

# Elvis alive and well in Compton Bassett!

Mike Hill, who admits that he is not a stranger to making a fool of himself, recently appeared as Elvis and several other daft characters in Compton Bassett village's winter amateur dramatics production 'Encore!Encore!'



Robert Hill and John Cleese on stage in 1957

"It was a great buzz," said Mike, "and as anybody who has been involved in 'am-dram' knows it's highly addictive! The show was in a 'revue' format with loads of comedy sketches and songs. This is my favourite format and it creates havoc backstage with all the quick changes and people falling over each other to try and get back in time for their next appearance. The Village Hall has benefited from a couple of extensions in the last five years with significant funding from the Company and landfill tax grants, so it made a heck of a difference getting changed in the warmth and in a bit of space rather than in a freezing tent tagged on to the back of the hall!"

### Family Tradition

Mike is not the first member of the Hill family to be attracted to the stage – his father and Group Chairman, Robert, could be found nowhere else during this school and university days. At school Robert was partly responsible for introducing John Cleese to the stage. "Cleesey was extremely shy, but 'Goon mad,'" recalled Robert. "I was asked to get a couple of friends and put a sketch together for the end of term party and managed to convince Cleesey to write the sketch and actually perform it with us, which he had never done before. It was called the 'East Acton Stick Dance' and was a take off of Morris dancing. As soon as Cleesey stood on stage everyone just fell about, and the rest is history."



Robert Hill and fellow actress in a Bristol University revue 'Acas High', 1958

The acting tradition extends back a further generation as Robert's father Grahame and two of his uncles Rowland and Mervyn often entertained friends and family as the 'Moonrakers'.



Mike Hill as 'The King!'

Mike Hill as 'Sir Solemnity Sourpuss'



(Left to right) Hill brothers Mervyn, Rowland and Grahame as the 'Moonrakers', 1951

## Jolly good sports!

### Swindon Half Marathon

Four staff took part in the marathon during October and all managed to complete the race in under two hours – excellent! Official times were: Richard Bond, Sales Manager at Purton - 1h50m02s; Rob Laird, Accountant at Marlborough - 1h54m34s; Jon Bucksey, Accountant at Marlborough - 1h55m25s and Louise Painting, Administrator with Hills Homes in Marlborough - 1h56m16s.



(Left to right) Richard Bond, Sales Manager, with Jon Bucksey, Divisional Accountant and Rob Laird, Management Accountant



Louise Painting

### Bowls



Congratulations to Barry Wheeler, Site Manager for Hills Homes (back row, second left) and his wife Gillian (front row, second left) who are members of the Purton bowls team which won the annual Wiltshire Bowlers Joint Council Mixed Galas staged around the County in August this year.

## New Employees

A warm 'Hills' welcome to the following employees who joined the Company between 1st July and 31st October 2005:

- Carleen Collings** - Credit Control Clerk, Marlborough
- Marie Hancock** - Accountant, Marlborough
- Adam McCaig** - Trainee Manager, Marlborough
- Amanda Bertoni** - Secretary / Administrator, Marlborough
- Pamela Parfett** - Sales Admin Clerk, Shorncliffe
- Mark Dumelow** - Plant Operative, Barton Court
- Nigel Bray** - Site Supervisor, Stanton St Quinton HRC
- Graham Doman** - Casual P/T Recycling Operative, Stanton ST Quinton HRC
- Darren Haakanson** - Chargehand, Chapel Farm
- Tony Miles** - LGV Driver, Purton
- Shaun Murphy** - Driver's mate, Compton Bassett
- Tony Baggus** - LGV Driver, Compton Bassett
- Richard Buckley** - Driver's Mate, Compton Bassett
- Dougal Campbell** - Driver's Mate, Compton Bassett
- Terry Wrigglesworth** - LGV Driver, Compton Bassett
- Frederick Green** - Driver's Mate, Compton Bassett
- Jodine Nelligan** - Driver's Mate, Compton Bassett
- Shelley Smith** - Driver's Mate, Compton Bassett
- Jon Hares** - LGV Driver, Compton Bassett
- Jamie Cerretelli** - Driver's Mate, Compton Bassett
- Stephen Jones** - LGV Driver, Compton Bassett
- David Long** - LGV Driver, Compton Bassett
- Peter Edgington** - Kerbside Transport Manager, Compton Bassett
- Christopher Clark** - LGV Driver, Compton Bassett
- Tanya Harrison** - P/T Temp Sales Administrator, Lickhill
- Stuart Allen** - Business Manager, Shorncliffe
- Denise Gough** - Sales Secretary, Marlborough
- James Reed** - Plant Manager, Shorncliffe

# intouch

THE HILLS GROUP NEWSLETTER

Issue 8 December 2005



# THE RIGHT MIX

See special feature on new Concrete venture

Hills Homes DVD enclosed See article on Page 6



Comment

by Alan Pardoe, Group Managing Director and Mike Hill, Company Secretary

**New addition to the Hills 'Family'**

October saw the birth of the Group's latest baby, Hills Concrete Limited. Conception was caused by the coupling of strategic changes within the concrete market and the Group's growing desire to acquire more of the aggregates value chain. After an interesting gestation period, the new venture is being cared for by a growing team of experienced staff focussed on ensuring that Hills Concrete becomes a significant regional player in the not too distant future. By providing first class service and delivering the highest quality products we are confident of its future success.



Alan Pardoe

**Performance Update**

Performance for the Group as a whole continues to be strong. The Aggregates division is performing above budget and the Waste Division is well above budget. Within the Waste Division both the disposal and recycling contract activities are significantly ahead, and although the Commercial Waste Collection activities did not have a good first six months, it looks as if their fortunes are beginning to change for the better. Hills Homes has achieved close to expectations so far this year but a quieter second half is forecast.



Mike Hill

We hope you all have a Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year!

**Stop Press!** As many of you know, Wiltshire County Council has just agreed to award two new 25-year contracts to the Group. This is great news and more details will obviously be featured in the next issue.

**Pretty in Pink Support for 'Research Breast Cancer'**

Staff at Marlborough head office took part in the "Wear it Pink" campaign in October and paid for the privilege of wearing an item of pink clothing for the day. The Company agreed to match the amount raised by staff and a total of £184.00 was donated.



(Back row, left to right) Shirley Elkins, Liz Carr, Marie Hancock, Karen Pithouse, Amanda Bertoni, Donna Fern, Rachael Potter, Sue Wyatt, Denise Gough, Mandy Wakefield. (Middle row) Jackie Robertson, Hazel Partridge, Kate Chipping, Carly Collings, Mike Hercock (Front) Monique Hayes, Adam McCaig, Alison Tomkins, Fiona Lawson

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The newsletter is printed on recycled paper.



Monique Hayes

Mixing it with the big boys!

Hills enter the ready-mixed market



Group Chairman, Robert Hill (left) and Paul Dixon, General Manager of Hills Concrete at the opening of the new site in Shorncliffe

**Brief History**

Back in the early 1980's many people might remember the existence of Hills Readymix - with concrete plants at The Spine Road in the Cotswold Water Park situated where Watermark have built holiday homes, and also in Durnfords Yard, in Bristol.

The market was very different in those days in that Hills Aggregates supplied quite a few concrete companies, but mainly to Mixconcrete's plants in Swindon, Devizes and Andover. This meant that sales of aggregates were not dependent on Hills Readymix. In fact, aggregate supplies to Hills Readymix, Bristol, were obtained from external suppliers.

Therefore, in the grand scheme of things, the Readymix business was less significant to the Group compared to other activities and as a result of this, Hills Readymix was sold to Pete Hart who re-branded it as Bristol Readymix. In order to protect aggregate sales when the business was sold, a legal agreement was entered into so that Bristol Readymix continued to buy from Hills Aggregates. Bristol Readymix expanded which led to a further plant at Compton Bassett again supplied by Hills Aggregates.

Over the years, Bristol Readymix sold to Tarmac, but still the agreement remained in place. Mixconcrete eventually sold out to Pioneer who closed the Devizes plant and changed the supply for Andover to United Marine Aggregates in which Pioneer had a 50% shareholding. Hills Aggregates supply continued to the Swindon Plant for a time and then ceased. Pioneer was subsequently taken over by Hanson who then supplied aggregates from their own local quarries.

**Opportunity knocks**

This sequence of events left Hills Aggregates heavily dependent on Tarmac who, over the years, had increased their volumes of concrete significantly so much so that despite losing supplies to Mixconcrete, aggregate sale volumes had actually increased.

The situation started to look precarious with Tarmac a few years ago when they acquired their own gravel deposit at Eysey Manor, near Cricklade and subsequently gained planning permission which included the provision of a Concrete Batching Plant.

Mindful of this threat, the Company and Tarmac attempted to discover an amicable solution, but after a couple of years of

talks and a few changes of Tarmac management, a solution was not found and Tarmac advised that they would not continue to use the Barn Ground Plant but instead, would re-locate to Eysey Manor. This took place in early November.

Bearing in mind how the market had changed for the sale of aggregate to concrete plants over the past ten years or so, there remained little opportunity to sell the Company's aggregate to any of the present concrete companies. Therefore, to protect the Company's position into the future, the Board of Directors decided to once again enter the ready-mixed concrete market, re-branding as Hills Concrete Limited.



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# The New Concrete Plant at Shorncote



(Above 3) The completed plant

(Main image) The site under construction

**A**n order for the supply of a concrete plant and associated groundworks was placed in June 2005 with the successful contractors being Ikon for the civil works and Powys Engineering for the supply of the plant.

The plant chosen being a Steelfield which had been previously used by Steetley in Scunthorpe. Powys Engineering completely stripped and re-built the plant using mostly new parts and included an automated computer controlled batching system by Practicon allowing the batcher to operate the system by simply inputting customer and mix details including the volume required. The system is quite advanced and, amongst other features, keeps a running total of all of the constituent materials used.

The design of various strength mixes of concrete is a very complex business involving determining the quantity of each constituent required to arrive at the appropriate workability and strength at the most economical cost.

To do this, the company engaged a concrete consultant – Beton Services – which is run by Jon Seller who in the past ran RMC's technical department. As well as developing the mixes, Jon will look after the day-to-day technical aspect and will also see the Company through to QSRMC Membership (Quality Standard of Readymixed Concrete) which is a pre-requisite to supplying major contracts including house builders such as our own Hills Homes.

The target for the opening of the plant was to coincide with Tarmac moving from our Barnground Site to their own at Eysey Manor at the beginning of November.

Despite this tight schedule, the plant opened for business on Monday 10th October and produced and sold 400m<sup>3</sup> of concrete in the first three weeks, which is a credit to the people involved.

The Company's Project Engineer, Graham Vanstone, ably ran the build and construction programme which allowed the tight timescale to be achieved.

## Meet the team

As concrete was a new venture for the Company, it was necessary to bring in new people with the appropriate skills and experience to run the operation.

Stuart Allen was recruited as Business Manager to run the Shorncote operation. Stuart has vast experience in the industry having spent many years with Tarmac as a Sales Manager and attained a Concrete Technology Diploma early on in his career.

Stuart will shortly move to manage the next plant in Compton Bassett and will leave the Shorncote operation in the capable hands Stuart Cordy who recently joined us from Hanson Premix and also brings with him a lot of experience. Both Stuarts are currently working on spreading the good word and growing the customer base.

Reporting to Stuart is Plant Manager Jim Reed, who held a similar position at Tarmac. Steve Robbins fills the role of Concrete Production Technician and for the time being is a bit of a "Jack of all Trades" looking after on site technical work, various plant duties as well as acting as relief Batcher.

Administration and IT have been rather a strain as the Company had to design, introduce and implement systems which did not otherwise exist and in a very short timescale. Whilst there are still tweaks required as the unforeseen emerges from the woodwork, the result was a triumph for Adrian Knowles and his team.

Denise Gough is another newcomer to the Company and holds the position of Sales Secretary and whilst her future duties will be working alongside and giving support to the Business Managers; in the short term she has been working with Adrian learning and implementing the new sales invoicing system.

So far as the delivery of concrete is concerned, the Company decided to opt to engage franchisees. This means that the Company offers a franchise to enable owner operators to purchase their own vehicles. These vehicles will be operated in Company livery delivering the Company's product and on a minimum five year contract. The current operators are Paul Prout, who has a 4 cubic metre MAN truck with a Hymix Mixer, and Steven Blow, who owns a Scania 8 cubic metre truck and a McPhee Mixer Unit. There are further vacancies for franchisees at present and into the future.



Stuart Allen



Stuart Cordy



Jim Reed



Steve Robbins



Adrian Knowles



Denise Gough



Steven Blow



Paul Prout

## Future Plans

The longer term plans are to build a business consisting of six or more Plants situated in an area where they can be supplied with our own aggregates, probably within a 30 mile radius of Shorncote.

In the immediate future, a Plant will be built at Compton Bassett which will be virtually identical to that at Shorncote. Work started at Compton Bassett on 17th October 2005 and is once again on a tight build programme, with a target completion of 31st January 2006.

# Profiles....

## Adrian Knowles and Dave Bevan - The 'Numbers' Men

Adrian and Dave head up the accounting teams that ensure that the thousands of transactions that take place are recorded, reported and translated into management information. They also play key roles in developing future financial targets and analysing the viability of potential projects and ventures.

Both have followed different qualification and career paths. Adrian graduated from King's College London in Pharmacology before qualifying as a Chartered Accountant (logical progression!). He then worked for BT Plc and Halma Plc before joining Hills as Financial Controller for Minerals and Waste in 1998. Outside work, Adrian enjoys life with his wife, Rachael, and three children, Catherine, Alex and Peter, as well as being an 'armchair' cricket fan and following the fortunes of West Ham United. "It's great to be working in a dynamic environment where change is the norm," Adrian told us, "and I see no reason why the recent significant growth cannot be maintained. The opportunities, particularly within our waste businesses, are clearly real and exciting."

Dave, on the other hand, was still in short trousers when he joined the Company in 1983 straight from school. He was interviewed by Alan Pardoe and joined the Group's trainee accounting apprentice scheme. Dave qualified as a Management Accountant in 1988 and became Financial Controller of Minerals and Waste in 1995. When Adrian joined in 1998, Dave moved to take on the Hills Property and Group accounting responsibilities. Dave is a self-confessed Swindon Town supporter and when there is not football on TV he enjoys walking his two Labrador dogs. "I have always enjoyed working for the Company and I think that it is as busy and exciting a time now as any I have known in the last 20 odd years." Dave is married to Ceri and they have just had their first child, a baby girl called Robyn, so many congratulations must go to them.



Adrian Knowles (left) and Dave Bevan (right)

## Capturing the quality

Most new homes developers claim to offer quality – but how many really achieve it?

Hills Homes has set out to demonstrate its high standards by commissioning a DVD which guides potential customers through the quality maze. It consists of a series of modules which deal in turn with the Company's ethos, its approach to design, the quality of its build, and a house tour which demonstrates the various finishes and fittings on offer. It concludes with a series of (unprompted) customer interviews which give universal praise to the Company.

The programme was shot largely at the Ermin Gate development at Priory Vale, Swindon but also includes a visit to the successful Newcroft Gardens development in Calne and to a series of previous developments across the region.

A complimentary copy of the DVD is enclosed with this issue of "in touch". It will be available for viewing at site sales offices.

If you have any queries regarding the DVD or require any extra copy, please contact Fiona Lawson, Sales Supervisor, at the Marlborough office. Information on current and future Hills Homes developments can also be found on [www.hills-homes.co.uk](http://www.hills-homes.co.uk)



Fiona Lawson and Bob Sparrow (both far right) with the production team

Woodmeade, Charlton Kings, Cheltenham

# Woodmeade sets the tone

September saw the launch of the view home at our prestigious Woodmeade site in Cheltenham where we have encountered an exceptional level of interest. Three properties have been reserved to date all with extras from our 'Selections' range.

Location, Location, Location have visited the site, interested in featuring it on their magazine. Watch this space for more news...

The winners of the prize draw held on the launch weekend will be dining in suitable style at Le Petit Blanc owned and run by Raymond Blanc.



The view home at Woodmeade

Ermin Gate, Priory Vale

## Circus star

Sales at our latest Swindon venture at Priory Vale are progressing well and we will be releasing the next phase of detached properties on 6th January.

The next part of our Ermin Gate site now reaching completion is the classically inspired and elegant circus. A new show home has just been opened so potential purchasers can now wander round one of these four bedroom homes at their leisure.



The Brambles, Malmesbury

## On the up and up

Our new site in Malmesbury - The Brambles - is gathering pace with the scaffolding due to come down any day and the view home opening in mid January.

The site consists of seven properties faced in traditional Cotswold reconstituted stone with natural slate roofs. The 4 semi-detached 3 bedroom houses and 3 detached 4 bedroom houses are priced between £185,000 and £295,000.



Artists impression of Plots 5, 6 & 7 at The Brambles

## Moving pictures



When you have a spare moment take time to visit the exciting new Hills Homes website on [www.hills-homes.co.uk](http://www.hills-homes.co.uk). Complete with virtual tours and videos it takes us to a new level of design flair and technology.

## New arrivals

Congratulations to Andy and Sarah Martin, Administration Assistant with Hills Homes – a baby girl called Eleanor Rose, born on 1st November and to Ceri and Dave Bevan, Financial Controller - a baby girl called Robyn, born on 23 November 2005.



Sarah and Eleanor Martin



Dave, Ceri and Robyn Bevan

# Compact – yes! Bijou – no!

Hills Waste recently took delivery of a new compactor to operate on the landfill at Compton Bassett. The Bomag BC97RB has an operating weight of 45 tonnes and is 4.5 metres wide, easily the biggest compactor the Company has ever operated. "This machine is massive," Mike Webster, General Manager of the Waste Division told us. "It is the equivalent of 9 Indian elephants, 6½ African elephants or 505 people my size!"



Charlie Lane, Compactor Operative (right) with Dave Smith, Foreman (left) and Peter Ingram, Plant Operative



Charlie Lane, sizes up the new Bomag



The compactor on the landfill

This machine can compact to over 1 tonne per cubic metre and can handle up to 1,500 tonnes per day. Charlie Lane who operates the machine commented, "This machine noticeably compacts better than the last one, as well as being able to push bigger loads." It uses hydrostatic transmission to 4 independent motors on each wheel to ensure optimum traction. Comfort is also important - the operator's cab is suspended on rubber mountings and the seat is pneumatically suspended reducing vibration and shocks to the driver.

These machines are getting clever too. "This one is fitted with GPS and a computer," Chris Eels the Assistant Waste Facilities Manager told us. "It can detect when it has a fault and actually emails Bomag itself telling them about the problem, where the machine is and even books a service technician to come out to site!"

## Bowling Green helps restore historic embankment

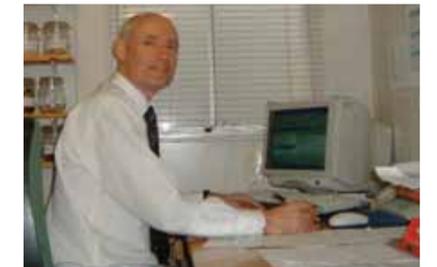
Bowling Green Farm quarry is currently supplying all the materials that will be used to renew the embankment on the Paddington to Bristol Railway Link at Challow, near Wantage. Originally engineered by Isambard Kingdom Brunel in March 1833, the current repair works

are being undertaken by McAlpine, and the project will use about 1,500 tonnes of clean stone for the haul roads, 13,000 tonnes of Class 1A material for the embankment repairs and approximately 2,000 tonnes of topsoil to dress the embankments.

# Success for 'on-line' quote system

Thanks to the updated Hills website, found on a web search by RE-Construction Ltd (based in Germany), Hills Aggregates have negotiated and won a major contract to supply materials for a new Lidl supermarket in Gloucester. To-date 1,000 tonnes of the 3,000 tonne requirement have been delivered.

"All negotiations were conducted via the internet with no verbal contact until after we had won the contract," said Steve Mead, Telesales Co-ordinator based at Shorncliffe. "The on-line quoting system has been extremely successful and enquiries have increased considerably over the last three months. As a result we have managed to secure some good, high value orders."



Steve Mead, Telesales Co-ordinator

# Vitacress goes greener with warrior compost

Anyone who has ever opened a packet of designer salad leaves, or bought a ready-made sandwich, has probably eaten something grown by Vitacress Salads Ltd.

Now Vitacress, one of Europe's largest growers of salad leaf crops, has switched to Warrior recycled compost to condition the soil at its organic site in Wiltshire.

Hills has won a contract to supply 3500m<sup>3</sup> of compost to the farm which grows salad leaves for many of the UK's major retail chains.

Recycled compost is growing in popularity, particularly among producers who want to take a sustainable approach to growing. Made from green waste such as plant trimmings, prunings and leaves, it both nourishes soil and improves its structure.

Vitacress added organic produce to its range in 2000, and now has 12 accredited sites

worldwide. Yet producing organic baby leaf salads is a great challenge as customers demand high and consistent quality of produce. To ensure this quality, the company developed world-leading standards of production. Now the introduction of compost made from recycled green waste has become a key part of this production.

With strict Soil Association standards, it is vital that the compost being used conforms to a strict set of criteria. Each batch of compost must be traceable to its source and have tests to ensure the absence of salmonella and ecoli.

To meet these requirements, Hills was chosen as the compost supplier of choice for Vitacress Salads. Hills is one of 65 compost producers now registered on The Composting Association BSI PAS 100 Certification Scheme – a scheme that ensures the safety of all products which meet the PAS 100 specification.



"Warrior recycled compost definitely improves the structure of the soil and helps it to retain moisture," says Chris Bester, Organics Manager at Vitacress.

"This is great news for Hills and for recycled compost as a whole," says Stephen Palmer, "we are pleased to be able to offer Vitacress a local and plentiful supply of compost - compost that we know is making a real difference."

(Above left) Compost being loaded for transport to Vitacress

(Left) Spreading the compost at the Vitacress farm

(Right) Steve Palmer, Recycling Sales Representative



## Wootton Bassett Golf and Country Club



Marc Eltham

Wootton Bassett Golf and Country Club have added twelve new greens to their Golf Course and they are all looking in top form thanks to material supplied by Hills Aggregates.

In February this year, Eddie Shah, (who some of you may remember was the owner of the 'Today' Newspaper which was the first newspaper in Britain to use colour print), invited Hills Aggregates to a meeting to discuss if it was possible to source an alternative supply of a 'Root Zone Material', which had been coming from Leighton Buzzard. He made it clear that he was keen to use local suppliers.

After a great deal of debate and testing, an approved method was found, by using 70% Silica Sand from Compton Bassett and 30% Soil. The Root Zone is used on tees and greens. "As you can see from the pictures, our method has proved very successful," Marc Eltham, Sales Representative told us. "To date we have supplied 5,500 tonnes of different products for this project. We are hoping to continue our three year association with Eddie Shah when he implements plans to extend the hotel."



Before and after pictures of one of the greens

# Graduate joins New Manager Programme

The Group welcomed the second recruit to the New Manager Programme in September. The recruitment process commenced in April and concentrated on the UK's leading universities. Three months and three rounds of interviews later Adam McCaig was offered and duly accepted the position. He came through a gruelling final interview day involving a tour of the operations, team role exercises and individual presentations to directors and senior managers regarding the conflict between the world of commerce and protecting the environment and implications to the waste business. 'I found that last day very challenging but really interesting', remembers Adam, 'the tour of Compton Bassett site operations and the Newcroft Gardens development allowed me to really get to know the Company, and the more I got to know, the more I wanted the position'.



With Peter Andrew, Waste Disposal Manager



With Nick King, Commercial Director of Hills Homes

Like thousands of other graduates Adam had been applying for many different graduate trainee positions. 'Compared to the other companies that interviewed me and offered me a job, Hills and its staff were much more personal and friendly. Often these friendly companies are fairly static and aren't really going anywhere, but I definitely got the impression and still have, that positive changes are happening and that it will be a dynamic firm to work for in the years to come'.

Adam, who hails from Reading, has recently finished reading Psychology at Swansea University. 'It was an interesting subject to study', recalls Adam 'although I realised half way through that I didn't want to specialise in it as a career. I'm pretty sure that it will come in useful in a management context'.

Adam spent the first five weeks of the programme with Hills Homes that included completing a project comparing Hills product and sales strategy with that of our major rivals, and presented it to directors and managers. 'Adam presented particularly well', commented Lance Parry the General Manager of Hills Homes, 'it was clear, concise and well structured. It was critical and constructive. Adam seemed naturally adept at recognising the issues involved, and identified well our strengths and weaknesses compared to our competitors. His recommendations were useful, some of which we are already putting into practice.'

Adam has just completed the next phase of the programme within the Waste Disposal activities. 'I have found my time with Waste Disposal a real education', said Adam, 'certainly as I was coming from a position of an ignorant rubbish producer! There appear to be many short term and long term challenges in what seems to be a rapidly changing industry'. He undertook a project investigating ways of improving the skip waste sorting activity at Chapel Farm that he recently presented to interested directors and managers. 'Adam grasped all the key operational factors regarding the different methods of sorting from manual to fully automated as well as the different issues surrounding each type of facility,' said Pete Andrew who heads up the waste disposal activities.

'I'm really pleased with how the programme is going', said Mike Hill who heads up the programme, 'not only with how Adam is responding to the challenges, but also with the Homes and Waste Disposal

As one career ends, another begins. During his first week Adam felt privileged to be shown around the quarrying operations by John Wheeler on his last day before retiring.



Adam and John Wheeler



teams and the efforts they have put in, as well as the tireless administration of the programme by Monique Hayes. The programme has evolved well from the last one and I would wager that there are not many companies who are running a graduate management programme as good as this one'.



Adam in 'presentation mode'

## Exam success

Congratulations to Jon Bucksey who has passed the professional examination for membership of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) and to Monique Hayes for passing the Advanced Certificate in Sales and Marketing from the Institute of Sales and Marketing Management (ISMM).



Jon Bucksey, Divisional Accountant, and Monique Hayes, Office and Projects Supervisor

## Long Service

There are many employees who have worked for the Company for a considerable period of time and we would like to acknowledge those who have reached significant milestones in the year 2005.

These milestones start at 10 years' service and go on to include service for every five years thereafter. Congratulations to:



Top: Richard Elbrow, Nigel Wilson, Brian Fitzpatrick.



Middle: Michael Miles, Roderick Smart, Gordon Strange.



Left: Terry Moore

### 10 years service

**Richard Elbrow**, LGV Driver, Purton.  
**Nigel Wilson**, Area Site Supervisor, Compton Bassett MRF. **Brian Fitzpatrick**, Assistant Waste Facilities Manager, Purton.

### 15 years service

**Michael Miles**, LGV Driver, Purton.  
**Roderick Smart**, Foreman, Earthmoving, Shornote.

### 20 years service

**Angela Smith**, Part time Cleaner, Purton.  
**Alison Tomkins**, HR Manager, Marlborough.

### 25 years service

**Gordon Strange**, Plant Operative, Chapel Farm.

### 35 years service

**Alan Pardoe**, Group Managing Director.

### 40 years service

**Terry Moore**, LGV Mechanic, Purton.

# The Old Order Changeth – John Wheeler retires

September saw the departure of one of the Company's longest serving employees when John Wheeler retired after 41 years loyal service. His working life within the Group started in November 1964 when he joined T F Coke as a machine driver after they had just bought Sandpool Farm from John's father. Interestingly John remembers Grahame Hill (Robert's father) coming to look at the land before T F Coke became interested and testing the gravel depth with a new fangled electronic sensor before deciding against buying the land. However Hills subsequently bought T F Coke and hence Sandpool Farm early the following decade. It's ironic that not only did John farm the land at Sandpool and then spend many years quarrying it, one of his last responsibilities has been to oversee its restoration! Another irony is that when his family were still farming the area, they farmed what later became Friday Island. John subsequently quarried the land, and not so long ago paid a fortune to stage his daughter's wedding there! Although that was money well spent, as she has given him four wonderful grand children.



John with Group Chairman, Robert Hill at his retirement lunch at the Red Lion in Axford



Alan MacKenzie, Paul Dixon, John Wheeler, Rob McGready and Marc Eltham

Some of the many changes that John has seen over the years are the changing approaches to such things as restoration and Health and Safety. 'I remember we had to leave finished sites rough years ago, and then it became the done thing to leave them graded and manicured,' John informed us, 'now we are leaving it rough again as it is better for the wildlife!' With regards to Health and Safety John mused that 'the machines nowadays have not only got cab heaters but they also have brakes! We used to have a gas flame heater placed on the floor on cold days so that the windscreen didn't freeze up! He has also seen progress regarding training too – 'I remember the first quarry that I was based at with T F Coke was Breakheart Quarry near Dursley. As soon as I arrived, the Irish foreman said to me 'You've worked on a farm, so there is the machine and there are the lorries – get on with it!'

John returned to Sandpool when Hills bought T F Coke in 1973 and stayed there until the late 70s. He then moved to the washing plant of the quarry that is now the Watermark complex. Another irony recently is that while his new house was being built he has paid a hefty monthly rent for one of the houses at the Watermark over looking the lake that he dug! He spent the 80s and early nineties working with and for such characters as Doug Wheeler (no relation!) and Ian Constable before spending his last ten years or so working for Alan Mackenzie and Rob McGready. Sites that he was based at included Thatcham, Ryall House Farm, Shornote and Latton.

'I have loved working,' said John, 'until the paperwork began to mount up in recent years. I remember there was always a lot of pride in the job. We used to look after the machines as if they were our own, and we thought tea breaks were a waste of time! I have loved working outside day and night. I even enjoyed draining the pumps at zam so they didn't freeze up and also defrosting the hopper. The forty-one years have flown by, but there is not much I would have changed'.

Thanks from all of us John, have a great retirement and keep in touch.



John says goodbye to the team at Shornote

## 50th Anniversary celebrations

Elcot Park hosted the happy celebrations of Edward and Pat Hill's golden wedding anniversary. They were joined by family and friends including their children - Sarah, Charlie, Emma and Anna- and grandchildren - Jennifer, Adrian and Christian. The guests heard some amusing speeches delivered by Pat, Charlie and Ted's brother and best man Richard, with his other brother Robert acting as compere. However the show was stolen by little Christian, who showed what he thought of his great Uncle Richard's speech when he decided that he wanted a second look at his lunch! It was a great day to mark great occasion.



Edward and Pat Hill

## The 'Matchstick' Man

It was a delight to see Les Butler a few weeks ago, when he dropped into head office to say hello. He also showed us pictures of his amazing matchstick model creations of Hills' lorries and mobile plant. Les spent 38 years of his working life with the Group before retiring in 2002 and as these pictures show – you can take the man out of the quarry, but you can't take the quarry out of the man! Well done Les!



Les Butler

