

Chief Executive's Diary



Welcome to the Christmas 2006 edition of Northlink, which brings you up to date with our various activities over the past six months.

Health and Safety remains and always will be, a top priority at Northstone. I know that the Safety Directors and other safety professionals in our various Divisions continue to focus on the key areas which have resulted in a year on year improvement in our performance. All of

us must remain vigilant and strictly adhere to safe working procedures if we are to prevent accidents.

On the operational side of our business, Farrans Construction have continued to produce a strong performance, based on several major contracts in various key sectors such as health, education, water and roads. Our order bank looks healthy until well into next year and beyond and our specific focus to these high-spend sectors is paying dividends.

The continuing government cutbacks in vital road maintenance and capital works is still adversely affecting our Quarry and Asphalt

Division. We are, however, hopeful that there will be an upturn in activity levels in the second half of next year. On a very positive front, the remedial works at Bushmills Road, in preparation for the development of the redundant quarry site, are now completed. There is an exciting opportunity to develop this land, using all of our in-house resources and materials, to maximize benefit to Northstone

I was delighted to see the steelwork for the new roof tile factory coming

out of the ground at Toomebridge. I have been involved with this project for some time and it is good to see it underway at last. The Division will shortly add silo mortar to its portfolio, under the Northstone logo, which should become increasingly more prominent on building sites throughout Northern Ireland. Generally it has been a good year for the Division in very competitive markets with good volumes going into Farrans projects.

Good progress has been made with the integration of Salmor Industries into Northstone. Salmor brings a team of very committed people and an innovative product range to Northstone, which makes for exciting development potential.

Beckett Construction Solutions continues to make good progress in the sales and marketing of construction accessories, with new staff now in place to maximise market opportunities in Northern Ireland and beyond. Construction accessories have become a very important development platform for CRH and Becketts will play their part in this development in Ireland.

It is also encouraging to note that the customer base, in the traditional Beckett business activity of roofing and interior fit out, continues to expand.

Our Materials Testing business continues to maintain a busy workload and is currently developing new test methods and services to extend its accreditations in 2007.

The streamlining of the Northstone administration, including credit control, is now completed. I greatly appreciate the hard work by everyone involved in this process.

I am glad to report that the development of our web sites is now being co-ordinated to ensure that our products and services are effectively promoted in a consistent manner. This initiative should begin to bear fruit early in 2007.

Finally it only remains for me to thank you for your efforts and to wish you all a happy, prosperous and safe Christmas and New Year.

Noel Quinn, December 2006

Frank on set at "The Bill"

Frank Connolly, Despatcher at the Quarry and Asphalt Division's Mountfield depot, is always entering competitions. His latest prize, which he won through a competition in the Daily Mirror newspaper, was a "Day at Sun Hill Police Station" on the set of ITV's "The Bill".



Frank at Sun Hill (L-R): Gerry Connolly, Inspector Gina Gold (Roberta Taylor) and Frank Connolly

Frank and his brother Gerry enjoyed an all expenses trip with flights, hotel and limousine transfer to the set of The Bill, near Wimbledon in London in July.

Frank had a great time as he told our reporter; "The day was fantastic. We watched a number of scenes being filmed, had a full tour of the set before being shown the props room, make-up facility and the cutting/editing room."

Many of the stars of the programme including Inspector Gina Gold (Roberta Taylor) had time for a cup of coffee with Frank and Gerry with lots of photograph opportunities.

"The filming and editing is fascinating – a whole days shooting will only produce 15 minutes of a programme" said Frank. "We were lucky enough to have a walk on part in a scene in the Sun Hill canteen but that episode will not be screened until May next year"

Frank enters competitions every week and has a long list of prizes to his name including weekend breaks, £500 vouchers for Marks and Spencer, which he won two years in a row, and a years supply of bread! Frank has recently informed senior management that he is holding out for the Lotto before he retires.

Total Football from Mattest

'Total Football' is a term we often hear from Gary Lineker, Alan Hansen and other soccer pundits during the Match of the Day televised highlights of Premiership games on a Saturday night. Northlink can now reveal that we have a squad of five a side footballers at Mattest who are also fine exponents of the beautiful game when it comes to skill, stamina and teamwork.

This November, the boys from Mattest won the keenly contested Farrans Alpha Project Five a Side Competition which was held at the Antrim Forum. A total of twelve teams entered the competition and Mattest easily negotiated the group stages in which they scored a total of 13 goals with Joe Flannery and skipper Gerard Mallon scoring freely.

The semi final was a much tougher assignment with a team from the Castor Bay providing the opposition. Mattest displayed their full repertoire of skills in a keenly contested and hard tackling affair and eventually ran out 6-3 winners.

The final was against a McAdam Design side who had shown great skills throughout the tournament. However, the result was never in doubt and Mattest lifted the trophy with a 7-3 score line.

The team of Johnny Stitt, Thomas Gorman, Gerard Mallon, Patrick Bradley, Kevin Mallon, Niall Muir and Joe Flannery excelled themselves during the competition with Gerard and Joe sharing the accolade of leading goal scorer with 9 a piece.

Gerard is the Mattest Laboratory Manager at Dunmurry and our intrepid Northlink reporter managed to have a few words with him a few days after his team's famous win.

"Our team won the competition because we excelled in one thing," said Gerard "We had magnificent teamwork. We all played for each other and from goalkeeper to striker, the skills displayed were tremendous. I know the boys cannot wait for the next competition."

Be it Total Football or Total Testing, Mattest are clearly the team to beat.



Mattest football heroes pose for the camera. Back row: Johnny Stitt, Thomas Gorman, Gerard Mallon. Front row: Patrick Bradley, Kevin Mallon, Niall Muir, Joe Flannery

Farrans Best Practice is Recognised

Farrans Construction are certainly setting the standard for other contractors to follow when it comes to embracing best practice on civil engineering projects.

This was evidenced by the recent recognition under the prestigious Civil Engineering Environmental Quality Assessment and Award Scheme (CEEQUAL) in which we achieved its highest accolade for the Carran Hill Water Treatment Works Scheme. This £10m Water Service contract to South Armagh was undertaken by Farrans in partnership with Earth Tech Engineering.

The Scheme adjudicators examined every aspect of the project management from the approach to procurement, key considerations, design and green construction to construction innovation, achievement of key performance indicators and respect for people initiatives. Their report indicated best practice implementation in all of these key areas and taking green construction as an example, the adjudicators reported;

“Emphasis was placed on utilising recycled building materials. For example, the 300 tonnes of rebar used in the concrete construction was manufactured from scrap metal and the vast amount of plywood used in the shuttering process was sourced from forests belonging to certification schemes overseen by the PEFC Council (Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Scheme).

Waste management practices employed on site included the segregation of all timber, rebar and block/brick prior to removal to a local recycling facility. During construction all chemicals were stored in dedicated bunded areas and a special settlement tank was provided to contain any water pumped from excavations. To protect the nearby Lough, floating oil-absorbent booms were placed in position along the edge”.

Northlink congratulates all those at Farrans who were involved at Carran Hill in further enhancing our reputation as the contractor of choice.

Jack High with Richard

The game of lawn bowls took a step into the 21st century for the 2006 season when the rule book was changed to allow competitors to wear coloured shirts for the first time. This meant the Coleraine Bowling Club 'A' team could take to the lawn resplendent in new Northstone red, white and black shirts.

Coleraine Bowling Club are one of the founder members of the Irish Bowling Association, which dates back to 1903. There clearly must be something about playing in Northstone colours because in June of this year, the team won the Piggot Cup for the first time in a decade, defeating local rivals Portrush in a close fought final at Cookstown.

However, the team's highlight of the season was to follow when it won the Provincial Bowling Association Championship in August to qualify for the Irish Championship finals at Blackrock, Dublin, where they were crowned Irish champions. Richard McDermott, a director of our Quarry and Asphalt Division, is a member of the all conquering Coleraine team and has regularly been mentioned in the match reports for the quality of his performances over the season.

Coleraine will now represent Ireland in the British Isles Championships to be held at Sighthill, Edinburgh next June and July.

Richard and the team would appear to be unable to stop the winning habit as they have just been named the Sports Council Team of the Year in the Coleraine Borough area.

Northlink wishes the team every success in the future as they seek to continue to bowl their opponents over on greens across Northern Ireland and beyond in 2007.



The victorious Coleraine team pose for the camera. (L-R): Alistair Calvin, Richard McDermott, Stephen Brewster, Victor Dallas

Let Phase 2 Commence!!!



Traffic Management to a Tee – Traffic Flows Smoothly on the Clydeside Expressway

Our correspondent with the Farrans Construction Team in Scotland reports that Phase 2 of the construction works is now underway at Glasgow Harbour Off Site Highways. West bound Clydeside Expressway traffic was successfully switched over onto Stobcross Link Road on Monday 27th November 2006. This allows the team to commence the construction of the south abutments of the Partick Link Bridge and Footbridge and the first span of the Ferry Road Overbridge. Rock socketed piling commenced on the 4th December 2006. In total there are 80 piles of 900mm diameter or bigger to install at 9 locations and 3,000 cubic metres of structural concrete to place with 700 tonnes of reinforcement to tie on the three bridges over the Clydeside Expressway.

A temporary ramp has also been constructed to take traffic from the new Stobcross Link Road onto the existing Clydeside Expressway. This involved the demolition of 90 metres of reinforced concrete retaining wall ranging in height from 2 metres to 6 metres above the twin tunnels of the Glasgow Underground system. The proximity to the underground railway track restricted the demolition methods that could be adopted and the volume of material which could be removed per day. The Farrans team elected to sawcut the walls and bases into sections and remove them using the new Company Sumitomo 80 tonne crane. Wall and base sections ranged from 10 tonnes to 30 tonnes in weight and diamond blades up to 2.2 metres diameter were used to complete the demolition ahead of programme. The continuous monitoring of the underground tunnels for movement and vibration has confirmed that the team selected the correct demolition method.

Ian Waugh and his team on site will now be working towards the next traffic management switch at the beginning of the summer when the Clydeside Expressway will be closed to traffic in both directions with the 4 lanes of diverted traffic weaving their way through the construction site.

Neil McDonald has completed Phase 2 of the Glasgow Harbour Sub-Station for Scottish and Southern Energy. Finishing works around the recently installed transformers and the reinforced concrete access road have been completed to allow the sub-station to progress to final commissioning. The sub-station has gone live and is providing power supplies for the Glasgow Harbour Development.

Approximately 100,000 cubic metres of inert material has been placed in the former Yorkfill Basin to provide more developable land for Glasgow Harbour Ltd. Patrick Murray has controlled up to 250 lorry movements per day from Merklands Quay through the Off Site Highways Site and into the Basin.

The Scottish team have also been recently won a £2.6 million contract with Strathclyde Business Park Ltd to construct the new accesses into Strathclyde Business Park near Glasgow. The contract was awarded in September and work is well under way with phase one due to be completed on the 4th December. Phase two will commence with the closure of a main access road to facilitate the construction of the first of two roundabouts on the existing Diamond Interchange. These require extensive traffic management and diversions due to the heavy use of this area by traffic accessing the various business and industrial parks in the area.

The site team, led by Raymond Millar, are currently ahead of the 38 week programme for the works.

Northlink commends Alvar Kenwell and his team in Scotland in further enhancing the Company's reputation in the Region by way of the successful completion of technically demanding projects.

Marketing Team Go Surfing

The Northstone Marketing Team of Keith Wood, Richard McDermott and Raymond Moore are currently reviewing our various web sites to ensure that our clients and customers are provided with as much information about our business as possible as well as current and relevant product and services data.

The completion of this project has been given fresh impetus by the recruitment of Ryan McQuillan in October as an internal web site developer and coordinator. Ryan brings to this new post a masters degree in E Business as well as relevant experience in a number of previous roles.

Work is well underway on the development of the Beckett Construction Solutions site. The new website will encompass both divisions of the business and will give new and old online visitors the chance to download our construction accessories product guide as well as various manufacturers' brochures. The roofing and interior fit out section of the site now has more information on the services available and recent successful contract information. The news and information pages leave the customer in no doubt about the capability and service level they can expect from Becketts.

In respect of the Mattest site the key task is to ensure that customers have the capability to download their test results from the web site. A proposal is being considered in this regard and soon our customers will be benefiting from this facility. The website will also provide visitors with a catalogue of different services which are available through Mattest, a list of our permanent and site based laboratories including directional maps and the ability to download the new Mattest brochure.

The new Northstone website will showcase the products and services of both the Concrete and the Quarry and Asphalt Divisions. The key features of the website will be its friendly interface and accessible navigation coupled with the provision of suitable and sufficient information to enable potential customers to make informed choices about their construction materials needs. The site will also provide an opportunity for us to further develop the Northstone brand in the market and collate all relevant product brochures, technical data and accreditations for ease of reference by the customer. A newsletter function on the website will give us an opportunity to keep subscribers and customers up to date with any developments such as new products or services. The Northstone site will allow us to make available safety, environmental, customer care and recruitment information in addition to links to other sites which will further enhance our reputation as the primary construction materials business in the Province.

Keith, Richard, Raymond and Ryan are certainly on the crest of a wave when it comes to web site enhancement.



The Northstone marketing team view another new page from the Company web site. Back Row (L-R): Keith Wood, Richard McDermott and Ryan McQuillan. Front Row (seated) Shane McDermott (The Internet Business)

More about CRH

The news this Christmas from Belgard Castle is that our friends and colleagues at CRH have again been busy implementing a progressive development strategy. In the first half of 2006 over €800 million was spent on acquisitions and large capital projects. The initiatives were spread across the world and are as follows:-

- **Europe Materials:** 7 acquisitions/investments and 1 capital project for €36 million.
- **Europe Products:** 6 acquisitions for €224 million.
- **Europe Distribution:** 3 acquisitions for €20 million.
- **America Materials:** 12 acquisitions for €169 million.
- **America Products:** 6 acquisitions and 1 capital project for €333 million.
- **America Distribution:** 2 acquisitions for €40 million.

The development activity has continued in the second half of 2006 with CRH entering the Chinese market for the first time, completing the purchase of Ashland Paving and Construction, Inc in the United States and also investing in a cement joint venture in Florida. More details are provided below.

CRH has now reached agreement to acquire the assets of a cement plant in Heilongjiang province in the north east of China. The plant, which will operate as the Harbin Sanliny Cement Company is located in Xiaoling Township, approximately 45km southeast of Heilongjiang's largest city, Harbin (population: 9 million). Harbin Sanliny is a modern plant with two clinker production lines and total cement capacity of 650,000 tonnes per annum.



Crushing and Conveying Plant in an APAC quarry in West Virginia



A new section of highway in Georgia constructed by APAC

CRH have also signed a letter of intent to acquire an equity interest in the cement operations of the Jilin Yatai Group. These comprise of 4 integrated cement plants and 1 grinding station, with total cement capacity of approximately 9 million tonnes per annum. The plants are located in the provinces of Jilin and Heilongjiang in Northeast China. The letter of intent provides for the initial purchase by CRH of a 26% equity stake in Yatai Cement with an option to acquire further shares after 3 years up to a maximum of 49%.

The completion of the acquisition of Ashland Paving and Construction Inc (APAC) was completed in August 2006 for a total consideration of euro 1,008 million. APAC has its headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia and is a leading US aggregate, asphalt and heavy highway construction company with approximately 9,700 employees and extensive operations in 14 mid western and southern states. APAC had sales amounting to US \$450 million in the year to 30 June 2006.

CRH has also taken a 50% equity stake in the American Cement Company (ACC) for a cash contribution of US \$50 million. ACC has been formed to develop and operate a cement plant in central Florida. The new plant and associated facilities will be located in Sumterville, close to Orlando and Tampa in Florida on a deposit containing over 150 million tonnes of high quality limestone reserves. The plant will have an annual capacity of 1.1 million tonnes and is expected to commence production in late 2008.

This year has just confirmed what we all already know – that CRH are a truly global organisation.

More about CRH next time.

Energy Efficiency Award for Ballybarnes Quarry

Our Quarry and Asphalt Division have again excelled themselves in environmental performance in winning the Energy Efficiency category of the inaugural Sustainable Ireland Magazine Awards.

The award was in recognition of the recent energy efficiency improvements at Ballybarnes and more generally, for the Division's general energy usage reduction policy. It is no coincidence that the management team in the Quarry and Asphalt Division have long held the view that commitment to effective environmental management is good for the business.

The specific energy efficient elements of the plant which the judges were impressed with were as follows:-

- the recycled process water system which has reduced the consumption of mains water by 22,000 cubic metres per year.
- the widespread use of variable speed drives in the processing plant.
- the installation of a load sensitive frequency converter on the primary crusher conveyor belt allowing it to be run at a lower speed when no material is passing through the crusher.

- the fitting of ultrasound detectors on the cone crushers to ensure that the volume of material in the crushers is maintained at an optimum level.
- the conversion to natural gas as the primary fuel for the coating plant dryer.
- the fitting of an inverter to the coating plant extraction fan to automatically control the speed of the fan to match the moisture content of the stone.
- the installation of a power factor correction panel.
- the intelligent monitoring system installed on all air compressors to ensure that the number of compressors operating at any one point in time never exceeds demand.

All in all, the energy saving measures detailed above have resulted in a reduction in on site electricity consumption of approximately 35% over the last twelve years. Quite a feat.

Northlink congratulates all involved in environmental and energy improvement in the Quarry and Asphalt Division on another well deserved award.



Electrical process control engineer Trevor McKay (left) and Ballybarnes quarry manager, Declan Close (right) pose with the award

Northstone Karate Kids



Area Sales Manager Henry McKinney (back row, second from left) with the Northstone Karate Kids and their trainers

There is no doubt that our Northstone identity is now well known throughout Northern Ireland and beyond with the famous logo being synonymous with quality construction products. This summer, the logo was even spotted in Hanover in Germany as Northstone sponsored the Northern Ireland Junior and Childrens Karate team in their quest for medals at the 5th Junior Karate World Championships and World Cup for Children.

Karate is a very popular sport in the north west of the Province and when the Concrete Division's Area Sales Manager in that part of the country, Henry McKinney, proposed that we support the Northern Ireland Team, he received the unanimous approval of the Company. Seven of the Northern Ireland team are associated with clubs in the Strabane, Killygordon and Derry areas.

More than 1600 competitors from across the world took part in the competition which was held in the impressive Hanover Sportstadh, where 16 fighting areas can be accommodated.

The news from the team is that all the fighters acquitted themselves very well, against more experienced opponents in many cases. They brought back an impressive haul of medals to the Province and according to all reports, the young people cannot wait with until the next championship to increase their medal tally.

Marlene Epitomises Competence and Experience with a Smile



Marlene Boyce, pictured left, Personal Assistant to Gareth Telford, Director of Contracts for the Quarry and Asphalt Division, epitomises the key characteristics of Northstone people. Competence and experience.

Marlene started her career with the Company in the typing pool at T.B.F. Thompson (Garvagh) Limited in 1964. It was very much a family affair for Marlene back in those days as her twin sister Anona and younger sister Heather also worked at Thompsons. It wasn't long after starting in Garvagh that Marlene met the love of her life, Jim, who was also starting his career with the Company. Marlene told our reporter that Mr Thompson was particularly proud of the number of employees who met their spouses while working at Garvagh.

In 1972 Marlene left the plant business and moved to Farrans Construction as a site secretary on the construction of the Sandleford Bridge in Coleraine where she worked for Joe McKeague, the site agent, Joe was later to become a highly respected director at Farrans.

Marlene takes up the story of her career from this point;

"I really enjoyed working with Joe on site at Coleraine and there were lots of laughs but the job always came first. Not long after starting at the Bridge contract, a young man called Derek Waddell joined the team. Derek went on to become a contracts manager and estimator in the Quarry and Asphalt Division. I remember getting a lift to site each morning in the crew bus as it passed close to where I lived. The driver was the site foreman, Jack Riddells.

I was then lucky enough to be offered a post at R.J. Maxwell and Son Limited as secretary to Ken Cheevers, the Managing Director. I had a tremendous time working with Ken. A few years later I left work to bring up my three boys, Adrian, Rodney and Gareth".

Marlene's competence and experience was clearly not forgotten by the management team at R.J. Maxwell as between 1985 and 1990 she was offered and accepted a number of short term contracts covering maternity leave before returning to full time work in 1990 as Personal Assistant to Ronnie McIntyre who was Managing Director at that time. On Ronnie's retirement, Marlene became Personal Assistant to Ronnie McKee, Contracts Director, before moving into her current role with Gareth Telford.

Marlene retires in June 2007 after many years of committed service to the Company. Her retirement plans revolve around having more time to spend with her family and 2 young grandsons.

All at Northlink wish Marlene a long and healthy retirement.

Shoppers Eagerly Await Bridgewater Opening

Those of us who would admit to a shopping addiction are eagerly awaiting the opening, next Easter, of the new Factory Outlet Centre at Bridgewater Park in Banbridge, County Down.

Farrans are the principal contractors on the Scheme and although our site team is busily engaged on the final stages of this prestigious contract, the Contract Manager, John Cooper, took time out to tell us some more about Bridgewater;



Farrans Site Staff at Bridgewater (L-R): Donald Doyle (Site Manager), Colm Doyle (Placement Student), Gerry Higgins (Quantity Surveyor), Mervyn Graham (Chargehand), Paul Higgins (Assistant Engineer), Henry Doyle (Project Manager), Michael Murnan (General Foreman), John Ferguson (Senior Engineer)

“Work started on site in February 2006 and the project consists of 83 retail units in a semi circular plan, surrounded by parking for 2000 cars. We have also constructed a new bridge over the nearby A1 dual carriageway, new slip roads off the A1 and two roundabouts, all on a 100 acre site. The site team have excelled themselves as usual with excellent progress to date achieved in the structure and the roof should be completed ahead of programme. The new bridge is now complete and will open to traffic shortly. I am particularly proud of how the site team has gelled together and is producing a tremendous result at Bridgewater”.

The site team was led by Project Manager, Henry Doyle and includes Donald Doyle (Site Agent), John Ferguson (Senior Engineer), Michael Murnan (General Foreman), Gerry Higgins (Quantity Surveyor), Erin Boomer (Site Secretary) and Colin Doyle (Student Engineer).

Shoppers in the Province will not have too much longer to wait with the Farrans site team doing the business at Bridgewater.

Western Blacktop Engineering Staff Take a Bow

It is certainly not easy being a site agent or engineer on our blacktop contracts. The job description is certainly detailed and long. It includes meeting demanding quality standards, measuring and invoicing work done, co-ordinating and managing sub contractors as well as coping with traffic management issues. Add to this the overriding requirement on Northstone sites to keep everyone as safe as possible, and the scale and scope of the role soon becomes apparent.

The Quarry and Asphalt Division has three excellent exponents of the role in the west of the Province. They are Ryan McDermott, Pat Rafferty and Michael Lyons. Collectively they have been responsible for the laying of some 175,000 tonnes of coated material on two large infrastructural projects over the past two years or so. These two projects were the N15 Bundoran to Ballyshannon Bypass in Donegal and the Omagh Throughpass in Tyrone. In both cases Ryan, Pat and Michael had to contend with stringent laying specifications.

Ryan is a site agent and part of the Division's western contracts management team who work primarily in Donegal and Sligo. The team's brief is to enhance the Northstone reputation with the county councils by fully satisfying their requirements. Ryan is certainly doing this by way of the three large surfacing schemes on national routes which he is delivering this year. The quality, service and value for money on the schemes is second to none.

Pat was the site agent on the recently completed Omagh Throughpass Scheme which required the laying of 26,000 tonnes of base course, 7,000 tonnes of Heavy Duty



L-R: Michael Lyons, Ryan McDermott and Pat Rafferty

Macadam binder course and 4,000 tonnes of SMA surface course. Pat joined the Division in 2003 and has a sound knowledge of blacktop products and mobile plant. He is currently responsible for the Asphalt and Bitmac Term Contract in Fermanagh which has generated work to the value of £1.5 million over the last year.

Michael was the frontline supervisor on both the Bundoran and Omagh Schemes. He provides a direct link to the surfacing squads and through his quiet demeanour certainly gets the best out of the teams under his control. He also has a thorough knowledge of coated materials and the use of sonics to achieve the necessary tolerances on surface levels. His recent success in laying 6,000 m² of product at the Omagh Youth Sport project to a tolerance of plus or minus 3mm is testament to his skills in this regard. Michael has been with Northstone since 2000 and during that time has been responsible for successfully completing an extensive range of projects in the border counties.

Northlink commends Ryan, Pat and Michael for their commitment and competence in achieving demanding targets in what can be difficult circumstances.

Construction of New Tile Plant Begins



The new tile factory takes shape at Toomebridge

Monday 9th October 2006 was a momentous day for the Northstone Concrete Division because that was the day when the first sod was cut to commence the construction of the new tile plant at the Airfield Site in Toomebridge. This major investment in a state of the art production facility will eventually replace the existing factory at the same location which has served us well for over 30 years.

Production Director, Brian Watt, led the team formulating the design for the new factory and was ably assisted by Project Manager, Finn McCory, in this process. The design development was long and arduous as Brian went to great lengths to ensure that the design met our exacting criteria and that we learnt from the experiences of other CRH companies which has constructed new tile plants in recent years.

As you would expect, a large proportion of the materials and services required for the factory building will be supplied by Northstone. The list to date is as detailed below:-

Concrete, Mortar, Blocks and Concrete Pipes	Northstone Concrete Division
Aggregates	Northstone Quarry and Asphalt Division
Facing Brick	Tyrone Brick
Permanent Formwork	Beckett Construction Solutions
Materials Testing	Mattest
Cost Management System	Farrans Construction

The professional services on the project are being provided by the following consultants:

Architect and Planning Supervisor	Michael Whitley Architects
Quantity Surveying	Stevenson Munn
Structural Engineers and Environmental Consultant	White, Young and Green
Mechanical and Electrical Engineers	A.H. Design

The main factory building is a portal frame design and will cover an area of some 3,400 m² with the walls being constructed of brick and composite panels. The roof will also be made of insulated composite panels.

The concrete batching and tile manufacturing plant has been designed to exemplify best practice in terms of efficiency, capability, health and safety as well as environmental performance.

Brian Watt was clearly delighted with progress to date when he spoke recently to our Northstone reporter;

“It is good to see construction commence after a long design phase. I am confident that the new factory will meet and probably exceed our expectations in every way”.

More about the new tile plant at Toome in our next edition.

Lifting the Lid on Salmor



The Salmor Factory in Lurgan



Another Salmor chamber goes into the ground



Lifting the lid on another Salmor product

July 2006 saw the arrival of Salmor Industries as the latest addition to the Northstone (NI) Limited. Salmor has its manufacturing operations based at Silverwood Industrial Estate near Lurgan, Co. Armagh, where it employs 75 people. It is a leading supplier of access covers and specialised fabricated steel products to utility markets throughout the UK and Ireland.

"I suppose our main claim to fame is our long standing contract with British Telecom for concrete-filled access covers", said Salmor Managing Director, Michael Wightman. "We have been the sole supplier of these products to British Telecom since 1994. We also supply this product to the water, gas and electricity markets". In more recent times the company has widened its product range to include ductile iron covers for carriageway use and a full portfolio of galvanised steel covers for internal and external applications.

Another specialist product within the Salmor range is kite marked recessed covers which are used in landscaped areas to disguise the presence of manhole covers. These covers are primarily used on environmental improvement schemes but are also supplied to residential sites for driveways and patios. Salmor has supplied covers for major projects like Customs House Square in Belfast and town centre improvement schemes including Banbridge, Enniskillen, Lisburn and Omagh.

More recently, Salmor has been the first company to add British Telecom's name to its customer list for an innovative range of preformed access chambers. "Preformed chambers are being increasingly used to

replace brick or concrete built access chambers on construction projects. The products deskill the operation on site and allow just about any size of chamber to be constructed, without any concrete backfill, in a matter of hours rather than, in some cases, days". Mr Wightman continued, "We are already selling into the chamber market in Great Britain but we know that we are only scratching the surface of potential sales".

In recent weeks Salmor made its first sale of preformed chambers to Farrans Construction in Scotland. Farrans used the Quad box system on the Glasgow Harbour project and were instrumental in helping Salmor to gain approval for the products with the Scottish Executive. This approval will now allow the company to supply chambers on motorway communications projects across Scotland.

Salmor has also created a link with a Canadian CRH company, Synertech, which occupies a similar market position in North America.

On the home front, Salmor is also a leading supplier of specialised fabricated steel access covers to the water industry and sees the building of a strong relationship with other Northstone divisions as being very important. "In particular, Farrans will be a major customer for both spring assisted access covers and preformed chambers and I hope that we can add value to the Farrans operations by supplying our innovative in-house offerings" concluded Michael Wightman.

Another potential synergy arising from the Salmor acquisition is access to Lisburn based, Total Pipeline Specialists Limited (TPS) in which Salmor

holds a 25% stake. TPS offer a 'mains to meter-box' approach for water utility contractors supplying a full range of pressure pipes, fittings, valves and electro fusion equipment hire. TPS also offer a wide range of duct products, traffic signage, cones and barriers. All at TPS pride themselves on providing the highest levels of customer service.

Commenting after five months as a Northstone subsidiary, Michael Wightman provided Northlink with a view as to how things have gone, "the people at Salmor are one of the key ingredients of our highly successful business and I think I speak for everyone when I say that the transition has been remarkably smooth to date and any initial concerns have largely been removed. Everyone at Northstone has been extremely helpful and we are certainly excited at the potential which membership of the CRH family has to offer".

Michael has already made many contacts with contracts staff across Northstone. Our photograph below was taken during a product demonstration and information event at Carrickmore where he and Lenora Moore from Total Pipeline Specialists Limited explained the advantages of the most recent additions to the Northstone product portfolio.

More information on Salmor products can be obtained directly from Michael on 028 3831 3101 or by e-mailing to michaelwightman@salmor.co.uk. The Salmor website www.salmor.co.uk is another excellent source of information.

Make the Right Choice and contact Michael to find out what Salmor can do for you on your current or future projects. You will not be disappointed.



Salmor chambers on a private development site



A Salmor valve chamber for Mid Kent Water



A Salmor ??? for United Utilities



A Salmor recessed cover, Hill Street, Belfast



Photo left to right: Brian McHugh, Kieran McElhattan, Michael Lyons, Greg McDaid, Michael Wightman (Salmor) and Lenora Moore (Total Pipe Solutions)

Royal Seal of Approval for Farrans Healthcare

The Princess Royal became the latest dignitary to bestow compliments on the work of the Farrans Healthcare Division when she officially opened the Hollywood Arches Community Treatment and Care Centre in Belfast recently.

The project has won many accolades and awards since its completion and these include the highly coveted United Kingdom wide Royal Institution of British Architects (RIBA) award for its design and execution.

The new centre was procured under a three contract framework by Performance Related Partnering (PRP) and represents a significant innovation in the delivery of a range of health and social services including social care, primary and community healthcare, acute care out of hospital and a collection of GP practices. Hollywood Arches provides 6,300m² of new and refurbished accommodation and incorporates the most up to date thinking in the design of healthcare facilities.

The key Farrans staff on the Hollywood Arches project were:-

John Wilson	Contracts Manager
Ken Meaklim	Site Manager
Donald Doyle	Site Agent
David Henry	M + E Co-ordinator
Paul Moreland	Commercial Manager
Gary Neill	Planner
Alister Murphy	Foreman

Farrans Healthcare quickly followed up the success of Hollywood Arches with the construction of the Lisburn Road Community Treatment Care Centre, also in Belfast. This provided 3,700m² of new accommodation in a particularly restricted site. The contract, which had a value of £5.9m, was led by Site Manager George McClure.

The third facility in the framework agreement is due to commence in the New Year at an agreed price of £7.4m and will be located with the Foster Green complex in South Belfast.

On the hospital side of the business, things have recently taken off at Altnagelvin where the Pharmacy and Laboratory Services Centre, procured under a Private Public Partnership (PPP)/Private Finance Initiative (PFI) arrangement at a value of £14m, is due for completion at the end of January 2007. This just happens to be a full 12 weeks ahead of programme.



The Princess Royal unveils a commemorative plaque during the opening ceremony at Hollywood Arches

The performance on this project helped in no small way to secure a Performance Related Partnership Framework contract at Altnagelvin. This contract is valued at £32.9m with further phases due to come on stream. It will initially involve the construction of a three storey building with floor space of 16,000m² connecting to the existing tower block and the new Pharmacy building. It will provide maternity and neo natal services, cancer care and patient rehabilitation as well as a new patient's records department and staff changing facility.

The Farrans Healthcare bid teams are currently working on a number of projects as we attempt to expand activities into another hospital development. Two of these bids are Private Finance Initiative Schemes for the Ulster Hospital, where we are partnering with Gilbert Ash, and the other for Omagh Hospital.

Concrete Division Now Offer Silo Mortar Option

Our Concrete Division people, ever mindful of meeting the particular needs of customers are now offering a dry mortar product to complement their ever popular pre mixed wet building mortar and plaster range.



The new product will be supplied to sites in a storage silo which will be replenished as and when required by our own road tankers. It is likely that the silos will be popular on long term sites with mortar needs which vary on a daily basis. Successful trials of the product have already been carried out on the Farrans Homes sites in Lisburn.

As with all Northstone products, the successful launch of the silo mortar product will be based on effective teamwork between the sales and production functions. Orders for the product will come through Paul Patterson in the Toome despatch office with silo movements being looked after by David Luke and his team of Nigel Hagan and John O'Connor. Directors Brian Thompson and Keith Wood will manage and co-ordinate all operational and promotional issues.

Looks like our new silos, resplendent in their Northstone livery, will become very much part of more construction sites across Northern Ireland in the New Year.

Life Time Learning with David

David Luke, pictured right, who works for the Concrete Division, is the latest in a long line of Northstone managers who have taken advantage of the opportunities within the Company to obtain further professional or technical qualifications.



David joined Ready Use Concrete Company in 1988 and over the years has held a range of production related posts primarily at Dunmurry but more recently has been based at Toomebridge.

All managers who decide to embark on a degree or similar course have one thing in common, they are intrinsically motivated and David is no exception as he explains;

"Over the last four years I have been studying on a part time basis at the University of Ulster and in July of this year I graduated with a BA honours degree in Business Studies. I found my time of study extremely worthwhile as it developed the skills I already possessed as a Production Manager. The course has also given me greater confidence in dealing with the various challenges I face each day at Northstone and has allowed me to take a more strategic view of the business we are in. The course content included elements on managing people, marketing, production, finance and business strategy. I specialised to some extent in marketing and took a number of modules in this particular discipline. I obtained great satisfaction in gaining my degree".

In October 2006 the Company recognised David's talents and abilities with promotion to the role of Operations Manager for the Concrete Division. David is now responsible for our ready mixed concrete and mortar products as well as transport. He is also in charge of the new Silo Mortar product and bringing it to the market place. In May of this year David was also recognised by his peers within the industry when he was elected to serve on the committee of the Concrete Society in Northern Ireland where he will not only promote the aims of the society but also Northstone.

Away from work David is very much a family man. He is married to Erica, a teacher, and the couple have two children, Thomas and Alexandra. In his spare time, David coaches schoolboy hockey and helps out with his local Dromore Boys Brigade Company. He also escapes for the day to day pressures at Northstone with 18 holes of golf at the weekend at Banbridge Golf Club where he is a member.

Northlink congratulates David on his academic success and recent promotion.

All Our Yesterdays

The All Our Yesterdays feature in this edition of Northlink takes us back to 1989 and in particular, a full page article carried in The Ballymena Guardian newspaper of 17 August of that year. It marked the opening of the new A26 Phase 1 Dual Carriageway between Antrim and Ballymena. The main contractor on the project just happened to be R.J. Maxwell (Ballymena) Limited.

The A26 was the first dual carriageway construction contract undertaken by Maxwells and represented a significant landmark in the development of the Company and its people. The opening ceremony was quite an event by all accounts and was followed by a celebratory lunch in a hotel in nearby Kells.

The reporters who covered the opening of the A26 for the Ballymena Guardian all shared a common theme in their stories, namely, the excellence of the Maxwell site team in delivering the project months ahead of schedule, within budget and with little or no disruption to traffic flows during the construction period.

As our photographs show, the Maxwell and T.B.F. Thompson senior management team was well represented at

the opening ceremony with Wissie Martin, Willie McNabb and Peter Doherty also featuring in the newspaper profiles of managers involved in the project.

Northlink readers may be interested in the following facts about the A26 Contract:-

- the 18 month project was completed 3 months ahead of schedule.
- the job bid was £3,140,000 and with additional works was completed for £3,750,000.
- the 80,000m² of surfacing on the project was laid to a depth of 0.32m which equated to 60,000 tonnes of coated material.
- 3 blacktop crews were working on the contract with 40 sub contractors engaged during the works period.
- the A26 was the largest scheme of its kind in Northern Ireland in the late 1980s and is still in excellent condition some 17 years later despite the massive increase in traffic volumes during this period.

The Ballymena Guardian was certainly accurate in their reporting of the prowess of R.J. Maxwell (Ballymena) Limited back in 1989, and just like the A26, we are still in great shape, some 17 years later.



Ernie McClure, former Chief Executive of the T.B.F. Thompson (Garvagh) Limited Group presents a gift to the first motorist to use the new A26 Carriageway



(L-R): Willie McNabb, Wissie Martin and Peter Doherty as they appeared in the Ballymena Guardian back in 1989

Wesley's Ever Growing List of Credits

Wesley Calvin (pictured right) joined Farrans Construction in 2000 on graduating from Glasgow University in Civil Engineering. Since then he has an impressive list of credits to his name which includes working as a setting out engineer, section engineer and site agent on projects such as Bleach Green Railway, Foyle Bridge Strengthening and Refurbishment, Aquarius 1 and 2 Mourne Water Projects, Knock Valley Sewers and Bann River Bridge.



Wesley's current role is working with Contracts Manager, David Parr, as a Site Agent on the Alpha Project at Ballinrees Water Treatment Works. Wesley gave our Northlink reporter an insight into the challenges he faces in his job at Ballinrees;

"My job has a range of challenges which include dealing with the adverse weather coming in to the north coast of the Province from the Atlantic to learning more about the contractual side of a Public Private Partnership project. I am also moving towards chartered status with the help of the Company. I can certainly say that there is never a dull moment working for Farrans".

Wesley's efforts on site were recognised recently at a gala presentation awards evening in Belfast when he collected a Construction Employers Federation (CEF)/Specify Magazine Construction Excellence Award on behalf of Farrans for the Foyle Bridge Strengthening and Refurbishment project.

Wesley was born in Coleraine and still lives there with wife Joleen and daughter Megan, who is now 6 months old. His main interests away from work are football, football and more football whether it is playing, watching or reading about it.

It is more than likely that Wesley's list of credits will grow as he continues to build his career at Farrans.

'King of the Road' on the Westlink Sky Road

The reports this Christmas from our Farrans people on the HMC Westlink project in Belfast are of good progress and ongoing efforts to reduce traffic congestion and delays during the works period. A temporary Bailey bridge has been constructed at the Grosvenor Road section of the works to take traffic travelling to and from the city centre over the site.

The bridge has been a great success and the public reaction to it has been tremendous. We reproduce below a letter to The Irish News which was carried on 26 October 2006 from "Motorist, Belfast 11".

"For weeks we watched as the finest of stones were piled up on either side of the Westlink. At first it seemed they were to be simply stored for use when needed. But as time went on it became clear that the mounds were being sloped. Contractors with hats and luminous jackets were seen with tripods and camera-like instruments sagely making apparent assessments. Then concrete bunkers were added on top and we suspected further significance on its way.

We left work and returned home one Friday evening and, lo and behold, on our journey into town on the following Monday morning, the complex structure was spanning a good portion of the road below. It had appeared from nowhere. For weeks it was aloof and pointless as it came from nowhere and went nowhere in equal measure.

Suddenly eastern and western arms appeared, tantalisingly near the flanking bunkers but not quite. Meanwhile, we mortals below could scarcely keep pace with the lane changes and their twists and turns, all in awe of this structure above.

At one stage we almost experienced daily whiplash as we 'gave way' at a difficult angle to the M2 traffic hurtling through the roundabout. Our heartbeats quickened with satisfaction when further wings connected with the concrete

bunkers patiently waiting on either side and there it remained – splendid but still redundant. Until Monday October 9, 2006 heralded a week like no other. We drove down the Grosvenor Road and rejoiced at the "Road Closed" sign which greeted us, because instead we were turning right – and after snaking one way and then the other, we triumphantly crested the new temporary bridge. Oh happy day and joyous view, all the longer dwelt on thanks to the 20 mph speed limit.

The tarmac tiles on the summit clicked eloquently under the tyres. Too soon we were snaking down again and facing Spendlove C Jebb's like we never angled at it before. Not until we were parallel with the police station did normal experience resume.

In the following days we have marvelled at the views of the City Hospital tower block, the Royal, St Peter's Cathedral Doors at night and we have continued to revel in driving overhead the Westlink and its tardy old roundabout.

Congratulations to the Roads Service and all the contractors for the feat of engineering ingenuity. All fellow drivers must come and drive over the new temporary bridge – it's so 'cool'. In truth, you would almost invent places to go in order to ascend and descend this motoring marvel. Make its acquaintance soon".

Congratulations to Farrans Section Manager, Eugene Flaherty and his team on a magnificent effort in building bridges with and for the motoring public of Belfast.



The new temporary Bailey bridge at Grosvenor Road just prior to opening

John Celebrates 35 Years with Construction

John Clarke, our highly esteemed director at Farrans Construction, has just celebrated 35 years of service with the Company.

John's story begins back in October 1971 when he joined Farrans Limited as a junior estimator. In those days Sam Taggart was still the owner of the Company and very much the 'boss' as John remembers;

"I had the privilege of having known Sam Taggart and in my early days at Farrans as I worked on the same floor as he did. Sam used to come into the estimating office on a regular basis and always showed a great interest in and detailed knowledge of the work we were undertaking".

John's first line manager at Farrans was John Sloan, the Chief Estimator, who joined the Company in 1970. "John was a very precise and methodical person and was also a firm advocate of procedure and discipline in the office" recalls John. "This suited me well as it helped me to develop and learn quickly with regard to assisting the two senior estimators".

John was certainly busy in his role under John Sloan as not only was he focussing on building estimating but also had elected to study Civil Engineering on a part time basis at college.

John's first few years in estimating passed quickly and it wasn't long before the time was right for him to gain site experience and so it was that he was moved to site as a Junior Manager. He was appointed to the Craigavon Office Block and Shopping Centre contracts. His role there gave him responsibility for various aspects of the work including engineering, finance and general management and although the contracts proved difficult, this was great experience for John in his formative years with the Company.

In late 1975, two senior building estimators left the Company and John was recalled to Head Office and became a senior estimator. John's career progression from this point has been steady with various responsibilities being added to his brief over the years. In 1985 he was appointed Chief Estimator and this was quickly followed in 1989 with the role of Commercial Manager. In 1994 John was appointed a Director of Farrans Construction and in this position he continues to manage the commercial aspects of the business together with some relatively new ventures such as the Private Finance Initiative contracts within the Building Division. He has played a pivotal role in the setting up of various joint venture arrangements and is also responsible for the successful new Farrans Homes division.

In today's world of employment it is extremely rare to find someone who has spent over 35 years with the same employer. Our Northstone reporter was interested to learn from John as to what makes Farrans so special for him. John's response was typical of a man who has a great affinity and loyalty for everything Farrans has done in the past and its future endeavours;

"Thirty five years may seem a long time, but no two days are ever the same at Farrans Construction where time really flies by. The two things which stand out however, to make Farrans different for me are, the diversification of our contracts both in terms of the nature and location and secondly, the people at Farrans, who are 'Simply the Best'".



John Clarke (front, second from left) opens the new North Lisburn Feeder Road with local politicians and civic dignitaries

Top Marks for Quarry Boys

Talent and ability exists at every location and construction site in Northstone. This time it is four up and coming young men in our Quarry and Asphalt Division who are setting the pace with the results they have achieved in their Diploma in Quarrying at Doncaster College.

The four are as follows:-

Declan Close	Quarry Manager at North Down
James Buchanan	Quarry Manager at Ballymena
Colin Mitchell	Quarry Manager at Moneymore and Mobile Crushing Manager
Ian Gault	Laboratory Technician at North Down

Two of the team, James Buchanan and Ian Gault were also presented with awards from the Institute of Quarrying at the Annual Conference in Torquay in October for achieving the highest mark in a subject. James received the Coles Award for the best mark in Safety and Legislation, and runner up prize in Business Management. Ian was presented with the Rexnord Award for first prize in the Quarrying Operations – Blasting Paper.

Bill Weir, Director of Production said; "I am very proud of their achievement and recognise the commitment that this has taken from every one of them. Studying at home, attending study weekends in Doncaster and fulfilling their already busy work commitments is no easy task. We also recognise the disruption this can cause to family life and it is credit to these men that they have done so well. Congratulations must also go to James and Ian who have demonstrated that our management team can compete with the big players on the mainland and come out on top. The Diploma in Quarrying is an excellent course and one that we have had representation on for the past 7 years with Padraig Leonard, our Laboratory Technician at Carrickmore currently on his final year".

This is a terrific achievement for the Quarry and Asphalt Division and we wish Declan, James, Colin and Ian a well deserved Christmas break.



James Buchanan (right) receives his award



Ian Gault (right) receives his award

Going Underground with Farrans

It is usual when Farrans undertake and complete a project that the end result is a visible improvement to a cityscape, road network or other element of the built environment. However, the recently commenced Belfast Sewers Project will be a little bit different as the vast majority of the work will be underground.

Regional Development Minister, David Cairns, was the guest of honour at a formal ceremony in November to mark the starting of the 36 month commencement phase of the £100m scheme to provide Belfast with a modern sewerage system. As we all know such events require a massive amount of preparation and the civil engineering division at Farrans has been extremely busy over the last few months putting in place all the necessary arrangements for the start of the project. These included finalising the contract details and progressing the site works which are necessary to accept the tunnel boring machines which are expected to arrive in Belfast in the early Spring of 2007.

Northlink can report that the shaft sinking works have commenced on the 9.4 km long tunnel system and the Project's office is up and running at the Duncrue Waste Water Treatment Works.

The preparation works prior to the commencement of the Project also included archaeological excavations to safeguard the heritage of Belfast and the undertaking of necessary service diversions to allow the city of Belfast to go about its business undisturbed.

This prestigious Project, which will involve the construction of tunnels of up to 4 metres in diameter, is a cornerstone of the Water Service commitment

to upgrade the existing sewerage infrastructure of Belfast, which in places dates back to the mid 1800's.

Farrans have been involved with the Project since its inception in the early part of 2005 and we now form part of a fully integrated joint venture with Morgan=Est which have been tasked with the delivery of the landmark scheme. The Farrans Project Team is led by Construction Director, Clifford Spence, and Contract Manager, John McReynolds.

Major civil works have now begun at the terminal pumping station at Duncrue with the arrival on site of the diaphragm wall sub contractor. The pumping station will be 37metres in diameter and will be sunk to a depth of 35 metres to accept the main tunnel drive. The pumping station will be one of the largest of its kind in the British Isles and will provide a screening facility for effluent prior to discharge into Belfast Lough.

Northlink will carry regular updates on the Belfast Sewers Project in future editions as construction activity gathers pace largely unseen by the wider public as Farrans go underground beneath the heart of the city.



Preparations under way to sink shaft 15 at Duncrue Waste Water Treatment Works

Building for the Future with Tyrone Brick

Tyrone Brick, our sister company within the CRH family in Ireland, have recently launched their new logo and corporate colours as illustrated by our photograph (right) of a brick offloader in its striking new livery.



The Company, which is part of Roadstone Provinces, is Ireland's largest manufacturer of clay facing brick and was acquired by CRH in 2001. It employs 125 people at its Coalisland Road location in Dungannon and uses locally sourced material in its products. There are now 70 individual brick types in the Tyrone portfolio with innovative new options being added year on year.

Over the past five years or so Northstone has established and strengthened its links with our colleagues at Tyrone Brick. Our Chief Executive, Noel Quinn, and our Finance and Administration Director, Raymond Reilly, both sit on the Tyrone Brick board.

Tyrone Brick is run by Operations Manager, Jim Anderson, and he is supported by senior managers who bring a wide range of skills and business acumen to their respective roles whether it is finance, production, quality and environment or sales and marketing. Northstone people regularly call on the advice and guidance of Jim and his team and to date have never been disappointed with the response.

Make the Right Choice and select Tyrone Brick for your next project, as in the case of our new tile factory at Toome, you will not be disappointed. Tyrone Brick are sold throughout Ireland, England and Scotland.

The sales contacts are as follows:-

Harry Martin 07703 210464	Sales Manager
Bernie O'Hare 07850 603511	Technical Sales Representative Armagh, Fermanagh, Tyrone and South Down
Graham Bartlett 07703 210470	Technical Sales Representative Antrim and Londonderry
Trevor Bleakley 07860 407847	Technical Sales Representative Greater Belfast Area
Eamonn Ryan 07736 635910	Technical Sales Representative Scotland

Keeping The Customer Satisfied

Our people in the Quarry and Asphalt Division clearly know a thing or two about keeping the customer satisfied as evidenced recently by their successful completion of a £320,000 contract to construct multi use games areas at **Glastry College and Westwinds Primary School in County Down. The client was the South Eastern Education and Library Board.**

The Site Agent, Michael Scullion and Contract Manager, William Hunter, had several pre contract meetings with Client representatives and the teaching staff at each school to ascertain the necessary health and safety requirements as the projects were to be completed during the school term.

It goes without saying that the projects were completed on time, within budget and to the demanding quality standards. More importantly the operation of each of the schools were not affected in any way by our works.

On completion of the games area at Glastry College, the Vice Principal of the school wrote to Michael Scullion, and we quote;

"May I thank and congratulate you personally for the competent and professional manner in which you supervised the construction of the pitches and indeed commend all the employees and directors of your firm. We have a superb facility with absolutely no interference to the daily operation of the college during your time on site".

This in essence is what we are all about – Keeping the Customer Satisfied.

Congratulations to Michael and all other Northstone employees who were involved at Glastry College and Westwinds Primary School in further enhancing our reputation in the North Down area. It is also not surprising to learn that negotiations are at an advanced stage with regard to further similar contracts in this developing sector of the market.

Glenn Builds a Career at Construction



Glenn Gilmore, Structure Manager at the Farrans Altnagelvin South Block Development, is typical of the up and coming cohort of young construction professionals who are building a career at Farrans.

He is an Architectural Engineering honours graduate of Queens University in Belfast. Glenn's story and career to date is typical of the opportunities which exist for graduates with the Province's premier building and construction engineering contractor. Who better to tell us more than Glenn himself;

I joined Farrans as a site engineer, after graduating from Queens in June 2001. I was fortunate enough to have completed my placement year with the company at both the Odyssey and at RAF Aldergrove, so the whole experience of joining was not as daunting as it could have possibly been.

My first job was the Millfield College Private Finance Initiative project, however, this was a brief experience, as I was soon off to the work on the Villa Marina Refurbishment in the Isle of Man, where I gained experience in a vast array of trades. I was also able to pick up a trick or too from the various Site Managers I worked under.

After completion of the Villa Marina, in April 2005, I was moved to the Lisburn Road Community Treatment and Care Centre. As this was a smaller contract, George McClure encouraged me to take on greater responsibilities, such as supervising health and safety and managing and co-ordinating the daily operations on site. From an engineering perspective, this was my most enjoyable job, as the structure was quite complex with quite a diverse façade.

In April 2005, I moved to Altnagelvin as a sub-agent, with the newly formed Farrans Healthcare Division. This contract was to provide a new Pharmacy and Associated Services Laboratory, designed to a very high specification, under the Private Finance Initiative method of procurement. Under the guidance of my project manager, Darrell McGuckian, and with the assistance of our sub-contractors, we were able to greatly accelerate the superstructure works, which meant the following trades could be on site earlier, giving more time for the complex mechanical and electrical commissioning. I can only thank Darrell for his guidance and encouragement while I made the transition from Engineering into Management. In April 2006, I was briefly based in Head Office, where I assisted with a Healthcare Tender Bid, and attended design development meetings for Castlereagh Community Treatment and Care Centre. This allowed me to gain a better understanding of the Commercial departments in the Company and the problems they face.

From May 2006 I have been working as the Structures Manager for the Altnagelvin South Block Development, where I am responsible for managing the frame construction and co-ordinating the associated temporary works. Led on site by Project Manager, Darrell McGuckian, our team has developed a good balance of youthful enthusiasm and experienced know-how. This balance has allowed us to complete a very tight sub-structure programme on time. This included the excavation and removal of 20 000 cubic metres of spoil in 4 weeks, as well as pouring up to 3,500 cubic metres of concrete over the last 3 months. Currently, we are preparing for the upper floor construction using a hybrid construction method of installing plate flooring, and pouring the RC beams and concrete topping to the plate flooring at the same time. Although I have no experience with this particular construction method, I am relishing the challenge of bringing two independent sub-contractors together as one team, so that we can complete the job safely and on time.

My personal life revolves around my wife Linda-Jane and we recently celebrated our first wedding anniversary with the news that we are going to be first time parents. Away from work, I am a part-time maintenance manager in my wife's bridal boutique, The Wedding Studio in Lisburn. Other outside interests include following Liverpool Football Club, which is currently just as stressful as a week's work and trying to make the most of any social opportunities before our new arrival".

Looks like Farrans have added another capable and astute construction professional to the site team.

Philip Becomes New Depot Supervisor at Strabane

In August of this year Philip Quinn's abilities were recognised and he was promoted to Depot Supervisor at the Concrete Division's busy Strabane Concrete and Block depot. He brings to the post over 30 years of experience in the concrete industry.

Philip, pictured right, joined the Company back in 1973 as a concrete technician working initially on the mobile batching plant which had been established to service the Farrans Courtaulds site at Campsie. He has been based for the most of his career to date at the Concrete Division's Coleraine depot and as depot controller, has done much to contribute to the efficiency of the depot and effectively service its customers.

In 2000, Philip was heavily involved in the installation and commissioning of the new mortar plant at Coleraine. He has also done much to develop his nephew, Colin Quinn, in the operation of a busy combined concrete and mortar plant at this location.

Philip is also innovative in his thinking of ways in which efficiency levels can be improved and over the years has brought forward many useful ideas in this regard.

As we go to press, Philip is now just over three months in his new role and who better to give an update on his progress and achievements than Precast Production Director, Brian Watt;

"Strabane is one of the Division's larger depots and certainly brings with it some challenges for Philip and his team. I never had any doubt that Philip's vast knowledge and experience of concrete and production operations would be a great asset at Strabane and so it has proved. He has shown a great willingness to learn about block production, which is something he did not have as much experience in as concrete but as usual has performed extremely well. Over the last three months or so Philip has done an excellent job in maintaining the high standards of safety, quality and environmental performance at the depot. He is to be commended for this".

Philip's interests away from work include following his beloved Manchester United and he tries to go to matches at Old Trafford as often as possible. He also has a keen interest in motorcycle road racing in the north west of the Province and rumour has it that he recently purchased a Honda motorcycle to travel the country roads and enjoy the wide open spaces.

It is fitting that we leave the last word with Philip;

"I have really enjoyed my time to date at Strabane. The production team at the depot have really made me feel welcome and they all have contributed much to the success of the Division's most westerly depot. I hope together we can build on this success in the months and years that lie ahead".



Back to Basics with Gordon

The reputation of our Mattest business as the premier materials testing house in Ireland was further enhanced during September when Director Gordon Ellis, pictured right, hosted and presented a short course entitled 'Back to Basics' at our new Mattest laboratory in Dunmurry.

The course was designed for recent graduates, site based supervisors and new entrants to the concrete industry in order to provide them with an appreciation of basic techniques in concrete testing on site to ensure compliance with the recently revised quality standards. The Concrete Society – Northern Ireland Region and the Quarry Products Association for Northern Ireland sponsored the event.

Gordon displayed his great knowledge and experience of product testing techniques during the presentation and thoroughly explained the properties of concrete as a construction material, sampling and workability testing, cube making and curing, testing and reporting results as well as site practice.

Some 45 technical people attended the course from a wide variety of backgrounds and if the feedback and questions are anything to go by at the end of the course, then Gordon developed the knowledge and understanding of all who attended.

"It was tremendous to be asked to deliver the presentation because at Mattest we are in the knowledge business. In other words, we provide customers with the information they need about their materials when they need it and in a format that suits their particular requirements" said Gordon after the event.

The course also offered the opportunity for those in attendance to view the Mattest laboratory and receive a copy of our new promotional brochure.

There is no doubt that Gordon has added a few more names to the Mattest customer base.



Construction Confirmed as Preferred Bidder in England



Artist Impression of the soon to be constructed Yarmouth Road Fire Station in Ipswich

The lights on the Christmas tree in the Farrans Cambridge office will be that little bit brighter this year and a few more celebratory glasses will be raised by our people with the news that Construction's English Division have been confirmed preferred bidder on their first Private Finance Initiative (PFI) project.

If financial closure is reached with the client at Easter 2007, the £16m project will commence with various new builds and refurbishments across Suffolk for the country's Fire Service. Planning permission has been applied for in respect of some of the new builds with the rest to follow shortly.

The overall project consists of the following elements:-

- the construction of a new 5 bay fire station at Colchester Road, Ipswich.

- the refurbishment or possible replacement of the fire station at Yarmouth Road, Ipswich.
- the rebuilding of the Needham Market fire station on its current site.
- the construction of a state of the art training centre for fire officers at Great Blakenham.
- the extensive refurbishment of Sudbury fire station.
- the rebuilding of Nayland fire station.
- the replacement of the Hadleigh fire station.
- the construction of a new fire station in North Lowestoft to service the locality.
- the building of a new five bay fire station is South Lowestoft.

In addition to the fire stations project as detailed above, we have agreed figures with our neighbours in Waterbeach, W.T. Burdens (Drainage Suppliers) Limited to build their new warehouse, offices and associated external works. We are also the winning tender bid for a new Special Needs School in Chelmsford, Essex. In both cases, the work will commence probably at the beginning of 2007.

The past few months in our Farrans English Division has seen the last of our partnering projects with Suffolk County Council come to a close at Rendlesham and Ipswich. Our time working with Suffolk Council has been long and fruitful with the completion of some outstanding school buildings using eco friendly sustainable materials and building techniques.

All at Farrans in England are to be congratulated on their continuing success.

Late Nights, Page Numbering, Scanning and Copying

Although we are in the age of e-business and the paperless office it is good to know that some things never change. Clearly Clients have resisted the onslaught of new technology and maintained their tried and trusted methods of tendering and provision of related quality submissions by contractors.



Patricia Kelly (left) and Carol McLean (right) get ready to give another tender submission the wrap treatment

Our photograph above depicts Patricia Kelly, tender administrator, and Carol McLean, personal assistant, after they have completed another marathon effort of late nights, page numbering, scanning and copying to prepare a tender submission. This time around the tender in question was the DRD Term Contract for Minor Works 2006, and with our Quarrying and Asphalt Division applying for all eight sections of the project, the completed quality submission produced a veritable paper mountain.

The Division's quality submission team is headed by Sam Deane who is based at our Ballymena depot. However, the real heroes are Patricia and Carol who bring all the documentation together at Coleraine. Each and every time the girls complete a submission Sam receives a telephone call from Carol consisting of just 4 words;

"It's a wrap Sam"

To the uninitiated that means that the submission is completed, has been packaged and delivered to the Client.

Northlink commends Patricia and Carol on their sterling efforts and wishes the Division every success with recently submitted bids.

The Safety Factor

The news this Christmas in respect of health and safety is that six CRH employees have lost their lives in work related accidents this year to the end of November. This statistic serves as a grim reminder to us all that nothing is so important at work that we cannot take time to make sure it is done safely.

Our own health and safety performance at Northstone is as follows:-

	Fatalities	Lost Time Accidents	Days Lost	Frequency Rate	Severity Rate
Year to 31/10/06	1	35	217	0.76	4.70
Year to 31/10/05	0	32	264	0.71	5.88

Slips, trips and falls were responsible for 54% of our lost time accidents and 58% of the lost days in the year to 31 October 2006. Clearly we must all be vigilant and address this particular issue on each and every Northstone construction site or fixed location.

It is also of concern that the year on year improvement in our accident frequency rate which we have come to expect would appear to have ceased. This is something which the Northstone Safety Directors considered at their last meeting in October. The following action points are being implemented to maintain and enhance our focus on health and safety:-

- reversing cameras will be fitted as standard items on all new lorries which are added to the Northstone fleet with older vehicles being retro fitted in this regard.
- a review of footwear will be undertaken to assess the ankle protection provided by various types of protective footwear worn by Northstone employees.
- an awareness campaign will be undertaken to reduce the number of accidents to vehicle and plant drivers which occur when they enter and leave the cabs of their vehicles.
- housekeeping will continue to be a key item in all inspections undertaken by Northstone health and safety professionals.
- more use will be made of the CRH Safety.com website as a means of learning more and sharing best practice in health and safety throughout CRH.
- more emphasis should be given to the positive effect that leadership and personal behaviour can have on safety performances and a suitable proposal will be drawn up to progress this

All members of the Health and Safety Team at Northstone wish you a healthy and safe Christmas and New Year.

REMEMBER: THINK SAFETY

New Faces at Beckett Construction Solutions

Three new members of staff have recently joined the team at Beckett Construction Solutions.

Debbie Anderson (below) joined us in July as an Accounts/Administrative Assistant having previously worked in an art gallery and the retail sector. Debbie's current role includes looking after the purchase ledger, taking minutes of meetings, greeting customers and guiding them around the Dunmurry showroom as well as providing general administrative support to colleagues.

Away from work, Debbie is involved in Tai Chi, participating in local shows and pantomimes for charity and also enjoys music, cooking and painting. Debbie's claim to fame is also her prowess in ballet having taken classes since she was a child.



Steve Lambert (right), who is our new Internal Sales/Stock Controller, joined Becketts last summer. He comes originally from London but moved to the Province earlier in the year and now lives in Maghaberry, just outside Lisburn. Steve's role is varied and the tasks many. These include order processing, monitoring and maintaining stocks at optimum levels, constantly liaising with customers to ensure they receive the highest possible levels of service and supporting our sales team in the field.

Steve possesses highly developed information technology skills and he has put these to good use at Becketts in virtually every aspect of his role.

At the moment most of Steve's time is taken up with preparing for his marriage to Nicola next year and following his beloved Tottenham Hotspur football team.



Ciaran Rice (below) is our most recent recruit and he joined us as a Technical Sales Representative supporting our Sales Manager, Peter McClure. Ciaran has spent most of his working life to date in construction having worked on sites when a student and then with a local builders merchant before specialising in the sale of hardwood timber and flooring. Prior to coming to Becketts, Ciaran was a sales representative selling ceramic and natural slate roofing products throughout Ireland.

Ciaran's role now involves selling our ever expanding range of construction accessories to contractors and precasters as well as making specifiers more aware of the benefits of choosing our products.

Ciaran is married to Suzanne and the couple have one daughter, Lia, who is 18 months old. His favourite past time is playing Gaelic football for his local St Peters team in Warrenpoint. He would admit to playing golf and is also a committed Liverpool fan.

Northlink welcomes all three new members of staff and wishes them every success in their respective roles with the Company.

