



SCENE

The newspaper of the Owen Owen Group: No. 3, December 1970.

Two million dollar face-lift

Report from Mr. F. W. Dakin, President, G. W. Robinson

Between January 1970 and June 1971 we will have spent \$2 million on re-building the outside of our Downtown store, and on the complete refitting of the interior.

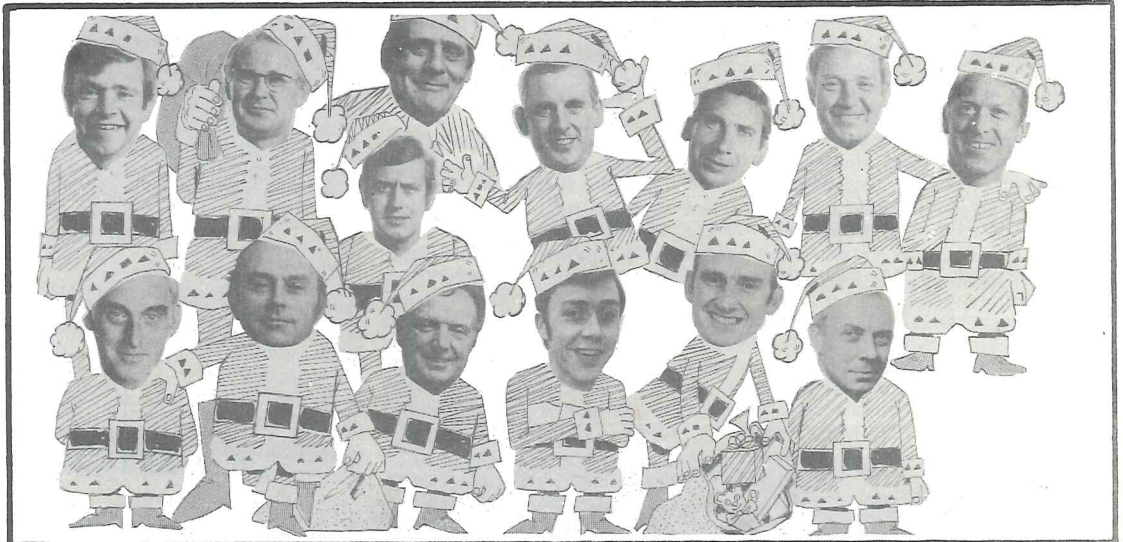
Over 80 workmen are employed on this project, which has to be phased over an 18-month period, so that we remain in business. The building renovations include a new front fascia, entrance and canopy, with the show windows being brought out to the street line, eliminating the former open arcade.

The entire exterior sides and back of the building are being finished in a combination of white marble and bronze-tone aluminium to complement the recently installed Italian marble on the front. The exterior renovations were completed on 1st December, 1970.

Interior renovation includes the installation of new escalators, elevators, staircases, merchandise fixtures, flooring, ceilings and lighting. All existing interior wall perimeters are in the process of being replaced, and each department will be given a distinctive shop treatment in order to bring the decor and presentation of merchandise up to the highest standards.

More space is going to be devoted to the women's major fashion departments in keeping with our policy of appealing to the modern, sophisticated, fashion conscious downtown shopper. Interior renovations will be completed by 1st June, 1971.

In size, both our stores are comparable to the Owen Owen Coventry store. Robinson's business in Canada is at



Greetings from the General Managers

General managers may not often seem the Father Christmas type as they strive to improve trading figures and keep everyone on their toes. For this issue the Group general managers have got together to offer their sincere good wishes to all staff, together with their thanks for the great effort to improve trading figures with which the entire staff is associated and, of course, to look forward to a still more successful New Year.

present running ahead of last year by approximately 10% in Burlington and 3% downtown, and should improve during the balance of the season. Approximately one million people shop in the two Robinson's stores during the course of a year.

GOOD NEWS FOR MANY PENSIONERS

Pensions paid by the Owen Owen Pension Fund are normally calculated on the average earnings over the last five years before retirement. This results in the pension being calculated in relation to the wage and price level at the time of retirement. However, up to now once pensions became payable it has not been possible to increase them as the cost of living has risen after retirement.

Following a review of the pension fund's resources the Trustees have found it possible to grant increased pensions to all those who retired and started to draw their pensions before 1st January, 1967. Increases have been calculated at 2% for each year of retirement before 1st January, 1967, with a minimum increase of 5%. For example, pensions which have been paid since 1960 are increased by 14% (i.e. 7 years at 2% for each year) and pensions paid since 1957 have gone up by 20% (i.e. 10 years at 2% for each year). The new scales of pensions came into effect from 1st December, 1970.

CHAIRMAN'S CHRISTMAS MESSAGE...

The Christmas issue of "Scene" gives a splendid opportunity to send a message of goodwill to all members of the Owen Owen Group wherever they may be. I know that all our Directors, both in England and in Canada, will wish to be associated with me in these sentiments.

1970 has been an encouraging year for us so far, as we have seen the start of the Group's recovery in the U.K. and a continuation of progress in Canada.

These trends should continue in 1971 and be further helped as we find the right solutions to the trading and cost problems which still remain in Liverpool.

Recovery and progress are the rewards of hard and co-operative work, and I thank you all for the personal part you are playing.

J.A.H. NORMAN

SCENE LINE-UP

- Page 2 U.K. Trading Review
- Page 2 Rare Set Crosses the Channel
- Page 2 Personality Profile
- Page 3 As Newcomers See It
- Page 3 Chester On The Air
- Page 3 'Demos' Sell Canadian Fashion
- Page 4 Doncaster Gets Rid of its Skeleton
- Page 4 Around and About



A view of the frontage of the G. W. Robinson Hamilton (Downtown) store.

U.K. TRADING REVIEW

H.W. PLUMB, Trading Director

Sales in August and September were good. Against comparatively poor figures a year ago most stores got off to a flying start to the half year with good increases on 1969 and well in line with budget aims. October and the first half of November have been tougher and although we maintained reasonable increases over 1969 in most stores, we had by mid-November fallen slightly short of our budget.

Taking the stores individually, Chester leads the field and has turned in some quite exceptional sales figures. Doncaster, Birkenhead and Finchley have also taken great strides and Wolverhampton is making good progress. Clayton Square has been doing reasonably well and so was Southampton until hit by the local bus strike. Coventry, too, has been affected by other people's industrial troubles with the serious strikes and lay-offs

Looking ahead By the time this is being read we shall be right in the middle of December trading. The planning and preparation have been thorough and we should be doing well. December is one of our vital profit earning months. January, too, is vital—firstly for the Sale and secondly for Stocktaking.

RARE SET CROSSES THE CHANNEL

Owen Owen clothes created quite a stir at Cherbourg, France, when eight models paraded them round a nightclub and hotel dining room.

The two shows, which were planned in Southampton to encourage French shoppers to buy there instead of London, took place in October with three other firms taking part.

Fashions ranged from our most swinging Rare Set models to elegant suits and dresses for middle aged women, and evening wear. General Manager of Southampton store, Mr. A. Simpkin, helped initiate the scheme as an active member of the Southampton Chamber of Commerce and, until recently, chairman of the Chamber's Distributive Trades Committee.

In Cherbourg for Owen Owen were Mademoiselle Anita Boyer, of Head Office, and Mrs. M. Johnson, first hand on the dress department at Southampton.

Although the clothes could not be sold on this occasion, they had an excellent reception. Miss Boyer remarked, "The Press reviews were very good, and many people at the fashion shows wanted to make purchases".

Before the show, Rare Set clothes were displayed in a department store window in Cherbourg, as part of a "Southampton Week". Mr. Simpkin said negotiations are in hand to hold more fashion shows in France next spring — this time selling the clothes on-the-spot.

We had a really successful Sale in January 1970 and it is a tremendous challenge we have ahead of us if we are to meet and beat the January targets. The buyers are resolved to produce the merchandise. We must make the most of the opportunity with first rate customer service and stock presentation.

TEST OF EFFICIENCY

And finally comes the test of our efficiency throughout the half year. All our improved sales and our hard work and endeavour can be marred if our stocktaking results are poor. Immense care must be taken in the preparation, listing and checking of stock. If the improved stock shortages shown in July continue we will be able to look back with pride on the progress made towards recovery from last year's poor trading performance.

Here's wishing you all a happy, prosperous and successful New Year.

PERSONALITY PROFILE

Ernest Gibson

Forty-two years "on the road" have convinced veteran driver Ernest Gibson that it's the best way to earn a living.

"Once you've been out, you never want to work inside again," he says.

He has been with Owen Owen in Liverpool since 1928, joining at 15 as a messenger boy when parcels were delivered by private, chauffeur-driven car and the shop stayed open for as long as there were customers.

"We used an old Morris Oxford which belonged to one of the manageresses; up till then horses had been used and a motor car was something of a novelty in the streets of Liverpool," Ernest recalls. That was the very first delivery van we had — now we've got a fleet of 14.

"Delivering the day's takings to the bank was another of my jobs. There were no security vans then and I had to make four or five trips on foot weighted down with moneybags full of coppers."

In all his years of driving, Ernest has never had the slightest brush with the law — in fact, he has recently received a 20 Years Safe Driving Medal from the Royal Society for Prevention of Accidents.



For the past 12 years he has been shop steward with the Transport and General Workers Union and has only just resigned his seat on the Retail Drapery Outfitting and Footwear-Wages Council in London.

Ernest is an avid Everton supporter and goes to every home match which saves him from spending too much time in the garden — "gardening frightens me," he jokes. He has four children, the youngest of whom are 16-year-old twins!

As with his football, he knows Owen Owen like the back of his hand — he was even born within a stone's throw of where T. J. Hughes stands today.

Robinson's Modern Miss Council...

G. W. Robinson's "Modern Miss Council", is an active force of communication between Robinson's and today's teens. It offers teens between 15 and 19 one year crammed full of informative programmes and active fashion projects. There are two councils; one for each store. Each have representatives from all the high schools in the area. The council numbers 35 in Hamilton, and 30 in Burlington.

Each council has a president, and various committees. The presidents are paid by the store at the current student wage rate, and work every Saturday on the various functions necessary to keep the Modern Miss Club a working success.

Meetings take place once a month, and centre around a special guest speaker. Experts on such things as hair colouring, hair styling and care, fashions, make-up, skin-care, arts and crafts, sewing, etc., plan active informative meetings for girls.

In addition each girl is required to fill out a "Fashion-scope" form answering questions about the newest fashions — what teens are wearing at school, etc. These forms are given to the Buyer, who reviews them for her own use when buying for the Modern Miss Shop.

Once a week displays are set up in the Modern Miss Shop. Photographs, school colours, and a sign indicating the look that is being shown all accompany the display. The girls also do informal modelling within the Modern Miss Shop on Saturday afternoons.

Each year a new Council is formed from the Modern Miss Club, which has a total membership of over 5,000 teen girls.



KEEPING SANTA DRY!

At this time of year Father Christmas becomes a vitally important figure in the lives of the youngsters which explains why the youngster in our picture is taking no chances on Father Christmas getting wet and catching a chill outside the Finchley store! We hope staff will understand that it was impossible to print all the "Father Christmas" pictures submitted by stores. We selected this one which was just that little bit out of the ordinary.

Robinson's Bowling League

Five-pin bowling has become an important event with Robinson's over the years, and has continued to grow in popularity, with thriving competitions in both Burlington and Hamilton.

At Christmas both the Hamilton and Burlington leagues have a Turkey Roll, when the highest scorer on each team for that particular night wins a turkey.

At the end of the season the winning team is determined, and prizes are also given to the bowler with the highest average, the highest single score, and the highest triple for both men and women.

However, that is not the end of the competition. The two leagues play off to win the inter-store trophy donated by the Directors. So far the standings are equal: Hamilton won the trophy in 1969, and Burlington in 1970. At the end of May, the season ends with a joint banquet and dance, and prize presentation.

AS NEWCOMERS SEE IT!

"They really take care of employees here, and make one feel like a member of a family."
 "This is a good store with excellent prospects for the right person. I have a feeling of belonging here."
 Those were just two of the comments made to a 'Scene' reporter who visited Owen Owen, Coventry, to talk to the August intake of school leavers.

All the intake were most impressed by the week's 'walkabout' which introduces newcomers to members of the staff, the various departments and gives basic training designed to make life easier for all concerned.

Chance of a lifetime trip to Poland

Elizabeth Hurton, Acting Sales Manager on Jewellery, Scarves and Handkerchiefs at Coventry, was one of a group of four boys and girls who spent five weeks in Poland during the summer as part of a youth scheme sponsored by the Experiment in International Living.

The trip included three weeks as a guest of a Polish family in Poznan, followed by a week in Warsaw and a week camping by the Polish lakes. Elizabeth, who thoroughly enjoyed her "chance of a lifetime" trip, joined Owen Owen from school.



LET'S GET IT RIGHT FIRST TIME!

Mistakes cost money and in the space jargon of the American astronauts "Zero defects" simply means no mistakes, and was the basis of a campaign at Bootle Centre recently. Mistakes have a nasty habit of building up and if 12 people in each of our 12 stores make one mistake each per week, in 12 weeks you have a mammoth 1,728 errors.

If each error took an hour to put right, 43 people would have to work full time for a week to do it. So the message is clear: Let's get it right first time.

Coventry's new recruits pictured on one of the store's new escalators during their week's "walkabout" in which they met staff, toured the departments and received basic training. GOING UP (left) Miss Worrall, gift shop, Miss Russell merchandise office, Miss Hector, Drapery, Miss Munsey, dress fabrics, Mr. West, Menswear. GOING DOWN (right) Mr. Anderson, merchandise office, Miss Taylor, Display, Miss Canning, Display, Miss Cullinane, Haberdashery, Miss Patel, Food Office, Mr. Ashby, DIY.

DEMOS SELL CANADIAN FASHION



Staff at the G. W. Robinson store in Hamilton, Ontario, took to the streets and staged "demos" to attract attention to the store's wide ranging fashion department which caters for every style and taste.

G. W. Robinson assistants startled the crowded streets of Hamilton when they appeared on a "demonstration" complete with slogans. Messages included "I'll stick with men and minis", and "Fashion is a 4-letter word - Midi", and each picket told passersby "Mini, midway, midi - Robinson's have them all!"

The idea was to attract women shoppers into the store by appealing to all ages and tastes, and the gimmick worked. Demos took place over a week during peak hours, and the store's windows featured models bearing the same slogans.

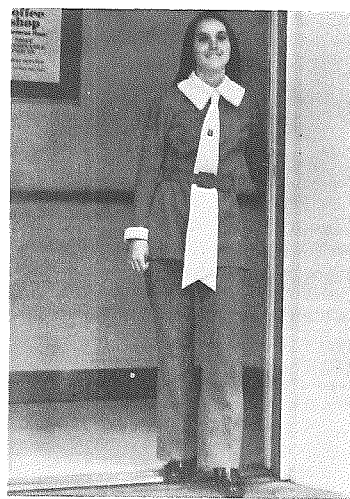
Diana Foulks, Invoice Office, Sumitra Patel, Food Office, Margaret Canning, Display, were all impressed by the size of the store and surprised by the amount of backroom activity.

Sales assistant Peter Ashby joined the store in response to a newspaper advertisement as did Hazel Worrall, and Marlene Ashbourne, both of the Gift Department. All three liked the look of the promotion prospects and hope to join a management course.

Jennifer Taylor applied for a job as a Sales Assistant and then talked her way into the job she really wanted - Display. Why did she want to join Owen Owen? "Because they have without doubt the best windows in the city" was her forthright reply.

Barbara Morris thought that the lecture on 'As others see you' was excellent and she learned a lot from it. Susan Russell, who has experience of other department stores found many benefits at Coventry that other stores did not have. One example she gave was a nurse always on duty.

Barry Anderson and Graham West probably summed up everyone's feelings when they said, "We have really been made to feel at home from the moment we started here. It is a very happy store."



LIFT GIRLS' PANT SUITS HELP SELL FASHION...

Crisp tunic pant suits in the Robinson's red with white trim store colours and white tie with the big 'R' crest have made Robinson's lift girls an integral part of the store's fashion campaign.

Many of the Robinson's sales staff are also wearing pant suits to work which helps to drive home the point that pant suits are a very important part of the international fashion scene which are acceptable anywhere - anytime.



Radio Eastgate, the Chester store's record request programme got off to a great start when the first programme was broadcast over the store intercom by Radio One Disc Jockey Dave Eastwood seen here at the mike with, left to right: Miss Paterson, Miss Bender, Mr. Laverick, Miss Beyer

CHESTER ON THE AIR

Radio Eastgate took to the air last month with Radio One DJ, Dave Eastwood, at the mike. Dave volunteered to launch Radio Eastgate after talking to some of the staff, who are friends of his.

The G.M.'s office at Chester store resembled a studio for half an hour as "recording" personnel and organisers bustled to get the first programme launched and requests poured in from staff downstairs.

The programme goes out over the store's intercom system twice a week between 8.30 am and 8.50 am - and there's no doubt that it has a good effect on those early morning blues. A request box has been placed in the store for staff requests.

Each session includes requests, staff chat and notices of forthcoming events. DJs are Gloria Beyer, house manager's secretary, Laurie Laverick, assistant manager of the DIY, electrical department, and Terry Braithwaite, assistant in the receiving room

It is hoped to follow up Radio Eastgate's success with another station at Bridge Street store, Chester.

STORE PROFILE

Doncaster gets rid of its skeleton

If ever a store could lay claim to have got rid of the skeleton from its cupboard it is Owen Owen, Doncaster.

It was while the basement area was being dug out during renovations that the contractors found the remains of a body. Where it came from no one is quite clear but since it went, Doncaster has not looked back.

The company took over the store from Verity's Ltd. in 1952 and some members of the staff then are still on the payroll. Longest serving of these is cleaner Mrs. Lucy McCrystal with 23 years service, followed by sales manager Miss Beryl Duro (22 years).

The current General Manager is Mr. Robert Packer who was appointed in July following service at both Southampton and Coventry. Born in Southampton, Mr. Packer, 38, is a married man with one child and he and his family have settled happily in Doncaster.

"I have a good team around me and morale is very high here," he says. "Since the structural alterations which have increased our floor space by 100%, we have moved every department around in order to maximise effectiveness and could not have done this as quickly or as successfully without the full co-operation of every staff member."

Second in command is 30 year old David Scruton who joined the company with a BA in Economics from Durham University in August 1962. He has had spells at Doncaster, Coventry, London, Leicester and T. J. Hughes, Liverpool, before returning to Doncaster in January of this year.

Administrative matters are looked after by office manager Miss Pat Shelton who joined Doncaster in 1955 and has seen the store, as it is today, take shape.

Business has been helped by the outside activities of staff like Fashion Sales Manager Mrs. Pauline Anderson who in 10 months at the store has organised fashion shows in local women's clubs, some of them with the help of Miss Cherry Raymond, a Sales Manager who joined the store as a 'Saturday Girl' in 1963 and liked it so much she stayed.

Future prospects and potential at Doncaster are excellent and Mr. Packer is convinced that the peak is some considerable way off. "We have room for further expansion," he says, "which would give us a further 15% overall floor space."

A partial drawback is the store frontage, which in no way reflects the improved interior. However, the two smallish windows are put to full benefit by Display Manager, Mr. W. Ballard and his team. Mr. Ballard came to Doncaster from Coventry in 1962 and his evenings are spent teaching display at the local art college.

A junior sales girl wondering where her future is within the company should look at the fairly rapid rise of Miss Shirley Evans who joined Owen Owen as a 15 year old in the shoe department, was the youngest ever Doncaster first hand at 18, and is now Sales Manager, China and Glass, Cutlery, Gifts and Hardware. She is just 21.

From the long narrow shop that the company took over in 1952 has emerged a modern store that the staff can be proud of.



Some of the personnel behind the Doncaster success story, left to right: Miss Edge; Mr. Cook; Miss Raymond; Mr. Packer; Miss Attewell; Mr. Loveridge; Miss French; Mr. Scruton; Mr. Stevenson; Miss Shaw; Mr. Ballard; Miss Shelton.

Passed with flying colours

The following students were successful in this year's examinations for the National Retail Distribution Certificate. Congratulations to them all.

PART 1 Miss B. Latham Mr. N. Moister, Mr. E. Nicholas and Mr. B. Smyth from Clayton Square, Miss P. Hall and Mr. M. Kinsella from London Road and Mr. F. Bassnett and Mr. G. Matchet from Birkenhead. Mr. Moister received the Student of the Year award.

PART 2 Mr. B. Murdoch from Clayton Square, Mr. A. Costigan, Mr. J. Farrell, Mr. B. Jones and Mr. J. Robertson from London Road and Mr. A. Keats and Mr. J. Martin from Southampton. Mr. Farrell received the Textile Award of the Year and Mr. Murdoch the award for the best student in English.

Congratulations also to Miss S. M. Oakman (Stafford House) and to Miss C. Wood (Doncaster), both of whom have obtained their Teachers Certificate in the Hotel and Catering Institute examination.



Miss Hannah Anderson

SWIMMING HONOUR FOR HANNAH

Miss Hannah Anderson, fashion fitter at T. J. Hughes, Liverpool, was rewarded for a lifetime devoted to swimming when she was installed recently as President of the Liverpool and District branch of the Royal Life-saving Society.

Only one other woman has been awarded this honour since the society was formed in 1930.

Miss Anderson, who has been swimming since she was eight and teaching life-saving since 1940, will hold the office for a year. She spends most of her spare time at swimming baths in the area, examining classes and judging life-saving competitions. She even took a week of her holidays recently to be an instructor at the Liverpool "Learn to Swim Campaign", where she taught beginners from 18 months to 70 years of age.

Around & About

SOUTHAMPTON

Store staff helped in a Top Ten XI v Southampton stores football match that raised £200 for the Cottage Homes. Captain of the Top Ten team was Ed 'Stewpot' Stewart, the disc jockey.

★★★★

CHESTER

The girls played the men in a full ninety minutes football match with no holds barred, resulting in a 12-10 win for the girls. They are willing to challenge any of the Northern stores — any takers?

★★★★

CLAYTON SQUARE

A singing group has been formed and already has 20 people attending weekly sessions in the store. Will it be up to the standard of the van drivers' choir of the 1950's?

★★★★

FINCHLEY

A lively social programme arranged by the store includes a mystery tour, a tramp's supper, a film outing and a West End theatre trip. The mystery tour proved unexpectedly mysterious when the coach driver lost his way at London airport.

A museum door used as a display prop, complete with a notice setting out admission charges and times of opening, had to be removed from a display window when too many

customers wanted to visit the museum.

★★★★

WOLVERHAMPTON

The store acted as host to the autumn meeting of the Northern Council of the Retail Distributors' Association. There were many favourable comments on the new store from visiting store executives.

★★★★

PLUMB'S

Frank Kings has been accepted as one of the first students of the Open University. He will be studying for an Arts Degree. Have we any other Open University students?

John Walton has recently returned from a 6,000 mile car and camping trip through Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland. Purpose of the trip made with three other ornithologists was to see, record and photograph the birds of Scandinavia.

★★★★

PRESTON

The store put on a very successful fashion show for the English Electric B.A.C. social club in October. The latest in fashions were modelled by store staff before an audience of over 250 people.

Mr. J. E. Herbert has joined the store as a Group Sales Manager after a sixteen year stay in Canada where for part of the time he was a buyer at

Robinson's. Mr. Herbert is a Freeman of the City of Lancaster.

★★★★

BIRKENHEAD

The new Top Gear Department got off to a fine start with a visit of members of the cast of Birkenhead Operatic Society's production of the 'Sound of Music'. Von Trapp and his two teenage daughters enjoyed the 'Sound of Music' in the new boutique and admired the merchandise.

★★★★

LONDON ROAD

Nearly £100 was raised for the Cottage Homes by 25 of the store staff who all completed a 10 mile sponsored walk through the Cheshire countryside.

★★★★

DONCASTER

Janet Murray, dress fabric department, produced a three-act play "Distinguished Gathering" for the Varsity Theatre Club which played to packed houses for three nights.

★★★★

COVENTRY

The Bishop of Coventry will give a Christmas Address to staff at Coventry on 22nd December over the public address system; this is the first time this has been done in a Coventry store.