

The Plug 'n Pipe

C A Sothers

Quarterly Newsletter
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Editor – Steve Craddock

Famine or Feast??

There is an old saying “*May you live in interesting times!*” that is reputed to have come from a Chinese proverb. Well we are certainly having an interesting time at the moment. We have a record order book of over £20 Million but, yet again, due to contract delays and circumstances completely out of our control, we are struggling to find enough work to keep all of our engineers busy in the short term. I would like to thank all of you who have supported the company by taking extra holidays at the start of this year, and also thank all of you who have been working for other contractors for your hard work and commitment in very difficult circumstances.

We have worked very hard over the years to build, what we consider to be, one of the finest directly employed workforces in the region - You may not realise this but you are the envy of many of our competitors! – We are very proud of this and hopefully you appreciate the extraordinary measures we have had to take over the last few months to make sure we keep the team together!

The “famine” will be coming to an end very soon with a number of contracts due to start including Leicester Schools, Coventry Leisure Centre, Stamford Quarter Shopping Centre, Odeon Liverpool, the Midland Arts Centre in Edgbaston, Reel Cinema Andover, Malinslee School Telford and G-Park Tamworth.

We have further encouraging news to report from our Basingstoke office. They have started work on their first contract at the National Blood Service and have tendered over £5 Million pounds worth of work since the office opened in September.

Please contribute to the newsletter with ideas and suggestions for articles or features.

You can ring me at the office on 0121 507 2044 or email steve.craddock@sothers.com

The 2012 Olympics

I make no apology for having a regular spot in the newsletter for the Olympics. As we are all contributing towards the costs I like to know where my money is being spent. It is also a rich source of interesting facts and figures. Two stories which have caught my attention recently is that Lord Coe announced that they have “banked” one million hours of safe working without a single reportable accident. They have over 2000 people working on site and at the ODA. Lord Coe said: *'The progress being made on the Olympic Park site is simply extraordinary - the scale and complexity of this task cannot be underestimated.*

It is thanks to the dedication and professionalism of all the staff working on the project, that not only are we on schedule but the work is being carried out with the very highest standards of health and safety. To achieve more than one million hours without a reportable accident is testament to the fantastic work being carried out on site.'

The other story, which I thought might amuse you, is that they have just held a third birthday party for some of the children born on 20th December 2004. A little strange you might think – but some bright spark in a marketing agency has twigged that their birth date is quite symbolic 20/12 (/04) and they have promised a role to some of the children, who will then be seven years old, in the 2012 ceremonies.



Southern Regional Office



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

We can now update you on what has been happening in Basingstoke over the last few months. We have had a very encouraging response from some of our existing clients who are delighted that we now have a regional presence in the South. The number and quality of enquiries received to date has kept Mark and the estimating team in Hockley extremely busy. The hard work is paying off and in addition to the National Blood Service job currently underway we have orders for four Waitrose stores to start in March. Three of these are relatively small HVAC upgrades but we also have the contract for a large extension to the Sidmouth store.

We have appointed Keith Perry as a mechanical project engineer to assist Mark in the office.



Keith lives in Southampton with his partner. They have 3 children and 4 grandchildren. Keith is a keen fisherman in his spare time.

He will bring the necessary mechanical services experience to the regional office and complement Mark's electrical background. The appointment has meant that we have had to move into a larger office within the same building to give us more room. It also gives us enough capacity to recruit an estimator – so if you know someone that is looking for a job in Basingstoke please contact Mark Lewis.

We are approaching the first anniversary of our commitment to Investors in People. I thought it would be a good time to give you an update on what we have achieved so far.

The vast majority of reviews have been done and we are trying to match the training requirements identified to our training plans and budgets. There have been a considerable number of engineers trained as First Aiders; we have developed a Mechanical Awareness course with South Birmingham College for our electrical supervisors; four of our project engineers have started a HNC course at Loughborough University and a number of other courses have been attended or are in the planning stage.

The feedback from our external consultant Sue Long has been very positive and we hope to be in a position to apply for external accreditation in the next few months.

We are also looking for feedback from you! If there are things we can do to improve the way we communicate with you or improve the way we operate as a company – PLEASE let us know! Don't keep your ideas to yourself.

Another reminder about what we are trying to achieve as a company. It is important that you realise that every single person working for the company has a contribution to make towards its success!

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.

Bill notches up 50 not out!!

We are delighted to report that Bill Edmonds has completed 50 years service with the Company.



Bill started work in 1958 at the tender age of 15 in the stores. He became the company's first apprentice and moved from the tools into the office working for Brian Hinton. Bill worked as an estimator and then a junior contracts manager before being appointed as a Director of the company in 1980 when he was just 37 years old.

Bill has developed a reputation over the years for being accident prone. This is particularly in evidence when he is on holiday or behind the wheel of a car. My advice to anyone who finds themselves on a plane with Bill is to get off straightaway and catch the next one! His escapades in the car include being locked in a multi-storey car park in a dodgy area of Manchester, hitting a barrier that had been fixed in concrete for many years that "moved" as he backed out of a car park and backing into a car that was "hiding" in the car park!

Notwithstanding his legendary reputation for chaos, the company owes a huge debt of gratitude to Bill. His style may be unorthodox but he is fantastic company and has a myriad of stories about the company. He has built a significant number of relationships with our customers and they have come to trust and respect him.

Those relationships have provided a constant stream of enquiries and work for us over the years. His contribution to the company's success and profitability should not be underestimated! The petrochemical and cinema work that we carry out are all down to Bill pioneering the company into those market places.



Bill is retiring in July and we are already planning a suitable send off. He really will be missed throughout the company and we wish him and Kate a long and happy retirement together.

Blast from the future!

The wicked boys from the estimating department have given us a glimpse of the future.



There are no prizes for guessing who the subject of the picture is but we are running a book on how long it will be before he gets there!!

Birmingham Electrical Training Apprentice of the Year Award

C A Sothers were well represented at this years awards thanks to Nathan Mabbett, Andrew Bott and Adam Glendall. Nathan scooped the Apprentice of the year award for the company, Andrew took the 2nd Year Merit award and Adam the 4th Year Merit award. Many congratulations to them all. Ruth Badger of "The Apprentice" fame presented the award and a cheque for £300 to Nathan at a ceremony held at Birmingham Council House.



COMPANY NEWS

Jason Kavanagh and his partner Emma have had a little boy who they have named Jack

Appointments



James Gill

James has joined as a trainee estimator after working on the tools. He is 23 and still lives at home because it's cheap and easy although he is looking for a house at the moment to share with his girlfriend of two years Beccy. He is a Blue nose and also enjoys rugby and motorsports.



Ben Marklew.

Ben has joined as a CAD operator and is studying at Wolverhampton University. He is 22 and lives in Bloxwich with his girlfriend Wendy. He joined the company after working for a charitable trust – Ackers Outdoor centre where he was a climbing and canoeing instructor.



David Owen

David has joined to assist Eddie Redmond in running the Maintenance department. He is 53 and lived for past 10 years in Worcester with his partner Ann. He has two grown up children Geoff and Nadia. He is a Worcester Warriors season ticket holder and still plays Birmingham league cricket.

Stuart is our After-Care Manager dealing with problems and defect rectification after the contracts have been completed. He is 31, plays rugby as an open side flanker for Barker Butts RFC and supports the Tigers and England. I'm sure he will get some flak when I tell you he is a Sky Blues supporter!



Stuart Munro



Louise Shepherd

Louise has taken over the Credit Control function from Beverley who has moved into the Maintenance Dept to work with Tina. Louise tells me that her hobbies and interests include shopping and drinking wine – but not necessarily at the same time – (will obviously get on well with Lisa!!) and she is a Villa supporter.



Matt Smith

Matt has joined as a Mechanical Project Engineer. He lives in Leicester and will be working on the Leicester Schools contracts. He is married with two daughters and is a keen sportsman. He is also a Foxes supporter (Leicester City for those who don't follow the game).