

Chief Executive's Diary



Welcome to the eleventh edition of our house magazine, with its new name and style to reflect our Northstone identity. Our magazine continues to be an excellent source of information about developments within the business and serves to keep us all up to date with news around our locations and construction sites.

Our health and safety performance over the past six months is something that I comment on in each issue. Although our accident statistics show an improving trend, which is rewarding considering all the hard work and effort expended in this area, I was concerned that, in the first six months of this year, we had a small number of near miss incidents. Any one of them could have easily resulted in serious injury to our employees or sub-contractors.

"A safe working environment MUST be our priority and EVERYONE has a part to play."

The implementation of our new Northstone identity and management structure is now almost complete. No doubt some of you will have already seen the first vehicles in their eye-catching new livery. The recent amalgamation of the Scott and Ready Use businesses, under Graham McQuillan, concludes the major change process. We must now focus on consolidating all the recent good work, to ensure that we maximize the profitability of our business.

Ralph Clarke, who has made an exemplary contribution to our Company for almost 43 years, has moved back from the day to day involvement in the business. Originally from Toomebridge, he joined Scotts after leaving the Rainey school in Magherafelt. He progressed from despatch through various administrative posts, including roofing services and marketing, before becoming a director of Scotts. In 1984, Ralph succeeded Ernie McClure as managing director of Ready Use. He also serves on the board of Roadstone Dublin. Ralph will continue to have a significant involvement with us before finally retiring in November.

Information technology developments within Northstone are ongoing and we hope to have the new despatch system in place around our locations by the end of the year. In the meantime, the I.T. Project Team is completing the installation of the new network, which should significantly improve our sharing of data throughout our operations.

We have had a satisfactory first half to the year on all fronts.

Farrans Construction has several new jobs, in addition to a healthy tender list. The Building Division team has commenced work on a new unit at Altnagelvin Hospital, which is the latest project we have negotiated in the growing Health Sector. The Victoria Square Development continues apace – a very impressive project in the heart of Belfast – on which Clifford Spence is leading the team on this technically demanding contract. House sales at our private developments in Lisburn and Craigavon are encouraging, which reflects well on the quality of the product Farrans Homes are currently delivering. Farrans are also building houses at Tarawood, Black's Road, for Northwin, where sales are also going well. In Scotland, Alvar Kenwell and his team are carefully selecting jobs and have secured an infrastructure contract at Glasgow Harbour. The partnering initiatives with Suffolk County Council in England continue, with two further school construction projects being recently added to the order book. Robert McAllister and his team are doing an excellent job at Luton Airport – a challenging contract in a busy location. Other new jobs recently started are the Portadown Bridge Refurbishment and Tandragee Waste Water plant.

The Quarry and Asphalt Division have secured reasonable tonnage of blacktop for the year with a further award of a super measured term contract in the West and also boosted by winning the Ballyshannon to Bundoran surfacing contract. The investment in production plant in recent years is yielding the anticipated cost efficiencies and stone sales are encouraging. The Division has also recently opened up Long Mountain quarry at Rasharkin, after some 40 years of inactivity, to supply material to the nearby Ballynaloob road project, also being carried out by the Contracts team under Gareth Telford. Work continues with the clearance of our valuable Bushmills Road site, in preparation for the sale of the premises possibly later in the year. The next few months will also finally see the retirement of our good friend Derek Waddell, who has been the Division's estimator for many years. Derek's wide experience in the industry, combined with a good practical knowledge and sense of humour, will be missed. We extend to Derek every good wish for his retirement.

The merger of Ready Use and Scotts into our new **Concrete Division** has not been without some pain and we were sad to have to see some people leave. We wish them well as they seek new careers. The major changes have now taken place and all involved can focus on making a success of the combined team.

Roofing products and services have had a solid start to the year, with the Scott Galloway tile remaining popular with developers. The ready mixed concrete depots have remained busy in the Belfast area, with Victoria Square now starting to take good volumes. The market in rural areas remains competitive, but we will continue to hold our own, due to the dedication of our staff and drivers, combined with our reputation for quality. Lough Neagh sand extraction is in line with last year and the continuous upgrading of plant and machinery helps us to maintain our strong position.

Concrete block sales are a good indicator of house building activity and after a quiet start in some areas, activity is picking up satisfactorily.

The profile of **W. H. Beckett**, under the guidance of Tom Sweeney, is being raised significantly. A new brochure has been published and the revamped web-site is now active. These initiatives, combined with additional key staff, should equip us to maximize the growing opportunities in this sector of the market.

It only remains for me to wish you an enjoyable, restful and well-deserved summer break and to thank you again for all of your efforts.

Noel Quinn, July 2005

NEWS FLASH!

On 21 June 2005 Roads Minister, Shaun Woodward, announced that the multi million pound M1/Westlink widening scheme is on target to commence in early 2006. He also announced that Highway Management (NI) has been selected as the provisional preferred bidder for the project.

Highway Management (NI) is comprised of Farrans Construction, John Graham (Dromore) Limited and the major German contractor, Bilfinger Berger Bot.

The £100 million project includes widening of the M1 and Westlink to three lanes in each direction between Stockman's Lane and Grosvenor Road. It will also entail the provision of underpasses at Broadway and Grosvenor Road junctions, widening of the M2 between Greencastle and Sandyknowes to three lanes in each direction and provision of on slips to the M2 at Antrim Area Hospital.

Having constructed a major section of the Westlink in the early eighties Farrans are delighted to continue their association with a major part of the infrastructure of Belfast. Farrans also look forward to renewing the joint venture partnership with John Graham, the same joint venture which successfully completed the M3 Cross Harbour Bridge.

Northlink congratulates all at Farrans Construction on their success.

Harriet's Story



Harriet hard at work at her desk in Toomebridge

Harriet Taggart is just the latest in a long line of Northstone people who have celebrated 25 years with the business. Her story began back in 1979 when, as a Youth Training Programme Trainee, she accepted a day release placement in Scott's accounts department. Her job at that time was to batch docket, file maintenance sheets and other clerical duties. Harriet must have impressed because it wasn't long before she was working permanently for the Company. At that time Scotts employed some 15 clerical people in the accounts department.

As time went on Harriet developed her skills in a range of tasks which ranged from operating the switchboard and

looking after reception to being responsible for invoicing and the sales ledger. She has also worked with many people in her career at Scotts who would later become main board directors including Noel Quinn, Ralph Clarke and Raymond Reilly.

The past twenty five years has seen information technology move on at some pace and Harriet has played an essential role in implementing new systems at Scotts. Her specialist knowledge in this area is called upon on an ongoing basis at Company level and at the moment she is involved in the preparation for the installation of a new Northstone server and network.

Concrete Division managing director Graham McQuillan has recently recognised Harriet's commitment and abilities by promoting her to the position of Office Manager where she will work closely with and be responsible for those staff members who undertake various clerical and accounting roles at Toome.

Our roving reporter had an opportunity to talk to Harriet recently to find out more about her story and what she feels about our new identity;

"The last twenty five years or so have gone very quickly. Right from my earliest

days at Toome I was impressed by the friendliness of the place and the fact that senior managers always had time for other staff at every level. This has encouraged us all to think of ourselves as part of a team and to try to help each other out as much as possible. It is still like that today. We now have new faces at Toome with some colleagues having moved up from Dunmurry as the new Northstone Concrete Division takes shape, so there is lots of activity and excitement in the office just at the moment. I believe that our Northstone identity will be a springboard for greater and better things for everyone because we employ good people".

All at Northlink congratulate Harriet on her 25 years of loyal service to the Company and wish her every success in her new role.

Harriet lives in Moneymore and is married to Davy. She and Davy have one son, Stephen.

More about CRH

The year ended 31 December 2004 was a landmark year for CRH with profit before tax exceeding one billion euro for the first time. This was the twelfth consecutive year of profit growth.

Other highlights for the year were:-

- Sales: euro 12,820 million (up 16%)
- Operating Profit: euro 1,247 million (up 25%)
- Profit before tax: euro 1,017 million (up 18%)
- Dividend per share: 33 euro cent (up 17%)



Hastag truckmixers ready to roll on a motorway in Switzerland

Overall 2005 has started well for CRH and the focus continues to be on cost effectiveness and operational performance world-wide as we move into a more profitable second half of the year.

In the year to date there have been 15 acquisitions completed at a total cost of euro 100 million.

Northstone (NI) Limited is part of the CRH Europe Materials Division. In the last year or so, the Division has acquired businesses in Switzerland, Finland and Russia.

The Division acquired Hastag Holding, the second largest producer of aggregates and ready mixed concrete in Switzerland with annual sales of euro 95 million. The Company leads the market in the critically important Zurich and St Gallen areas.



Aggregate production in a Hastag quarry at St Gallen in Switzerland

In Finland, the purchase of Abetoni, a market leading manufacturer of concrete pipes and paving products was completed. Abetoni locations are predominantly in the south west of the country and offer an excellent opportunity to capitalise on the growing demand for landscape and paving products in this region of the Baltic states.

In Russia, the Division's presence in the ready mixed concrete sector in St Petersburg was expanded with the purchase of TSMK. TSMK own an unexploited quarry in the Russian province of Karelia which is close to the Finnish border. The quarry, which is currently being developed, will allow access to the ever growing St Petersburg aggregates market.

CRH now employs some 58,600 people across the world.

More about CRH next time.

Bowling Them Over in the Quarry and Asphalt Division

Hidden talents clearly exist in the Northstone Quarry and Asphalt Division as our team of ten pin bowlers have yet again excelled themselves in the annual competition which was held recently at the Sports Bowl in Ballymena. The event is held to raise funds for the Northern Ireland Chest, Heart and Stroke Association and this is the third consecutive year that our own bowling boys from Ballymena have won the competition.



The Famous Five (left to right): Tony Magill, James Patterson, Mervyn McBride, Jason Murphy and Leslie Kelly

The team consisted of Tony Magill, Leslie Kelly, Mervyn McBride, James Patterson and Jason Murphy. Tony was the team manager and trainer.

Some would say that it was Tony's team talk before the event which did the trick. In fact, some bystanders have likened it to the one given by Colonel Tim Collins on the eve of hostilities in the last Iraq war. Rumour has it that Divisional Managing Director, Willie McNabb, has even asked for a copy of the text to be displayed on his office wall to provide him with inspiration.

Leslie Kelly, opened the bowling for our side and perhaps it was his time in the Falklands with the Company, but he seemed to adopt the pose and gait of a penguin in each delivery. The transfer list may well be beckoning for the 2006 season. Next up was Mervyn McBride from Kells and if the press reports are to be believed, Mervyn made Leslie look good.

Third in line was our own Jason Murphy from Cork who produced a series of consistently high scores. It is indeed rare that a Cork man shows County Antrim residents how things should be done, especially in Ballymena.

Star of the show was James Patterson whose accuracy in delivery of the bowl is a thing of beauty.

Special mention goes to Tony Magill, the team manager and trainer, who kept spirits up when the opposition were beginning to perform. He was a calming influence and an articulate team manager who only had to mention the possibility of a P45 once to achieve the desired effect.

Northlink congratulates our bowling boys on their success and here's to next year.

All Our Yesterdays

The photograph in this article was taken in early September 1975 and depicts Mrs Iris Concannon, wife of Environment Minister Don Concannon, cutting the tape to officially open the Glengormley to Templepatrick section of the M2 Motorway.



Sam Looks On: The late Sam Taggart (right foreground) watches intently as another Farrans contract is completed.

Look closely at the photograph and you will see a distinguished gentleman standing to Mrs Concannon's left. The man in question is the late Sam Taggart, the founder and original owner of Farrans Limited. He is clearly proud of the achievements of his Company in successfully constructing another technically difficult civil engineering project.

The Belfast Telegraph, which reported on the ceremony, opened its article by stating: "This section of the motorway was a major feat of engineering. The Sandyknowes roundabout was considerably enlarged and high overhead lights were installed, slip roads were re-aligned and six new bridges were constructed to accommodate other roads".

As we know, Sam's legacy lives on in Northstone.

Quarry Division Lifts Another Environmental Award

The excellence of our Quarry and Asphalt Division's environmental management system and performance has again been recognised. This time it was in the inaugural Coleraine Borough Council Business Awards Scheme where we beat off strong competition from local large employers to win the coveted environmental award.

The five award criteria were:

- environmental policies
- the benefits accruing from these policies in respect of employees, customers, the community and environmental performance.
- the business opportunities or cost reductions arising from commitment to environmental management.
- the improvement in the environmental performance of suppliers and contractors.
- the steps taken to train or educate employees, customers, contractors and the general public in respect of the environmental issues within the business.

All at NorthLink congratulate every employee at the Quarry and Asphalt Division on their award and their continuing efforts to achieve superior performance in environmental management.



Gavin Ramsey (right) receives the Coleraine Borough Council Award on behalf of the Quarry and Asphalt Division.

Northstone Update

The Northstone Implementation Team, charged with responsibility for ensuring that the launch of our new identity is delivered as smoothly as possible, has been hard at work over the past six months. The team consisted of people from across the Company with Alan Hewitt and Keith Wood from the Concrete Division being joined by Richard McDermott and Raymond Moore from the Quarry and Asphalt Division. Tom Sweeney was also involved initially. The team was led by Noel Quinn and assisted by a consultant, GAIA Marketing and Design.

The tasks were many and varied, with Alan, Keith and Raymond looking after internal and customer communications and Richard dealing with all aspects of administration and documentation. The target date for the team was to have everything ready for the launch of our new identity on 1st April.

Effective communication of our Northstone identity began back in December, with a Noel Quinn question and answer session being carried in our own magazine to advise all employees of our plans. This was quickly followed up by a detailed briefing of the sales team and other customer-facing staff just before Christmas. A comprehensive article was also placed in Plant and Civil Engineer magazine in the New Year and this facilitated the promotion of the new logo and Northstone identity to the industry. Around the same time every customer received a letter to provide them with more detailed information on Northstone. Alan, Keith and Raymond complemented this with the design of a new web site (www.northstone-ni.com). They also designed a comprehensive, four page advertorial piece for Northern Builder magazine, which has also served as a useful information source for the sales team when meeting with new and existing customers. We will soon see new signage appearing around the locations and also the publication of a Northstone Products and Services Directory, which will provide customers with comprehensive information on all of our products and services.



Keith Wood (left) and Alan Hewitt (right) proof read a Northstone advertorial

Richard's responsibilities included ensuring that all documentation in the Company was reviewed to take account of the Northstone identity to facilitate a seamless launch on 1st April. This included the redesign of letterhead as well as continuous and non-continuous stationery for despatch, invoices and statements. Other important issues were bank accounts, cheques, quality assurance registrations and the like. All suppliers also received two separate letters to advise them of the new arrangements. Richard has also arranged for new business cards to be printed for our people and the design and purchase of a range of Northstone promotional gifts.



Raymond Moore (left) and Richard McDermott (right) carefully plan another aspect of the launch of our new Northstone identity

The work of the Northstone Implementation Team is now almost complete and when Noel Quinn was asked to comment on their work, he was typically generous in his praise of their contribution;

"The launch of our new identity has gone extremely well. The amount of work required in achieving the target date was significant and the decision to form an Implementation Team has proved to be correct, as their enthusiasm and knowledge of the issues were invaluable. Tom, Alan, Keith, Raymond and Richard have done much to ensure that the Northstone launch is a success and that our own people, customers and suppliers alike, have been kept fully informed along the way. The quality of the the Product and Services Directory, the various magazine articles and the re-designed Company documentation is first class."

Praise indeed for Tom, Alan, Keith, Raymond and Richard.

New Faces at W.H. Beckett

Three new faces have recently been recruited to the team at W.H. Beckett in Dunmurry as we seek to develop and grow this specialist aspect of our business.

David Lowry (right) joins us in an estimating and internal sales role with a brief to price and win profitable contracts as well as to market the Beckett product and service portfolio. He holds a degree in computer aided design from Glasgow Caledonian University and brings to the post a wide industrial experience having worked as a graduate engineer with a local seat belt manufacturer and in a number of positions within the curtain walling and glass facade sector of the construction industry. More recently David was a project controller and estimator with a local office fit out company which involved undertaking site surveys, quotation preparation and sourcing products.



Away from work, David listens to and makes music. He also enjoys going to the cinema and socialising with friends.

Harry Savage (left) joins the Beckett team as a flooring supervisor with responsibility for co-ordinating and organising the laying of our extensive range of floor coverings. He brings to the job a wealth of technical, product and client knowledge. Harry has been in the contract flooring industry for over 40 years and moves to W.H. Beckett from a well known flooring contractor. Away from work, Harry is a keen golfer and is a member of Donaghadee Golf Club.



Stuart Carphin (right) joins us as our new accounts/office administrator with a brief to develop and implement systems which will enhance the smooth running of the office services at Dunmurry. Credit control will also be a significant part of Stuart's role. Stuart has a background in credit control having worked in motor insurance, computer services and the motor trade. He also spent some five years as a stock controller in the licensed drinks industry. Stuart lists rallying among his outside interests having been involved in the sport for 33 years, although by his own admission, he now spends most of his time flyfishing which is less injurious to his health.



All at NorthLink wish David, Harry and Stuart a long and successful career with the Company.

Smooth Operator

Quarry and Asphalt Division Contracts Director, **Wissie Martin**, has always been a smooth operator when it comes to negotiating with clients, promoting the company or meeting deadlines on technically demanding projects. However he has given the term a whole new meaning with his latest effort to raise funds for worthwhile causes.

It all came about as a result of a discussion at a function attended by client representatives and their partners. Wissie was encouraged to become involved in an initiative to raise funds for disadvantaged children in Romania where £20 will keep an orphan or disabled child for a month in a caring environment. There was only one problem, the initiative involved taking part in a Waxathon which for the uninitiated involves the application of HOT wax to remove body hair (of which he had plenty!).

Wissie has never been a man to do things by half and so he agreed for a whole body treatment and the venue would be Ballymena Quarry where he was guaranteed an audience and maximum opportunity to raise funds. When the day arrived, Wissie was as buoyant and chirpy as ever even when the wax was being removed.

There was certainly gain with the pain as Wissie raised £2,000 in sponsorship from Northstone employees, clients and friends, to ease the plight of children who are very much worse off than ourselves.

All at NorthLink congratulate our own Smooth Operator, **Wissie Martin**, on his magnificent effort.



Grimming and Bearing it – Wissie Martin leans over his desk and prepares for the worst

Brenda Reaches Long Service Landmark



Brenda (right) receives her long service award from Chief Executive Noel Quinn

One of the best known people in our business, **Brenda Gregg**, our Salaries and Pensions Administrator, has reached the remarkable landmark of having 35 years unbroken service with the Company. Brenda commenced her career back in November 1969 with the Farrans Limited accounting team where she was involved in the development of our first ever computerised system and over the years she has been involved in many of the information technology initiatives we have had.

Looking after the administration of our salaries is not an easy task with the strict deadlines which have to be met and staff changes not to mention ever changing government legislation, but to Brenda this is all part of the job which she carries off with some style and efficiency of the highest level. In 2004 Brenda's expertise was recognised when she was asked to also administer our pensions, and true to form, she has taken the added responsibility in her stride.

Our NorthLink reporter was keen to find out from Brenda if there are still challenges to overcome in her role after 35 years with the Company. Brenda's response was what we have come to expect;

"The challenge for me every day is to help others with their queries and concerns whether it is talking to a member of staff about maternity pay or dealing with a concern from a colleague on income tax or pension problems. There is also making sure that I make the most of our computer systems. What never changes for me is the genuine gratitude shown by Northstone people when I have assisted them in resolving an issue. This is personally, very rewarding. Over the years many of my work colleagues have become close friends. Working in Northstone is like being part of a large family where we all depend on each other to achieve our work related targets but at the same time we all have time for a chat. The last thirty five years have really flown by and have been challenging certainly but very enjoyable."

Readers may also like to know that Brenda is also the Northstone employee representative on the CRH Euro Forum. This year, the Forum was held in Holland and Brenda took a very active part in the discussions with CRH management. The issues included the environment, health and safety, financial performance and business challenges for 2005. Further information on the Forum can be obtained from Brenda on request.

Encouraging Young People



Mark Lowry (far right) presents Darren McHenry (far left) with his sponsorship cheque. Also in the photograph is Professor Millar (centre), Dean of the Faculty of the Built Environment.

Northstone continues with its policy of encouraging young people to consider construction, quarrying and mineral processing as an excellent career choice.

Farrans Construction have sponsored students undertaking construction related discipline for some years. Our photograph above depicts Building Division

Managing Director, **Mark Lowry**, presenting a cheque to **Darren McHenry** who has just completed his first year on the Construction Engineering and Management course at the University of Ulster. Darren was the highest scoring entrant to the degree course based on his 'A' level examination results in 2004.

Up, Up and Away with the Farrans Pegasus Team



Team Ethos to the Fore at Luton: (Front, left to right) Paul Canavan, Dwayne Rice, Neal Lynch, John Gallagher, Warren Wright and Michael Murnin. (Back, left to right) John Collins, Brian O'Hare, Jerome Curran, Mark Beacom and John Ferguson.

Pegasus may be the name of the winged horse in Greek mythology but the Farrans Construction team are certainly flying high on Project Pegasus at London Luton Airport.

Over the past few years the airport has experienced an increasing number of airline operators and their passengers using the facilities. In 2004, the number of passengers going through the terminal was 7 million. The airport, as it was, could not cope with these volumes and so, Project Pegasus was born.

The Farrans Construction involvement in the Project came about as a direct consequence of having worked for the airport owners, TBI, in the past

particularly at Belfast International Airport. A relationship of some 10 years standing.

In August 2004, Farrans Construction was invited to undertake a £25m construction project at Luton Airport to commence the following month and be substantially completed by the end of June 2005. The management team at Dunmurry committed to the Project Pegasus and within four weeks we were on site at Luton with only limited design information and little else.

The contract involved the construction of a 250 metre long, 3 storey high pier, an immigration hall, a new retail scheme and the construction of a new two storey arrivals and departures area. The scale of the project meant that the whole logistics of the airport had to change to accommodate the works.

The challenges for the site team were enormous given that they had to work within a live airport environment and adjacent to a runway which meant six jets arriving and departing in the vicinity of our site boundary throughout the day. The project required constant liaison with the airport operations team as we were required to demolish an existing arrivals building which dealt with 20,000 passengers each day and construct a new two storey building to replace it. The site team also had to insert bridge links at the front entrance of the airport which resulted in many interfaces with the public and the airport authorities. This meant that relationships had to be forged quickly.

Contracts Director, Robert McAlister, was clearly delighted with the performance and dedication of his

site team when he spoke to our Northlink reporter recently.

"The site team at Luton is tremendous. The project required them to gel quickly and be totally focused. This they achieved with little difficulty. I am particularly proud of their commitment to the Company which has seen them achieve monthly turnover figures approaching record levels. The Farrans Luton Team have responded in an exemplary way to the long working hours away from home in rented accommodation, working and living with the same people. The team spirit, morale and willingness to help each other as found in the team is remarkable. Each one of the team has potential to build significant careers in the industry".

The contract manager on Project Pegasus is Warren Wright who is ably supported by site managers Neil Lynch, John Collins and John Gallagher. Other members of the team include section managers Jerome Curran and Michael Murnin, senior engineer John Ferguson and engineers David Bolton and Dwayne Rice. Mark Beacom is the site based quantity surveyor who works with Sean O'Neill and M & E co-ordinator, Brian O'Hare.

During Project Pegasus, a retail scheme was added to the contract. This team is headed up by contract manager John Cooper with Paul Canavan as site manager. Gerry Higgins looks after the surveying role.

Looks like Farrans Construction has a new group of willing and able construction professionals forging careers with the Company.

New Regional Sales Managers in Concrete Division



New Regional Sales Managers Smile for the Camera (left to right): Paddy Mackle, Ken Anderson and Stephen Smyth

The recent merging of our former Ready Use Concrete and Scott businesses into the new Concrete Division has created an opportunity for the appointment of three new Regional Sales Managers with Paddy Mackle, Ken Anderson and Stephen Smyth being promoted.

Paddy Mackle will be responsible for concrete and block sales in the north of the Province and Donegal as well as co-ordinating mortar sales in the greater Coleraine area. He will lead a team made up of Darren Stewart, Nigel Mairs and Lionel McCutcheon. Paddy in turn will be responsible to Sales Director, Keith Wood. Our reporter, always keen to find out more, recently asked Paddy for his views and aspirations for the future;

"I see my new role as leading the team and co-ordinating all market information in the region to ensure we maximise the sales opportunities. We will only be as good as the information we have and in this regard I will make sure that I am always available for my team to lend assistance, help to solve problems or suggest ideas as to how we approach particular areas or customers. Over the next few months I also intend meeting as many customers in my region as possible. Northstone has been good for the sales team as we now have more sharing of market information than ever before which is vital if we are to achieve our overall objective of developing relationships with existing customers and winning new ones across as wide a portfolio of Northstone products as possible".

Ken Anderson is typically upbeat about his new appointment as he indicated recently to our reporter;

"I am looking forward to the challenges of the new position within the Concrete Division of Northstone as we seek to develop roof tiles sales across Northern Ireland and into Donegal. I have a tremendous team of area sales managers in Richard Wilson, Henry McKinney, Gordon Mitchell and Hector Warke who have lots of experience in the industry. Each one of them also has vast local knowledge, good relationships with their customers and that all important commitment to customer service. Together we can achieve bigger and better things within the Northstone environment which offers sales and marketing opportunities which perhaps were not as readily available under our previous structure".

Ken reports to Sales Director, Alan Hewitt.

Stephen Smyth becomes Regional Sales Manager for concrete and blocks in the Greater Belfast area and the south of the Province. He will continue to provide support to all of the sales team in the marketing and selling of our mortar product. George Grant, John Millen and Rebecca Drury report directly to him. Stephen gave our magazine an enthusiastic assessment of how the new role has gone for him so far;

"One of the first things I tried to do on appointment was to meet with my team on a regular basis to learn more from them about their areas, their customers and the general level of construction activity in the region. I was delighted to note the increased interaction which is now taking place since the launch of our new identity with plenty of quality leads being passed on. We are now getting to the stage where we have stopped talking about Ready Use and Scott representatives which is evidence to the fact that we are now all working more closely together. My vision for the role is to make optimum use of the talents of my team and to build on existing relationships with customers by introducing them to a wider range of Northstone products and to become their material supply partner of choice".

Stephen reports to Sales Director, Keith Wood.

Our magazine wishes Paddy, Ken and Stephen every success in their new roles.

New Northstone Colours Unfurled

Black, red and white are quickly becoming the primary colours in the materials supply sector of the industry as all new vehicles which join our fleet come complete with the new livery. The first impressions from our customers are very positive towards the crisp, clean lines of the vehicles and their distinctive colours.

All new heavy commercial vehicles have white cabs and black bodies with the only exception being the mortar trucks, which have a black cab and white body. The vans are all black. The text on the vehicles, as can be seen from our photographs below, is dominated by the Northstone logo. This varies only slightly to accommodate the appropriate strapline under the logo such as the Right Tile or the Right Asphalt. Space is also found on the cab doors to denote the relevant product brand such as Readyuse, Maxwell or Scott.

As you travel around the Province over the coming months look out for the black, red and white livery as we further establish our new identity in the marketplace. Readers may wish to know that we have it on good authority that the new bulk tankers are real eye catchers.



Looking Well: A truckmixer in Northstone Colours

Colin Becomes Chief Estimator



Colin Magwood (pictured left) has become the Quarry and Asphalt Division's new Chief Estimator, succeeding Derek Waddell who will retire shortly. He brings to the post ten years of contract experience having joined R.J. Maxwell as a trainee site engineer after graduating with a BEng (hons) degree in Civil Engineering from Queen's University, Belfast.

Colin's talents were recognised at an early stage in his career with the Company and in 1997 he was promoted to Surfacing Manager at our Moneymore depot and then became a Contract Manager the following year. In 2004, Colin moved to our Carrickmore depot to look after contracts in the west of the Province.

Our reporter caught up with Colin recently and was keen to find out why a Contract Manager decided to become office based and how the first few months in the job had gone. Colin as always was forthright in his response;

"I applied for the position of Chief Estimator as I felt, in the first instance, it was the right move for me at this stage in my career. The job offers me the opportunity to apply the knowledge I have obtained during my time in contracts and to see more of the commercial side of the business. I am learning all the time and this month, for example, I have priced a contract at a landfill site which is great experience. The first few months in the job have gone very well and I certainly had a smile on my face when we priced and were awarded a contract by the Roads Service, Eastern Division to lay stone mastic asphalt at seven different locations in the east of the Province. What I also like about the job is the opportunity it affords to build relationships with sub contractors who undertake work on our behalf and this certainly has improved my communications skills. I feel I must mention my two colleagues in the estimating department, Derek Waddell, who is retiring in July, has been an immense help to me as I settle into the role. He has passed on a lot of knowledge to me which I know will be invaluable in the future. My other colleague, Edgar Scott, who although based in Coleraine, has always taken time to assist me with his intimate knowledge of the market in the Coleraine and Londonderry areas".

Colin lives in Dollingstown. He is married to Jill, a primary school teacher, and has two children.

Glenn Revels in his Environment

The Northstone Concrete Division despatch office in Dunmurry is a busy place on any given day. The journeys of the depot's 9 truckmixers have to be planned, organised and co-ordinated, the two telephones appear to ring continually, a cash sale customer may be at the despatch hatch and a driver may have a query not to mention the fact that a large pour day the following day has to be planned with military precision. At the centre of things is depot controller Glenn Archer who revels in this environment.

Glenn, pictured below, joined us in 1998 having previously been employed for three years by a local transport company as a sales centre manager. He brings to the job a background not only in transport but also sales and crucially, customer service. These skills have been further developed as he outlined recently to our reporter;



"My focus is always on promoting the Company and our products and services. I look after the despatch of ready mixed concrete at Dunmurry which means that to secure same day orders I have to be able to explain the characteristics of concrete to customers who may never have used it before. I need a fair degree of product knowledge to do this.

My negotiating skills have also improved because although our product may not be the cheapest in the market I realise that customers want a high level of service and quality. This we can give them and they appreciate it. A large proportion of our customers have been with us a long time and this in my view, is a reflection of our customer care and the quality of product we manufacture and deliver.

When I started in Ready Use I worked under Gerald Doyle for the first few months and this gave me the confidence and knowledge I needed to look after the supply of product to large contracts like the Odyssey Arena. I am now involved in co-ordinating deliveries to the Farrans Construction contract at Victoria Square."

Glenn clearly has everything under control at the Concrete Division's despatch office in Dunmurry. He lives in Glengormley and is married to Nicola.

Good Progress in England

Our correspondent in Farrans Construction's English Division reports solid progress in the region over the last six months.

In July the £7m fit out and extension of the Commissary Store/Supermarket at RAF Lakenheath will be completed. This project has been carried out in 10 phases, during which time the store has had to remain fully operational at all times. Next door to this is the Avionics Building, which following a major refit, at a cost of £3.5m is also very near completion.

Both projects have proved to be a serious challenge for the site management team of Keith Dorling, Phil Browne and Fred Corner but as usual they made it in the end.

These projects have been replaced with three new recently awarded contracts at Lakenheath. They are the Consolidated Communications Building at £4.5m, the Swimming Pool at £1.7m and the Fire Station at £0.7m.

The Division's other major client, Suffolk County Council, continues with its school partnering



programme with our team being led by Alan Prime and Ray Gambell. The current workload of £5.1m, which is made up of four schools, is due to be completed this summer.

We have already gone some way to replenish the order book with the award of 2 more school construction projects. One at Rendlesham, valued at £2.5m and the other at The Oaks at £1.8m. Again both management and site teams should be congratulated on their continued success.



Having praised all the boys for their performance in constructing the projects there are a few other people without whose contribution much of this good work would not be achieved. These include Richard Weir (above) our Estimator and Buyer and Rachel Winters (below left), who looks after all our secretarial and receptionist needs as well as producing our quality assurance documentation. Rachel did a tremendous job on the quality assurance aspects of the drawings for the current projects as well as the production of the operational and maintenance manuals for completed contracts.

The ongoing team effort by all site and office staff as well as the regional plant yard continues to make the Division successful.

The Division has also welcomed two new staff members in recent months with trainee site managers, Ed Lewis and Dean Berry joining the team on the Suffolk schools and Lakenheath respectively.

Our Own Diecast Model

Nigel Paine, the Chief Civil Engineering Estimator at Farrans Construction, has recently taken up an interest in diecast models, focusing on construction, earthmoving and heavy haulage equipment. Over the years, Nigel, who is pictured right, has become our own model for those graduates who seek to build a career with the Company.



Nigel came to us in 1993 with a first class honours degree in civil engineering from the University of Ulster. His first job was to work with the then Managing Director, John Gillvray, for a year as an estimating assistant. He then moved to site where he gained valuable experience on a range of projects which included Greencastle Pumping Station, Stena Roll on Roll off Berth in Belfast and the Belfast City Hall Environmental Improvement Scheme.

In 1995, Nigel was seconded to Ferguson and McIlveen, Consulting Engineers, for one year to gain design experience to assist in the achievement of chartered status of the Institution of Civil Engineers.

On his return to the Company, Nigel progressed from senior site engineer to sub agent and agent. The projects he worked on included the Eastern Approaches which linked the M3 Motorway to the Sydenham Bypass in Belfast, Portaferry Jetty, Pollock Dock 6 Reconstruction and Dorisland Water Treatment Works in Carrickfergus.

In 2000, Nigel transferred back to Dunmurry to take over from Brian Kennedy who was retiring. His role involved contract programming, design co-ordination and tender pre qualification procedures. It was at this time that Nigel became more and more involved in estimating and by the end of 2002, he was pricing all of the tenders for civil engineering work in Northern Ireland.

Nigel's career has continued to develop as he takes up the story;

"In 2004 I moved into the post of Chief Civil Engineering Estimator which includes pricing all types of civils projects including water treatment, waste water treatment, pipelines, drainage, roads, bridges and marine work. Estimating has changed considerably in my time and it is now not just about submitting the lowest price. Nowadays, the majority of tenders have a quality and technical aspect which can represent from 20% to 90% of the tender assessment marks, depending on the client's preference. This quality and technical aspect is all about demonstrating to the client how we intend to deliver the project safely, to a high quality, on time and to budget. In order to do this we require considerable input from a range of people in the Company including health and safety, quality, environmental and human resources together with construction management personnel. I greatly appreciate their contributions".

Nigel is married to Judith and lives in Moneymore. The couple have two great sons, Simon who is 4 years old and Luke, ten months.

Nigel recently attended the Company's Personal Development Initiative for up and coming managers which allowed him the opportunity to exchange ideas with colleagues from our other divisions.

On The Mountain Top with Utilities

A common theme in several of the articles in this edition of Northlink has been the caring nature of Northstone people and their willingness to support worthy causes.

Farrans Utilities exemplified this recently when a group of their employees together with three other staff from elsewhere in Farrans Construction climbed a peak in the Galtee Mountain range in Tipperary. The event was to raise funds for Water Aid which seeks to improve the quality of water in the developing world. The Water Aid Charity is the nominated charity of the Water Service in Northern Ireland.

Our intrepid team from Farrans Construction donned their boots on 11 June as part of the Munro Challenge in which 284 mountains over 3,000 feet high were climbed all on the same day across the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland. The Challenge raised a staggering total of £300,000 for Water Aid, all in one day.



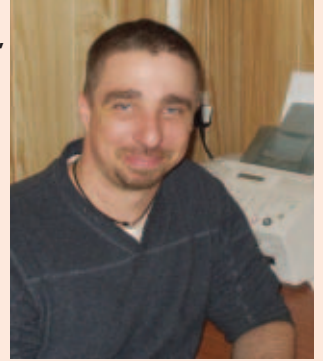
Ready for Action in Tipperary (left to right): Conleth Greene, Marion Gordon, Damien Maguire, Conlon Morrison, Barry McKinney, Sean Bradley, Kevin Corley and Alan O'Neill

The Farrans team consisted of Katherine Davison, Marion Gordon, Kevin Corley, Conleth Greene, Damien Maguire, Conlon Morrison, Allen O'Neill, Mark Cunningham, Sean Bradley and Barry McKinney.

Northlink congratulates all those involved.

Looking After Customers with Colin

Colin McLroy (pictured right), the controller at the Concrete Division's Glenwherry depot, has customer care down to a fine art as he told our reporter recently;



"To be effective in my job, I have to know as much as possible about our customer base. This means that if I have up to date information about their requirements I can then make sure that we satisfy and even exceed their needs. Our business is all about looking after customers which encourages them to choose Northstone for their ready mixed concrete rather than a competitor."

Colin joined Ready Use in 1993 as a time served fitter and became a member of the maintenance team at Dunmurry under the guidance of the late Hugh Watt. Although Colin had lots of experience in the repair and maintenance of mobile plant and vehicles, he was keen to learn more about fixed production plant. This was quickly rectified as Colin was asked to work along with Stephen Sheppard who is one of the most experienced fitters in the team. In a very short period of time Colin was involved in the refurbishment of pan mixers, conveyor belt adjustment and repair of cement silos as well as lots of other complex tasks around the depots.

In 1996 an opportunity arose for Colin to move across into the customer facing side of the Ready Use business and he became our relief batcherman which meant covering for staff absences and other operational needs at any of the Company's depots. Over the next three years or so, Colin had stints at Londonderry, Coleraine, Carryduff, Ballynahinch and Newtownards, which was a great learning curve as he explains;

"The great thing about being a relief batcherman at a wide range of plants is that you learn about the business and it's customers. The staff at the depots also taught me so much about the particular operating characteristics on their plants. I found that I really liked talking to customers and doing my utmost to meet their requirements."

In 1999 Colin became the permanent depot controller at Glenwherry, which for those of us who don't know, is exactly 10 miles from Larne and 10 miles from Ballymena. The depot is situated within the boundary of a local quarry. Colin's technical background has stood him in good stead in relation to the routine maintenance tasks at the plant which again helps him to meet customer needs as he explains;

"A plant breakdown is the depot controller's worst nightmare especially on a busy day but the routine maintenance regime we have in the Concrete Division together with the back up support we receive from the maintenance team in Dunmurry means that a breakdown rarely occurs. The continuity of supply is vital for customers as is the quality of the product. I also like to keep a close eye on our raw materials as a batch which does not meet the customer's specification would damage our reputation."

Readers may be interested to know that Colin's brother Richard, is employed by the Quarry and Asphalt Division as a Contract Manager working out of Coleraine Quarry.

Colin lives in Newtownabbey and is married to Gina. The couple have an eight year old boy, Andrew James.

More Space Required

More space will soon be required on the walls of the Farrans Construction Training Room to accommodate another award. This time we picked up The Irish Concrete Society's prize under the Elemental Category for Architectural Concrete in respect of the construction of the new headquarters for Irish Cement in Drogheda.

The euro 2.5 million contract involved the construction of an architectural concrete circular building with a huge amount of detail including a fluted exterior. Readers may be interested to know that W.H. Beckett, who were sub contractors on the project, constructed the Trocal roof and installed all partitions and ceilings.

In accepting the award, Robert McAlister, Construction's Building Director, acknowledged the work of his team in successfully completing a technically demanding project to the highest possible standards.



Robert McAlister (seated centre) proudly displays the Irish Concrete Society Award

George Calls it a Day After 43 Years



George Grant, pictured above, one of Construction's longest serving members of staff, has decided to call it a day and retire after almost 43 years of loyal and faithful service.

George's story began back in 1957 when he joined a local construction company, J. McCreehy, as a fifteen year

old plant operator. He spent some five years with this employer before deciding to move to Farrans as a ganger. In those days, gangers were usually fearsome individuals who ruled their squads more by threat than encouragement and were not usually fresh faced, twenty year olds like George. However, his talents had been recognised and so it was that George started his career with Farrans working initially at Sprucefield Bridges in Lisburn before moving to the Conway Flats site in Dunmurry. It was here that George worked for Granville Lockhart and Dennis McClure, who was later to become the Company's well respected managing director.

In 1979 George was transferred to salaried staff as a groundworks foreman. It was also around about this time that George began to work on

many of the large public housing schemes in Belfast which meant difficult times for all involved on the contracts as this was at the height of civil unrest in the city. True to form George's fortitude and desire to get the job done shone through in trying circumstances. Since then George has worked on nearly every major building contract undertaken by the Company including Yorkgate, Belfast Sewage Incinerator and the Odyssey Arena. He became one of our most respected and well liked members of the site team. He liked nothing better than to share his groundworks experience with our young managers when the need arose. George's skills at handing over a contract and reluctance to accept a snagging list were indeed a thing of beauty.

More recently George has been

working on the Company's private housing developments where he has made a vital contribution to what is a relatively young site management team.

Away from work George is a keen pigeon fancier and takes a keen interest in racing his prize birds.

In presenting George with his retirement gift, Robert McAlister, Construction's Building Director, succinctly summed up what we all already know about George;

"George is always good natured and one of life's true gentlemen".

All at Northlink wish George a long and healthy retirement and we have already heard that he has been hard at work planning another visit to Australia to see friends and family.

At the Centre of Things with George

George McClure, Construction's project manager at the Community Treatment and Care Centre contract on the Lisburn Road in Belfast, joined the Company in June 2000 and over the past five years has worked on a wide range of projects which included private housing in Lisburn and L.A. Fitness developments in Dublin, Armagh and Belfast.

His current contract for the South and East Belfast Health and Social Trust will provide a range of services normally only provided within a hospital environment and will include x-ray, speech therapy, dentistry, medical procedures, consultations and podiatry. The Lisburn Road location is the one of three similar centres for the Trust which Construction are building.

George, who is pictured right, is an extremely detailed and methodical person as befits a construction professional who has spent his working life on major construction projects. This experience was recognised recently when his site was visited by an independent health and safety auditor as appointed by CRH plc. Needless to say, the site received top

marks and the auditor summarised his findings in the following way;

"I have visited many construction sites and worked for short periods of time on some in the past six years and as regards safety this is the best I have encountered". (Brendan Neville – CRH auditor).

George took time out from his busy schedule to tell Northlink some more about the audit and life in general at Farrans Construction;

"I was certainly a bit apprehensive when I learnt that the Centre was to be visited by a CRH auditor but at the same time I was confident that our procedures and in particular the CARES safety management system was robust and thorough. The audit went well and is a tribute to the work of the entire site team in implementing our systems. I have really enjoyed the past five years at Construction where I have found the work challenging and rewarding. What I like is that there is always superb support for the site teams from management and head office in general. This makes my job a lot easier".

Away from work, George keeps himself fit by playing

touch rugby on a weekly basis at Ballyclare Rugby Club. Readers may also like to know that George was capped by Ulster in the mid seventies and partnered the legendary Mike Gibson in the centre on at least two occasions. The reports we have of George on the rugby pitch in his heyday would indicate that he was a strong running, direct and team oriented player with no little creativity. In fact, just like the George of today at the Community Treatment and Care Centre contract in Belfast.

George is married to Pat and lives in Greenisland. The couple have three grown up children.



Jonathan Meets the Specification

Selling stone and coated materials to contractors or house builders is never easy and it requires certain characteristics on the part of the sales executive which are decidedly uncommon. Dogged determination, thick skinned, hard working, resourceful, energetic and knowledgeable are all



Jonathan has his hands full with triplets Peter, Rachel and Aimee

descriptions which come to mind when profiling the ideal sales executive. Well, the news from Croaghan quarry is that we have such a person already employed. His name is Jonathan Gault who is the location's sales executive with responsibility for stone and coated materials sales in the north east and north west of the Province.

Jonathan joined us in May 2000 and was initially employed to look after the weighbridge and product despatch. What set Jonathan apart at this time was his willingness to prospect for sales with new and existing customers by telephone whenever he had a quiet moment. His opportunity came at the end of 2003 when we decided to recruit a sales executive at Croaghan to generate more business for this developing location. Jonathan was the stand out candidate for the post and he was transferred into the sales team at this time.

Those of us who know Jonathan are immediately struck by his enthusiasm for the business and his willingness to learn. His main role is in the sale of stone from Croaghan, which is a hard rock quarry. More recently he has become involved in the sale of limestone products from Carmean Limeworks and also coated materials.

Our reporter was interested to find out more about Jonathan's job and his approach to selling out products;

"I find selling very challenging especially when it comes to prospecting and securing new business. Our market is very competitive but I believe if you talk to customers and understand exactly what their requirements are then it is easier for us to make the sale. Time and time again the customer will choose Northstone because of the service we offer and the quality of the product which meets all of the necessary specifications. However there is no substitute for continually following up on enquiries and chasing orders".

Wise words indeed from one of the newest members of the Northstone sales team who clearly meets the required specification.

Readers may also be interested to know that Jonathan and his wife Jennifer, are the proud parents of triplets who were born in December last year. We understand that Peter, Rachel and Aimee are all doing well.

Exciting Times at W.H. Beckett



Some of the Beckett Team take time out to pose for the camera (l-r): Tom Sweeney, Stuart Carphin, David Lowry, Joanathon Holmes, Harry Savage, Damien McCann, Tina Keys, Norman Graham, Michael McNama, Sean McNama and Gary Moore

In January this year Tom Sweeney was appointed Director of W.H. Beckett with a brief of developing the existing business lines and to add new products and services to the portfolio. W.H. Beckett has been a well established specialist roofing, flooring and ceiling contractor in the Northern Ireland construction industry for almost sixty years and the name has become synonymous with quality and service levels of the highest order.

Testament to this was receipt of the prestigious Flooring Installation of the Year Award 2004, which was presented to the Company by Contract Flooring Journal, the official trade magazine of the Contract Flooring Association in the United Kingdom. This national award was in recognition of the Company's installation of soft flooring at the Villa Marina Theatre, Isle of Man. W.H. Beckett is the only Company in Ireland to have ever won the award.

With Tom's appointment, a key objective is to grow and develop the Company's customer base to make W.H. Beckett a robust business unit in its own right.

Tom has recently completed a detailed strategic review of the business and along with Chief Executive, Noel Quinn, decided the time was right to expand the business and maximise on the opportunities which exist within this sector of the industry, as well as consider new product areas which may enhance the product portfolio and service level delivered to customers. This business development agenda has necessitated the recruitment of new staff with Stuart Carphin in accounts/administration and David Lowry in estimating and internal sales, joining the team at Dunmurry.

Our reporter called into Tom Sweeney's office recently to find out more about developments at W.H. Beckett. Tom was only too glad to share his thoughts about the future of the business;

"These are certainly exciting times at Becketts as we move towards generating more enquiries to price and successfully undertake work within the interior fit-out and specialist roofing sectors, and seek to develop the business in other areas. We have done a lot of work recently in launching a new website (www.whbeckett.com) together with a new promotional brochure, and already we are seeing an enhanced level of enquiries coming into the business. In addition, we have made sure that we have the necessary accreditation to be allowed to work on government contracts. We have also started to work towards recognised safety and quality standards as we aim to set ourselves apart from the competition. Everything we have achieved so far this year would not have been possible without the commitment and dedication of Beckett employees. In Gary Moore we have a General Manager who has much experience within the interior fit-out and specialist roofing sector. Gary is ably supported at Dunmurry by Jonathan Holmes who has the dual role of estimator and surveyor. On site, the contracts are competently and effectively managed by Denis Gilloway, Tommy McGrath and Damien McCann. Tina Keys assists with accounts and administration in the office. Our on-site contract employees have also done us proud in continually producing quality workmanship which our customers clearly appreciate. I am extremely optimistic about the future prospects for W.H. Beckett as we seek to grow the business and add complementary services and products to the portfolio in the short to medium term".

Looks like more exciting times ahead for all at W.H. Beckett.

Reaching for the Sky at Victoria Square



John McReynolds (left) and Shane Daly (right) oversee the mast erection on the first tower crane at Victoria Square

Our photograph above depicts John McReynolds and Shane Daly who supervised the placement of the last four mast sections on the first Ramondi 8 tonne crane.

John also leads the Farrans Construction site team in the construction of the two level underground car park at Victoria Square which will provide parking space for 1,000 cars. The excavation for the car park is without doubt the largest of its kind that Belfast has seen for some years. John reports to Contracts Director, Clifford Spence.

History is again in the making at the Victoria Square Development where Farrans Construction are partnering in a joint venture with local contractor, Gilbert Ash, to construct the £300m project. Victoria Square was featured in the last edition of our magazine.

There will soon be a total of six tower cranes erected and operational at the city centre contract. This, we believe, is a record for static cranes on a single site in Belfast.

The first two cranes, a Ramondi 8 tonne and a Comedil 12 tonne, are now in place and with jib heights of 47 metres and 60 metres respectively, the sky line of Belfast is certainly changing.

The remaining four cranes are programmed to be erected shortly and with jib heights of 52 metres, 62 metres, 42 metres and 68 metres, Victoria Square will give the impression that it is reaching for the sky.

A Matter of Degree

Brian Peden, a Surfacing Manager with the Quarry and Asphalt Division, joined us some 22 years ago as a labourer working in the surfacing squads. Over the next ten years or so he continued his development with the Company and worked as a ganger, foreman and then surfacing supervisor. Further education was something he had never really considered.



However, as we all get older our outlook on life changes and it was a chance discussion with his then Contracts Director, John Craig, that made Brian think carefully about his future. John suggested that Brian should think about a business qualification as a route to improving his career prospects. The following September, Brian enrolled on an ONC course in business studies at Antrim Technical College with the support of the Company. It wasn't easy for Brian as although he was facilitated with an afternoon off work to attend college, he still had to fulfil the responsibilities of his role with the Company. The ONC course was successfully negotiated and there followed an HNC course in business studies which meant more assignments and course work as well as examinations. Again Brian applied himself and passed the two year course with flying colours.

The obvious next step for Brian was a degree and sure enough in the autumn of 2002 he enrolled on the Business Studies degree course at North East Institute of Further Education in Ballymena. The news hot off the press is that Brian will graduate this month with a BA (hons) degree in Business Studies and continue the long line of Northstone employees who have obtained degrees and professional qualifications over the years by way of part time study, supported by the Company.

Brian, who is pictured above, was obviously delighted with his success when he took time out to speak to our reporter;

"It has been a long road for me but the degree makes it all worthwhile. I now have a lot more self confidence and I find myself able to take a different perspective on issues at work which I feel makes me a better manager. I can only thank my line managers who have shown faith in me over the years and encouraged me to continue with my studies. I am really looking forward to the graduation this summer".

All at Northlink congratulate Brian on his degree which is just reward for one of the most likeable and respected people in the business.

Brian lives in Antrim and is married to Gwyneth. They have three children.

Recent Senior Management Visit to Northstone

This Spring some of our locations and construction sites were visited by Declan Doyle and Donal Dempsey. Declan is the Managing Director of CRH Europe Materials and Donal Dempsey is the Managing Director of the Roadstone/Wood/Northstone Group in Ireland. The visit was hosted by Noel Quinn.

The visit began with a trip to Croaghan Quarry to view our new production facilities and to learn more about the technology and capability of the integrated crushing and coating plant from Production Director, Bill Weir. There followed a short trip down the road to Coleraine Quarry to view the location and to listen to a presentation detailing the options for the future development of this site.

The Concrete Division also featured on the itinerary for Declan and Donal, who stopped off at the Airfield Site in Toomebridge for a tour of the roof tile plant and to find out more about future business developments.

The two day visit was rounded off by a stop at the Farrans Construction private development site at Linen Green in Lisburn where both men obtained better appreciation of the housing market in Northern Ireland and the quality of product being delivered by the Company. Before returning to Dublin, Declan and Donal were given a tour of the Victoria Square basement contract and were suitably impressed with the scale of the job and the professionalism of the Farrans team there.

Our reporter has it on good authority that Declan and Donal were suitably impressed by the performance and potential of the Northstone operations across the Province, as well as the commitment and enthusiasm exhibited by our people at every level.



Declan Doyle



Donal Dempsey

All in a Day's Work for Geraldine



Geraldine Kelly, our administrator within the Roofing Services Department of the Concrete Division, is certainly a person of many talents when one considers the range and scope of her duties. Her friendly disposition, obvious commitment to the business and her willingness to help and assist colleagues make her one of the most popular people in the Division.

Geraldine, who is pictured left, joined the Company back in 1992 as a shipping clerk at the Sandy Bay sand site on the shores of Lough Neagh. In 1994 Geraldine was asked to move across to the Airfield site where she initially was involved in tile despatch for a short time before taking up the position of administrator in the roofing services department. At this time the department was quite different to what it is today and one of Geraldine's first tasks was to help to get the administrative procedures up and running to the required standard. As time went on Geraldine's role began to develop with the department as she told our reporter recently;

"Once we sorted out the paperwork in the office I was asked to also become involved in stock control. I liked this immediately because it meant I could learn more about the business and also to talk to suppliers to negotiate prices, order materials and organise the transportation for the materials. We now have over two hundred different types of items in the stores. This aspect of my job requires me to keep an eye on stock levels as some of the products have an eight week lead time after the order is placed. I have also come to know more people at Roadstone in Dublin and Cork because they order many types of roofing accessories from us. I would say my favourite part of the job is dealing on a day to day basis with customers and over the years many of them have become my friends".

Geraldine's typical day can involve anything from job costing and invoicing to preparing profit figures for the accounts department and ordering materials. Quite a list for any one person but Geraldine thrives in this environment and as such is very much at the heart of everything within the roofing services department at Toome.

Geraldine is married to Gerard and lives in Antrim.

Developing Links within Communities



Presenting Northstone Vests to Teaching Staff (l-r): Paul Toal, Margaret McAuley (teacher), Brian Thompson, Anne Marie Kelly (classroom assistant), David Smyth and Brian Watt.

The Concrete Division has done much over the years to develop links with the communities in which we operate. The latest initiative was to host a visit to our Toomebridge location for primary 5 children from St Mary's Primary School in Bellaghy and support them in their entry to the Sentinus Junior Industry Challenge project which seeks to develop an awareness of business and enterprise at primary level through visits to local employers.

The School's project is based on the theme of Tiles and the children, with the help of their teacher, form a Company, decide on a suitable name, design a logo and make their first product. The children focused on our Concrete Division because they could see the use of a locally sourced raw material incorporated into a range of products and also find out about product development, production processes and marketing.

On 7th June some 22 pupils arrived at Toomebridge and were greeted by Production Directors Brian Watt and Brian Thompson. The programme commenced with the all important health and safety talk from David Smyth who also took the opportunity to ensure each child had a high visibility vest which he suggested they also wear when out on their bicycles. The next stage was a tour of a sand site to see how we recover sand and classify it. Then it was on to the Airfield Site to visit the tile and block production units. The children were encouraged to find out more by asking a list of prepared questions and Northlink has it on good authority that our people were extremely impressed by the capabilities and enthusiasm of the children.

On the day after the visit Brian Watt, who co-ordinated the event at Toomebridge, was invited to St Mary's to meet the Sentinus assessor as he explained recently to our Northlink reporter;

"I was as nervous as the children when I met the assessor but after seeing their displays based on the visit to Toomebridge I was confident that they would do well.

The work put into the displays in one day was tremendous. I was absolutely delighted that the school received a gold award for their project and as a result will be taking part in the finals of the competition to be held shortly in the Odyssey Arena in Belfast. I feel these events with local schools are vital for the business because not only do the children and their parents learn more about our business but some of the pupils may even become employees of Northstone."

Taking a Dive at Linen Green

Our photograph (below right) looks like a site manager's worst nightmare in which an operative falls from a high level platform. Recent statistics show that 50% of deaths on construction sites in Northern Ireland are as a result of falls from height.

However, the scenario depicted in the photograph, which was taken at our Linen Green private development site, was very much stage managed to illustrate the benefits of passive fall systems. The event was the contribution of Farrans Construction to support the industry's recent initiative to promote safe systems to protect those involved in the erection of precast units.

The airmats in the photographs are safer than the conventional active systems of harnesses and work restraints as there is less to go wrong and they require no active involvement on the part of the operative.

The passive fall system was launched at a well attended event in Belfast at which Farrans Construction Building Division Managing Director Mark Lowry gave one of the keynote addresses. Speaking from a Principal Contractor's perspective, Mark said;

"It is imperative that we all leave no stone unturned in addressing health and safety. One life is as important as another and we are committed to ensuring that health and safety is an integral and central part of the organisational culture throughout Farrans Construction and throughout every company that works with Farrans".

One aspect of the Linen Green site which is certainly not taking a dive is sales. To date eleven of the houses are occupied and we have sold our first home with a purchase price in excess of £300,000. The showhouse is open for viewing each Sunday between 2.30 pm and 4.00 pm with up to 50 families visiting the site each week. Only a few units remain unsold in the current phase with the next phase due for release in the Autumn.

Congratulations are also the order of the day for Linen Green Site Manager, Stephen Foster, who has recently been awarded the prestigious Pride in the Job accolade by the National House Building Council.



A site operative falls for the camera at Linen Green



Above: The Site Team display themselves on the balcony of the showhouse at Linen Green

Putting Others First

Northstone people have always been well known for their charitable giving and support of worthwhile causes. However, this generosity has reached new levels through the work of our Gallivantors Social Club.

Since its formation in 2001, the club has held events targeted at supporting particular charities and these include Malcolm Sargent Cancer Care for Children, the Lighthouse Club and Red Nose Day. The latest fundraising event was a dress down day in aid of the Tsunami appeal in which £2,505 was raised by employees and this was matched pound for pound by the Company. Readers may be interested to know that a family survives on 60 pence per day in the areas affected by the tidal wave.



Gallivantors on Parade (l-r) Brenda Gregg, Ann Cathcart, Harry Ritchie, Barry McKinney, Marion Gordon and JoAnne Blair

In total the Gallivantors have raised the magnificent sum of £5,389 for their chosen charities and clearly those involved with the Club are committed to putting others first. The hard work of running the various events is undertaken by its committee which is made up of employees from across the Company. The members of the committee are Brenda Gregg, JoAnne Blair, Ann Cathcart, Lynn Cain, Janine Johnston, Clifford Spence, Marion Gordon, Catherine Davidson, Harry Ritchie and Barry McKinney. All deserve great credit and our full support.

Northlink has it on good authority that the Gallivantors have already made plans for their next event and readers should make every effort to become involved. Remember what 60 pence can do in the developing world.

Esther takes Customer Care to New Heights

Esther Blair, pictured right, joined the Utilities Division of Farrans Construction in July 2004 as their Customer Care Manager. Dedicated customer care professionals are not commonplace within the construction industry and as such Esther's appointment is indicative of the commitment of Utilities to this increasingly vital aspect of a business where we have a large customer facing element.



Customer care involves everything from liaising effectively with client bodies, district councils and sub contractors to keeping members of the public informed and dealing competently with their complaints. Esther brings over 11 years experience to this arena having previously managed customer services within the utilities sector with NTL and McNicholas Construction.

Esther is primarily involved with the Utilities Watermains Project in which the contract specifically requires Farrans to take responsibility for and professionally manage all aspects of customer care including public relations and consultations, customer notifications and complaint handling. The Watermains Project is a joint venture with Enterprise, a specialist utilities contractor from the north west of England.

On commencement with the Company, Esther immediately set about complying with these obligations as she explains;

"The customer care contractual obligations under the Watermains Project are extremely onerous. My first task was to develop a proactive approach to public relations and information by delivering relevant presentations about our work aspects, impacts and management procedures to District Councils and their members. This has worked very well and I now have established contacts at the Councils who receive weekly and monthly project updates and information briefings so that they feel very much a part of the process.

We have also established a large public notification programme because we are also responsible for the production and distribution of all information leaflets and literature about the Project. This involves delivering general information leaflets to all properties which may be affected by the works approximately 4 weeks in advance of our arrival at the location. Where properties will experience interruption to their water supply we also provide occupiers with written notice of this at least 48 hours before the event. The scale of this task is immense and we regularly employ delivery personnel in both Belfast and Portadown and also use large postal distributions from Dunmurry".

Esther recognises the importance of effective complaint handling and in this regard makes use of a computerised management system via the Enterprise call centre, to ensure efficient investigation and resolution within specified timeframes. She also monitors the reporting systems each day and liaises closely with Water Service Customer Services and the Enterprise Call Centre management to ensure effective communication on all issues which may arise.

Communication is clearly Esther's forte as she has developed and delivered a Customer Care Briefing Module to all employees on the Project to maintain awareness and focus on customer care issues and their importance to the Company.

Esther has certainly made a significant contribution to the success of the Utilities Division within Farrans Construction and through her diligence and professionalism all those likely to be affected by the Watermains Project are well informed and customer complaints are minimised. Undoubtedly she is taking customer care to new heights.

Gavin Joins Quarry Division's Environmental Team

Gavin Ramsey, pictured below right, joined the Quarry and Asphalt Division in February this year as our new Environmental Officer.

His brief is to ensure the day to day implementation of the Division's environmental management system and also to work with an environmental consultant on the Aggregate Levy Credit Scheme which requires the effective audit and review of some 96 criteria covering every environmental facet of quarrying operations.



Gavin is certainly well qualified for his post as befits someone with a MSc in Applied Environmental Science from Queen's University, Belfast as well as holding a primary degree in Zoology from Aberdeen University. After graduating with his further degree, Gavin was employed initially by the Water Service for two years and his responsibilities included the development of their environmental management system as well as research into improving the drinking water quality in the Province. After leaving Water Service and before coming to Northstone, Gavin was employed for some eighteen months by the University of Ulster where he was involved in a project which involved research into the sterilisation of medical equipment using environmentally sound methods.

Since joining Northstone, Gavin has covered a lot of ground as he explained recently to our reporter;

"In the past four months or so I have become involved in the internal auditing of fixed locations and contract sites. I have also gained lots of knowledge and experience through working with the external auditor who is looking after the Aggregates Levy Credit Scheme for us. I feel I have settled down very well within the Quarry and Asphalt Division where I have quickly come to realise that the people like and enjoy working for the Company. I can appreciate this because on commencement I began a continuing induction programme to assist in my integration into the Company. I was also given details of my key objectives and targets for the next twelve months which convinces me that I have career development to look forward to within the Division. One of my key objectives is to raise the awareness of children at local schools of what our industry contributes to the local environment through biodiversity and geodiversity as well as changing their perception of the industry's environmental commitment and performance. I am really looking forward to the challenges which lie ahead for me".

Gavin, who lives in Ballykelly, is based at Croaghan Quarry. He reports to Divisional Production Director, Bill Weir.

From Bundoran to Ballyshannon



Taking Quality Seriously – Martin Kane checks product temperature on the newly laid surface at Bundoran

The Contracts Team, which is based at the Quarry and Asphalt Western Division's Carrickmore Depot, are certainly widely travelled in this part of the country. This summer the focus of attention is the small matter of surfacing the new Bundoran to Ballyshannon Bypass, a distance of some 10 kilometres.

Our sub contract, which is valued at €4.5 m, is with the SIAC Wills Joint Venture and involves the laying of significant volumes of materials. The key quantities include 70,000 tonnes

of 28 mm roadbase, 23,000 tonnes of 20 mm base course and 19,000 tonnes of hot rolled asphalt. The work commences just south of the holiday resort of Bundoran and ends at the new bridge over the River Erne at Ballyshannon.

The volumes of materials involved and the programme requirements were such that the Division erected a second coating plant within the Roadstone quarry at Ballintra. The plant in question was formerly used for the Belfast City Airport contract.

Our unsung heroes in production deserve great praise for dismantling and erecting the plant in just three weeks, something of a record. The team was led by Divisional Quarry Manager, Raymond Stirling who was ably assisted by Stephen Surgenor, Jonathan O'Connell, Liam McKenna, George Anderson and Robert Henderson.

Contracts Director, Peter Doherty, took time out from his busy schedule recently to tell Northlink some more about the Bundoran to Ballyshannon project;

"This project will be challenging in terms of scale and programme. It will require first rate co-ordination and co-operation by all members of the site team. This will not be a problem as in my opinion the team we have on site is second to none. Brian McHugh is the contract manager with Ryan McDermott the site agent. Jonathan O'Connell, Michael Lyons and Ciaran McElhatton are the site engineers. James Lawne and his squad are looking after the surfacing. Every member of the team is experienced and has the ability to make things happen. We are off to good start at Bundoran but there is a long way to go. The aim naturally is to lay as much material as we can over the summer months. Our young team on site are doing an excellent job".

Peter's team have also just been awarded their first National Primary Contract in Monaghan to strengthen the existing N2 road from Moy Bridge towards Emyvale, a distance of some 2 kilometres. Sean Clarke is the Site Agent on this project.

Looks like busy times ahead for all in the Western Division.

Concrete Division Comes Together

On 1st April our new Northstone Concrete Division identity became a reality with the merging of Ready Use and Scotts. In preparation for the merger, the production supervisory team, departmental managers and directors came together in late March to spend some time away from their desks to discuss and learn more about the future plans and the new organisational structure for the Division.

The event was led by Managing Director, Graham McQuillan, who as always, was keen to stress the opportunities available to the new Division and what it would mean for our people and the business. He also talked through the organisational structure and how the responsibilities for the various functional areas would be allocated across the management team.

Brian Watt becomes responsible for concrete products, including block production, as well as the Division's health and safety director. He has joint responsibility for maintenance along with Brian Thompson.

Brian Thompson will look after ready mixed concrete, mortar and sand production as well as the Division's transport resources.

All in attendance were then asked to introduce themselves to the gathering and share any questions or concerns they may have about the new structure or how it might affect them. Needless to say, all in attendance were extremely positive about the new Division and what it can achieve. The talk was about sharing information, expertise, knowledge and experiences underpinned by teamwork.

It is fitting that we leave the last word to Graham who is eagerly anticipating the part the Concrete Division will play in the future success of Northstone;

"Scotts and Ready Use have, over the years, become major suppliers of superior construction materials and services. We have a deserved reputation for quality and service as well as product innovation. The market for concrete products requires



The caption is The Concrete Division Team Come Together. Back Row (left to right) Robert Nicholl, Mark Evans, Philip Weir, Alan Taylor, Sammy Rea, Finn McCrory, Noel Malcolm, Brain Thompson and John Laverty. Front Row (left to right) Nigel Galbraith, Terry Moylan, John O'Connor, David Luke, Nigel Hagan, Alan McElroy, Graham McQuillan and Brain Watt.

high levels of responsiveness to customer needs, strict adherence to quality manufacturing techniques and capability to deliver product to customers as and when they need it. Scotts and Ready Use people have always excelled in these areas and their contribution to the success of the

Concrete Division in particular and the Northstone business in general will be immense. Our new team will offer customers a superb package of products and services."

Looks like everything is set fair for the Northstone Concrete Division team as we further develop our new identity.

I'm A Civilian...Get Me Out Of Here!

Exercise Executive Stretch is an annual weekend of physical and mental 'stretching' for young managers. It is organised and run by the Volunteer Reserve Forces (TA and Royal Navy Reserves) and aims to develop skills such as physical strength, stamina, mental alertness, team and leadership skills. This year's event took place over the first weekend in May at Magilligan Training Area.



Ready for Action (left to right): Wilfred Kelly, William Hunter and Andrew Delargy suitably attired for Exercise Executive Stretch

Andrew Delargy, Wilfred Kelly and William Hunter from the Northstone Quarry and Asphalt Division were 'conscripted' onto Exercise Executive Stretch along with seventy other DPM (Disruptive Pattern Material) clad civilians from various walks of life and shared executive dormitories for two short nights.

A lie in until 5.30 am, a welcome change from working life, helped the volunteers to meet the various enjoyable mental and physical challenges set out over two very busy days of team based endeavours.

Raft building, pushing/pulling Landrovers, search and rescue exercises and carrying heavy equipment were certainly challenging in the coastal springtime wind, rain and sleet conditions. Clay pigeon shooting, target practice with the army issue rifles and quad biking were also enjoyable, with the highlights of the weekend being the awesome flight in a Puma helicopter over the surrounding countryside, and the very strenuous and lengthy but strangely relaxing social evenings laid on by the NAAFI.

This was a great weekend of challenges where everyone was given the opportunity to "stretch" themselves as leader of a team under pressurised but enjoyable conditions.

Needless to say we had one of our guys in the victorious team but William's modesty prevents us from naming him.

As a footnote, the intrepid three are pictured standing on Red Textureflex covered pavements laid by our Special Products crew in 2004.

The Safety Factor

The identity of our business may have changed to Northstone (NI) Limited over the past six months or so but the commitment to providing a safe place of work for our employees, and also for our sub contractors remains undiminished.

The Company's safety directors met in April to review our performance and ensure that all divisions of Northstone work together effectively and share ideas and best practice on improving health and safety standards across the business. It is our belief that investment in superior health and safety procedures and safe systems of work will make a company more profitable.

About a year ago some 200 of our employees were asked to take part in a survey to establish why on occasions we behave in an unsafe manner and disregard safe working procedures. We have now received the survey report and the main findings are as follows:-

- all employees have a tendency to work safely.
- approximately 50% of those taking part in the survey indicated that they tended to work unsafely due to production pressures.
- the vital role that supervisors play in ensuring safe working.
- many employees demonstrated a low awareness of risk.

The survey findings have been discussed and actioned by the Northstone board of directors.

Our Chief Executive wrote to many of us recently in respect of safe working following several near miss incidents on our sites. It is imperative that we properly plan all work activities, irrespective of production pressures and effectively communicate the safe system of work to all those involved in the activity so that they are aware of the risks and adhere to the necessary procedures. Working as a team and being a team player are essential if we are to improve our health and safety performance.

Our accidents statistics, as detailed below, show an improving trend in respect of accident frequency rate (AFR) and accident severity rate (ASR):-

Year to 31 May 2005	Accident Frequency Rate	Accident Severity Rate
W.H. Beckett	0	0
Concrete Division	0.32	6.98
Quarry & Asphalt Division	0.72	6.73
Farrans Construction	0.89	7.01
Northstone (Overall)	0.77	6.87
Year to 31.05.04	1.05	12.09

Northlink is also delighted to note that Northstone people are playing a pivotal role in the Hard Targets Clubs as initiated by the Quarry Products Association (NI) recently. The aim of the clubs is to promote safer working in the quarrying and construction materials processing industry by sharing ideas, experiences and best practice with other producers. This in turn will reduce the reportable accidents occurring within the industry.

Finally we must end on a negative note, as unfortunately we have to report that CRH have had 4 fatalities within Europe this year. One of these was in County Donegal where a contractor's employee became entangled in the conveyor belt of a mobile crusher and screener. Details are vague as to what happened as he was working alone but whatever occurred it is a waste of a life. Think safety at all times.

We wish you all a good summer and that you holiday well!

Bridges and Ballerinas



Covent Garden Awaits: Michael Douglas strikes a pose at Glasgow Harbour

The news from the Farrans Construction Scottish Division this summer is about ballerinas and bridges as both relate to our recently awarded contract to construct the roadworks and infrastructure improvements to the ongoing Glasgow Harbour development. Our works will focus on the Clydeside Expressway and are intended to create access to Glasgow Harbour and improve the local road network. Pedestrians, cyclists and drivers throughout this part of the city will benefit from our activities.

The £23M contract will also improve the existing Clydeside Expressway and create new bridges across both the Expressway and the River Kelvin. A new ground level, 8 metre wide

pedestrian bridge will also be constructed between Glasgow Harbour and Partick and this will be the showpiece entrance into the Harbour. Our contract is scheduled to commence on site in September and be completed in the early months of 2008.

As usual, the site team led by Paul Magowan and Ian Waugh will again rise to the challenge and both men are currently finalising the project design elements with Atkins of Glasgow who we have appointed as designer for the project.

Our previous scheme at Glasgow Harbour for delivery of the on-site roads is currently nearing completion and we even had time for a member of the site team, Michael Douglas, to be put through his paces by ballerinas Michelle Ironside and Claire McConnachie of the Academy of Theatre Arts. The dancers were trying to teach the site team to be lighter on their feet by taking up something new as part of National Learning at Work Day. The ballerinas tried to convince Michael to swap his riggers boots for ballet shoes but as our photograph shows, they were unsuccessful.

The award of the latest contract in Glasgow continues the Farrans link with prestigious waterfront developments in Scotland. The Edinburgh Waterfront Development was completed this summer and work has got started on the Dundee Central Waterfront. The vision for Dundee is to open up access to the prime waterfront locations for both commercial and residential developments. This will allow a greater feeling of space and connection with the River Tay for the general public in the city centre. Bob Dooner and Raymond Millar are heading up the team in Dundee.

We can also report that the Scottish infrastructure success continues with Tony Fry and Robert McVitty steering the delivery of the Hermiston Park and Ride Scheme near Edinburgh. This design and build 450 space car-park and terminal building will be officially opened on the 14 July when the public will be able to utilise the scheme, one of a few aimed at easing the traffic congestion in the city.

All at Northlink wish Alvar Kenwell and the rest of the team in Scotland well as they continue to enhance the Company's reputation in the region.

Cool Clear Water

Farrans Construction's Civil Engineering Managing Director, Eamonn Sweeney, recently attended the official opening of the new £12 million Lough Macrory Water Treatment Works near Omagh.



Left to right: Eamonn Sweeney toasts the official opening of Loughmacrory with Katharine Bryan (Chief Executive, Water Service), Libby Gawith (Earth Tech) and Trevor Haslett (Water Service). Eamonn's chosen tipples was of course, cool clear water from Lough Macrory.

Construction were principal contractor for the project in partnership with Earthtech Engineering Limited. It ensures compliance with the demanding European Union drinking water quality standards. The plant treats some 18 million litres of water per day and will supply high quality drinking water to the people of Omagh and surrounding areas.

Eamonn, as usual, was keen to praise the work of his people on the project when he took time out to talk to our reporter;

"Lough Macrory is another fine example of our ability to complete technically demanding projects. Our part of the works included the upgrading of the feed pipework from Lough Macrory and Lough Fingrean reservoirs and demolition of the existing structures on completion. Desludging of lagoons at Lough Macrory, Carmoney and Derg Water Treatment Works also formed part of the contract.

The site team of John McReynolds, Stephen McCaffrey, Eugene Flaherty and Martin Tinney, along with everyone else involved at Lough Macrory did a tremendous job. I am extremely proud of their performance".

So the next time you happen to be in Omagh, drink the tap water and leave your Ballygowan or Perrier unopened.