

# the Gazette

JULY 2025 | ISSUE 109

FOR PENSIONERS OF IMPERIAL TOBACCO



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The announcement of an updated performance-driven, consumer-led strategy paves the way to delivering sustainable growth in net revenue and profit.

# 2030 STRATEGY IS SET TO DRIVE GROWTH AND VALUE

**I**MPERIAL BRANDS has announced its updated five-year strategy to drive sustainable growth and create long-term value for its stakeholders.

The 2030 strategy builds on the strong foundations of its predecessor through continued focus on the top combustible markets and next generation products (NGP).

The company has chosen to continue to focus on its five largest markets (the United States, Germany, United Kingdom, Spain and Australia), which represent around 70 per cent of adjusted tobacco operating profit and will continue to contribute most of its earnings.

## Sustainable growth

Within these markets, Imperial has identified specific areas for investment by category, brand and sales channel with the objective of continuing to maintain aggregate share in each to drive sustainable growth and cash delivery.

The same performance-driven, consumer-led approach will be applied to its wider portfolio of tobacco markets, which are expected to make a greater contribution to overall performance over the next five years.

The company will also build on its fast-growing NGP business, which is founded



▲ Imperial Brands CEO Stefan Bomhard

**“...better business delivering stronger, more consistent, operational and financial performance, and excellent returns...”**

on a clear understanding of its consumers, credible brands in all three categories (vapour, heated tobacco and oral nicotine), and differentiated products in all markets where it has distribution routes in order to provide additional growth opportunities and support performance.

Chief Executive Officer Stefan Bomhard said: “Our current plan has created a better business delivering stronger, more consistent, operational and financial performance, and excellent returns for shareholders. This underpins my confidence that, during the next five years, our 2030 strategy will unlock further value creation opportunities.”

The updated strategy will support the company's goals to deliver sustainable growth in net-revenue, profit and cash. It expects to deliver low single digit tobacco net revenue growth and double-digit NGP net revenue growth and for Group adjusted operating profit to grow at around 3-5 per cent annually.

Read more at: [imperialbrandspc.com](https://imperialbrandspc.com)

## Investing in growth and delivering

Half year results for the six months ended 31 March 2025 demonstrate that Imperial Brands has delivered growth across all regions and is on track to deliver its full-year result in line with guidance.

Strong tobacco pricing is more than offsetting volume declines and the company has grown total tobacco market share in its five priority markets, while revenue from next generation products (NGP) is up almost 15 per cent.

Read the full statement at: [imperialbrandspc.com/investor-hub/half-year-results-2025](https://imperialbrandspc.com/investor-hub/half-year-results-2025)

## Boxing clever

The rechargeable blu box kit has been launched in the UK. It features a device and pods and comes in three flavours: mint, strawberry ice and lemon lime. The introduction will help build on blu's 10 per cent share of the UK vape market.

## LinkedIn recognition

Imperial Brands has been recognised as one of LinkedIn's Top 25 Companies in the UK, testament to

its commitment to being a diverse and inclusive company. Being listed highlights that the business is a great place to work and a top destination for career growth and stability.



# New CEO aims to build on company's growing success

LUKAS PARAVICINI will succeed Stefan Bomhard as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Imperial Brands on 01 October, following Stefan's decision to retire.

Lukas, who is currently Chief Financial Officer (CFO), joined the business in 2021 and has been instrumental in driving the company's performance over the past four years. Murray McGowan, currently Imperial Brands' Chief Strategy and Development Officer, will succeed Lukas as CFO and become a member of the Board.

Thérèse Esperdy, Chair of Imperial Brands, said: "Under Stefan's leadership, Imperial Brands has delivered consistent growth and outstanding returns for shareholders."

"One of his many achievements was the way he comprehensively refreshed our executive leadership, making strong hires from other consumer businesses and nurturing internal talent."

"Lukas and Murray have both played key roles in Imperial Brands' growing



## IMPERIAL BRANDS

success over the past four years and were important architects of our recently unveiled 2030 strategy.

"Under their executive leadership, I am confident we will continue to deliver for shareholders while moving purposefully towards a healthier future."

Lukas added: "I am excited to be working with our excellent team to build on our growing track record of growth. As we deliver on the next stage of our strategy, Imperial Brands will continue to play its distinctive role as the strong challenger business in our industry."

"By getting even closer to our consumers, staying focused and investing to be more agile, we will deliver sustainable growth in tobacco and profitable scale in



▲ Lukas Paravicini: CEO from October

next generation products." Stefan will continue to serve on the Imperial Brands Board until 31 December 2025 and be available until May 2026 to support Lukas with the transition. [G](#)

**John Donkersley** and his wife Doris, who have notched up an incredible 70 years of marriage, marked their platinum milestone with a quiet family gathering.

## Couple mark their 70th wedding anniversary

IMPERIAL PENSIONER John Donkersley and his wife Doris, who have been together since their teenage years, are celebrating their 70th wedding anniversary.

The couple, who are both 92, met shortly after leaving school at the age of 16 and marked the platinum milestone with a quiet family gathering at their home in Barnehurst, Kent.

"We had our big celebration for our 60th anniversary," said Doris. "This year we're keeping it a little more low-key."

John joined Imperial's advertising department in Drury Lane, London in 1952, before moving to Imperial House, Hyde Park, when it opened in 1969. He later transferred to the secretary's department and finally the Group public affairs graphic

studio, where he was responsible for placing the printing contract for the first Pension Fund report and other company newspapers. He took early

retirement from Imperial in 1984 and began working as a print buyer for Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO). He recalls one notable project where he created maps of the Gulf region for US military operations, drawing on resources from companies like BP and Shell.

"It was a very secretive job at the time, and I was proud to have contributed," said John. "I even received a letter of recognition from a US General for my work."

The couple's connection to Imperial continued through their son, Stephen, who joined the advertising department in 1980. He and John worked just one floor apart at the Hyde Park office and often met for lunch and coffee. Stephen retired in 2009, after 29 years of service.

John and Doris received a card from the Queen for their 60th and 65th anniversaries and are hoping to receive one from the King this year.

They have two grandchildren, Heather and Philip, and two great-grandchildren, Edward and Harriet, who joined the couple for a family meal to mark their special occasion. [G](#)



▲ Just married: John and Doris at their wedding 70 years ago



▲ Platinum couple: John and Doris Donkersley



**Robert Egginton** has joined Imperial Brands as Head of UK Pensions, succeeding Jan Killick, who retired earlier this year after six years in the role.

# NEW FACE JOINS AS HEAD OF PENSIONS TEAM

**R**OBERT BRINGS with him over two decades of experience in pensions and employee benefits. Over the last 15 years, he has held senior roles at organisations including Mercedes-Benz UK and GXO Logistics, where he most recently led a pensions team covering the UK and Republic of Ireland for both Defined Benefit and Defined Contribution plans.

"I am really excited to join Imperial Brands and lead the team supporting the Imperial Pension Fund," said Robert.

## Experienced in-house team

"The draw for me is the great reputation and history of the Fund and the journey the scheme is on to safeguard the members' benefits.

"It's also fantastic to be joining an organisation with such a strong culture and experienced in-house team. I'm looking forward to continuing the journey to evolve the services the team delivers for the Trustees, members, and the company."

"...looking forward to continuing the journey..."

**Head of UK Pensions:**  
**Robert Egginton**

When he has spare time, Robert enjoys spending it with his family and two labradors and indulging in his numerous hobbies which include cycling and model building.

## Keen archer

He is working on a model of the historic Cutty Sark clipper and loves spending time visiting the real ship that's on show in Greenwich, London, to pick up on the small details. He's also a keen archer and a member of his local club in Edlesborough, Buckinghamshire.

"It's a great way to unwind and spend time outdoors getting some fresh air and exercise," said Robert.

"There's a lot of skill and focus needed to achieve accuracy to reach the target, which can be set at anything up to 90 metres away.

"It's also great to travel to different clubs and events competing at club level, although I won't be entering the Olympics any time soon!

"I don't see an end to adding to the list of hobbies anytime soon as its good for mental agility." **G**



**Jan Killick**

Robert spent a month working alongside Jan before she retired, gaining valuable insights into the Fund's operations and history.

"Jan was incredibly generous with her time and knowledge, and the handover has been invaluable," he added.

## Will you sign up for electronic information?

There are a number of ways to get information about the Pension Fund or contact a member of the team, depending on your needs.

Visit our [myimperialpension.com](http://myimperialpension.com) website 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.

## Ways to contact the team


If you need to contact the pensions office, email or telephone is the quickest and easiest way to reach a member of the team.


However, if your bank or address details have changed, you will need to 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.

 [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)

## NOTICEBOARD



A portrait of a man with short, dark hair, smiling. He is wearing a dark suit jacket over a light blue button-down shirt. The background is a blurred green, suggesting an outdoor setting.

▲ New Board member: Martin Staunton

five-year strategy (see page 2) and is now working on its delivery.

## Selection process

An accountant by training, Martin's career has been largely in general management or functional positions across strategy transformation and corporate development. As well as working in advisory roles, he has worked in-house with a range of businesses to deliver their ambitions, including involvement with mergers and acquisitions, investment committees and managing pension risks.

"I am delighted to be appointed as the new Chair and look forward to working with my Trustee colleagues..."

"I am delighted to have been appointed to the Imperial Tobacco Pension Trustee Board and look forward to working with the Trustee team and its advisors moving forward," said Martin.

"My career experience allows me to bring a commercial view to the Board, which I hope will be beneficial in supporting the Trustee team to make the right decisions to deliver maximum benefit, value and security for the Fund's members.

■ Look out for this year's Pension Fund summary report, which will be sent out later this year. In the meantime, you can keep up to date with Fund news by visiting our website.

## Diary dates

- ◆ The 2025 reunion for former **Imperial Group PLC Head Office** employees will take place at Knowle Golf Club, Bristol on Thursday 16 October. Organiser Mike Paige will send out invitations with further details nearer the time.
- ◆ 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.

## 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: [helpline@impac.org.uk](mailto:helpline@impac.org.uk) or write to  
IMPAC, PO Box 10486, Oxtou, Southwell  
NG24 9NL

**For membership queries**

IMPAC membership agency (to update membership details only):  
email: [impac@dmb.org.uk](mailto:impac@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.impac.org.uk](http://www.impac.org.uk)

Membership is free for the first 12 months.



# OVER 150 AT SUMMER REUNION



Pensioners catching up at their summer reunion in Nottingham

Inset: enjoying the buffet at The Stage pub

**P**LAYER'S PENSIONERS enjoyed a fantastic summer reunion at The Stage pub in Nottingham, with well over 150 attending to catch-up and reminisce about their days working for the company.

It was the first time Wayne Smith, former fitter in the services department, attended the reunion, which is organised by former engineering mechanic Dave Clay. The Stage always provides a free

buffet, with donations collected for its chosen charity instead. This time £425 was raised for the Lincs & Notts Air Ambulance, which is hoping to add a second helicopter to support its attendance at the most serious incidents across the area.

The Player's events are promoted

through *Imperial Tobacco...Past and Present*, a private Facebook group that has over 1,800 members and was set up to allow former colleagues to keep in touch.

The group's Christmas reunion will be held on Wednesday 17 December from 3:30pm at the same venue. **G**

## **G** LETTER

### Reunion praised for supporting dementia charity

◆ It was heartening to read that the pensioners' reunion in Nottingham raised money for Dementia UK. My beloved husband, Tony Wild, was an engineer who spent his entire working life at Player's. He used to say he enjoyed every single day of work. Sadly, Tony passed away from Alzheimer's. I do as much as I can to support the cause, so I was pleased to see that Player's pensioners are also contributing to fight against this cruel disease.

Wendy Wild



## The Harry's head to Benidorm



▲ Members of the Player's walking group, The Harry's, showing off their colourful Hawaiian shirts during their four-day break to sunny Benidorm, Spain.

The annual trip is organised by Dave Clay, who worked as an engineering mechanic at Player's for 37 years from 1969 until 2006.

The group of nine members of the Player's walking group enjoyed exploring the coastal resort during the day and watching different tribute acts each night.

It was the 17th time the group have visited the area, where they stay at the Hotel Calypso, and plans are already in place for their return in May 2026.

**James Gunn OBE**, great-great grandson of Henry Overton Wills II, co-founder of WD & HO Wills, is celebrating his 100th birthday. He will mark the occasion at his home in Nottingham with his wife, Rosemary, six children, ten grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

## WILLS DESCENDANT TURNS A HUNDRED



**J**AMES GUNN was born in Clifton, Bristol, in 1925 and grew up in Henbury just outside of the city. He attended Durnford Prep School in Dorset, followed by Radley College in Oxfordshire.

In 1943, James was due to be called up, so he volunteered to join the Royal Artillery and completed two years training, which included six months at Edinburgh University and officer training in India. He was commissioned in August 1945 shortly before the war ended and spent two years as a PT and Sports Officer at the Indian Army Mountain Training Centre in Ambala, awaiting demobilisation.

### James chosen 'sight unseen'

"The centre had a staff of 60 instructors: quite a handful for 20-year-old Lieutenant Gunn, but my Urdu improved wonderfully!" said James. "I then spent seven terms at New College, Oxford,

reading history and playing a lot of music and married my first wife, Jill, in December 1949."

In 1950 the board at Imperial Tobacco, where both his father, Henry Sommerville Gunn, and grandfather, Henry Wills Gunn, had held senior roles, agreed to take one of Henry Sommerville's sons, sight unseen.

As the youngest, James was chosen and was assigned to Player's in Nottingham as a Management Trainee.

He joined the South Nottinghamshire Hussars Territorial Army (TA) a year later and became its Commanding Officer in 1962.

In 1966 they won the Queen's Cup, competing against over 20 TA field regiments, and the same year James was awarded the OBE for outstanding military service.

On promotion to the rank of Colonel in 1967, he was appointed TA Colonel for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire and subsequently became Commandant of Nottinghamshire Army Cadet Force and

Honorary Colonel of the South Nottinghamshire Hussars. He was also Chairman of the Nottinghamshire Reserve Forces and Cadets Association and a member of the national Army Cadet Force Council.

James was appointed Deputy Lieutenant of Nottinghamshire in 1979 and served as High Sheriff of Nottinghamshire in 1984/5.

During his 32-year career with Imperial, James worked his way up from Foreman through to roles in production, distribution and marketing, before becoming General Distribution Manager for Imperial Tobacco.

### Last in a long line


Illness led to his early retirement in 1983, but James later recovered and became involved in the formation of IMPAC to help protect the interest of pensioners when Hanson took over the company in 1986.

"I was the last in a long line of family members to work for the company," said James, who married Rosemary in 1982.

"In 1851 my great grandfather, Rev Henry Mayo Gunn, married Isabella Wills, daughter to Henry Overton Wills II,

who was one of the two brothers who co-founded WD & HO Wills in 1830.

"All three of the couple's sons – Henry Wills Gunn, Ernest and Hamilton – all went on to work for the company, as did my father, Henry Sommerville Gunn.

"For my 100th birthday, I am hoping to be fit enough to attend my granddaughter, Francesca's, wedding in Cambridge. Quite a way to bow out!" 

"Quite a way to bow out!"

▼ From left: James's great-grandfather, Henry Mayo Gunn, father, Henry Sommerville Gunn, and grandfather, Henry Wills Gunn



### Other pensioners celebrating their 100th birthdays:

**Pamela Judge**, widow of P Judge, who worked for Wills in Bristol from 1943 until he retired in 1960. He died in 1976.

**Alice Pearce**, who worked for Wills in Bristol Manufacturing between 1978 and 1985 when she retired.



Paul has chaired Ilkeston and District History Society for the past nine years

Former Horizon powerhouse engineer, **Paul Miller**, has spent a lifetime involved in the industries and communities of his hometown in Ilkeston, Derbyshire. His early days in coal mining and engineering have led him to a long and enjoyable retirement filled with music, friends and historical research projects.

# PAUL'S DAYS ARE FILLED WITH MUSIC AND HISTORY







AUL MILLER first descended into a coal mine at just 15 years old, following a family tradition in a town that had been shaped by the industry.

Born in Awsworth, Nottingham, in 1947, Paul moved to Ilkeston, Derbyshire, when he was 12. Like many in his family and local community, he grew up surrounded by the influence of the coal mining industry.

"I always wanted to be a coal miner," he said. "My family background is in mining, and I used to love listening to my father's stories of what it was like down the mines."

Paul's first job after leaving Bennerley Secondary School was an apprenticeship with the National Coal Board, installing machinery underground, while also studying at the local technical college.

### Wonderful job

He initially worked at Coppice Colliery near Shipley, earning £5 per week, before being given the opportunity to work in operations across the country.

"It was a wonderful job," he recalled. "I would've stayed there longer but I was saving to buy a house and couldn't get approved for a mortgage because of the low wages and uncertainty about the future of the industry at that time."

By his early twenties, Paul had left the mines behind and moved to Stanton Ironworks in New Stanton, which was once the area's largest employer and manufacturer.

"It was a laugh a minute, but we got some serious work done."

In 1970, Paul married his wife, Wendy, and the couple shared over 50 years together until she died in 2021. Together, they had two daughters, Sally, a district nurse, and Katie, who also worked for Imperial as a Sales Rep across the South West, as well as two grandchildren.

When Paul joined Player's Horizon factory in 1977, it was a welcome change from the demanding work he was used to. "My early jobs had been tough physically," he said. "I came to Player's to retire!"

He began as a maintenance fitter in the primary department, where raw tobacco was processed, before moving into general maintenance, looking after lifts, shutter doors and other machinery five years later. Following that, he spent four years

maintaining forklifts. His final decade with the company was spent in the factory's powerhouse, where he maintained the boilers.

"It was a laugh a minute, but we got some serious work done," said Paul, who retired in 2002 after 25 years with the company. "I'm very grateful

for my time at the Horizon factory and for the company pension scheme. I couldn't have retired at 55 anywhere else."

Paul fondly remembers the Player's rock and roll nights at the athletic club on Aspley Lane, Nottingham: he and Wendy took a double decker bus from their home in Ilkeston and would jive all night to 1950s records, his favourite era.

Paul's love of 50s music didn't end with the dances. Today, he plays bass guitar in a band called the Elderly Brothers, alongside former Player's engineer and lead vocalist,



▲ Paul has spent years researching the names listed on Ilkeston's First World War cenotaph with his friend, Grant Shaw

Roger Ward, and two other members. They rehearse once a fortnight and have had four gigs this year so far.

"We perform a lot of 50s music at care homes and charity events," said Paul, who began taking guitar lessons when he retired. "It's very rewarding to see older residents who struggle with memory loss join in. They really come to life when they hear music from their younger days."

### Younger days

Paul is also a keen historian and has been a member of the Ilkeston and District Local History Society for 18 years, serving as Chairman for the last nine. He helps organise monthly talks at the local church hall, plus exhibitions and trips which regularly attract around 50 attendees.

"We recently took a trip to the National Coal Mining Museum in Wakefield and had the chance to take a tour of the old mine shafts," he said. "Now that really took me back to my younger days."

As a member of the history society, Paul aims to share his knowledge and preserve the history of Ilkeston through writing. One book he co-wrote, *Railway Tales: Ilkeston and District in the Age of Steam*, is on its eighth reprint and speaks of another of Paul's lifelong interests. "I always wanted to work on the railways too," he said. "But you can't do everything!"

Through the group, he became



▲ Paul plays bass guitar with the Elderly Brothers at care homes and charity events

continued on next page



continued from page 9

instrumental in the restoration of the Grade II listed Bennerley Viaduct, a large iron railway bridge linking Ilkeston and Awdorth. Known locally as the Iron Giant, the viaduct had fallen into disrepair since closing in the 1960s.

He was approached by the Friends of Bennerley Viaduct group because of his knowledge of local history and railways and quickly became involved in the campaign to raise awareness, hosting talks, community events and even media interviews.

"Our efforts led to the viaduct being named on the 2020 World Monuments Watch list, alongside the likes of the Notre Dame in Paris," said Paul. "And, after years of campaigning and restoration work, the viaduct reopened as a walking and cycling route in 2022. It has become a popular walking spot for people all over the country and is also open for our groups."

### War memorials in France

Another recent project saw Paul, alongside friend and fellow history enthusiast, Grant Shaw, spend a number of years researching the 49 names listed on Ilkeston's First World War Cenotaph. Together, they traced the lives of these local men, researching their family history and piecing together their stories.

Their research has taken them to visit war memorials in France as well as the beaches



▲ One of Paul's passions has been a project to restore the Grade II Bennerley Viaduct

of Normandy. The pair contacted the Royal British Legion for a box of remembrance crosses and, throughout their travels, have laid a cross on the memorial of every fallen serviceman from Ilkeston.

"It was an incredible project, and I often got emotional thinking about these people who died during the First World War, who were from places that I walk by every day," said Paul. "I wouldn't mind picking it up again; I'm sure there are more memorials to visit."

Paul, who is now in his seventies, still

dedicates much of his time to researching and uncovering his town's history. "It's amazing what you can walk past in your own town if you know where to look," he said.

"I am very grateful to Player's – not only for a very enjoyable career but also for allowing me to have such an active and lengthy retirement." **G**

Find out more about Paul's work with the history society, and explore books available for purchase at: [ilkestonhistory.org.uk](http://ilkestonhistory.org.uk)

## Recognised for voluntary service

David Farley enjoyed a day to remember at the King's Garden Party at Buckingham Palace in recognition of almost 60 years of dedicated volunteer service.

David, a former Player's Sales Representative in London, was awarded the British Empire Medal in the 2024 King's Birthday Honours List for his longstanding commitment to the communities of Wadebridge and Lanreath, Cornwall.

Over the decades, his community involvement has included running youth clubs, managing a village football team, supporting parish councils and leading a long-running social club for young people with additional needs.

"I ran the social club near my home in Wadebridge, North Cornwall, for nearly 40 years," said David, who joined Player's in 1964 and retired in 1996. "We gathered weekly for fun activities, organised group holidays and enjoyed Sunday lunches together once a month."

The medal was presented at a ceremony at County Hall in Truro in



David Farley at the presentation ceremony at County Hall, Truro, with Valerie, his wife of 59 years, and their three daughters

September last year. David attended the event with his wife, Valerie, and their three daughters, and was congratulated by both the Lord Lieutenant of Cornwall and Chairman of the Council.

In May this year, David and Valerie were invited to attend the King's Garden Party, where they joined others from across

the UK who have made a difference in their communities for a special day of celebration and recognition.

"I have had so much fun in my life thanks to a lot of truly wonderful people," he said. "It's been a real joy to support young people over the years and see them make so much of their lives."



A desire to travel and see the world has led Imperial pensioner **Mick Miller** on his greatest adventure – meeting and marrying his soul mate.

# A LONG DISTANCE LOVE STORY

**M**ICK MILLER met his wife, Thandeka, in early 2020 when he was travelling in South Africa with some friends he had met

while trekking the Great Wall of China in aid of the Alzheimer's Society the previous year.

"I was out in a bar in Camps Bay, Cape Town, when I saw Thandeka and was blown away by her beautiful smile," said Mick, who lives in Sherburn-in-Elmet, near York. "We struck up a conversation and, though I didn't know it at the time, I now know that I met my soul mate that night."

After Mick returned home from South Africa, where he also visited former Imperial colleague and friend Suzanne Scott, who now lives in Durban (see story on page 16), he remained in contact with Thandeka. However, due to the impact of the Covid pandemic, it wasn't until 2022 that they were able to meet in person again, this time in Zanzibar, Tanzania – the same year Mick completed a trek to Everest base camp in Nepal.

"We decided to do the long distance thing, with Thandeka coming over to England for three months each summer, me visiting South Africa and

"...I asked her to marry me and, fortunately, she said yes!"

us continuing our shared passion for travel visiting countries including Thailand, Namibia and several in South America," explained Mick, who worked as a sales rep for Imperial from 1992 until 2017.

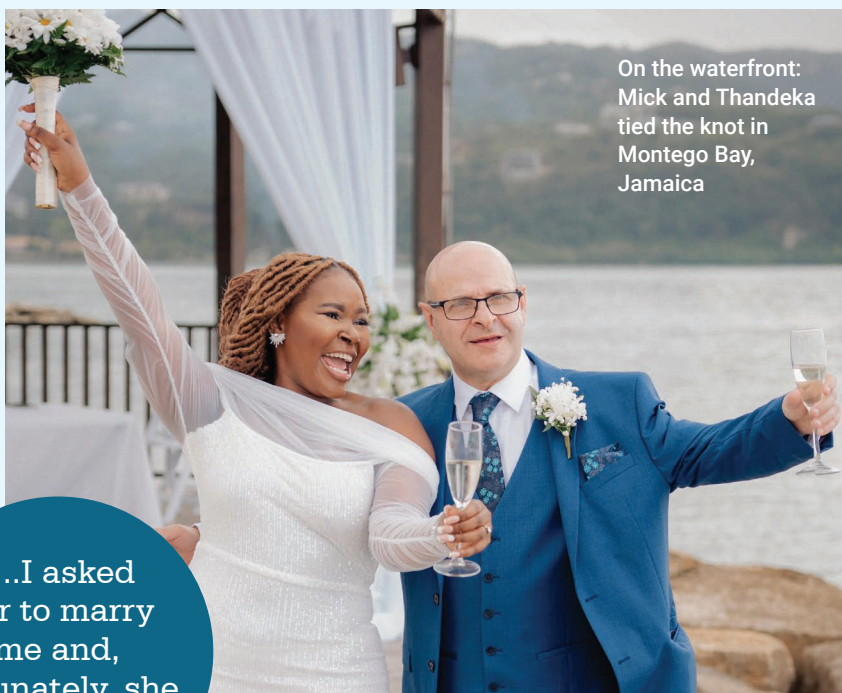
## Zulu pre-wedding ceremony

"But we wanted to be together full time so last summer I asked her to marry me and, fortunately, she said yes!"

In November 2024, Mick travelled to Thandeka's family home near Durban for the umembeso – a traditional Zulu pre-wedding ceremony where the groom gives gifts to the bride's parents and family in a public declaration of their intention to marry.

The couple then tied the knot in

On the waterfront:  
Mick and Thandeka  
tied the knot in  
Montego Bay,  
Jamaica




Montego Bay, Jamaica, in February and are awaiting approval of a spouse visa to allow Thandeka to live full time in the UK, although the couple are considering settling in Cape Town instead.


Thandeka, who is finishing a law degree, grew up in the KwaZulu-Natal province near Durban and experienced the stigma of not being able to afford school shoes until she was nine years old. Her dream was to be able to buy shoes for children whose families were unable to afford them and it is a project that Mick has fully embraced.

"We each set up a Just Giving page last year and raised enough money to buy 25 pairs of school shoes and polish for primary school children near Durban, ahead of the start of the new school year in January," said Mick, who works part-time as a supermarket merchandiser.

"We only need £450 a year to continue supplying 25 pairs so we have now set up a new Just Giving page for anyone who would like to make a donation.

"We are also looking at various fundraising ideas, including a barefoot sponsored walk around a lake near my home to highlight the plight of the children."

The couple are now planning another wedding celebration in January 2026 when friends and family will join them at Manyoni private game reserve near Durban and enjoy three safaris as part of the festivities. 

To support Mick and Thandeka's appeal, go to  <http://bit.ly/4513HD2>



Mick and Thandeka raised enough to buy school shoes and polish for primary school children near Durban





This year would have marked the 100th birthday of **Robert Beighet Brownlees**, who worked at the Wills Newcastle factory from the day it opened in March 1950 until he retired in 1982. The milestone prompted his daughter, Madeline Caris, to contact the Gazette to share her memories of her father's time with the company – as well as her own – and the role it played in the family's lives.

## A FAMILY AFFAIR AT WILLS NEWCASTLE

**R**OBERT, known to those around him as Bob, was born in Newcastle in 1925 and, aged 19, was called up for National Service, serving with the Royal Navy for four years.

When he completed his National Service he met his wife, Marge (pictured right, with Bob), at a dance at the Wheatsheaf Hotel, near Woosington, Newcastle, and the couple married in September 1950.

They went on to raise seven children: Marge's daughter, Christina, and their children Bobby, Paul, Madeline, Janice, Terry and Mark.

"Dad told me he was with another girl that night, but when he saw mam, he was smitten," said Madeline.

"He asked her on a date, and they arranged to meet the following week, but, always the gentleman, he made sure the other girl got home safely at the end of the night."

Bob and Marge were both excellent singers and would regularly perform with friends at the Westbourne and Novo Castris social clubs in Newcastle.

### Head Security Officer

Bob began working in the warehouse at the new Wills factory in Newcastle on the day it opened its doors – 01 March 1950 – and was also a part time Factory Fireman as and when needed.

He was later promoted to Security Officer and eventually became Head Security Officer for the factory where he was responsible for directing traffic at the beginning and end of each working day, as well as the overall security of the site. He retired in 1982.

One of Bob's favourite traditions was to organise an annual trip to the coast at Bridlington with family and friends, including those from Wills, which he did for over 50 years. It was always around his birthday in May and he organised his last one on his 89th birthday, just three days before he died.

The Brownlees children were a familiar sight at the factory from an early age, attending company social events such as Christmas parties, fireworks displays and sports days.

In 1966 Bobby made working at Wills a family affair when he joined the company, aged 15, as an electrical engineering apprentice.

He went on to win the Apprentice of the Year award twice in a row, receiving the Rowan Cobbold Trophy, while his good friend, Keith Hignett was runner-up.

Bobby, who died in May this year, worked for Wills for 20 years, starting in the Newcastle factory and later transferring to the Bristol factory. In 1986, after leaving Wills, he returned to



Bob, with his son Bobby

the North and become a manager at the Nissan car factory.

### I was so proud of him

Madeline also began working for Wills in the packing room in 1970 and stayed with the company for 11 years. At the time all new starters had to take part in CPR training which was another one of Bob's responsibilities.

"I sat in the room with all the other new starters, not knowing what to expect, when Dad walked in to teach the class," Madeline explained. "I was so proud of him. Wills was a really family orientated place to work and, as well as my Dad, brother and me, my cousin Rosemary's father, Tommy Stewart, and my cousin Kenneth Mawhinney also worked for the company."

"We all enjoyed our time working at the Wills factory, especially Dad, who was a hero to me, and to all of our family." **G**



Members of the Wills Newcastle security team. Bob is second from left



# National accounts coordinator who remained close with former colleagues

Wills pensioner Eddie Oram, who enjoyed a 42-year career with the company, has died aged 76.

Born in 1948 in Lower Clapton, London, he attended Parmiter's Grammar School in Bethnal Green and spent his childhood playing for the Eton Manor Boys Football Club.

After leaving school in 1965, Eddie combined three jobs – a car minding and washing service, selling eggs at a market stall and manning a Sunday newspaper kiosk – before starting his career at Wills.

He joined the company as a sales admin clerk at the Holborn Viaduct office in London, meticulously maintaining records of direct accounts long before computers simplified the task.

## National accounts coordinator

Eddie later moved into the role of reference clerk in the sales office where he stayed for three years before transitioning to the marketing department as head of the multiples section. In 1977, he accepted the role of national multiples coordinator, and relocated to Bristol with his wife, Christine,

who he met in 1967. The couple married three years later in 1970.

After the merger of Wills/Imperial Imports and Player's/Ogden's in 1982, Eddie was appointed national accounts coordinator, working in the Imperial national accounts department for 25 years.

## National accounts coordinator

When Eddie retired in 2007, he kept busy with a number of projects, including building a nine-hole crazy golf course in his garden at his home in Shepton Mallet, Somerset, and reconstructing his detailed 19-foot OO gauge model railway.

He was also a season ticket holder for Bristol City and enjoyed fishing off Chesil beach in Dorset, as well as holidays with his family.

Eddie remained close with many of his colleagues from his four decades at Wills, regularly attending reunions and group trips to catch up with old friends.

He is survived by Christine, their two sons, John, who lives in Dubai, and George, who lives in Cheltenham, and six grandchildren.



Eddie on his nine-hole crazy golf course

# Trained actuary who became Director of Imperial Investments and went on to chair Impac

Former Imperial Investment Manager Norman Ferguson has died aged 88.

Norman grew up on a farm in County Down, Northern Ireland, and graduated with a degree in economics and statistics from Queens University Belfast in 1958.

He started his career at Standard Life in Edinburgh, where he trained as an Actuary, before joining the Imperial Group in Bristol as Assistant Investment Manager in 1968.

Ten years later he took over the role of Investment Manager following the retirement of Alan Hutchings. He stayed in this role until 1990, as the then Managing Director of Imperial Investments.

## Private investment consultancy

On retirement from Imperial he set up his own private investment consultancy company, the Norman Ferguson Partnership, working for clients such as Devon and Cornwall Councils, Irish Life and Permanent in Dublin and logistics company Excel.

Six months after officially retiring Norman was also



appointed Director of Imperial Investments, and he carried on working with the company on a consultancy basis until 1999.

In 2004 he took on the role of Chair of Impac, using his pensions and investments knowledge and experience to support the interests of pensioners. He remained Chair until 2016 when he became President, a position he still held when he died.

## Sailor, gardener and golf player

Norman was also a keen sailor and enjoyed gardening and playing golf. He was a member of Bristol and Clifton Golf Club for many years where he regularly bumped into former

colleagues.

He is survived by Adelaide, his wife of 67 years, their children, Richard and Jackie, and four grandchildren.

Will Mather, whose 35-year career with the Pension Fund included 18 years working closely with Norman, said: "Norman was a stimulating colleague. He was always full of energy and enthusiasm, sometimes irrepressibly so! He will be greatly missed by all who knew him."



# Keen sportsman who umpired tennis matches at Wimbledon

Imperial pensioner and accomplished tennis umpire, Tim Mahoney, has died aged 74.

He joined the company in 1969 as a computer operator in group management services and later became a computer programmer. It was here he met his wife, Jane Deane, who was a secretary in the same department. The couple remained together until Jane died in 2018.

Tim remained with the company until 1983, when he left following redundancy. During the next few years, he worked with a local college to teach unemployed people how to use computers and helped them gain qualifications.

In 1991 he began working in the IT department at Jobcentre Plus, where he was part of the team responsible

for converting the entire organisation to a new computer system. Tim took early retirement in 2012 and enjoyed volunteering as a tour guide for the Bristol City Sightseeing open air buses.

A keen sportsman, Tim was an active member of several Imperial sports clubs including tennis, squash, archery and rugby. He regularly competed in both the local tennis league and in fixtures against Player's and Wills – until a knee injury prevented him from playing.

Far from retiring from the world of sport, however, Tim enjoyed a distinguished career in tennis officiating. He umpired at Wimbledon for 12 years, including matches on centre court and officiated at tournaments across England and Wales.

He also took up refereeing, assessing



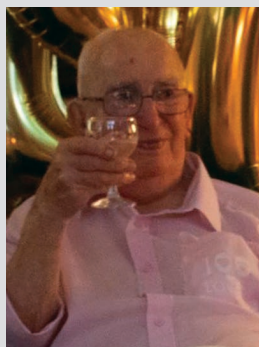
and coaching rugby referees; he was the grading secretary for the Bristol Referees Society, and, in 2016 he was sent to South Africa to assess its developing referees.

Tim was chairman of Rugby Football Union's South West Group for two years from 2004 to 2006, overseeing around 1,250 referees and match observers. He also found time to marshal at the European Golf Tour, as well as a number of times at the Ryder Cup.

## Ross Foods accountant and a true family man

Centenarian Arthur Makepeace has died shortly before what would have been his 101st birthday.

Arthur joined Buxted Chicken as its Accountant in 1959, just as it was getting established as one of the UK's first companies to enter the frozen chicken market. He was based in Buxted, East Sussex, but travelled around the country helping to open new depots and saw the company grow to over 200 employees.



Buxted was taken over by Ross Foods, which became part of the Imperial Group

in 1969 and, in 1971, Arthur left the company, deciding to remain in East Sussex when the head office was relocated to Norfolk.

He retired in the mid-1980s and, with his wife Dorothy, continued as an active member of many local organisations. The couple moved into a retirement home in 2018, where Dorothy died four years later.

"Dad always wanted to die peacefully in his sleep; a wish he was granted," said

his daughter, Helen.

"He always worked hard and, with Mum, gave me and my brothers a loving home and a true moral compass for our adult lives.

"Dad loved his family and was content and grateful for his long life. The fact that his children, grandchildren and great grandchildren were still visiting him in his care home right up until he died speaks volumes of a life well lived and showed how much he was loved along the way."

## Philip spoke fondly of his 20-year career with Imperial

Philip Trevor Ingham, who worked for Imperial for 20 years, has died, aged 75.

Born in Pudsey, Leeds, in 1950, Philip joined Imperial in 1976 as a Salesman, introducing new brands to the shops and helping to arrange product displays.

In 1996, Philip left Imperial and joined Twining's Tea Company, again as a salesman, dealing with large companies and department stores like Selfridges and Japan Airlines. He enjoyed the work but spoke fondly of his time with Imperial and kept in touch with many of his former colleagues.

Philip married his wife Esther in 1972,



and the couple enjoyed nearly 54 years of marriage. They were enthusiastic travellers and spent a lot of time in the Far East,

visiting places like Thailand and Malaysia, enjoying the culture and cuisine.

In retirement, he worked on building model trains, dolls houses for the couple's grandchildren and fish ponds for their koi fish. He was also a keen gardener and created a beautiful garden for Esther to enjoy.

"Working at Imperial was such a joy for him; he had such a good time there," said Esther.

Philip is survived by Esther, their son, Alan, stepdaughters Joyce and Melanie, and five grandchildren and step grandchildren.



# Player's pensioner well known for his football skills

Popular Player's garage pensioner Frederick Towlson, known as John, has died aged 85.

John joined the Traffic and Despatch Department in 1958 and was very well known in the garage as well as for his footballing skills.

He spent more than 30 years working for the company, including on the HGVs, in the



garage, and as part of the 'heavy gang'.

He met Lilian (née Thompson), his wife of 60 years, at the company in the early 1960s and the couple celebrated their diamond wedding anniversary last year.

## Loved travelling

Lilian worked in the Traffic Office on Beckenham Road as

well as the laboratory before leaving to have their son, Richard, in 1967.

John enjoyed fishing and loved travelling to Toronto, Canada, to visit Richard and his family.

John is survived by Lilian, who lives in Strelley, Nottingham, children Richard and Lynne, five grandchildren and one great grandson.

The deaths are reported, as at 31 May 2025, of the following retired employees:

## HEAD OFFICE AND ITL

Christopher Paul Coakley, 83;  
Norman Walter Hill Ferguson, 88;  
Gerald Flook, 86;  
Gary Raymond Gostelow, 82;  
David James Hardingham, 77;  
Philip Trevor Ingham, 75;  
Stewart Michael Knee, 72;  
Edward James Oram, 76;  
John Graham Ross, 85.

## WD & HO WILLS

Johanna Austin, 73;  
Lily Ince Boston, 93;  
Norma Kathleen Brophy, 93;  
Robert Brown, 86;  
John Newington Christopher, 94;  
Terence Hugh Chubb, 90;  
Ann Jane Nixon Conway, 71;  
Elizabeth Bryans Craig, 93;  
Brian James Douglas, 86;  
Anthony Patrick Drennan, 89;  
Margaret Mary Glanville, 91;  
Pamela Josephine Green, 89;  
Patricia Halpin, 92;  
Sylvia Joan Haney, 100;  
Joyce Audrey Heath, 95;  
Maureen Daisy Hooper, 87;  
Maureen Lillian Hooper, 88;  
Maureen Lilian Howe, 88;  
Jeffery Clive Iles, 77;  
Joan Lane, 97;  
Kenneth Lees, 92;  
Margaret Rose Leeworthy, 83;  
June McDonough, 88;  
Doreen Nellie Moulton, 93;  
Stuart Charles Nicholson, 69;  
Meriel Gilian O'Mahoney, 78;  
Eileen May Pembury, 91;  
Brian John Perry, 92;  
Maureen Sylvia Pocock, 96;  
Muriel Ponting, 83;  
William Carey Sloan, 90;  
Marian Jean Stubbenhagen, 82;  
Charles Robson Taylor, 93;

Douglas Turner, 92;  
Alexander Thomas Turner, 94;  
Ralph Frederick Ward, 92;  
Peter Francis Wood, 96;  
Shirley Young, 89.

## JOHN PLAYER & SONS

Elizabeth Anderson, 77;  
Arthur William Betts, 84;  
Vincenza Biondi, 89;  
David Boland, 77;  
Muriel Elsie Boon, 98;  
Shirley Borrington, 85;  
Elizabeth Campbell, 86;  
Doris Cartwright, 95;  
John Casey, 93;  
Elsie Charlton, 89;  
June Cooper, 89;  
Ernest Raymond Dennis, 99;  
Irene May Dobson, 97;  
Norma Edwards, 92;  
Margaret Milgrew Fleming, 95;  
Patricia Ann Fox, 75;  
Henry Frazer, 92;  
Michael Gordon Gabbitas, 87;  
Michael Girvan, 93;  
Diana Haile, 79;  
Rodney Haycock, 79;  
Avis Tina Haylett, 90;  
Cynthia Paula Hearne, 74;  
George Heron, 85;  
David Tomlinson Hildrew, 64;  
Stephen Jones, 70;  
Philip James Lumsden, 77;  
Creasey Leonard Nixon, 94;  
Raymond Norwood, 85;  
David Oldfield, 82;  
Paul Padley, 70;  
Freda Ida Perkins, 83;  
Sidney Platt, 96;  
Brian Popple, 90;  
Sylvia Ann Ramsey, 85;  
David Scott, 73;  
Geoffrey Lawrence Shipman, 90;  
James Sloan, 82;  
Paul Keith Smith, 62;  
Kenneth George Spowell, 84;  
David Michael Sumner, 74;

Frederick John Towlson, 85;  
Terence John Ward, 78.

## OGDEN'S

David Allen, 87  
Irene Culshaw, 83;  
John Gray, 92;  
Gladys Johnson, 92;  
Gordon James Korn, 94;  
Grace Mitchell, 94;  
Albert Edward Sumner, 87;  
Valerie Thompson, 81;  
Veronica Whewell, 88.

## FINLAY & CO

Brian Victor Bayes, 80;  
Joan Jones, 89.

## LOWFIELD DISTRIBUTION

David Edwin Allen, 85.

## SINCLAIR COLLIS

Peter Bannister, 84;  
Malcolm Peter Gillies, 82.

## ST ANNE'S BOARD MILL

Brian Michael Beard, 78;  
Michael Graham Long, 82;  
Arthur Godfrey George Parsons, 76;  
Raymond Henry Priest, 96;  
Ronald Albert Shepherd, 82.

## IMPERIAL FOODS LIMITED HEAD OFFICE

Surjit Singh Chohan, 91;  
Trevor Bryon Fitch, 73;  
Brian David Freeman, 86;  
Michael John Hooper, 77;  
Lynne Denise Iles, 73;  
Arthur Henry William Makepeace, 100;  
Marjorie Mann, 92;  
Michael John Newman, 93;  
Alan Say Thow, 88.

## CHIPMUNK

Douglas Hurrell, 77.

## FLORAPAK

Doris Mary Landen, 88.

## GOLDEN WONDER

Vincent Kelly, 69;  
Helen McAleese, 83.

## ROSS FOODS

Thomas Murray Cameron, 79;  
Josephine Collett, 82;  
Edward John Elliston, 87;  
Geoffrey Maskell, 68;  
Phyllis McDonough, 87;  
Roland Pawlett, 93;  
Barry Pritchard, 84;  
George Rennie, 76;  
Arthur William Roman, 94;  
Michael John Soutter, 77;  
Trevor Vinson, 61;  
Robert Kenneth Whitlock, 95.

## SEVEN SEAS

George David Smart, 98.

## SMEDLEY-HP FOODS

Owe Almgren, 89;  
Robert Gordon Gall, 90;  
Irene Ellen Gray, 96;  
Steven Harrop, 69;  
Peter John Smith, 95;  
William Peter Fowler Symonds, 80.

## WELCOME BREAK

Pritam Kaur, 94.

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.*





Former Imperial sales rep **Suzanne Scott** has dedicated the last decade to working at the Glen Garriff lion sanctuary in South Africa.

## SUZANNE IS SOUTH AFRICA'S LION QUEEN

**F**OLLOWING a personal tragedy in 2010 Suzanne Scott started volunteering with lions in Zimbabwe during her work holidays and later took three-months unpaid leave from the company to spend longer with the lions.

"The returns back to the UK became harder and harder," said Suzanne, who now lives in Durban, South Africa. "By this stage I was 45 and had worked at Imperial as a sales rep in the West Yorkshire area for over 20 years. I hadn't had children and had no major responsibilities so was hoping I might be able to find a way to start working with lions full time.

### Wild lion monitoring

"I didn't make a plan, just trusted the process and hoped for the best: I felt like it was time to let the universe decide what I should be doing. Lo and behold I was made redundant in 2013 and took that as my sign to rent out my house and invest my redundancy pay in moving to Southern Africa to volunteer with lions full time."

Suzanne volunteered for a year in Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana and South Africa at various sanctuaries as well as taking part in wild lion monitoring. By 2015 her journey led her to Glen Garriff Lion Conservation, located in Harrismith, about half way between Johannesburg and Durban in South Africa.

It was a small, family-run reserve, which had just turned into a registered non-profit lion sanctuary and was struggling financially.

Suzanne fell in love with its 77 lions and decided to use all of the experience gained volunteering at different reserves, as well as the life and career skills developed in UK, to help them survive. She began by reaching out to international



Suzanne fell in love with the lions at Glen Garriff lion sanctuary

"...I'm still here, making a difference to the lions' lives..."

friends for advice on fund raising and started filming the lions and promoting them via social media.

Over the next five years she developed the social media following to over four million, monetising YouTube to earn an income to help pay for the lions' upkeep. The team also started renting out a property on the estate for visitors to experience the lions in close quarters and provide another income stream.

"I became a director of the lion sanctuary and I'm still here, making a difference to the lions' lives and enjoying the weather in South Africa," said Suzanne. "I enjoyed my years with Imperial, particularly building relationships with customers from different cultures, the psychology of selling, and the freedom of being on the road.



"I am extremely grateful that my career has afforded me the financial security to be able to do what I love. I don't get paid for any of the work that I do and managed with my savings and investments until I started to claim my pension early at 55 two years ago.

"I was born on World Lion Day (10 August) and have always had a fascination and a feeling of a soul connection with lions, so being able to work with them every day is a dream come true."

To find out more about the lions at GG Conservation visit [ggconservation.org](http://ggconservation.org)

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