NorthLink

THE HOUSE MAGAZINE OF **NORTHSTONE** (NI) LTD. July 2009 Issue 19

Chief Executive's Diary

My last article for Northlink in December 2008 reported on the decline in the house building sector, a major end-user of our products and the construction industry in general. Sadly, this situation has further deteriorated and we are now in unprecedented times in relation to the sustained downturn in activity levels in our industry. It is in this operating environment that we have had to look at all areas of cost and take the necessary steps to ensure the business meets its targets. I am deeply saddened by the fact that we have again had to make redundancies across the Northstone divisions. In addition, we have had to make decisions on pension benefits and salaries and I very much appreciate your understanding in these matters.

The Northstone materials business has been adversely affected by substantially reduced volumes and civil engineering, especially in Northern Ireland, has experienced a steep decline in new work coming to tender, despite some high profile lobbying. Major civil engineering projects in the Province, which the industry badly needs, may not commence for another three to five years. It is in these circumstances that we are very actively seeking opportunities outside of Northern Ireland, to mitigate the effects of this situation.

On a more positive note, there has been a very encouraging first six months of the year in our house building business and I look forward to the commencement of the new Lakeside Development in Coleraine after the summer break.

I was delighted to see the recent launch of Cubis, the new identity of our Utility Chamber Division, which brings together, into one cohesive unit, our three recent acquisitions of Salmor Industries, Carson Industries and C4 Industries. There are great opportunities, I believe, for this business to develop and grow into new products and markets.

It is also pleasing to note that our

Quarry and Asphalt Division has secured further contracts at the City of Derry Airport.

I can assure you that our management team is working very hard to ensure that Northstone emerges from the current recession as an effective, strong and vibrant business to take advantage of the upturn in the economy when it arrives.

It only remains for me to thank you all for your efforts over the last six months and to wish you an enjoyable and restful summer holiday.

Noel Quinn July 2009

A **Royal Occasion** At Altnagelvin

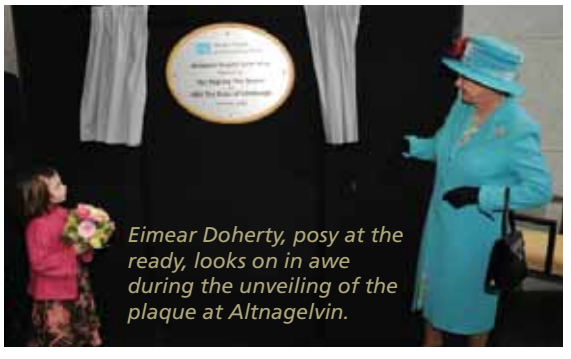
The official opening of Altnagelvin Hospital's new £33million South Wing Development took place on the 6th May 2009, when the Health Minister, Michael McGimpsey welcomed Her Majesty the Queen and his Royal Highness, The Duke of Edinburgh to officially open the new complex.

Speaking at the event, the Minister said *"The new Wing, which I had the opportunity to see during a recent visit to the hospital, is one of the most modern healthcare facilities in Western Europe. It will provide enhanced replacement facilities for a range of existing services, including: haematology/oncology, chemotherapy, maternity, neonatal intensive care, acute care of older people, and rehabilitation facilities comprising a hydrotherapy pool, physiotherapy, occupational and speech and language therapies and Social Services."*

The new South Wing was handed over by Farrans on the 5th December 2008 and was fully functional by February of this year with ten wards and departments in operation and is the first phase of new build clinical accommodation which provides replacement facilities for some key services within the existing hospital building. The relocation of these key services which will take place while the hospital is still "live" will enable the existing tower building to be vacated and extensively refurbished as part of the whole hospital redevelopment.

Farrans are currently working on the second phase of the South Block development which will include stroke services at ground floor, an acute medical unit at first and coronary care units on the second floor. This phase of the works is due for completion in February 2010.

Also speaking at the event was The Chairman of the Western Health and Social Care Trust, Gerard McGuckian, who said *"This is a very exciting time for the Western Trust as it moves forward with a number of other major projects including the new hospitals in Omagh and Enniskillen and the Radiotherapy Centre in Altnagelvin."*



Eimear Doherty, posy at the ready, looks on in awe during the unveiling of the plaque at Altnagelvin.

Bringing the engagement to a close Her Majesty unveiled a plaque to commemorate the official opening of the hospital's South Wing before being presented with gifts of a piece of artwork depicting an oak leaf symbolic of Londonderry by Gerard Guckian and a posy of flowers by 5 year old Eimear Doherty, who is a liver transplant patient at the hospital.

Northlink congratulates all Farrans people who were involved in the South Wing Development at Altnagelvin which has further enhanced the Farrans reputation as the Contractor of Choice in the Healthcare Sector.

Utility Chamber Division Becomes CUBIS

CUBIS Industries is the new name for Northstone's Utility Chamber Division. As discussed in the last issue of Northlink, the former businesses of Salmor Industries, C4 Industries and Carson Industries were to form their own division within Northstone in 2009.

One of the first tasks for Sales and Marketing Director, Andrew Wright, was to decide on a new brand and image for the Division.

Having opened the floor to suggestions from the staff at the three sites, the name CUBIS, which is derived from the Latin word for chamber, was decided on.
"There were many good suggestions but we went with CUBIS as we liked the way it sounded and it also had added significance as with three companies coming together we were effectively 'cubed' ourselves," he said.
"This is also reflected in our choice for the logo, which makes use of the chevrons that are in the Northstone logo. Like CUBIS, Northstone was the result of three companies coming together as well," he added.

The Division's slogan, 'It's about time', reinforces the principal benefit of choosing CUBIS products over conventional methods of building underground chambers while also stating that it is 'about time' that pre-formed chambers were preferred over traditional concrete and brick.

"It might be a case of providing a stick to beat ourselves with when it comes to a delivery being late and we get a phone call wondering if it was still 'about time', but thankfully that hasn't happened yet and we intend to keep it that way," said Andrew.

Michael Wightman (pictured below), CUBIS Industries' Managing Director, said that the new branding had been met with a positive response across the Division.

"It was a quite strange hearing the phones answered with a new name after all these years and some people are still occasionally saying the wrong name! That aside, everyone has taken to it well and are looking forward to a bright future,"

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TBF Thompson
A Tribute

On 1st January this year one of Northern Ireland's best known and significant figures in business for many years passed away. Thomas Bacon French Thompson or "TBF" as he was known died peacefully in the Causeway Hospital, Coleraine in his 94th year with his second wife, Betty by his bedside.

TBF had a meteoric journey in business. He purchased his first lorry for the princely sum of £70 in 1934 and so began his entrepreneurial path to success. That path was to lead to the formation of TBF Thompson (Garvagh) Ltd and subsequently progressed to the establishment of a business portfolio which included many of the Province's leading companies which formed the bedrock of the Thompson Group. Along the way there were some amazing stories such as in June 1971 when Willie Bolton, owner of R J Maxwell & Son Ltd., called to check out preparations for the surfacing of the driveway to TBF's home, 'Heathlands' at Garvagh. As he and TBF chatted Willie said to TBF "you know TBF if you bought Maxwells you could tarmac your own driveway." TBF rose to the challenge and after doing some strategic thinking he bought Maxwells including the shares of the Company.

A man who had an absolute faith in God and who sought to bring Christian principles into his business dealings TBF also had a great opposition to alcohol. He was a vigorous tee-totaller to the point where he was prepared to turn down ownership of a company with an annual turnover of £50million if alcohol was to be a part of running the business and of company expenses. Such was the case in 1977 when TBF took over Farrans who at that time were involved in numerous projects including motorways, bridges, airfields, docks, harbour works, power stations, reservoirs, university buildings, factories and public buildings. TBF negotiated with the late Sam Taggart who was ably backed by his team, particularly John Brown, his expert on the commercial aspect of Farrans. TBF took over the Company and at the outset declared that the future company policy regarding alcohol would be the same as in the Garvagh Group which meant that no company expenditure would be incurred on the purchase of alcoholic drinks.

TBF had a tremendous zest for life. He was a person who enriched any gathering and who left people with a sense of well being after they had departed from him. He was cheerful and calm although he openly admitted he had not always been a "saint". He was an outstanding individual with both a great heart and a great deal of time for people. This concern for his fellow man led to he and his first wife, Kathleen, establishing two charitable trust funds, the TBF Thompson and the Kathleen L Thompson Trusts. These were formed when the TBF Thompson Group was purchased by Cement Roadstone in 1978. The significant sale took place at Heathlands after a very exhausting evening, concluding at 4.30am. TBF then surprised his legal and financial advisors stating that he and Kathleen wished to form two trusts for the benefit of philanthropic work and the spread of the Gospel worldwide. It may have been 4.30am but TBF had a priority, it was not a spur-of-the-moment decision, he had planned it prayerfully. The sale to Cement Roadstone was a wise move and not only for TBF. He was aware of the complex inheritance tax implications if he should die suddenly and that this left the TBF/Farrans staff with a sense of vulnerability as his main concern was for their security and long term future. By selling the Group it was a case of what was good for TBF was good for all those employed by his Group and he knew it. The merger with Roadstone removed the vulnerability.

TBF retired from business in 1996 at the age of 81 and was appointed Honorary President of TBF Thompson (Garvagh) Ltd and Charles Hurst Ltd. He had no further business involvement and instead channelled his energy until he retired completely in 2004 into the work of the TBF & KL Thompson Charitable Trusts for the furtherance of Christ's Kingdom. He was still coming into the office at 8.30am daily at the age of 88 years, a remarkable testimony to his focus, drive and to his desire to see the Trusts firmly established. He had many quotes and would often share them. They were simple but profound. One was "if you make wise decisions you go in the right direction. If you make unwise decisions you go in the wrong direction and make trouble for yourself and everybody else!"

There is no doubt that TBF has left a tremendous legacy both spiritually and in the commercial world.

Back To School for Brian & David

The Northstone Concrete Division continues to forge links with schools in the vicinity of its operations around Lough Neagh and beyond. This spring, Brian Watt, Production Director and David Smyth, Health and Safety Manager, paid a visit to St Mary's Primary School in Bellaghy to review the science projects undertaken by the year 7 children. Our two men were certainly impressed by what they saw as David told Northlink;

"The theme of the science projects was related to the local industries in and around Lough Neagh. The kids made model barges from plasticine and other materials to test for their load bearing and movement capabilities. We saw the children test the soles of their shoes on sand paper to find out more about friction and grip. They were even looking at the filtration properties of sand and other materials. We could not have failed to be impressed by the commitment and diligence of the children as well as the practical learning. At the end of the visit the children asked us many questions about the Northstone business which was great."

Some three days later, the children visited the Division and were provided initially with a guided tour of the Hutchinson's sand site at Toomebridge after a health and safety briefing from David Smyth. They were able to watch the Sandy Bay barge, operated by Paul Toal, approach the quay wall and then be offloaded. There was then a tour of the site to find out more about the different types of sand and gravel recovered from the Lough and how it is processed.

Back row (l-r) William Stewart, Brian Watt, David Smyth and Paul Toal pose with the children at Hutchinson's sand site.

The visit to Hutchinson's site was hosted by Sand Production Director, Brian Thompson, with William Stewart, Industrial Engineer, and Dessie McGuckin, Sand Production Manager, providing assistance.

The children then visited the new tile plant at the Airfield site in Toome.

Our thanks go to St Mary's Primary School, Bellaghy and the year 7 teacher, Mrs Margaret McAuley and their classroom assistant, Miss Cathy McErlean. The behaviour of the children was first class and if the questions asked by them are anything to go by, we will certainly have a few potential employees in a decade or so.

Andrew Takes Seat On **Northstone Board**

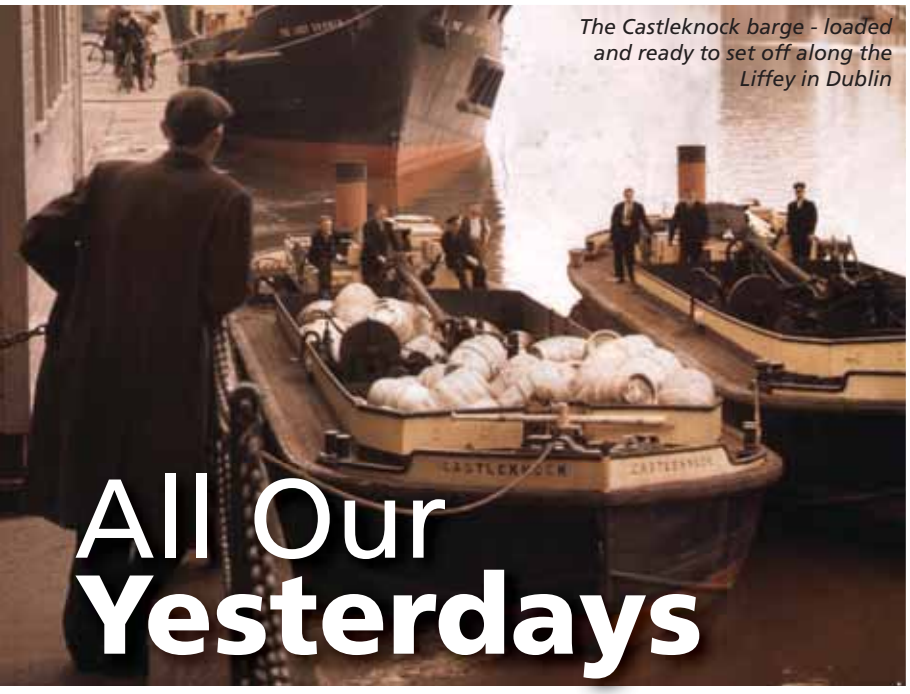
Andrew Donnan has succeeded Raymond Reilly and become the new Northstone Finance and Administration Director.

Andrew joined Farrans Construction in 2000 as an Assistant Company Accountant becoming Company Accountant in 2003. In 2005 he became the Northstone Management Accountant. His new senior management role has many responsibilities which include Company finances, liaising with CRH plc, financial control systems, statutory compliance, annual returns, treasury and information technology. He will also work closely with other Northstone Board members on operational issues as required and provide financial input into business development opportunities.

Andrew is a friendly, approachable and easy to get to know person who places great emphasis on developing his team.

Away from work, he lists his interests as vintage cars and auto testing.

Northlink wishes Andrew every success in his new role.



The Castleknock barge - loaded and ready to set off along the Liffey in Dublin

All Our **Yesterdays**

As well as supplying 40% of Northern Ireland's drinking water and being the habitat for internationally renowned eels, Lough Neagh is also home to another valuable asset – sand, which has its origins in the glaciers of the last Ice Age. The main commercial enterprise on Europe's largest freshwater lake remains the extraction of sand from its floor, with thousands of tonnes dredged every day and a lot of it finding its way to Northstone.

History books make reference to 17th century settlers using sand from the Lough in house building but Scotts of Toomebridge were one of the main businesses to begin operating commercially on the Lough, with much demand for sand in the years following World War II to help with reconstruction. Scotts, one of the three companies that formed Northstone, were based in Toomebridge originally but sand quays were subsequently opened at Sandy Bay, Bannyginnif and Hutchinson's Quay to cope with the demand.

These days, the Lough's sand is dredged using modern purpose-built barges but in the early days of Scotts the job was carried out by a barge fleet that previously belonged to the Guinness brewery in Dublin. These barges had been used to move barrels from the brewery at St. James Gate, down the Liffey to Dublin docks and the ships that would export the precious cargo. Seeing the Guinness barges, stacked high with barrels, pass through the City was a familiar sight for many Dubliners in the first half of the twentieth century.

During the 1950s, Guinness started to make use of road transport to move its product and work subsequently diminished for the barges. Guinness decided to sell much of the fleet with many heading to Lough Neagh to meet the rising demand for its sand. Six of the Guinness barges – the Foyle, the Lagan, the Killiney, the Chapelizod, the Castleknock and the Clonsilla - were purchased by Scotts.

After decommissioning, the barges were moved up the east coast of Ireland to where the lower Bann meets the sea on the north coast. They were then towed to the Lough and refitted to suit their new use. The barges were subjected to major modification throughout their working lives on Lough Neagh, eventually ending up with six-cylinder Gardiner diesel units that could move the heavy barges at a rate of up to seven knots.

Sand dredging on the Lough was a risky business in the early days, with no proper navigational equipment. All that was used was a compass and a watch, setting a course and timing your passage, hoping for the best. Each barge was a one man operation. Due to the dense fog that sometimes surrounds the Lough, skippers had to rely on the time it took to travel from the pumping house, with notes on timings and bearing usually taken. As Scotts had their main sand quay at the Quay Wall in Toomebridge, the Toome canal was continually lined with the Guinness barges, meaning a busy job for the lockkeeper.

Sadly, none of the old barges are still in existence. The Chapelizod and the Castleknock were blown up at the height of the Troubles in the early 1970s and were totally destroyed. The Killiney and the Lagan also ended their working lives in the 1970s, when they were stripped of all useful equipment and sunk as foundations for new quays. The Clonsilla and the Foyle both went down while in operation, each springing a leak and hitting rocks in foggy weather. Parts of the Lagan, which was actually built at Harland and Wolfe for Guinness, form part of the quay at Northstone's sand site at Sandy Bay.

Work today is carried out by more modern vessels that have capacities of up to 250 tonnes. All are loaded by pump, which brings sand and water into a settlement tank with the excess water running overboard and back into the Lough. At the three Northstone sand sites, the load is pumped ashore and graded using a Linetex classifier.

Who would have thought that the Lough Neagh sand which forms such an integral part of the Northstone business has a glacial and Guinness connection?

Stephen **Wins** Irish Title

Farrans site people are certainly multi talented when they are not producing superior performance on our construction sites. However, it is rare for us to have an Irish Champion in our midst but Stephen Foster (pictured right) has just raised the bar for the rest of us.

Stephen is the site manager on the Templepatrick Primary School project in County Antrim. He has always had a keen interest in motorsports with a particular liking for road racing motorcycles. Some four years ago Stephen had the opportunity to get involved in kart racing and as you can see from our photograph, he has had no little success.

"I started my karting career in Pro Karts which were capable of speeds of about 75 MPH," said Stephen. *"The kart I now have is classified as a 250cc single cylinder Super Kart which can reach speeds of 150 MPH and accelerate to 100 MPH in 4 to 5 seconds. The power to weight ratio of my machine actually exceeds that of a formula one racing car. At my two local circuits of Kirkistown and Bishopscourt, the first left hand bend is taken about 135 MPH with my body about one inch off the ground. At such speeds the driver even experiences G-Forces which can take its toll of body and neck muscles".*

Stephen's kart is worth in the region of £6000 and as can be seen from his machine, he has received sponsorship from various sources with the Farrans yellow logo taking pride of place at the front of his machine.

Stephen told our Northlink reporter a little of the Irish Championship event which took place at the Nutts Corner Motorsports Circuit;

"Everything went really well over the two days of the event and I was fortunate not to have too many mechanical problems. The thrill and the adrenaline rush of the Championship races was second to none. I am now the All Ireland GP Super Kart Champion. Not bad I guess but it now means that I no longer carry a race number but run with a GP plate instead. I am now expected to win every race I enter which is not really possible".

Northlink congratulates Stephen on his success and looks forward to more reports from our 150 mph Site Manager in his Super Kart which carries the famous Farrans logo.

Further Tender Success at City of Derry Airport

Northlink is pleased to report that our ever resourceful contracts people in the Northstone Quarry and Asphalt Division have been awarded two further contracts at City of Derry Airport following on from the recently completed Runway Safety Works Contract.

In April of this year, the Division was awarded a £1.9m Apron Reconstruction Contract and our team of Richard McIlroy, Andrew Delargy and Stephen Ward are already on site. The works require the removal of the existing pavia brick pavement and replacement with pavement quality concrete to Defence Works Functional Standards.

Hot off the press in the last few weeks is the news that the Division has also been awarded the Runway 08-26 Resurfacing Contract. The scope of the works on this contract includes the planing off of the existing porous friction surface and to overlay the existing runway pavement with some 20,000 tonnes of material. We are also required to replace the existing runway markings and groove the Marshall Asphalt to provide the surface texture and drainage characteristics required to meet the required specification. There will also be replacement of all centreline Airfield Ground Lighting (AGL) and other associated civil engineering items to ensure the runway complies with the new Civil Aviation Authority Regulations.

All work on the Runway 08-26 Resurfacing Contract also requires that the activities must be carried out during night possession with the runway being handed back to the client each morning for operational use.

Contracts Director, Gareth Telford, was clearly delighted with the tender success when he spoke recently to our Northlink reporter; "Our site team showed its true skills and capabilities in the delivery of the initial Runway Safety Works Contract at City of Derry Airport. This performance stood us in good stead when we tendered for the other two subsequent contracts where quality and experience considerations were of paramount importance. We have also shown on previous airfield contracts that our superior organisational skills can deliver technically difficult projects during night time possession of runways. The two contracts have a combined value of £4.8m and our team are preparing to commence the runway resurfacing contract on 3 August 2009. All in all it looks like a busy time ahead for those involved in airfield work at Northstone."

Northlink also has it on good authority that the Northstone Quarry and Asphalt Division has been shortlisted as one of five major contractors being asked to tender for the rehabilitation of the runway at RAF Mount Pleasant on the Falkland Islands later this year.

Congratulations to our specialist airfield team at Northstone on their tender successes.

Ian Does It For Charity
Coast To Coast

Ian Waugh, the Farrans Project Manager on the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre in Glasgow, has many claims to fame. These include being recruited by Northstone Quarry and Asphalt Managing Director, Willie McNabb, to work on the surfacing of the M77 motorway in Glasgow back in 1995 as well as being an ardent supporter of Glasgow Rangers Football Club. However, Ian's true calling is his charitable work which this year involved a 320 mile cycling marathon over a very hilly part of England with some friends.

As with all such things, which are discussed and agreed with friends over a few shandies, there was always a cunning plan as Ian told Northlink;

"The plan was to depart from Newcastle on the east coast one Thursday morning and head out on the Reivers Cycle route, a 180 mile cross country bike route which snakes into the borders of Scotland before meandering back to the south, finishing at Whitehaven on the west coast. Foolishly we decided to do this in two days as the route according to my mate James was "easy" and the hills were in your favour! He forgot to mention you were cycling against the prevailing winds! It proved to be a tad more tricky than first suggested but we got through the 90 miles each day in remarkably good spirits and with only some minor mechanical problems on the way. Most of the second day was spent cycling into the wind and rain but we reached Whitehaven with the sun out and a thirst to quench.

The second stage of the adventure saw us take a bike route called the C2C, for obvious reasons, as you start at Whitehaven then finish again at Newcastle. This route was shorter than the Reivers at 140 miles but involved 7 major climbs to grind up and down. Day one of this route was a mere 80 miles which we raced through due to a helping wind and a beautiful day to encourage us. The scenery on this route is immense with the road taking you through the Lake District towards Keswick and then up the Pennines' towards Hartside View, a hill top café where some much needed tea and cakes were had.

The last day was also a scorcher and the target of 60 miles to the finish looked easy however, two brutal climbs first thing in the morning into the wind soon brought us back down to earth! The last 40 miles were a gentle cruise into Tynemouth to dip the wheels in the sea to mark the completion of the ride. In all, 320 miles were covered at an average speed of about 14 miles an hour meaning a total of approximately 24 hours were spent in the saddle. Ouch! Top speed of 48 MPH was achieved on day one with only nerves and the thought of shredded skin preventing the 50 MPH barrier being broken!

The peloton raised £2000 for St Oswalds Hospice in Northumberland which gave the trip that extra little meaning. Well done lads. See you next year for another adventure".

Trail blazing Ian Waugh (right) with a fellow cyclist at the Scottish border

Stephen Joins The Farrans Finance Team

In May of this year, Stephen Macartney joined the Farrans team at Dunmurry as Financial Controller. He brings to the post extensive experience of the materials and construction sectors having previously been with Tyrone Brick, where he led the finance team through the integration process when that business was acquired by Roadstone Provinces in 2001.

In 2005, he was seconded from Tyrone Brick to the Roadstone Wood Group where he played a key role in the successful implementation of the Command Alkon and Oracle Financial Computer Systems. These new systems now support over 800 users across all 60 Roadstone Wood locations. Stephen was subsequently appointed Finance Director of Roadstone Provinces Limited in 2007 and was based at their head office in Saggart, Dublin.

Stephen's profile of professionalism, people orientation and dedication fits well with the team he leads at Dunmurry. Away from work, Stephen is a follower of most sports. He is a keen golfer and has told Northlink that he regularly emulates his hero, super Frankie Lampard, on the 5 a side pitch.

Stephen lives in Greenisland, County Antrim and is married to Julie. The couple have three children, Rachel (16), Emily (13) and Peter (11).

Northlink welcomes Stephen to Northstone and wishes him every success in his role.

CUBIS Industries
Appointments

Patricia Burns

Colman Cooney

Derek Williamson

As part of its recent restructuring efforts, Northstone's newest trading division, CUBIS Industries, has seen the promotion of three of its senior employees to the rank of Director.

Patricia Burns, who has already spent 14 years within the Salmor organisation is appointed Director of Commercial Operations for the Division. In her new role, Patricia will oversee the management and co-ordination of all commercial operations on the three sites including administration, cost control and credit control activities

Colman Cooney is appointed Director of Operations at the Division's Roscommon site. Colman, who previously held the position of Financial Controller within Carson Industries, has over 6 years company experience having previously qualified as a Chartered Accountant with Ernst & Young. Colman will be succeeding the current Carson Managing Director, Michael Kelly, when he retires in September and will be taking up the reins on a much wider role encompassing all Roscommon manufacturing operations.

Derek Williamson is appointed Director of Operations at the Lurgan site, the largest within the CUBIS organisation. Derek, has over 20 years of manufacturing experience within the previous Salmor business, and is looking forward to his wider role which gives him overall responsibility for all activities at Lurgan.

Northlink would like to pass on its congratulations to all of the new CUBIS Directors and wishes them every success in their roles.

David Blake Retires
After 41 Years

Lunch by the River Cam in Cambridge was the setting for work colleagues to make a presentation and say a final farewell to David Blake. The 23 April 2009 was David's last day at work after 41 years with Farrans in England during which time he has witnessed the Company grow and develop from a private family business to the corporate ownership of today.

David started his career as an apprentice bricklayer and joined Farrans in 1968 as an assistant buyer on a then major family housing scheme for the Armed Forces at St Michael's Estate, Colchester. His commercial awareness was soon recognised and David moved on to take a position as senior buyer in the Farrans Wivenhoe Regional Office, later progressing into contracts management as his career developed.

On the opening of the new Regional Office in Cambridgeshire in 1985 David was promoted to Commercial Manager where he headed up a very successful team culminating in his appointment as a director of Farrans in 2000.

A presentation in Dunmurry in 2006 marked David's official retirement, but reluctant to take his foot off the accelerator he has been working part-time for the last three years going back to his roots as a buyer for the English Division.

Farrans team say farewell to David (l-r) Richard Weir, Andrew Butcher, Steve York, David Blake, Duncan Hankins, Alan Prime, Ray Gambell, Carl Studd and Jason Denly.

In recent months David had let it be known (with a laugh) that he was finding it increasingly more difficult to find the time to come to work as it now clashed with all the projects and interests he has started.

David has been a mentor to many of the senior members of staff in Farrans at Cambridge, an infectious character with a life time of construction knowledge that will be missed. All at Northstone wish him well and a long and very happy retirement.

Simon Community
Visit To Roscommon

Our friends and colleagues at the CUBIS Plant in Roscommon were delighted recently to welcome Kerry Mossop from the Simon Community in Galway to their factory. The purpose of Kerry's visit was to tell our people more about how the monies earned by the CRH companies across Ireland were being used to good effect in the west of the country.

Kerry was certainly very appreciative of the CRH donations as she explained to the Works and Safety Committee Members at the factory;

"We in the Simon Communities of Ireland are extremely grateful for the continued support from CRH plc in Ireland. The Simon Safety Challenge is a great way for both CUBIS and the Simon Community to benefit. It is through the efforts of plants like Roscommon that we are able to make a real difference to people's lives".

Colman Cooney, the CUBIS Operational Director at Roscommon responded by saying;

"We are proud of the achievement of having two full quarters without any lost production days due to accidents. Being able to make a donation to a very deserving charity whose good work is very evident within our local community gives us an even greater incentive to continue to look for ways to continue our health and safety improvements within our site. The health and safety of our employees is our number one priority and knowing everyone here is fully committed to this makes a difference not just on site but also to the community".

Kerry Mossop receives a cheque from Roscommon Production Manager Charles Dunne

Long Service Awards
In Concrete Division

Four long service employees in the Northstone Concrete Division were recently recognised by Managing Director, Graham McQuillan, at a ceremony in Toomebridge.

Liam Johnston, Keith Wood, Philip Smyth and Alan Murray each received a gold watch to mark their service and commitment to the business.

Roofing Supervisor Liam Johnston joined the Company as a roof tiler on 31 July 1984. Over the years, Liam developed his roofing skills to such an extent that he was often asked to demonstrate his capabilities to others at the Construction Industry Training Board. Liam's largest contract to date was the roofing of St Genevieve's School in Belfast which was a triumph for his supervisory and technical skills.

Sales Director Keith Wood came to our business back in 1982 as a student working during the summer holidays in the roof tile plant in Toomebridge. He then joined the Company in 1983, working initially in the shipping office in Dunmurry before moving into sales in 1985 as a representative for the Belfast and Craigavon areas.

In 1993, Keith was promoted to the post of area sales manager and two years later became the Company Sales Manager with responsibility for all sales and marketing activities in our former Readyuse Concrete business. Keith became the Readyuse Sales Director in 2001 and has further developed the role under our Northstone identity.

Long Services Awards in the Northstone Concrete Division (l-r) Keith Wood, Alan Murray, Graham McQuillan, Managing Director, Philip Smyth and Liam Johnston.

Block truck operator Alan Murray joined Readyuse Concrete in 1984 having previously worked for the Company for a short time in the early 1980's. He was originally based at the block yard in Dunmurry, which is now the site of a MAKRO store, but moved to the plant at Carryduff in 1993 where he stacks blocks and bricks and then loads them onto offloaders for transport to site.

Storeman Philip Smyth joined the Company as a roof tiler in 1994 and in 1997 became responsible for a squad of roof tilers. Since October 2008, Philip has worked as a storeman at the Airfield site in Toomebridge.

In presenting the long service awards to our four colleagues, Managing Director Graham McQuillan said; *"Our Division is built around long service employees who bring experience, expertise and commitment to their individual roles. I am delighted to make these awards in recognition of the commitment of Liam, Keith, Alan and Philip to our business".*

Davy Donaldson Celebrating 40 Years of Dedicated Service

Davy Donaldson, Quarry Manager, at the Northstone Carmean Limeworks near Magherafelt has just celebrated 40 years of service with the Company which started way back in March 1969 at 20 years of age.

Davy's family have a long tradition in quarrying as his father Alex or Skipper Donaldson as he was known, was also Quarry Manager at Carmean. He retired in 1981 after 35 years of service.

Those of us who know Davy are very much aware of the qualities which he brings to the job. His leadership style is very much one built on teamwork and respect for his men as well as leading by example. The foundations of his technical knowledge are built on practical knowledge and experience of actively undertaking the tasks.

Davy grew up on the family farm which is close to the quarry at Carmean. He emigrated to Canada at the age of 18 but after working on farms and in factories for some two years, he could not resist the call of the green fields and the 'white cliffs' of Carmean and came home in 1969.

In March of that year, Davy started work at Carmean as a lime spreader driver. At that time, the quarry had 5 spreaders working across the Province. Davy's first job was to drive from Moneymore to Glarryford in a Fordson Major truck, which did not have a cab, with the lime spreader in tow. In those days, lime was shovelled out of the lorry into the spreader by hand. Davy worked on the spreaders for about ten years and each winter he worked in the lime stores at the quarry.

Davy then moved to driving a delivery lorry servicing customers with chippings and animal feed products throughout Ireland, travelling as far as Cork. In January 1982, Davy succeeded his father Alec as Quarry Manager. At that time, the Quarry's General Manager was Fred Lyons and the Transport Manager was George Crane.

Davy has many memories of his career to date at Carmean as he told Northlink recently;

"I have worked with some great people at Carmean over the years and seen many changes. The increased emphasis on health and safety and the ongoing improvement in working conditions and operating procedures have all been good things as quarries can be uncompromising places to work. The quality and reliability of quarry plant and equipment has also improved greatly which makes everyone's job a lot easier. In the early days, I remember driving a 38RB rope excavation at the quarry face which was certainly an experience."

Davy lives on the family farm at Carmean. He is married to Lynne and the couple have three daughters (Denise, Cathy and Cheryl) and one son, David.

All at Northlink congratulate Davy on his achievements and service over the last forty years.

Concrete Division Launches **New Specialist Sands** Range

Promoting Specialist Sands front row (l-r) Johathan Gault and Graham McQuillan back row (l-r) Ryan McQuillan and Brian Watt

Our innovative and perceptive colleagues in the Northstone Concrete Division have been hard at work in recent months identifying opportunities in the marketplace and developing products to respond to them.

Concrete Products Director, Brian Watt, successfully led the steering group tasked with responsibility for researching the market, developing and promoting the six Northstone sports surface specialist sand products which include:-

Number 1 Top Dressing Sand
Number 2 Bunker Sand
Number 3 Pure Sand Rootzones
Number 4 Soil Amelioration Sand
Number 5 Equestrian and Menage Sand
Number 6 Slit Drainage Sand

The direct selling of specialist sports sands is a new activity for Northstone.

Brian told Northlink a little of the journey towards producing and selling our own range of specialist sports surface sands;
"In Northstone we have been producing superior sands for almost seventy years. The recent acquisition of pit resources by Northstone to complement our existing Lough Neagh products has meant that we can offer a wider range of profiles. It was a natural progression for us to enter the sports surfaces market this year. A lot of credit for the success of the launch has to go to Jonathan Gault, our Area Sales Manager and also Ryan McQuillan in Dunmurry who did an excellent job in developing our marketing material. One of the many good ideas was to email the Northstone sports brochure to all employees on the intranet system. The steering group held the view that our own colleagues in Northstone are perhaps our best sales people. Within hours of the email being sent out with a covering letter from our Managing Director, Graham McQuillan, we were getting positive leads and enquiries which have resulted in sales. I have no doubt that the service level and technical support offered to customers by Northstone will win us a lot of new business."

Northlink congratulates Brian, Jonathan and Ryan on their efforts to successfully launch the Northstone specialist sands range and we look forward to hearing more from them in respect of identifying and taking advantage of other opportunities to sell more Northstone products and services.

STOP PRESS
As Northlink goes to print we have just heard the good news that the Northstone Concrete Division has won several supply contracts with local authorities and sports associations for specialist sands.

Shannon Dances Her Way To World Title

Every parent takes great pride in the performance and achievements of their children and Farrans director, Sean Bradley, is no exception when he told Northlink about his daughter Shannon's prowess in Irish Dancing.

"My daughter Shannon has been dancing since she was four years of age. She is now aged 11 and this year competed in her second World Championships," said Sean. *"Last year Shannon competed in the World Championships in the Waterfront Hall in Belfast and finished with a very creditable fifth place. This year she won her age group in the championships in Killarney which qualified her for the World Championships which were held in Philadelphia".*

It was certainly a very exciting time in the Bradley household earlier this year as Shannon and her elder sister, Caoimhe, prepared for one of the biggest adventures of their lives and travelled to Philadelphia with the rest of the family to compete at the very highest level of Irish Dancing.

Once in Philadelphia, Shannon discovered that there were in the region of 200 competitors in her age group at the championships with over 5,000 competitors in all categories. Shannon's competition consisted of two separate rounds requiring a heavy jig and a slip jig to be danced to determine the top 50 contestants who would then go forward to dance their sets in front of the adjudication panel at the recall round. Shannon was on top form in the recall round and when she was crowned world champion there were certainly a few celebrations in the arena.

Sean was obviously delighted with the performance of both Shannon and Caoimhe at the event as he told Northlink; *"Shannon's sets were tremendous and I knew she was in with a chance of the title. I was thrilled when she held up the trophy. Caoimhe also put in a fantastic effort to come 38th in the final in the under 16 competition. I have never felt more proud than I did that day".*

Northlink readers may be interested to know that all trophies at the World Championship of Irish Dancing in 2009 were sponsored by Michael Flatley of 'Riverdance' fame.

Proudly showing their certificates (l-r) Gareth McKnight, John McReynolds and Frank Hennity

Considerate Constructors At Farrans

Farrans people had three very good reasons to celebrate in April of this year when Gareth McKnight, John McReynolds and Frank Hennity stepped up to receive Considerate Constructors Awards at a prestigious event at London's Plaisterers' Hall.

The Considerate Constructors Scheme is a voluntary Code of Practice in the construction industry and aims to improve the public image of the industry by minimising any disturbance or negative impact caused by construction sites to the immediate neighbourhood. The Scheme commits participating contractors to be considerate and good neighbours, as well as clean, respectful, safe, environmentally conscious, responsible and accountable.

The Considerate Constructors Awards recognise the standard of excellence afforded by a construction site towards its workforce, neighbours and the environment. In 2008, there were 7,000 eligible sites across the United Kingdom but only 7½% received an award for their performance and only 0.9% of sites received a gold award.

Pride of place at Farrans must go to Contracts Manager, John McReynolds, who collected a gold award for Northern Ireland Water's Belfast Sewers Project where we are partnering in a joint venture with Morgan Est. A silver award was duly collected by both Gareth McKnight and Frank Hennity for their respective sites. Gareth is site manager at the private development project at Thaxton Mill Gardens in Lisburn while Frank is site manager on the city centre Belfast Streets Ahead Project for the Department of Social Development.

Speaking after the award ceremony, a delighted Eamonn Sweeney, Joint Managing Director at Farrans said; "These awards clearly demonstrate that despite the economic climate our industry is facing, we at Farrans are not allowing our standards to slip. A tremendous effort is being made by our site teams to enhance the reputation of the industry and to deliver our projects as considerately as possible. It is no coincidence that Farrans are the only Irish company to become associate members of the Considerate Constructors Scheme. I extend my congratulations to all at Belfast Sewers, Thaxton Mill Gardens and the Belfast Streets Ahead projects on their magnificent achievement."

New Lothian Tile Added To Northstone Portfolio

The Northstone Concrete Division has recently launched their new Lothian roof tile which was developed by Concrete Products Director, Brian Watt. The Lothian tile made its debut at the Self Build exhibition in Belfast in March this year with Area Sales Manager, Raymond McKenny, putting together the necessary marketing material.

Brian told Northlink something about his new tile;
"The Lothian tile has a thin leading edge and has a distinctive line etched down the middle which gives a small tile visual impression when on a roof. We manufacture the Lothian in basalt grey, brown and red. The Lothian further enhances the Northstone portfolio as we seek to offer the customer the widest roof tile choice available in the industry".

The feedback received to date from customers who have used the Lothian tile is excellent. Local contractor, David McFarland, fixed Lothian tiles to the roof of a high specification dwelling in Crumlin. David was delighted with the aesthetic quality of the Lothian tile and already is talking about them being specified on his next project.

Congratulations to Brian, Raymond and the rest of the team on further enhancing the Northstone brand as the ***"Right Choice"*** for the customer.

Tony's **Story**

Eamonn Sweeney, the Civils Managing Director at Farrans Construction, refers to his business as a 'people development factory'. What he means is that Farrans is totally committed to the training, personal development and skill enhancement of its people at every level. This in turn maximises on the full potential of Farrans people within their specific roles in the business.

There have been many examples of Farrans people who, over the years, have forged careers through hard work, education and training. In each and every case, there has also been a fair degree of personal motivation and family support to cope with the studies, examinations and other factors.

One typical example of benefitting from Eamonn's people development factory is Tony Mulholland who provided Northlink with the following account of his journey towards a professional technical qualification.

"I joined Farrans back in 1989 on the Royal Avenue Pedestrianisation Project in Belfast with Clifford Spence as site agent and Kevin Corley as sub agent. Sean Bradley was the setting out engineer at that time so I have been very fortunate to have worked with all our senior management team over the years at grass roots level including Eamonn Sweeney and Mark Lowry. Throughout this time I have been involved on countless projects involving marine works, structural concrete, road works, utilities, sewage and water treatment plants and piling contracts.

Obviously I must have impressed someone within the senior management of Farrans and I was delighted to be promoted to the position of General Foreman with piling becoming a bit of a speciality for me over the years and I was lucky to get to work on various contracts in England, the Isle of Man and in particular Scotland. This has enabled me to build many friendships and good working relationships with our Scottish team and I have always been made very welcome on my many trips there. I am presently working on the Warrenpoint Harbour Deepening project which involves the construction of approximately 300 metres of a steel piled combination wall and anchor wall and includes the installation of over 400 tie rods and all associated ground works, concrete slabs and brick paving.

Immediately prior to my involvement at Warrenpoint I was site foreman on the Kiln 3 project for Irish Cement which was a huge challenge and one I thoroughly enjoyed probably due to the fact we had a great site team led by Brian McCool and David Thompson. Both Brian and David were very supportive and encouraged me to take on roles and responsibilities beyond that normally expected of a general foreman which has been fantastic experience for me.

In September 2006 I began a two year course to become a corporate member of the Chartered Institute of Building. Set at honours degree level and culminating in two 3 hour exams, it was quite a challenge. This involved one night a week at the Construction Industry Training Board at Dundrod and many long nights at home completing assignments and researching information. Not an easy task because for a large part of the first year I was on projects in Scotland. This meant I had to fly in every Tuesday night for my course and back out on the Wednesday morning. Last year when I was in Drogheda my average working day was 14 hours so I have to admit I was tired during the lectures.

However I have to say I received every support from Farrans from the top down especially from Clifford Spence who has encouraged and supported me from the beginning.

Finally after passing the examinations I had to sit a professional review on the 20 January 2009 at the Ramada Hotel, Belfast in front of a panel of members who after the thirty minute interview thankfully welcomed me as a corporate member.

The knowledge and experience I have gained with Farrans over the last twenty years is priceless and will surely benefit me every day for the rest of my career at Farrans".

Northlink congratulates Tony on his success.

M80 Stepps To Haggs

Another Roads Project Success For Farrans

The 18 kilometres of road between Stepps and Haggs on the east side of Glasgow is the only non motorway section of road between Glasgow and Dunblane, which results in heavy traffic congestion around the new town of Cumbernauld. Working in partnership with the HMC Joint Venture companies who successfully undertook the recent Westlink motorway project in Belfast, the Farrans bid team, led by Jay Wasson, have been involved in competitive dialogue with the client, Transport Scotland, from 2007 to win the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) project to address the Cumbernauld congestion. The project, which has a contract value of £276m, involves the construction of 18 kilometres of motorway, 6 kilometres of which is in green fields, and the remainder involving the widening of existing urban dual carriageway.

Jay's team did their work well and in June 2008, HMC were appointed as preferred bidder and the project was handed over to the construction team. Initially, this involved completing the utility diversions, site clearance, detailed design co-ordination and procurement of major sub contract packages.

The Farrans Director in Scotland, Alvar Kenwell, takes up the M80 story;

"Uncertainty in the financial markets delayed the signing of the contract until January 2009 but with financial closure, a large number of Farrans people, led by David Parr, were deployed to the project and these now number over thirty. The project combines the strengths of the Farrans Scottish and Civil Engineering divisions by putting experience gained at the Westlink to good use alongside the local knowledge of our people in Scotland. This is demonstrated by the ability of Tony Fry and Bob Dooner's Scottish Water project team to assist in expediting utility diversions. Farrans have also transferred the positive experience of the Simon Community Safety Challenge to the M80, where HMC are supporting the Scottish Spina Bifida Association with their own safety challenge".

Our photograph depicts a section of the offline works on the M80 project. The scale of the operation can be gauged by the size of the excavators and 40 tonne dumpers in the photograph.

On the M80, Lois Wedgewood, the Procurement Manager, has the honorary title of social secretary on the project, a role which maximises on her talents. The Farrans guys are also keen to maintain their fitness by playing weekly five aside soccer matches. Northlink has it on good authority that Farrans Scotland stalwart, Robert McVitty, plays a commanding role as midfield general where he deploys his full repetoire of rugby skills.

More about our colleagues in Scotland next time.

Northstone Courses For **Architects Commence**

In the last edition of Northlink we reported that the Northstone Concrete Division has produced a booklet specifically targeting architects and specifiers in promoting roof tiles for commercial building projects.

(l-r) Eddie Barton, Graham McQuillan and Ryan McQuillan discuss another continuing Professional Development Courses for architects and specifiers

The news this spring is that Eddie Barton, manager of the Division's Roofing Services, has put the booklet to good use by offering continuing professional development courses to architects and specifiers. Eddie's course, which was developed in conjunction with Ryan McQuillan at Dunmurry, showcases the versatility of roof tiles in commercial projects and includes many examples of successfully completed projects. The capability and experience of the roofing services team is also highlighted together with various testimonials from satisfied customers.
The continuing professional development course has the full support of Graham McQuillan, the Concrete Division's Managing Director as he outlined recently;

"Eddie's course is tremendous as it promotes the use of roof tiles on commercial projects to relevant decision makers. I think the booklet which has also been developed complements the course perfectly and I have no doubt we will have many opportunities to tender for contracts as a consequence".

Northlink looks forward to reporting further on Eddie's progress as he tells architects and specifiers more about our roof tiles and the experience, expertise and performance of his team.

Working Safely Together Day At Farrans

Monday 27 April 2009 was no ordinary day for the site based employees and sub contractors at Farrans Construction. This was because each and every site in Northern Ireland, Scotland and England received a visit from a Farrans Director or contract manager as part of the Farrans Working Safely Together Day.

The event was devised by Farrans Safety Director, Kevin Corley and Safety, Health, Environmental and Quality Manager, Alex Anderson as they both recognised how much site workers depend on the actions of their colleagues on site for their health and safety. Kevin and Alex also realised that when these safety critical relationships break down, the potential for accidents is increased greatly.

After a brief discussion with Farrans Civils Managing Director, Eamonn Sweeny, it was not long before it was agreed to have a Working Safely Together Day to raise awareness of safety critical relationships on site. It was also realised that to be effective, senior management would have to have a pivotal role in the process.

The methodology was that on Friday 24 April 2009, a tool box talk would be delivered on every site stressing the level to which all site based employees are dependent on each other for safe working, the implementation of procedures, accident prevention and generally improving safety standards. On 27 April 2009, a director or contract manager would visit nominated sites and talk to at least three employees or sub contractors about their safety critical relationships.

Needless to say, the Working Safely Together Day was a great success as Kevin Corley explains;

"The event was all about asking our site people to think about how their acts or omissions could lead to a work colleague having an accident. The fact that directors or contract managers were involved helped to emphasise the importance of the discussion. It also led to many suggestions being brought forward to management in terms of improving co-ordination for effective health and safety management. At Farrans we must continue to develop a working environment in which suggestions to improve safety standards are encouraged and actioned. Our Working Safely Together day showed us what is possible in this regard".

The Farrans Working Safely Together Day was reported in several local newspapers and trade magazines and received the full support of the Health and Safety Executive in Northern Ireland.

Kevin and Alex deserve great credit for their efforts and innovative thinking.

(l-r) Ken Logan, Principle Inspector with the Health and Safety Executive, Mark Lowry and kevin Corley (Farrans) launch the Working Safely Together Day on site in central Belfast

Michael And David **Save The Day**

On Tuesday 5 May, Michael Savage (pictured left) and David Brazier, who are both skippers on Northstone sand barges on Lough Neagh, had an eventful afternoon at work.

Michael, who is skipper of the 'Coney Island' barge received an emergency radio message from the Belfast Coastguard to indicate that six young canoeists had got into difficulty on the Lough in poor weather conditions. The young people were taking part in an activity under the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. Michael, who is also a part time volunteer coastguard rescue officer for Lough Neagh, reacted immediately and put out a distress call to all other boats in the area to travel to the scene. David Brazier, who skippers the Northstone barge 'Sandy Bay', responded and using the co-ordinates provided by Michael, travelled to the incident area. On arrival, he found six canoeists in the water. David then proceeded to assist them onto his barge, together with their canoes, and travel to the nearby Northstone sand site at Sandy Bay.

Once safely in the site's canteen, the young people were treated for mild hypothermia by the Coastguard Team and other emergency services.

Thankfully all of the canoeists were none the worse for their experience in the cold waters of Lough Neagh and some two weeks later they were able to complete their journey across Sandy Bay to Rams Island on Lough Neagh.

Both Michael and David are modest men but there is no doubt that their rapid response to a distress call prevented a serious incident. It is typical of both men that they deemed their actions as merely complying with the duty that all users on the Lough have to each other. They are to be commended for their actions.

The Maritime and Coastguard Agency certainly share our view of the good work of our two men in their report of the incident on www.mcga.gov.uk/c4mca/mcga07-home/newsandpublications/press-release.htm

Lough Neagh is the largest expanse of freshwater in the British Isles and is the third biggest lake in Europe measuring over 300 square kilometres. Northstone (NI) Limited have been extracting sand from the bed of the Lough with a fleet of barges since the 1940's.

Saying Yes to Better Health at Northstone (l-r) Tom Davidson, Karen Gibson, Nurse Colette Johnston, Brenda Gregg, Brian Irwin and Ann Cathcart.

Promoting Better Health In Northstone

How many times have we heard it said that "your health is your wealth"? Well, this certainly is the case when one considers the following facts:

- In Northern Ireland 2,494 people died in 2008 as a result of heart disease with men being more susceptible to heart attacks than women.
- Every year in Northern Ireland around 4,000 people suffer a stroke – that's one person every five minutes. At least 40% of strokes are preventable.
- In the United Kingdom as a whole, someone dies from a heart attack every six minutes. Heart and circulatory disease is the biggest killer in the United Kingdom.
- 145,000 people in Britain have a stroke every year. Of these people, about one in six are likely to die within the first 30 days, about a third are likely to die within the first 10 days and about a third are likely to be left disabled.

It is against this backdrop of grim statistics that the Northstone board again decided, for the third successive year, to promote better health awareness by offering health assessments through the Chest, Heart and Stroke Association.

Since January of this year, the Association nurses have travelled to our locations and assessed the health of some 550 Northstone employees. The thirty minute session with individual employees included blood pressure and cholesterol checks as well as a body composition review. The session ends with the Association nurse providing advice and guidance on healthier lifestyle.

There is no doubt that all who have had a health assessment with the Chest, Heart and Stroke Association have found it to be useful and in some cases, colleagues have discovered that they have conditions of which they were totally unaware.

The message this summer to all employees from Northlink is not to become a statistic and be more aware of the value and importance of good health.

One Million Metres Of Watermains

Farrans Utilities, together with joint venture partner, Enterprise Group Holdings, has been working with Northern Ireland Water for the past four years in upgrading the water mains infrastructure in the south east of the Province. The Farrans joint venture is part of Northern Ireland Water's overall Water Mains Rehabilitation Project which is valued at £80m.

The work of the Farrans Joint Venture and other contractors across the Province will improve the quality, reliability and flexibility of water supply in Northern Ireland while also reducing leakage. The Project will address the problems associated with the aging existing infrastructure which in certain areas, does not have the capacity to accommodate an increase in housing or tourism.

The Farrans Joint Venture together with Lagan Hollerans, the contractor for the North West of the Province, were recently invited to help Northern Ireland Water celebrate the key milestone of 1 million metres of new water mains laid on the overall Project to date.

Farrans Director Kevin Corley, who attended the photo call put the project into context for Northlink;

"To reach the one million metre mark, the Project team laid about 1,000 metres of water mains every working day. In addition, if the pipes used in the construction process were placed end to end, they would stretch from Belfast to Bordeaux. One of the key work methods of work, which facilitated productivity on site, has been the use of underground low dig technology. This has not only minimised disruption but also reduced the amount of waste material generated with more than three quarters of the mains being laid without the need to open large trenches".

Celebrating Together (l-r) Kevin Corley, Adrian Dixon (Lagan Hollerans) and Gary Curran (Northern Ireland Water)

Northlink congratulates the Farrans Utilities Joint Venture on their pivotal role in improving the watermain infrastructure in the Province.

Sustainable Urban Drainage by Northstone

Developing product innovations is a key result area for the Northstone business in order to maintain our competitive position in the market. This year, three of our people in the Quarry and Asphalt Division have excelled themselves with the successful introduction of the new Northstone Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS) which is known as MaxDrain. Special Products Manager, Paul McBride, Technical Manager, Angus Kennedy and Knowledge Transfer Partnership Associate James Gawn have researched, tested and developed the product and have now added MaxDrain to the ever increasing Northstone portfolio.

MaxDrain is the new porous system designed with the environment in mind. Hard surfaces such as roofs, paths, roads and car parks are a fact of urban life. They do not absorb rainfall but rather direct it to drains from where it goes to streams and rivers which in spells of heavy rain, can flood rapidly.

Paul McBride told Northlink some more of the story of MaxDrain.
"MaxDrain allows large quantities of rainwater to pass through the porous bituminous surface. The water is filtered through the voids and retained in the pavement structure.

Subsequently, the storm water is released at a controlled rate either into a conventional drainage system or by infiltration into the sub soil. Installation of MaxDrain SUDS can therefore reduce the risk of flooding at the point of collection or downstream.

We have worked closely with Queens University, Belfast over the past two years and conducted tests to prove that it can cope with heavy rain and can be easily maintained. MaxDrain passed these tests with flying colours.

Special mention must go to the great efforts of James Gawn who worked tirelessly to develop our new product."

A copy of the new MaxDrain brochure is now available to download from the Northstone website.

(l-r) James Gawn and Paul McCollum undertake further tests on a MaxDrain surface.

Carl Joins The Farrans Team In England

The Farrans management team in England was further strengthened earlier this year with the recruitment of Carl Studd. He takes over the role previously held by Jason Denly who, as reported in the last edition of Northlink, has moved to the position of Business Development Manager for the region.

Carl comes from a trades background and brings to his role some twelve years of experience in construction management. His current contracts include the Agate House High Dependency Unit in Bedfordshire, the Replacement Vehicle Depot at Mildenhall and the March Waste Transfer Station in Cambridgeshire.

Carl is from Ipswich originally but now lives in a small village in the Suffolk countryside. He is currently the vice chairman of the Suffolk branch of the Chartered Institute of Building. Carl lists his interests as fast cars and sailing, as well as being a voluntary member of the Auxiliary Coastguard having served previously with the Royal Naval Voluntary Auxiliary Service. He is also a member of the Waldringfield Sailing Club on the river Deben where he operates the safety rescue boat on club sailing days.

Carl provided Northlink with an insight into his current contract at March;
"The March Waste Transfer Station project was secured under the Donarbon/South Cambridgeshire Private Finance Initiative (PFI) Waste Management Agreement. We started on site at the end of April 2009 and we are well on course to complete the contract in October with the steel frame already in place, some two weeks ahead of programme. On completion, the station will receive all local recyclable material for onward transmission to recycling centres after sorting. Our success in this sector of the market will hopefully lead to more opportunities in the future for Farrans. I have really enjoyed my first six months at Farrans in what is a happy family environment in the Cambridge office".

Northlink wishes Carl every success in his role with Farrans in England.

Eamonn Leads From The Front On **Occupational Health In Construction**

Eamonn Sweeney, the Managing Director of Civil Engineering at Farrans Construction, recently responded in his usual way to a request from the Health and Safety Executive in Northern Ireland to encourage more major contractors to adopt best practice in managing the occupational health of their construction workers.

Eamonn was delighted to deliver the keynote address at a breakfast briefing in April for six major contractors in Northern Ireland. His objective was to persuade each of the managing directors present to agree to be part of the BuildHealth Initiative, of which Farrans are founder members. Eamonn's style was factual and persuasive focusing on the benefits accruing to Farrans of participating in the BuildHealth Initiative in 2008 and in particular the experiences of the Farrans examplar site at Altnagelvin Hospital. He then concluded with the all important business case for better occupational health in construction.

Eamonn told Northlink something of his passion for improving occupational health;
"Managing occupational health does not have to be complex or costly. All we are doing is looking after our people that little bit better. In fact, good occupational health awareness extends the working lives of site people who up until recently would perhaps have had to move away from the industry due to the aches and pains they developed over the years on site. To me, health is every bit as important as safety on site!"

The end result of Eamonn's presentation is that six more managing directors have committed to better occupational health standards and practices in their companies.

All contractors who commit to the BuildHealth Initiative are required to implement a series of measures on an examplar site which includes the following:-

- the review of all risk assessments to ensure that any health issues arising from the activities are effectively addressed.
- ensuring that all workers involved in safety critical work meet appropriate fitness standards.
- delivery of regular health related tool box talks.
- the successful delivery of health promotion initiatives on site.
- monitoring and review of health related absences with a view to establishing and addressing the cause.

Northlink commends Eamonn for his commitment to improving health standards in construction.

Daryl McGuckian (Project Manager at Farrans site at Altnagelvin Hospital) and Eamon Sweeney at the BuildHealth presentation

Back row (extreme left), Jerome Curran and Jeff Brown (extreme right) show their Farrans colours with the children

Moffat Kids Wear Their **Farrans Colours**

As reported in a previous edition of Northlink, the Farrans Safety Team have been hard at work in recent months delivering the Safety Sam presentation to children in schools in the vicinity of contract sites. The aim is to make the children aware of the hazards encountered on a construction site and not to be tempted to enter a construction site at any time.

Mr Safety Sam at Farrans is Brian Hill, who combines very demanding health and safety responsibilities on the Belfast Sewers Project with that of the role model, Safety Sam, who encourages children never to use a construction site as a playground. One of his more recent expeditions was to Moffat Nursery and Primary School in South West Scotland where he delivered the Safety Sam message to the children in some of the most junior classes.

Moffat Project Manager, Jerome Curran, organised the session with school principal, Jeff Brown and was clearly delighted with the reaction of the children when he spoke recently to our reporter;

"The kids loved every moment of the presentation with Brian being his usual self in encouraging each and every child to get involved. They were all truly captivated when Brian played the DVD which recreates the scene of a child falling from a ladder on site. At the end of the session, each child was given a pencil, ruler and other items in addition to their own high visibility vest, complete with Safety Sam logo. I am confident in my belief that the children are often more dedicated than many adults on construction sites when it comes to wearing their personal protective equipment as the kids wear them to and from school, on school outings and also while cycling. Safety Sam very evidently made an impression".

Safety Sam Says

"PLAY SAFE STAY SAFE"

Colin Mitchell runs through for another try while wife Miranda (inset) secures more possession from a lineout

Rugby Success For Colin And Miranda

The British and Irish Lions may be playing well this summer in South Africa in places like Pretoria and Durban but a little closer to home, the Northstone Quarry and Asphalt Division have their own rugby success story.

Colin and Miranda Mitchell are both key members of their respective teams at City of Derry Rugby Club. Colin is the Quarry Manager at the Division's Ballymena Depot and Miranda is personal assistant to the directors at Croaghan Quarry. The couple were married last year and the first year of marriage usually is a time to settle down but Colin and Miranda are certainly not Mr and Mrs Average.

Colin was recently awarded the City of Derry's most improved player of the year and top try scorer accolades in what was an unbelievable year of success for the north west club. They are the newly crowned Kukri League Champions, Junior Cup Champions and Towns Cup Winners 2008-2009, and Colin has played a major part in this success. The club also narrowly failed in its bid for promotion back to senior rugby following a series of hotly contested play offs.

Colin's better half, Miranda, took up ladies rugby three seasons ago and has been playing various positions in the pack at City of Derry. Miranda's team was not to be outdone by the men and won the All Ireland Division 2 North League which culminated in Miranda being called into the Ulster ladies squad. Northlink understands her outwardly slim build is deceptive especially by those on the receiving end of one of her tackles.

Both Colin and Miranda play in the back row.

Northlink wishes Miranda and Colin continued success both on and off the pitch.

Henry **Retires**

Henry O'Kane, contract manager with the Quarry and Asphalt Division, will retire on 31 July 2009 after 20 years of service with the Company. He entered the road building industry at the tender age of eighteen when he took up the offer of employment with W.M. Bolton and Sons in Coleraine. Henry's superior technical and people skills are well suited to civil engineering and before long he was asked to take on more responsibilities on larger contracts. In 1972, Henry moved to W + J Taggart Limited in Portrush, County Antrim, as a site agent where his list of credits includes the Teeshan Dual Carriageway, Coleraine Ring Road and Lisburn By Pass. It was while at W + J Taggart that Henry met the late Bob Holmes, who was later to work for R.J. Maxwell, and the two men became life long friends.

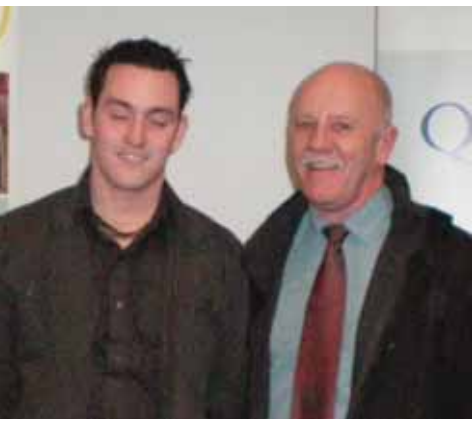
Henry joined R.J. Maxwell + Son Limited on 1 August 1989 and before long was promoted to the role of contracts manager. Gareth Telford, Henry's contracts director, has kindly provided the following appreciation of Henry and his contribution to our business;

"Henry brings many qualities to his role with Northstone which add much to our reputation with clients and the public alike. Dedication, hard work and integrity are the core values on which Henry has forged his reputation with clients and colleagues. His true capabilities came to the fore when a contract was particularly demanding either in terms of programme, design or client quality standards. In these situations, Henry always delivered. Overall, Henry was always appreciated for his willingness to help others on site and to forge a team spirit to ensure each and every contract was undertaken to the highest possible standards.

Henry also deserves great credit in leading and managing the first Super Measured Term Asphalt and Bitumen Contracts for Northstone in the north of the Province.

I know that we all will miss Henry greatly when he retires."

All at Northlink wish Henry a long, healthy and happy retirement and we know that he intends to spend more of his time with wife Lucy and their grandchildren.



(l-r) Jim Hagan and Northstone's Peter Doherty at the South West Regional College

Jim Learns More About Road Surfacing And Quarrying

The Northstone Quarry and Asphalt Division has fully supported the efforts of the South West Regional College in Dungannon in the delivery of its inaugural Civil Engineering with Mineral Extraction Specialist course. The two year programme requires each student to have five weeks of work experience in the industry and the Quarry and Asphalt Division was delighted to offer a place at Carrickmore Quarry to Jim Hagan, who lives in nearby Pomeroy.

Jim acquitted himself very well during his placement and before long became an important member of the team as he completed his training programme in all operational areas of the business.

Commenting on his time at Carrickmore, Jim said;

"At the quarry I was able to observe and understand all aspects of production, from blasting and crushing through to mixing and loading lorries. I even got involved in laboratory testing of product samples to ensure the materials complied with quality standards."

Jim also spent an enjoyable time with the engineers and laying crews as he explained to Northlink; *"I also learnt much from the engineers on site and got involved in setting out duties and record keeping. I was really impressed with the efficiency and skill level of the crews in laying the coated material. I was also left in no doubt of the importance placed by Northstone on health and safety as well as quality in all aspects of the business."*

All at Northlink wish Jim every success in his future career within the civil engineering and extractive industries.

Mark Develops Career At Farrans

Farrans people are characterised by their professionalism, dynamism and commitment to the business and in this regard, Mark Beacom, is no exception.

Mark joined Farrans in 2004 as a quantity surveyor having worked in a similar role for two large local contractors. He worked initially on Project Pegasus at Luton Airport and other similar fast track contracts with Farrans.

His talents and abilities were recognised recently with promotion to the role of Commercial Manager where he manages tendering and pre contract issues on major contracts.

Mark told Northlink something of his experiences of working with Farrans;
"The construction industry in general always provides great variety and diversity in the nature of the work people like me get involved in. This has been very true of my time to date at Farrans. I have had the opportunity to work in various sectors of the industry such as education and commercial work. Farrans have also enabled me to see more of the work of the various functional areas of the business. This variety makes my job interesting and to be honest, no two days are the same.

My background in site quantity surveying working within a multi disciplined site team has given me an understanding of what it takes to deliver a building project. This has proven invaluable in my current role as I need a wide breadth of knowledge to deal with everything from analysing contractual risks to managing design quality. This range of responsibilities allows me to continue to learn something new, each and every day at work, which is great."

Mark recently travelled to Australia to marry his fiancé, Jessica, and after the wedding the couple spent some time travelling to take in the sights and sounds of this great country. The new Mrs Beacom comes originally from Sydney and the couple intend making regular visits to see more of Australia.

Away from work, Mark goes to the gym to relax.

Northlink wishes Mark every success in his new role within the building division of Farrans Construction.

When Mark Met Nigel

Nigel Dodds, the Province's Minister of Finance and Personnel, recently visited the Farrans project at the Girls Model School in north Belfast to find out more about the progress being made on the construction of one of the largest schools in his constituency.

The visit was hosted by Mark Lowry, the Farrans Joint Managing Director, as he had done on Nigel Dodds' previous visit in June 2008 when he laid the foundation stone for the new school.

(l-r) Minister Dodds and Mark Lowry on site at the Girl's Model School in Belfast

The Girls Model School is being delivered by Farrans as a Belfast Schools Strategic Partnering Project and is managed in partnership between Amey FMP and the Belfast Education and Library Board.

It is usual when two Fermanagh men meet for the conversation to turn to memories of the Province's lakeland county, happy days at Portora Royal School in Enniskillen (although Mark was much younger than Nigel) and mutual friends. However, before the craic started, Minister Dodds was given an excellent presentation on the project by Design Co-ordinator, Neil McStravick, which outlined the sustainable working practices on site. Neil also described the design management processes and the commitment to quality of the Farrans management team. Over 95% of all the suppliers to the project are based in N.Ireland, and Northstone group products were very evident throughout.

Some of the key facts about the new Girls Model School included in the presentation were as follows:-

- the total floor area of the new school will be 14,919 m^2.
- the school will accommodate 950 pupils.
- the community facilities, including electronic village hall, crèche and hair and beauty facilities, extend to 890 m^2.
- there will be 7,509 m^2 of sports facilities including 2 synthetic pitches, tennis courts, netball court and running tracks.

Neil's presentation certainly interested the Minister as he returned to the meeting room after his tour of the site which was led by Neal Lynch, the Farrans Project Manager.

As for Mark and Nigel reminiscing about old times, this certainly took place at every opportunity during the visit and both men discovered that they had lots in common in addition to a Fermanagh connection which included clear thinking and a commitment to value for money and quality.

Award Winning Visible Felt Leadership

Celebrating their CRH Safety Award back row(l-r) Kieran O'Neill, Willie McNabb, Trevor Creighton, Michael McCusker, Mark Lowry, front row (l-r) Johnny Douglas, Henry Morris, Craig Chisholm, Noel Quinn and Donal Dempsey.

In June 2007, the management of health and safety through greater involvement on the part of every Northstone employee took a major step forward with the introduction of the Company's Visible Felt Leadership (VFL) Initiative.

Prior to the implementation of Visible Felt Leadership the Northstone board had spent many hours deliberating on how to make year on year improvements on the Company accident and frequency rates. It was agreed that the only way to achieve this was for senior managers to take a more active role in talking to our people at every level about health and safety and how standards could be improved. There followed a number of training sessions in Visible Felt Leadership and in June 2007 the first visits by managers to meet with individual employees to discuss health and safety were undertaken.

The positive effect of Visible Felt Leadership was almost immediate because for the first time perhaps, managers could learn directly from fellow employees about hazards and risks associated with particular tasks. The suggestions made by employees to improve safety standards were also discussed and recorded with the relevant manager also having an obligation to action the suggestions made during the visit.

Chief Executive Noel Quinn has always been convinced of the value of Visible Felt Leadership in the health and safety management process as he explained to Northlink recently;

"Visible Felt Leadership at its most fundamental level means that in Northstone each month, there are almost sixty discussions taking place between managers and employees which are dedicated completely to improving health and safety standards. The initiative has also led to affording more Northstone employees the opportunity to have their say in reducing accidents. I am convinced of the value of the initiative in making Northstone a healthier and safer place to work. It will always receive my full support".

The contribution made by Visible Felt Leadership to the management of health and safety at Northstone was recognised recently with a CRH Europe Materials Safety Award.

£13,500 and Still Counting

Farrans Team Keep Smiling in all weathers on Ben Nevis

Neil McStravick, a young Design Co-ordinator on the Farrans Girls Model School site in north Belfast, does more than most for charity. This year he was the motivating force behind encouraging a group of Farrans people to put on their hiking boots and raise some money for the Ulster Cancer Foundation. Neil is not a man to do things by half and it was no surprise when he decided with the group to take on the Ben Nevis Challenge. The Farrans people who took part in the Challenge were drawn from the site staff on the Belfast and Scottish Schools Projects and numbered thirteen in total with three non Farrans people swelling the numbers.

Neil gave Northlink some background information as to the decision to support the Ulster Cancer Foundation;

"The Ulster Cancer Foundation receives no government funding and relies entirely on donations to undertake it's work. The services it offers to cancer patients and their families is tremendous and includes providing a freephone cancer helpline which provides information, support and advice to anybody worried about cancer. The Foundation also funds vital research on improving treatments and survival rates for people with cancer in Northern Ireland as well as promoting early diagnosis of cancer through awareness campaigns. It is certainly a worthy cause."

Our group of intrepid mountaineers set themselves a target of raising £8,800 prior to the event and like most budgets it did not even come close as Neil and the rest of the team have so far raised the magnificent total of **£13,500** with more sponsorship still being received. It is fitting that we detail below the names of the team who selflessly gave of their time and efforts to support the Ulster Cancer Foundation. They are as follows:-

Gavin Newburn, Spencer Williams, David Henry, Warren Wright, Cathal Montague, Mel Machin, Lee Simpson, Mark McCormick, Neil McStravick, Julie McGuigan, Jerome Curran, Colm Doyle, Gerard Diamond, Anthony Harrington, Justin Newman and Sarah Marshall.

On behalf of Neil and the rest of the team, Northlink thanks all friends and colleagues who supported them in their endeavours

John's Team Deliver Superior Performance At Lisburn College

Contract Manager John Cooper is fast becoming the Farrans specialist when it comes to building technically difficult projects in the education sector which require effective planning, ongoing liaison with key stakeholders and delivery to demanding timeframes. His list of current projects include the Girls and Boys Model Schools in Belfast as well as the Lisburn Campus of the South Eastern Region College.

In Lisburn, John's site team is designing and constructing a new college on a brownfield site adjacent to the existing College of Further Education. Upon completion of the building, the students will move across to the new facility to allow construction of a new two deck car park and apartment block.

John's site team is led by George McClure who is ably supported by John Ferguson, Ronan McVeigh, Dwayne Rice and Gavin Connolly. Chris Sloan and Kevin McLaughlin are the student engineers with Donna Lynch as the site secretary.

The mechanical and electrical co-ordination is managed by Brian O'Hare with Kieran McElmeel looking after the fixed furniture and equipment. The Farrans quantity surveyors are Martin Gilpin and Alistair Scott.

John provided Northlink with the story of the Lisburn Campus development so far;
"We commenced an early enabling works contract in the summer of 2006 to provide accommodation for the students to decant into and facilitate limited demolition of part of the old college building. This work enabled the clearing of the site and was followed by extended archaeological investigation. A period of prolonged negotiation followed with financial closure on the £25.9 million Private Finance Initiative scheme being achieved in Spring 2008 which allowed the main works to commence on 31 March 2008. I am extremely proud of the performance of my team as to date, all of the in situ concrete frames for the three main buildings have been completed with the roofing and external envelope works progressing to a conclusion. The two tower cranes which currently dominate the Lisburn skyline will be taken down this summer.
Internally, the mechanical and electrical works are progressing well with the classroom and workshop construction on target to allow finishing trades to commence this summer.
Our programme requires us to hand over the main college complex in April 2010 with the deferred works, including the apartment block and car park, being completed by May 2011".

Looks like John and his team are adding to the Farrans reputation as being the leading contractor in the educational sector in the Province and deserve great credit for their work to date in Lisburn.

On parade at Lisburn, (l-r) Chris Sloan, Ronan McVeigh, John Cooper, Gavin Connolly, John Ferguson, George McClure, Kevin McLaughlin, Brian O'Hare, Kieron McElmeel, Dwayne Rice, Donna Lynch and Alistair Scott.

Wendy Receives **Royal Seal Of Approval**

Wendy tells the Princess Royal more about her experiences at Farrans

Wendy Armstrong, the Quality and Environmental Manager on the Farrans Belfast Streets Ahead project, met The Princess Royal recently in respect of her work as an ambassador with the Women into Science and Engineering (WISE) Campaign. The WISE Campaign seeks to encourage girls to continue studying Maths and Physics at school and to consider careers in those areas of science, engineering and construction that they have traditionally rejected.

Wendy, who joined Farrans in July 2007, provided Northlink with the following interesting statistics in relation to how science subjects are perceived by girls:-

- only 15% of university engineering students are female.
- girls make up fewer than 3% of apprentices in engineering and construction.
- only 7% of girls with grade A* or A at GCSE go on to study A-level physics.

Wendy met the Princess Royal at a recent function in Belfast to promote engineering as an excellent career choice for girls. As Wendy explained it was quite an event;
"It was wonderful to meet the Princess. I was introduced to her as "Wendy Armstrong from Farrans Construction" and she asked me about the projects I had worked on with Farrans and my role. She also asked me how I found working in a male dominated environment. She was impressed I think with the nature and scope of my work".

In inviting Wendy to be an ambassador, the WISE Campaign recognised that Wendy's career after leaving school clearly demonstrates commitment to civil engineering and superior achievement. Wendy kindly provided Northlink with a brief career history;

"My home town is Ballinamallard, Co Fermanagh and my school career started in Shanmullagh Primary after which I moved on to Enniskillen High School. After completing my GCSE's I moved to Enniskillen Collegiate Grammar School where I started my AS levels. It was at this stage during a weeks Work Experience in Fisher Engineering Ltd, Ballinamallard that I decided I wanted to become a Civil Engineer. I finished my AS levels but then left the grammar school and went to Fermanagh College to study a BTEC National Diploma in Construction and then on to the University of Ulster at Jordanstown.
At present I am the Quality and Environmental Manager for the Belfast Streets Ahead Project which includes CEEQUAL and Considerate Constructors work as well. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time with Farrans to date and have gained valuable knowledge on the contracts that I have been involved in namely Victoria Square, Belfast Tunnels Project and Belfast Streets Ahead. I enjoy the school visits and I am very proud to promote Farrans and Civil Engineering to all the kids that I meet. My main reason for becoming a Science and Engineering Ambassador was to highlight the fact that just because you fail the 11+ and AS levels and go to a secondary school instead of a grammar school you can still do well and finish University with a first class honours degree in Civil Engineering in a subject that is male dominated".

Wendy has achieved many accolades in her short career to date which include:-
2003 – The Ulster Bank Cup for Best BTEC National Diploma Student
2006 – The Concrete Society Prize for Excellence in Concrete Technology
2007 – The Hays Construction Prize for Best Student in Placement
2007 – The Construction Employers Federation Prize – Best Performance in Placement

We look forward to carrying more reports on Wendy in future editions of Northlink as she builds a career with Farrans and does much to encourage girls to enter our industry.

Hard Work Brings **Results At CUBIS**

Members of the 600 club at Lurgan (l-r) Adam Loughlin, Garrie Hull, Damien Murphy, Tina Scullion and Darren Turner

The real heroes in Northstone this summer are our friends and colleagues in CUBIS where good old fashioned hard work and commitment has resulted in the Lurgan and Liverpool locations achieving over 600 and over 300 working days respectively since their last lost time accident. To appreciate the significance of this achievement it really has to be put into context. In 2008, the Division had 9 accidents and 464 lost days, in 2007 there were 7 accidents and 31 lost days and in 2006 there were 4 accidents and 19 lost days.

To recognise their success, all CUBIS employees in Lurgan were provided with commemorative polo shirts. Damian Murphy, our production manager in Lurgan takes up the story;

"The polo shirts provided a talking point for employees and visitors to our location as everyone wanted to know the significance of '600' under our logo. It really emphasised the achievement. We are all extremely proud of our health and safety performance as we all feel we played a part in it. It has been achieved by a combination of good procedures, effective training, regular monitoring and safe behaviours all welded together with effective teamwork".

The CUBIS location in Liverpool has also had significant health and safety success in its own right with a celebration already being planned to record the achievement of over 300 days worked without an accident.

Northlink has it on good authority that there is already great anticipation and rivalry between the CUBIS locations as they tussle for the inaugural award of Safety Location of the Year in 2009.

Congratulations to all involved on a magnificent achievement.

Graham Promotes **Behavioural Safety**

Graham McQuillan, the Managing Director of the Northstone Concrete Division, lent his support to the latest Continuing Professional Development course in health and safety which was delivered in Toome on 5 May 2009. The half day session was developed and delivered by health and safety professionals from across Northstone who were Declan McLogan (Farrans), Craig Chisholm (Quarry and Asphalt Division), David Smyth (Concrete Division), Joe Brankin (CUBIS) and Brian Hill (Farrans).

A total of 28 Northstone managers attended the course and the informative and innovative programme included a discussion on how behavioural safety affects safety performance, various group exercises, a review of Visible Felt Leadership, a guide to coaching for safety and a description of various positive interventions which could be taken to reduce accidents. After closing the course, Graham provided Northlink with his assessment of a behavioural based approach to health and safety;

"An understanding of how behaviour on the part of individual employees affects safety performance is vital if we as a business hope to make a real impact in preventing accidents. Today's course provided us all with an insight into how we can affect the behaviour of employees to achieve real gains in the area of health and safety. We must all learn more about behavioural safety in the coming months as all Northstone divisions strive for continual improvement in this critical area of the business".

(l-r) Declan McLogan, Craig Chisholm, Graham McQuillan, David Smyth, Joe Brankin and Brian Hill look pleased with their work at the end of their behavioural safety course

Helping Ground Beetles, Tree Sparrows and not so Common Terms

The shores of Lough Neagh on which the Concrete Division has its sand processing plants are havens for wildlife and it is the protection of these rich habitats which has led to the Division developing a Biodiversity Response Plan. However, a plan is a meaningless piece of paper until it is implemented by employees who are aware of their responsibilities.

Dessie McGuckin, the Division's Lough Sand Production Manager, certainly took up the challenge of raising awareness of biodiversity among our sand site employees by organising a training session led by Seamus Burns of the Lough Neagh and Lower Bann Advisory Committee.

Dessie kindly provided Northlink with a brief overview of the session; *"Lough Neagh is an internationally important habitat and hence its designation as a Special Protected Area (SPA) and Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI). The six rivers which feed into the Lough drain approximately 40% of the land area of the Province. It was within this context that the training session for our people focussed on how wildlife can be protected and encouraged on the sand sites.*

Seamus also spoke of the dramatic decline in the number of diving ducks and waders on the Lough, the increase in the number of whooper swans and the support received from the Concrete Division for the initiative to erect nesting boxes for tree sparrows. Our people were amazed to learn that the eastern shore of Lough Neagh is also a stronghold for the ground beetle in Ireland. All in all, the sand site employees left the session more aware of the natural world around them and the obligation we all have to conserve it for future generations".

The common tern or sea swallow was once a common summer migrant on Lough Neagh. Sadly it is now on the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) amber list which means that the species has suffered a sustained decline in its population over the last twenty five years. The common tern is now restricted mainly to Lough Beg, which is a small Lough just north of Lough Neagh on the River Bann. The bird prefers to nest on islands or rafts of vegetation but have suffered greatly from heavy predation by kestrels on its chicks when on the nests. The Lough Neagh and Lower Bann Advisory Committee were keen to find a means of reducing the predation on their tern nesting rafts and yes, our Concrete Division were able to assist. The common tern nesting rafts now come complete with their own ridge tile roof which is perfect in providing protection for the tern chicks. Hopefully more common terns will enjoy the benefits of a Northstone roof and increase in numbers throughout the Lough Neagh wetlands.

Work Of Energy Management Group Continues Apace

Energy Champion Joe Brankin (right) undertakes an Energy Management Commitment visit to the CUBIS factory in Liverpool to discuss energy efficiency with compression operatives.

The recently formed Northstone Energy Management Group has met twice so far this year and the work undertaken at these meetings includes the following:-

- the development and implementation of a 2009 energy action plan for each Northstone division.
- the successful launch of an energy efficiency suggestion scheme.
- the introduction of an Energy Management Commitment (EMC) Initiative.
- the successful negotiation of a new Northstone electricity supply contract.
- the ongoing reporting of energy performance data at management and board level to monitor performance against targets and industry benchmarks.
- the development of a training module for lorry drivers entitled "The Fuel Efficient Truck" to raise awareness on the part of Northstone drivers of the savings which can be made in fuel costs by better driving technique.

Joe Brankin, our business improvement manager with CUBIS in Lurgan and who is a member of the Energy Management Group told Northlink about the thinking behind the introduction of the Energy Management Commitment Initiative.

"Our Group devised the Energy Management Commitment Initiative because it was felt that it would further improve the awareness of Northstone people of the importance of energy efficiency to our business. It is a very visible process which involves our energy champions visiting various locations and talking to employees at every level, about the use of energy at their locations. It also illustrates to our people that our champions are committed to and place great importance on energy efficiency. The discussions which are held generate useful information to allow focus on particular problems as well as producing ideas and suggestions from employees on improving our energy saving performance. As a Northstone Energy Champion, I fully support this worthwhile initiative."

Looks like our Energy Management Group are making excellent progress.

(l-r) Raymond Stirling, General Manager, Jim Shannon, MLA Ards Peninsula, Mrs Alison Stinson & family and Sam Deane, Production Director enjoy the fun at North Down quarry

North Down Open Day Draws Many Visitors

As part of the European Minerals Week, our North Down Quarry Depot hosted an open day on Saturday 9th May. The open day was advertised in the local press. Despite rain on the day, ninety-four out of ninety-six pre-booked visitors came. Six additional non-booked visitors also turned up, making one hundred altogether. Visitors were able to enjoy light refreshments and exhibits in a large marquee. Laverne Bell manned an exhibit for the Quarry Products Association NI, and Mark Ruddock, from the NI Raptor Group, had a captive-bred peregrine falcon on display. Altogether, the event was appreciated by all the visitors, many of whom had small children. The children were allowed to climb into the cabs of a dumper, shovel loader and tipper lorry which were also on display. Two minibuses were used to take the visitors on a guided tour around the quarry. They were able to see the face excavator, a dumper and the primary crusher in action. Production Director, Sam Deane, was the tour guide on the day. Jim Shannon, MLA for the Ards Peninsula also called in.

Energy Efficiency Suggestion Scheme Winners Announced

The response to the inaugural Energy Efficiency Suggestion Scheme has been tremendous with a total of 36 Northstone people taking time to submit ideas as to how we can make better use of energy in our business and reduce costs.

The closing date for receipt of entries was 12 June 2009 and a short time after this, the judging panel of Sam Deane, Brian Watt and Jim Leitch met to review the entries against a set of demanding criteria. Jim told Northlink a little of how the panel went about their work;
"To be honest, when the Scheme was launched none of us expected the level of response we received from our people across the Company. The quality of ideas and detail submitted with entries was exceptional which made our job even more difficult. After much deliberation we decided on four winners as it was felt that the introduction of their ideas would produce significant and sustained savings almost immediately without excessive cost. I have to say I never cease to be amazed at the ingenuity and commercial awareness of Northstone people and I look forward to judging the next batch of entries in December 2009."

The winners of the June 2009 Northstone Energy Efficiency Suggestion Scheme are as follows:-

Name	Division	Idea
Paul Roberts	Quarry and Asphalt Division (Newtownards)	Fit automatic timer shut downs to commercial vehicles to reduce idling time and fuel wastage
Robert Pugh	CUBIS Industries (Liverpool)	Save electricity by introducing a lower capacity water chiller unit for injection moulding during nightshift at the plant.
Dessie McGuckin	Concrete Division (Toomebridge)	Restrict the engine revs on the six sand barges to 200rpm.
Harry Richie	Northstone Head Office (Dunmurry)	Shut down 10 computer servers each night and at weekends when there is reduced activity. Power off desk telephones after hours and at weekends.

Northlink congratulates Paul, Robert, Dessie and Harry on their success.

The next Northstone Energy Efficiency Suggestion Scheme will be launched in November 2009.

Frank Punches His Last Docket

(l-r) Northstone's Contracts Director, Peter Doherty congratulates Frank Connolly at his farewell dinner

Frank Connolly, who has recently retired, became an employee of Northstone back in January 1989 when the Quarry and Asphalt Division, formally known as R.J. Maxwell + Son Limited, acquired two quarries which had been owned by Hadden Quarries Limited in County Tyrone. One was in Carrickmore and the other was in Mountfield.

Frank had always been based in Carrickmore since coming to the area from Belfast to marry Mary, the love of his life, in 1977.

Peter Doherty, the Northstone director of contracts at Carrickmore quarry, provided Northlink with the following appreciation of Frank and his contribution to Northstone over the last twenty years or so;

"I first met Frank when he was a lorry driver with our Company and what I had heard about him was certainly true. He was hard working, diligent and conscientious in every aspect of his work. He used his great knowledge of the road network to good effect to minimise the time taken to travel to and from our contracts. Dependability and loyalty are words which are often used lightly when describing employees but in Frank's case, they are totally justified.

In 2007, Frank joined the staff as despatcher at Carrickmore and Mountfield where his quiet, friendly and trustworthy nature was always appreciated by fellow employees and customers. His progression from lorry driver to despatcher was seamless due to Frank's personal qualities and dedication.

I am not alone when I recall contacting the despatch office at an ungodly hour on many occasions to have the telephone answered by Frank's quiet, helpful voice.

Frank will be greatly missed by all his friends and colleagues at Northstone as well as our customers and sub contractors. It was quite an emotional time when he punched his last docket in the despatch office at Carrickmore as it was realised that one of life's true gentlemen was retiring".

A dinner was held recently in Carrickmore to mark Frank's retirement and his contribution to Northstone.

All at Northlink wish Frank a long and healthy retirement.

THE **SAFETY** FACTOR

It is with great sadness that we report that there have been a total of seven work related fatalities in the year to date in CRH plc. Six of these have been in Europe with one in the United States. The latest fatality occurred at a concrete products manufacturing unit in Belgium on 12 June 2009 when an employee was struck by a forklift truck. An overview of the causation of the CRH plc fatalities this year would indicate the following:-

Causation	Number of Fatalities
Construction Type Operations	3
Entrapment in Fixed Plant	1
Electrocution	1
Forklift Truck Operations	2

This information serves as a timely reminder to us all that we must be vigilant to ensure that all relevant health and safety procedures are fully implemented in respect of each and every work activity in our workplaces. There must be no exceptions.
Health and Safety continues to be a top priority for the management teams in each Northstone division. Our statistics, as detailed below, certainly reflect this commitment in the current year.

	Fatalities	Lost Time Accidents	Days Lost	Frequency Rate	Severity Rate
5 months to 31/5/09	0	11	54	0.35	1.75
5 months to 31/5/08	0	19	354	0.60	10.90

Our Quarry and Asphalt Division have really pulled out all the stops this year with no lost time accidents recorded in the five months to 31st May 2009 and all employees and sub contractors are to be congratulated for this tremendous achievement. Superior performance in our materials divisions has also been recognised recently with the presentation of the Safety Location of the Year Awards for 2008. The top performers in 2008 were:-

Concrete Division
Concrete Plant Category - Banbridge
Large Plant Category - Block Production at Toomebridge
Sand Depot - Sandy Bay
Quarry and Asphalt Division
Most Improved Quarry - Ballymena (pictured above)

The CUBIS Division location at Lurgan also deserves special mention for its tremendous performance of zero lost time accidents in 2008.
In the year to 31 May 2009, the Northstone divisions have reported a total of 50 near miss incidents. Each near miss is only a small step away from an accident to one of our people or a sub contractor and we must do everything we can to reduce the frequency of such incidents. The content of the near miss reports received, irrespective of nature or potential, is proving useful as we continually seek to improve our safe working procedures.
So far this year, we have also delivered a total of 11,623 health and safety training hours and without doubt this is a useful tool in reducing accidents. However, our ever resourceful health and safety team, are busy trying to design more effective training sessions to ensure maximum retention by the trainees of the information imparted. The team are also involved in drafting a new employee health and safety handbook for our materials divisions and we understand that it will be available before the end of 2009.
All that remains is for the Northstone Health and Safety Team to wish you all a restful and safe summer holiday.