

# The Plug 'n Pipe

C A Sothers

Quarterly Newsletter  
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Editor – Steve Craddock

Time seems to be flying by this year! Autumn is here already and apart from a few brief bursts of sunshine the summer has been a bit of a non-event. Fortunately the work situation is much brighter than the weather has been. We have recently completed a number of sizeable contracts at Swansea, Walsall Campus, Amen Corner and Worksop, and have just started at Warwickshire Digital Laboratory, Esporta Gloucester and Thanet Casino and Bingo club.

The order book is also looking healthy with contracts worth over £15 million pounds to be completed by September 2008 already in the bag!

We seem to be bucking the trend at the moment compared to our competitors but this is certainly not the time to be complacent. There is still immense pressure on margins with raw material costs increasing on the World market – mainly fuelled by the demand of the Chinese economy. We have seen the price of copper reach £4,000 per tonne and this has sparked a number of thefts from site of installed pipe work. The price of aluminium has also reached record levels and it appears that scaffold towers are the latest target for the thieves.

You may already know that we have worked on a number of Goals Soccer centres. What you may not know is that we have already completed 8 and we have orders for a further 4. It seems that, although we may be struggling to compete at a National level, there are still huge numbers of people playing the sport at the grass roots level – curious analogy as most of the Goals Soccer Centre pitches are synthetic – but you know what I mean!

## The 2012 Olympics



Sorry to harp on about the Chinese, but it would appear that they have been stockpiling resources in order to ensure that supply chain issues do not stand in the way of a fanfare to launch the games in Beijing on time. It is unlikely that this stockpile will be released back onto the World market further increasing the bill for the London games. When the budget was revised in March to £9.3 billion pounds it incorporated a general inflation allowance of around 5% as a contingency.

Allan Wilen, the chief economist at the Construction Products Association says that it is difficult to tell whether this contingency will be enough. Many other factors, including the US and other Western economies will play a big part in the demand for raw materials.

There was a lovely quote in the paper last week that may come back to haunt the writer "an insider at the London Organising Committee of the Olympic games said that theories that the cost of raw materials would rise above the contingency were "insane" and ruled out any possibility that the cost of the games would rise again"!! Now I'm not a betting man, but if anyone would like to offer me odds that they will.....

*To contribute to the newsletter with ideas and suggestions ring me at the office on 0121 507 2044 or email [steve.craddock@sothers.com](mailto:steve.craddock@sothers.com)*

## Southern Regional Office



Investors in People (IIP) **INVESTORS IN PEOPLE**

We have been looking for the right time and the right person to open a Regional office south of the M4 corridor. These plans have finally come to fruition with the appointment of Mark Lewis. Mark joins us from a leading M&E contractor in the area and will be heading up the team based in Basingstoke.

Mark is 37 and has spent the last 21 years with the same company. Originally starting as an apprentice electrician at the age of 16, Mark spent 8 years after qualifying in the estimating department before moving into project management. Mark is married to Catherine and they have 3 young children. He was also the coxswain of the inshore lifeboat at Solent Rescue for 15 years from 1986 – 2001.



The plan is to develop our links with the Regional offices of our existing clients to offer the same standards of design, installation and maintenance that we can from Birmingham. The regional presence will enable us to cover a wider area geographically and broaden our customer base. The office functions will be carried out in Birmingham, which will help reduce costs and enable us to monitor costs and contract performance closely.

Most of the reviews have now been done and we are busy working through every single one to identify ways that we can help you to carry out your job more effectively. A number of courses have been organised already including PASMA, IPAF and St John Ambulance.

We are developing a Mechanical Services Awareness course in conjunction with South Birmingham College. The course will be run at the college over a series of Saturday mornings. More details will be available in the next few weeks. If you would like more information about the course please contact Robert Hinton.

We will be having a preliminary assessment carried out by our external consultant before Christmas. She will conduct a number of interviews with a cross section of employees to see if we have communicated our message to you about where we intend to focus over the next year. In case any of you missed it in the last 2 newsletters and at your review – here is a reminder!

1. To be the best “one-stop-shop” for M&E design, installation and maintenance services.
2. To satisfy our clients!!
3. To make a profit and provide a sound financial platform for future business.
4. To conduct ourselves and our business honestly and with integrity.

# C A Sothers and the quest for the Holy Grail!

It's not the title of a new Monty Python film but the name of the C A Sothers sponsored football team! Captained (a term that is used in the loosest possible sense) by Matt Evans, it includes a number of Sothers employees who play in the league at Goals Soccer centre at Star City. It appears from the current form that the word "Star" is only used when referring to the venue and not the talent of the players.



I am assured that the current form is not representative and they are building up their fitness levels for a late surge up the league. They are always looking for new players - if anyone would like to be considered for a place in the team please contact Matt on his mobile or via the office.

## Blast from the past!

David Bryant visited John Stansbie over the summer holidays. John worked for the company for 32 years from 1968 – 2000. John now lives on the Isle of Wight and works at Parkhurst prison carrying out the electrical testing and maintenance throughout the prison. There have been many celebrated prisoners incarcerated at Parkhurst including the Great Train Robbers, The Krays and the Yorkshire Ripper. When John described his work at the prison he said "it does have it's moments!", a typical understatement from John.



John lives near the prison with his wife Jill who manages a shop in one of the many holiday parks on the island. John would like to be remembered to everyone at the company and extends a warm invitation to former colleagues to call in if they are visiting the island.

## *Mortgage Advice*

The last few months have been "very interesting" if, like me, you follow the financial news. The pressure on interest rates and the near collapse of Northern Rock have thrown the financial markets into sharp focus. Whilst savers welcome interest rate increases, home owners with a mortgage to pay feel the effects of higher mortgage payments as the Bank of England base rate has reached it's highest level for six and a half years. The last 0.25 % base rate increase in July, the 5th since last summer, means that borrowers will, on average, have to pay an extra £16 a month on a typical £100,000 mortgage. Over the last 12 months this adds up to an increase of £64 per month. Borrowers about to renew a fixed rate mortgage are likely to be the hardest hit and face paying out as much as two percentage points in interest higher on their loans.

This is coming at a time when disposable incomes are falling and the savings rate has been squeezed to its lowest in nearly 50 years. We have been approached by our financial advisors who have offered to provide a free independent review for any employee. Andrew Hawthorn is the Mortgage Broker at MDP Financial Services and can be contacted on 0121 233 0222. His role is to provide staff with an independent Advice & Recommendation service. Andrew will explain all mortgage options available and identify specific requirements for you before researching the UK mortgage market on your behalf to source the best product available. With access to the whole of the UK mortgage market and the ability to search through thousands of mortgage products, MDP could save you both time and money.

The service has been made available by MDP free of charge to all employees - so if you are moving home or simply reaching the end of your current rate period, feel free to contact Andrew at MDP.

## COMPANY NEWS

Simon and Emma Flanagan have had a baby girl who they have named Taylor Jane.

Matt Evans and Ed Ashford have both got married – not to each other I hasten to add!

Finally congratulations to Adrian Cowley for completing 25 years service with the company.



The long service award is worth £500 and Adrian has purchased a television with the award.

## Appointments

Paul Brett joined the company at the beginning of September. Paul is a mechanical engineer and is the other Installation Team Leader alongside Martin Atkins. His previous employers include Balfour Kilpatrick, Hills Electrical and the Kershaw Group.



Paul is 37 and lives in Burntwood with his wife Julie and 2 children Charlotte and Oliver. Paul is a keen golfer and Villa supporter – but we will try not to hold that against him!

We were sad to lose Chrissy Burrell who has moved back to Bristol but we are pleased to welcome Georgina Kelly who has replaced Chrissy as the voice of C A Sothers.



Lastly we would like to welcome Lee Taylor. Lee is working for Mark Lewis out of the Southern Office. Lee is married to Katrina and they have two boys Brandon and Drew.

