



1952... a new Queen and visits to the theatre

THE year of the Coronation was more than the start of a new reign. It started a social revolution in Britain.

The pomp and ceremony at Westminster Abbey has changed the lives of practically every household in Britain.

For it was the occasion when most families first obtained or watched television.

It was the moment that changed our evening lives. No more were there queues outside cinemas or theatres. It reduced attendances at amateur dramatic societies and really heralded the end of the famous Owen Owen Audley Players. Up to 1953 the amateur shows, produced – often written – by Miss Moulding had attracted sell-out audiences of 300 – 400 in the basement cafe at T. J. Hughes.

Miss Moulding recalls those plays of 25 years ago. "Our productions ranged from Shakespeare and Shaw to Sweeney Todd and the Black and White Minstrels.

"There was a performance of Journey's End when the Display team had devised a realistic dug-out which was to simulate a bomb blast. The dug-out did in fact collapse and bury a trainee!

"On another occasion the entire van team of about 20 staged a show at the Y.M.C.A. theatre in Liverpool. Although it was strictly against the rules they smuggled in a crate of beer. The show ran for a week to packed houses and raised quite a lot of money for the A.A.A.

"Mr. Duncan Norman, father of our present chairman, used to attend all the shows with his family. Sometimes he must have been bored stiff but he was always enthusiastic."

As staff trainer Miss Moulding also wrote three plays – "A Little Knowledge", "Then There Were None", and "The Good Old Days" – which were performed in the Crane Theatre, Liverpool to provide training with a smile for store staffs.

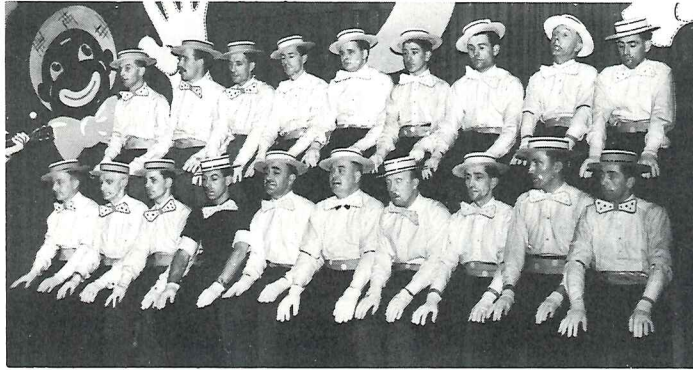
Could the enthusiasm for amateur dramatics be revived in the stores again after 25 years?

"I rather doubt it" says Miss Moulding. "The war had only been over seven years and everyone was entering a period of relaxation. There were 1,000 people on the staff of T. J. Hughes alone in those days and TV had not got the big grip it has today.

"Now people have all sorts of leisure pursuits that they didn't have then – golf, longer holidays, discotheques, and many other outside interests.

"You must remember that 25 years ago we had a play reading in front of an audience 40 times a year – one a week apart from the Summer. That was in addition to the plays and shows."

But the Coronation – or more strictly, TV – really put an end to all that.



Van drivers as Black and White Minstrels.



Display men as ballet dancers. The "Prima Ballerina" was 6ft 2ins. and heavily tattooed.



"Forever Amber" – and 15 male members of the staff in drag. The only one still on the staff is T. J. Hughes Buying Controller Charles Backhouse (third from right, back row).

SEVEN STORES IN 1952, TWENTY-TWO TODAY

In 1952 there were seven stores in the group - Coventry, Liverpool (Clayton Square and T. J. Hughes), Preston, Southampton and two which are no longer part of Owen Owen at Blackpool and Doncaster.

At that time the Coventry store was being rebuilt to be re-opened in 1954. This picture was taken in 1952.

Today, only a quarter of a century later, there are 22 stores.



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There's nothing like a good book . . .

THERE'S more to figures than adding them up – every column contains a story. And the man with the job of telling the story on the group's accounts is Financial Director, Mr. Maurice Rider.

Mr. Rider joined the company six months ago and from Head office he co-ordinates and centrally controls all the group's financial operations. The various accounting departments compile and collate the figures but, he explains, "It's my job to take things a step further and to interpret them, so that I can advise the Board on, for example, budgeting and planning. Basically, I have to advise on the availability of the group's financial resources and how they are best spent, making sure there is enough to cover both maintenance and, of course, the development of the business."

Mr. Rider also has the task of trying to make everyone in the business aware of the cost of financing ideas or projects. "We could have stock problems – for example with fashion merchandise. We have to be quite sure that what we buy we can sell, and with fashions changing so quickly, if we were not careful we could be left with a stockroom full of out-of-date dresses. This would leave cash tied up in dead stock rather than available to invest in new saleable merchandise."

Mr. Rider is a North Yorkshireman, living for many years in Stokesley, a pleasant country town. After leaving school, he joined a firm of chartered accountants as a student. He qualified after five years, but was immediately called up for National Service.

"I spent 18 months in East Africa with the King's African Rifles. At the time, the period of the Mau Mau terrorism was just beginning to cool off. I think the most memorable thing about my stay there was attempting to guard water holes in the desert regions of Eastern Uganda. It was no easy job explaining to the native herdsman in Swahili that their tribe's cattle could only drink at a certain time of day!"

'In my blood'

Returning from Africa, Mr. Rider went back to accountancy, and for 10 years he was in private practice. "Then suddenly I was nearly 40, and I felt I had to do something else with my life. So I went into retailing. The retail trade was, I suppose, in my blood – my father and his five brothers were all involved in food manufacture and retailing."

So for six years before joining Owen Owen, Mr. Rider was doing a similar job for a large supermarket chain – but still based in Yorkshire.

The move to bustling Merseyside was, he admits, traumatic. "I loved the country life and the country people but I suppose I was looking again for something more challenging. I certainly found it here!"

City life does have its advantages though. A music lover, Mr. Rider is a member of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society. "It surprises me how many people underestimate Liverpool," he says, "because it has so much to offer



Mr. Rider, the family man, relaxes at home with his wife Shirley, their daughter, Adrienne, and dog "Trumper".

artistically. And I don't have the impression that the Philharmonic, the theatres and the wonderful art gallery and museum are just here for the tourists. The arts really are alive and a part of Merseyside life."

Further afield, Mr. Rider enjoys walking and has always found the Northern industrial heritage fascinating. "I suppose you would say I am interested in social history, but that makes the subject sound dry. It's really all about people, the communities they live in and the work they do. The Ribbles Valley, which I have been discovering since my move here, is a sort of paradise for the industrial archaeologist."

Mr. Rider, his wife Shirley and their two teenage children, live in Formby where there is still some of the small town atmosphere they feel at home in.

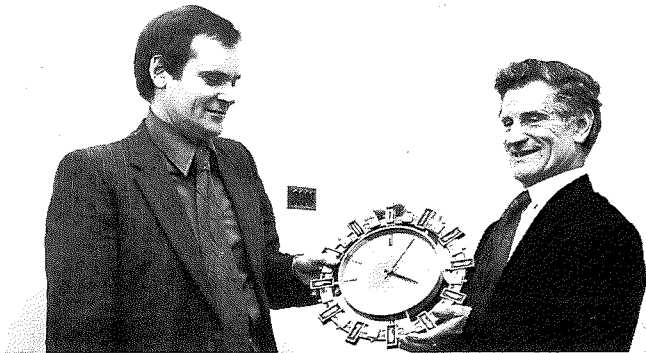
He sees himself first and foremost as a family man, and finds no difficulty in leaving the group's financial worries behind at the office when he gets home each evening.

"I have a very simple philosophy. A man can only deal with three or maybe four problems in one day. Try to tackle 20 and he can only worry about them. So I stick to solving my quota each day, then I switch off when I get home. That way the work gets done and I stay sane!"

Tommy's goodbye party

MANAGEMENT and staff threw a party to mark the retirement of Receiving Room supervisor Tommy Coupe after 27 years' service at the Preston store.

Tommy is pictured here (right) receiving a wall clock from regional controller Mr. C. J. Hassall who made the presentation on behalf of the directors.



CHAIRMAN'S AWARD

Mrs. B. P. Telkman, general manager of the Coventry store received this year's Chairman's Award while the Buyer's Award has been won by Mr. B. Royds, buyer of electrical and sewing machines. They are seen here after the Chairman, Mr. John Norman, had made the presentations.

Happy . . . helpful . . . informative . . .

The last edition of Scene had gone to Press by the time the reaction began to filter in from the first meeting of the Central Staff Council.

But now we have received enthusiastic letters from representatives following our request for their personal views about the meeting.

Here are just a few extracts:

I received feeling terrified at the prospect, but I needn't have worried, the day was happy, helpful and informative. The atmosphere was friendly and relaxed, and I found I was commenting and participating without effort.—Miss Hazel Goff—Chester

From the moment we entered Stafford House we were made to feel welcome. It was interesting to note that the problems of our store were similar to those of other stores.—Miss Joan Lean—Wolverhampton

The best thing was hearing the background to the various Company policies under discussion. The Council provides a 'personal' form of communication, which was a great help to our understanding of Company policies.—Mrs. Jean Taylor—Audley House
Miss Elaine Lawson—Stafford House

I expected the meeting to be slow and everyone cautious to approach each question and proposal, but the fact that the Chairman chatted to each of us before the meeting helped to put the delegates at ease. The lasting impression is a very happy one. Not only did we have the chance to see some of the

other stores, but it was interesting to meet the other delegates.—

Mrs. Freda Baldwin—Bath, Taunton, Weston-super-Mare

The Directors were very approachable and understanding and this, perhaps was one of the highlights of the day.—

Mrs. Mavis Keylock—Coventry

The questions that I asked were answered to my satisfaction. My lasting impression of the meeting was a feeling of satisfaction, that the management and staff were beginning to understand one another's problems, and nothing but better understanding could come from future meetings.—

Mrs. Margaret Oldham—London Road

Subjects discussed received as close attention as possible in the time allocated. Getting down to the nitty gritty was the order of the day.—

Mr. Robert Godlonton—Preston

The meeting wasn't at all what I expected. I expected it to be very official but instead, everyone was extremely friendly.—

Mrs. Margaret Sheldon—Birkenhead

Three pretty Finchley masterminds

As part of the Finchley store's before-opening training sessions there has been a competition to find a team of "Masterminds".

The nine teams of three which took part answered questions on general knowledge, as well as questions on stock, the company,

and departments.

In a close fought final the office team, consisting of Sally Lisiki (merchandise office clerk), Suzanne Lack, (telephonist), Adele Isaacs (general manager's secretary), beat William Hartley (SM), Malcolm Creek (ASM) and Austin Twiggs-Home (estimator and measurer) from the basement's team by 25 points to 21.

They're more like friends than customers

Women's lib is alive and well at our Hereford store where the all-girl staff are using their charm and expert advice to pull in the customers.

In fact it's very rare to see a man in this tiny store for it deals exclusively in womens-wear.



Mrs. Pembridge

But since they joined Owen from Macowards a year last November, the manager Mrs. Ethel Pembridge and her staff have proved time and time again, that for the baby of the group, it's not the size that counts, but the quality.

And for the quality of service, they are hard to match. "We like to treat all our customers as friends," says Mrs. Pembridge. "Because we are such a small store we tend to recognise faces easily. Most people who come in here, are known to us by name."

Couple this with a fine range of clothes and Owen Owen's

friends in Hereford are friends for life.

Mrs. Pembridge quite often sees customers she served 33 years ago when she joined the store as a junior. "In those days we used to specialise in coats and millinery, and the customers used to come from miles around to shop here," she says. "As a junior I had to get into work a quarter of an hour early to Hoover and dust before the seniors arrived."

"We're all pretty handy with our hands," said part-time sales assistant, Dorothy Morgan. "If anything needs doing here we do it ourselves."

"At the moment we are re-organising the departments to give us more room," she added.

With all the energy she uses at work Mrs. Morgan still finds time to go to keep-fit classes on Tuesdays. "Together with my work it keeps me in trim," she says.

Another part-timer among the 17 strong staff is Olive Bailey who has worked in the store for seven years. Married with two daughters and three grand children she works three days a week in the fashion department. Her husband Fred is a retired police superintendent and in their spare time the couple enjoy gardening.

Monica Young, sales assistant at the store for the last three and a half years, loves the picturesque countryside which surrounds the town. Her family were evacuated from London during the war and would not go back. "Give me the fresh air and the open fields any day," she said.

Monica and her maintenance engineer husband, Lionel, have three children aged 18, 21 and 23. They have just celebrated their



Outside view of Hereford store.



Owen Owen staff left to right: Eve Taylor, Monica Young, Rosemary Harris, Tessa Jordan, Louise Tilby, Christine Partridge.

silver wedding anniversary, but still find the energy for modern sequence dancing.

Rosemary Harris, one of the youngest members of staff, has to travel to Birmingham to pursue her hobby.

She is a keen ice skater and

manages to visit the rink in the city at least once every three weeks.

"I would love to go more often but it's quite a distance to travel," she says. "Still I would rather live here than in Birmingham."

One of six sisters, she also does charity work for Cancer Research.

Heather Tomlinson's husband, John, lectures in business studies at a local technical college and she came to work at the store three and a half years ago, because she "enjoys meeting people". "It's a job I would not change for the world," she says.



Marion Wainwright



Debbie Morris

Community spirit counts in Kidderminster

FOUR out of five people in Kidderminster do their shopping at Owen Owen. And it's not just because of the quality and range of our merchandise.

Much is due to the acknowledged friendliness of the staff and because the store tries to play an important role in community life.

"Forget this and you cannot be successful in a place like Kidderminster," says general manager Mike Poole.

"In a big city store you cannot hope to know all your staff. Here I know all the staff by their Christian names. In many cases I know their families and their problems."

Over the past 20 years Kidderminster has changed from a country town where most of the working population were either employed in carpet factories or farms, to almost a new town where the centre has been changed from small, old shops to modern shopping centres.

On the outskirts housing estates have sprung up and many of the

residents work in Birmingham and Wolverhampton.

Some of the older locals still call the store Attwoods. For until eight years ago a local family by that name had traded on the site for more than three centuries before selling to Great Universal Stores. At that time they had a 17th century building with a mock Regency frontage put on in the 1930's.

Very different

G.U.S. pulled down the old store and replaced it with the present modern building. But the new owners could not draw the customers. Two more firms tried, until Owen Owen took over from Macowards in 1975.

Mike Poole was managing the store for Macowards and has remained in that capacity with Owen Owen.

It's very different from his retail store training in big cities.

He started working life in an advertising agency, moved to a department store in Birmingham

as a management trainee until he was 23 when he joined a Catholic Seminary to study for priesthood. After some heart searching he decided it was not for him and returned to retailing in Liverpool and later Manchester. He joined Macowards as a trainee general manager and went to Kidderminster as general manager nine months before Owen Owen took over.

He is married, with two children. His wife Sheena teaches at a local school and in the evenings they study for Open University degrees.

One or two members of the staff worked in the store when it was run by Attwoods.

Harry Thomas of Menswear said: "There were gardens at the back of the shop with stables, and a malt house where beer was made for a nearby pub.

Drinking tailors

"A workshop stood alongside the stables where tailors sat cross-legged making suits. They were notorious drinkers and often had to be dragged out of a pub to

finish a rush order. But it wasn't unusual in those days for some staff to work until 11 o'clock at night."

And while the town grows the younger staff feel that while more and more houses are being built there are not enough recreational facilities being developed.

Marion Wainwright of Haberdashery explained: "It's only the store which keeps us together. We are very close-knit here and get on well together. Owen Owen really gives us something to work for."

Her friend Debbie Morris, a newly-married 19 year old, lives on one of the new housing estates on the outskirts of the town. Her husband is an industrial radiographer and while she enjoys her job Debbie regrets that there is only one cinema, no theatre or clubs and few youth centres.

Meanwhile our store is successfully providing a service for both generations and a service that is obviously going to play an even bigger part in Kidderminster's growing future.

"I NEVER GET THAT MONDAY MORNING FEELING"

JAMES Mariner opted for a career in retailing after the war because he believed Britain was moving into a consumer orientated society. For an electrical engineer fresh from the R.A.F. it was quite a challenge. But for a man who believes every day to be a challenge, he took it all in his stride.

The son of a railway guard he started working life with the Eastern Electricity Board. Three nights a week after working from 8.30 to 5.00 p.m. James raced home, changed and travelled eight miles to a technical college in South East Essex where he was studying for his national certificate.



James Mariner

On Wednesdays and Fridays there were Air Training Corps meetings, church parades on Sunday mornings, and football or cricket matches on Saturday afternoons. On Saturday evening, his only free time, he usually went to the cinema.

"We were rationed to the hilt, our future was uncertain but we enjoyed life. We were fit and healthy, we had lots of fun, our backs were to the wall but there was no grouching or moaning," he said. In 1944 he joined the R.A.F. as an airborne radar mechanic. Radar was on the secret list and security was strict. "I remember one boy who was moved off the project very quickly when they discovered he had German grandparents," he said.

An omen?

When the war in Europe finished he moved to the Air Ministry. He

was based in Princess House, London, just a few doors away from our former buying office. It may well have been an omen for the future.

In the late 1940's he found himself working at the Royal Aircraft Establishment, Farnborough. They were exciting days with Britain taking its first tentative steps into the jet age.

But by 1953 Mr. Mariner felt it was time to change course and seek a different career. "I had been thinking about retailing for a long time. It seemed a dynamic industry full of challenge, I decided to give it a go." He joined the James Beattie Group in Wolverhampton as a trainee. He had become general manager by the time he left to join a Coventry based group as managing director.

In May 1970 he came to Owen Owen as selling controller based at Stafford House, Liverpool. He became regional director in 1971.

Mr. Mariner lives in Coventry with his wife Sylvia and uses the area's extensive motorway network to drive between the stores in the Midlands for which he is responsible.

No regrets

In the evenings he likes to relax at home listening to his stereo. Wagner is among his favourite composers but he also likes popular music. He is a keen do-it-yourself enthusiast. He built a home extension himself, and he usually spends his weekends with drill and saw in hand.

Mr. Mariner has never regretted the day he moved into retailing. "I found it to be everything I hoped for," he says. "I love the job and I love the people I work with. Every day is so different. I never get a Monday morning feeling. When I do, I know it will be time to pack up."

Business News

New acquisition

In his statement to Shareholders on trading for the year ended January 29, 1977, the Chairman, Mr. J. A. H. Norman reported that group profit before tax was £2,203,000, compared with £2,832,000 in the preceding year.

The time and the scale of recent store acquisitions has had a considerable bearing on the comparative performance of the two years. For instance, the year to January 1976 included only the most profitable Christmas quarter of the eight

newly acquired stores and of the most recent Canadian store, while the year to January 1977 accounted for a full year's trading and, as expected, felt the drag of the seasonal loss-making months in the early part of the year. In addition, last year included a substantial loss from the first ten months' trading in Richmond compared with the small profit contributed in the preceding year from Doncaster.

The significance of the contribution from the new stores to increased sales and decreased profit is illustrated in Column 4 of the following table.

	Year to January 1977	Year to January 1976	Inc./dec.	Year inc./dec. attributable to new stores
	£	£	£	£
Sales (£'000s)				
U.K. Stores	53,000	44,500	+ 8,500	+ 5,500
Canadian Stores	31,000	22,000	+ 9,000	+ 3,000
Plumb Contracts	2,000	3,000	- 1,000	—
	<u>86,000</u>	<u>69,500</u>	<u>+ 16,500</u>	<u>+ 8,500</u>
Profits (£'000s)				
U.K. Stores	1,499	1,746	- 247	- 279
Canadian Stores	678	1,066	- 388	- 209
Plumb Contracts	26	20	+ 6	—
	<u>2,203</u>	<u>2,832</u>	<u>- 629</u>	<u>- 488</u>

U.K. STORES

The established Owen Owen and T. J. Hughes stores all had a difficult trading year against the now familiar background of reduced consumer spending, competitive pressure on margins and increased operating costs. But better trading in November, December and January, together with the effects of the cost reductions made in the summer, enabled these stores to show a small increase in the year's profit.

The integrating of the eight new U.K. stores acquired in November 1975 was one of the main pre-occupations of last year. Much improved sales resulted in five of the eight stores making profits on the year. A good start has thus been made, but there remains much to do to raise their standards to a fully acceptable level in both customer and staff areas, and also in goods handling facilities.

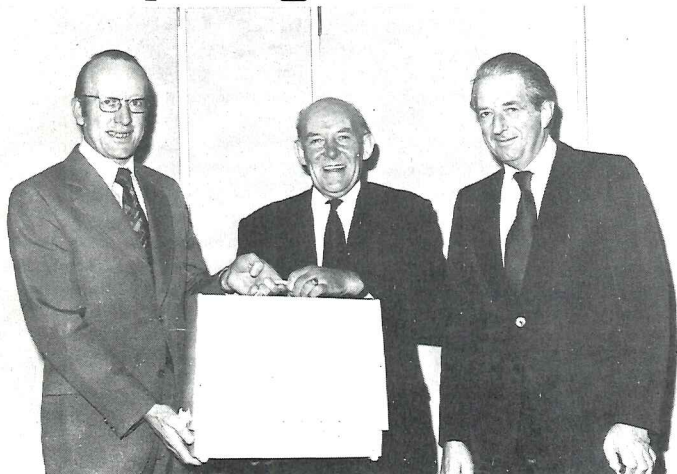
The Richmond store, acquired in March 1976, made a substantial loss in the year. A programme to modernize and revitalize the business is now under way and we hope to see a turn-round by the end of the current year. The new shop-front will be complete by early summer and will recover valuable ground floor selling area in place of an old-fashioned arcade. A number of important concession departments are in course of opening, including a Glemby hairdressing salon, a Wallis shop and, in the autumn, a Miss Selfridge shop. A new and enlarged customer restaurant has now been opened.

U.K. FIGURES

SALES	£53,000,000
LESS COST OF GOODS AND SERVICES BOUGHT OUTSIDE	£41,500,000
WE THEREFORE EARNED	£11,500,000
HOW THE MONEY EARNED WAS DISTRIBUTED	

EMPLOYEE REMUNERATION	£9,000,000
REINVESTED IN BUSINESS	£1,369,000
TAXES	£900,000
DIVIDENDS	£231,000

Group Engineer retires



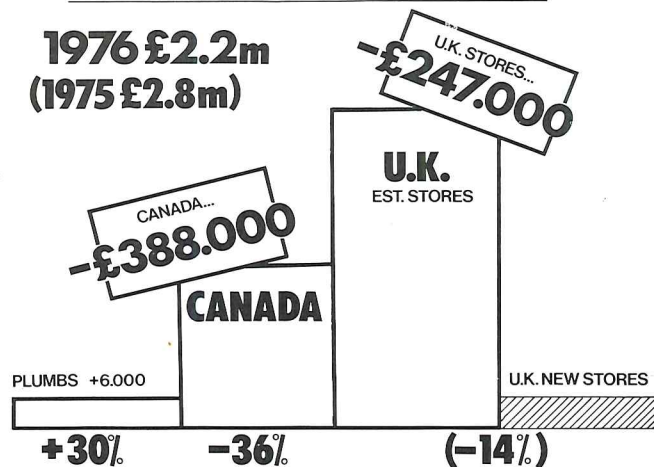
Mr. W. Gleave, group engineer since 1972, retired on March 31 after 30 years with Owen Owen.

Mr. Gleave joined the company as an electrician and was later house manager and regional engineer. Unfortunately over the past few years Mr. Gleave has suffered from ill health which led to his early retirement.

He is pictured here with the Chairman and Mr. J. S. Murden, Property Director, after receiving a gift of a sewing machine from the Company.

WHERE PROFIT WAS LOST

1976 £2.2m
(1975 £2.8m)



Thank you girls!

EACH week about 4,000 weekly paid employees at all our stores, warehouses and offices draw their pay. But few of us think of the tremendous work that all the wages clerks have to put in to ensure that all those pay packets are ready on time each week. And, just as importantly, contain the right money.

So in this issue we are saying 'Thank you' to some of the wages clerks in the group. If any have been left out it is purely because the information and pictures did not reach us in time.

s affect results

THE CANADIAN STORES

Anti-inflation measures introduced in late 1975 with statutory controls of wages and profit margins have increasingly restrained consumer spending and the buoyancy in our business has suffered in consequence. This setback has broken the 17-year record of annually increasing Canadian profits. We hope to resume the upward progress as soon as restrictive legislation is eased, although we must expect that the current year will continue to be difficult.

In particular, two stores were responsible for the major part of the decrease. The main store in downtown Hamilton felt the increasing competition of the neighbouring Lloyd Jackson Centre which is nearing completion. The most recently opened St. Catharines store, while accounting for a material part of the Canadian sales increase, contributed a loss at the end of its first full year compared with a profit from its few months' trading at the end of 1975.

PLUMB CONTRACTS LIMITED

The shopfitting business increased its profits by a small amount last year and the immediate order book, both in the U.K. and in the Middle East, looks

healthier than it has been during the past three years of recession.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Plans for expansion include the new T. J. Hughes, Birkenhead store in the redeveloped town centre (which we hope to have trading in place of the present small store by Christmas of this year), and an 80,000 sq. ft. store in Redditch with a planned opening in 1979 or 1980.

In Canada, a sixth Robinson store is scheduled to open in a new regional shopping centre on the outskirts of Niagara Falls in September, 1977. Plans have also been made to open two further stores in the area of Kitchener, Ontario, one in the second half of 1978, and one in 1981.

PRESENT OUTLOOK

With difficult economic conditions continuing in both the U.K. and Canada, it would be wrong to count on any increase in the volume of consumer spending in the immediate future. One of the critical factors in this year's trading performance will be the speed of profit build-up in the new stores in their second full year of trading, and we are hopeful of seeing some further reward for the hard work that has been put into these stores.

Margaret keeps busy

PART-TIME cash office clerk Margaret Tiplady has plenty to keep her occupied when she is not working at our Finchley store.

She has been elected vice-chairman of the Greater London Area Woman's Advisory Committee, and has spent a great deal of time, recently, helping to organise the national conference of the Woman's Advisory Committee of the Conservative party which took place at Central Hall Westminster in May.

Special interest

But Margaret, who was chairman of the Finchley and Friern Barnet Woman's Advisory Committee for eight years, also takes a special interest in old people's welfare. She once worked in an old folks home and is currently writing a paper on hypothermia.

Bath's new bulletin

BATH staff have introduced a news bulletin giving details of sport and social events. It's known as the "Bath Amateur Athletic Association Social Newsletter".

NEWS FROM CANADA

MAE AND "PIDGY" CLOCK UP

MRS. Mae Morris, Credit Office, and Mrs. Anne Pigeon, supervisor head office Invoice Office have retired from Robinsons after a combined total of 60 years' service with the group.

Mrs. Pigeon - known as "Pidgy" to her friends - was associated with the company for 33 years, 20 of them in charge of Invoice Office where she developed systems and methods which are still in use.

More than 100 people attended her send-off presentation party, when Mr. F. W. Dakin; president of the company stressed the importance of her contribution to the growth of the company.

Mrs. Morris first joined Robinsons 42 years ago, just to help over the Anniversary Sale. She stayed until 1951 and left on marriage. Ten years later she rejoined the company and during the past few years was in the "cash cage".

A surprise guest at her retirement party was Mrs. McCormick who started work at Robinsons at the same time as Mae. Mrs.

60 YEARS

McCormick, had already retired from Men's Furnishing, but wanted to be present for her former colleague's farewell.



Personnel manager, Miss D. Bechler congratulates Mrs. Ann 'Pidgy' Pigeon.



Mrs. Mae Morris at her retirement presentation.

First birthday celebrations



THE youngest store in Robinsons group at St. Catharines, 12 miles from the Niagara Falls, has celebrated its first birthday.

For those members of the staff from Hamilton, who moved to St. Catharines, it has been an exciting year.

St. Catharines, known as the Garden City, overlooking Lake Ontario, is the wine centre of Canada and many tourists enjoy visiting the vineyards and orchards.

Pictured here are members of the store management who have seen it through its birth pangs.

Back row (left to right): Mr. David Kowalchuk (Sporting Goods/Hardware); Mrs. Dorothy Cardno (Cosmetics/Ladies' Accessories); Mr. Dick Jones (Shipping/Receiving); Mrs. Sharon Dalrymple (Housewares); Mr. David Battye (Men's Wear).

Middle row (left to right): Mrs. Margaret Farr (personnel manager); Mr. Douglas Jaggs (store manager); Mr. Ken Foster (assistant store manager); Mrs. Dorothy Cook (Lingerie/Candy).

Seated (left to right): Miss Sarah Davies (Ladies' Fashions); Miss Janet Price (office manager).

POETIC OCCASION

WHEN Norah Clapham, Supervisor, Central Wage Office at Robinsons, Hamilton, retired after 22 years Miss Dorothea Bechler, Personnel manager, composed these verses for a retirement party at her home.

October sixteen nineteen-eleven
A little girl came down from heaven
The parents named their daughter 'Norah'
And here is some of her wonderful 'stora'.

The happy girl with brains galore
She helped her parents in their store
She learned the business and much more
Studied accounting and kept score.

Hotels she ran with easy grace
The treasurer's office in world-war days
Until the fighting was all done
And final victory was won.

Things changed, and other plans were made
England for Canada she did trade
Home she came, I'm glad to tell,
When she joined Robinson's personnel.

She helped Miss Bechler, Wycherler too
To build a happy Robinson crew,
She managed many department sales
Controlled the marking and incoming mails.

Her kindness, helpfulness was clear
As Staff Association Secretary year after year
Sent fruit and flowers for those quite ill
Looked after Pensioners and paid the bill.

The time has come for her to leave
Robinson's her friends who truly grieve
To see their Norah now depart
They'll miss her dearly from their heart.

EVESHAM: Mrs. C. Bayes lives in a small village called Middle Littleton about five minutes from the store. She enjoys old time dancing, painting and keep-fit classes.



BATH: Mrs. Peggy Alcock refers to her office as the "Doctor's Surgery" - staff only visit her when something is wrong. But she doesn't get many "patients". (She has recently become treasurer of the AAA.) Her hobbies are tapestry and knitting.



FINCHLEY: Mrs. Caroline Powis, joined the company in 1968 as Wages clerk. Her hobbies are dancing and reading.



COVENTRY: Miss Breeda Higgins has been in the Wages office since leaving school. She is assisted part-time by Mrs. Margaret Redmond who was previously in the office for 10 years before leaving to have a son.

T. J. HUGHES - LONDON ROAD: Miss Janet Lloyd, who is an active member of the store's AAA committee, joined the company from school in 1974.



PRESTON: Mrs. Bertha Barber started in 1973 as Catering clerk and transferred to Wages in 1975.



SHREWSBURY: Miss Alison Bridges, second eldest of eight children, is another young lady who lives in a pretty little village - Church Preen, 15 miles from Shrewsbury. She travels to the store in an old Morris 1000 and had on one occasion to abandon the car in a four foot snow drift in a country lane. A friendly snowplough took her back home!



WESTON-SUPER-MARE: Mrs. Mary Rogers re-joined the company in 1973. She had previously worked in the Check Office for James Colmer from 1957-1969. Apart from wages she looks after Customer Accounts and Service/Cash Office. Hobbies include knitting, home decorating and swimming.



WOLVERHAMPTON: Mrs. Lynn Masters, wage office supervisor, has been with the company since 1970. Her hobbies are horse riding and dress-making - both of which she does well. But one of her main interests is showing her award winning Pharaoh hound, "Tut".



ALFRED RETIRES AFTER 45 YEARS

ALFRED Boothroyd, Stourbridge's longest serving member of staff has retired after 45 years.

Alfred started as a salesman with J. H. Stringer Ltd., the private family business run by the late Mr. Harry Stringer and his brother Harold. The business was sold some years later to the Broadmead group of companies, then to Macowards Ltd. and eventually to Owen Owen Ltd.

But he actually started his career in 1923 as an indentured apprentice with Messrs. Affleck & Brown of Manchester to learn the business of a draper.

He has been mainly concerned with Soft Furnishings and Linens and has been manager of the Linen department for some years. He has no plans for his retirement, but, having a large garden, will find plenty there to occupy his time. While not calling himself a keen gardener he enjoys the results and he will indulge his other pleasure, motoring.

Two of his assistants have also recently retired. Betty Allen who joined Stringer in 1953, started in the Linen department but when it was decided to add to the House Furnishings, she was asked to buy cut glass and later luggage, lampshades and gifts.

Part time

In 1966 she decided to retire but was persuaded to work part-time, still buying lampshades and gifts.

She then came back full circle to the Linen department.

Annie Phillips has also taken up a life of leisure. She joined the staff in July 1965 and spent the whole of her service in the Linen department.

Bell ringing paid off

FREDDIE Franks paraded the streets ringing a hand bell to mark the start of sale time at our Shrewsbury store.

And his efforts certainly paid off. For when the doors opened on the Monday morning more than 100 customers were queuing outside.

Despatch porter Freddie has worked at the store for 30 years and his bell ringing has become a long standing tradition.

Holiday prize

LOOKING forward to a holiday in Torremolinos, Spain, is consultant Jean Bate who has won first prize in a national sales competition organised by Singer sewing machines.

To win the holiday, Jean, from our Wolverhampton store, sold 202 machines in just 13 weeks.

Junior of the year

COLLETTE Hutchinson a trainee at our Clayton Square hairdressing salons has been named Junior of the Year in the Seligman and Latz North West Championship for the second year running. It's not surprising she has also been named as the top Owen Owen Junior of the Year.

Sponsored walk

A sponsored walk by Bath staff along the Avon and Kennett Canal raised more than £64 for the Cottage Homes and the Purley Childrens Trust.

In their Easter bonnets. . .

STAFF from Weston-super-Mare and Taunton were among the guests at a Spring dance and Easter Bonnet competition organised by members of the Bath store and Amateur Athletic Association.

Monopoly on beauty

There is a limit

A CUSTOMER in Chester buying net curtains was only too anxious to help when the assistant asked her the size of the window.

"I don't know, but here's a photograph of the house."

"Oh, yes," said the well trained assistant. "With that type of sash window you will need approximately X metres."

"Oh no," said the customer, "it's not for that window. It's for the one at the back!"

IT was an all Owen Owen semi-final at a beauty contest held at Newport's Helmaen International Night Club.

And the judges were hard put to decide between Jane Williams (Rare Set), Sylvia Burke (Shoes), Aileen Millard (Carmen wigs) and Sylvia Hoskins (Coro-craft).

But after lengthy deliberation they decided to award first place to Sylvia who now goes forward to the Miss Gwent competition later this year.

Up at five o'clock— just to say 'Thanks'

FOR five years stores in the centre of Liverpool have been waiting for the opening of the city's new £45 million underground system — the first to be completed outside London for more than 80 years.

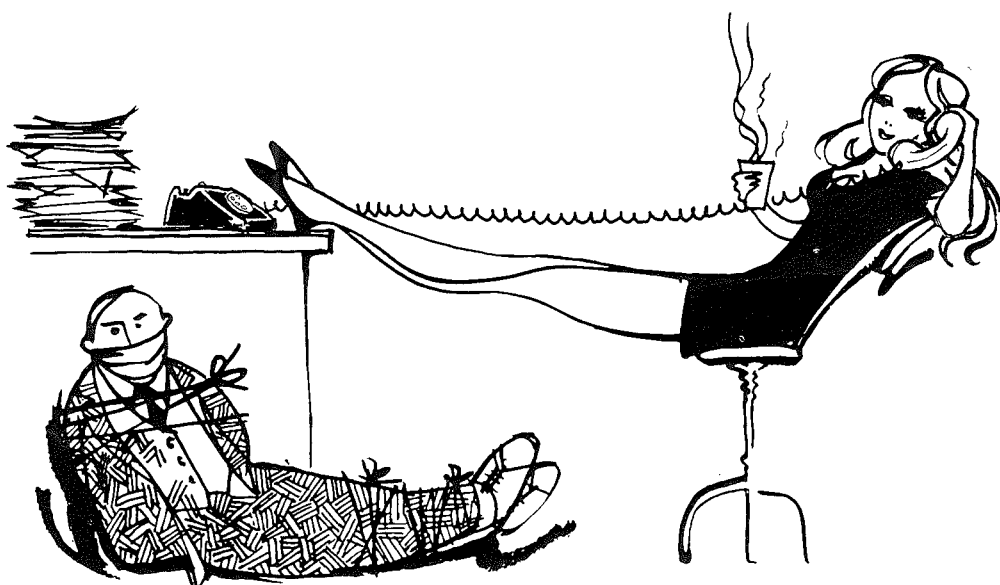
To mark the inauguration of the Wirral Loop Line, Miss Ethel

Trowler, our Clayton Square general manager, was there — at 5.59 a.m. — to say "Thanks" to the train driver. So important did she consider the occasion that she had to get an alarm call at 4.45 a.m. to ensure being on the first train through the tunnel.

The line between James Street Station (in the business quarter) and Central Station (in the heart of the shopping centre) was

closed for 22 months while the final work was carried out. Although a special bus service carried shoppers over the last stretch Miss Trowler hopes that the new tube system will attract more people to Clayton Square from outlying parts of Merseyside.

With Miss Trowler on the first train were Mayors and civic dignitaries as well as Mr. Henry Cotton, buying director.



.... I'M SORRY, MR. HIGGINS IS TIED UP AT THE MOMENT.

Overheard in T. J. Hughes, London Road

On the Childrenswear Department

CUSTOMER: "I am returning this because it's marked"

ASSISTANT: "Well, they are all marked Substandard, Madam".

CUSTOMER: "Well mine wasn't, the only label said SECONDS".

Crossword Answers

Across: 1. Punch, 2. Punch, 3. Punch, 4. Punch, 5. Punch.

Down: 1. Peas, 2. Ewes, 3. Hens, 4. Seas, 5. H's.

COST CUTTING BUYERS SLASH PRICES

It is a unique set-up. No other stores in our group have their own multi-million pounds buying and merchandising operation running alongside the Owen Owen Central buying Office. But, of course everyone recognises that the three T. J. Hughes stores are "different".

Merchandise Controller Phillip Brosgarth explains: "In the present economic climate people who normally have enough money to buy without shopping around for bargains are now looking for good buys. That's why they come to T. J.'s.

"We buy very keenly - usually big parcels - and sell just as keenly.

"Anyone can get themselves bargains at our three stores in Liverpool, Bootle or Birkenhead.

"Big jobbers - the people who have parcels of bankrupt stock, fire salvage, good standard seconds - always give us the option to examine and buy.

"We have the experienced buyers who know whether the merchandise will sell. Buyers don't just rely on their own expertise. They constantly talk to staff on the sales floors to ensure that they know what the customers are saying and buying - or not buying."

T.J.'s are, perhaps basically autonomous in buying and merchandising and this is backed up by aggressive marketing and promotion.

Added Phil Brosgarth, "The rate of stock turn demands fast reaction from the buyers. That is why the team spirit is so important. The SM's, ASM's, and sales assistants can keep us in the picture by giving an honest appraisal of customer reaction. Even the stock room staff comment on our efforts - and not always kindly!"

Rene Miller is one of the longest serving members in the department and she prides herself on knowing what her customers want. In fact when she is not out and about buying in new stock she is often on the shop floor, talking to the customers.

"Fashions are inclined to change very quickly, so it's important to know which way the market is going", she says. "I would hate

to have to judge the market by sales computer read outs, when it's so easy to meet the customers personally."

Rene joined T. J. Hughes 30 years ago as a junior on baby linen and moved to the buying department when it was set up 16 years ago.

"On my first buying operation I had thousands of pounds to

His knowledge has made a major contribution to the success of the D.I.Y. department which has vastly increased in size during the last 16 years.

"More and more people are now turning to D.I.Y. as a cheap way of improving their homes," he said. "We stock some of the cheapest equipment in the country and the customers know it, they

drop the price quoted in an advert if we know someone else is selling cheaper on the day of the sale," said Mr. Brosgarth.

"Obviously we ensure that we don't compete pricewise with Clayton Square on the same products - which are mainly centrally bought. It's usually on our own buying that we slash prices," he added.



T. J. Hughes buyers left to right—Mr. L. Naylor, Mr. P. Brosgarth, Mr. C. Backhouse, Miss B. Mulholland, Miss I. Miller, Miss J. Brown, Mr. K. Roberts, Mr. J. Dearnley, Mr. F. Masserick, Mr. P. Lathom, Mr. I. Evans, Mr. J. Gregory, Mr. A. J. Osborne.

spend. It seemed a fantastic sum in those days to a housewife used to dealing in shillings and pence. But since then I must have bought goods worth millions of pounds and still managed to keep my housekeeping straight!"

For Tony Peloe, buying for the Do-it-Yourself department has meant a new hobby. He is now an expert at home repairs and has made many improvements to his house in Southport.

come back time and time again."

But one customer they have never seen again at the London Road store is the Irishman who came in to buy wallpaper. "Obviously, after he had purchased the wallpaper he was asked if he wanted paste," said Tony. "He said he didn't but he did want some drawing pins and he replied that he was going to, because he would soon be moving and that he had no intention of leaving the wallpaper behind."

But the majority of T. J. Hughes customers are just looking for good quality goods at rock bottom prices.

"Customers examine our adverts and see that they can buy a Hoover Junior - to quote just one example - at less than in a discount warehouse. We claim to be cheaper than anyone else at the time of purchase. We will even

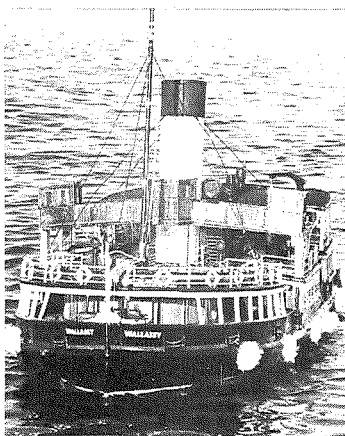
Although he's a keen Everton fan he reckons that the end-of-season success of the Liverpool and Everton teams, with a run of cup semi-finals, cost the city stores a lot of money because so much was spent by fans travelling to away games - as far as France and Rome.

Charlie Backhouse, Buying Controller, who has been with the group for 40 years started as a sales assistant in Men's Wear at Clayton Square.

He obviously enjoys work and he could write a novel about his wartime experiences which include spells in P.O.W. camps in Germany from which he escaped twice. The first time he was recaptured but the second effort got him to Switzerland.

Nowadays he enjoys his spare-time role as vice-chairman of the Liverpool branch of the Royal British Legion and treasurer of its city centre club.

Dad's a model-maker



JANE Bennet, assistant sales manager of Haberdashery and Dress Fabrics in Clayton Square is rightly proud of her father, Mr. Eric Bennet.

His hobby is building scale replicas of the Mersey ferry boats, of which sadly for Liverpool, there are very few left.

Pictured here is a replica of the 'Wallasey', which was built in 1928 by the Caledonian Ship-building company at Dundee for Wallasey Corporation.

This model is more than five foot long and is run by a twin electric engine which is remote controlled.

Chester's ghostly rival

CHESTER'S ghostly figure which haunts the fixtures in the ancient store seems to have a rival - a phantom monk who has been sending shivers down the spines of our Shrewsbury staff.

Legend has it that the monk was murdered and bricked up in the walls of a monastery which once stood on the site of the store. But according to Fred Franks and Vera Williams he is still very much alive.

Says despatch porter Fred: "I have had many personal experiences of the ghost. The door leading from the alterations room to the Wages office has been opened for me. A bottle in the hairdressing salon moved three yards from a low shelf to the door, on its own, without breaking. I have heard crashing in the Hardware department but after taking a look round nothing had been moved. And even lights have been put out from the wall switch when there has been no one else in the room".

Vera who is an ASM on Dress Fabrics and Haberdashery, has had a similar experience, but she reckons the most frightening one was when the phantom actually touched her.

"I was working late in my department and the general manager was in his office at the top of the building," she said. "I leaned on the counter deciding it was about time to call it a day when I felt someone come up behind me and hands were placed on my shoulders as if to say, 'time to go home'."

"I presumed it was the general manager, but when I looked over my shoulder there was no one there".

Other people have felt the ghostly presence too. "On one occasion three staff together in Dress Fabrics Department felt a sudden distinct coldness around them. Following a casual remark from one of the ladies "I think we've got a visitor" the temperature soon returned to normal.

What happened to the pancake?



Julia Howells was provided with a pan from the Hardware department where she works in the Shrewsbury store to take part in the town's Pancake Race. Julia, in a red, white and blue outfit devised by Display, was certainly the most outstanding dresser. But after the pan and pancake had parted company for a while during the race in Old Market Square, she couldn't quite take the lead.

IRISH CROSSWORD PUZZLE

from Wolverhampton

	1	2	3	4	5
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					

ACROSS: 1. . . . and Judy, 2. A drink, 3. A heavy blow, 4. A magazine, 5. To perforate.

DOWN: 1. Vegetables, 2. Female Sheep, 3. They lay eggs, 4. Oceans, 5. These are sometimes dropped. Solution - Page 6

FLAGS on sticks for only 2½p or big ones measuring one yard by 18 inches at 11½p . . . that's how much costs have risen in the 25 years since the Queen's Accession in 1952.

This advertisement, which appeared in the Liverpool Echo in May 1952 resulted in thousands of Owen Owen flags and strings of bunting being used for city street parties. Notice the different style for 1977.

THEY JOINED THE FIRM IN ACCESSION YEAR



FIFTEEN Merseyside members of management and staff, who started in Accession year, received 25-year awards at a special ceremony in Stafford House, Liverpool are pictured here.

They are (left to right): Mrs. M. Carter (Clayton Square), Mr. R. Orbison (Bootle

Centre), Mr. R. Quinn (Bootle Centre), Mr. G. Simms (T. J. Hughes), Mr. D. Edgeley (Clayton Square), Mrs. A. Earl (T. J. Hughes, London Road), Mrs. D. Sir (T. J. Hughes, London Road), Mrs. G. Lomas (T. J. Hughes, London Road), Mrs. K. Brown (Audley House), Mrs. E. M.

Rice/Renton (Clayton Square), Mr. G. B. Watt (Clayton Square), Mrs. F. Long (Clayton Square), Miss E. W. R. Rigby (Clayton Square), Mrs. M. Wells (T. J. Hughes, London Road), Miss G. E. Evans (T. J. Hughes, London Road).

At Chester . . .



AT Chester another eight management and staff received long service awards from the chairman seen here fourth from right. On the left is Mr. T. Brent, general manager of the Chester store.

Left to right are: Mr. T. Brent, Mr. K. Stewart, Miss H. Pleavin, Mr. B. Frankland, Mr. K. Tittle, Miss J. Tozer, the Chairman, Miss M. Pugh, Mr. H. Edwards, Mr. W. Thomas.



and Southampton

where Personnel Director, Miss Elizabeth Mee presented a clock to Mrs. J. McDonald

Royal Ball Guests

MRS. Cathy Doran, one of our telephonists at Clayton Square, has just returned from a Royal Masquerade Ball at Windsor Castle which she describes as "fabulous".

Her husband won a ticket for two through his firm to attend the Royal party.



OWEN OWEN

FOR

Ceremonial Decorations

UNION JACKS . . . specially printed in vat dyes on soft draping rayon spun . . . much superior to the cheap cotton so often used . . . flags hemmed ready for attachment to sticks or poles . . . range from size **2/3**
36 x 18 ins. at
To size 68 x 48 ins. at **10/11**

Flags attached to sticks (or poles for the larger sizes), range **6d**
from 12 x 8 ins. at
To size 68 x 48 ins. mounted on 96ins. long pole at **14/11**

STREAMERS . . . 12 Union Jacks, each 12 x 8 ins. stitched to strong tape, approx. length **4/11**
24 feet. Complete
8 large plastic shields 18 x 24 ins. depicting a Lion Rampant on Union Jack, the Crown and Laurel wreath on the St. George Flag and the Union Jack. Overall length approx. 30 feet. Complete **8/11**

12 triangular Pennants each 18 x 9 ins. over-all length 25 feet. Strong plastic in red, white and blue. Complete **2/11**

12 triangular strong plastic Pennants each 7 x 10 ins. in red white and blue. Over-all length 21 feet. Complete **1/11**

PLASTIC SHIELDS . . . 18 x 24 ins. printed on strong, supple material, depicting a Lion Rampant on Union Jack; Laurel Wreath on the St. George Flag or the Union Jack Each **10½d**

UNION JACKS, STREAMERS & SHIELDS AT UNBEATABLE PRICES

Choose now while there is a good selection.
The finest in Liverpool for value.

Owen Owen Ltd., Clayton Square.
Liverpool. Telephone Roy. 6060

HERE'S A HEALTH UNTO HER MAJESTY



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Clayton Square, Liverpool. Tel. 709 6060. Eastgate St. & Bridge St. Chester Tel. 23112

DURING this month many of our older staff will be recalling what they were doing during 1952. Here are just a few examples:

THOSE WERE THE DAYS

Shrewsbury store still had its own funeral parlour and Chapel of Rest in those days with staff carpenters making each coffin individually.

The funeral business also brought trade to the Menswear department where there was a good stock of morning coats and top hats!

Post-war rationing had only recently relaxed and a new model fashion room had been opened with Fashion Shows at which top models came from London to display the clothes.

Crocodile handbags retailed at up to £100 and sold so readily that the buyer had a chauffeur driven car to bring the merchandise back to the store immediately after she had selected it.

Clayton Square staff recall the summer outings on Wednesday afternoons when all staff were off.

Mrs. Alma Spreag, Cash Office manager, has fond memories of trips to places like Blackpool where

this picture was taken, (Mrs. Spreag is extreme left back row).

At Southampton there were 500 on the staff. The annual outing in 1952 took the staff to sea in a Red Funnel steamer. The voyage down the Solent to Southsea Pier was a noisy affair with a band playing full blast.

On another voyage - Bournemouth this time - involved Father Neptune in a "Crossing the Line" ceremony. A dummy was dropped overboard but obviously was too lifelike. The "body" was picked up by H.M. Coastguards who were not amused.

Twenty-five years ago the female staff at Southampton were required to wear black or navy dresses with just a touch of white if they wished. Women managers had to wear suits. No earrings were allowed.

And men wore only black or navy suits, white shirts and dark ties.

