



THE NEWSPAPER OF THE OWEN OWEN GROUP

Scene

No. 9 . SPRING 1973

IT'S BEEN A REMARKABLE YEAR!

In his statement to shareholders the company chairman, Mr. John Norman, reported: "The year that ended on January 27 was a remarkably good one for the company, producing a profit before tax of £1,409,000 compared with £632,000 in the preceding twelve months."

Mr. Norman said that the improved levels of profitability that were achieved last year were an encouraging outcome of the process of reconstruction that had been progressively taking place throughout the business.

"The new shape of the business is beginning to come through with confident management in charge of the day-to-day operations," he said. "Retailing is as much a business about people as of merchandising and I am particu-

larly glad of this opportunity to thank all management and staff for their continuing efforts on the company's behalf.

"Sales in the first two months of this year have started strongly. We shall continue to place strong emphasis on volume growth as the key to this year's result."

A more detailed review of last year and of the prospects ahead is given on page two.

Chairman Reports Progress and Rise in Profits



Sales and profit contributions from each of the three main businesses:

	£'000	Sales % of total	Profit before tax £'000	% of total
UK retail	22,933	70	1,097	78
Canadian retail	9,048	27	229	16
UK contracts	985	3	83	6
Group	32,966	100	1,409	100

Don't put it down—put it away!

Southampton's slogan for 1973 has attracted a number of variations, such as "Don't put it down—throw it at the house manager!"

The general manager, Mr. Lawrie, recently made the best variation on his own theme when, on buying a pint for one of his colleagues, he said, "Don't put it down—put it away, and I'll buy you another!"

FOUR FIRE-FIGHTERS WERE GM'S

Among those who helped to fight a recent fire in the Chester Bridge Street store were the general manager and three of his predecessors! On the spot were not only Mr. Rossotham, the present general manager, but also Mr. Plumb and Mr. Barkway—both previously G.M.'s of the store—and Mr. Redding who was G.M. in 1968-69 and who has since left the company.

Mr. Redding was shopping in the store when the call went out, seized a fire extinguisher and joined in the fight against the blaze!

DAVID IN TOP TEN

Clayton Square chef David Hunt (20) has just gained his City and Guilds Advanced Catering Certificate, after two years' hard study at Birkenhead Technical College. Only about 10 people a year pass the examination, and David is one of the youngest to do so.

David is engaged to Miss Louise Dunlop, whom he met in the Rowen Grill where he works and the couple plan to get married this summer.



They keep London Road tidy—read about them and the store that is moving ahead in leaps and bounds on page 4

Beat this says store

Chester is challenging the other stores to beat their record for having the best customer in the group. Their challenger is 88-year-old Mrs. Alice Brown, who has been shopping at William Jones, the store's food section, for 63 years!

Mrs. Brown began shopping at William Jones in her early 20s, when she used to come for things for her mother. In those distant days, customers used to sit down to be served. She remembers the days when 6s bought the week's groceries and butter was 6d a pound, tea 2d for 2 oz. and sugar 2d per pound, and recalls having goods delivered by horse and cart.

Well, how about that? Can any of the other stores beat Mrs. Brown's record?



1 UK Stores

review by Mr. T. O. McGrath, managing director, Owen Owen (Stores) Limited.

The improved performance in sales and profit within the U.K. stores can be attributed to a number of different factors. Firstly, the Government's economic measures coupled with the easier availability of credit led to an enormous spending boom. Secondly, we were in a better position than ever before to seize the opportunities offered to us and exploit this boom. This led to all stores achieving, and in most cases exceeding, their profit targets. Erdington was an exception but trading was badly hampered for many months by the work involved in installing escalators.

The results from our two Merseyside stores produced encouraging results on which we shall build this year.

We not only achieved all of our financial objectives for last year but also our objectives in re-organising and introducing a new way of working that will in the future enable us to work together effectively towards the achievement of the company's short and long term aims.

It is important for us all to realise that the company has an ability to meet the public's needs in a profitable manner. We shall continue to improve our stores by decorating and re-fixturing to ensure that we increase the attractiveness of shopping at Owen Owen as a part of an overall programme to build the company profits on the firm foundations we laid during last year.

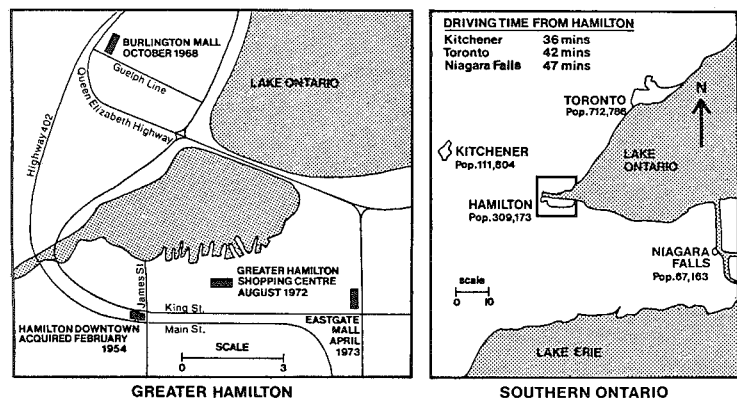
2 Canada

review by Mr. F. W. Dakin, President and Chief Executive Officer, The G. W. Robinson Company Limited.

Robinson's achieved record sales and record profits last year, the sales of \$21,345,000 (£9,048,000) representing an increase of 44% on the previous year. Part of the increase was of course accounted for by the sales of the Centre store which was transferred to Robinson's by Hudson's Bay Company in August, 1972, but real progress was made at Burlington and the original downtown Hamilton store performed exceptionally well in the face of continuing building dislocation in the neighbouring area.

A fourth Robinson's store was opened in the new Eastgate shopping centre in Hamilton in April, 1973, and a fifth store is already being planned for Kitchener in two years time.

The location of the Canadian stores is shown below:



3 Plumb Contracts

review by Mr. T. Doyle, managing director

The company had a tremendously successful year of expansion and development and is now firmly established as one of the foremost specialist organisations of its type in the U.K. Demands for our services from both existing and new clients created a volume of sales and output far in excess of previous levels and were met—thanks to prolonged prodigious efforts on the part of all members of the company.

The bulk of the year's work was, of course, carried out in this country but one particularly challenging variation was a substantial contract for a departmental store in Bahrein—our first major export venture. Despite very tight deadlines, the whole project was completed successfully.

The year ended with the company being retained to carry out its biggest ever contract at a value of some £200,000—undoubtedly a good augury for the future success and growth of Plumb Contracts of Coventry.

PENSION FUND BENEFITS

In the last issue of "Scene" we gave some details about the working of the pension fund—how the pension contributions are invested in many different companies and how problems of inflation are tackled.

Since then, the Actuary's report on the fund on April 5, 1972, has been received. This report is concerned to check on the solvency of the fund by estimating the amount the company will have to pay out in pensions and the amount of assets and income it will have to meet these payments. To do this, the Actuary makes certain assumptions—on the income side about the amount of money the fund will earn on its investments and the amount of future contributions from members and from the company, and on the expenditure side about the number and the size of the pensions and other benefits that it will have to pay.

The result of the Actuary's valuation was to show that the fund could count on assets of £4,700,000 and could expect to have to meet liabilities of £4,410,000. The value of the assets had risen faster than expected in the previous valuation due to three factors:

- 1 Because there had been a profit on the sales of investments (profits made on investments are only brought into the valuation when the investments are sold and the profit is actually received in cash).
- 2 Because the fund had retained company contributions in respect of members who had left and withdrawn their own contributions. The company's contributions always stay in the fund for the benefit of the continuing members and can never be given back to the company.
- 3 Because income from investments had been higher than expected when the last valuation estimates were made.

The fund's liabilities had also increased enormously since the previous valuation in 1967: in particular, as a result of increases in wages and salaries due to inflation. The estimated capital value of pensions in respect of those who have already retired amounts to £935,000 and the estimated capital value of the pensions and other benefits to be paid to those of us who are still working is £3,475,000.

The result of the valuation was, therefore, a surplus of estimated assets over estimated liabilities of £290,000 and so it was possible for the Trustees to consider making improvements in the existing pension fund benefits. These improvements have now been introduced. Consideration was given first to the needs of existing pensioners whose pensions were fixed when they retired and have suffered most from the high rate of inflation in recent years. Increases in their pensions were made with effect from December last. Next, attention has been concentrated on improving widows' pensions and pensions for those who have to retire early because of ill health. Finally, new benefits have been introduced for bona fide dependants of unmarried members to bring them in line with the benefits given to the dependants of married men.

The estimated total cost of these benefit improvements far exceeds the surplus of £290,000 and the company has undertaken to pay increased contributions to the pension fund of about £45,000 each year. Members contributions are continuing unchanged.

YOU CAN BANK ON OWEN OWEN

Four stores now have bank facilities for shoppers

The former manager of a Liverpool city centre bank is spending his retirement in Owen Owen at Clayton Square—not shopping but helping and advising customers at the store's new Saturday Bank, run by London and County Investments.

The bank is one of three recently opened by London and County in Owen Owen stores. The others are at Southampton and Coventry. At Wolverhampton the store bank is operated by Western Credit Holdings.

Liverpool bank manager Mr. Stephen Moran with over 40 years' experience in banking came out of retirement to run the Clayton Square branch, which was opened by Liberal leader Jeremy Thorpe last October. The Saturday Bank, as it is called, is open until half an hour before the stores close on weekdays and until 5.30 p.m. on Saturdays, so shoppers who run short of money at weekends no longer have to kick their heels until Monday.

Business is growing daily at the bank, where Mr. Moran is helped by assistant manager Mr. Eric Derham, a retired chief cashier.

Wolverhampton's bank opened in grand style with a champagne buffet, where these lovely ladies from the store acted as hostesses.



Coventry bank manager Mr. Dunling with a customer.



A view of the bank at Clayton Square.



FALL GAVE HIM TIME TO THINK

The turning point in buying director Mr. Vincent Baylis's career was a painful experience. It happened when he was practising the high jump for the next event in the calendar of the Wallasey Athletics Club.

Mr. Baylis smiles now when he recalls how he landed on his head after clearing an easy 4 ft. 6 ins. But it was no laughing matter at the time. For he broke his neck and was taken to hospital paralysed from the waist up.

"I was recovering for nine months", he remembers "and during that time I took stock of my position and decided what I was going to do."

He was working for a bank and he decided to go into retailing. In February 1960, when his convalescence ended, he joined Littlewoods stores.



He had earlier become engaged to Birkenhead store catering manager Miss Judith Murphy, who introduced him to the Owen Owen organisation. He joined T. J. Hughes six months later as a management trainee.

He was soon transferred to Doncaster as ground floor sales manager and two years later became buyer of girl's schoolwear,

children's underwear and children's separates at the London buying office. Fifteen months later he was appointed central buyer of handkerchiefs, scarves, jewellery and umbrellas.

In 1966 he was appointed assistant general manager at Clayton Square and after six months became merchandise manager at Chester. While he was there he won the Chairman's Prize for merchandise managers two years running.

He spent 14 months as general manager at Preston, then became G.M. at Clayton Square. In August 1970 he was appointed senior buying controller at Stafford House, followed by buying director in February 1972.

His main task is working out buying policy for the chain of Owen Owen stores. "We have been aiming to raise the general level of our buying by paying more attention to planning and co-ordination of merchandise ranges throughout all the buying controls and through this to gradually increase the value and appeal of the merchandise we sell. Value for money will always be in the forefront of our buying, but quality, style, colour and design will also play a vital part.

"The world is our market in terms of buying and customers expect to see an ever-changing range of merchandise".

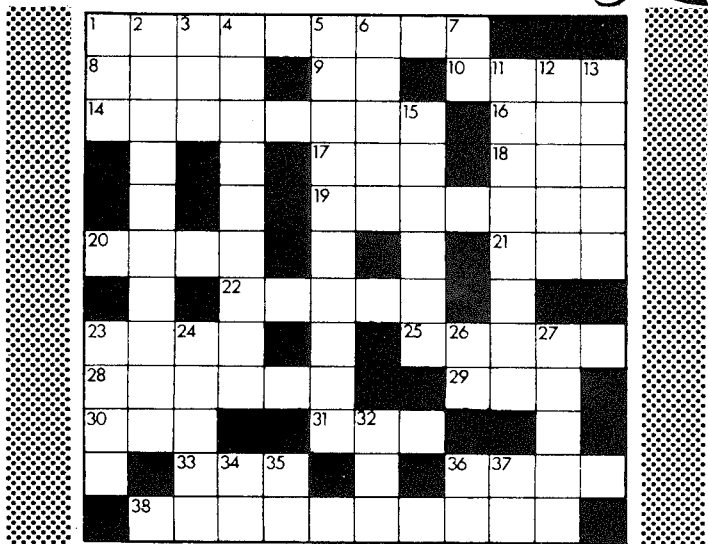
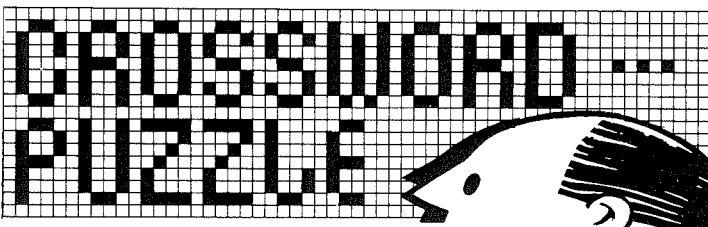
Mr. Baylis (37) and his wife, Judith, have four children—two boys and two girls—aged 7-11. The eldest son Mark, has just won a place at his father's old school—St. Anselm's College, Birkenhead. Mr. Baylis likes to swim and play squash and enjoys home decorating.

Parents give shield to perpetuate son's memory

The parents of Southampton DIY assistant Raymond Hartley, who was well-liked and showing great promise when he died tragically at the age of 19, have presented the store with a handsome shield which will be presented at the end of each trading year to the most promising junior.



This year it has been won by Stephen Ashley, of the radio and record department, seen here receiving the award and £5 from general manager Mr. R. P. Lawrie.



Across

1. With 2 down and 31 across. Choosy, using in the middle with a charge at the end. The whole has just been abolished (3 words 9, 10 and 3)
8. Time will give out (4)
9. Where Polly's kettle went (2)
10. Ladies, for example removed, leaving us menfolk alone? (4)
14. Pat, with it, and due, undoubtedly the right approach (anag. 8)
16. Physical training in the middle east, dear? (3)
17. Leading man in farce (3)
18. Four or five, or even wood perhaps? (3)
19. Its obvious that beige, stone, and off white are? (7)
20. Not the guy who acquires your stock, a shed? (4)
21. Old agreement (3)
22. Ancient word meaning hillock or mound of earth (5)
23. — we forget (4)
25. Springfield perhaps, grubby too (5)
28. Sea bird in first, and captivate (6)
29. Could be sweet or canned (3)
30. Fit for a pig (3)
31. See 1 across (3)
33. Whiskered burglar? (3)

Down

1. Shanty, shell or scape, maybe? (3)
2. See 1 across.
3. The touch paper usually gets this? (3)
4. Conventional rules of behaviour, in polite society (9)
5. Ant run to me for a contest (anag 10)
6. Coloured rubber? (5)
7. Prefix, but not for British Syd? (2)
11. Estimate the worth of (8)
12. A hold up, not a stick up? (5)
13. See 38 across
15. Stretch (6)
23. Heel over (4)
24. Small copper coin used in Northumbria during seventh to ninth centuries (5)
26. It's less effort getting here in the lift? (2)
27. Goad a relative after tea? (5)
32. Mimic (3)
34. Prefix (2)
35. Mini thanks (2)
36. The puzzle solver? (2)
37. Not out! (2)

Solutions on p. 6.



"You know that financial objective bridge we were going to cross when we came to it? Well, it just collapsed"

New-look windows



Clayton Square's display windows have been given a new look. Shiny silver mannequins made out of fibreglass are set against mirrored perspex screens decorated with the Owen Owen name.

The walls have been covered with white PVC and the floors with white, marble-effect tiles. Spotlights highlight the merchandise and promotional points in the windows.

The windows were designed by London display consultant Tom Ellery and completed by Clayton Square's display team under display manager Mr. Joe Murdoch, who said that the windows had received many favourable comments.

If the experiment is successful, it may be repeated at other stores.

On the air

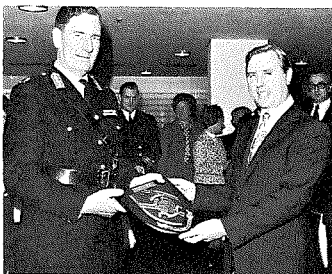
When sales assistant Martin Green leaves the lighting department at Coventry he goes "on the air." For Martin (22) is a broadcaster for the local hospitals.

He spends three evenings a week in a studio providing programmes for hospital patients. The service covers seven local hospitals and Martin commutes at football matches and presents a weekly film programme.

A request service has been set up for Owen Owen staff to have records played for friends or relatives who are convalescing. Perhaps Martin will be forsaking the "bright lights" at Coventry for the bright lights of television before very long.



Presentation by Royal Marines



Mr. J. Mariner, general manager, Coventry, is presented with the Royal Marines crest by Major J. I. H. Owen, O.B.E., at a reception in our "Rowan Tree" Restaurant.

LONDON ROAD ADVANCES IN LEA

After three years of poor profits and drastic contraction, when its selling area was cut by half to make offices and stockrooms, T. J. Hughes, London Road, has emerged as the third most profitable store in the group.

Now its troubled past is forgotten as it moves forward in leaps and bounds. The shoppers—who deserted the area when the bulldozers moved in—are coming back in droves to take advantage of the store's discount bargains.

"We are trading without any inhibitions," said director and general manager Mr. A. T. Dyson. "We are going for merchandise we can sell at prices nobody else can touch and promoting it with no holds barred".

Mr. Dyson's office on the second floor is decorated with wall charts plotting selling strategy and his door is rarely closed. He reminds you of a general leading his troops into battle—a battle for shoppers.

He is helped by the store's two buying controllers, Mr. Bob Reid and Mr. Dave Melling, merchandise manager Mr. Ian Martindale and a team of buyers—who also buy for the branches at Bootle and Birkenhead—because "basic" merchandise is a small part of T. J. Hughes stock. Unlike Owen Owen stores, the emphasis is on promotional merchandise—special offer items at bargain prices.

Supplements Sell

The store was the first in the group to run an advertising supplement in the local paper and the results were outstanding. Since the first eight-page supplement came out last October, two others have been produced, both highly successful. "We got the idea from Robinson's in Canada, who have run some very successful supplements of up to 16 pages," said sales promotion manager Mr. Mike Conroy.

The supplements promote the store's bargains in promotional merchandise like fashion, menswear,

Trainee Alice



Seventeen-year-old Alice Riley would like to be a fashion buyer—at present she is a junior trainee in Merchandise Office dealing with basic stock re-ordering and inter-store transfers.

Alice, who enjoys dancing and drawing in her spare time, joined the company eight months ago from school in Birkenhead.

kitchen furniture, hardware and shoes. After the last supplement in March, sales on the shoe department on the ground floor broke all previous records, with nearly 8,000 customers in three days.

Large numbers of customers for children's shoes pay for their purchases with store money, said section head Miss Edith Haven. The paper money is popular with women customers and comes in four denominations—£1, 50p, 25p, and 10p. It bears the company name and even has a watermark through it. Its use has grown in the three years since it was introduced and now many of our customers change their Provident and other credit shopping cheques for store currency at the change desk in the basement before beginning their shopping. It's simple to use and customers don't have to settle with their credit cheque company right away.

Choir Leader

John Lindsay is in charge of the change desk and is helped by two full time and two part time staff. John spends his spare time at the local Salvation Army citadel, where he is the leader of the young people's choir, consisting of boys and girls aged 8-16.

Bachelor chef John Kelly is also concerned with young people's activities—but he trains them to use their fists not their voices. He helps to run a local youth club and teaches the boys to box.

Selling Cigarettes



Being in charge of the store's cigarette department on the ground floor is never a drag, explained Eileen Donovan—35 years at T. J. Hughes. The department, which stocks all the main brands, together with cigars, matches and lighter fuel, is always busy, selling about 24,000 cigarettes a day!

Eileen does church work in the evenings and at weekends. She goes out in all weathers to raise money for St. Mary's Church, Liverpool—and enjoys every minute of it. She started visiting homes 37 years ago and in all that time she reckons to have raised about £4,000 for the Church.



Above:

Chef John Kelly (right) and kitchen staff (from left) Mrs. G. Keeling, Mrs. H. Edgar, Mr. J. Rafferty, Mrs. E. Johnson and Mrs. E. Roulston.

The central kitchen on the ground floor serves the adjacent staff restaurant, which seats 220, the Stafford Room self service restaurant (200 seats) and the basement snack bar. It also supplies a small buffet unit at the St. Anne Street warehouse and meals for the evening staff at Bootle Centre.

The staff restaurant is used by 350 people from the store and from the Owen Owen offices on the first floor every day. And the customer res-

taurant serves 300 meals a day during the week—a total of 650 meals a day.

The meals are prepared by a team of six, including Mr. Kelly, who has worked in the kitchen for three years.

Busy Bakery

The cooking operation is matched by the store's bakery on the top floor, which provides the catering units at London Road, Clayton Square, Bootle, Birkenhead and Chester with most of its weekly

output of 3,600 sausage rolls, 1,560 scones, 2,880 cream cakes and other mouth-watering items.

The bakery has four full time staff—two of whom have served over 20 years—and two part time under supervisor Mr. John Gilmore and finishing room forewoman Mrs. Alicia Jessop. Married for 19 years, Mr. Gilmore says his wife lets him make the pastries at home, because after a working life in the baking trade, he has definite ideas about what he likes!

The bakery also supplies the discount Gee Bee supermarket on the ground floor, which was opened last month. The Gee Bee supermarket is a shop within the store and has taken the place of the store's own supermarket, whose staff have been taken on by the new management.

Below:

Task force member Dorothy Jamieson helps menswear first hand Geoff Norton on the shirt department.



APS AND BOUNDS!



Tidy job

The rambling London Road building complex, including five floors and 60,000 square feet of selling space, is cleaned daily by a team of 17 cleaners, one of whom is 70 years old.

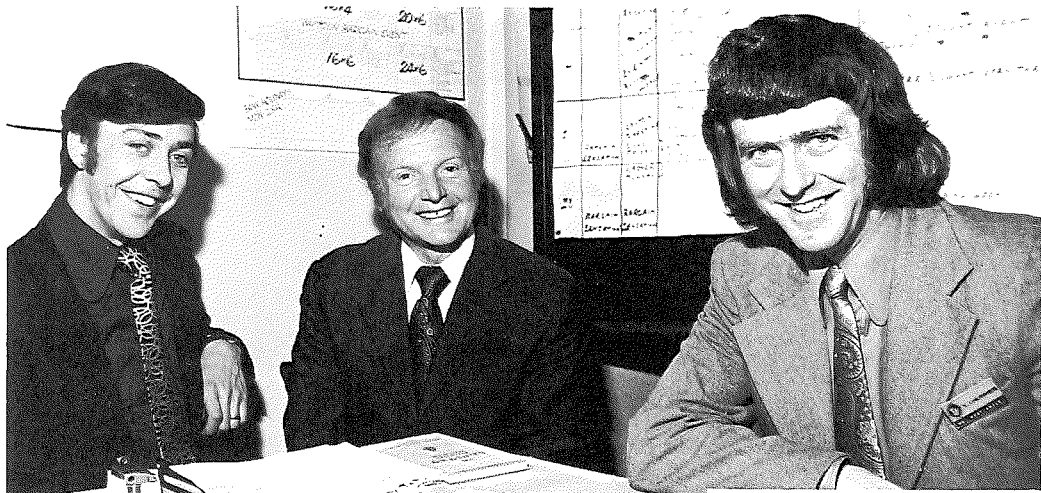
But there's nothing old-fashioned about the cleaning operation, which uses modern equipment, like a brand new pollution-free incinerator capable of disposing of one ton of refuse a day!

streamlined—and during a recent promotion, the department, together with those at Bootle and Birkenhead, sold over 3,000 shirts in three days!

Section head Geoff Norton says that people buy up to six shirts at a time and come back for more. Fashion shirts, especially in polyester/cotton, are very popular at prices from 99p.

The Rescuers

When the store gets very busy the special Task Force swings into action. Composed of four experienced women



Planning sales strategy are (from left) buying controllers Dave Melling and Bob Reid, and merchandise manager Ian Martindale.

part timers, the force is a bit like the 7th Cavalry—when the customers start attacking, they storm to the rescue of beleaguered full time staff! They can sell everything from carpets to cutlery and are occasionally asked to help out in the cash office, too. Task force member Mrs. Dorothy Jamieson, who has been with the store for 13 years, says the force was formed two years ago to help out during busy periods and stand in for staff off sick or on holidays. There is well over 50 years store experience between Mrs. Jamieson and her team-mates Gladys Lomas, Lillian Fallon and Sandra Bagnall.

Active Staff

There are 246 full time and 276 part time staff at London Road, so you'd expect the store's social committee to have their hands full. Well, they do!

They meet regularly to discuss ideas for social activities, and in the last 18 months they have succeeded in holding something new every month. There has been excellent support from the staff for dances, motor car treasure hunts, hot pot suppers, outings and handicraft exhibitions—and club nights which have attracted up to 350 staff and their guests. The store has just held a "mediaeval" banquet and is planning its annual outing, which last year drew 600 people.

As store trainer and social committee chairman Mrs. Joan Holstead said modestly, "I think we have found the formula for successful social activities".

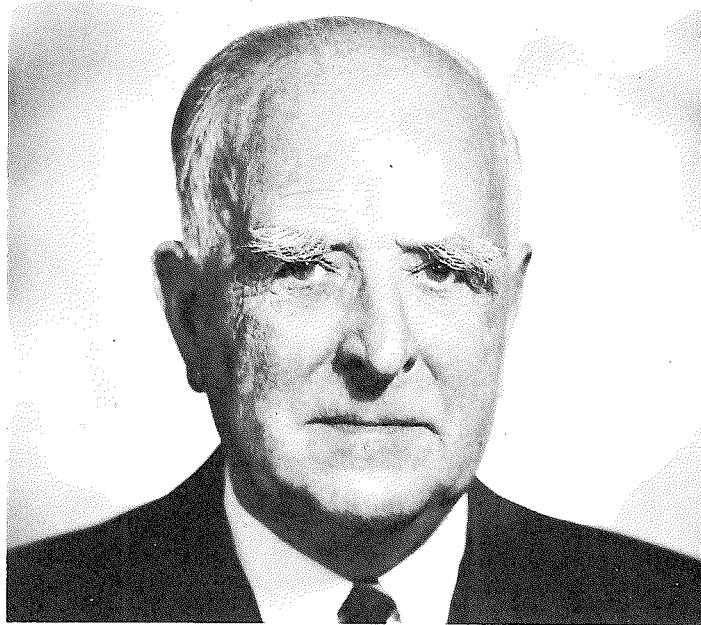
Above:

The store's social committee discusses future activities. They are (from left) Miss E. Skitt, Miss E. Haine, Miss B. Baldwin, Mrs. Joan Holstead (chairman), Mr. E. Rothwell, Miss M. Alden and Mr. G. Norton.

As well as releasing some valuable floor space previously occupied by the supermarket stockrooms, the Gee Bee bulk-buying system enables big savings to be passed on to the customers—savings the old department could not match.

Keen prices are also helping to sell shirts at a fantastic rate. Business has boomed since the shirt department was

A Tribute to Mr. Duncan Norman



Mr. Duncan Norman, chairman and managing director of the company for 40 years until his retirement in 1964, died on November 8 and the following tribute forms part of the address given by Sir James Mountford at the memorial service held at Liverpool Cathedral on December 1.

"What we think of today, however, is not the outstandingly successful man of business or the holder of high offices. It is the man himself on whom our thoughts are fixed. In him there were combined in a quite unique way, a rock-like firmness of purpose, a personal modesty which sometimes amounted to diffidence, an old-world courtesy of manner and a deep and sympathetic understanding of people.

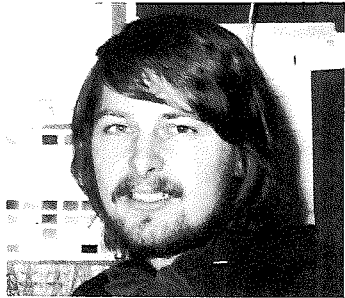
"In a supreme way he had the attributes of leadership: a clear mind which analysed a situation and saw the direction in which events should move, and a determination to insist that his policies should be implemented. He was what is sometimes called a *strong* man. At the same time he had the no less important ability to enlist the loyalty of people on whom he could rely and a flair for inspiring a feeling in all his associates, whatever rank they held in the organisation, that they were members of a team engaged in a worth-while enterprise. He was himself a perfectionist in all things and could never be satisfied with the second-rate. For himself he set the highest standards of efficiency, hard work, devotion and, above all, of probity. It was to integrity of character that he was most sensitive. He could not endure weak excuses or what he called *sloppy thinking*.

Special Quality

"There was a special quality about his leadership which we can never overlook. However difficult affairs might be, however frustrated he might feel, he never forgot that he was dealing with people who had their own idiosyncracies, their own problems, hopes and fears. His relations with all his associates were always on this personal plane, not because he had learned a psychological gimmick in a School of Business Studies, but because that was the sort of man he was. Arriving early in the morning he would meet the cleaners as they were leaving the store, doff his hat, and say *good morning ladies*: and he meant it. His memory for people, all in their own setting, was phenomenal: he never seemed to forget the background of individual members of staff, where they lived, how many children they had and how they were named. None of this was a coolly calculated exercise in public relations: he genuinely liked people as individuals and instinctively took an interest in their doings. He would go to any lengths and put himself to endless trouble to help. It is small wonder that the volume presented to him on his retirement contained more than 3,200 signatures of people who had worked with him, known him and loved him."

Copies of the full Address are available on request from Secretary's Office in Stafford House.

PRIDE OF PLUMBS



Twenty-four-year-old Malcolm Wilson is the pride of Plumbs. A former student at the Teeside College of Art, he joined the design group last August and is working on shopfittings and public houses, as well as general designs. He has won several awards for his work including two from the Institute of British Designers.

Relieved!

Ju Jitsu expert Mr. Roger Wilday had to lend a hand when assistant Miss Ida Gossage bravely arrested a violent youth at London Road. We hear the youth was quite relieved when the police arrived and clapped a pair of handcuffs on him!

A BIG ATTRACTION

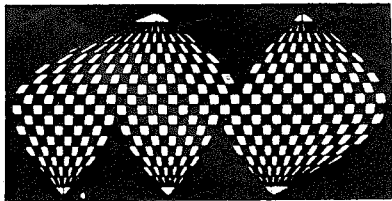
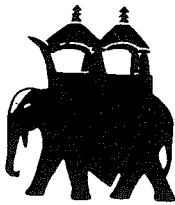


Television personality Miss Janet Webb is presented with a bouquet of flowers by Miss Rae Hooker from the sales promotion office at Coventry, after opening the store's New Clifton Slimline shop. In the background is general manager Mr. R. Wheeler.

Princess



Sixteen-year-old Julie Brown from the invoice office at Audley House played a princess in her church youth club's special performance of Puss in Boots to raise money for church organisations. The show was such a success that they were asked to give two more performances in February.



Owen Owen buyers are likely to be making more trips abroad in the next few years, as more continental merchandise finds its way into the shops and new markets are opened up.

At present about two per cent of Owen Owen merchandise is bought directly from abroad, while a greater amount is obtained from British importers. All six buying controllers have made trips abroad this year and 24 buyers have been overseas in the past six months.

They order such things as knitwear and men's shirts from Hong Kong, children's wear from Taiwan, stainless steel from Denmark, clocks and toys from Germany and garden furniture from Spain.

Trade Fairs

Buying director Mr. Vincent Baylis, who has personally inspected most of these markets, discusses the countries to be visited and arranges trips to trade fairs—the shop windows for foreign merchandise. Owen Owen buyers visit fashion shows in Paris and Scandinavia and trade

fairs in Frankfurt, Cologne and Milan.

Our buying agents abroad arrange for the goods to be shipped to Britain where the group's shipping agents, Thomas Meadows, collect them for distribution to the stores.

Continental Pressure

Spain and Taiwan are new markets being visited for the first time. Says Mr. Baylis: "As the duty between Britain and the Common Market countries is gradually reduced over the next four years, continental merchandise will become ever more competitive."

"We are already aware of tremendous pressure building up from continental suppliers to sell goods in the U.K. We will probably see new markets opening up in the future in unlikely places like Korea and Vietnam."



Buyer "Libby" Pluck has just returned from Paris.

BUYERS MAKING MORE TRIPS ABROAD

Bubble bubble



No, Mrs. Sybil Beagles isn't making a home-made cure for the ague from bats' wings and frogs toes. Mrs. Beagles, from Doncaster's menswear department, makes wine from peaches, parsnip, sultanas, beetroots and other ingredients. It was her husband who took an interest in winemaking, but the bug bit Mrs. Beagles and away she went with delicious results springing from her patience.

Michael's Quiet Knights

Southampton's fish cook, Mr. Michael O'Gorman, likes making plastic models from kits and takes great care to get them looking authentic. The two knights in the picture took him six-to-eight hours each to paint and assemble.

Mr. O'Gorman, known to his friends as Mickey, has just celebrated his 73rd birthday, believe it or not. Before he settled at Owen Owen, he spent 15 years at sea, travelling all over the world, and used to sell many of his plastic models to American passengers.

Cook Michael O'Gorman with two of his models.



What do the customers think of us?

What do the customers think of Owen Owen? Some of them tell us if they are pleased or dissatisfied, but our sales figures are probably the best guide to whether or not we are trading successfully. Common sense and good judgement help us put those figures up. And so does Mrs. Peggy Morrissey.

A director of Owen Owen (Stores) Ltd., Mrs. Morrissey is our roving critic, giving, as she puts it, "the customers' view from a professional angle." This means she looks at merchandise, presentation and salesmanship in the major stores from a shopper's standpoint and, by her observations and suggestions, highlights the critical areas where improvements can lead to increased sales.

"There have been great improvements in the last two years," she said, "and our sales figures are already reflecting them. I consider our values are second to none and on the whole our sales staff are as good as, if not better, than anywhere else."

A chain of department stores provides interesting comparisons. Merchandise that sells well in one store may not go in another. But merchandise does not sell itself—a number of factors help to promote it and perhaps the most important is the attitude of the seller.

One of the problems Mrs. Morrissey finds is that some staff are reluctant to offer customers medium and higher priced items. They are afraid of the price. "What they do not realise is that attitudes have changed and customers are willing to pay more for something they want. It is essential that we get ourselves adjusted to current values and current attitudes. More and more customers are interested in better quality and better design."

Communications between selling staff and buyers have also come under scrutiny from Mrs. Morrissey. "There must be a close understanding between buyers and sales staff for the benefit of the customer. It's no use one side blaming the other if something goes wrong, or leaving a problem unattended. Neither side can function without the other, so it follows that if they work in harmony and develop a closer understanding of each other's functions—as set out in the recently produced Communica-

tions Manual—they will achieve greater success."

Mrs. Morrissey says she likes to see staff smiling and treating customers courteously. But she has nightmares about:

- staff who count stock or work on bits of paper with their backs to customers;
- poor co-ordination between associated departments;
- staff who do not refer to someone else when they cannot answer customer's questions on their merchandise.

Fortunately, she does not have so many nightmares nowadays. "Most of the staff are very alert and merchandise has improved almost across the board," she says.



It's Peggy Morrissey's job to give their point of view

Chester tops



Seven of the 14 assistants from 12 stores who gained distinctions in this year's proficiency examinations came from Chester. They were: Mrs. J. A. Baghurst, Mrs. C. Jones, Miss A. Bithell, Miss C. M. Homer, Mr. G. D. Brown, Mr. H. Griffiths and Mr. G. E. Terry.

Passes were also gained by Chester's Miss V. Hitchen, Miss D. Kenward, Miss C. A. Rawlinson, Mr. K. Fuller and Mr. R. Clarke, seen here receiving his award from Mr. J. H. Barkway, Regional Director of Northern Stores.

Mr. Barkway congratulated all the entrants and said it was the ninth year of the examinations.

Miss Bithell, Miss Homer and Mr. Terry, together with Miss Lewis were all successful also in their N.R.D.C. examinations, Mr. Terry being awarded the Liverpool Stores Committee "Student of the Year" trophy.

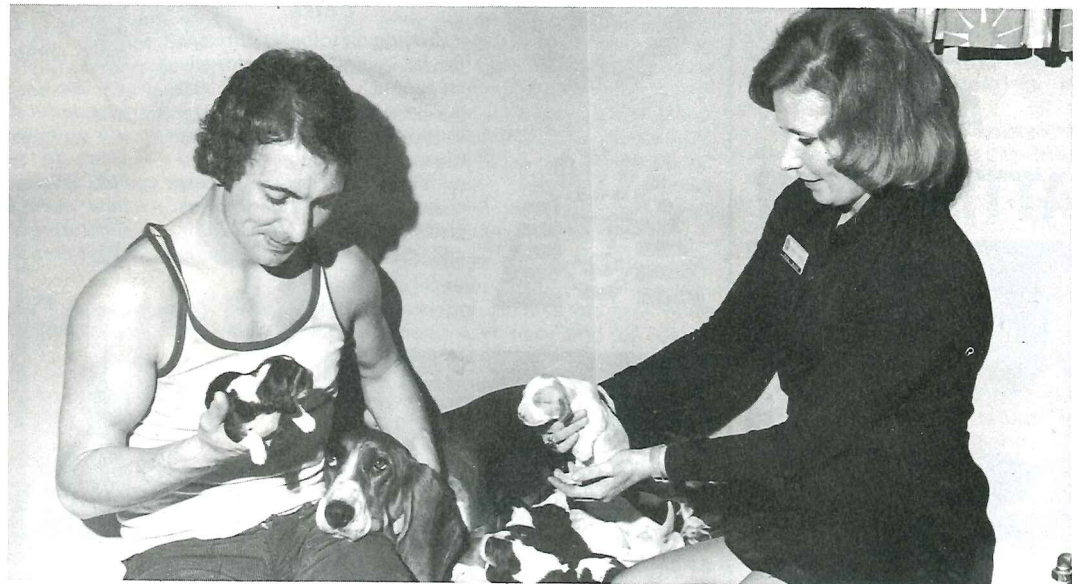
Distinction - Winners -

Name	Store
Mrs. J. A. Baghurst	Chester
Miss A. Bithell	Chester
Mr. G. D. Brown	Chester
Miss P. Brown	Erdington
Mr. P. Clarke	Bootle Strand
Mr. A. N. Davis	Southampton
Miss P. D. Fisher	Wolverhampton
Mr. H. Griffiths	Chester
Mrs. M. T. Heathcote	Birkenhead
Miss C. M. Homer	Chester
Mrs. C. Jones	Chester
Mr. A. Leap	Clayton Square
Mr. G. E. Terry	Chester
Mrs. J. Thompson	Erdington

Store successes

Store	Distinctions	Passes
Clayton Square	1	4
London Road	—	13
Coventry	—	6
Southampton	1	7
Preston	NO ENTRIES	
Doncaster	—	3
Chester	7	6
Finchley	—	6
Wolverhampton	1	8
Erdington	2	7
Birkenhead	1	4
Bootle Strand	1	3
	14	67

IT'S A DOG'S LIFE AT SOUTHAMPTON!

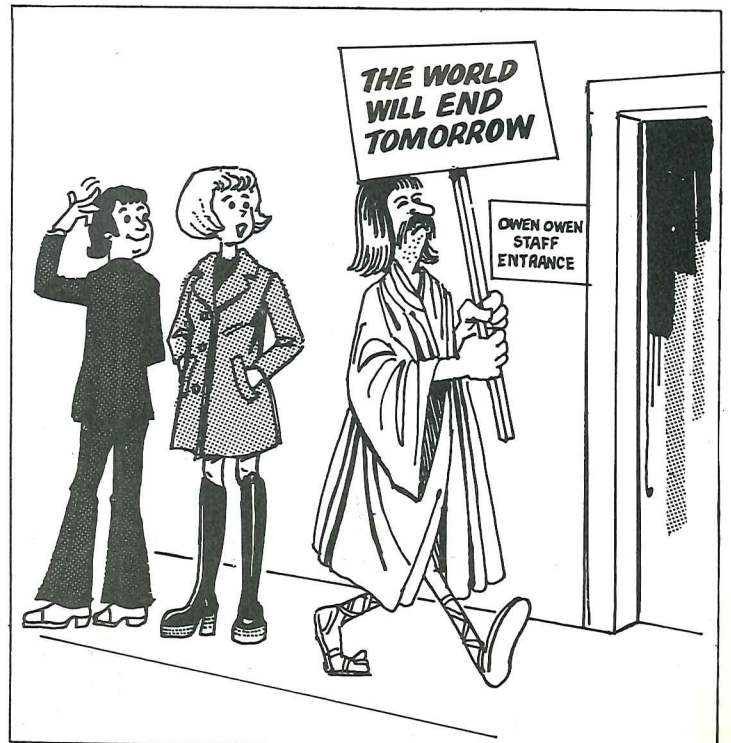


By courtesy of Southern Newspapers Ltd.

Meet Gumbles and family. No, not the fellow on the left—that's Southampton footballer Brian O'Neil. Gumbles is the hound in the middle looking suspiciously like Fred Bassett.

Last September Gumbles, whose owner is Mrs. Dinky Gunn (right) from Southampton's Rareset, decided to get some attention by giving birth to nine pups. They have all been given homes, three of them going to Southampton footballers Mike Channon, Brian O'Neil and Bobby Stokes. Fortunately a photographer from the *Southern Evening Echo* snapped Gumbles and Co. before they split up. All together now—ah . . . !

The End Cartoon



"Just my luck! I start my holiday next Monday!"

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