

Chief Executive's Diary



Welcome to the summer edition of Northlink, which brings you up to date with our various activities over the past six months.

The tragedy of the fatal accident to Mr Martin McKay has cast a dark cloud over our summer. Mr McKay was carrying out work for our Quarry & Asphalt Division in Fermanagh, when he was electrocuted. The loss to his family is immeasurable, particularly in circumstances where his first child was born in the week following the accident. Our most heartfelt sympathy goes to Mrs. McKay and the family circle as they face the future without Martin. I know that the tragedy has had a profound effect on Peter Doherty and his team in Carrickmore, who had close personal relationships with Mr McKay.

We must all work together, day and daily, to ensure that fatal accidents are eradicated from our industry and I appeal to all of you to redouble your efforts in this regard.

The pilot health initiative, carried out by The Chest, Heart & Stroke Association early in the year was deemed to be a success and the feedback has been very positive. A significant number of people were referred to their doctor where results indicated a possible problem. Simple changes in life-style can go a long way in preventing serious illness. The plan is to make the health assessment available to all employees during 2006 and these got under way on 5th June.

While the Northstone name is becoming more apparent in the market-place, the key administrative streamlining is virtually complete. The COINS information technology system has been rolled-out to all locations and the single sales & purchase ledgers are operating satisfactorily. We still await the new despatch and sales system (Command Alkon), which has been installed in our sister companies elsewhere in Ireland. Hopefully we will benefit from improvements identified during their installation process.

I mentioned in the December Northlink edition, that our Quarry & Asphalt Division was heading into difficult times due to savage cuts in the roads' maintenance budget. Despite strong lobbying from the industry, expenditure has been decimated, in a quite incomprehensible strategy to allow our roads infrastructure to deteriorate further. Regrettably, we had to cut back on our overhead and some redundancies were made.

Activity in the roads sector is generally quiet but some large capital works projects should kick-in during 2007 to help get things moving again.

I recently visited the sand & gravel pit at Draperstown (Gregg's Depot) and was impressed with the progress made there since we took it over last year. Our objective of more self-sufficiency in quality aggregates is beginning to happen.

Plans for the new tile plant in Toomebridge are well underway. The erection of the building will start shortly after the summer break and the orders for equipment are in the process of being let.

Activity in concrete products is perhaps behind where we would like it to be, but some major Farrans projects in the Belfast area are underpinning volumes.

Regrettably, we had to take the decision to cease concrete pipe production in Ballymena. This was a very difficult decision, but overcapacity in a declining pipe market finally won the day.

The preparation for sale of the Coleraine (Bushmills Road) site is virtually complete and we hope to go to the market in September. There has been a tremendous amount of work put in on the site and credit should go to all involved. It will generate a lot of interest from developers in the area.

The workload in Farrans Construction has steadily increased,

resulting in a healthy long-term order bank. The wide range of projects is also a feature; from Altnagelvin Hospital, Project Alpha (Water), Westlink (Roads), Lisburn College (Education), Bridgewater Outlet Retail Park at Banbridge, the list seems to go on. Well done to all involved for the hard work carried out to secure such a healthy portfolio.

I visited Glasgow recently to see what Alvar Kenwell and his team were up to there. There is a great deal of regeneration to be done in that City and Farrans appear to be well positioned to capitalise on it.

Our Materials Testing business has now completed its move across the city to Dunmurry. The order book in this activity has grown and we are working with clients on some major road construction projects throughout Ireland.

Becketts have secured some good orders in their traditional activities, particularly from "outside" customers. Some rationalisation also had to take place here as we re-focus on higher margin activities and benefits are now coming through.

The construction accessories side of the Beckett business has had a slower introduction due to some product gaps. Hopefully these issues have been largely resolved and we can now approach the market in a comprehensive way.

Finally, best wishes on their retirement to two senior colleagues, Alan Hewitt & David Blake, who have contributed so much over many years.

I hope you all enjoy your well-earned summer break and many thanks for your continued support and contribution.

From the Heart

It is often said that charitable giving is made by people who have a heart and compassion for others. If this is the case then our people in the Quarry and Asphalt Division have this characteristic in abundance.

Last Christmas, rather than giving presents to clients, the Division donated the money involved to two local charities.

These were Heartbeat and the Royal National Lifeboat Institution.

Heartbeat was chosen because one of our employees, Norman McIlwaine, a fitter at Ballymena quarry for over 25 years, has had a long involvement with it. Norman and his family have ardently supported Heartbeat ever since their daughter Emma required major open heart surgery as a toddler. Twenty years on and neither Emma or Norman have looked back.

Heartbeat supports the families of children with cardiac problems and funds research and much needed equipment for the Clark Clinic at the Royal Victoria Hospital for Sick Children in Belfast. The charity also provides parent accommodation at the hospital as well as holiday breaks for families in County Down through its fundraising activities.

On presenting a cheque for £1,250.00 to Norman McIlwaine to pass to Heartbeat, Willie McNabb, Managing Director of the Quarry and Asphalt Division said;

"Norman has had a long association with Heartbeat and regularly organises events to raise funds for the charity. He works away for them in his quiet, unassuming manner and it is a great privilege for Northstone to support Norman and Heartbeat in this way. It must be a harrowing experience to have a child with a life threatening heart condition and it is good to know that Heartbeat is there for the children and their families."

Quarry and Asphalt people also give to selected charities each week through the payroll. In 2005, they donated a very generous £3,280 to Barnardos and Cancer Research.

Congratulations to all on a magnificent effort.



Putting Your Health First



It has to be admitted that health awareness is not a top priority for many in the construction, quarrying and concrete sectors of our industry. Most of us probably eat and drink a little too much and fail to take adequate exercise. Over time this can lead to health problems with heart disease and strokes being the usual outcomes.

Late last year, Chief Executive Noel Quinn asked that a pilot scheme be carried out in our business to promote better health awareness among employees. In January 2006, the Chest, Heart and Stroke Association were invited to provide nurses to assess the health of some 100 of our people concentrating mainly on blood pressure, cholesterol levels and promoting healthier lifestyles. These short, confidential assessments, which will last no longer than 30 minutes per person, were well received by

all involved. In fact, several employees were immediately referred to their own doctors based on the assessment results.

The Northstone Board were impressed by the feedback on the pilot and requested that an assessment should be offered to every employee in the Company.

As we go to print, the assessments have now started at Dunmurry and our construction sites at Westlink and Victoria Square. The programme continues in the Quarry and Asphalt Division and the Concrete Division before finishing off with the Farrans Construction people in England and Scotland.

Putting your health first is one of the best decisions you will ever make, so make the right choice and ensure your name is on the list for a health assessment when the Association nurses visits your site or location this summer.

Brian Champions Concrete Best Practice

Best practice is a term we often hear talked about but relatively few of us understand exactly what it means. Perhaps in CRH it is best defined as "improving everything we do by collectively sharing internal experiences and expertise as well as knowledge of better ways of doing things currently practiced in our industry" There are currently best practice groups established in CRH for everything from coated materials, marketing and health and safety to quarrying, purchasing, human resources and transport. Northstone people have always contributed effectively to every best practice group on which they sit.



One advocate and champion of best practice is Brian Thompson from our Concrete Division who chairs the Irish Concrete Best Practice Group which includes representatives from Roadstone Dublin and Provinces as well as John A Wood and Northstone among its membership. The periodic meetings are also attended on occasions by colleagues from CRH companies in Europe.

News of the good work undertaken by Brian's group must have travelled across the Atlantic because in April Brian was invited to attend a two day conference of the American Concrete Best Practice Group in Ogden, Utah and make a presentation. The American concrete companies produce some 8 million cubic metres of concrete each year which puts the Irish companies' 2.8 million metres into perspective.

Brian takes up the story of the 2 day event;

"The conference was hosted by the local company, Staker-Parsons and the meeting was chaired by Don Eschelman, one of Oldcastle's senior Vice-Presidents. There were over 20 delegates there and each Company was represented. Throughout all presentations particular emphasis was placed on customer service. The USA target is for "on time" delivery to 15 minutes of customer order time. They have the Command Alkon computerised despatch system (which Northstone Concrete will have next year) and are able to measure accurately all delivery times. They claim to be able to achieve this because they have "educated" the customer in the required ordering procedures. They expect a minimum of 3 days notice for orders in general, with 1 week required for major pours. Same day ordering is unheard of.

Other major issues during the presentations focused on quality, in particular product development and branding of mixes, group purchasing synergies and of course Health and Safety.

On day 2 of the conference I did a presentation based on the Irish companies and detail on the operations in mainland Europe. The Americans are focused on maximising time during these conferences and as such my presentations was at 7.30 am. Thankfully everyone managed to stay awake, and the volume of questions on the content showed that there were common areas of interest."

The key to best practice is learning from others about better ways of doing things and through commitment and good management improving your systems accordingly to enhance efficiency levels. Looks like Brian's Irish American partnership will go from strength to strength.

Helen and Siobhan Strengthen Construction's Technical Team

Farrans Construction continue to recruit high calibre staff to enhance the Division's technical capability and the service level delivered to clients. Two such members of staff are Siobhan Dixon and Helen McCrea.

Siobhan joins us as a Contract Planner based at Dunmurry. She brings to the post some six years experience in similar roles with three major contractors in the Province. Prior to that she worked in research at the University of Ulster and spent two years with a civil engineering consultancy practice. Siobhan is a Building Engineering and Management honours graduate of the University of Ulster.



Siobhan Dixon

Since joining us late last year Siobhan has worked on six live contracts and three major bids.

She was delighted to tell Northlink how things have gone for her since joining Farrans;

"I have really enjoyed the last six months. There is a lot of diverse work coming in at the moment and from these I will gain valuable experience to enhance my existing planning skills and my contribution to the Company.

In my role, no two days are the same as I spend part of my time in the office and part on site. It is certainly never boring. Everyone at Dunmurry has been very welcoming and there is a good team spirit in the Company."

Helen McCrea joined us recently as a Health and Safety Adviser, a role which also extends to undertaking quality and environmental audits. She is a mechanical engineer and brings to her job some ten years of experience working in an engineering environment for companies such as Calor Gas, Mackie International, Montupet and Crane Stockham Valve. Her roles in these businesses varied from risk assessor, health and safety adviser, product safety engineer, technical documentation engineer and project engineer.



Helen McCrea

Helen took time out from her site visits recently to tell Northlink some more about life in the health and safety department;

"The job so far has been very challenging as there has been a lot of information to collate not to mention the health and safety, environmental and quality management system. However, the systems we have in place make it relatively easy for me to fit in and start making a contribution. I have certainly been given lots of responsibility, and met many new people since joining not only in Northern Ireland but also England and Scotland. I like this."

Northlink wishes both ladies every success in their careers with Construction.

Coloured Macadam Takes a Bow

The Northstone Quarry and Asphalt Division has recently extended its product range with the addition of coloured bitmac. Manufactured with quality aggregates carefully selected to complement the desired colour, a blend of colour dyes, and Shell Bitumen's versatile Mexphalte C



pigmentable binder, the new coloured macadam greatly extend the palette of surface finishes available to the client, specifier or architect.

The Mexphalte C produces coloured asphalts and bitmacs with excellent engineering qualities that not only look good but perform exceedingly well.

The colour match that can be achieved is admirably shown in the photographs of the buff coloured material recently laid at Lisnagarvey Hockey Club, near Hillsborough, County Down. The entrance area subtly complements the new club building. It leads the eye from the car park to the club house giving the air of a fully unified whole. Lisnagarvey certainly made the Right Choice.



Coloured Macadam – another product innovation from those smart Quarry and Asphalt people.

For details of Northstone's coloured bitmac range, please contact Sam Deane on 028 25 898151 or e-mail sdeane@northstone-ni.com.

Martin's Many Talents

Martin Stewart has been a clerical assistant in Farrans Construction's stationery department at Dunmurry for almost eight years. He undertakes the tasks that although essential, we all tend to take for granted.

Martin is the person who opens the post in the morning, date stamps it and delivers it to its destination. He also collects the outgoing and internal mail as regular as clockwork. The chances are that the forms we send out to job applicants and the various booklets we print internally and use on site have all benefited from Martin's dedicated hand. Add to this the tight rein he keeps on stocks in the stationery department and you have a vital cog in the Dunmurry organisation.

The team at Northlink never cease to be amazed at the activities Northstone people are involved in away from work and Martin certainly follows the trend. This quiet, mild mannered young man just happens to a black belt, first dan in the Japanese martial art of Jujitsu. Martin called to see the editor one afternoon recently to tell him more about his favourite past time.

"Jujitsu originated with the Samurai in Japan many years ago. Although it is a form of unarmed combat its real purpose is to develop balance and self control. I like it because I get a sense of achievement from it," explained Martin.

Martin has been attending Jujitsu classes in his home town of Lisburn for the last five years and he has made rapid progress through the various stages or belts starting with the novice's white, through green and purple to black. He tells us that he is well on the way to receiving his second dan which involves the use of weapons.

Readers may also like to know that Martin is a keen soccer fan supporting his beloved Glasgow Celtic. He also finds time to take in the occasional movie with the last one unsurprisingly being a martial arts feature starring the X Men.

Martin is very much typical of the people at Dunmurry who focus on their work and provide the rest of us with an invaluable service. Dig a little deeper with most of them and you discover something surprising about how they spend their spare time.

Special Award for David

David Henry, the Building Services Co-ordinator at the Farrans Victoria Square Development, has just received a special award from the Chartered Institute of Building for his outstanding performance in his Direct Membership Examination in 2005.

David's career in construction began on leaving school after fifth year examinations which were then known as 'O' levels. He followed his father into a mechanical trade apprenticeship with Matthew Hall Mechanical Services attaining advanced City and Guilds qualifications. After serving his apprenticeship, David worked for various mechanical and electrical sub contractors progressing from chargehand, site foreman and supervisor to estimator and mechanical contracts engineer. David has also extensive overseas experience having been involved in projects in Europe, the West Indies, Caribbean, Hong Kong and Japan. He has even found time to fit in a post graduate degree and completed his MA in Business Strategy in 1998.

David made the switch to the main contractor's team in 1999 with a stint as a site mechanical engineer with Mortenson on the Seagate site at Londonderry.

In 2001, David joined Farrans Construction as a Building Services Co-ordinator and was seconded almost immediately to the Northwin Team working on the Wellington, Balmoral and Belfast Institute of Further and High Education Private Firm Finance Initiative projects. His credits at Farrans also include being part of the team at the Lidl development and the healthcare facilities at Lisburn Road and Holywood Arches in Belfast.

David is clearly a man who relishes personal development and it wasn't long before he accepted the Farrans invitation to take the Direct Membership Route (DMX) to become a Chartered Builder, as he explains;

"I was encouraged by Farrans to continue my personal development and then led to becoming a Chartered Builder. I was delighted to be awarded a bronze medal for my examination results in the 2005 examinations. I found the building technology, finance and contract administration modules very relevant to my role in the Company. They also filled the

gaps between the building services and civils, structural engineering and project management disciplines."

David also gave Northlink the following insight into his role at Victoria Square;

"I have been heavily involved in the pre

construction phase at Victoria Square, where the focus was on commercial, planning and programme issues. My role has now evolved into the construction phase where we are concentrating on health and safety, design development, value engineering, sub contractor performance, liaison with the various utility providers, services co-ordination and keeping up to date with tenant changes. The mechanical and electrical installations have just commenced at Victoria Square which mean a very demanding period ahead for Brian O'Hare, Gavin Newburn and myself. Oh, and by the way, we also have the commissioning to look forward to."

Away from work, David is a born again biker having bought a bike for his 25th wedding anniversary last year. He is also a proud grandfather as grandson Teirnan was born prematurely at 29 weeks and 3lbs 1 ounce in February.

Northlink congratulates David on his well deserved recognition for his examination performance.



Gordon's Team Move to Dunmurry

Gordon Ellis, Director of Mattest, and his team of staff and technicians have recently moved from their Montgomery Road laboratory in east Belfast to refurbished premises at Dunmurry. The team now occupy the former Ready Use garage and laboratory building adjacent to the mortar plant in the yard at Dunmurry.

The new facility offers more space for material testing operations and the storage of samples but also, more importantly, the opportunity to move into new and more analytical forms of testing. A team of ten trained and experienced technicians are based at Dunmurry and they provide customers with a wide battery of accredited tests unrivalled in Ireland.



Gordon Ellis is enthusiastic about the benefits which the move into the larger premises will bring to the business and also how the business is developing;

"The Dunmurry building offered us the opportunity to design the ideal laboratory from the start and that is exactly what we did. We now have dedicated areas for testing soils, aggregates, concrete and coated materials. We also have an office suite which can easily facilitate meetings with clients as we as training sessions for our own people or clients.

The Mattest business is all about customer service and the technicians and management team we now have in place are well equipped to avail of all opportunities in the market place whether in the form of accredited testing services, materials sampling, consultancy on particular issues or delivery of a complete testing package on major contracts.

Mattest have a tremendous reputation for service and quality in Ireland. It is our aim to build on this to maintain the Mattest position as the leading materials testing house in the market place. We can only do this if we continue to widen our test battery and deliver an efficient and value for money service to contractors and others. Mattest are in the business of partnering with their clients and taking away all of the worry and hassle of material testing from them and providing comprehensive and reliable test results in a timely fashion."

Further information on Mattest testing services can be obtained from Laboratory Manager, Gerard Mallon on 02890 551 354. Neil Cooke, Technical and Commercial Services Manager, can provide more information on Mattest consultancy and advisory services. Neil's contact number is 02890 551 368.

Why not give Gerard or Neill a call to discuss materials testing on your current or next project.

Jim Prepares to Park his Lorry for the Last Time

Jim McAlister, a lorry driver in the Northstone Quarry and Asphalt Division, is preparing to retire this September after completing 41 years of continuous service. What makes Jim's achievement all the more remarkable is that he had just one week of sickness absence in that period.

Jim started at our Bushmills Road, Coleraine depot in May 1965 and was issued with a Leyland Comet truck complete with wooden body. The body had even been made by the Company's carpenter, Hugh Crowe. In those days Jim worked on spraying contracts for the princely sum of £8 per week and also delivered stone during the construction of Coolkeeragh Power Station and to the railway station gates at Coleraine to fill the wagons with ballast.

Our roving reporter caught up with Jim recently to reminisce on a working life spent with Company. Jim, as you would expect has many fond memories, as he recounts;

"In the 1960's and 1970's I worked with many fine people at Coleraine quarry including Robert Boyce, Joe Campbell, Jim Cochrane and Tommy Leighton. In fact, some relations of these men are working for Northstone today. We had 27 lorries operating out of Coleraine in the late 1960's and there was no weighbridge which meant that all the dockets were written by hand. I have been happy at Coleraine since the day I started and I have never looked back."

Willie McNabb, Divisional Managing Director, was delighted to provide Northlink with the following appreciation of Jim's employment with the Company;

"I have admired and appreciated Jim's contribution to Northstone (Maxwell) over many years. His pleasant manner, work ethic, kinship with his colleagues, and regard for his lorry, has always been 'Top Drawer' and I know I speak on behalf of many, by wishing him a long, healthy and enjoyable, well earned retirement."

Everyone at Northstone wish Jim a long and healthy retirement.



Lifetime Learning with Harry

Harry Ritchie, the Northstone Intranet Administrator, epitomises what lifetime learning is all about in our Company. He joined Breton Precast as a YTP trainee back in 1988 and immediately went into the accounts department where initially he looked after the purchase ledger. He then moved to credit control where he quickly came to terms with recovering debts from builders who in some cases were not averse to using contract terms and retentions as reasons to delay payments. He was clearly a success in this role as he was then asked to also deal with sales invoicing. In 1998 Harry moved to Dunmurry with the centralisation of the Breton accounts function.

Harry was always the go to person at Breton when it came to repairing computers or sorting out problems in the use of the system for colleagues. His

talent in this regard did not go unnoticed at Dunmurry and in 1999 Harry became the Farrans Intranet Administrator.

Harry, by his own admission, was never really an academic person. However, this changed in 2002 when he enrolled on a computer science degree course at the University of Ulster at Coleraine. The three year, 12 module course involved Harry travelling to Coleraine for evening classes once a week during term time not to mention the associated studying and assignments. This was a massive commitment for Harry remembering that he is married with two children. Harry took time away from the computer screens to tell Northlink some more about his studies;

"I realised relatively late in life that I needed to get some relevant qualifications

in information technology not only for my own personal satisfaction but also to add value to my role in Northstone through greater understanding and knowledge. I took 12 modules in total and to be honest there were occasions when travelling to Coleraine from Belfast for classes each week was hard going. However, I had a personal desire to get the qualification and the three years passed quickly. I was really delighted to receive my degree and there is no doubt that my work experience at Dunmurry stood me in good stead at every stage of my studies. I will always be grateful for the support I received from the Company in undertaking my studies. Would I do it again? Of course I would as the sense of achievement was a tremendous buzz."

This was a massive commitment for Harry remembering that he is married



with two children and is heavily involved in Junior Football Coaching with Ards Football Club.

Northlink congratulates Harry on his tremendous achievement and he is an example to us all when it comes to determination to achieve personal goals.

Looking to the Future with Farrans Homes



Construction of new homes at Thaxton Mill Gardens is just about to start in the Lisburn area and represents the first stage of the Farrans development lands to be built upon since the North Feeder Lisburn road was opened in early May. Farrans Homes are a

member of the North Lisburn Development Consortium which privately financed the £10 m feeder road to enable the construction of 1700 homes in the area over the next ten years. The Farrans proportion of this activity will require us to build 350 homes up to 2015 and beyond. The homes in Thaxton Mill will be sold by the Eric Cairns Partnership with marketing of the development scheduled to commence this autumn. The Thaxton Mill site will be under the watchful eyes of Gerry Doyle and Gareth McKnight

Farrans Homes have also recently purchased land and some unfinished dwellings from Northwin Developments at the prestigious Wellington Square Development which is located just off the Annadale Embankment in Belfast. Morris Gilmore and Gareth Wilson are already hard at work completing 51 units and although they have only been on site a few weeks the lads already plan to hand over 9 high specification apartments before October this year.

The site teams at Thaxton Mill and Wellington Square are that age old combination of youth and experience with our two Gareth's learning much from the shepherding and guidance of Gerry and Morris along the way which is good for their own personal development and Farrans Homes.

Our existing site at Linen Green continues to prosper and impress with the build quality and growth in sales under the management of Stephen Foster.

The all important head office support to the sites is provided by John Clarke, David Craigan and Mary Moore with Gary Blair, Brian Gordon and Sean O'Neill together delivering commercial, cost control and surveying services of the highest order to ensure that there is added value in every work package placed.

Returning to the subject of shepherding and guidance, Northlink congratulates our own Ken McDonald who has been honoured by his peers in being appointed Moderator of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Ireland. This is a truly special accolade for Ken as he is one of the very few non ordained people to be appointed to this position.

Farrans Homes continues to successfully develop its business by putting in place and developing teams of people with the necessary skills and attributes to ensure we deliver quality, value for money homes to 2015 and beyond.

Alan Decides to Call it a Day

Alan Hewitt, Sales Director in the Northstone Concrete Division, has decided to retire after almost 27 years to the day from when he first stepped over the threshold of the office door of the Ready Use Scott Marketing building in Dunmurry as a very promising sales representative. In those days, Ready Use Scott Marketing was the sales and marketing organisation established to sell the Group's products which included ready mixed concrete, limestone products, roof tiles, blocks and other items. Alan's brief way back in 1979 was to assist in developing a special products division to look after the sale of Lytag insulating blocks, Lytag granular material, Scott Roof Tiles and Carmean limestone outside of the greater Belfast area.

In 1982 Alan moved to Toomebridge as a sales representative and thus began a special association with sand, block and roof tile sales which has endured for almost a quarter of a century. At that time Syd Millar was managing director of Scotts, Ralph Clarke was sales director and Barry Bamber was production manager. It was around this time that Alan's career began to blossom and in 1984 he became the Area Sales Manager looking after counties Armagh, Tyrone, Fermanagh, Derry and Down.

The following year Alan became the Scott General Sales Manager with responsibility for blocks, roof tiles and sand. Alan was appointed Sales Director in 1995 in recognition of his abilities and contribution to the Company over the years.

Alan is perhaps the best known sales and marketing person in the construction materials sector in Northern Ireland today. He has earned a deserved reputation for practical customer service which means if Alan told a customer he would ensure a delivery of product was on time then it would be. Customers, large and small, regarded Alan as a friend first and foremost rather than a sales person for Scotts. His jokes and sense of humour are legendary. In fact Alan's reputation for delivering customer care, his integrity, a sense of humour and a detailed product knowledge built up over many years just happens to be the perfect personnel specification for a sales professional. Alan was always wise counsel for those of us who needed it on occasions as he had probably seen it all before and his advice was always practical and relevant to the particular situation. His friendly demeanour and continual encouragement of others never changed even though he had good days and bad



Alan Hewitt

days just like the rest of us.

Our Northlink reporter met with Alan just prior to his retirement to find out more about his career with us and how he feels about the prospect of retiring and not having to be concerned about sand selling prices and tile market shares. Alan was as forthright and generous in his comments as we have come to expect;

"Scotts and more latterly, Northstone, was to me was like my second family down through the years. There was always a good atmosphere about the place which came about because we all had time for each other and we would all lend a hand to help each other as required during the day. Over the years I have seen many changes in the management team but the one enduring trait has been the family atmosphere we enjoy at Toomebridge and throughout the Division. The ongoing teamwork engendered the family atmosphere in the business which was the keystone of our success. I will certainly miss the cut and thrust of negotiating with customers and suppliers but what I really will regret is not having the opportunity to see people develop and grow within the Company. This always gave me greatest satisfaction. I also leave the sales function happy in the knowledge that the plans we have in place for the future will stand us in good stead when it comes to maintaining and developing our market share. I know that the Division is in safe hands with Graham McQuillan at the helm.

I intend to spend my retirement focussing on wife and family, doing some travelling and trying to reduce my golfing handicap to a more respectable level.

I would like to thank friends and colleagues in the Concrete Division for their tremendous retirement gift. I wish them all every success in the future"

All at Northlink wish Alan and his wife Sylvia a long and healthy retirement and of course, extend our thanks for being a good friend to so many of us at Northstone.

Quantity Surveyor Showcase

Readers of our magazine will have noticed that from time to time we like to focus on groups of people or departments in the Company who work tirelessly on what can often be perceived as less glamorous tasks but their professionalism, dedication and hard work are vital to the success of the business. One such group is the quantity surveying team at Dunmurry.

The team has increased in size over the last two months with the arrival of three new members of staff who will breathe an air of youth into the Department. "With the continuing year on year increase in turnover and the creation of the Farrans Homes and Healthcare Divisions within the Region, together with new opportunities for tendering for work through Public Private Partnership (PPP) and Performance Related Partnering (PRP) streams, the time was right to find new people to join our team" commented Director David Megaw.

Brian Latham is a Junior Quantity Surveyor who has relocated back from England where he worked for a major national Contractor on a prestigious PPP school project in Cornwall. He is down on site at Banbridge on the £26 million Factory Outlet scheme which commenced in February and is due for completion by Easter 2007. He will be assisting Gerry Higgins, the longest serving person in the Department, who is no stranger to large fast track projects having been involved in several recent years. Gerry's credits include the Odyssey Millennium Development, The Lincoln Centre Hotel and the 29,500 m² Lidl Regional Distribution Centre contract which was started and handed over in only 26 weeks.

Brian Maguire has "jumped the fence" having spent several years working in professional practices since graduating from the University of Ulster. He will be working alongside Paul Moreland in the recently formed Healthcare Division which has just picked up the prestigious £32 million contract for the construction of a new facilities block at the Altnagelvin Area Hospital. Paul started with the Company as a Trainee Quantity Surveyor in 1986 when social housing and redevelopment contracts were the major source of turnover in the Farrans Building Division. Since then, he has worked on many commercial and retail projects, most recently the two successful Community Care and Treatment Centre developments for the South and East Belfast Trust. His involvement in the tender process for these contracts led to him heading up the commercial negotiation for the Altnagelvin contract.

Martin Gilpin is working on the £150 million Joint Venture contract at Victoria Square in the centre of Belfast. As well as his quantity surveying experience, he brings with him programming, estimating, and negotiating skills which will be of benefit during the course of the contract. Martin will be working with Walter Robinson, who joined Farrans in 2000 from a local Property Development Company, to work on two of the Further Education Public Private Partnership projects in the Province which were carried out by the Northwin Joint Venture Company. On coming back into Farrans, Walter worked on the Cromac Wood Office Block/Radisson Hotel contract in Belfast before becoming involved with the Victoria Square superstructure tender finalisation.

Colin Minnis continues to manage all financial aspects of the ongoing programme of works at the Belfast International Airport which are likely to exceed £1.5 million in planned maintenance, refurbishment and expansion projects this year. He has been dealing with the Airport exclusively for over five years and these contracts have "clocked up" over £7.5 million of turnover in this time. Colin is also managing all quantity surveying aspects of the £14 million Public Private Partnership Laboratory project at Altnagelvin which is expected to finish ahead of programme early next year.

Mark Beacom joined the Company two years ago and was in charge of the financial negotiations and running of the £28 million pound London Luton

Airport contract where he was ably assisted by Sean O'Neill. This same partnership has more recently been involved with the procurement of two contracts for Tesco Stores in the Provence. On completion of these two contracts this month, Mark has also become involved in negotiations for a substantial mixed use commercial, retail and residential development in Belfast while Sean will be returning to his involvement with the Farrans Homes Division.

Brian Gordon, one of the longest serving surveyors in the Company, deals exclusively with the commercial management of the rapidly expanding Farrans Homes division which handed over 125 units last year. Brian not only deals with the financial management of the division, but also works on land feasibility studies, the legal and contractual aspects on house sales as well as all customer care issues. Brian is ably assisted by Sean O'Neill who is involved in preparing feasibility studies for future schemes.

The traditional role of the Contractor's Quantity Surveyor has changed

significantly over recent years as David explains to Northlink; "They have been disingenuously described in the past by some commentators as the people who go in after the war is lost and bayonet the dead! At Farrans Construction we continue to secure work through PPP, PRP and partnering type routes and as such there is a need to have a strong link between tender and construction teams to procure the work in a manner that ensures quality, efficiency of design, value for money and still provide the client with the product that he requires whilst still remaining competitive. I have no doubt that our quantity surveying team have fully embraced this new commercial environment in which we operate and have provided that all important link. This ensures a seamless transition from the pre to post contract phases with our clients, in conjunction with the Company's Estimating, Planning and Management Departments.

I feel sure that the new members of the team are going to add strength and depth to the department and I hope that they will enjoy working within the team."



Craig and Trevor's Summer Tour

PIC TO COME

An integral part of a good safety manager's job is to ensure that safety procedures and arrangements are reviewed and updated regularly. This is never more important than when dealing with fixed plant and machinery at quarry locations.

Craig Chisholm, our Health and Safety Manager in the Quarry and Asphalt Division, together with our Deputy Quality Manager, Angus Kennedy, have recently been hard at work updating our isolation and lock-off and permit-to-work procedure and the special isolation station boards in the quarries - vital to ensure that any risk of entrapment in machinery or electrocution is eradicated. The revised procedure in booklet form, and the board, have been produced in the smart new Northstone identity.

This summer Craig and our electrical process engineer, Trevor McKay, will be explaining the new procedures to our people and sub contractors at each and every quarry location and distributing the new display boards. They will also field questions and ensure that there is no ambiguity as to when and how our procedure is applied.

Northlink caught up with Craig recently in between the usual safety audits and training sessions to find out more about the importance of effective isolation. Craig was keen to stress adherence to safety procedures at all times;

"All fixed plant and machinery in our quarry locations is properly guarded, but there comes a time every so often when that machine or electrical panel breaks down or has to be maintained, and this can require the isolation of a power supply and/or the removal of guards. There is the potential for lots of things to go wrong at this time. It is exactly this situation that our procedures and the permit to work have been designed for. If they are followed then there is no risk. Problems arise when people take short cuts. This must never happen under any circumstances."

Wise words indeed from a safety professional who is clearly on top of his game, and who, along with Trevor, will spend the summer taking the safety message to our quarry locations.

Norman's Niger Mission

Hardly a day seems to go past without mention made in the press or on television about hospital waiting lists, infections suffered by patients and the perilous state of the National Health Service in the United Kingdom.

One hospital which puts these problems into perspective is found in Galmi in Niger. Niger just happens to be the poorest country in the world and it regularly suffers famines due to crop failures brought on by sub Saharan temperatures and lack of rainfall.

Galmi General Hospital, although primitive by our standards offers accident and emergency services, a maternity unit, a mal nourished facility, well equipped operating theatres, a large pharmacy and a dental care unit.

Norman Graham, our storeman/machine operator at Beckett Construction Solutions is about to forsake the comforts of home for a year and go to Galmi to become the hospital's maintenance manager. The obvious question for Norman when he met our Northlink reporter was why he had decided to go to Africa?

"For the past few summers I have travelled to Niger to work with the local people at the Galmi Hospital." said Norman "I found the whole experience very challenging and rewarding. Earlier this year I was invited to take up the post of maintenance manager and put in place a maintenance programme to improve standards at the hospital. I had no hesitation in volunteering for the job. I will also be involved in building renovations at the hospital. My aim is to pass on my knowledge and skills to the local people so that they can maintain the new installations and systems after I return home. My workshop will be in the hospital compound from where we will also support local missionaries. The Company has been tremendous as they have given me a leave of absence from my job to go to Galmi."



Norman, who has featured in the pages of our magazine before, is involved with LIFT (Labour In Faith and Trust) which is a Christian organisation specialising in sending teams of people to Africa and elsewhere to work on building projects to enhance the lives of local people.

All at Northlink wish Norman every success with his mission to Niger and we all look forward to seeing him again in the summer of 2007. Readers wishing to find out more about LIFT should visit their website on www.liftni.org



Promotion for Brian



Brian McHugh joined the Quarry and Asphalt Division in 1995 as a setting out engineer in Stage 2 of the Omagh Throughpass. His skills and attributes were recently recognised with his promotion to the post of Contract Manager in the Western Division.

Brian, who is a civil engineering graduate of the University of Ulster is based at the Division's Carrickmore depot where he reports to Contracts Director, Peter Doherty.

Over the last few years Brian has been heavily involved in some key capital works in County Donegal including the recently completed Bundorran/Ballyshannon Bypass, Clar Barnesmore Gap, Mountcharles Bypass and surfacing of the newly constructed harbour at Killybegs.

He admits to still being on the learning curve in respect of his new role as he explained:

"I am still learning in my new role but I have found every minutes of it extremely enjoyable. I am very proud of the high profile jobs we have completed in Donegal and the quality of the workmanship of our team in the West. What I really like is analysing the performance of individual contracts to establish learning points which will help me in the next contract. Meeting and establishing effective relationships with Clients is essential as this gives me the opportunity to tell them what we can do for them. At Carrickmore we have a very close knit team who work well together. It is this togetherness that makes my job as contract manager a lot easier."

Brian lives in Castledearg and is married to Sinead. The couple have a young son, Caolan. He is a keen gaelic fan, heavily involved in the administrative side at club and county level however that has been somewhat curtailed with Caolan's arrival!

All at Northlink wish Brian every success in his role.

David Blake Retires

It was certainly the end of an era in May when Construction's Director of its English Region, David Blake, retired.

David joined the Company 38 years ago and the world of construction has certainly changed much since but one thing has remained constant, namely David's convivial personality, his ever helpful nature and willingness to assist others. David has done much to make the English Region what it is today. Whether it was developing relationships with clients such as the Ministry of Defence and United States Air force which resulted in the Company being their contractor of choice for decades or the embracing of innovative forms of contract to allow us to enter new sectors of the market, David has led from the front with his usual panache and style. David worked under a number of senior managers at Farrans over the years which included the late Peter Osmand, Dennis McClure, Derek Matthews, John Clarke and Mark Lowry. They were certainly good teachers because David exhibits many of their skills, quite a combination.

So it was that David came to Belfast in late May for a lunch to mark his retirement with a number of friends and colleagues from the Company. At the event, the talk was not so much about contracts won or lost over the last four decades or so but more about David the person and his attributes. All present were reminded of how he always supported other divisions within the Company at times of extreme pressure whether in the form of releasing key staff he could ill afford to lose or providing expertise on particular contracts. David took commercial acumen to new heights and this linked to his judgement made him the perfect leader for the English Division. Invariably, David put the Company before the interests of his own Division. However, the overriding characteristic which defines David is his friendliness and ability to get the best out of the people around him. All who had the pleasure to work with him, felt he was a friend first and foremost.

It is fitting that we close this tribute to David with his own account of what Farrans is all about;

"When Farrans first arrived in Colchester to carry out almost 20 years of continuous building projects for the Ministry of Defence, it seemed a good idea, at the age of 22, to join a large company. The construction industry at that time was very much based on hire and fire, contract to contract, so to be here 38 years on was certainly not something I had anticipated. I know there are many other people within the Company who also have long service, so my thought at retirement is, what has made me stay so long?

Over the years there were good and bad projects, and as always, it is the latter which we



seem to remember in vivid detail. What I remember most however, are the people, past and present, who are the Company. They are the reason I stayed so long. Whether in England or Northern Ireland, Farrans people are unique with their willingness to help colleagues or provide advice. The answer was always "yes". These colleagues have, for me, made Farrans and Northstone what it is and always has been, namely a company with a long tradition that truly cares for its employees.

I would like to thank you all for the many happy years you have contributed to my working career and wish each and every one of you health, happiness and success in all that you strive to achieve."

All at Northlink wish David and his family a long and happy retirement and of course, thanks for all the memories and your friendship over the past 38 years.

Raymond Hall Retires

Raymond Hall, the long serving and highly respected building technician at Construction, has retired after 42 years of dedicated and exemplary service to the Company.

Raymond started with the Company back in 1964. That was the year when the Sun newspaper was first published in the United Kingdom and the film Mary Poppins won 8 Oscars. Top of the Pops first appeared on our television screens in the same year.

Raymond began his career as a draughtsman at Dunmurry working under the late Bob Crook before moving to the Joiners Shop where the late John Walker was his manager. At this time, Farrans Limited, as it was then, undertook construction work in various parts of the world. This included the construction of the Sultan's Palace in Abu Dhabi, which was the Company's first metric contract and the heavily moulded teak joinery products for the project were manufactured in Belfast and shipped across to the Gulf.

In the early 1970's Raymond began to work directly for Dennis McClure, the Company fondly remembered former Manager Director. Raymond's role was to take off quantities from drawings and order materials for projects. He was also involved in letting sub contracts. This was also the time of no fines concrete construction which Farrans used to great success in many public housing schemes in Northern Ireland including Ballyduff and Shantallow in Londonderry. Raymond was also heavily engaged in the construction of the shopping centre and office block at Craigmavon.

In 1995, on the retirement of Dennis McClure, Raymond moved back to the joiners shop at Dunmurry where he provided a technical service to our building sites as well as supporting the work of the shop.

Raymond's 42 years of service is a tremendous achievement. Over the years he was recognized as a person who would willingly help others. Whether it was assisting our general foremen with a technical issue or providing a drawing, everything Raymond did was accurate and exactly what was required. Cross words and bad temper were things which Raymond did not contemplate.

Our reporter spoke to Raymond recently to find out how retirement was going and to reflect on a lifetime at Farrans. Raymond was happy to oblige;

"Retirement is going very well at the moment and we are just about to have a holiday. I continue to miss Farrans and all my good friends. I have nothing but good memories of my time there. I often think of former colleagues and sadly, some who have passed away. Farrans was a great place to work and I wouldn't change anything if I was able to turn the clock back to 1964."

All at Northlink wish Raymond and his wife a long and happy retirement.



caption to follow

Turning a Problem into an Opportunity

How often have we heard it said that a problem is really only an opportunity in disguise? Well, the news from the contracts people in the Quarry and Asphalt Division's Croaghan Depot is that such a situation is common place with customers regularly referring a seemingly intractable problem to us and after putting our minds to it, we come up with a solution.



One such situation was when a local builder had a problem with rapid deterioration of a concrete floor in a new fertiliser warehouse/storage area during the maintenance period of the contract. As the contract was a design and build format it meant that the builder had to provide a suitable alternative that would not be susceptible to the particular conditions found in the warehouse. We let Contract Manager, Stephen Surgenor take up the story;

"The builder's problem was passed to our new Product and Development Group in Northstone who, along with Shell Bitumen, designed and produced a hot rolled asphalt using a grade of bitumen which would be resistant to the calcium ammonium nitrates in the fertiliser. These were adversely affecting the original concrete surface. We planed the concrete to a depth of 45mm, tack coated it and laid some 130 tonnes of the new product using a paver and compacted it with two tandem rollers. This gave a smooth surface ideally suited to the offloading of the fertiliser. Some months passed and I then inspected the surface with our technical manager, Derek Dougherty. There were no signs of mechanical or chemical damage to the new surface which to me illustrates the capabilities of our products. I was delighted with the results."

Looks like Stephen has another satisfied customer.

Marketing to the Fore

Marketing continues to be a key area at Northstone as we continue to develop our new Northstone identity within the market place. Responsibility for this is with Keith Wood from the Concrete Division and Richard McDermott and Raymond Moore from the Quarry and Asphalt Division. This steering group is led by Chief Executive Noel Quinn.

The primary focus this spring was the Northstone Marketing Forum, which brought together the Company sales team and colleagues from Tyrone Brick and also representation for Roadstone Provinces. Members of the Northstone board also attended. The theme of the Forum was 'Business Improvement Through Effective Sales and Marketing'. On the day, the sales team was asked to consider a number of topics through group exercises and provide feedback to the rest of the Forum.

These included:-

- Enhancing and Strengthening the Northstone Identity
- Customer Relationship Management and Profiling
- Becoming the Supplier of Choice
- Enhancing the Sales Executive's Capability

The individual topics were presented to Keith Wood, Richard McDermott, Alan Hewitt and Noel Quinn. Mark Lowry also gave an interesting perspective from the point of view of a major customer before the groups commenced their deliberations.

The day long event went extremely well with many good ideas being developed and presented to the Forum. All involved felt that the Forum had achieved its objective of bonding the sales team closer together in Northstone. Each member was involved in the



group exercises with their ideas and suggestions ultimately being collated into the Northstone Marketing Strategy for the medium term.

The hard work really only began for Keith, Richard and Raymond after the Forum ended, as all of the ideas and suggestions from the Sales Team have to be considered and then integrated into an action plan. Northlink can report that our three colleagues have so far focussed on 10 prioritised ideas and an Action Plan is now in place. The activities include equipping the sales team with enhanced promotional material, upgrading our website and improving the marketing information available to our sales people in the field.

Noel Quinn has long been an advocate of the benefits of the Marketing Forum and this year was no exception as he explained recently to Northlink;

"The Northstone Marketing Forum is a tremendous vehicle to improve communication among the sales team and give each and every one of them an opportunity to contribute towards the strategy of our business. This is very important. Marketing is the life blood of our business and we must continue to seek and implement ways in which we can improve our performance. I was very much encouraged when I reviewed the ideas and comments from this year's event and it indicates to me the varied talents and strong commitment of the sales team. I feel the Action Plan developed from these ideas and comments will do much to make our marketing efforts more effective and ultimately this is good for our business in an extremely competitive market."



Northstone Accounts and Finance Teams Come Together at Dunmurry

One of the many benefits to our business of the new Northstone identity and structure has been the bringing together of the accounts and finance team at Dunmurry under the guidance of Colin Allen and Andrew Donnan.

Colin is the Financial Controller and is responsible for those people in the team who provide head officer services such as group reports, deal with receipts and payments, payroll, treasuring and taxes. Detailed below is a brief summary of the responsibilities of the staff who report to Colin.

Head Office Services and Group Reporting

Maura Morgan is the Northstone Group Accountant and is responsible for collating the various reports and financial/statutory accounts. She is also involved in corporation taxes. This busy lady also produces the Materials Testing monthly management accounts for the operations both North and South of the border. She also deals with the Northstone Head Office accounts.

Payments

Joan McMullan is the Payments Manager and is responsible for all payments made by the Company, as well as any associated queries. This includes the purchase ledger, sub contractors, hauliers and owner drivers. Joan also creates new suppliers, sub contractors and haulier accounts on the COINS System. Joan's department is made up of Janet Ellames, Iris Heasley, Yvonne Smyth, Zena Armstrong and Jane Thomas. Janet Ellames is specifically responsible for all payments and queries in respect of Farrans Construction and Beckett Construction Solutions. This includes the purchase ledger and sub contractors. She also creates new suppliers and sub contractors accounts in the COINS ledgers.

Iris Heasley and Yvonne Smyth work as a team and are responsible for the Farrans Construction and Beckett purchase ledger payments. They also answer all relevant queries. Zena Armstrong and Jane Thomas are responsible for all Northstone

payments and queries. This includes purchase ledger, sub contractors, hauliers and owner drivers.

Payroll/Cash In

Brian Irwin is the Payroll/Cash In Manager and is responsible for the weekly payroll and recording cash in. This involves five UK and three Republic of Ireland payrolls. He also looks after the treasuring function which includes investment fund, monthly interest and daily bank balances. Brian's department is made up of Lynda Donnell, Joanne Turner, Joanne McKibben and David Falloon.

Lynda Donnell creates new organisation in COINS, records and reports cash in and processes the Concrete Division's weekly payrolls.

Joanne Turner reports cash in for Northstone and processes the weekly payrolls for the Quarry and Asphalt Division, Farrans Construction in England and Scotland as well as Beckett Construction Solutions.

Joanne McKibben is responsible for creating new organisations in COINS, reports cash in and looks after the Materials Testing payroll.

David Falloon processes the Farrans Construction weekly payroll for Northern Ireland and processes the Materials Testing payments throughout Ireland.

Andrew Donnan is the recently appointed Northstone Management Accountant who is responsible for the co-ordination and development of the management accounting function for each of the Northstone Divisions. Under Andrew's leadership, each of

the Divisions has its own accounts team headed up by a divisional accountant who is responsible for providing management information to the directors and operational management of their respective divisions. This includes the preparation of management accounts; budgets, capital expenditure appraisals and other management information. They are also responsible for ensuring that appropriate internet control arrangements are in place and adhered to. A brief description of their responsibilities is detailed below.

Farrans Construction

Gary Caddell is the recently recruited Divisional Accountant for Farrans Construction. He is supported by Winston Irwin, the Cost Office Manager, who ensures the accurate and timely production of contract costs. Winston also maintains the fixed asset register, produces VAT and intrastat return as well as dealing with contract cost queries. Paul McClinton and Stuart McDowell maintain the contract cost ledgers and process contract costs.

Pamela Voce and Richard McDermott are both assistant accountants responsible for a range of functions for Farrans Construction. These include bank reconciliations, contract master maintenance, materials stores issues, plant department reporting, processing overhead costs and nominal account reconciliations. They also produce Beckett Construction Solutions cost reports.

Sharon Walker is responsible for maintaining sub contractor VAT and CIS registration details and processing sub contract payments. She also processes monthly employee mileage claims.

Quarry and Asphalt Division

Andrew Barry is the Divisional Accountant for the Quarry and Asphalt Division. In addition to his usual responsibilities, he is taking a lead role in system specification and implementation of Command Alkon, the new point of sale despatch system.

Trevor Shields is the Division's Assistant Accountant and he assists Andrew with the preparation of the monthly management accounts, annual budgets and year end financial accounts.

Claire Muldoon looks after the processing of purchase ledger invoices as well as general ledger analysis.

Andrew McFarland processes the purchase ledger invoices and has sole responsibility for owner driver invoices. He is also assisting Andrew with the implementation of Command Alkon.

Stephanie McKee processes the sub contractor invoices ensuring that the CIS and insurance records are up to date. She also undertakes balance sheet reconciliations and general ledger analysis.

Allan McQuiston processes purchase ledger invoices to ensure matching of purchase orders, goods received notes and ensures the correct authorisation.

Concrete Division

Kara Cunningham and Jim Wilson are Divisional Accountants within the Concrete Division and they have been working together in the creation of a combined management accounting function for the new Concrete Division. The final set of combined management accounts were produced in early 2006. Jim hopes to retire in 2007 and is also facilitating a smooth hand over of his responsibilities to Kara.

Tom Graham and Jimmy Totten are assistant accountants. They assist in the preparation of the monthly management accounts. They also prepare VAT and intrastat returns, balance sheet reconciliations and other duties.

Lorna Halliday and Corinne Cross maintain customer information in the sales location system, produce sales invoices for concrete blocks and mortar and deal with customer invoice queries.

Adrienne Graham and Lindsay Cowan process purchase ledger invoices and maintain cost analysis spreadsheets.

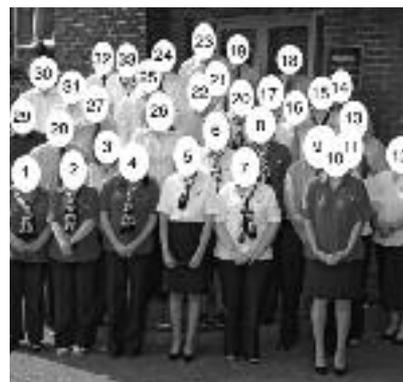
Northlink can report that our newly formed accounts and finance team are performing extremely well and meeting the demanding needs of Northstone people at all levels. * to present the ongoing development of new system which will further enhance the efficiency of the business.

Congratulations to all involved.

Pictured left:

Iris Heasley (1), Yvonne Smyth (2), Pamela Voce (3), Lindsay Cowan (4), Corinne Cross (5), Lorna Halliday (6), Sharon Walker (7), Claire Muldoon (8), Stuart McDowell (9), Joanne McKibben (10), Lynda McDonnell (11), Joanne Turner (12), Tom Graham (13), Brian Irwin (14), Zena Armstrong (15), Colin Allen (16), Janet Ellames (17), Richard McDermott (18), Trevor Shields (19), Adrienne Graham (20), Joan McMullan (21), James Totton (22), Andrew Barry (23), Jim Wilson (24), Andrew McFarland (25), Kara Cunningham (26), Winston Irwin (27), Gary Caddell (28), Allan McQuiston (29), David Falloon (30), Maura Morgan (31), Andrew Donnan (32), Stephanie McKee (33).

Not present in photo: Jane Thomas, Paula McClinton.



Mourne Man Makes his Mark

The Kingdom of Mourne on the south eastern coast of County Down is not only an area of outstanding natural beauty but is also famous for its granite which graces many buildings and other structures across the United Kingdom and beyond.

The area has always had a strong connection with the construction industry with many operatives, craftsmen and others leaving home early each morning to work on sites in Belfast and elsewhere.

Jonathan Morris, a site agent with Farrans Construction, lives in the heart of the Mournes. He joined Farrans after graduating with a B Eng degree in Civil Engineering in July 2001. His first job was as a site engineer at Newry Wastewater Treatment Works where he learnt much from Site Agent, Derek Little.

In 2003 Jonathan became an assistant buyer in the Civil Engineering Department in Dunmurry working with David Barr where he gained the all important commercial appreciation of letting sub contracts and negotiating with suppliers.

April 2004 saw Jonathan being appointed as Design Co ordinator with Farrans Utilities on their Kilkeel Annalong project which involved the construction of a command reservoir, 28 kilometres of pipeline and other associated works at service reservoirs in the Mourne area. In September of the same year Jonathan undertook a similar role for the Carran Hill Water Treatment Works and was also involved in the initial design build up for the Clay Lake Water Treatment Works under the guidance of Contract Manager, David Parr.

Early last year Jonathan moved to Carran Hill Waste Water Treatment Works as sub agent where the first phase of the works was successfully completed ahead of programme and he even got involved delivering presentations to children from nearby Crossmaglen on the construction of the plant. In December 2005 Jonathan was on his travels again with his appointment as site agent to manage the demolition of the old Fofannybane water treatment works and the construction of a new clean water tank on the existing site. We let Jonathan take up the story of his current contract;

" Demolition started at the end of January 2006 after the new Fofanny Water Treatment Works had been commissioned and brought into service. The team on site worked extremely well and we had 80% of the old works demolished and some 20,000 tonnes of rock broken out in the space of twelve weeks. This was all down to our Farrans plant operators Martin O'Neill and John McAuley, along with our sub contractor, Brian Paine.

We started the concrete works in early May with the new tank and pipework programmed to be completed along with the remainder of the demolition by the end of the year. At every



point on the project I have received tremendous support and guidance from my contract manager, Brian McCool, for which I will always be grateful."

Jonathan who comes originally from Kilkeel is married to Caroline and the couple live in Annalong. He has two younger brothers, one is a joiner and the other a contract manager with a local stone company. His father is a building contractor and from an early age has been involved in construction as Jonathan explains;

"I was taught by my father to mix concrete and mortar as a child and first used an automatic level when I was at primary school. My first encounter with formwork was hammering the pins into RMD shuttering panels when I was ten years old. I also spent my school holidays in the summer building blocks with my father and helping out on my late grandfather's farm. These experiences have stood me in good stead for my chosen career path."

Away from Farransw, Jonathan is involved with children's work in his local church

Looks like Farrans have unearthed another rock solid performer with no little ability from the Kingdom of Mourne who has made his mark within the Company in a relatively short period of time.

Scaling the Heights with Utilities

This Spring the Farrans Utilities Mountain Walking Team made light work of reaching the summit of Errigal Mountain in Donegal recently. Our intrepid mountaineers flushed with the success of their achievement can't wait for the next big challenge.

In a previous edition of our magazine we reported on the Farrans Utilities team's successful trip to Galtymore Mountain where they took part in the Munro challenge which seeks to raise money for the Water Aid charity. Indeed the joint efforts of some 590 climbing teams throughout the UK and Ireland raised a staggering £300,000 for the charity in 2005. This year to keep the team fitness level finely tuned, for future events, our Utilities people under the guidance of Kevin Corley were in training in Donegal and embarked on the challenge of climbing or was it walking up Errigal Mountain just because it was there.

This years team members consisted of Marion Gordon, Katherine Davison, Anita McParland, Conleth Greene, Barry McKinney, Allen O'Neill, Conlan Morrison, Mark Cunningham, Sean Bradley and Kevin Corley. The team would like to thank all who have supported WaterAid through the year in the various fund raising events.



Euroforum meets in St Albans



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The annual Euroforum meeting was held in St Albans, Hertfordshire in May and again offered the opportunity for CRH employee and employer representatives to meet and discuss areas of common interest or concern in CRH businesses throughout Europe. This year's event was hosted by Ibstock Brick who have a number of factory locations in this part of England.

Our own employee representative, Brenda Gregg, was joined by colleagues from Ireland, England, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia and elsewhere. The format of the event is that the employee representatives meet on arrival at the venue and agree on the topics to be covered at the Forum. The next morning, presentations are delivered by various management representatives on issues which include CRH strategy, financial performance, health and safety as well as human resources. There then follows a question and answer session with the CRH Human Resource Director, Jack Golden, fielding questions from a number of employee representatives. The Forum ended with a tour of the new Forticrete concrete roof tile factory at nearby Leighton Buzzard. Brenda has kindly provided Northlink with the following short report on the main elements of the Forum:-

" This year our main focus was to seek ways to

enhance the performance of the employee representatives at the Forum. In this regard it was felt that the CRH annual accounts and Contact Magazine should be translated into the languages spoken by all employee representatives with support given at the Forum to representatives who are not fluent in English.

It was also the view of the employee representatives that a suitable training course should be developed to ensure that each representative is fully aware of his or her obligations and the Forum's legal setting.

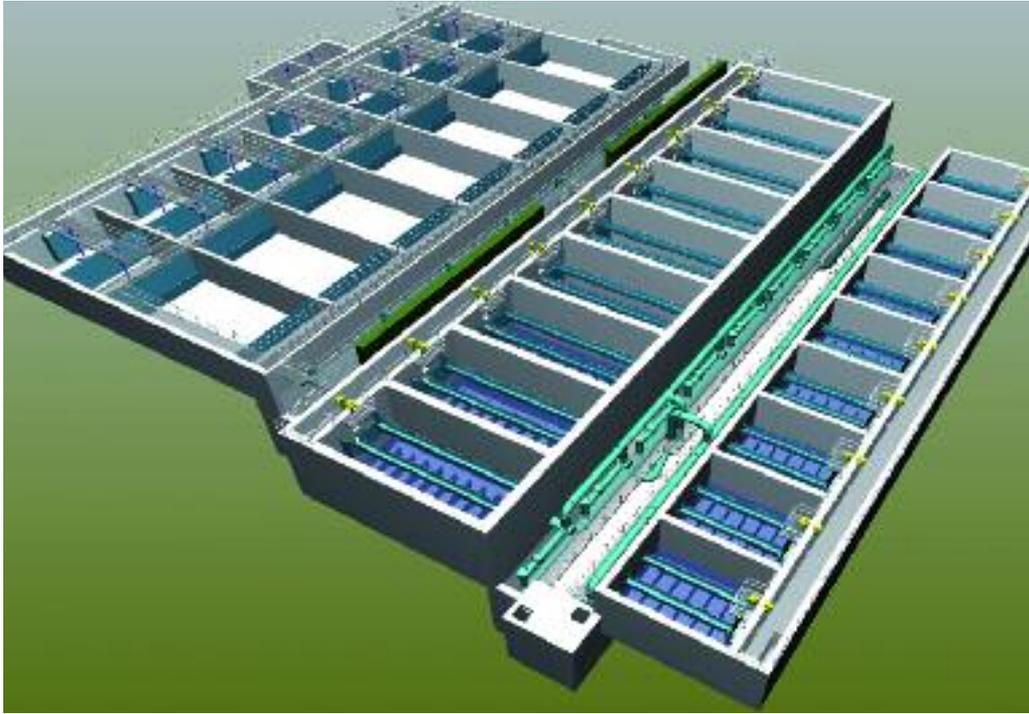
We also felt that space should be made available on the CRH web site to record the business of the Euroforum and keep as many employees as possible informed of what is going on. This could be facilitated by a nominated spokesperson.

All of the above points and more we put to Jack Golden at the Forum and he has subsequently given assurances that all matters will be addressed in due course."

Northlink has been reliably informed that Brenda acquitted herself extremely well in the deliberations and question session at the Forum. Further information on the event and the matters discussed can be obtained from Brenda at Dunmurry on 02890 551259 or by e mail on bgregg@northstone-ni.com

Construction Signs Up for Clean Water

Farrans are part of a consortium comprising also of Kelda Water Services and Earth Tech which has just signed a major £110 million water services contract to upgrade the Province's water treatment system to bring the quality of drinking water up to European Union standards.



This 25 year project is the first drinking water Public Private Partnership (PPP) contract offered by the Department for Regional Development, Water Service which involves the design, construction and operation of four new water treatment works and three pipelines (total length = 60km). Combined with other projects undertaken with Earthtech, Farrans will have constructed over 80% of the Province's potable water treatment capacity in recent years.

The contract was secured against international competition and is testament to the strength and innovation of our estimating department, led by Bid Manager, David Barr and Chief Civils Estimator, Nigel Paine.

During the Preferred Bidder stage Farrans Construction were responsible for securing planning permission on all sites and negotiating pipeline routes with landowners. Using the skills developed during the Aquarius project, Brian Gormley and his team met with over 200 landowners during the first two months of the Preferred Bidder stage.

Under the guidance of David Parr (Project Manager), design work has progressed well over the past number of months and civil engineering construction work has begun immediately on the project, upgrading the current facilities at Castor Bay, Dunore Point, Moyola and Ballinrees. The existing facilities will remain in operation until the upgraded plants are in operation, with the new infrastructure set to be commissioned in 2008.

Once completed, the £110 million investment in new plant and mains will provide 400 megalitres of water every day. When the treatment facilities come on line, Dalriada Water will operate and maintain the sites for 23 years. The estimated value of this contract over the full concession period is £500 million.

Future editions of Northlink will provide updates on progress on this prestigious project.

People make the Difference at Bundoran to Ballyshannon Bypass

This summer, the many holiday makers who drive along the coastal bypass from Bundoran to Ballyshannon will certainly notice a difference in the quality of road surface. Our Quarry and Asphalt Division team, under the leadership of Peter Doherty in the west of the Province, have just completed the laying of a magnificent total of 138,000 tonnes of coated material in an eleven month contract period. In our summer 2005 edition we reported on the commencement of this surfacing sub contract for the joint venture partnership of SIAC and Wills.

Credit must go to our surfacing crews and staff who excelled themselves to complete the surfacing on time under what were at times, difficult circumstances. The feat was only achieved through effective and extraordinary team work as Peter explained to Northlink;

"I have nothing but praise and admiration for all who worked on the Bundoran to Ballyshannon Bypass and in this I also include the manufacturing, technical and despatch staff. Only an excellent team of people could produce and lay so much material to the exacting quality standards required under the sub contract in such a relatively short timeframe, especially as the bulk of the surfacing was done over the winter months. The Contract Manager, Brian McHugh, and his Site Agent, Ryan McDermott led from the front and were ably supported by Jonathan O'Connell, Ciaran McElhatton, Greg McDaid, Pat Rafferty, Michael Lyons, Ciaran Canavan, Conrad Doherty, Leslie Kelly and Ronan McGinley.

Over the course of the contract we had five surfacing crews laying at various times with foremen James Lawne, Martin McCaffrey, Kevin Mallon, Mervyn Speers and Hubert Leighton excelling themselves to lay the required tonnages. The Division's Special Products team was also called upon to work on the project. Our own crews were augmented by the McKay Brothers surfacing squad who continually maintained the high standards we have come to expect from them.



caption to follow

The material used on the contract was all manufactured at our own coating plants which were located within Roadstone's Ballintra quarry and I can safely say that the contract team were never let down by an interruption in supply. George Anderson and Richard Craig did a fantastic job at the mixers under the supervision of Divisional Quarry Manager, Raymond Stirling and Roadstone's Quarry Manager, Patsy Barr. Jim Doherty and Emelda McDaid at the Ballintra weighbridge ensured we never had a problem with despatch of the product.

On a project where the maintenance of quality standards was imperative we were well served by Joe

Leonard and Ashley Currell in the Ballintra laboratory who made sure the high frequency sampling and testing requirements were met. Nothing was too much trouble for the Division's Technical Manager, Derek Dougherty, in relation to technical support for the site team.

The overall teamwork on the project was epitomised for me towards the end of the project where we completed the technically demanding laying of porous asphalt to reduce noise levels close to the new bridge at Ballyshannon. The guys just took it in their stride as part of a normal day's work yet it was anything but.

Overall the completion of the project was a magnificent effort and I know Siac Wills were very appreciative of our efforts. It is just a pity that I cannot erect a permanent sign on the job with the names of Northstone people who worked on it to record their tremendous efforts. I never cease to be in awe of the skills and capabilities of my team in the west of the Province."

Northlink may not be able to erect a sign in Donegal as Peter suggests but we can record the achievements of our people and hopefully the above article goes some way to doing that.

Utilities Embrace New Technologies

Farrans Utilities have always been at the forefront of innovative technologies to ensure that clients and their customers receive the best possible service within the shortest timeframe. Invariably, the new technologies also increase productivity levels on site.

One such example can be found on site just outside Newry where Utilities, along with joint venture partners, Enterprise, are using the latest water industry technologies to minimise disruption to customers. The Newry site is part of the Watermains Rehabilitation Framework contract for the South and East Region of the Province.

The process begins in the site compound where 100 metre coils of HPPE pipe are pre chlorinated, sampled and passed for use by the Water Service Scientific Services. This allows the use of on line replacement techniques and reconnection of water supplies to householders on the same day.

Trenchless pipe bursting technology is used to install the pipe which in turn makes use of the existing water main for the new pipe. The pipe bursting machine initially cuts, expands and then fragments the existing pipe thus allowing the new, larger diameter pre chlorinated pipe to be pulled through in the same line as the host main. Up to 200 metres of pipe can be installed each day using this method. Customer care is always of paramount importance with Utilities, and the site team ensures that all householders and other customers in the affected area are notified of the disruption to their water supply by post in advance of the work. They are also advised of when their supply will be reconnected.

Pipe bursting also brings with it the advantage of reducing the quantity of waste generated and transported off site as well as reducing the length of disruption to customers.

The 100 metre coils are joined together by Electro Fusion Welding which also allows valves, highdrants and other fittings to be bolted on as normal. Quality standards are ensured by undertaking a secondary chlorination on site. Once everything is bolted together, a pressure test is carried out.

Utilities have pioneered the use of the "10 minute test" on new sections of pipe. This requires pumping the pipe to test pressure using specialist apparatus. Once completed on site, the box is wirelessly enabled and all test data is downloaded using GPS technology. The results are then e-mailed to our engineer's computer and copied to the Water Service at a central location for approval.

The "10 minute test" is quick, easy to use and completely removes the need to bring any equipment back to the site office to download data and check the results.

Utilities' new technologies must certainly be working because over the last two years over 208 kilometres of existing water mains have been replaced on this Framework contract using trenchless technologies. This has resulted in quicker completion of work, higher service levels to both client and customer as well as savings to the Company.

Great credit go to all at Utilities for fully embracing new technologies in this way.

PIC TO
COME

Long Service Awards for Paddy and Sam



caption to follow

Northstone people have various traits and characteristics but throughout the business we always find people who have given many years of long and loyal service. They are the bedrock on which the Company's reputation has been built and in addition to the example they set for the rest of us, they invariably add value in everything they do at work. Paddy McDermott and Sam Boyd are typical examples of long service people who this year both celebrated twenty five years of service with the Quarry and Asphalt Division.

Paddy is a forklift driver who works in the limestone bagging shed at Carmean and Sam drives the loading shovel at Croaghan quarry. In presenting their awards, Divisional Managing Director, Willie McNabb, emphasised the contribution that Paddy and Sam, along with many other long service colleagues continue to make to the Quarry and Asphalt Division;

"I congratulate Paddy and Sam on their contribution to our business. They both play vital roles in the efficient operation of their respective quarries. Their influence also goes much deeper as they are both role models for younger people when it comes to maintaining standards of safety, workmanship, quality and many other aspects of how we do business. Their reliability, experience and undoubted loyalty also adds greatly to the family atmosphere we have in the Quarry and Asphalt Division."

All at Northlink echo Willie's words and congratulate Paddy and Sam in reaching a significant milestone in their service to the Company.

David and Stephen Come Out On Top

'Celebrating Civil Engineers' is an exciting new initiative pioneered by the Institution of Civil Engineers in Northern Ireland and launched this year. It aims to recognise the abilities and vision of local civil engineers who have made a significant impact in Northern Ireland in recent years.

Stephen McCaffrey and David Parr from Farrans were nominated by Civil Engineering Managing Director, Eamonn Sweeney, for awards under the initiative in the Contractors Category.

Stephen's submission was based on his role during the preferred bidder negotiations and construction of the Victoria Square Development basement and sub structure works. The submission also required details of the nature and complexity of Stephen's role, his contribution in achieving a successful outcome and his approach to communication with all stakeholders.

David's award entry majored on the work he has done with the Department of Regional Development – Water Service on the construction of a number of water treatment works in recent years. It also featured his role in the Alpha Project which has just commenced and is outlined elsewhere in this edition of Northlink.

On 26 April 2006, Stephen and David were invited to a lunch in Belfast at which the names of the award winners would be announced. It was indeed a proud day for Northstone when they were confirmed as joint winners of the Contractor Category.

The award is deserved recognition of Stephen and David's undoubted skills and abilities. In receiving their awards, both men were characteristically modest and typically, they focused on the team effort of colleagues in helping to win their accolades.

Stephen said, "I am very honoured to receive the award, however I believe that it is recognition of the success of the Farrans team who have contributed and continue to contribute at all stages of our involvement at Victoria Square.



The success of a project like Victoria Square is not achieved by one person but by all members of the team who have worked hard and contributed so much to the successful outcome."

David echoed these words by saying;

"It is a great privilege to win such an award but it is a bit unfair because civil engineering, above all other professions, is a team effort. I pay tribute to the Project Alpha bid team at Farrans who are all unsung heroes. This award is really for them."

Northlink congratulates both Stephen and David on their success. They are clearly two members of Team Farrans who have ability and vision. They undoubtedly will continue to make a significant impact in Northern Ireland in the future.

New Telephone System at Dunmurry

Telephone systems like any other piece of telecommunications equipment quickly becomes obsolete and with the increase in staff numbers and new office facilities at Dunmurry in recent years, it became apparent that the telephone system had to be replaced.

The search for a new provider began a year or so ago with various presentations and meetings at Dunmurry to decide on our best option. After much deliberation it was decided that British Telecommunications plc (BT) should be our provider.

BT recommended that Cisco Call Manager technology be used to provide our telephony services for all the handsets at Dunmurry and this gives us the capability in the future to extend the technology to construction sites and remote locations across the Province. Cisco handsets also provide a visual corporate directory of internal telephone numbers above the key pad which reduces the time spent in locating internal telephone numbers. In addition, the handsets are personalised which means they can be connected to the system anywhere in Dunmurry without the user having to change his or her extension number.

The replacement of a telephone system in a business the size of ours is quite a project and it is imperative that the right team is brought together to ensure the implementation is a seamless progression from old to new. Our project team consisted of Dorothy Andrews, Harry Ritchie and Michael Edwards. The project itself was in two phases. Phase 1 involved the complete upgrading and overhaul of the existing network to ensure it was ready for the installation of the new telephone system with one advantage here being that the existing computer cabling would also carry the new system. Phase 2 involved the allocation of telephone handsets and other related communications applications to enable the new telephony infrastructure.

Needless to say Dorothy, Harry and Michael not only excelled themselves with a total of 161 users being connected to the new system but also managed to deliver comprehensive training sessions in the use of the equipment to selected users from every department who were then tasked with training colleagues thereafter. However, the work of the implementation team continues with Dorothy, Harry and Michael liaising closely with BT to resolve any issues with the new system as and when they arise.

Well done to all involved in the implementation of another successful project led by our information technology staff.

Contract Planning with Gary

How often have we heard it said that if we fail to plan we should plan to fail? Well Farrans Construction clearly have no intention of failing as Gary Neil is looking after contract planning at the Victoria Square Development. Gary brings to the role almost a quarter of a century of experience on construction sites having started his career with John Laing Construction as a Pupil Productivity Cost and Bonus Surveyor in 1982. Some four years later Gary moved into planning and resourcing and thus began a career which has seen Gary become an integral part the construction team. After a short spell with another contractor, Gary joined Farrans in 2000 and since then has been involved in a wide variety of large projects from hotels in Belfast to two separate contacts at Luton Airport.



Tender planning has become a major part of Gary's role at Farrans which has seen him put his undoubted abilities to good use on challenging Performance Related Partnering contracts. Since August of last year Gary has been based at Victoria Square working with the Superstructure team. So what is contract planning all about? Who better to answer that question than Gary;

"Contract planning is all about understanding the construction process, specific contract requirements and problem solving not to mention a bit of lateral thinking thrown in. The prime task is to put this altogether into a programme having regard to a wide range of variables and the usual constraints of time and cost. The key is then to effectively communicate the programme to the site team and the client and keep it up to date."

Gary is a family man who is married to Una and the couple have three boys. Una is heavily involved in the Downs Syndrome Association and serves as treasurer of the Carnmoney Primary School Parent Teacher Association. Gary's main interest away from work is supporting the sporting activities of the three boys as well as a spot of angling. He has even organised a couple of fishing trips for colleagues in Farrans with the most recent trip being to the Copeland Islands in June. This year Gary also became involved in establishing a Special Olympics Club called the "Newtownabbey Racers" based at the University of Ulster in Jordanstown. The aim is to use the high performance facilities at the University to provide sports activities in a competitive environment for children and young adults who have learning difficulties.

When it comes to contract planning Farrans clearly have their own Olympian.

Opening of Ballinaloob



The Quarry and Asphalt Division has just completed another successful major roadworks contract with the opening of the A26 Ballinaloob Climbing Lane near Ballymoney in County Antrim.

The project commenced in April 2005 and was originally valued at £1.5m over a 25 week period. It involved the extraction of 35,000 tonnes of unacceptable material and its replacement with 43,000m³ of imported rock, the laying of 16,500 tonnes of coated material as well as the design and build of a cattle underpass, culvert extensions and ancillary works. We moved onto site on 2nd May 2005 the client has extended the Scheme at both ends of the climbing lane which significantly increased the tonnages of materials to 98000m³ of excavated material, the placement of 87000m³ of imported rock and 27000 tonnes of coated materials. All of this was achieved and the road was opened to traffic on 23rd December 2005. A great achievement by Contracts Manager, Henry O'Kane and Site Agent, Paul McBride.

All coated material for Ballinaloob was produced at our Ballymena and Croaghan quarries which worked in tandem to maximise on daily outputs and it was laid by Derek McKendry's squad with assistance from our sub contractor, McAllister Brothers. The maximum daily tonnages laid were 1115 of 28mm road base, 650 tonnes of 20mm base course and 640 tonnes of 14mm Stone Mastic Asphalt.

The large tonnages involved did not affect the quality of the finish with the site team producing the usual Northstone high quality product. Even though the majority of the material was laid over the winter months.

Ballinaloob also required also to open up the Division's dormant quarry at nearby Long Mountain to produce the rock fill and capping material. The quarry was purchased more than 40 years ago by the late William Bolton for the princely sum of £2,500. The quarry comprises of 75 acres of land and some 4 million tonnes of basalt reserves. This was a key factor in the award of the contract to our Quarry and Asphalt Division.

Ballinaloob will certainly enhance road safety standards by means of its improved junction layout with the new overtaking lane reducing driver frustration.

Northlink congratulates all involved in this successful project.

Maggie's 'Monster Bike and Hike'

While many Northstone people were enjoying a well earned May Bank Holiday, a team of intrepid souls from Farrans Construction was 'biking and hiking' across Scotland from Fort William on the west coast to Inverness on the Moray Firth, a distance of 73miles. Their route took them from the foot of Ben Nevis (which just happens to be Britain's highest mountain) through The Great Glen and along the shores of Loch Ness and the Caledonian Canal. Starting at 7am on Saturday 29th April, the trek was completed at 3:01am on Sunday the 30th April some 20 bone crunching, knee jarring, toe stubbing, muscle pulling, blister bursting hours later!

The 'Monster Bike and Hike' was organised by Maggie's Centres (a cancer charity based in Scotland but which has facilities throughout mainland UK) as a fund raising event and involved 30miles of cycling and 43miles of hiking in a 24 hour period. Our team consisted of Alvar Kenwell, Bob Dooner, Tony Fry, Wallace Glendinning, Paul Magowan, Raymond Millar, Robert McVitty, Padge McGinn and Jay Wasson. Together they covered a combined distance of 457miles and raised in excess of £10,000 for the charity in the process.

Northlink congratulates all concerned on a magnificent effort.



L-R: Bikers – Wallace Glendinning, Bob Dooner, Robert McVitty, Tony Fry, Alvar Kenwell, Jay Wasson, Paul Magowan. Support – Padge McGinn, Raymond Millar (behind the lens).

Tom Pays Credit to His Team

Tom Rainey, the new Credit Manager at Northstone, was appointed on 6th March 2006 with a brief to deliver a more efficient service through a single credit control team based at Toomebridge. Previously, each of the member companies under the Farrans Limited Group had it's own credit controller who was based at Dunmurry, Toomebridge or Coleraine depending on the company concerned. Our new Northstone identity has meant that we now have a single sales ledger account and this has meant that the centralisation of the credit control function can be facilitated at Toomebridge.

Tom, who reports to Northstone Concrete Division Sales Director Keith Wood, for product sales and to the Northstone Quarry & Asphalt Commercial Operations Director, Richard McDermott, for contracts is no stranger to our business as his first ever job back in 1979 was as a credit control assistant with Ready Use Scott Marketing at Toomebridge. In 1982 Tom became the credit controller at Scotts. After a period away from our business, Tom returned as the credit controller for R J Maxwell in August 2002.

Tom was only too pleased to extol the benefits of centralised credit control now being enjoyed at Northstone when asked by our reporter;

"Centralised credit control allows us to do many things better and quicker than under the previous arrangement. In the first instance, we are closer to our customers which means we can deal more quickly with their queries and provide the sales team in the field with more up to date information. We also have a more knowledgeable, consistent, co ordinated and effective approach to the recovery of debt. In addition we can take away a lot of the cash collection duties from the sales team allowing them to focus on what they do best, namely selling the product. All of these have to be a good thing for Northstone."

What struck our reporter about Tom was his appreciation of the efforts of his team as he explained;

"The credit control team I have at Toomebridge is second to none. In Heather Walls, Siobhan Blaney and Susan



caption to follow

Cassidy I have experienced and dedicated people who understand credit control and are committed to providing a superior service to customers and also the various functional areas in our business. Heather looks after product sales in the east and south of the Province and is assisted by Tracey Bell in our Ballymena quarry location in respect of surfacing contracts and supply only sales from the quarries. Siobhan is responsible for the west of the Province and the Republic of Ireland. She is assisted by Phelim Conlon at Mountfield quarry who, like Tracey, does an invaluable job in relation to surfacing contracts and quarry sales. Susan is the newest member of the team having joined in May this year. She looks after contracts and sales in the north of the Province as well as the Mattest business in the Irish Republic. Susan also assists Joanne Leckey on the Mattest Northern Ireland sales ledger. Joanne is based at Dunmurry."

What sets my team apart is our shared objective to keep bad debt to a minimum and a desire to continually improve

our credit performance using debtor days as our key measure while at the same time maintaining and enhancing our reputation with customers."

Tom Rainey has been in credit control almost thirty years and our reporter could not resist asking him about any significant changes in that time. As usual Tom was cautious and thought long and hard before responding;

"In general the biggest change I have seen over the years has been the disregard and lack of urgency of customers in some cases to pay their debts in due time which in turn makes it more difficult for the credit control function to recover monies due to the business. This makes it imperative for credit controllers to be on top of their game. I am extremely lucky in that my team are always at the match and playing to their full potential."

Credit indeed for his team from a manager who has been involved in the credit control function for almost three decades.

Richard Goes Back to School!

It's back to school for Richard McDermott, Director of Northstone's Quarry & Asphalt Division. Richard was recently elected to the Board of Governors of Coleraine Academical Institution where he was a pupil from 1969-1975. C.A.I. is commonly referred to as Coleraine and was founded in 1860 and long been recognised as one of Northern Ireland's leading grammar schools.



Over the years it has provided many notable incumbents to the ranks of Northstone with former Chief Executive, Ernie McClure, current Divisional Managing Directors, Willie McNabb and Graham McQuillan as well as Gareth Telford, David Smyth, Paul McBride and Richard McDermott Jnr. all being former pupils. Former Chief Executive Officer of R J Maxwells & Son Ltd, Kenneth Cheevers also served as Chairman of the Board of Governors at C.A I.

All at Northlink wish Richard well in his work for the school.

Finnish Friends like what they see in Northern Ireland

Northstone has always been committed to sharing best practice ideas with colleagues throughout CRH.

In April the Quarry and Asphalt Division hosted a three day visit of colleagues from Rudus Asfaltti in Finland. Lauri Kivekas (Regional Director), Kimmo Rantanen (Managing Director) and Johanna Ackman (Business Manager) came to meet us and were particularly interested in operational practices and costing methods used in our blacktop business.

On arrival in the Province, Lauri, Kimmo and Johanna were given a tour of the famous Causeway Coast and were able to sample the delights of the world famous Bushmills Distillery.

The following day it was down to business with detailed presentations from our management team followed by visits to Croaghan quarry and various contract sites in the north of the Province.

Day three of the visit involved a tour of North Down quarry and contract sites in the Greater Belfast Area where Contracts Director, Wissy Martin, was the host. Wissy even fitted in some sight seeing in Belfast which, as usual, was done in his own inimitable style.

Lauri, Kimmo and Johanna were clearly impressed with what they had seen and learnt in Northern Ireland and returned home with many new ideas to meet the challenges of the blacktop market in Finland. They also made many friends during their visit.

A few days later we received the following e-mail from Lauri;



"We have discussed a lot about the trip with Johanna and Kimmo and we all agree that it was the best arranged visit that we have ever experienced. You had everything so well prepared and planned. We were impressed with your planning reporting and control systems. We will certainly learn a lot from this. Your operations were well organised and effective. We hope that we can also develop more integrated quarries with asphalt and ready mixed concrete plants within them."

Lauri has just summed up what Best Practice is all about – learning from others, sharing ideas and of course, making new friends.

Record of Achievement in Scotland

How often have we heard it said that records are there to be broken, well our Farrans Construction people in Scotland did just that in March when Paul Magowan and his team at Glasgow Harbour lifted into place the largest span to depth ratio steel beams in the United Kingdom.

Three 160 tonne pairs of beams were lifted into place by steel subcontractor, Fairfield Mabey, in an 8 hours lifting operation planned and coordinated by Ian Waugh. The 62.5metre long beams were lifted into position with a tandem lift utilising 800 tonne and 1000 tonne capacity cranes. The beams were positioned on top of 3 metre high reinforced concrete abutment walls which in turn were constructed on top of 15 metre bored and rock socketed concrete piles. Once the beams were in place a reinforced concrete bridge deck was poured and concrete parapets constructed. This major section of the works was completed by the end of June and will be open to traffic shortly after.



In Glasgow Harbour, Derek Mathewson and his team of engineers are also constructing a local road network, much of which is on top of a 5 metre high reinforced earth embankment. This multi layered embankment has been designed and constructed to carry up to 5 lanes of traffic alongside the Clydeside Expressway, a major traffic route into and out of the centre of the city and the Glasgow Harbour Development.

The completion of the River Kelvin Bridge and its approaches facilitates complex traffic management phases and allows traffic to be diverted off the Clydeside Expressway onto the newly constructed River Kelvin Bridge and Link Roads. This is necessary to allow us to construct three more reinforced concrete bridges, all of which span the Clydeside Expressway. The smallest of these is a dedicated footbridge with granite paving and high specification lighting and handrails. The other two structures are vehicular bridges, Partick Link Bridge, a single span of 24m and Ferry Road Overbridge which has a total length of 102m.

Neil McDonald is also working in Glasgow Harbour and he is on course to deliver a substation for South of Scotland Electricity which will provide power to the development plots with Farrans also having been recently awarded the contract to infill the nearby Yorkhill Basin. This old dock requires an infill bund to be formed across the mouth prior to infilling with 100,00m³ of inert material transported from a stockpile in Merklands Quay. Patrick Murray will be in charge of this first step operation for Glasgow Harbour to turn the old dock into developable land. Readers may remember that our Quarry and Asphalt Division operated a coating plant at Merklands quay for several years.

Robert McVitty and his team at Govan have successfully delivered the dry-dock for BAE systems. The first section of the type 45 destroyer was moved to its position on the new dry berth in mid May with the second section positioned in early June. The works included installation of over 1000 tonnes of piles and to extend the existing berth, the piles included a 26 metre long box section manufactured in Germany, the first time that these have been installed in the United Kingdom. The gate to close off the slipway was constructed on site by a team of welders working on the 5 panel gate metal structure with each section measuring some 5metres by 7metres. The gate was manufactured and painted on site to save on the large transport costs quoted at tender stage. The site team of Ciaran Donnelly and Tristram Browne will no doubt be back to witness the launch of the first destroyer from the berth early next year.

Our works at Dundee on the Central Waterfront contract have now come to an end. Raymond Miller completed the project in May by delivering all the additional works instructed by the Client. This first stage of the Dundee Masterplan has realigned the Greenmarket area, the first stage in bringing the town centre closer to the Waterfront. Raymond looks forward to the challenge of another new contract at Gartcosh for Scottish Enterprise. We have been in discussions with Scottish Enterprise to install 700 metres of water main within the development park following on from the installation of the deep sewers earlier this year.

Northlink congratulates Alvar Kenwell and his team on another fine record of achievement in the year to date which has been soundly based on technically demanding projects which perfectly showcase the skills and abilities of our team.

Farrans Construction in England

The news from our correspondent in England this summer is one of new and anticipated contracts. The first Farrans Private Finance Initiative (PFI) project moves a step closer in respect of the £16 million Fire Station Scheme for Suffolk County Council. Although we have not been named as the preferred bidder our bid is now the only one under consideration by the Client.

The second half of the year will see the start of two Care Home projects. Queens Court at Bottisham, Cambridge is a 13 month extension and refurbishment contract valued at £1.7 million. Agate House in Bedfordshire is a new build project valued at £2 million with a contract period of 18 months.

Work has now started at Moulsham High School in Chelmsford, Essex. This is a 12 month alteration and extension project valued at £2.3 million.

Our people in England are a tight knit, successful team which prides itself on its experience. Northlink can report that our highly respected Senior Site Manager, Terry London, has reached his official retirement age after 34 years of exemplary service with Farrans in England.

On leaving school at fifteen, Terry served as an apprentice carpenter with a local builder and funeral director. He joined us in March 1972 as a joiner working out of our Wivenhoe office in Essex. Terry's talents were recognised at an early stage and it wasn't long before he was promoted to Carpenter Foreman, General Foreman and then to Senior Site Manager.

Over the years Terry has been involved in a wide range of projects from missile installations and young offenders institutions to new crown courts and housing developments. He also had a spell in the Shetlands in 1991 on a refurbishment contract in Lerwick.

More recently, Terry has become a leading member of the Suffolk Schools Partnering Programme and we are pleased to report that he has decided to accept our invitation to defer his retirement and continue to work in this area.

Over the past two years or so, five key members of the management team have reached retirement age, namely Norman Laurie, Tony Clarke, David Blake, Paul Rayner and of course, Terry London. All continue to work for Farrans in either a full time or part time capacity. The occasion will be marked by the '@Old Boys Barbecue' in early July.

Team Farrans in England have secured their order book for the remainder of this year and with our current tender enquiries and PFI status, everything looks set fair for the next few years.



Superstructure Takes Shape at Victoria Square

Any Northlink reader who has been in central Belfast recently cannot have failed to have noticed the progress being made at the Victoria Square Development.

Farrans Construction, together with joint venture partners Gilbert Ash, are now seven months into a very demanding schedule to complete the superstructure and have it open for business in March 2008. There are four main buildings in the Development with Farrans looking after two of them.

We are building a concrete structure along Chichester Street which will involve apartments, a health centre as well as retail and leisure units. The other concrete and steel structure is attached to the Kitchen Bar extending to Ann Street. This will be the main retail and food court area of the Development.

Victoria Square as a whole represents a huge challenge to both Farrans and Gilbert Ash.

There are now seven tower cranes servicing the site and it is estimated that as many as 600 people will be working on the project at its height. This number will probably increase as clients' fit out contractors come on site towards the end of the contract.

Warren Wright is the Contract Manager on the superstructure works and he leads a team of professional and able staff who are clearly delivering on the project. He has four zone managers and a construction manager who looks after enveloping. They in turn are supported by a commercial team and a technical services unit which includes disciplines such as planning, design co-ordination, health and safety and also document control.

The scale and diversity of Victoria Square make it a flagship development. Warren and his team are doing us proud as we all watch history in the making in the centre of Belfast.

PIC TO COME

New Centralised Computer System



The development of our new Northstone identity has allowed our information technology people to centralise the Company's computer network at Dunmurry. Since 1998 we have had NT4 servers at Coleraine, Toomebridge, Cambridge and Oakbank providing authentication, e mail and database functions at these locations.

The time was certainly right to centralise the system as the technology was available and our existing server support provider could no longer effectively service and support their NT4 equipment. Any centralisation would have to allow users access via Citrix Metaframe and as the Company was about to invest in Citrix for our new point of sale and despatch system, centralisation was the only option.

The Dunmurry Information Technology Team of Harry Ritchie, Barry McKinney and Michael Edwards were guided by Raymond Reilly throughout the process and their first task, some nine months ago, was to appoint a partner to design, manage and conduct an upgrade of an existing domain infrastructure. After a series of discussions with prospective partners, Northgate were appointed to implement the project to install single servers to look after e mail, databases as well as filing and printing. During the project, Northgate introduced the following products into our system:-

- Microsoft Windows Server 2003
- Microsoft Exchange Server 2003
- Microsoft SQL Server 2000
- Double Take Disaster Recovery
- Citrix Metaframe

A team of Northgate consultants worked closely with our own management team to ensure the plan to move from the old to the new system contained recognisable milestones to ensure it could be effectively managed. The migration to operational status on the new infrastructure was done over a number of weekends in accordance with the plan and Northgate engineers worked closely with Northstone information technology people to ensure that all client systems, mailboxes and users were successfully relocated.

Needless to say, the migration to the new system was successfully completed within the timeframe and our Company now has a modern computing infrastructure which will enable all users to receive a higher level of service and support from Dunmurry. The new system will also be more flexible and cost effective in relation to adding more sites to the computer and telephony network in the future.

Harry, Barry and Michael are certainly doing the business when it comes to centralising our computer system and delivering superior levels of service to all users throughout Northstone.

The Safety Factor

Unfortunately our usual safety factor article starts off with news of three fatalities in CRH in the year to date. Our Chief Executive has already made mention of the accident to Martin McKay in this magazine.

Our colleagues in the United States have had the other two fatal accidents. At Pennsy Supply an employee lost his life as a result of a fall during the erection of a concrete batching plant while at Allied Building Products a forklift driver died as a result of being crushed between his forklift and a stockpile of building materials. These tragic events serve to remind us again that our industry can be an extremely hazardous place to work if the necessary safety precautions are not in place at all times. Where procedures are in place for safe working, it is essential that we follow them as they are there to protect us and keep us safe.

In the light of these fatalities it is even more important that we reaffirm our commitment to safety best practice and seek to improve our safety performance on a continual basis. David Smyth from the Northstone Concrete Division is our representative on the CRH Safety Best Practice Group with Philip Shields from the Quarry and Asphalt Division sitting on the recently established CRH Contract Safety Group which has a brief to review procedures for working in the vicinity of overhead electricity lines. Both men are working extremely hard on improving safety standards and are to be commended for their efforts on behalf of us all.

Our accident performance in the year to 31st May 2006 indicates that we have had 15 lost time accidents which have resulted in 67 lost working days. This has produced an accident frequency rate of 0.70 and an accident severity rate of 3.12. In the same period last year we had 17 lost time accidents with 152 working days being lost. Our accident frequency and accident severity rates were then 0.77 and 6.87 respectively. If we examine the longer term trend, our statistics indicate a year on year improvement in terms of severity but it would appear that our frequency rate has not declined to the same degree in recent years. This is something that the Northstone Health and Safety Directors are examining as we must reduce the frequency of our lost time accidents to reduce the probability of a serious accident occurring.

Health and safety initiatives have been launched across all Northstone Divisions during 2006. In Farrans Construction the employee safety handbook was updated and also translated into Polish, the sub contractor safety rules have been rewritten and issued, eyesight tests have been introduced for plant operators and a glove awareness poster has been introduced. At the Concrete Division all relevant CRH Best Practice guidelines have been introduced and increased employee involvement continues through the works safety committee which has seen improvements introduced in the way we refuel our block making equipment, installation of automatic wash out of mixers to reduce the risk of Hand Arm Vibration and a number of improvements to reduce manual handling risks. The Quarry and Asphalt Division have revised their fixed plant isolation procedures, introduced a new safety awareness talk booklet for quarry locations and have devised a computerised and prioritised action plan to control risks at quarry locations. Well done to all involved.

This year we have also introduced the Northstone Safety Location of the Year Award Scheme in the Concrete and the Quarry and Asphalt Division. The Scheme aims to further raise awareness of health and safety among our people, encourage the implementation of best practice and recognise superior performance in health and safety. We all anticipate great interest in the Scheme and look forward to the benefits which will accrue from it.

Unfortunately we have to end on another sad note with news coming to us of the death of a quarry operative in Mullingar recently. The information we have is that the man became entrapped in the tail drum of a conveyor and died at the scene.

All the Safety Team wish you a restful and safe summer holiday.

Marion Celebrates 35 Years with Construction

Today's job market is generally characterised by employees who stay a relatively short period of time with their employers, change jobs at a whim and continually have their curriculum vitae on file with a number of employment agencies in an ongoing quest to find the next highest bidder for their services.

We at Northstone have a core of dedicated and competent employees who have remained loyal to the Company down through the years and are the bedrock on which the business has been built.

One such employee is Marion Gordon who is personal assistant to senior managers Mark Lowry, Robert McAlister and Noel Quinn.

On the 1st February past, Marion Gordon celebrated 35 years with Farrans Construction. Her story takes us back to 1971, when as Marion has asked us to point out, child labour had not been abolished and she attended her interview at Dunmurry in her school uniform.

Marion commenced work for the Company in the Typing Pool, which at that time was the hub of Farrans and where some 10 girls worked for the various departments within the Company.

In 1972 Marion was offered a new position which involved working directly with Dennis McClure and the late Peter Osmand within the Building Contract Division. She

recalls this as a very happy period in her life in Farrans, which was filled by great characters and very definitely too many to mention here. As is the case to-day, it was a busy time for the Company when they were involved in some of the largest projects undertaken in Northern Ireland, England, Scotland and indeed the Outer Hebrides.

On Dennis McClure's retirement, John Gillvray became Managing Director of Farrans Construction and Marion thrived in the role of continuing as his personal assistant. On John's retirement in 2004, Marion carried on her tradition of working for senior management on the appointment of Mark Lowry as Managing Director. of the Building Division at Farrans Construction. Marion's mercurial powers also allow her to work closely with Robert McAlister, a senior Director and Mark's right-hand man in the Building Division, as his personal assistant. She even has time to fulfil the same role on a part time basis for Northstone Chief Executive, Noel Quinn.

Northlink asked Noel Quinn to provide a brief summary of Marion and what she means to the business and he was only too happy to oblige;

"Marion is a remarkable person and the best personal assistant I have had the pleasure to work with. She is an example to us all when it comes to communication skill, accuracy and team working. These skills come in part with experience but what sets Marion apart is her unwavering

commitment to Farrans Construction and her willingness to go the extra mile for those around her. Thirty five years of service to the one Company is a fantastic achievement."

Having worked for three Managing Directors and untold Directors down through the years, Northstone had to ask Marion to comment on what is so special about what is so special about working at Farrans where she has spent nearly a lifetime. Her response was immediate and heartfelt;

"Its people – they are a team – As a Team we have built some of the most prestigious landmarks across the Province. When you travel anywhere in Ulster, you use roads built by the Team, you fly out of airports built by the Team and when you cross the water you use Jetty's built by the Team. Each day we have new young members joining our Team and if Farrans lives up to their expectations half as much as it has realised mine, then they will have many happy memories, as I do."

Need we say any more?

