

# the Gazette

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FOR PENSIONERS OF IMPERIAL TOBACCO



## ANYONE FOR TENNIS?

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Head Office reunion



Starting out  
at Player's in  
Nottingham  
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Interview:  
busy as ever  
in retirement  
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Still teen  
sweethearts  
after 60 years  
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Results show the Group is set to deliver tobacco and next generation products revenue growth.

# FULL YEAR RESULTS ARE ON TRACK

“Our FY25 performance provides a strong foundation as we look ahead with confidence to the next phase of our strategy to 2030.”

**I**MPERIAL BRANDS has reported another year of ‘operational and financial delivery’ in the fifth and final year of its 2021 strategy.

In a trading update ahead of the release of its full year results (FY25) to 30 September 2025, which were announced after the Gazette had gone to print, the Group confirmed it was on track to deliver low single-digit tobacco and next generation products (NGP) revenue growth.

## Transformation

Performance was driven by strong pricing in combustibles and demand for NGP such as vapes and heated tobacco products, and the company expects market share



**IMPERIAL BRANDS**

gains in the US, Germany and Australia to broadly offset declines in Spain and the UK.

“We are continuing our long-term transformation to become a stronger challenger business, which is more consumer-centric, focused and agile,” said CEO Lukas Paravicini.

“Our FY25 performance provides a strong foundation as we look ahead with confidence to the next phase of our strategy to 2030.”



▲ Imperial Brands CEO Lukas Paravicini

As part of this ongoing strategy, alongside driving sustainable value in combustibles and building scale in NGP, Imperial is committed to building a simpler, more efficient organisation.

In line with this, it has started a consultation regarding the future of its factory in Langenhagen, Germany, the outcome of which will be either sale of the site to a third party or closure.

## Progressive

The FY25 annual dividend increased by 4.5 per cent to 160.32 pence per share, now paid in four equal quarterly payments, and the company also announced a further £1.45 billion share buyback for FY26.

“Our progressive dividend policy, together with our ongoing share buyback programme, will continue to deliver strong shareholder returns,” added Lukas Paravicini.

Full year results can be found at: [imperialbrandspc.com](http://imperialbrandspc.com)

## How to keep in touch

The Pension Fund Office provides a number of different ways to find out information about the Fund or contact a member of the team, depending on your needs.

The [myimperialpension.com](http://myimperialpension.com) website is a good place to start if you are looking for news about the Fund, how to spot a pensions scam or how to report a death. The site also has a library of documents such as annual reports, actuarial valuations and back issues of the Gazette.

Email or telephone is the quickest and easiest way to reach a member of the pensions office team. However, if your bank or address details have changed, please provide the new information in writing, accompanied by your signature so we can ensure the alteration is genuine and that no mistakes are made.

## Electronic communication

We are also encouraging members to opt-in to receive generic communication electronically, to allow us to provide you with information in a fast, convenient and environmentally friendly way.

This only relates to standard pension news updates and Trustee communications such as the Gazette, Pension Fund Report and bulk Fund news mailings – you would continue to receive all personal correspondence such as pension payslips and pension increase letters by post.

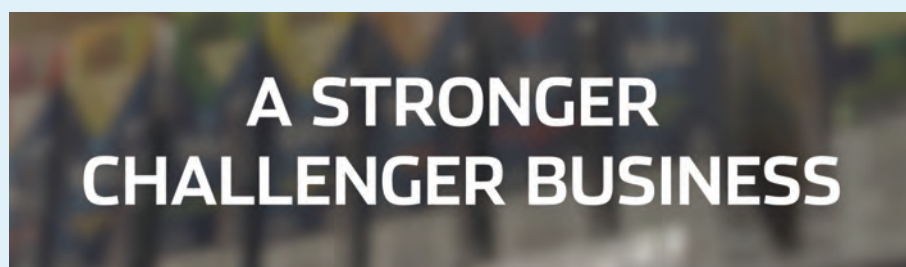
To opt-in and have access to the latest Fund news on your mobile phone, tablet or computer, please email the Pensions Office with ‘opt-in to electronic communications’ in the subject line.

✉ [pension.enquiries@uk.imptob.com](mailto:pension.enquiries@uk.imptob.com)

☎ 0117 953 0000

📍 Imperial Tobacco Pension Fund, PO Box 3242, Winterstoke Road, Bristol BS3 9GY

🌐 [myimperialpension.com](http://myimperialpension.com)



The discovery in an attic of an 88 year old Player's long service certificate led to **Malc Elston** and **Phil Bradley** spending hours searching census records in the hope of finding a family to return it to.

# QUEST TO RETURN SERVICE AWARD

**A** CHANCE finding in the attic of a house in Nottingham has led Player's pensioners Malc Elston and Phil Bradley on a quest to trace the descendants of James Bavin, who joined the company in 1912.

A friend of Malc's, Andy Neep, found a 25 year service certificate when he was clearing out the attic before moving from his home on Holbeck Road, off Grassington Road which runs alongside the Player's recreation ground.

"...we thought it would be a nice idea to... find the Bavin family.."

faithful service rendered during the past 25 years and as a mark of appreciation and goodwill' and is dated 09 March 1937.

"Andy was aware that I worked for Player's so thought I would be interested in his find," said Malc, who worked for the company from 1964 until he retired in 1997. He joined the despatch docks, before working in the docks office. He then spent a couple of years in the garage office before 25 years in data processing and a further five in the Horizon factory.

"I showed it to Phil, knowing that, like me, he is interested in family history, and we thought it would be a nice idea to

## Faithful service

The elaborate certificate was given to James Harry Bavin 'in recognition of



see if we could find the Bavin family and return the certificate to them."


The quest resulted in Malc and Phil, who was a garage driver at Player's between 1961 and 1987, spending hours searching census records in the hope of finding a living relative.

## No direct descendants

Their investigation uncovered that James Harry Bavin was born on 23 November 1897 in Nottingham and died on 28 July 1983 at Forest Dene Nursing Home on Gregory Boulevard in Nottingham. He married Nellie Balchin in 1923 but the couple had no children and, as James was an only child, it meant he had no direct descendants.

"In the 1939 register, James is listed as living with Nellie and his father, Harry, who was a widower by that time, at 55 Grassington Road," said Phil, who also helps organise the annual Player's Garage and Motor Vehicle Repair reunion.

"It states his occupation as Foreman in the tobacco trade and also ARP (Air Raid Precautions) room warden at John Player & Sons.

"It's disappointing not being able to find anyone to hand the certificate to, but Malc and I have really enjoyed finding out about James's life." 

◀ Malc Elston and Phil Bradley with James Bavin's certificate



## Congratulations to the following Fund members celebrating their 100th birthdays:

**Frances Moore**, widow of Smedley-HP Foods pensioner Arthur, who died in 1988. Arthur worked for the company for 13 years from 1969 until 1982.

John Player & Sons pensioner **Louisa Murry**, who worked for the company in Nottingham for almost 18 years, between November 1968 and September 1984.

**Nellie Rhymes**, widow of Michael, who worked at Imperial Group Head Office between 1945 and 1982. He died in 2017.

**Joyce Sharp**, widow of Player's pensioner Anthony who died in 2018. He worked for the company for almost 39 years after joining in 1940.

A great attendance proves the Group Head Office reunion is as big a draw as ever.

# PENSIONERS RELIVE THE GOOD OLD DAYS



**T**HE IMPERIAL Group PLC Head Office reunion proved as popular as ever, with more than 70 pensioners gathering together at Knowle Golf Club, Bristol, for the annual event.

## First time

Several former colleagues from across the company attended for the first time, including secretaries Donna Ball, Barbara Thompson and Rebecca Randall, Pension Fund Office Benefits Clerk Dayton Little, Carole Downs from the Patents Office and former Senior Analyst Programmer David Riches.

"It's really wonderful to see everyone, especially considering that three weeks ago, I thought I might not have been able to make it," said former Pensions Manager

and reunion organiser, Mike Paige, who addressed the group.

"I had been pruning the conifers in my daughter's garden when I fell off a 5ft ladder. Luckily, I had moved from the 12ft one and there was no lasting damage – apart from my ego.

"These reunions are a great opportunity for everyone to catch up and chat about the good old days and it's always great to see so many smiling faces."

Mike told the group that he had recently been contacted by former Accountant John Price, who used to be captain of the tennis section of the Imperial Athletic Club.

John was moving house and found a collection of old tennis trophies in his attic and was keen to find them a new home.

Among them were several engraved with

"... a great opportunity for everyone to catch up and chat..."

▲ Cheers: from left, Reis Braganza and Stuart Roberts from Group Management Services and Martin Haines from the Registration Department catch up

familiar names, two of which belonged to pensioners attending the reunion and Mike took the opportunity to present the trophies to their original recipients.

## Reunited

Norman Hitchings, who worked in the Research Department, received the Club Member of the Year trophy, which he was originally awarded in 1992, and Carole Downs was reunited with the Ladies Doubles trophy from 1988 (see story below).

David Riches, former Senior Analyst Programmer in the Statistics Division of the Research Department at Raleigh Road, Bedminster, was also in attendance at the reunion for the first time. He enjoyed

## Cover story: sporting spirit runs in the family

Carole Downs attended the Group Head Office reunion for the first time, and was delighted to catch up with many former colleagues and friends and be presented with a tennis trophy she won 37 years ago.

She worked in the Patents Office between 1957 and 1967 and her husband, Colin, who died in 2023, also spent 26 years with the company as Research and Development Manager. The couple met prior to Colin joining Wills, and Carole recalls putting in a good word for him with her friend whose father was responsible for interviewing new hires.

After he retired in 1987, Colin also played a major part in setting up IMPAC, which works to protect the interests of the members of the Imperial Pension Fund.

The pair were regular visitors at the Imperial Athletic Club, where Colin played bowls and snooker and Carole enjoyed tennis. They often brought their children, Paul and Lisa, along to join in the various team sports and family events and Lisa even won the same Ladies Doubles trophy just a year before her mother in 1987.

"It was lovely to be presented with the trophy again at the reunion," said Carole. "It brought back lots of memories of playing at the club, and of my doubles partner, Nollie Hampson, who was the star player."





◀ Long-serving trio: Sally Pearn, Dayton Little (left) and Mike Paige have a combined service of 82 years between them. Sally worked in the Members Benefits Section for 16 years, then in the Science and Submissions Department for a further 19 until she retired in 2017. Former Pensions Manager, Mike Paige, worked for the company for 39 years, and Dayton Little, worked as a Benefits Clerk for eight years

catching up with many faces from his eight years with the company, including Mike Downing, former Computer Programmer in Group Management Services, who he used to play hockey with at the Imperial Athletic Ground. Former Pension Fund Office (PFO) Benefits Clerk, Dayton Little, reconnected

with colleagues Sally Pearn and Mike Paige, for the first time in 30 years.

### Transferred

Dayton joined Imperial in 1978 in the Commercial and Marketing Intelligence Department on Lombard Street but quickly

*continued over the page*

## A lifetime of friendship



Reunion newcomers Donna Ball and Barbara Thompson (née Laybourn) met at Imperial in the late 1970s and have been friends ever since.

Both were secretaries in the Group Management Services office in East Street, Bedminster, Donna working for Computer Development Manager John Aris, and Barbara for John Coultate, who was in charge of the operations research section.

They also left the company at a similar time to start their families and remained in contact, with their children also becoming friends.

### Remained in contact

"We met often for play dates with our children and have remained in contact ever since, still meeting up regularly for lunch or coffee," said Donna, who lives in Hambrook, South Gloucestershire.

"No matter how long it's been since we've seen each other, it's always as though no time has passed at all."

Both Donna and Barbara returned to Imperial for a short time after having their children but left when the company was taken over by Hanson in 1986. Donna went on to work at the BBC in Bristol while Barbara, who lives in Portishead, worked at a secondary school.



▲ In good company: back row from left, Pauline Harris, Geraldine Shields and Margaret Garlick and, front row from left: Kay Thatcher, Mary Downing, Maureen Ford and Diane Jordan, enjoy catching up



◀ Legal Department colleagues reconnect at the Imperial Group PLC Head Office reunion, which was held at Knowle Golf Club for the fifth time. From left, Bill Tacey, Ian Poole, Chris Patterson and Ralph Whiting

## Rebecca and Philippa take a trip down memory lane

The occasion also marked a trip down memory lane for newcomer Rebecca Randall (née Jenkins), who saw her former colleague Philippa Nutt for the first time in over 40 years, and the pair quickly picked up where they left off.

Rebecca joined the company aged 17 straight from Weston Secretarial College and started in the junior typing office – the company's in-house training school for aspiring secretaries.

"We would learn shorthand and typing skills and could occasionally do some secretarial work in other departments as needed," said Rebecca. "It was a great introduction to office life."

She was seconded to the Registration Department to learn the workings of the company and then had the opportunity to join the Personnel Department as a secretary, which is where she met Philippa.

Rebecca went on to become secretary to Peter Middleton, who was then Director of Imperial Distribution Ltd, which was responsible for supplying and distributing products to shops, kiosks and vending machines.

When she left Imperial in 1981, Rebecca joined a secretarial agency in London and was assigned as secretary to Dr Olusola Saraki, a politician in the Nigerian Government. She was based in Lagos for a short time and enjoyed travelling to countries such as the US and France.

After returning to Bristol, she worked on the BBC's *Wildlife on One* programme before taking a break to raise her daughter. During this time, she changed career paths and opened her own business in upholstery and soft furnishings,



which she ran for 14 years. She now works part time as a veterinary receptionist and enjoys spending time with the animals in her care.

"My time with Imperial absolutely set me up for the rest of my career. It was such a grounding experience, and I feel very privileged that I was able to secure a job there," she said.

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transferred into the PFO and worked as a Benefits Clerk alongside Sally for the next eight years.

### Team building

"I only spent about six months in the Commercial and Marketing Intelligence Department – I often joke that my most important job there was making the coffee – but I really enjoyed my time in the PFO," said

"...I really enjoyed my time in the Pension Fund Office"

Dayton. He also remembers attending an Outward Bound course, which the company offered for new employees under the age of 18, and spent three weeks in Aberdovey, mid Wales, taking part in a range of team building activities.

After leaving Imperial, Dayton joined KPMG while training to become a Chartered Tax Advisor, then spent 10 years with Bristol law firm Osborne Clarke. He now works in estates and probate at Things Solicitors in Bath. 

## The Harry's hit Skegness

The Harry's enjoyed beautiful blue skies for their annual memorial walk at Skegness, honouring and remembering friends and colleagues no longer with them.

The Player's walking group took the train from Nottingham to complete the six mile walk along the coast from Skegness to Chapel St Leonards, enjoying fish and chips before returning home.

The group is organised by former engineering mechanic Dave Clay and meets regularly throughout the year to walk and catch-up. Plans are already underway for next year's memorial walk; a tradition they are determined to maintain.



Player's pensioner, **Dr Steve Bone**, has enjoyed a varied, international career that began in the Research and Development Department at the John Player & Sons Radford factory in Nottingham.

# VALUABLE LESSONS LEARNED AT JPS



if it doesn't meet consumer expectations," he said.

Steve left Player's in 1983 to join Thorn EMI as the Chief Chemist, and later moved to PA Consulting, located in Cambridge and London, where he quickly advanced to Senior Partner.


Over three decades, he built a career that took him around the world, applying his expertise in both technical management, strategy and commercial roles. "I have been involved with several product innovations and used my early experiences at Player's to help me," said Steve.

In 2005, he founded his own company, nu Angle, a consulting firm that specialised in innovation management and technology commercialisation.

Now semi-retired, Steve enjoys spending time with his two sons and three grandchildren and has taken up playing the piano again, which he loves.

## Strong foundation

He also continues to advise international clients on strategy, product development and technology commercialisation in the healthcare and fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sectors, and he credits his early experience at Player's with giving him a strong foundation in good management.

"I've worked with organisations across Europe, the US and the Far East, and I can say that Imperial's management was one of the best I have experienced," said Steve, who is keen to hear from any of his former colleagues. He can be contacted by email at: [spbassociates1@gmail.com](mailto:spbassociates1@gmail.com) 

**A**FTER FINISHING school in 1972, Steve completed a four-year degree in Applied Chemistry at Trent Polytechnic, followed by a PhD in Chemistry from the University of Nottingham in 1979.

That same year, he joined Player's Research and Development Department, where he worked on cigarette filter design and manufacturing.

"My desire to gain hands-on experience in manufacturing and management led me to join Player's, steering me away from academia and industrial research," said Steve, who lives with his wife in Christchurch, Dorset.

## Product development

Steve's role at Player's combined laboratory work, computer science, supplier management and hands-on trials at the Radford factory's cigarette filter manufacturing plant. It was here he learned one of the most valuable lessons of his career: the importance of connecting product development with a dedicated multi-disciplined manufacturing team and customer experience.

He recalled the development of Imperial's New Smoking Material (NSM) in the 1970s, a tobacco substitute that initially generated interest but quickly lost consumer support despite major investment. "It highlighted how technical innovation alone is not enough



■ Can you help identify anyone in this photo? Steve Bone (third from right in the back row) is pictured in the Research and Development Department at the Player's Radford factory in Nottingham in the late 1970s/early 80s. Steve recognises his colleagues, Andy Curzon, standing in the middle, and Howard Foster, standing on the right. Please get in touch with the Gazette; contact details are on the back page.

## G LETTER

# Article sparks memories of generous 'fairy godmother'

◆ While reading about Wills descendant James Gunn OBE in the last issue of the Gazette, I was reminded of very fond memories of my 'fairy godmother', Miss Ricketts. Her father was a partner in Ricketts, Wills & Co, which existed between 1833 to 1847 as a predecessor to WD & HO Wills.

Miss Ricketts was our neighbour. I called her my fairy godmother because, when I was five years old, she called at my parents' house in Westbury Park, Bristol, and patted my head. I told her, "don't pat my head, I'm not a dog," to which she laughed and, from that day onward, she bought me a new dress every birthday and Christmas until I was 10 years old.

I went on to work at Imperial Tobacco Head Office, first as a temp in 1997 in the Purchase Ledger Department at Upton Road, and later as Supervisor when the department moved to Winterstoke Road. My brother, David Frederick Morse, who sadly died in July this year, also worked at Imperial's Head Office until he was called up for National Service. When he returned, he joined Golden Wonder Crisps and relocated to Edinburgh, Scotland. I retired in 2007 but have good memories of working there and the people I worked with.

Elizabeth Banwell (née Morse),  
Bristol

David Barnett has never been busier than he is in retirement but, as his family says, he is 'living his best life'. Whether he is volunteering at Great Central Railway, hosting a show on community radio, fundraising for his local twinning association or watching his beloved Nottingham Forest play at the City Ground, the Imperial pensioner never has a dull moment.

# DAVID'S RETIREMENT IS FILLED TO THE BRIM

David Barnett was appointed station master at Loughborough on the Great Central Railway earlier this year

B

ORN AND raised in Nottingham in 1951, David Barnett left school part-way through studying for his A levels at Bramcote Hills Grammar School, keen to start his career. He applied to the big three employers in the city: Boots, Raleigh and John Player & Sons, successfully following in his father's footsteps when he joined Player's as a Trainee Reference Clerk in 1968.

"I really wanted to be a rep, but was told I was too young and needed to gain experience of the company and how it worked first," said David, whose father, Dennis, worked for Player's for over 40 years, retiring as a Foreman at the Horizon factory in 1981.

### Headline news

Not long after he started with the company he met his first wife, Frankie, who worked in the typing pool. Her father, Frank Chadbourne, also worked for the company so when the couple married in 1972 they made headline news in the Player's Post. Frankie left the company when their son Andrew was born in 1975 and, a year later, they welcomed their daughter Lyndsay.

In 1977 David got his chance to be a rep, taking a role as a Merchandising Rep based in Burton-on-Trent, and, four years later, became a Direct Accounts Rep in Manchester. He spent six years in this role, covering a number of different territories, including the Isle of Man.

"I flew out for a week every four and never missed a trip during the two years

"I was absolutely delighted when I was offered a three hour Saturday morning show."

▲ A lifetime's ambition: David hosts a two hour evening show on Hive FM

I was covering the Isle," said David, who has four grandchildren: 20-year-old twins Abigail and Emma and grandsons Edward, 15, and Frank, 7.

"I absolutely loved the place and the people; they are so laid back they are practically horizontal."

### International division

David grew tired of working in the domestic market and, when an opportunity arose to work for the company's international division in 1987, he jumped at the opportunity.

"I was one of 30 to apply for the role as a Duty Free Rep so was delighted to be successful," he added.

"I was part of a team of just five covering the whole of the UK under Duty Free Manager Arnold Kanarak. It was to be the start of 20 wonderful years with the company."

David was initially the sales rep in the North for UK airports, ferry ships and the Royal Navy before becoming a Travel Retail Territory Manager. In this role he was in charge of the accounts of all UK based airlines, some

UK airport operators, ferry companies and NAAFI International, based in Germany.

"My work with NAAFI, which was my biggest customer, meant that I have been on every type of ship the Royal Navy has ever had in its fleet, including aircraft carriers, nuclear submarines and the Royal Yacht Britannia," said David.

"It was a huge privilege and incredible to think that it was part of my working day. As you can imagine, security was a top priority but they were lovely people to deal with."

David met his second wife, Audrey, in 2005, a year before he took early retirement after 38 years with the company. The couple married in Mauritius in 2007 and, a year later, emigrated to France; a country David fell in love with the first time he visited in the 1980s.

### Holidaymakers

They bought a house and gite in Rétaud, Charente Maritime, in the Cognac region and spent more than two years restoring both buildings, including building a heated swimming pool in the garden.

The couple had chickens, a vegetable patch and an orchard, and enjoyed five successful summers of renting the gite to holidaymakers. However, they missed

*continued on next page*



▲ David and Audrey married in 2007

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family and friends and made the decision to move back to the UK in 2013, settling in Griston, Norfolk.

Keen to be involved with village life, David became Chair of the Parish Council and was instrumental in raising the funds needed to repair the village's beloved sign which depicts the Babes in the Wood fairy tale, believed to be based around the village.

In order to build on the village's association with the tale, the Parish Council started an annual fair and, as part of the publicity for it, David was invited on to local radio station Brecks FM.

"After I was interviewed I jokingly asked the presenter if there were any jobs as it had been a lifetime's ambition of mine to present a radio show," said David.

"I was absolutely delighted when I was offered a three hour Saturday morning show: I was in seventh heaven!"

### Community radio

David's love of music is a big part of his life, having played in a band and been a DJ in his younger days, so when he and Audrey moved to Long Bennington, Lincolnshire, in 2020, he was sad to give up his radio show.

However, earlier this year he had the opportunity to rekindle his love of community radio and hosts a two-hour show every Tuesday evening on 97.2 Hive FM, based in Grantham.

"I love all types of music but wanted to focus on alternative indie, featuring many lesser known artists as well as the more famous ones," said David.

"I spend two or three hours a week preparing – researching songs and artists

They bought a house and gite... and spent more than two years restoring both...

– and hope I put together an interesting show."

A self-confessed Francophile, David also chairs Long Bennington's Twinning Association. Its 'twin' is Bretteville L'Orgueilleuse in Normandy and, every other year, members of the associations take turns to host the other for a long weekend.

One of his roles as Chairman is to raise the funds needed to host the visitors, which he does by organising an annual quiz night as well as a live band night.

During one of the visits from their French friends David was able to combine another of his passions by

organising a trip to the Great Central Railway (GCR) in Loughborough, where he has been a volunteer since 2022 (see March 2024 issue of the Gazette:

[myimperialpension.com/library/gazette-march-2024/](https://myimperialpension.com/library/gazette-march-2024/)).

He first trained to become a Porter and then a Platform Inspector, where he also acted as Station Master on occasions. Last year he was also given the role of Rostering Officer, organising the 30 plus volunteers the GCR has on its books at the station, which is set with the décor, equipment and uniforms of the 1950s.


### Station Master

"Due to the roosting role I was automatically drafted onto the station management team, which is responsible for ensuring the smooth running of the station," said David, who volunteers at the station at least once a week.

"At a meeting earlier this year it was announced that I was being appointed a Station Master, which was a complete surprise but a very welcome one."

As Station Master he is in charge of the whole station, including the safety of the passengers as well all of the volunteers, and is responsible for ensuring trains leave the station safely.

Another of David's passions is Nottingham Forest Football Club, where his grandfather played at the turn of the last century. He holds a season ticket with his son, Andrew, and grandchildren Emma and Edward and the four try to never miss a home game.

"I had a fantastic career with Imperial," said David. "I worked hard for the company and it has been very good to me, allowing me to indulge in my passions and live life to the full." 



▲ David with his son, Andrew, and grandchildren Edward and Emma at Wembley for Nottingham Forest's Championship play-off triumph against Huddersfield in 2022



▲ David and Audrey's house and gite in France's Cognac region

Two Imperial couples have notched up 60 years of marriage, with family and friends at the heart of both of their celebrations.

# DANCE LED TO A LIFETIME TOGETHER

**T**EEN SWEETHEARTS, Peter and Jean Martin, are celebrating their 60th wedding anniversary.

The couple, who live on the Wirral, met on a bus when Jean was travelling to a dance and Peter approached her and asked her to save a dance for him later that evening.

“My mum told dad that it was a private event, but somehow he managed to get in and have his dance,” said the couple’s daughter, Jayne. “They’ve been together ever since.”

Peter and Jean married in 1965 and moved to the Cotswolds, where they had daughters, Jayne and Vicky.

## Travelling

Peter, who joined Ogden’s as a salesman in 1963, was responsible for the Cotswolds area and enjoyed travelling around the region while Jean continued her hairdressing career, creating popular Beetle-inspired cuts and beehives.

After seven years, they returned to the Wirral to be closer to family and, during this time, Peter began working under the JPS brand, continuing his

service with the company until he took early retirement in 1986.

He went on to work for Barclays Financial Services for 10 years, where he managed a team of eight financial advisors, retiring fully in 1996, aged 60.

## Open house

In retirement, the couple have enjoyed long winter stays in Tavira, Portugal, helping friends prepare their holiday apartments for the summer season, and taking many cruises. They have continued their love of dancing, including at the famous Tower Ballroom in Blackpool.

Peter and Jean celebrated their diamond anniversary with an open house for family and friends throughout the day, followed by an evening meal with close family.

“It was wonderful to get the family together to celebrate this special milestone, and we all wish mum and dad many more happy years ahead,” added Vicky.



▲ Peter and Jean Martin marked their diamond anniversary in style, surrounded by close family and friends



◀ The happy couple on their wedding day in 1965

## Diamond couple met and married while at Player's



▲ Alex and Jean toast their milestone

Player’s pensioners, Alex and Jean Gordon, who first met while working at the Stirling cigarette factory in the 1960s, are also celebrating their diamond wedding anniversary.

Alex joined the company in 1959, aged 17, as a mechanic while Jean began her career as an operator in the making department in 1963. They married two years later and, in 1968, Jean left to raise their two sons, David and Craig, before returning to work in 1979.

Alex and Jean remained at the Stirling factory until its closure in 1983, when they transferred to the Player’s Horizon factory in Nottingham. They left in 1999 and 2000 respectively after completing a combined 65 years’ service with the company.

In retirement the couple have remained active, enjoying holidays in the UK and abroad, as well as time at their caravan in Skegness. More recently, they welcomed Scottish Terrier, Molly, who has become a regular companion on their walks. They also enjoy spending time with their granddaughters, Daisy and Edith.

To mark their diamond celebration, Alex and Jean enjoyed a family meal before travelling to North Wales for a week’s holiday in a cottage.

“It was a lovely occasion to celebrate their special milestone,” said Jean’s sister, Mary Cochrane, a former Player’s Factory Manager’s Secretary. “The whole family wish them many more happy years together.”

## Diary dates

- ◆ The **Player's Garage and Motor Vehicle Repair** reunion will take place on Monday 01 December from 2.30pm onwards at the Bell Inn, Nottingham. Contact Phil Bradley or David Lowe for more information.
- ◆ The **Player's Christmas** reunion, the second get together of the year, will be held on Wednesday 17 December from 3.30pm at The Stage pub, Wollaton Street, Nottingham NG1 5FE. Contact Dave Clay.



## IMPAC

is a pensioners' organisation which has been supporting Imperial Pension Fund members for over 30 years.



Website: [www.impact.org.uk](http://www.impact.org.uk)

### IMPAC members' helpline:

email: [impactmembers@outlook.com](mailto:impactmembers@outlook.com) or write to IMPAC, PO Box 10486, Oxton, Southwell NG24 9NL

### For membership queries

IMPAC membership agency (to update membership details only):

email: [impact@dmb.org.uk](mailto:impact@dmb.org.uk); phone: 01438 840247 or write to: IMPAC, c/o DMB, 18a Reynards Road, Welwyn, Herts AL6 9TP.

### New members welcome

Any Imperial pensioner who would like to join IMPAC please contact the helpline or apply online at: [www.impact.org.uk](http://www.impact.org.uk)

Membership is free for the first 12 months.

Nine friends from the shipping and despatch offices at the Wills Hartcliffe branch enjoyed a long-awaited reunion on Bristol's harbourside.

# HERE COME THE GIRLS AFTER FORTY YEARS



▲ From left: Carol Sohliva (née Kease), Jenny Commings (née Stephens), Beverley Hawkins (née Carter), Lynn Webb (née Boucher), Sue Cole (née Laws), Belinda Jones, Jenny Braywood (née Rogers), Paula Ferris (née Lewis), Andrea Portman (née West)

**N**EARLY 40 years had passed since colleagues who worked together at the Wills Hartcliffe branch in their late teens and early twenties last saw each other. The group, affectionately known among themselves as the 'Hartcliffe girls', had spent their early careers working side by side in the shipping and despatch offices.

### Memories and photographs

The reunion had originally been planned as a boat trip around Bristol, in the heart of the old port, not far from the company's former factories in Bedminster, but the weather had other plans. Instead, they gathered for a quick walk followed by lunch at the Cottage Pub to share memories and photographs from their time at Wills.

Beverley Hawkins, who joined the shipping office in 1974 and later worked in the despatch office, brought along some photos from the 1970s of a family fun day organised by Wills in Bristol, which the company arranged several times a year.

The photos showed a team from the shipping office who had competed in a five-a-side football game and others from

the company taking part in competitions such as plank walking. The idea for the reunion came from Jenny Commings, who had already planned a get-together with a smaller group and had also reached out to

## Still hoping to reconnect

Now that the Hartcliffe girls are back in contact, they are already planning more regular get-togethers, with a Christmas reunion among the ideas being discussed.


While the recent reunion brought together nine former colleagues, there are still a few people the group hasn't been able to reach. Among them are Sue Reedy, Jane Rogers and Sonia Watts, who all worked in the despatch office. The group is keen to hear from them or anyone else who would like to reconnect – please contact Belinda Jones.

Belinda Jones, who then helped track down others from the Hartcliffe branch.

"Working at Wills is a part of the history of our lives," said Belinda. "Being back with the group reminded me of how much we had in common and how, even after all these years, it felt like we had never been apart."

Belinda began her career at 17 as a clerk in the shipping office, where she joined a small team of five – one of only two teams that made up the shipping department.

She worked for the company for 10 years and took redundancy in 1987 when the Hartcliffe branch closed. She went on to work at Bristol Airport for two years before leaving to have her three children.

After raising her family, she spent several years working in care roles and is now just months away from retirement. "I'm looking forward to putting my feet up and getting my weekends back," she said. "And maybe now I'll have more time to organise our next reunion!" 



▲ Beverley Hawkins, Belinda Jones and others from the shipping office, including Sonia Watts, after competing in a five-a-side football contest on one of the family fun days in the 1970s

## Depot Manager and a keen cricket player

PENSIONER JOHN Allen, who was the former Chairman of the Imperial Cricket Club, has died, aged 89.

John was born in 1935 and joined Imperial's head office in Bedminster, Bristol, as a door boy, aged 16. After completing his two years of National Service, he returned to the company to work in the Stores Department, as he was then too old to be a door boy.

### Encouraged to apply

He stayed there for three years, until a clerk's position became available at the new Western Depot behind Temple Meads railway station, where Player's cigarettes were distributed throughout Wales and the south west. John's colleagues encouraged him to apply, and he was successful, taking on responsibility for managing the office.



John met his first wife, Janet, who died in 2017, at a youth club when they were teenagers. The couple married in 1955 and had a son, Richard, and shared 60 happy years of marriage. Janet later joined the company as a typist, working alongside John in the depot office.

In 1981, John became Foreman of the Western Depot and, two years later, was promoted to Depot Manager, following an interview with senior management in

Nottingham. He remained in this role until his retirement in 1985. Throughout his 35-year career with Imperial, John was a keen cricket player. He captained the company's youth team in his early years and later became Chairman of the Imperial Cricket Club – an achievement he was especially proud of.

John was introduced to his second wife, Penny, through mutual friends at their church. The pair became good friends, and this grew during Covid lockdown, when they decided to isolate together at John's home in Stockwood.

The couple married in September 2021, surrounded by their friends and family, and spent their time together travelling to different countries and enjoying weekends away.

John is survived by Penny, his son, Richard, three grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

## Jayne loved her job because of the people

WILLS PENSIONER Jayne Langdon (née Elvin) has died, aged 63, after a three-year battle with Motor Neurone Disease.

Jayne was born and grew up in Headley Park, Bristol, and, on leaving school, aged 16 started work in a solicitors office before joining WD & HO Wills in the late 1970s.

Over more than two decades she worked at the company's cigarette factories in Bedminster and Hartcliffe, as well as the cigar factory on Winterstoke Road before leaving following the birth of her second son in 1999.

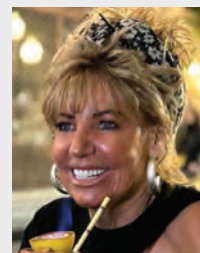
"Jayne loved working at Wills because of the people she worked with," said John, her husband of 30 years. "She made so many friends there and enjoyed a busy social life, going to various parties and nights out as well as day trips and holidays

abroad, which were arranged by one of her colleagues." It was on one of the nights out, in March 1991, that Jayne met John and the couple married four years later.

Jayne enjoyed foreign holidays and had a large number of friends, many from Wills that she was still in regular contact with, as well as from the community in Hanham, Bristol, where the family settled to bring up their three sons.

"Jayne was beautiful inside and out," said John. "She was devoted to her family and her warm and caring nature meant that almost everyone who met her became a good friend."

Jayne is survived by John and their sons Josh, Cory and Deke.



# Former Chief Accountant who worked on Hanson demerger

KENNETH THORNE, former Imperial Chief Financial Accountant, has died aged 84.

Born in Bristol in 1941, Ken grew up in Stapleton, spending time in the village of Penygraig in the Rhondda Valley, South Wales, near his father's family during the war.

He attended Bristol Commercial School in St Paul's before joining a firm of Chartered Accountants based on Park Street in the city in 1959, where he worked full time while also studying for his chartered accountancy exams for five years.

Ken met his wife Janet on the dance floor of the Grand Spa Ballroom in Clifton in 1967 and they married in Horfield two years later. Shortly after, Ken was offered the opportunity to work as Chief Accountant for Cementation Company in Zambia, central Africa, and the couple took the bold step to move there in 1970.

Three years later they returned to England and settled in Iron Acton, where they lived for 22 years, before moving to Frenchay.

## Very proud

Ken joined Imperial as Chief Financial Accountant in 1973, first based at Group Head Office in Lombard Street, before moving to Hartcliffe and, later, Upton Road. He worked for the company for 25 years and was a key figure in the demerger from Hanson in 1996 when Imperial Tobacco became a PLC. He retired in 1998.

Ken and Janet had two daughters Sarah and Joanna, who sadly passed away in 2022. Ken was very proud of Joanna becoming a children's nurse and, like the whole family, was devastated by her death.

In retirement Ken volunteered as Treasurer at Henleaze Swimming Club, where he had been a member for many years, and surprised his family by writing a novella and several shorter pieces, each filled with his dark wit and humour.

Ken was a devoted Bristol Rovers fan and kept himself fit through tennis and cycling earlier in his life, and swimming, which he loved. Until recently he was still going to the gym regularly, doing daily press-ups at home and managing his large garden. He was also grateful that his retirement gave him the opportunity to spend a lot of time with his granddaughter Mia, while she was growing up.

"Ken was dedicated to his work but never lost his sense of humour, even during stressful times," said former Finance Manager Martin Hedges, who worked with Ken for many years.

"He was often first in and last out – unless Bristol Rovers were playing at home

in a mid-week match! He was a pleasure to work for, a great mentor for me personally and a good friend, who will be sadly missed by all those who worked closely with him."

Ken is survived by Janet, Sarah and Mia.



## Two pensioners who reached their 100th

TWO OF THE Pension Fund's centenarian members, who together clocked up 67 years' service, have died.

**Alicia Graham**, pictured, who worked for the company for nearly three decades, has died shortly after marking her 100th birthday. She joined Edwards, Ringer and Bigg as a shorthand typist in 1946 and was quickly promoted to Sales Manager's Secretary. During her 29 years with the company, it saw a number of changes – from Edwards, Ringer and Bigg, to Churchman, Lambert and Ringer, to Churchmans and, in 1973, Ogden's – and Alicia eventually became the General Manager's Secretary for the Bristol factory.

When Imperial closed the Redcliffe Street factory in 1975, she took early retirement aged 50 and spent the following years with her husband, Clifford Graham, who she married in 1971. Since 2007, Alicia lived in a retirement village in Downend, Bristol, and enjoyed regular visits from her family.

**Michael Bolland** has also died, aged 101. He worked for Imperial for 38 years, from 1940 until he retired in 1978.

He initially joined Imperial's African Leaf Organisation based in Limbe, Malawi, before moving to Imperial Group Head Office in Bristol as a leaf buyer in 1968.

Michael joined the leaf department alongside fellow leaf buyers Don Fuller and Alan Jones, following the UDI (Unilateral Declaration of Independence) of Rhodesia, and was tasked with finding new sources of tobacco supply to the UK.

## A source of humour and comfort

PLAYER'S PENSIONER Betty Lawton, who worked for the company for more than three decades, has died aged 91.

Betty joined the company in 1952 as a technician in the Nottingham laboratory and later became Laboratory Manager. She remained with the company until her retirement in 1985.

Betty married Ron at the age of 21, although their time together was sadly cut short when he passed away in May 1975 at the age of just 42. Later, she met Derek Morrell, who also worked at Player's as a Lab Technician, and they shared many years together until his death in 2009.



In retirement, Betty enjoyed travelling, with her favourite countries being Japan and Fiji. She was also devoted to her charity work, which included giving swimming lessons to people with disabilities.

Later in her life, Betty moved to Woodhall Spa,

Lincolnshire, to live with her niece Debbie Chester, and she cherished time spent surrounded by family.

"Betty was a central figure in a large and loving extended family. She was a friend, confidante and a source of endless humour and comfort, and she will be greatly missed," said Debbie.

# Bill started out as a van boy at 14

SINCLAIR COLLIS pensioner William Richmond, known to friends and colleagues as Bill, has died aged 96.

Bill worked for the company for 44 years, having joined Robert Sinclair as a van boy in 1943 at the age of 14. The tobacco manufacturer, which became Sinclair Collis in the early 1970s, was also a tobacco and confectionery wholesaler with its head office at Blenheim House in the centre of Newcastle.

At 19 Bill moved into the fancy goods warehouse and, in 1953, became a tobacco and confectionery rep.

By 1969 he was Area Sales Manager for the north east of England, based at the company's large depot at Birtley on the outskirts of Newcastle, before moving back to Blenheim House as Marketing Manager.

Bill officially retired in 1988 when Sinclair Collis was sold to Palmer & Harvey, but he stayed on as a consultant for another 18 months to reorganise the north east sales territories.

## Lay assessor

In retirement he gave his time to organisations such as the Confectioners Benevolent Fund, of which he was Chairman for four years, and IMPAC, where he was Vice-Chairman for three years.

He also worked with Gateshead Council as a lay assessor. As a volunteer he worked with professionals such as nurses to inspect residential properties for their suitability for adults with learning difficulties or as retirement or nursing homes.

In addition he played piano for Centenary



Church, Crawcrook, for its annual pantomime for over 20 years, and also put his expertise into fundraising for the church.

Bill married Rita in 1952 and shared 67 happy years together until she died in 2019. They enjoyed getting away, spending many weekends, short breaks and holidays together, particularly in the Lake District.

He is survived by his children, Bill and Julie, four grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

The deaths are reported, as of 30 September 2025, of the following retired employees:

### HEAD OFFICE AND ITL

David John Bartlett, 78;  
Athalea Eris Cyntra Binks, 88;  
Michael George Bolland, 101;  
Peter Norman Brownridge, 81;  
Susan Joan Edwards, 72;  
David Lloyd Harrison, 76;  
James Hunter, 86;  
William Arthur Ison, 84;  
Elaine Jones, 79;  
Pamela Jane Redwood, 78;  
Kenneth Frank Thorne, 84;  
Pamela Margaret Webb, 80.

### WD & HO WILLS

John Anthony Allen, 89;  
Edward Richard Barron, 78;  
Anita Bedword, 85;  
Margaret Brooks, 89;  
Robert Brownlees, 74;  
Leonard James Curry, 89;  
Olive Esme Farnsworth, 92;  
Aileen Fowlds, 87;  
Agnes Gallagher, 66;  
Jack Goodall, 90;  
Charles Frederick Harvey, 90;  
Barbara Minnie Hawker, 93;  
Margaret Patricia Henderson, 68;  
Shirley Ann Hills, 93;  
Elizabeth White Ingram, 86;  
Peter Michael Ireland, 84;  
Edward William McPherson Jones, 95;  
Edward Kerr, 83;  
Rosemary Beryl Knight, 97;  
Gabrielle Franci Lagorio, 97;  
Jayne Elizabeth Langdon, 63;

Barbara Joy Mason, 93;  
Margaret McNair, 92;  
Patricia Mary Nelmes, 86;  
Patricia Rossi, 88;  
John Valentine Rowe, 78;  
Doreen Seager, 98;  
David Peter Gregorson Sillar, 88;  
Thomas David Steel, 78;  
Eric James Streeter, 82;  
Doreen Lilian Watkins, 97;  
Janet Loraine Whiteman, 65;  
Jeanie Wilson, 96.

### JOHN PLAYER & SONS

John Allison, 71;  
Michael John Alfred Baker, 88;  
Eric Butterworth, 76;  
Eric Sydney Castledine, 77;  
Barrie William Cordon, 90;  
Betseva Agatha Dell, 75;  
Pauline Dickinson, 85;  
Elsie Dilks, 78;  
Gerald Wilfred Fletcher, 85;  
Anthony Edmund Glennon, 79;  
Barrie Raymond Hall, 88;  
Jeffrey George Jarvis, 80;  
Lorna Lilieth Langley, 85;  
Betty Lawton, 91;  
Trevor Alan Makings, 58;  
Duncan McIntosh, 88;  
Leslie James Niccolls, 78;  
Kathryn Elizabeth Orton, 70;  
Gelsomina Pece, 91;  
Robert Richmond, 81;  
Ethel Ross, 94;  
John Valentine Rowe, 78;  
Bruce Michael Singleton, 81;  
David Smith, 82;  
Iris Thompson, 97;  
Dorothy Jean Ward, 88;  
Andrew George Williamson, 78.

### OGDEN'S

Carl Eric Ewing, 83;  
John Anthony Gilbertson, 73;  
Alicia Mary Graham, 100;  
Olive Hughes, 88;  
Benjamin Parkinson, 85;  
Ronald Leslie Tector, 85;  
Eileen Williams, 67.

### FINLAY & CO

John McKenzie, 81;  
Maxine Elizabeth O'Neill, 70.

### LOWFIELD DISTRIBUTION

Beverley Jill Gautrey, 67;  
Malcolm Edward Wood, 86.

### ROBERT FLETCHER & SON

Peter Holdbrook, 70.

### SINCLAIR COLLIS

Pamela Allen, 89;  
David Baldwin, 78;  
Kevin Bell, 65;  
John William Goff, 66;  
John Sutton Graham, 90;  
Helen Duncan Malcolm, 91;  
William Richmond, 96;  
David Rogers, 79;  
Leonard Yeomans, 96.

### ST ANNE'S BOARD MILL

Edwin Maurice Clothier, 99;  
Joe Leslie Morris, 93;  
Christopher Worlock, 74.

### IMPERIAL FOODS LIMITED

**HEAD OFFICE**  
Brian Coston, 79;  
Wasył Dutka, 98;  
William Brian Harker, 91;

Mavis Mantle, 90.

### GOLDEN WONDER

Malcolm Paul Jones, 83.

### ROSS FOODS

Barbara Asker, 98;  
John Arthur Elsam, 88;  
Stanley Heaven, 82;  
David Andrew Hirst, 77;  
Roger Robert Howard, 88;  
Peter Kenneth Lambord, 95;  
Geoffrey Newsum, 81;  
George Sutherland Skene, 92;  
Brian Walker, 87;  
Jane Weir, 90;  
Robert Williams, 65;  
John Raymond Wright, 98.

### SMEDLEY-HP FOODS

Brenda Edith Barker, 69;  
Kenneth Lloyd, 80;  
Norman Graham Ringer, 73.

We offer our sincere condolences to the family and friends of our former colleagues.

*Please note that names appear under the company worked for at end of service, which is not necessarily where they spent the majority of their career.*

Just like buses, you wait for ages then two come along at once! By coincidence, there's a second band called the Elderly Brothers, this time in the south west.

# TAKE TWO: LET'S HEAR IT FOR THE ELDERLY BROTHERS

**M**IKE DOWNING was interested to read about Paul Miller's band, the Elderly Brothers, in the July issue of the Gazette, as he is also part of a singing duo that shares the same name.

"We are the Elderly Brothers – south west version!" said Mike, who worked as a computer programmer at Imperial Head Office in Bristol for 20 years. "We have been performing together for over a decade, although we don't play any instruments like our Nottingham namesakes."

## Perform regularly

Mike and his friend Bryn Hawkins formed their duo in September 2015. Both were members of the Mendip Male Voice Choir – Mike sang in the bass section, and Bryn sang second tenor. Bryn also ran a monthly meeting for local pensioners in his community, arranging speakers and entertainers, and organising coach trips and weekends away.

One afternoon, Bryn called Mike to say the singer booked for the following day's pensioners' meeting was unable to attend and suggested the pair step in and lead a sing-along using 1950s and 60s backing tracks. Mike agreed and they quickly put a programme together, which the audience loved. Since then, the duo has continued to perform regularly, with Christmas being their busiest season when carols are also added to their repertoire.

"Although we enjoy singing songs from our youth, it's most rewarding when people who have health issues, especially dementia, can recall the lyrics from years ago and sing along with confidence," said Mike, who lives with



The Elderly Brothers, South West version, Bryn Hawkins, left, and Mike Downing

"We always finish with Neil Diamond's Sweet Caroline..."

his wife Mary in Bristol.

"We always finish with Neil Diamond's Sweet Caroline and, at nearly every performance, the residents and staff are singing along with us".

## Sang nearly every lyric

Mike recalled one particularly rewarding moment when a lady, who had been sitting with her husband throughout the performance, came over to thank them: "She said her husband had dementia and hadn't spoken for a week but, during our session, he sang nearly every lyric and then started chatting with her afterwards," Mike explained.

On another occasion, Mike and Bryn found themselves performing a rendition of You'll Never Walk Alone, with a member of the audience who



▲ The East Midlands Elderly Brothers, Paul Miller, left, and Roger Ward

had once been a professional opera singer. They later learned that she had performed at theatres in London's West End and at the Old Vic in Bristol.

The Elderly Brothers are already booked for the festive season, performing at a Christmas party for a local nursing home and at a retirement village, and have prepared all the usual Christmas favourites for residents to sing along to.

"While there may be more than one group called the Elderly Brothers, it seems we both know how to get everyone singing," said Mike.

The Gazette is published by the Imperial Tobacco Pension Fund.  
For pension information, please call the pensions office on 0117 953 0000.

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