

Chief Executive's Diary



Welcome to the twelfth edition of our house magazine and again many thanks to the various correspondents in Northstone who contribute to it. I would make particular mention of our editor, Jim Leitch, who works tirelessly to produce Northlink, which in my view, is the best in-house magazine around.

I have been pleasantly surprised as to how much our retired colleagues enjoy receiving and reading their copy. Northlink also travels far, as I understand that Walter Scott, the former owner of our "Scott" business, even receives his copy in Australia. It is important that we continue to maintain contact with former colleagues whose interest in the Company is as strong as ever.

Health and safety is always the top priority for our various management teams across the Divisions. As we come to the close of another year, I am pleased to report continual improvement in our performance, with both accident frequency and accident severity rates improving significantly. This is a good measure of the dedicated work that goes into reducing risks at our locations and construction sites. All those involved are to be complemented on another excellent effort in 2005. However, we should never be complacent, as our industry still has an unenviable safety record with workers dying as a result of work related injuries with alarming frequency. In this regard it is with great sadness that we report that nine CRH employees have been killed at work this year, with the principal causes of these tragedies being very familiar to us all, namely failure to effectively isolate plant and machinery, mobile plant operations and falls from height. CRH intends launching a safety initiative in the New Year to address the causes of these fatal accidents. We at Northstone will play our part, by reviewing the circumstances of each of the fatalities and ensuring that our systems and the precautions taken are suitable and sufficient to deal with each and every work situation.

It is perhaps understandable that when we consider health and safety management in our business, we all tend to focus on physical safeguards and precautions to protect our people rather than health considerations. In the New Year we have asked the Chest, Heart and Stroke Association to run a pilot scheme in which some 100 Northstone people will be invited to have a voluntary assessment of their health undertaken by an occupational nurse. The locations chosen for the pilot are Dunmurry, North Down and Toomebridge. The aim is to raise individual awareness of health issues

and encourage lifestyle changes where appropriate. If the pilot is deemed a success, the Chest Heart and Stroke Association will be asked to offer it across the Company as the year progresses.

Our Northstone identity is now well established within the market place, with the sales teams reporting positive customer reaction to our new name and organisation. The recently published Products and Services Directory is the final initiative in the Northstone implementation plan and the benefits of the closer alignment of our Northstone product and services portfolios are already apparent.

In our last edition I made mention of the valued contribution made by Ralph Clarke, the former managing director of Ready Use Concrete, to the success of our business over some 43 years. Ralph attended his last Board meeting in November following a farewell dinner attended by present and past colleagues. We extend to Ralph and Lorraine every good wish for an enjoyable retirement.

In the Northstone Concrete Division, the recently acquired Gregg's Sand and Gravel operation near Draperstown is now fully operational and it is good to have Mr Leslie Gregg giving us the benefit of his experience as we develop the potential of the pit.

The Division can now also plan for the construction of the long awaited new roof-tile plant at Toomebridge following approval of this major investment in our business. This is a significant vote of confidence in our management team and we wish them every success in the implementation.

The market for our ready mixed concrete, mortar and concrete products over the past year has been challenging, with intense competition in each product line. Our strategy of seeking modest price increases to offset escalating input costs has proven to be the correct course of action. Customers continue to recognise the value of product quality and service level as key determinants when making their purchasing decisions. Our sales team deserves great credit in promoting the competitive advantages of the Northstone concrete products portfolio in a challenging market-

place.

In the Quarry and Asphalt Division, there has been good demand, particularly for dry stone products. Contracts at Ballyshannon, Ballynaloob (near Ballymoney) and Omagh have boosted black-top output, particularly in the West. However, as we go to press, there are major concerns in the industry with regard to proposed cuts in the Roads Service road repairs budget in Northern Ireland for 2006-2007. Over the past month or so Willie McNabb, working within the Quarry Products Association, has been constantly lobbying against these proposed cuts and the adverse effects they will have on the quarrying and road surfacing sector. We trust that there is a successful outcome, similar to that gained in respect of the aggregate tax a short time ago. Meanwhile, preparations continue at the Division's former headquarters at Bushmills Road in Coleraine, for the sale of the property and it is hoped that all necessary planning will be in place by the second quarter of 2006, to facilitate disposal of this prime site. At the same time, plans are well advanced for the relocation of facilities to Croaghan to accommodate staff who are currently located at Coleraine.

At Farrans Construction the outlook for 2006 is encouraging as a good, long term order book is building up. Major contracts such as the M1/Westlink widening scheme in Belfast, water projects such as Project Alpha in the north and west of the Province, as well as the Victoria Square Super Structure contract are all scheduled to commence in 2006. It is also extremely encouraging to note

that prestigious clients like Tesco and Land Securities, are actively partnering with Farrans in the construction of several demanding retail projects which are due to commence next year. In addition, negotiations are at an advanced stage in relation to securing a major project at Altnagelvin Hospital. (*and Lisburn Institute - wait for announcement*).

Private development will remain a key focus of the management team and this will necessitate the continued development of a suitable land bank.

I firmly believe that the vertical integration of our entire Northstone business is a very important factor in underpinning profitability into the future.

The past six months have also seen a lot of development activity at W H Beckett, as we seek to establish a new business platform to supply construction accessories, from new premises near Hillsborough. These are manufactured or sourced by CRH companies in Europe and Beckett will be the sole supplier in Ireland. This is an exciting opportunity and I believe others exist for Northstone as a direct result of having closer links with other CRH companies.

Gordon Ellis and his team have also been progressively growing the testing business throughout Ireland, with new opportunities arising, as the Republic's extensive national roads' programme rolls out.

It only remains for me to thank you for your continued support and efforts over the past year and to wish you and your families a Merry Christmas and a Safe New Year.

Noel Quinn, December 2005

A Mystery Solved In Time For Christmas

When the late Sam Taggart, the founder and former owner of Farrans, decided on a name for his construction company in the 1940's, little did he realise that he was about to commence one of the longest running mysteries in the construction industry in Northern Ireland.



Over the years many theories have been put forward as to the origin of the name, Farrans. Some believed that Sam named his company after a townland in south Antrim. Others thought that the name had foreign origins. Some even believed that there had actually been a Mr Farrans. To be fair, nobody knew the answer.

Northlink can confirm that after Sam graduated in civil engineering from Queens University in 1928, he worked for a short period of time in the Ordnance Survey for Northern Ireland. The work involved travelling to various places in the Province and mapping them. It is clear that Sam really enjoyed his time at the Ordnance Survey because when it came to naming his own construction company in the 1940's he recalled his first job and the places he had worked. He used the first letter from the names of the first seven places he mapped for the Ordnance Survey to form the name Farrans.

It is perhaps fitting that we should solve the Farrans mystery in our own house magazine and that the name of the Province's largest contractor should be so closely linked with Northern Ireland. A fact that we did not really appreciate until now.

The Hall That Farrans Built

The Farrans Construction site team which built the extension to the primary school at Great Whelnetham must have made quite an impression on the children there because they felt moved to write a song about the Company and perform it at the opening of the complex.

The children excelled themselves in dressing up for the occasion and used actions to denote the various trades. The little boy who played the site foreman certainly did lots of finger wagging which indicated that the children had an excellent grasp of reality. Great Whelnetham is a typical country school in rural Suffolk with a relatively small roll. The

extension, which was valued at £500,000, provided the boys and girls with much improved facilities and clearly the work caused much excitement during the construction period. The song was entitled 'The Hall That Farrans Built' and describes the various stages of construction and the tradesmen who worked on the project. Roofers, carpenters, plasterers plumbers and electricians all receive a mention. Pride of place in the song goes to the finger wagging site foreman, Norman Laurie, who is referred to in almost every verse. The final verse of the song is reproduced below;

*This is the plasterer that decorated the interior
When the electrician had finished the wiring
Who came after the plumber with his lengths of pipe
Who followed the plasterer that finished the walls
After the carpenter had fitted the windows
When the roofer had attached the tiles to the rafters
After the builder had constructed the walls
Following orders given by the busy site foreman
Whose job it was to read the plans
Designed by the architect
For the hall that Farrans built.*

Elsewhere in England, Northlink can report that the region's first Private Finance Initiative (PFI) bid has been submitted to Suffolk County Council for the construction of 7 new fire stations and the refurbishment of 8 others. The bid is worth in the region of £16million over a two year period. Work on the current design and build projects continues apace at Lakenheath US Airforce Base and a further contract to construct a £4million Flight Simulator Building at the Base is about to commence in the New Year.

Things are certainly going well in England this Christmas if songs are now being written and performed about how we go about our business.



Caption to follow

A New Team Starts To Gather At Dunmurry

Over the past few months a number of new faces have taken up residence in the former Ready Use building at Dunmurry as preparations continue apace for the commencement of the DBFO Roads Package 1 Contract at the end of January 2006.

The winning of this joint venture project was reported in our last edition and involves the design, building, financing and operation of road improvements on both the M1 and M2 motorways as well as upgrading of the Westlink. These improvements also include the construction of underpasses at the Broadway and Grosvenor Road junctions on the Westlink. The contract is valued at £110 million.

The construction work will be undertaken by a joint venture company called Highway Maintenance Construction which brings together people from Farrans Construction, John Graham (Dromore) Limited and German contractor, Bilfinger Berger Bot into one team.

Already three Farrans people are hard at work on the project. Eugene Flaherty will be the section manager at Grosvenor Road, David Barr is the Traffic Management and Services Manager and Barry McDonagh is a site engineer. They will soon be joined by more Farrans people in the New Year.

Northlink welcomes our new colleagues from Graham and Bilfinger to Dunmurry and wishes the new team every success on what is sure to be another landmark project.

Northstone Identity Makes It Mark With Customers

The true test of our new Northstone identity was always going to be how it was received by our customers and it's effect on our relationships with them. Well, the news from both the Concrete and the Quarry and Asphalt Division is that we had no reason to worry. Customers of all sizes have been unanimous in their praise of the enhanced service level they are now receiving and more importantly, that they were kept informed by our sales people at every stage of the implementation process. Some have even taken time to write and tell us how well the introduction of Northstone was handled.

Our Northlink reporter managed to catch up with Keith Wood, our Director of Sales for ready mixed concrete, and was able to find out more about the development of the new identity over the past six months or so. As usual, Keith was upbeat and detailed in his response;

"The benefits of our new identity have really come on stream over the summer and autumn months. There is certainly more sharing of marketing information between the former Ready Use, Scott and Maxwell sales teams and this has strengthened the lines of communication which in turn has meant that our customer base has increased not only in number but also in the range of products they buy from our portfolio. The Northstone sales team now has a wider geographical coverage than before and this, together with the use of their new laptop computers, has meant an improved service level for our customers.

The various advertorials which were placed in the trade press since the start of the year have done their job and established the identity and logo within the industry. This was followed up by the production of a new Northstone Products and Services Directory which provides the customer with contact details and information on product ranges available from every Company depot. A new brochure

specifically targetting mortar customers is being printed at the moment,

Each and every member of the sales team has done a tremendous job in establishing the Northstone identity and they continue to talk to their customers to ensure we remain their supplier of choice."

Keith, along with Richard McDermott from the Quarry and Asphalt Division are responsible to the Board for co ordinating all Northstone marketing activities. They are ably assisted by Alan Hewitt and Raymond Moore, who provide valuable input in respect of our roof tile and stone product ranges respectively.



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Securing Future Reserves

In July of this year our Concrete Division acquired the sand and gravel extraction rights on land owned by Leslie Gregg at Ballybrest Road, Cookstown. The negotiations were undertaken by Divisional Managing Director, Graham McQuillan, and further extend the natural resources operated by Northstone in this part of the Province. The new operation will be known as Gregg's Depot and will provide our Concrete Division with valuable and essential resources for the next 25 to 30 years with a potential to extract between 6 and 8 million tonnes of quality sand and gravel.

The existing pit at Ballybrest Road was operated for a number of years by Mr Gregg who during this time was a key supplier and good friend to our former Scott (Toomebridge) Limited business. Northlink is delighted to report that Leslie's involvement will continue at the location on a day to day basis and his experience and expertise has already proven invaluable to us.

Gregg's Depot is managed by John Laverty, our Sand Production Manager and supervised by James Mulholland. The depot already supplies gravel to the Division's block plant at Toomebridge and sand to the Craigavon and Dunmurry mortar plants. In the New Year the depot will produce sand and gravel for more of our own locations as we move towards greater self sufficiency.

Our new location looks set to become a valuable and strategic asset for our Concrete Division over the next quarter of a century and beyond.

Northlink wishes Leslie, John and James every success in further developing Gregg's Depot.

All Our Yesterdays

Our photograph in this article takes us back to 1972. It appeared as a feature in the 1st July edition of the Ulster Star newspaper.



Caption to follow

The gentleman in evening dress suit on the right is the late Bob Boyd. He is receiving a British Safety Council health and safety award on behalf of Farrans Limited at a presentation dinner in London. The award in 1972 was the third consecutive year that Farrans Limited has received this recognition for their superior performance in health and safety. The award criteria was based on reportable accident rates per 1,000 employees. In 1971 Farrans Limited had a rate of 32.1 compared to a national average of 38.4 per 1,000 employees.

Bob was the Farrans Limited Safety Personnel and Training Manager who served the Company for almost twenty years before retiring in 1988. He was very much an innovator in his field as at that time relatively few construction companies had dedicated professionals in the safety or personnel functional areas. Bob even found time to undertake the role of internal auditor.

Bob came originally from Fermanagh and had a military background reaching the rank of major. He was a man of great integrity who did much to establish the reputation of Farrans as a safety conscious and people oriented employer. He took particular pride in recruiting apprentices and others into the business. Many of our senior people at Farrans were no doubt interviewed by Bob at the start of their careers with the Company. Bob unselfishly gave of his time in supporting the local colleges and universities to encourage young people to pursue a career in construction. It was no surprise to anyone who knew him that Bob was awarded an MBE for his services to our industry.

Bob sadly passed away a few short years after retiring. There is no doubt that he played a major role in making our business what it is today and he is fondly remembered by all that had the pleasure to know him.

More about CRH

The news this Christmas from Belgard Castle is of further capital expenditure and acquisition activity in the United States over the past twelve months.

On the east coast of America, Pennsy Supply, one of Pennsylvania's leading suppliers of aggregates, concrete and asphalt have just spent \$7.4m at their Hummelstown quarry. This quarry produces high calcium limestone which is used in all kinds of products including asphalt, glass and plastic. The quarry now has a new stone crushing plant and grinding mill.

CRH has also now acquired the aggregates, asphalt, paving and construction assets of the Mountain Companies which operates in the Appalachian region of eastern Kentucky, south west Virginia and along the Kentucky/West Virginia state line. The companies have over 400 million tons of reserves at eight quarries and one sand and gravel pit. They produce approximately 5 million tons of aggregates and 2 million tons of asphalt annually. As part of the deal, CRH also acquired a 50% stake in Bizzack Inc, an associate company of Mountain. Bizzack specialise in rock clearing and earth moving work, a feature of this rugged and mountainous region.

Across in Minnesota, CRH has purchased the assets of Southern Minnesota Construction (SMC), the leading aggregates and asphalt supplier in the south-central region of the state. SMC has over 80 million tons of reserves and produces 3 million tons of aggregates and 0.5 million tons of asphalt each year.

Commenting on these acquisitions, Liam O'Mahony, CRH Chief Executive, said; "These are very well managed businesses with excellent reserves and strong market positions, which represent a unique geographical front with the U.S. Materials Division's existing activities. Intention of the businesses should facilitate substantial



cost savings which strengthens the Division's market position and giving us significant growth platforms in Kentucky, Virginia and Minnesota."

More about CRH next time.

Caption to follow

A Changing Sky Line At The Airfield

Those of us who have not been at the Concrete Division's Airfield site at Toomebridge for some time will certainly notice a difference when they next visit the location as Premier Cement have just completed the erection of a 1,000 tonne cement silo and the necessary ancillary works.

The silo was relocated from Premier's former depot at the Adelaide Industrial Estate in Belfast as CIE, the Irish railway operator, decided to discontinue the shipment of bulk products this year. It is probably a sign of the times that most shipments of cement into Northern Ireland by Premier had been done by road tanker from Irish Cement's Drogheda factory for some time and this will continue to be the case.

Premier is a wholly owned subsidiary of Irish Cement and has been doing business in the Province for many years. It was not surprise that when Premier were searching for the perfect location for their cement storage reservoir silo following the closure of their Belfast depot that they approached our Concrete Division. The Airfield site is one of the most strategically placed locations in Northstone as it is well served by an excellent road network allowing easy access to almost anywhere in the Province. The silo will offer additional assurance to customers that Premier can cater for any situation where supplies of cement are urgently required.

The Premier silo at Toomebridge is a state of the art driver self loading facility. This method of product delivery has been in operation at Irish Cement's Drogheda factory for some time and is tried and tested. Most importantly, the tanker drivers are familiar with it.

Colin Higgins is the Premier General Manager for the Province. He is well known to many at Northstone as he was the former Company Sales Manager at Ready Use Concrete Company before deciding to accept a post with Premier in 1998. Colin is assisted by Billy McGowan who will look after the silo at Toomebridge and provide the usual high level of service to the Company's customer base.

All at Northlink wish Colin and Billy well as they settle into their new location.



Caption to follow

Making Hard Targets Attainable

Northstone people have traditionally over the years done much to serve the needs of the quarrying and processed products industry. This contribution can take many forms and includes responding to consultative documents from government in respect of forthcoming legislation, lobbying politicians and others in respect of specific industry needs or concerns, engaging in discussions with regulators and sharing expertise and experiences with interested parties.

Over the past four or five years, most of the efforts of our people have been directed through the Quarry Products Association for Northern Ireland (QPA). The Company is represented on many QPA committees and working groups across a wide range of functional areas. In every case, Northstone people have played a major role in achieving demanding outcomes and targets which have in turn enhanced the profile and reputation of our industry.

The following employees currently serve on committees or working groups within the QPA:

Willie McNabb:	Executive Committee Member and Former Chairman of the Association
Graham McQuillan:	Executive Committee Member and Member of the Lough Neagh Sand Traders Association
Bill Weir:	Chairman of Planning and Environmental Committee. Committee Member on National Planning and Environmental Committee
Peter Doherty:	Member of Asphalt Committee
Roy Browne:	Chairman of Concrete Committee
Jim Leitch:	Chairman of Health and Safety Committee
Craig Chisholm:	Member of Health and Safety Committee Member of Blacktop Safety Sub Committee
Julie Irwin:	Member of Human Resource Group

Ralph Clarke, our recently retired and highly esteemed managing director of Ready Use Concrete, was also a member of the QPA Executive Committee. He played a significant role in the development of the QPA strategy which is currently being implemented.



Caption to follow

A typical example of the work of Northstone people for the overall good of the industry can be found in the QPA Health and Safety Committee on which Jim Leitch and Craig Chisholm serve with distinction. Last year the committee responded to a Government initiative to reduce reportable accident rates by 50% over the next five years by introducing a Hard Targets Club in each county of the Province. Every QPA member organisation was invited to nominate representatives to sit on a club with a view to sharing ideas and experiences to improve overall safety performance. The work of the Hard Targets Clubs has been a success and there is now greater safety awareness and knowledge in the industry than ever before. In May of this year the Health and Safety Executive recognised the Hard Targets Clubs initiative by presenting the QPA with an award at their annual conference to mark the European Week of Safety and Health.

Northlink congratulates all those involved in working with the QPA on their achievements and wish them every success in meeting next year's challenges.

Keeping Things Moving With The Concrete Division's Newest Team



Caption to follow

Ensuring that the Northstone Concrete Division's 15 concrete depots, 3 mortar plants, 3 block production yards, 2 tile factories and 1 pipe production plant are effectively maintained is no easy task. Add to this our 6 sand barges and many items of mobile plant and the size of the task soon becomes apparent. The last thing our customers need is for us to have a plant breakdown at a critical time.

The bringing together of our former Scott and Ready Use businesses within the Concrete Division led to an evaluation of how best we can organise, co-ordinate and deliver maintenance services to our depots across the Province. Scott and Ready Use had their own specific maintenance and stores departments. The Concrete Division's production directors, Brian Thompson and Brian Watt, have been hard at work over the past few months considering the situation and decided that the best way forward was to decentralise our existing maintenance departments with each major location having its own, dedicated fitter. Under the new arrangements, the garage facility at Dunmurry will close shortly and the central stores for the Division will be at Toomebridge. This initiative has brought together former Ready Use and Scott people into the Division's newest team under the leadership of Maintenance Manager Colin McCall. Colin will also have a central resource pool of fitters who will provide a back up to the production units as required.

In mid October, Brian Watt and Brian Thompson presented their plan to their new team and this provided an opportunity for questions and answers. The get together also allowed former Ready Use and Scott employees to get to know each other and put names to faces. All in attendance agreed that Northstone offers the opportunity to pool the many talents of our people and share maintenance expertise which is perhaps unrivalled in the industry.

Northlink wishes our newest team in the Concrete Division every success in their new arrangements as we all strive for superior performance across the Company.

Greased Lightning On Two Wheels



Caption to follow

Our engineering staff in the Quarry and Asphalt Division have a deserved reputation for getting things done quickly and effectively on site in all weathers. New challenges are something they take on and overcome as part and parcel of their role without flinching.

One such member of staff is Ian McIntyre, a site agent based at our Ballymena depot, who has just taken up the sport of dirt bike racing this year and already has two podium finishes to his credit. The information we have is that Ian is like greased lightning as he negotiates the ups and downs of the slopes without the slightest hint of a wobble. Our photograph shows Ian preparing to take part in the Down and Dirty

Mountain Bike Freeride Event which was held in October in the Mourne Mountains in County Down. Ian was one of 105 intrepid riders taking part in the race which raised over £4,000 for the Mencap Charity.

Ian clearly likes exchanging his company car for something less sedate as he now competes in both the Irish and Scottish Downhill National Series and next year will be racing in the red and black of Northstone. His bike is indeed a highly sophisticated piece of equipment with multiple gears, state of the art suspension and ventilated disc brakes.

Ian's father, Ronnie, is a former Managing Director of R.J. Maxwell and served our Company with great distinction and foresight during his period of tenure.

Northlink wishes Ian well as he competes across the Province and beyond. Readers can monitor the Northstone flier's progress at www.irishdh.com and www.descent-world.co.uk

South Side Success



Caption to follow

Our Farrans Construction correspondent in Scotland reports that the Division continues to seek work within the region's Central Belt and is currently undertaking projects on the south side of Glasgow. These projects are all located within one square mile and include roadworks, bridge construction, structural steelwork and marine works.

Works are continuing with Phase 2 of the Glasgow Harbour contract and we are currently completing the utility installation for this stage of the development. The largest project in the South Side, the Off-Site Highways at Glasgow Harbour is now also well under way with the construction of a 62m single span steel bridge over the River Kelvin, one of the largest of its type in the country. Paul Magowan and his team, led by Ian Waugh and Derek Mathewson have already successfully dealt with the challenge of the construction of sheet piled walls

along the side of the tidal river as well as the installation of the bored concrete piles required to allow commencement of the concrete abutments to support the 600 ton bridge beams.

The whole construction team on site are dealing with the project's environmental challenges, ranging from the ecology associated with piling in a sensitive salmon and otter river to the sustainable challenge in re-using materials on site for the earthworks operations and thereby reducing the amount of import and disposal of material required for the contract.

A new concept being used at Glasgow Harbour is the use of the contract programme as a valuation tool. Richard Hensman is controlling the programme which contains every item from the priced bill. At the end of each month a valuation can be produced from the programme percentages submitted against each item which at the same time issues the progress report. The vast programme is then split into manageable sub programmes which are issued to the site teams to monitor construction progress.

Other works in the area include two contracts for BAE Systems. The largest one of these is within Slipway No.1 in the Govan Dockyard. The aim of this project is provide a 'dry dock' within the existing tidal slipway to enable the construction of the new class of frigate for the Royal Navy. The works include installation of around 100 rock anchors drilled to a depth of some 40m below the slipway to hold the slab down in a permanent state. The existing slipway will then be extended by installing 26m long box piles to form a permanent cofferdam prior to driving a sheet piled wall across the face to seal the slipway from the tides in the temporary state. Other works will include

a removable steel gate across the mouth of the slipway and a concrete package to replace the existing worn out surface. Tony Fry and Robert McVitty are dealing with the challenges that are associated with a marine contract within a sensitive river such as the Clyde. The second BAE contract is being managed by Neil MacDonald and is in the final stages of delivering the structural steelwork foundations to facilitate the landing of a 400 person accommodation block at the Scotstoun shipyard.

The remaining works within the area include the construction of a sub-station for Scottish and Southern Electricity. The delivery of a large piled foundation slab complete with generator housing will be the first direct contract with this Client. The contract has been awarded on the basis of a previous relationship developed whilst aiding service connections on a recent Glasgow Harbour scheme.

We can report that the rest of the Scottish team working outside the Glasgow area are all performing well with the successful opening of the Hermiston Park and Ride Scheme in August, the delivery of Phase 1&2 of the Dundee Waterfront contract and completion of the Park and Ride facility at Inverkeithing in Fife. Current works include the construction of a 9m deep sewer within the Gartcosh Development Park on the outskirts of Glasgow which is partially through a nature reserve containing a colony of Great Crested Newts. The challenge of installing the pipes at such a depth and managing the environmental issues associated with the newts has been met successfully with recent graduate John Surgenor taking a lead role on site.

All at Northlink wish Regional Manager, Alvar Kenwell, and his team every success in 2006.

Family Connections at Strabane



Brendan McGaughey, James Galbraith and Peter McGaughey

The names of McGaughey and Galbraith certainly appear to becoming more common place on the employee listings at the Northstone Concrete Division's Strabane Depot over the past year or so with the recruitment of three new people to the team.

Brendan McGaughey joined us earlier this year as a concrete production operative working in the block squad. He is a trained production engineer and has spent some 25 years employed as a foreman at the nearby Lakeland Dairies plant in Omagh. His knowledge

and experience of mobile plant has certainly been put to good use at the depot where his existing skills set has been further enhanced with training in the operation of forklift trucks and loading shovels. Brendan's two sons, Peter and John also work for the Division at Strabane.

James Galbraith is a brother of depot supervisor, Nigel Galbraith and extends the Galbraith connection at Strabane as Nigel's brother John also was employed until recently at the location. James is our new batching plant operator and brings to

the role similar experience with another local company as well as many years as a mechanical engineering in a textile factory in Sion Mills where he supervised a team of twenty six maintenance fitters. The reports we have are that James has the intricacies of operating the new batching plant at Strabane off to a tee and since joining Northstone has added road sweeper and loading shovel operation to his already extensive list of skills.

Peter McGaughey teams up with his father and brother to form a formidable trio in block production at Strabane. He has a background in quarrying and construction having worked for local companies where he specialised in mobile plant operation. Shortly after arriving at the depot Peter was provided with recognised skills training in the use of forklifts and loading shovels.

Brendan, James and Peter have clearly made the right choice in joining Northstone and all at Northlink wish our three new colleagues a long and successful career with the Company.

In the Presence of Greatness

It was the late Andy Warhol, the well known American artist and film director, who said that everyone is famous for at least five minutes in their lives. Well take a close look at this photograph which depicts the Portadown football team just before the kick off of a match at their home ground of Shamrock Park in 1981.



Gerry Kean, George Best and Portadown FC

Take a closer look and you will notice the late George Best who played for the club on a one match contract against local rivals, Glenavon. The eagle eyed amongst us may also notice a fresh faced youngster standing in the back row of the photograph. This young lad was appearing on a regular basis for Portadown in the Irish League and building a reputation as a striker with some deft touches. This was none other than our highly regarded Quarry and Asphalt Sales Manager, Gerry Keane.

As Northlink goes to print the Province is preparing for the funeral of soccer legend George Best and many Northstone people have their own memories of George and his exploits on the soccer pitch. Gerry certainly has his own memories which few of us can match in that he actually played with the great man. We have it on good authority that Gerry often recounts the day when he played with George at Shamrock Park and it is fitting that we leave it to Gerry to explain;

"I remember George beating a few defenders down the wing and sending over a great cross into the goalmouth. I saw the ball coming over but all I could do with it was blast it over the bar. Throughout the match George exuded class and it was an absolute pleasure to be in the presence of greatness."

Gerry may well have had his five minutes of being famous that Tuesday afternoon in Portadown but the memories clearly have not diminished with the passing of time.

Seamus Banks On Safety

Each year the Northstone Quarry and Asphalt Division Managing Director, Willie McNabb, invites all employees to a briefing session at which he outlines the Company's performance and provides information on other important issues.

One of the primary objectives of the briefings is to obtain the views of our people as to how we can improve performance and make Northstone a better place to work. Health and safety is always at the top of Willie's agenda. This year one of Willie's concerns related to employee safety in the vicinity of reversing vehicles and the protection of tipper drivers and others in the vicinity of overhead electricity cables.



Caption to follow

At one of the briefing sessions, Seamus O'Keefe, a skilled labourer based at Carrickmore, suggested that the nominated banksman in each squad should have a special high visibility vest to identify his role. He felt that the vest should have the word 'banksman' stencilled onto the back and also have orange high visibility flashes. This would make the banksman more readily identified to lorry drivers and plant operators as the individual who controls all reversing operations. The suggestion from Seamus was ratified at a subsequent management meeting and now all banksmen across the Division have their role specific vests.

Seamus received a cheque from the Division for his suggestion.

New Product Development Group Established

A key element in the growth of our business has always been our ability to develop new products in anticipation of market opportunities or changes in customer demand. This year the Northstone Quarry and Asphalt Division has given added impetus to this process by establishing a new Product Development Group under the chairmanship of Sam Deane, our Special Products Manager. All functional areas are represented in the Group including commercial, technical, production, contracting and sales and marketing. The current membership of the Group is made up of Willie McNabb, Bill Weir, Sam Deane, Philip Shields, Angus Kennedy, Derek Dougherty, Raymond Moore and Tuesday Pollock.

The Group's primary objective is to generate, develop and screen ideas for new products with viable ideas being taken through to market launch. Divisional Managing Director, Willie McNabb, is certainly an ardent supporter of the Group as he explains;

"It is imperative for the long term success of the business that we develop new products to add to our existing portfolio and identify niche markets to ensure we have a competitive advantage. New product development will remain a core activity within our Division and not on the periphery."

The development of new products at the Quarry and Asphalt Division will also be assisted by the signing of Knowledge Transfer Partnering Agreements with Queens University and the University of Ulster. These are part funded by the Department of Trade and Industry and will enable us to improve our innovative and best practice capability through knowledge and technology transfer with the assistance of an academic mentor.

Exciting times indeed at the Northstone Quarry and Asphalt Division.



Caption to follow

Fofanny Scheme Leaves Mournes Undisturbed

As we go to press we can report another significant success story at Farrans Construction with the completion of the £18m underground Fofanny Water Treatment Works in the heart of the Mourne Mountains in County Down. The Mournes are an area of outstanding natural beauty in South Down and it is likely that it will soon achieve National Park status.

The Farrans Construction team, which was led by David Parr on site, partnered with mechanical engineering specialist EarthTec to construct a state of the art facility which blends perfectly with its surroundings. The roof of the works was top soiled and planted out with a seed mix native to this mountainous region.

To date Fofanny is the first water treatment works in Ireland to be built underground and it is the first time that the process of hydroseeding has been used on such a large scale. Hydroseeding involves the spraying on of seed mixed with a bonding agent to help it to bed. At Fofanny, a variety of indigenous seeds were collected by hand or brush and vacuum harvesting and after a series of trials last year, the optimum seed and soil mix was decided upon.

The landscaping of the roof of the new works, which is approximately one acre in size, also included the planting of some 10,000 native heathers and other plant species.

Fofanny is another fine example of Farrans Construction and its partners using superior design and construction techniques to leave pristine natural environments unaffected by major civil works. Quite a feat and testimony to the capabilities of team at Dunmurry. All involved in the Fofanny project are to be congratulated.



Caption to follow

Beckett Business Expansion

The ongoing development of Northstone continues with the news that our Beckett business has been expanded with the creation of a new division to sell and distribute a range of construction products and components throughout Ireland.

These are manufactured or sourced in Europe by companies within the CRH Construction Accessories platform and we will now be able to offer specifiers, developers and contractors a wide range of unique cost effective solutions in relation to concrete and formwork, brickwork, groundworks, waterproofing and other activity areas. Examples of the new products range include STABOX, AND COUPLERBOX (rebar connection systems for construction joints), TITAN dowels for expansion joints, ISOTEC elements for the prevention of thermal bridging at balcony connections etc., ARMATEC prefabricated punching shear reinforcement for columns in flat slab construction, KORBO brickwork support system, and a wide range of other products e.g. spacers (concrete, plastic & metal), permanent formwork for foundations, shuttering systems, formwork accessories, compression joint material. Initially Becketts will distribute, throughout Ireland, the full range of construction accessories from the CRH company, PLAKABETON, based in Belgium. Over time it is Becketts intention to further expand the product portfolio by leveraging the rapidly developing CRH construction accessories platform in Europe.

The new Beckett construction accessories division complements the existing Interior Fit-Out and Roofing division, which is run by General Manager, Gary Moore and his team. A new Trading style has been developed for the W.H. Beckett business, with the straplines 'Engineering Innovation' and 'Construction Solutions' featuring on our letterhead and brochure, to assist with the launch of the new Beckett division, and to create an opportunity for synergies between the divisions.

Peter McClure joined Beckett in October as Technical Sales Manager from the



Caption to follow

Northstone Concrete Division and he has already visited CRH locations in France and Belgium to find out more about the products, their features, marketing strategy, and distribution. Peter is currently hard at work meeting potential specifiers and customers, developing customer awareness presentations, and drawing up a sales and marketing plan for 2006.

Beckett Director, Tom Sweeney, took some time out from his busy schedule to tell Northlink a little more about Northstone's most recent new business;

"Our objective in establishing the new Division at Beckett is to further enhance the package we can offer to new and existing customers. CRH have already shown that there is a good market for construction accessories in Europe and we now have an excellent opportunity to do the same thing in Ireland. Our research has shown that specifiers and contractors are always seeking cost effective, better and quicker technologies to enhance their construction operations.. We can offer them proven solutions and I am confident that before long Beckett will become the one stop shop for all their needs in this regard.

Looks like exciting times ahead for Becketts with the distribution of Plakebeton products, and the overall development of the business.

To find out more about what Beckett can do for you on your own site, give Peter McClure a call on (028) 90551 320 or Mobile 07920106198 or request a site visit and product presentation. Why not also visit the Company website www.whbeckett.com

Copper Fastening The Beckett Reputation

It is not often that construction workers feature on an hour long television programme but that is exactly what happened in early November when the Beckett roofing team of Denis Gilloway, Tony Drain, Michael Johnson, Paul Rea, Ian Whiteside, John Burns and John Carleton showcased their craftsmanship on Channel Four's popular Grand Design programme.

The lads dodged the cameras, make up artists and script writers over a number of weeks to construct both a copper standing seam and Sika Trocal roof on a new dwelling at 54 Dunmurry Lane, Belfast. Our team even found time to make and fit copper fascias and gutters.

It is due recognition for the sometimes unsung heroes of our Beckett business that they should be selected to exhibit their craftsmanship on a

programme which is essential viewing for many across the United Kingdom.

During the filming of the programme our Contract Manager, Denis Gilloway, gave a polished interview on the merits and aesthetic qualities of copper roofing and Michael Johnson was even mistaken for rock star Roger Daltrey on more than one occasion.

A number of enquiries from potential customers have already been received as a direct result of our appearance on Grand Designs and Northlink is reliably informed that these are well on the way to becoming future contracts.

Congratulations to all involved in the Programme which has done much to further enhance our reputation in the specialist roofing sector of the market.



Caption to follow

Managing a Quarry with Paul

Paul Hughes joined our Quarry and Asphalt Division as Assistant Quarry Manager at Ballymena in 2001 and this year his abilities and commitment were rewarded when he became the location's Quarry Manager.

Paul has been in engineering for his entire working life which commenced with an apprenticeship as a fitter/welder with GEC in Larne. He then went to B S Tooling in Mallusk as a CNC machinist before taking his first managerial type role as a Shift Engineer at Flexibox Limited in Ballymena which involved overseeing the permanent weekend night shift in the factory.

It was while he was at Flexibox that Paul decided that a career in engineering was really for him and so he enrolled in a course in mechanical engineering at the University of Ulster. What was remarkable about this was that Paul was a full time student during the week and then worked each and every weekend at Flexibox. Quite a feat. In addition, Paul was not just your average student, he excelled and at the end of his course was awarded a first class honours degree.

A short time after graduating, Paul joined Seagate Technologies as an engineer before deciding that a career in quarrying was for him and became a Northstone employee.

Paul brings a wide range of skills and attributes to his current role with us. He has a sound mechanical engineering background from shop floor level up as well as a work ethic which is second to none. On joining Northstone he has learnt much by his own admission whether it is being trained to drive all of the mobile plant in the quarry, operating the coating plant, qualifying to become a shotfirer or undertaking detailed safety audits, he has always been one for experiencing as many aspects of running the quarry as possible. Paul recently gave our Northlink reporter a brief summary of what managing a quarry is all about;

"Managing a Northstone quarry location is all about flexibility and responding effectively to the needs of our customers, both internal and external. Flexibility to me means having a workforce who can competently undertake a range of tasks and can make a contribution to one off situations like the installation of new plant and equipment or changing demands from our markets. I am extremely lucky at Ballymena as my team fit this profile to a tee. My Divisional Quarry Manager, Raymond Stirling is also always on hand to provide me with guidance and the benefit of his experience as required which helps greatly. The main difference between quarrying and factory type engineering processes is that managers in our industry must have the ability and intuition to appraise situations quickly and make correct decisions on a daily and hourly basis. Our operating environment is extremely fluid and managers have to have the knowledge and experience to react to customer requirements. If we fail to do this, a competitor will gain a commercial edge.

My quarry at Ballymena is being developed on an ongoing basis. I was involved in the installation of the Kleemann Reiner secondary crushing plant and the erection of the asphalt plant which provided material to our Belfast City Airport contract. I know this experience will prove invaluable to me in the future."

Paul, like his colleagues, has a strong technical background coupled with relevant practical experience in a wide range of operational areas. These attributes are an essential requirement for current and future managers.

Northlink congratulates Paul on his recent appointment and wishes him well in his future career with the Company.

Leslie Answers The Call

Leslie McLaughlin our well respected health and safety adviser at Farrans Construction officially retired earlier this year after 40 years of loyal and unfailing service to the Company. He is already being missed as over the years Leslie was recognised as one of the most friendly, knowledgeable and helpful people many of us have had the pleasure to work with.



Leslie left school at fourteen and served his carpentry apprenticeship in his native Limavady, in the north west of the Province. At that time apprenticeships were five years in duration. However, Leslie felt that he wanted to know more about construction and make it his career and so, in association with Londonderry Technical College, he applied for and won a scholarship to Belfast College of Technology to undertake an Ordinary National Certificate in Building on a full time basis for two years. Needless to say he passed the course with flying colours and a short time later found himself going back to the north west as an assistant site engineer employed by Farrans Limited on the Coolkeeragh Power Station. This was in 1965.

Towards the end of the Coolkeeragh contract Leslie was approached by the late W.J. Thistlewaite, a director of the Company, who asked him to go to Belfast for a few months to "see how you like it". That was in 1966 and Leslie never returned to that part of the Province again. In these early years in Belfast, Leslie was able to complete his studies on a part-time basis and take a Higher National Certificate in Building and winning the prize for the top performing student in his year.

Over the next few years Leslie has worked on some of Farrans' most prestigious contracts. He was a section engineer at the Pre Clinical Building in Belfast and Ballylumford Power Station where he worked under Joe McKaig. His opportunity to develop his reputation and managerial experience came when he was appointed the Project Engineer on the construction of the Europa Hotel in 1969 and was a vital member of the site team which completed the project in an amazing twelve months.

There then followed lots of small contracts under the guidance of the late Peter Osmand until in 1975, Leslie was asked to become the Site Agent on the new Duncrue Incinerator in Belfast, a project valued at £2.5m which would be closer to £30m in today's money. Shortly after Duncrue, Leslie became a Contract Manager specialising on commercial contracts in the greater Belfast area under the direction of Derek Matthews. Leslie's friendly personality and attention to detail did much to develop lasting relationships with important clients such as the BBC, Ford Motor Company, Short Brothers and many more. In some cases these relationships were to continue for over twenty years and be of great worth to the Company. Leslie's greatest attribute arguably was his ability to effectively explain the construction process to Clients and through the exceptional performance of his teams on site, give Clients confidence in our abilities at every stage from negotiation to hand over and maintenance.

In 2001 Leslie's career took a new direction when he was asked to become a health and safety adviser. We are fortunate that he accepted the offer as he went on to play a major part in the development and implementation of many of the systems which we implement today. Leslie used his vast on site experience to great effect with his communication skills and approach being a perfect match for the requirements of the role. Even at 56 years of age, Leslie had no hesitation in taking on and achieving the necessary qualifications. Many site staff, young and old, have benefited greatly from Leslie's vast experience in relation to solving safety problems on their sites.

Northlink can now report that Leslie has accepted an offer from Farrans Construction to defer the carpet slippers and armchair by the fire a bit longer and take on a safety adviser role at Victoria Square looking after the superstructure aspect of the contract. All at Northstone are delighted to have Leslie back treading the scaffold boards again and looking after the health and safety of Farrans Construction people and sub contractors on this prestigious contract.

A Summer Holiday With A Difference

Most of us look forward to our annual summer holidays and all that it entails. It may be relaxing by a pool at a hotel in the sun, visiting new countries and seeing the sights or simply doing nothing for two weeks as a way of winding down after a busy year at work. None of us would contemplate volunteering to work on the construction of a three bedroom house in Uganda where temperatures and humidity levels are stifling and malaria as well as AIDS take a devastating toll of the local people.

Gary Moore, our General Manager at Beckett, is certainly one of a kind for each year at holiday time he gathers his tools and travels to far flung places to undertake voluntary work with a organisation called Labour in Faith and Trust (LIFT) which is based in north Belfast. This summer Gary went to Uganda to help build a new home for 9 orphans whose mud hut had become uninhabitable. The orphans had lost their parents as a result of AIDS and were being looked after by an aunt but the deprivation and poverty meant that she was valiantly fighting a losing battle to prevent the youngsters joining the ever increasing number of street children in Kampala. However, things were to become even more eventful as Gary takes up the story.

“The mud hut was in the Ugandan capital, Kampala. The LIFT team quickly demolished it and as we were building the replacement house, some of the team discovered a little four year old girl who was seriously ill with malaria. Malaria can be cured but the child’s mother had given up hope of saving her life as she did not have the necessary funds to buy medical treatment or travel to the nearest clinic. We took the little girl on a twenty mile taxi journey to the clinic and for the equivalent of 66 pence were able to obtain the injection she needed to combat the malaria. Within a few hours, the child’s fever had passed and she was sitting up. The replacement dwelling for the orphans was completed a short time later and it wasn’t long before we were travelling back to the airport to catch the flight back to Belfast. The sense of personal satisfaction I get from working with LIFT is tremendous and I left Kampala knowing that 9 orphans had at least some hope for the future.”

As indicated on the pages of previous editions of this magazine, the caring nature and concern for others of Northstone people is remarkable and Gary’s story is both humbling and inspirational.

Further information on LIFT can be obtained from Gary on 02890 551219.



Caption to follow

Bobby Dazzler

Every successful organisation must have people who achieve results and get the job done irrespective of the degree of difficulty, time constraints, weather conditions or any other influencing factor. Such people are found across the Northstone Divisions but Bobby Wallace re writes the manual when it comes to commitment to the Company and capability.



Bobby Wallace

Bobby has been the Quarry and Asphalt Division's lead foreman in the greater Belfast area for the last 20 years. His squad is renowned for having successfully completed many high profile surfacing contracts which include the car parking at the Odyssey Arena and runways at Belfast City Airport.

Bobby’s 35 years of experience in the blacktop industry and eye for detail means that every project, irrespective of size, receives the same high quality finish which our customers demand.

Wissie Martin, who is Bobby’s Contracts Director, recently obliged Northlink by providing a profile of what makes Bobby special, as he explains;

“Bobby is a contract managers, or site engineers’ perfect foreman as he willingly assists them in planning the sequence of work on site which invariably means we deliver the contract on time. His great experience also means that his spreader is well maintained and as such, breakdowns are rare. However, Bobby’s greatest asset is his dependability and always having the Company’s interests at heart. Many, many times on difficult contracts he has simply requested the material and ensured that it is laid in accordance with the contract specification where other foremen may well have decided not to bother. His attitude and ability is first class. I cannot speak too highly of him.”

Praise indeed for our own Bobby Dazzler.

Stephen takes Pride in his Job

The latest breaking news this Christmas from Farrans Homes is that Linen Green Site Manager, Stephen Foster has deservedly won the prestigious NHBC ‘Pride in the Job’ award for excellence in site management for his work at the Division’s Lisburn development. The award was made at a stylish fuction in the Culloden Hotel in November and is the house builders award of choice as it is based on practical and measurable criteria.

It says much for Stephen that on receiving his award he immediately acknowledged the work of his team at Linen Green as he outlined to Northlink recently;

“The Farrans people at Linen Green are tremendous and although the award was made to me as an individual, it belongs really to the entire team. The build quality of our product and excellent presentation of the development all helped towards achieving this recognition. All our hard work has paid off as the potential purchasers who come to site appreciate it and this in turn is reflected in our sales figures.”

It came as no surprise to anyone at Farrans Homes that Stephen was nominated for and won the award because he certainly puts his all into running the Linen Green development and this coupled with a highly professional approach to site management means that purchasers are seldom if ever disappointed with their new home. Every purchaser is special as far as Stephen is concerned and this personal touch means so much to them as they navigate their way through the stresses and strains of buying a new home. His pride in everything that goes on at Linen Green and in delivering a superior, value for money product is obvious. Stephen and the efforts of his team in securing the NHBC award have now confirmed Linen Green as being among the leading 30 private housing developments in Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man. This is another way of indicating that Stephen and his team are now in the top tier of the 17,000 sites across the UK which were considered for the award.

Northlink has it on good authority that our suppliers feel that Stephen is one of the best organised and competent housing site managers they have come across. They talk about his total commitment to health and safety with awe.

Objective and independent comments like these are praise indeed.

During the construction of the houses at Linen Green there were up to 80 people under Stephen’s control. The organisation of this volume of labour within the context of a private housing site where each purchaser demands a personalised and specific product is challenging to say the least. It is fitting that we leave the last word to Stephen;

“It is always good to have your efforts recognised and our site is a quite exceptional development. We have been on site since February 2004 and my team have been superb in meeting all the operational challenges mainly because we pull together and this award is a really a reflection of the good team spirit that we have at Linen Green.”

The future looks bright for Farrans Homes, as illustrated by the smiling faces of the team as they pose for the camera on the second phase of Linen Green.



Caption to follow

Recognition for Tony and Paul

The hard work and ability of Tony Fry and Paul Magowan has been recognised by the Farrans Construction Scottish Division with their recent promotion to contract manager.

Tony is a civil engineering graduate of Heriot Watt University and immediately after his degree joined Costain plc and worked on a wide variety of large scale civil engineering projects throughout the United Kingdom. These included a section of the London Ringmain Project, the Avonmouth Bridge Strengthening Contract and the Newbury Bypass.

He joined Farrans Construction in January 1999 when he decided that the time was right to settle down back in Scotland. Things have gone well for Tony since his commencement with us as he explains;

“I have worked throughout Scotland on a variety of different civil engineering project with each one providing a different challenge. To me one of the great features of a career in contracting is the feeling that each contract is a new start – you begin with an empty space and at the end of the contract you can look over the site and see what you have created. I can’t think of any other job that gives that level of satisfaction.”

Tony is also a commercially astute and committed individual as indicated in his recent discussion with our Northlink reporter when he said;

“We have come through a period recently in Scotland in which we have changed the way in which we control and manage contracts. I believe we are now embarking on exciting times in the Region where we all feel we are moving to another level, the most obvious example being the winning of the prestigious Glasgow Harbour Contract. The value and duration of this contract will form the backbone of our turnover for the next two and a half years and provide a basis to expand going forward.”



Tony Fry image to come

Paul Magowan graduated from the University of Edinburgh in 1994 with a B.Eng (Hons) degree in Civil Engineering and immediately joined Farrans Construction as a graduate engineer. Since then he has been involved on a range of projects right across Scotland from Dundee to the Isle of Barra in the Outer Hebrides. Life to date for Paul at Farrans has been eventful as he explains;

“Many of the contracts I have been involved with have been very challenging but my biggest test to date was Troon Harbour Roll On Roll Off Terminal. It was constructed to a very tight programme and despite some bad weather and difficult sea conditions, we completed the berth on time and had it available for sea trials in accordance with the contract conditions.”

Northlink readers may be interested to know that Paul’s father, Andy, was Managing Director of T.B.F.



Paul Magowan

Thompson (Garvagh) Limited which was at one time an integral part of the Farrans Limited Group.

The promotion of Tony Fry and Paul Magowan will allow Regional Manager, Alvar Kenwell, to take a step back from the day to day running of our Scottish sites and spend more time in developing the Client base.

Northlink wishes Tony and Paul every success in their new roles.

New Faces at Concrete Division

Two new members of staff have joined the team at the Northstone Concrete Division in recent months.

Maria McGonigle (right) who is based at our Letterkenny depot in County Donegal, started with us in March as the depot secretary and despatcher. She works closely with Area Sales Manager Henry McKinney and yard operative, Ryan Lindsay at one of our smallest but busiest locations. Maria, who lives in the town, joined the team after a short break away from employment to spend time with her daughter, Caoimhe, who is now five years old. Maria had been previously employed by a large ladies clothes shop in Letterkenny where she undertook a range of administrative tasks. Maria recently provided Northlink with an insight into how things have gone for her over the past few months at Northstone; “Within the first week of joining Northstone I was utterly amazed as to how much was involved in selling roof tiles and the various accessories but Henry and Ryan have always been on hand if I have a problem. Customers come from across the entire county to buy Northstone tiles and accessories which tells me we have a good product.”



Maria has also had the opportunity to meet the rest of the team at Toomebridge as she explained; “Shortly after starting with the Company I travelled to Toomebridge and met everyone in the office. This was really useful and I must say that everyone has been tremendous in making me feel at home. I certainly made the right career move in coming to Northstone.”

Our second new employee in the Concrete Division is Area Sales Manager, Raymond McKenny (left).



Raymond looks after concrete tile sales in County Tyrone and also is responsible for concrete sales from our depot at Carrickmore. He comes to us with a sales and marketing background gained in a range of products and services including fireplaces and advertising. Our Northlink reporter was keen to find out more about how Raymond had adapted to life in the concrete industry and he was only too happy to oblige;

“As someone completely new to the construction industry I have certainly a lot to learn. However, I believe my selling skills and experience will stand me in good stead. Northstone have a great reputation in the market for quality and service so this makes my job a lot easier. One of the highlights to date for me was winning the order to supply 400 metres of concrete to a local farm which was a situation where there was lots of competition but our quality and service level won the day.”

Clearly Maria and Raymond are settling in well at the Concrete Division and Northlink welcomes them to the Company and wishes them well in their future careers with us.

A SHEQ Manager Who Delivers

Alex Anderson, the SHEQ Manager at Farrans Construction, is one of those people we all hold in awe and marvel at their competence. SHEQ, for those of us who don’t know, means Safety, Health, Environmental and Quality. These are functional areas of the business which, if we were being honest, we would rather rely on others to ensure that our systems meet the required standard.

However, Alex is a SHEQ Manager with a difference as he brings to the role a commitment and work ethic which very few can match. It is no surprise to those of us who know him to discover that the tender submissions which are compiled and submitted by him are

impeccable and are remarked upon by client bodies for their excellence. His thoroughness and eye for detail mean that our external audits under each of the three systems invariably produce few recommendations on to how they can be improved upon.

Alex brings 23 years of site experience to his current role which he commenced in 1999. He currently leads a team of four staff specialising in site auditing of health and safety, environmental management and quality assurance. The devising and updating of improvement plans is also an important aspect of Alex’s role. His latest achievement is gaining lead auditor status in

health and safety, a qualification recognised by the International Register of Certificated Auditors.

In 2003 Alex initiated the Company Safe T Cert Club to assist sub contractors in developing their own safety management system and improve their performance. More recently he produced the Farrans Construction Environmental Rules for Sub Contractors advisory booklet and the highly acclaimed Company Health and Safety Handbook.

Farrans Construction site staff can be assured that their operating procedures are of the highest possible standard as they have been developed by a SHEQ Manager who really delivers.

Caption to follow



Immediate Success for New Farrans Healthcare Division



Site team: Back row L-R: John Ferguson, Jonathan Collins, David Agnew, Alan Mc Cullough
Front L-R: Glen Gilmore, Darrell Mc Guckian, Laura Arbuckle

The management team at Farrans Construction clearly do not believe in resting on their laurels as this year they have established a new Healthcare Division which has quickly become a major force in this important sector of the market. This has been achieved under the stewardship of John Wilson with Anita McParland, David Henry and Paul Moreland carrying out the key head office functions.

The anticipated expenditure on healthcare facilities in the Province, as published in the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland, is £2.2bn over the next ten years. There are special skills and requirements associated with delivering hospitals and community care & treatment centres. The best way to address this is to establish a dedicated Division, with the personnel who are suited to working within this environment.

The successful completion of two community treatment and care centres in Belfast to the highest quality standards laid the foundations for the success of the new Division and its ever growing reputation. The centre at Hollywood Arches was constructed by a team led by Ken Meaklim supported by Donald Doyle, Alister Murphy and Melvin Kelly. The project required the retention of the existing health care facilities during the construction phase and ultimately provided a range of services for the local community ranging from general practitioners and dentists to podiatrists. The centre at Hollywood Arches was completed earlier this year at a cost of £7.5m.

The second centre in Belfast was at Lisburn Road and was completed last month. The site was extremely restricted as it was adjacent to a busy railway line and surrounded by both private and public buildings. The site manager, George McClure, was assisted by Donald Doyle who transferred across from the Hollywood Arches project. The team at Lisburn Road also included Glenn Gilmore, Spencer Williams and Gareth Murray. One particularly interesting feature on the project was the internal Glulam walls which were constructed of heavy timber posts running the full height of the building at a progressive incline and were fully glazed as a functional feature within the atrium.

A third community treatment and care centre at Castlereagh in Belfast is currently being designed and planned with a scheduled start date on site of July 2006. The project will be negotiated with Farrans Construction in the New Year.

A Farrans team is already hard at work constructing a new Pharmacy and Laboratory Building at Altnagelvin Hospital in Londonderry which was secured as a Public Finance Initiative project at a cost of £14m. The bid was developed in its latter stages by Anita McParland and is led on site by Darrell McGuckian with support from Glenn Gilmore, Jonathan Collins, Alan McCullough, John Ferguson, Brian Mullan, David Agnew, Colin Minnis and Laura Arbuckle.

Farrans Healthcare has also recently secured preferred contractor status for the new south block at Altnagelvin as part of a framework agreement over 4 years with the value of work to be carried out in the period being potentially in the region of £60m. This successful bid was led by Contracts Manager, John Wilson with Anita McParland being the Design Co-ordinator and Noel McKee as Commercial Manager with significant technical input from Jonathan Collins.

All at Northlink wish the Healthcare team at Farrans Construction every success with their new projects.

Environmental Excellence In Evidence at North Down

Excellence in environmental management must certainly be in evidence at the Quarry and Asphalt Division's North Down quarry as the location has just received further recognition. This time it was the prestigious Quarry Products Association award for Energy and Resource Management. The North Down location now has an integrated system which produces cost saving, increased productivity and environmental improvement.

Some of the improvements which led to the award included the following:

- a recycled process water system
- intelligent energy systems controlling conveyor belts, extraction fans and air compressors
- diagnostic and automated power usage remediation
- time switches, thermostats and photocells to control heaters, lights and other equipment
- conversion from kerosene to mains gas as a fuel source
- on going investment in new processing and environmental control equipment and improvements to the site layout

One interesting fact which Northlink readers may find interesting is that the only water which is not recycled at North Down is the drinking water used in the offices and canteens. Everything else is continually recycled.

Divisional Product Director received the award at the Quarry Industry Showcase event in September. He was clearly delighted with this most recent accolade for the location as he told Northlink afterwards;

"This award is worthy recognition of the efforts of the entire workforce at North Down. It is really their award and I commend them on their enthusiasm and commitment to effective environmental management which benefits us all."



Angus Sheds Some Light



Caption to follow

Angus Kennedy, our Deputy Quality Manager in the Quarry and Asphalt Division, is a man of many talents. Not least of these is his ability to translate dry, complex technical standards into an easy to understand format which even the most non technical of us can comprehend.

Angus's skills and abilities have been recognised by others outside of Northstone and for the past three years he has been invited to contribute an article to the Quarries and Mines Year Book. In 2004 and 2005, Angus described quarry processes and products. In 2006 he tackled the new European Standard on Aggregate Sizes (BS EN 13043) in which he presented a basic outline of the system in a clear and understandable fashion. The 1,500 word synopsis, which includes two tables, can be viewed on the Northstone/Maxwell website on [http://www.rjmaxwell.com/education/european aggregate sizes \(BS EN 13043\)/](http://www.rjmaxwell.com/education/european aggregate sizes (BS EN 13043)/).

Making It a Happy Christmas in South Armagh

We have lost count of the number of times we have carried articles in the pages of this magazine describing the charitable giving and fund raising activities of Northstone people. Our latest example of this comes from the Farrans Construction team at the Carran Hill Water Treatment Works which decided, along with staff from Water Service NI, Earthtec and Construction Consulting Services, to do something to support the work of The Rainbow Club in nearby Crossmaglen.

The Club was established almost forty years ago by local people as a cross community group to provide social activities and run events for disabled children across South Armagh. As the years went on, the Club invited elderly people and also disabled adults to become involved. The mainstay of the Club's calendar is the weekly get together of young and old in the community centre in Crossmaglen which usually starts with a bingo session followed by some live music and dancing. There are also Christmas shopping expeditions and day trips as well as a holiday for the children in the summer months. The Rainbow Club is funded entirely by voluntary contributions.

The work of the Rainbow Club clearly touched the people on site and before long a sponsored walk was organised around the area in the immediate vicinity of the Carran Hill site. A band of some 20 intrepid souls completed the 7 kilometre trek and more importantly collected some £2,532 from their sponsors. A short time later a presentation event was held in the local GAA club house in Crossmaglen at which a cheque was handed over to members of the Rainbow Club.

It was smiles all around as clearly this welcome contribution will go some way to making it a happy Christmas for the members of the Rainbow Club, young and old.

The new Carran Hill works, which will be capable of treating up to 6.8 million litres of water a day in line with the latest European Union Standards, is currently running two months ahead of programme. When fully operational towards the end of next year, the new plant will replace the old Carran Hill Works on the same site.



Caption to follow

Yet More Space Required at Dunmurry



Caption to follow

More space will definitely need to be set aside at Dunmurry to accommodate the ever growing number of awards received by Farrans Construction.

The latest accolade was the Construction Excellence Award for Civil Engineering Project over £3 million which was presented at a gala evening in October. In making the award the judges said;

“The nature of the works and the adverse ground conditions on a restricted site, adjacent to the Newry River, led to a technically demanding project. Although not a formal partnering project, excellent working relationships between the team at all stages, including a significant redesign, enabled major obstacles to be overcome. The final solution is a pleasing project completed on time and close to the target cost.”

Would we expect anything else from the Province's leading contractor which has as its motto, 'Experience, Expertise and Performance'?

Sand Martins Make The Right Choice

The large number of sand martins which made our Ballyginniff depot their home this summer undoubtedly made the right choice when it came to nest building material. They chose our sand stockpiles as the perfect location for their nesting colonies.



The sand martin is a small brownish white, swallow like bird with a short bill and dark eyes. It feeds on a wide variety of flying insects which are caught on the wing. They certainly find the Northstone sand depots around the shores of Lough Neagh to their liking as each year they return to them from their wintering grounds in southern Africa.

This year our depot supervisor at Ballyginniff, Michael Savage, assisted in a biodiversity survey organised by the Quarry Products Association. This involved trapping the birds in a mist net set along the Lough shore.

Once caught, the birds were measured and weighed before being fitted with a leg ring for monitoring purposes. The birds were then released, none the worse for their experience.

Our locations around the Province, whether it is a sand depot, block yard or quarry location, are all havens for wildlife in their own right. Peregrine falcons, buzzards, badgers, foxes and many more species co exist with the vehicle movements, blasting and other activities and do extremely well.

No doubt Michael's sand martins will be winging their way back to Ballyginniff next March to commence another successful breeding season in our sand stockpiles.



Don's Team Turn On The Power



Caption to follow

Don Creighton joined Farrans Construction as an electrician in June 2000 and since then he has committed himself to delivering a range of electrical and related maintenance services to sites which are competently undertaken and to the required standard.

Don's talents were recognised in May of this year when he was asked by Plant Manager, Tony Kane, to manage a team of three electricians and an apprentice. The team consists of Michael Leech, Paul Caughey, John McShane and Jonathan Swaffield. This was the catalyst for the electricians at Dunmurry to really come into their own and whether it is site establishment, office accommodation testing, temporary lighting, computer cabling or tool testing, the Farrans sites are assured of a top class service.

Don has a wide experience base to call on having worked as a maintenance electrician at Harland and Wolff shipyard in Belfast and for many years as a construction site electrician. He is extremely modest but as our Northlink reported discovered, Don is also ambitious in respect of his team as he explains;

"I have an excellent team at Dunmurry with lots of experience. They all work safely, quickly and effectively. My job is to co-ordinate them correctly and ensure we continue to improve the service level we deliver. We will achieve this through the implementation of a planned maintenance programme and keeping ourselves up to date with relevant standards and modern technology. On a personal role, I really like my new role as I can plan our own works programme and I still get a buzz out of knowing that the team has done a good job for the sites. I have lots of ideas still to try out in relation to improving our performance."

Looks like Don's team will be turning on the power for years to come.

The Safety Factor

"Will you be going home to your loved ones after work today?" It seems such a silly question to ask but do you ever consider it when you leave home in the morning. Is there really such a choice to be made each day?

This year 6 CRH people and 3 contractor employees left their homes and loved ones to go to work and did not return. In 2004, 8 workers lost their lives on CRH locations. That makes 17 very sad and grieving homes over the last two years so.

What can we learn from this terrible statistic? Investigations into the accidents have revealed that the key causes were;

- failure to effectively isolate fixed plant and machinery,
- failure to assess the risks of working at height and ensure proper safe guards were in place to prevent falls,
- failure to protect persons working with or being in the vicinity of mobile plant and vehicles.

No doubt you have heard all of this before from your line manager or read it in the pages of this magazine. However, the fact remains that these causes continue to bring about so many deaths and serious injuries in our industry. **Are we all missing the point?**

Outside of the CRH family and focusing just on the quarrying and processed products industry in Ireland, there have been a number of fatalities and serious injuries associated with equipment and work activities that are commonplace in our own Company. Block making machines have been involved in 2 fatalities and reversing vehicles have been the cause of another 2 deaths.

Can you afford to be complacent and think it can't happen to you?

Let's look at a fatality in one of CRH companies in England. An employee entered a static block making machine to manually strap a bale of blocks. The machine was not isolated and the machine grippers caught the man and dragged him to the position where he was found! An inexperienced operator who didn't isolate the machine you may think, WRONG. The deceased was the Factory Manager, 55 years old with 25 years experience in block making plants and management. He had completed his recognised safety training, was well respected and admired by his peers and had even played a major part in the design of the machine on which he lost his life.

It would appear he took a chance and paid the ultimate price.

Make the RIGHT CHOICE

No matter what your employment status, you have a responsibility to act safely and follow the rules. Choose the safe way to undertake your role each and every day at work. You owe it to your loved ones at home. If you are in doubt about safety in any aspect of your job with the Company, stop and ask your line manager. You owe it to your family at home.

DON'T BECOME A STATISTIC – STAY ALIVE

9 families will have a very sad Christmas this year and an empty chair at the dinner table, I trust you will have a happy and safe Christmas.

The Safety Factor article is contributed by David Smyth, our Health and Safety Manager with the Northstone Concrete Division. David is one of the most respected and highly regarded safety professionals in our industry today. His poignant and hard hitting message this Christmas gives us all food for thought.

Roof Tile Ambassador

The unsung heroes of our Company are very often the despatch people and drivers who have daily face to face contact with customers. It is they who are the real ambassadors for the business.

One such ambassador is Roy McConnell who is an offloader owner driver in the Northstone Concrete Division. Roy has had a long association with the Company which dates back to 1978 when he was employed by Sammy Jenkins, an owner driver, delivering sand from our Scott sand sites. At that time he drove a 6 wheel Mercedes tipper.

In 1981 the late Sandy Campbell, the Scott Transport Manager, offered Roy the opportunity to become an owner driver hauling sand from the Company's Ballyginniff depot. Roy accepted the offer and in 1984, began driving tile offloaders in 1984 and thus began the role in which he is perhaps the best known driver in Northstone.

Roy now drives a Volvo FM12 460 offloader complete with a personalised number plate and resplendent in the Northstone livery. The number plate was a recent present from Roy's daughter, Naomi. Readers may be interested to know that Roy's vehicle features in the new Northstone promotional material.

Roy's typical day requires the delivery of two loads, some 7,000 tiles. Some days, depending on the location of customer sites, Roy even manages a third load. He is well known and respected by customers from Donegal to County Down and all of them remark on his consideration, commitment to service and civility. The management team in the Concrete Division regularly receive reports from customers on Roy's attitude and helpfulness. Invariably these customer reports describe an occasion when Roy did everything possible to help them with a delivery.

Our reporter recently had the opportunity to talk to Roy about life as a tile offloader driver and the various ups and downs of the job. Roy's response was typical of the man;

"Driving an offloader is really my passion. I get great satisfaction when the lorry looks it's best and am proud to have it painted in the Northstone livery. The red and black colours look well. My job is all about listening to our customers and doing everything I can to meet their specific needs on site. This approach helps greatly when it comes to ensuring there is enough space to park the lorry and offload safely. I have no doubt that our tiles are the best on the market because the customers tell me they are. The Concrete Division is a great place to work and what I really like is the way the senior management take an interest in their people. I know this because when I took delivery of my last two new trucks on both occasions a senior member of staff shook me by the hand and wished me well with my investment. They also show support at times of trouble. I like that.

The customers I deliver to speak well of the new Northstone livery and what the new organisation will mean for them. This bodes well for us all."

Roy is a pivotal member of the Northstone Concrete Division team who does much to promote our products on site through his commitment to customer care. He is one of life's true gentlemen and an ambassador for Northstone.

Roy lives in Ballyclare and is married to Isobel. The couple have one daughter, Naomi.



Caption to follow