to create a competitive market for water and sewerage services for non-household customers in England.**

From April 2017, all business customers, public sector, charitable and not-for-profit organisations in England will be able to choose their water and sewerage supplier – however big or small the business and wherever it is located.

Being able to switch water and sewerage service supplier will mean that non-household customers are free to negotiate for the best package that suits their needs; be it through more efficient customer service, better-tailored packages, water efficiency advice, or price.

The market will work in much the same way as in other utility services, where a range of suppliers compete for customers by offering them the best deal. The suppliers will buy wholesale services from the former monopoly suppliers. They will then package them with other value-adding services for their customers at competitive prices.

### **Merlot Programme**

The Merlot Programme has been created to allow South Staffs Water to implement the changes necessary to comply with the new market conditions that will come into force in April 2017.

Lawrence Edwards is the Merlot Programme Manager. Lawrence has previous experience of managing business change and has worked within the utilities industry before.

The Merlot Team is made up of a number of internal and external members. Lisa Smith previously worked as Finance Manager for South Staffs Water and has moved roles to become Merlot's Assurance Project Manager. Liam Grady is the new Retail Project Manager and Andrew Keane takes over the Wholesale Project.

*“Being able to switch...will mean that non-household customers are free to negotiate for the best package that suits their needs...”*

Working alongside the project managers are a number of business analysts, including Helen Fowler, an analyst for the Retail Project who previously worked for IWS on its IFS implementation. Verrol Skerritt is the new Business Analyst for the Wholesale

Project and has worked on OpenWater previously with United Utilities. Stuart Whitfield, previously Service Delivery Development Manager for South Staffs Water has now taken up the role of Business Change Manager for the Wholesale Project.

A number of additional team members will also be joining the Merlot team as the programme progresses, including Lindsay Morris from South Staffs Water, Helen Campbell from Echo and Dharmender Rai from Group IT. The programme team will require input from a variety of people across the Group over the next 18 months and any help will be greatly appreciated.

The team will aim to keep you updated on progress through regular newsletters and would appreciate any feedback you'd like to give. For more information on the programme please contact Lawrence Edwards or visit the SharePoint page at <http://sssp/ssw/merlot/SitePages/Home.aspx>



Photo above: (Back l to r) Alice Horton, Helen Fowler, Liam Grady and Lisa Smith. (Front l to r) Verrol Skerritt, Lawrence Edwards and Stuart Whitfield

## Fact File

- In May 2014, the Water Act 2014 received Royal Assent and put in place the necessary legislative framework to achieve market reform in the water industry.
- Water for Life set out the UK Government's vision for an innovative, resilient water industry that offered non-household customers a choice of supplier.
- The programme brings together market participants, Defra, Ofwat, Market Operator Services Ltd (MOSL) and other stakeholders to implement that vision, by opening the competitive market for non-household water and sewerage retail services in April 2017.
- In April 2008, Scotland became the first country in the world to open up water and sewerage services to competition for all public sectors. The English market has therefore taken learnings from this.
- Market participants will need to be ready by 1 October 2016 for shadow operation, where companies will practice for the opening of the market prior to 2017
- Incumbent water and sewerage companies will also be able to voluntarily exit from the retail market with the consent of the Secretary of State.
- Go live date for the new market is 1 April 2017
- Key documents that will govern the new retail market can be found in OpenWater's 'Market Architecture Plan'. These can be found at [www.open-water.org.uk](http://www.open-water.org.uk)



South Staffs Water



# OnSite Specialist Maintenance appoint 11 new foremen

OnSite Specialist Maintenance (OSM) has appointed 11 foremen who will now be trained specially to oversee jobs working at high levels.

The company has spent three months carefully selecting suitable candidates for the posts.

They were officially appointed on 25 July at the Park Inn, Nottingham, where OSM had arranged an inspirational health and safety talk by Paul Blanchard, who shared with them the reality of life after an accident [www.lifeafteranaccident.co.uk](http://www.lifeafteranaccident.co.uk)

The new foremen will now begin a progressive 12 month training programme.

The management team at OSM would like to congratulate A. Cambell, A. Evans, C. Cartledge, C. Betteridge, C. Cooper, C. Gowlan, A. Barwick, A. Peak, P Devonport, R. Heaton and M. Muzikevicius.



Photo above: Health and safety talk at the Park Inn, Nottingham for the new foremen.

**OnSite**<sup>™</sup>  
Specialist Maintenance

## Hydrosave launches new technical division

Hydrosave has launched a new sub division to provide technical services and create a platform for other SSI group companies to showcase the services they can provide.

Hydrosave has provided water conservation and leakage management solutions to utilities and private sector companies for nearly 20 years.

The new division, SSI Test, Inspect, Consult, will offer clients a range of technical services including in-pipe

survey techniques, CCTV, soil analysis, network calming appraisals, GPRS data capture and critical valve assessments.

It will focus on providing accurate asset condition assessment, remaining life analysis and preventative maintenance.

**SSI**<sup>®</sup> Test Inspect Consult  
services

**Hydrosave**  
Water Network Efficiency

# Echo unveils their new Vision, Mission and Values

We are pleased to announce we have launched our new Vision, Mission and Values (VMV). We believe the newly formed features have helped us shape our core principles in reflection of our people culture.

Our values are the essence of Echo's identity, describing who we are and what we stand for. We wanted the values to fully support our vision and shape our first class working culture. During the development phase we asked employees what words should be used to represent our people and the business. After weeks of deliberation and several focus groups, employees and members of the Senior Management Team worked together to devise two empowering business statements and words that imitates us. This exercise alone really helped us capture these values, as they surfaced as natural behaviours we desire at Echo.

“The launch events held across our sites were really well attended and we have received lots of great comments and feedback. The high levels of engagement that were shown by employees really demonstrates the pride and commitment of our employees and reinforces that Echo truly is a unique and special company to be a part of.”

Over the months we have made great efforts to evolve our VMV by delivering presentations during cascade meetings whilst handing out branded booklets and giveaways. This new look has become a permanent feature of Echo, incorporating images on business branding and used as part of our working language. This has enabled employees, clients and customers to recognise what we stand for. The above supports our ambitious agenda to double in size over the next three to five years, coupled with a clear focus on the creation of a single, unified organisation that will maximise its impact by working as ‘one team’.



## Vision:

One Echo, creating opportunity through growth

## Mission:

Staying true to our values, we provide customer led solutions for clients whose principles and beliefs we share.

Through the expertise, knowledge and understanding of our people, we collaborate to deliver an enriched customer experience protecting your brand as if it's our own.

## Values:

Integrity, Respect, Agility, Empowerment, Collaboration



**£500  
HOLIDAY  
WINNER**

Photo l to r: Paul Smith, Robert Bull, Thomas Dawson, Nathan Dolphin, Zac Downen, Pete Roberts, Julian Winders, Andrew Morris, Stuart Reynolds (Just), Adrian Wassell, Dave Garrard, Martyn Frost, Damien Kimber and Tim Roberts.



## The South Staffs Canal Crew raises £1700 for WaterAid

In July, 15 employees set off to cycle the 100 miles of canal towpaths which stretch from Green Lane to Langollen in Wales. The venture took two days and raised an amazing £1700 for WaterAid. Andrew Morris describes the journey.

“I don’t know whether it is New Year resolutions; an urge for fundraising or a longing to escape the dark winter nights... but in January more and more people seem to approach Pete Roberts to ask where this year’s WaterAid charity bike ride will be.

“In previous years we’ve ridden from Stanton Reservoir to Kinver Pumping Station and from the source of the River Blythe to Chelmarsh Reservoir. So this year when myself and Pete were thinking of routes, we tried to find somewhere to get to using canal towpaths, that would increase the challenge. We also wanted there to be a well-known attraction that could be our ‘goal’.

“After consideration we came up with the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct just outside of Llangollen, which is two day’s riding along 100 miles of canal towpaths.

“The aqueduct, which was built in the early 19th century, is a UNESCO world heritage site and a masterpiece of engineering and architecture.

“After publicising the challenge the list of riders grew to 15, with the following South Staffs Water employees signed up:

“Peter Roberts (and 1 guest), Adrian Wassell, Nathan Dolphin, Andrew Morris, Andrew Smith, Julian Winders, Paul Smith, Martyn Frost (and 1 guest), Tom Dawson, Robert Bull and Dave Garrard (and 1 guest). Zac Downen from Group Services also took part.

“As the ride approached, extra efforts were made to add to our total for WaterAid. Dave Garrard, Andy Smith, Mark Colwell (despite the fact he was unable to take part in the bike ride) and I undertook a ‘dry run’ by riding the 100 miles on exercise bikes in the canteen.

“Also helping to raise money were Leanne Allen and Martin Vickers, from South Staffs Water who sold homemade cakes in the Green Lane restaurant.

“In total we managed to raise £224 before the real challenge started.

“We all turned up ready to depart at 7am for our two day challenge. We set off on the towpath towards Wolverhampton on the Wyrley and Essington Canal. The group was led out by Julian Winders who set a fast pace through the tarmac and gravel bends. We soon picked up the Shropshire Union Canal, just north of Wolverhampton and rode on towards our first stop at Gnosall, delayed slightly by the first puncture at Brewood. As we set off from Gnosall, tarmac soon became a distant memory as mile after mile of uneven rough grass lay round every bend, right up to just outside Market Drayton - where it turned into a mud swamp that was only safe to walk through!

“Lunch at Market Drayton saw us meet up with our support crew Mark Smith, from South Staffs Water and Rob Monk from Cambridge Water, who gave up their time to drive the support vehicles





to make sure we had all we needed when we wanted it. Without their help the bike ride would not have been possible.

“From Market Drayton, via an ice cream at Nantwich, we continued along the Shropshire Union Canal until the Llangollen branch. Despite further punctures and an accidental dip into the canal by Martyn Frost, we continued on, over the rough grass and root strewn terrain.

“Whitchurch was approximately 60 miles from the start so made the perfect overnight stop, with a very welcome hot meal and drink waiting. Despite some mechanical bike repairs we were all up and off again towards Ellesmere the following morning. Unfortunately for the team the towpath trauma continued and in places it became an effort to maintain any forward momentum due to the uneven and obstacle laden route.

“Following a pit stop in Ellesmere we pushed on, despite further punctures, and eventually arrived at Chirk for lunch. This was where we were greeted by Chirk Tunnel - a 421m unlit tunnel with no passing points; if you met someone on a bike in the middle, one of you was going to have to go back!

“Thankfully, after this the towpaths became much more hospitable and we rode on with great speed to the aqueduct. As we crossed we were treated to some spectacular views across the valley and the engineering scale is breathtaking! After arriving on the far side, and still in awe of what we had achieved, we jumped back onto the saddle and rode along the canal into Llangollen. The sense of joy, relief and pain when reaching the end after 105

miles was etched on all of our faces. After a short break and cool down the van was loaded with the bikes and we all set off in the minibus back to Green Lane.

“We all had a fantastic two days in glorious weather that was very hard on mind and body but we all made it and helped to raise a fantastic £1,700 for WaterAid, with the amount still rising as more donations come in. We would all like to give a big thank you to everyone who has sponsored us.”

 **WaterAid**

  
South Staffs Water

# Ralph to abseil UK's tallest sculpture

An IWS employee is daring to abseil the UK's tallest sculpture to help raise money for Parkinson's UK.

Ralph Youell, who is Operations Manager at the Crayford office, will be taking the plunge off the side of the 262ft high AccelorMittal Orbit at London's Olympic Park on September 27.

Ralph said: "One of IWS's Crayford contracts is in the Olympic Park in Stratford so I will be getting the opportunity to quite literally oversee the project when I take the plunge!"

The giant sculpture – which is six times higher than the Angel of the North – offers abseilers who dare to step off the ledge an adrenaline-fuelled ride down to the ground, taking in breath-taking views for 20 miles across London.

Ralph added: "I am doing this for a very dear friend and neighbour, Cathy, who is always smiling and happy despite her suffering.

"Cathy has done many things for the charity herself including a parachute jump. She was hoping to complete the abseil, but unfortunately her illness has taken a bit of a hold and she is unable to this time around."

Ralph is not averse to taking on new challenges. He has already abseiled down a 17 storey office block in Sidcup, for Greenwich and Bexley Hospice; completed two parachute jumps, and driven cars and motorbikes around Brands Hatch.



**PARKINSON'S<sup>UK</sup>**

He hopes this challenge will raise £400 for Parkinson's UK which aims to find a cure for people with Parkinson's and help change attitudes.

Ralph added: "The smallest donation really can make a difference to this worthy cause and would be appreciated by everyone who is affected by Parkinson's."

To sponsor him visit  
[www.justgiving.com/Ralph-Youell](http://www.justgiving.com/Ralph-Youell)

#### Fact file

- One person in every 500 has Parkinson's, that's about 127,000 people in the UK
- There is currently no cure
- Drugs and treatment are available to help sufferers manage many of the symptoms
- For more details visit [www.parkinsons.org.uk](http://www.parkinsons.org.uk)



AccelorMittal Orbit - 262ft

# It's a dog's life for Joe the whippet

Echo has worked in partnership with the Dog's Trust since early 2004. The UK's largest dog charity is currently using the contact centre to assist in its major drive to get all dogs microchipped in Wales by 2015 and in England by 2016.



As part of the partnership, Echo established a dedicated microchip advice telephone line designed to help owners get their pets 'chipped' for free.

Pet owners calling the line are provided with details of their nearest participating vet, which Echo agents identify using their postcode.

Each year more than 100,000 dogs are lost or abandoned at a cost of £57 million to the taxpayer and welfare charities. The campaign has already resulted in some 20,000 dogs being 'chipped' and their owners registered on a nationwide database.

Echo employees regularly fundraise or raise awareness of the fabulous work the Dog's Trust does.

Laura Deakin, who works as a PA to the Echo directors, said: "The Dog's Trust is a fabulous charity which helps re-home dogs and raises awareness of issues affecting dogs and their owners.

"As a dog owner myself I was devastated when my whippet, Joe, suddenly became ill. He has always been a very active dog but all of a sudden he became very poorly. He went completely off his food and liquids and became very lethargic.

"We were very worried about him and a trip to the vets confirmed that he had a nasty virus."

After a week of antibiotics and rest Joe picked up and Laura thought all was well. Unfortunately, when his course of medication finished, Joe very quickly went downhill again and was rushed back to the vets, which kept him in for tests.

Laura added: "The vet told us Joe had meningitis and that the next 24 hours were critical for him. Fortunately after a couple of nights in a dog hospital and lots of drugs and fluids Joe began to get better and was put onto an intense course of steroids for the next four months."

Joe is now completely off all of his medication and thankfully he is fighting fit with no signs of any lasting damage.

Laura added: "This whole experience has made me realise just how important Joe is to our family and we would like to use his experience so other dog owners are aware too.

"We would also like to use it to make everyone aware of the fabulous job that the team do down at Dog's Trust in Roden, Shrewsbury. As well as



Laura and Joe as a puppy.



Joe on one of his outings to the pub.

offering a re-homing centre the trust also provides loads of helpful advice for dog owners.

"Anyone can make donations, either of a cash value or by donating toys and blankets. Every little helps for this amazing charity."

[www.dogstrust.org.uk](http://www.dogstrust.org.uk)



# Echo offer a helping hand to refugee crisis

Echo Managed Services in Bristol have rallied round to help support refugees in Calais.

Alex Carruthers and Lucy Davies, agents on the Healthcare at Home team, decided to urge other members of the office to collect clothes and food for the refugees after seeing press coverage of the crisis.

The team were quick to show their support by bringing in unwanted clothes, sleeping bags, shoes, toiletries and food.

These are now being packaged up and sent to the Calais Refugee Solidarity Bristol, which was set up by a team of volunteers in August to provide support to the refugees stuck in Calais.



Eve Marangon, team leader for Echo Managed Services, said: "There has been a brilliant response from everyone in the office. They've been donating everything from essential warm clothing to food for those who may need it."

Photo above l to r: Alex Carruthers and Lucy Davies.

For details visit [www.calaisrefugeesolidaritybristol.co.uk](http://www.calaisrefugeesolidaritybristol.co.uk)



## Retro Sweets and Candy is closing down!

With the end of the Graduate Scheme fast approaching unfortunately our much loved Retro Sweets and Candy will be leaving South Staffordshire Plc at the end of October.

With a final fundraising target of £3,750 we need your help one last time! Our concluding sales will be held on the 7, 14 and 28 October in the restaurant at Green Lane. Please come and support us, and look out for our totaliser to keep track of how we are doing.

Watch out for some closing down deals and treats in our final sale and remember - all profits will be going to Acorns Children's Hospice to help them continue their vital work to help children with life-limiting illnesses across Walsall and the Black Country.

If you are not based at Green Lane, but would like to support us by purchasing some sweets during our final weeks, please email [info@retrosweetsandcandy.co.uk](mailto:info@retrosweetsandcandy.co.uk) and we will do our best to meet your needs.

If you would be interested in taking on the business beyond October to continue fundraising for a charity of

your choice please contact us at [info@retrosweetsandcandy.co.uk](mailto:info@retrosweetsandcandy.co.uk) to discuss this further.

Thank you for all your support over the last two years, it has all been for a very worthwhile cause.

Alice, Emma and Hugh  
Retro Sweets & Candy



# My Journey BACK to IWS



Carla Spate started working at IWS as an apprentice in 2013. (You may recall the “The Diary of an IWS Apprentice” article in The Loop). Since then she has left the company – and come back again! Here she explains why taking a different career path brought her back to IWS.

“I started work at IWS M&E as an apprentice in business administration with Walsall College. My apprenticeship came to an end in 2014 and although I continued to work for IWS a while longer, I began to look for a job with more financial responsibilities, so I could complete my NVQ Level 3 in business administration.

“I soon found a job in sales administration, which was located closer to my home and offered a larger salary – it seemed perfect.

“When I left IWS in January 2015 it was very emotional. This had been my first permanent job and I knew I was leaving a lot of friends and great colleagues behind.

“When I started my new position as a sales administrator, I soon realised not all organisations are as friendly and welcoming as IWS M&E.

“It was a big change moving from a large company to a small, family run business. The first thing I noticed was the unnecessary pressure I received from the management.

“Nevertheless I continued to work hard and soon became good at my new job. The problem was the more proficient I got, and the more the management praised my work, the more my team started to resent me and make my work difficult.

“One thing I missed was not having a supportive role model like my supervisor at IWS M&E who I could turn to for help. Although I did have a supervisor I didn’t feel I could do the same.

“The final straw for me was being shouted abuse in my face for something I hadn’t done – by someone who wasn’t my supervisor or boss. I did make a complaint but nothing seemed to come of it and although things did quieten down for a bit, it didn’t take long to go back to normal.

“At this point I think it was clear that I wasn’t going to be able to make progress in this company because of some of the employees I had to work with.

“Throughout this time, I had kept in touch with my IWS supervisor. It came up in conversation that there was an opportunity to work within her team at IWS Water Hygiene as a System Support Administrator. After checking with my Walsall College tutor that I could continue my NVQ Level 3 with another organisation, it wasn’t long before IWS arranged for me to come in for interview. Fortunately, I was successful in getting the job.

“I don’t regret leaving IWS M&E. The move gave me experience in another workplace, increased my salary and gave me the chance to study business and administration at a higher level – but it did make me realise what a fantastic organisation I had left.”





Andy Smith with a near complete view of Striding Edge in the background. The camera is resting on the tomb of the fallen walker.

# Personal Challenge – A walk up Helvellyn

After hearing and reading many stories about the famous Striding Edge arête which leads to the summit of Helvellyn, Andy Smith from South Staffs Water decided to set himself a personal challenge – and give it a go himself. Here, he tells his personal story of his adventure for the day.

“My journey began at 3am with a 2 hour and 40 minute drive to the eastern fells of the Lake District. By 6.30am I was on my way up a forest path at Glenridding - the weather was beautiful with only a few high clouds visible.

“Unfortunately my guide book wasn’t very helpful so I decided to work out my own route instead. I ended up following the path into Grisdale Valley which eventually took me up to the “Hole-in-the-wall” (as described on the map). I stopped here to take in the views and recover from the ascent which is a good 500m from the valley.

“As I looked around I realised how alone I was. At this time in the morning there was no one on any of the hills that surrounded me.

“I carried on alongside the wall of Bleaberry Crag with the sharp points of Striding Edge in front of me. I tackled the Striding Edge arête by walking

*“The top of Helvellyn can be described in one word, ‘flat.’ You could literally fit a football pitch up there...”*

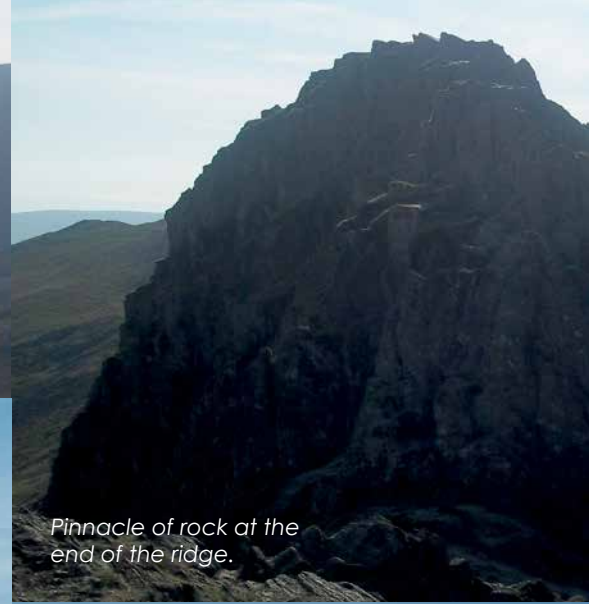
along the crest were possible and then descending to a path that runs to the right. At the final section of the ridge I had to climb over a small pinnacle of rock that looks quite scary from a distance with big drops either side. Fortunately it wasn’t too technically challenging and I was able to tuck myself in between rocks on both the ascent and the decent.

“After the pinnacle I ascended a steep, demanding slope to the summit where the views were just jaw dropping.

“As I looked around I noticed a large flat stone. It was the tomb of a fallen walker who died in the 1800s. Apparently, when the remains of his body were found three months later his dog was standing over the body crying for the loss of its fallen master.



*View from the approach to the Hole-in-the-wall.*



*Pinnacle of rock at the end of the ridge.*



*The path back down to Glenridding. Looking back towards Catstye Cam.*



*Jetty over Ullswater*



*The flat summit of Helvellyn.*

The story went on to raise the question, if the dog had been in the hills for three months who or what gave him the nourishment that enabled him to survive such harsh conditions? Answer that last bit how you want!

“The weather was great so I took the time to take some snaps of my route while I was on the summit. The top of Helvellyn can be described in one word, ‘flat.’ You could literally fit a football pitch up there and it’s a major contrast against the two ridges sticking out either side of it.

“After I had finished on the summit I made my way north to the way marker for Swirrel Edge. It was very steep but a lot of the rock and stone lean into the slope so it was easy to maintain grip and balance on my way down. In no time I was making my way back down the main path towards Glenridding alongside a rolling waterfall.



*Glenridding and Ullswater.*

“All in all this was a great day out that is a challenge but well worth it in good weather with great views of across the lakes.”

Life is an adventure, live it!!



**South Staffs Water**

# 1:1min interview

Alan Smith, Key Account Coordinator, Cambridge Water

1) What's the best part of your job and why?

I enjoy working with the people around me.

2) What's the worst part of the job and why?

Getting to and from work! The joys of travelling on the A14!

3) Describe your journey to work.

It can be tedious at times, but some music in the car makes it a happy journey.

4) What was your first ever job?

I built PA equipment for an electronics company. My claim to fame is that I built the PA equipment that was used during the Pope's first visit to Ireland in 1979. I was a bit of an electronics whizz kid in my younger days.

5) What's your dream job?

An online business that would allow me to work anytime and anywhere in the world - laptop entrepreneur.

6) What personal items decorate your desk/place of work?

Mostly sweets, chocolate or food that I should be avoiding.

7) What's the proudest achievement in your current job?

That is yet to come I think.

*"If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got."*

8) Where did you go on your last holiday?

That was a while ago, but I spent two weeks in Canada – Toronto, Wasaga Beach and Niagra Falls. Loved it there and didn't want to come back at the time.

9) What was the last album you bought?

Nothing has Changed – a David Bowie compilation to play in the car. This guy has been a hero of mine since the early 80's. I was lucky enough to see him live in Germany in 1983 – fantastic gig.

10) What's your favourite film and TV programme?

Don't really have a film in mind that I could class as my favourite, but I love comedy films and hate musicals. Doc Martin (loved Men Behaving Badly – Martin Clunes is funny and of course Neil Morrissey) and Long Lost Family are programmes that I find myself going out of my way to watch.



Photo above: Alan Smith, Cambridge Water

11) What's your favourite quote?

"If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got." Henry Ford, American founder of the Ford Motor Company.

12) Who do you most admire and why?

It's difficult to admire just one person, but I do admire people who are creative and innovative. For example, I admire musicians who can actually play and write their own songs – singer songwriters like Ed Sheeran and Noel Gallagher.