

# The Plug 'n Pipe

C A Sothers

Company Newsletter  
December 2008  
Editor – Steve Craddock

## Seasons Greetings!

Well another year is nearly over and I know that I am looking forward to the Christmas break. It has been an interesting year for many reasons. Apart from the fact that two of my children got married (and yes it was expensive!) and my wife celebrated her 50<sup>th</sup> birthday (and yes, that was expensive too!), the Company has had mixed fortunes.

We started 2008 with a record order book but very little to do for the first couple of months. We did what we could to ensure that we could keep as many of you as possible busy, and we really appreciate the help you gave us by taking holidays and working as sub-contractors for other companies.

Things really took off after March and we have been flat out all year with October being our highest ever sales month. Inevitably the down turn in confidence has filtered into the commercial sector and a number of projects have been deferred or cancelled. We learnt recently that the project at Dickens Heath – Phase 2 has been cancelled indefinitely. Those of you with internet access can see a very interesting picture of the site on Google Maps.

Probably the biggest disappointment this year is that the next phase of Leicester Schools (Building Schools for the Future) is not ready because Leicester Council have still not decided what the next phase will be. The two projects this year were worth £8M.

However it is certainly not all doom and gloom. We have just secured the order for an office refurbishment on the Hagley Road, we have the ongoing roll-out of Goals Soccer Centres, a Sixth form College in Stoke and a number of other projects which will keep us busy.

News from Basingstoke is also very encouraging. We have completed a number of projects for Waitrose and we have now been allocated a number of refurbishments and fit-outs for 2009. In addition we are working with Moss Construction and Interserve in the area and they don't seem to be so affected by the downturn in the economy as we are in the Midlands.

The maintenance department has had a good year. Turnover and profitability are up on last year and this has been at a time of a few personnel changes with David Owen joining the company and Bill Edmonds retiring. It was great to see Syd Macguire making good progress after his double knee replacement. We are looking forward to seeing him back full time in the New Year.

We have completed a number of high profile jobs during the year and the one that seemed to attract the most publicity was the new Digital Laboratory at Warwick University. A full case study is featured below.

May I take the opportunity to wish you all a very Happy Christmas and say a very big thank you for all your efforts to help the Company during the year.

## Prime Minister opens lab

Prime Minister Gordon Brown opened the University of Warwick's flagship building – the Digital Lab – using 'virtual scissors' to cut a ribbon in cyberspace.



We recently completed the Digital Laboratory contract for Norwest Holst at Warwick University. Warwick Digital Laboratory is a state of the art building that will be used for collaborative research, knowledge transfer and education and training by The Warwick Manufacturing Group (WMG).

Projects will include digital manufacturing, e-security, mass customisation and digital healthcare. WMG works closely with a number of manufacturers including Siemens, Airbus, Corus, G E Healthcare and Jaguar Land Rover.

Since the 1980s WMG has been at the fore-front of researching and applying in businesses and other organisations, lean manufacturing, procurement, logistic and management processes which make more efficient use of commodities and other resources with less waste: delivering both economic and environmental benefits. One of the programmes that will be developed at the Digital Laboratory will be to create products in virtual environments.

This reduces the time and expense that is associated with making prototypes of new products in the traditional way before putting them into mass production.



Our site manager was Andy Marshall assisted by Simon Wootton. The scope of our £2 million contract for Norwest Holst included all electrical, mechanical and public health services. Hoare Lea were the building services design consultants. The internal architecture relies on the structural elements of the Digital Laboratory and most of the building services we installed are exposed to compliment the laboratory theme. The electrical & mechanical services installation to the laboratory incorporates a number of energy saving measures including actuators on all the opening windows linked to the TAC Building Energy Management System and automated lighting controls. Accurate setting out and a high quality finish was essential for the success of our contract. Heating and cooling to the building is by pre-insulated underground pipe work connected to the University district mains services. Well done to Andy and his team as they have produced an installation that has been complimented by Norwest Holst, Hoare Lea and Warwick University.



## INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

We finally had our assessment last week and I am delighted to tell you that the assessor is recommending that we be awarded the IIP Standard. His report is considered by a panel of employers and they make the final decision, but it would be very unusual for them to overturn his recommendation. Presentation of the award will be made in the New Year.

There are several people to thank for their help with the development of our IIP standard. When we decided to embark on the standard we employed an external consultant, Sue Long, to review, plan and develop the systems with the directors. She has given me a great deal of support and must take a great deal of credit in getting us to this point.

To those of you who were interviewed by the assessor – a great big Thank You!! The majority were selected by him and, whilst the interviews were confidential, he was able to report back so many positive comments about what we are doing as a company – you have made us very proud.

It would be very easy at this point to relax and lose focus on what we are trying to achieve but we are not going to let this happen! We are working through the recent Job Reviews and Tony Fletcher and Christina Sadik are putting together our training plan and budget for next year. One of our biggest challenges was collating all the information and getting everyone working for the company properly qualified for their job.

This was difficult enough but we have received new minimum qualifications from a number of main contractors for 2009 and 2010. They are developing their supply chains and will insist that everyone on their sites meet the minimum standards. We are assessing the impact of the standards and will do our best to implement them over the next few months.

## Blast from the past!

As it's Christmas we have a special Blast from the past with a photo that Tim Collins has kindly provided dating back to 1985. There are quite a few faces that even the most recent employees will recognise. The match was C A Sothers United Vs PSW Eindhoven (Poole Stokes Wood) played on 14<sup>th</sup> June 1985 in Bearwood. Rumour has it that Bill scored the first goal after 5 minutes, but things deteriorated after a few shandys at half time, and some dodgy refereeing decisions, the final score was 6 - 1 to PSW Eindhoven.



Players: Top row from left to right – Mick Jervis, Robert Hinton, John Dawson, Bill Edmonds, Tim Collins, Charlie Ryan, Dennis Mills (Referee)  
Front row: Steve Herbert, Phil Holloway, Darren Sidwell, Mick Tumelty, Paul Slater, Chris Sothers

## COMPANY NEWS

Jonathon Wigley and his partner Cheryl have had another baby. Chloe Louise was born on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2008. They already have a one year old boy Jamie Lee born April 2007. They are going to have their hands full this Christmas!

I have a couple of birthdays to mention in this newsletter. Emma Flanagan has asked me to wish Simon a very Happy 30<sup>th</sup> Birthday from her and Taylor Jane.

We have another Birthday to celebrate – Carl Wragg was 30 on 13<sup>th</sup> October. An anonymous source has provided this cutting from his local paper!



**CARL  
WRAGG**

13.10.78

**Happy 30th  
birthday, have a  
great day!**

Lots of love from  
Zoe, Isabelle,  
Lauren, Kade & all  
the family xxx

*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](mailto:steve.craddock@sothers.com)*

# Appointments



Sarah Tucker

Sarah is 20 years old and has joined the company as a junior admin assistant but has now moved upstairs to assist Christina and the contracting department. Sarah is a self confessed geek who loves X-Men, reading and yoga. She has also been known to drink too much on the Sothers nights out. Sarah is in a relationship with Tom who is a Prince Harry lookalike (Sarah has a thing for ginger men hence her boyfriend looking like Prince Harry).

Kelly joined only a few weeks ago to take over from Sarah on Reception and switchboard. She is 19 and lives with her partner Terry on a canal barge. Kelly lists her interests as shopping, the cinema and watching the soaps. She is trying to persuade her partner that it would be a good idea to have a dog – if any of you have a spare one let her know!!



Kelly Stanford



Paul Clarke

Paul has joined the company as a senior project engineer. He is 42 and lives in Bridgnorth with his wife Zoe and 12 year old son Jordan. His interests include Rugby Union, Golf, Coarse Fishing and sport in general. He played Rugby for Bridgnorth for 18 years. At the moment he is limited to the role of Vice President but still has ideas of 'the big comeback'. He is a 17 handicap golfer at Bridgnorth and helps with the junior section during the summer months. He tells me that in the short time that he has been with the company he has experienced a genuine feeling of being part of a team and looks forward to making a positive contribution in the future.

Kevan has joined as an electrical estimator. He is 50 and joined after 15 years with his previous employer. He is married and lives in Sutton Coldfield. He lists his hobbies as gardening and DIY.



Kevan Macleod



Richard Sutton

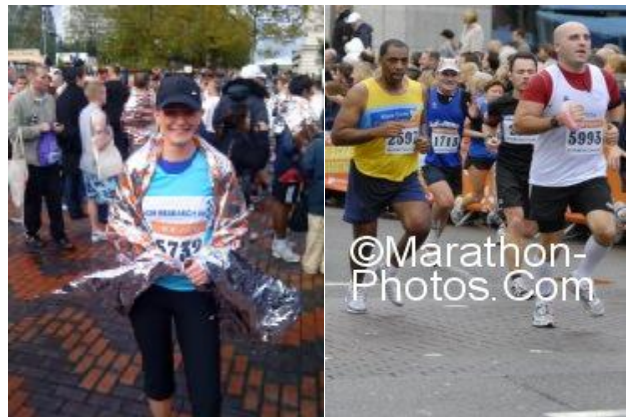
Richard has joined Mark Lewis in the Basingstoke office as an Electrical project engineer. He tells me he "turned" 40 this year, is married to Gill, and has two fantastic boys Callum 8 and Cody 6. He previously formed an electrical company based in Camberley, so had no time for hobbies or interests, now he is working for Mark, he still has no time for hobbies or interests! He tries to go indoor climbing as often as possible and is renovating a sailing dinghy for him and the boys to sail. He has also been renovating and extending his house for the last 10 years (obviously not that good at it so the dinghy's got no chance!). Richard is a keen motorcyclist and can't wait to own another bike – his last pride and joy was swapped for parenthood! His ambitions are to be mortgage free, own a Porsche 911, have hair again, be able to play a guitar and finish his house. Not a chance Richard!!

Lee has joined the company as a Mechanical Project engineer and is currently working with John Batsford on the Goals Soccer Centre projects. He is 33 and married to Anya. They have a 10 month old baby boy and Lee tells me he is still having trouble sleeping and dealing with dirty nappies. You would have thought that at 33 he would have been potty trained by now. He also listed several other interests which my wife has forbidden me to write about. If you want to know more you will need to speak to Lee!!



Lee Manning

## Other News!



Lisa Foster and Anthony Smith recently ran in the **EDF Energy Birmingham Half Marathon**, held on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> October 2008.

Lisa raised £528 for Cancer Research UK and managed a very creditable 3,521<sup>st</sup> place in 2 Hours and 1 minute. Anthony raised £182 for Birmingham Children's Hospital and came in 2,009<sup>th</sup> in 1 hour 49 minutes. It was a fantastic effort by both of them. I particularly like Anthony's surgical stockings!

The picture of Lisa was taken after the race wrapped nicely in tin foil and an action shot of the Honey Monster courtesy of Marathon-Photos.com.