



# SCENE

The Newspaper of the Owen Owen Group ISSUE No.2 Oct. 1970

## HALF TIME SCORE

Commenting on the half-year's trading figures released on 17th September the Chairman, Mr. John Norman, said:

"Figures for the Owen Owen group at the end of the first six months show a marked improvement. The loss of £129,000 incurred in 1969 has been cut back to £7,000. This is a most encouraging start to the year and Owen Owen, T. J. Hughes and Robinson's have all contributed to the improvement.

"Special commendation must, however, go to our Chester store for its outstanding performance and also to Bootle Strand and Burlington, both of which beat their budgets and came nearer to the break-even point at the half-way mark.

"With this clear evidence of progress throughout the group, we can say that the 'patient' is safely out of hospital and embarking on the period of convalescence which will lead back to final good health.

### Long way to go

"How long will this period last? This is difficult to say precisely, because we have still a long way to go in the UK, as will be evident to everybody when we measure the loss of £7,000 in the first half of this year against the profit of no less than £237,000 which was earned during the first six months of 1967. Significantly, 1967 was the last year before the Liverpool 'bus strike, which brought to a head all the trading problems that had been building up for us on Merseyside.

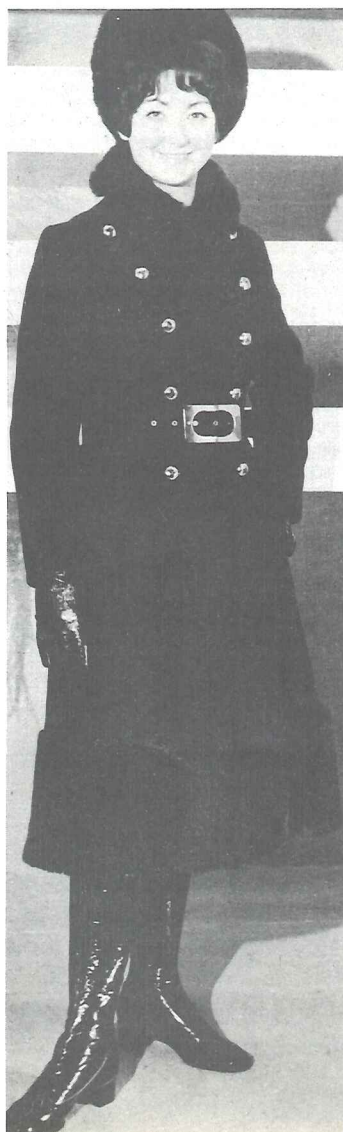
### Right direction

"We are now going in the right direction and so many of the changes and improvements made during the last two difficult years are beginning to work in our favour. The second and important Christmas half of 1970 gives us all an opportunity to help in hastening the recovery process."

### Scene Line-up

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## Fashion focus on the 'Midi'



The "midi" has found its way into many a wardrobe and has not by any means been a teenage or Rare Set exclusive.

The lowering of the hem was viewed with trepidation and great caution in the months of June and July when the news first came from the fashion "halls of fame" and the time for placing orders drew nearer.

Before the Autumn season got under way it was a case of "Mini? Midi? Maxi? or Mixi?" and our fashion buyers found it hard going when it came to the moment of decision.

However, group fashion buying controller Miss Tania Getgood felt the Midi WOULD catch on and claim perhaps 20% of the coat market. The Maxi could, she felt, still hold a place.

John Lewis, our coat buyer, and Val Baker, Rare Set, both predicted a swing to the Midi probably co-ordinated with trousers and certainly with boots.

Women, so afraid of those extra inches anywhere else, have accepted them on hemlines - which bears out our buyers' early thinking that if there is a trend, whether it catches on or not, we must be prepared.

If the demand is created we must be able to supply!

Miss Jackie Brown, Top Gear buyer for T. J. Hughes, also felt that the Midi would "click". Consequently this "long line" of success has run across both groups of stores.

Miss Getgood, Jackie and Val felt that Midi dresses would not enjoy the same degree of success as the coat and all three hope the Mini will survive. In Miss Getgood's words: "The Mini, when it arrived, was the biggest boost to British fashion for years."

Pictured: Jackie Brown displaying the new "midi" look coat.

## FINCHLEY WIN SCENE COMPETITION

In our first issue we announced prizes for the best items for Scene submitted from the stores. Winners are the display team at Finchley with their ingenious photograph shown below. It shows 16-year-old display assistant Miss Leueen Vieira posing alongside a display model in an identical outfit from Rare Set.

Second prize goes to Mr. C. Simmons, of Clayton Square, for his blood donor item on Page 3.

Third prize goes to french polisher Mr. G. Williams, of Bootle Centre, for his story of a customer who claimed a long association with the company. "I've dealt with Owen Owen all my life," she said, "and my mother before me. As a matter of fact she dealt with them before they were amalgamated - in those days it used to be Owen and Owen's - so I don't think any charge should be made for this job."



### Small World

A group of the Chester store management recently went to the local Chinese restaurant for an evening meal and asked the waiter what he recommended from the extensive menu. "I don't know," he said. "I always eat at the Row restaurant at Owen Owen."

# CANNED GIFTS WILL BE WINNERS

Christmas trading plans are already well advanced. One of the most novel ideas is the canning machine which will be seen on our special Gift Boutiques so that customers can have their small gifts sealed in 16oz cans.

You can get anything from a full-length nightie to eight sugar mice in the cans and the customers think it is a great idea.

Sales Promotion Controller David Rennison found out the hard way by operating the canning machine in the Liverpool store during last year's Christmas shopping rush.

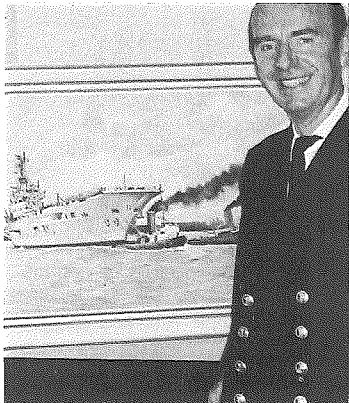
Customers flocked to the machine and the eight sugar mice - together with a letter from the children to the cat - was one of the most unusual demands received.

The promotion was such a success that the decision to run it throughout the group was almost automatic.

Mr. Rennison, along with Advertising Manager Stewart Lowdon, thought of the scheme.



## Ark Royal, ahoy!



Harold said: "When the Ark Royal visited Liverpool recently a friend - a former Master at Arms in the Navy - and I managed to get on board and talk about the painting. Then came the letter asking to buy the painting. The canvas will stay with the ship and any future vessels bearing the name Ark Royal".

Our picture shows Captain Ray Lygo, Commanding Officer of HMS Ark Royal (left), with Mr. Johnson's painting.



When studio manager Harold Johnson (right) took up painting ships as a hobby two years ago - after many years as an artist - he used photographs of the aircraft carrier Ark Royal in order to paint the famous ship.

Some time ago, 49-year-old Mr. Johnson, based at Liverpool head office, received a letter from the Ark Royal's welfare committee, who wanted to buy the painting and add to the ship's valuable collection of trophies collected over the years.

## PAISLEY AND POLKA DOTS FOR AUTUMN

So that the girls don't have it all their own way on the fashion front, Scene editor Ted Astor has his comments on the likely Autumn shirt styles.

"I believe that men are far more fashion-conscious today than they ever were and with body shaping, collar style and pattern designs, the shirt is becoming a fashion garment in its

own right."

Ted predicts that the breast pocket will reappear, collars will retain their long polo shape and fabrics will be lighter. The matching tie will remain popular certainly through the Christmas period but, adds Ted, "most discriminating men still prefer to choose co-ordinating ties. This Autumn polka dots and paisley designs will be the vogue."

Nice to see you... nice to hear from you... The smiles come all the way from our friends and colleagues in Canada. Our picture shows Mr. George Escott, Merchandising Manager of Robinson's, talking about basic stock procedures to a group of the management and staff of the Burlington store.

## Appointed to Group Board

Mr. H. W. Plumb has been appointed to the Owen Owen Group Board. Mr. Plumb holds the position of Trading Director with responsibility for the merchandise performance of all stores in the UK.

A former Royal Navy lieutenant, Mr. Plumb joined Owen Owen in February 1962 as sales manager at the Coventry store. His subsequent appointments included those of general manager at Chester and general manager at Coventry. He was appointed Trading Director in November, 1968.

Aged 47, Mr. Plumb is married and has one daughter aged 17, and lives in Chester.



## PERSONALITY PROFILE

*Mr. Ted Astor*

"Live for the job and the job will live with you - successfully" is one of the mottoes of Ted Astor (pictured below) group buyer of men's shirts and woven and knitted wear.

It's something that Ted has tried always to live up to during his 35-year career with Owen Owen which began as a sales assistant at Clayton Square back in 1935.

When the new Coventry store opened in 1937 Ted was appointed resident buyer, a position he held for 10 years until he became central buyer for the group.

Even though he doesn't see them all, Ted is responsible for every one of the 80,000 shirts sold by the Owen Owen group each year. Because of this he has to put aside personal preferences and tastes in order to judge public trends accurately.

This is a part of his job that really fascinates him - the resolving of merchandise problems that emerge from trend reactions and the development of the company's own brand within the framework of modern trends.



Many of the leading lines for Autumn will be "Owen's Own" brand and 70% of sales are planned for the 30s. to 50s. price range which embraces this.

From 1965 Ted spent three years as merchandise controller and manager before reverting to group central buyer in 1968. Since then men have been buying more shirts - "Three or four a year as opposed to one a year bought by the wife for Christmas," says Ted. He is already thinking of Spring knitwear and flew to Hong Kong in August with this in mind.

# 200 YEARS WITHOUT AN ACCIDENT

Drivers and transport workers of the Owen Owen group assembled at Bootle Centre to see Mr. J. A. H. Norman, chairman, present the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents safe driving awards to 13 men with over 200 years safe driving between them.

Our fleet covers 200,000 miles a year and to tens of thousands of customers our drivers represent Owen Owen and their role is a highly important one.

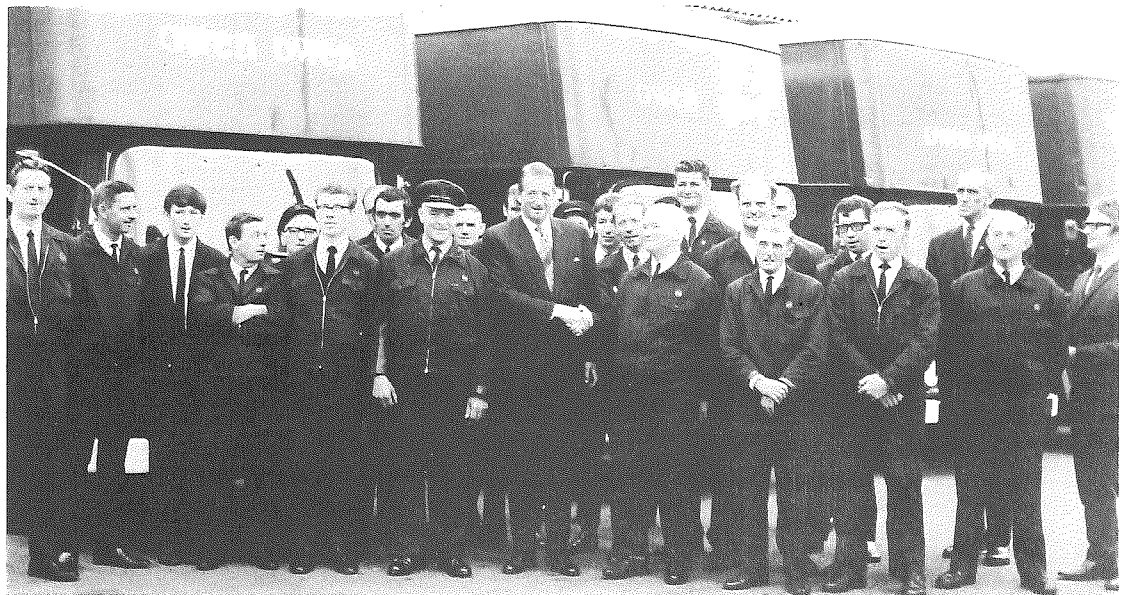
Mr. Norman paid tribute to everyone concerned with the condition and appearance of the vehicles and to the important part the transport section was playing in the growth of the company.

Awards were made to :-

Richard Hyndes, William McGrail, Harold Marsden, George Mills, Joseph Woodward (Diplomas); Brian Bird (5 year medal); Frank Carr (Bar to 5 year medal); Robert Quinn, Charles Graham Montagu, Thomas McDonald (10 year medal); Alfred Mitchell (Bar to 15 year brooch); Ernest Gibson, George Lowe (20 year brooches).

An appreciable cut in the company's motor insurance premiums has been achieved following the reduction in accidents during the past year.

Pictured: Safe-driving award winners "on parade" with Mr. Norman and their vehicles.



## AROUND & ABOUT

**LONDON ROAD** Three hundred T. J. Hughes staff and 30 pensioners were joined on their outing to Blackpool by three Directors, Miss Arthurson, Mr. Barkway and Mr. Reid.

A splendid new staff restaurant has been opened in London Road next to the customers' restaurant.



**FINCHLEY** Staff and their friends danced to the Roger Squire discotheque at the Torrington Arms in July.



**WOLVERHAMPTON** Miss S. E. Baker passed the Diploma of the Leather Institute training course.

A cruise was enjoyed one evening in August on the River Severn.



**SOUTHAMPTON** Miss Laver is enjoying a retirement cruise to South Africa. She returns in November.



**BOOTLE CENTRE** Miss Bateman exhibited at the Liverpool Show some of the soft toys she makes in her spare time.



**COVENTRY** Two employees scooped first and second prize in a holiday competition, "Places in the Sun", organised by the Coventry Evening Telegraph. Supermarket assistant Mrs. E. O'Connor won first prize and chose a trip to New York for herself and her husband. Margaret Bland, a central stockroom assistant, was runner-up and she and her sister enjoyed a free holiday in Majorca.



**CHESTER** Mr. P. Griffiths, of the William Jones food department has been awarded the "Birds Eye" Cup and £20 prize on the results of the recent Grocers' Institute Associateship examination.



## A golden day for Hilda

When Miss Hilda Redmond joined the staff at Owen Owen, Preston, as a 15-year-old junior her first job was counting wartime clothing coupons. Today, 25 years later, Miss Redmond is office manager and a popular figure known to all the staff.

In July she completed 25 years with the company and Mr. John Norman, group chairman and managing director, made the trip from Liverpool to present Miss Redmond with a gold watch.

Miss Redmond was the first woman in the group to hold a post as store receiving and stockroom manager and her career is an example of the way in which the lowliest junior can progress

to executive status.

Though known as "Miss Redmond" in the Preston store, Hilda married in 1951 and outside office hours is Mrs. Hilda Dobson, of Barry-Avenue, Ingol, near Preston.

Making the presentation, Mr. Norman said: "The company is lucky to have, and needs, people with Miss Redmond's length of service. It is good for morale and helps other members of the staff adapt to the changes that have to be made from time to time."

Our picture shows Miss Redmond receiving the gold watch from Mr. Norman watched by Mr. R. P. Lawrie, Preston general manager.

## FUN IN STORE

### BABYWEAR



"Give us the date Madam and we will deliver it for you!"

# Charm school for our staff

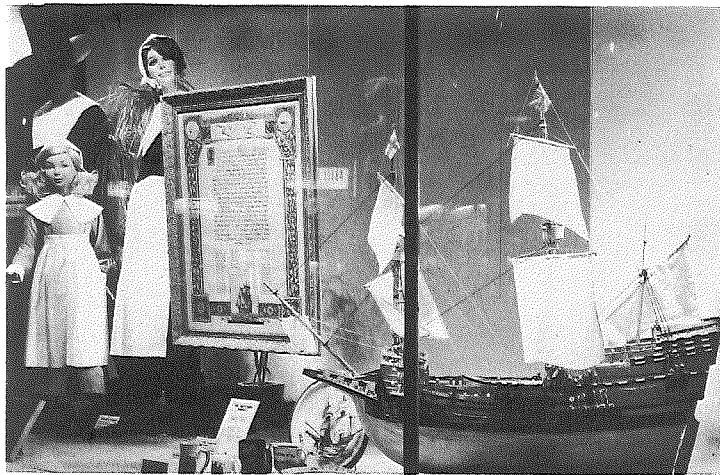
The Charm School is coming your way . . . in the person of the charming Mademoiselle Anita Boyer. The 22-year-old French girl says it is "a new page of my life."

Already Miss Boyer has visited Coventry, Clayton Square, T. J. Hughes, and Bootle. Her brief is three-fold: To help give girls a finishing school grooming; to train them in customer relations and so add to both confidence and ability; and to take them momentarily out of their everyday life and into the worlds of art and design.

Department, dress, make-up, arts and handicrafts . . . these are all part of the Charm School syllabus.

Mademoiselle Boyer has a degree in languages and attended the Monaco finishing school of which Princess Grace was the patron. And, until diverted to Owen Owen, she was a Cambrian Airways hostess.

Pictured: Mademoiselle Anita Boyer with her "class" at Bootle Centre.



## WINNING WINDOW

Our Southampton store was a prize-winner in the window competition organised by Southampton Chamber of Commerce as part of the 350th anniversary celebrations of the sailing of the Mayflower and Pilgrim Fathers from Southampton - not Plymouth as popularly supposed.

The competition was open to all shops

and stores in the port. The costumes and model in the Owen Owen winning window were all made by pupils of the local Glen Eyre School. The Mayflower Compact (the large framed message in the centre of the display) was handwritten and illuminated by Mr. Kenneth E. Jessup, a local artist.

## Looking in on the managers

Each month the store general managers visit Head Office in Liverpool for a one-and-a-half day meeting that lays the plans for successful trading in the months ahead.

Mr. H. W. Plumb, trading director, reviews the trading figures to be achieved and buying controllers and central buyers attend the meeting to give the general managers details of the new merchandise that will be coming into the stores and to brief them on the latest trends.

At the July meeting, for example, a range of Finnish pine kitchen

furniture, do-it-yourself tiles selling at a big discount, and a new range of colour co-ordinated towels were just a few of the lines discussed.

From the fashion scene came a prediction of higher prices and lower hems by Miss Getgood, buying controller of fashions. The "midi" will reach two inches below the knee and black, brown, purple and burgundy will be the predominant fashion colours. Trouser suits with tunic tops will be popular for Autumn.

The picture catches the general managers in a lighter moment.

## THE WAY TO THE TOP



The way to the top is open to all in the Owen Owen group. It is policy to promote from within, and to win a Distinction in the Proficiency Test means automatic selection for a management course.

The test allows people to see for themselves whether they wish for promotion, and are capable of it. It is ideally suited to anyone who feels: "I'm as good as —, but I don't get noticed."

The test is open to all over 18. It comprises four two-hour papers on the basic retailing matters of salesmanship, display, stock presentation and stock control.

A 60% pass wins an award of £4. An 80% pass wins a Distinction and, as group training controller Miss O. Moulding puts it, "a golden opportunity to get a foot on the management ladder."

So let's have more entrants to join this year's Distinction winners, over half of whom have gained promotion since taking the Proficiency Test: Mr. B. Bolton and Mr. P. S. Finch from Clayton Square, Mr. D. S. Cookson from Southampton, Mr. R. Hayes, Mr. G. J. Lancefield and Mr. J. W. Payne from Preston, Mr. L. Laverick and Mr. P. J. Madeley from Chester, Miss E. A. Hurton from Coventry, Miss S. E. Baker from Wolverhampton and Mr. J. J. Farrell and Mr. J. Robertson from London Road.

Pictured: Mr. G. A. Spencer, chairman of the Distributive Industry Training Board, talking to two group management trainees in the Central Training Department, Stafford House. The trainees are Miss B. Rogers and Miss F. A. Broughton.

