

the Gazette

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FOR PENSIONERS OF IMPERIAL TOBACCO

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Taking in the sights of Nottingham: former Player's engineers outside the council house building in Market Square

WALKING GROUP RESUMES SCHEDULE



The Harry's were invited to explore the basement of one of the oldest pubs in England when they stopped for a drink at The Salutation Inn



MEMBERS OF Player's walking group, The Harry's, are back to meeting every two weeks and were surprised when a walk around Nottingham took an unexpected turn and resulted in them exploring the depths of one of the city's longest standing buildings.

The group, which started in 2007 and is made up of former engineers, stopped at various local landmarks during their walk around the city including Old Market Square, the Robin Hood statue and The Salutation Inn, which lays claim to being

one of the oldest pubs in England.

"We went into the pub for a drink and the landlord invited us to have a look in the cellar," said former engineering mechanic Dave Clay, who coordinates the group.

"It was very interesting as the building dates to 1240 and has a series of man-made caves beneath it."

Annual memorial walk

The group, which also managed to complete its annual memorial walk from Skegness to Chapel St Leonard's in tribute

to members who have died in recent years, plans to continue walking until Christmas.

"It does us all a bit of good and provides a great opportunity to spend time with old friends," added Dave, who has been organising events for Player's for 45 years, including the summer reunion which was attended by about 100 pensioners.

"We're all looking forward to the next reunion in December and, with Covid-19 restrictions easing, hope more former colleagues will be able to join us." (See Diary Dates on page 10 for details.) **G**

The following members of the Imperial Tobacco Pension Fund are celebrating their centenary:

- **Marie Leach**, widow of Ross Food pensioner A Leach. He worked for the company from 1971 until 1977 and died in the same year.



- Golf and football enthusiast **Joseph William McDermott**, left, who joined John Player & Sons in 1939, enjoyed a family party for his 100th birthday. He swapped a potential footballing career at Nottingham Forest Football Club to work at Player's for 42 years before retiring in 1981. His wife Beryl, who died in 2012, also worked for the company for 41 years.

- **Ronald Pattinson**, widower of Phyllis, who died in 2014. She worked at John Player & Sons from 1969 until 1982.

- **Kathleen Louise Shortman**, widow of Wills pensioner James Ernest who died in 1996 and was employed by the company from 1938 until 1973.



Support for strategy from senior appointments, sharper management focus, greater investment in priority markets and new market trials.

TRADE PERFORMANCE MATCHES FORECAST



TRADING UPDATE has reported that Imperial Brands is delivering in line with guidance and on track to meet full year expectations.

The company's focus on top five priority markets is beginning to arrest long-term share declines and recent senior appointments have strengthened capabilities across the Group.

CEO Stefan Bomhard said: "We have

made good progress in implementing our strategy through a sharper management focus, greater investment behind our priority combustible tobacco markets and new market trials in heated tobacco and vapour.

"We are building a high-performance culture with the introduction of new more consumer-focused ways of working and have made a significant number of new hires to enhance our capabilities in key areas.

"I am pleased to report the business

continues to perform well and we remain on track to deliver our full year results in line with expectations."

Full year results were released after the Gazette had gone to print but can be viewed at www.imperialbrandsplc.com

New appointments boost leadership team

◆ TWO NEW appointments have been made to Imperial Brands' Executive Leadership Team (ELT).

Kim Reed, far right, leader of Imperial's US business ITG Brands, joins the ELT as president and CEO, USA region, and **Paola Poggi** joins Imperial from Procter & Gamble (P&G) to take up the role of president, Africa, Asia, Australasia region.

The appointments support the company's transformation and its strategic focus on meeting consumer preferences in its five priority markets.

Kim, who has led ITG Brands since June 2021 (Gazette, issue 97), has a wealth of experience in the consumer goods sector and a successful track record in sales and executive leadership.

Paola has broad FMCG experience having held several business leadership positions across multiple geographies, most recently as senior vice president of P&G's personal care beauty portfolio, based in China.

After more than 20 years and a very successful career at Imperial, division director Dominic Brisby left the business in October.

Chief executive Stefan Bomhard said: "Kim and Paola



are great additions to our senior leadership team and will strengthen our consumer-centric approach.

"Dominic has excelled in a variety of roles at Imperial, including as joint interim CEO for several months last year. He has given incredible support to me, and the rest of the business, and I wish him all the very best for the future."

European product trials herald growth opportunities

◆ THREE NEXT generation product (NGP) pilots are underway, including the introduction of heated tobacco products in the Czech Republic and Greece.

The national launch in the Czech Republic was the first time Imperial Brands had made its Pulze device and iD heat sticks available in Europe. The move supports Imperial's commitment to make a meaningful contribution to harm reduction and was quickly followed by the introduction of the products in Greece.

The Pulze device, pictured, heats – but doesn't burn – iD heat sticks to provide nicotine and tobacco aromas containing fewer and substantially lower levels of the harmful chemicals found in combustible

cigarette smoke. Unlike other heated tobacco products, the Pulze device does not require a charging case, offering up to 20 consecutive uses. It is being made available in copper and silver colours.



iD heat sticks are being made available in five flavours: Rich Bronze with rich tobacco flavour and triple flow filter technology, Balanced Blue, Mint Polar Green, Mint Ice and Capsule Polar. Joerg Biebernick, President, Europe Region, said:

"Heated tobacco offers significant growth

opportunities in Europe where, in many territories, it is the biggest NGP category and the fastest growing.

Detailed market testing will allow us to quickly expand our consumer insights and inform the potential to launch validated heated tobacco products in further European markets."

In addition, revised, refreshed packaging for the company's vapour brand blu is being trialled across more than 220 key stores in Charlotte, North Carolina.

A new and impactful Get Unlit campaign, which strongly resonated with target consumers in pre-launch testing, is supporting the pilot in addition to a full in-store and digital consumer engagement programme.

Keynote speech highlights Imperial's unique role

◆ IMPERIAL BRANDS CEO Stefan Bomhard gave a keynote speech to the GTNF (Global Tobacco & Nicotine Forum), the world's leading annual forum for tobacco and nicotine stakeholders.

He outlined his views on the transformation of the tobacco sector and how Imperial is changing to successfully play a unique role in the future of the industry.

The delegation of around 140 attendees at a London venue were joined by several hundred watching online through the GTNF website.

Stefan also spoke to members of The Worshipful Company of Tobacco Pipe Makers & Tobacco Blenders as the

principal guest at the historic organisation's annual banquet.

The livery company, originally founded as a trade association 400 years ago, continues to play an active role in London's financial district and provides charitable support to those in the tobacco trade who have fallen on hard times.

Stefan used his short speech to celebrate the role of guilds – both in the UK and his native Germany – as well as the skills and crafts that will support Imperial's future success.

CEO Stefan Bomhard catches up with former Imperial Group human resources director George Lankester, who was Master of The Worshipful Company of Tobacco Pipe Makers & Tobacco Blenders from 2007-8, at the livery company's annual banquet



New arrivals bring international experience



◆ NGOZI EDOZIEN, right, and Diane de Saint Victor have joined the Board of Imperial Brands PLC as non-executive directors.

Ngozi has over 30 years' experience in general management, finance, consultancy, and business development gained at multinational companies in Europe, USA and Africa. She also has considerable experience of consumer goods, having spent six years on the Board of PZ Cussons and four years on the Board of Vlisco PLC.

Founder and managing director of Invivo Partners Limited, a

Nigerian venture capital firm, Ngozi is a non-executive director on the Board of Guinness Nigeria, a listed subsidiary of Diageo, Stanbic IBTC Holdings PLC and of Barloworld Ltd.

Diane brings strong legal, regulatory and ESG experience to the Board, having held several general counsel and other key roles in an international career spanning more than 30 years.

Her 13-year tenure as general counsel and company secretary for ABB, the global technology company based in Switzerland, and her general counsel role at Airbus before that are reinforced by her prior listed UK Board experience as a non-executive director at Barclays plc. She is currently a non-executive director at Transocean Ltd, an international oil drilling business, as well as Natixis S.A., the French financial services firm.

Chair Thérèse Esperdy said: "I am delighted to welcome both Ngozi and Diane to the Board. They bring considerable international experience across our developed and developing markets.

"These appointments reflect our continued drive to enhance our Board capabilities to bring insight and experience from relevant markets and sectors, while focusing on all aspects of diversity to ensure we have the best possible mix of skills, experience and perspective to drive the business forward."

Pensions offer deadline

◆ THE TRUSTEES have now contacted all Fund members who are paid small pensions – those valued at £30,000 or less – and offered them an option to exchange their regular payments for a one-off lump sum.

The final group of eligible members may choose to accept this offer or not by the November 30, 2021 deadline. If a member decides not to accept, they don't need to do anything – their pension will continue to be paid each month as normal.

If a member chooses to accept, they will need to return a decision form (enclosed with the offer). On payment of the lump sum, future pension payments will cease.

Please note that you would only have heard from the Trustees if you are eligible to receive this offer, so please do not contact the Pension Fund Office if you have not received an offer letter.

Update on pensions team

◆ IMPERIAL'S HEAD office in Bristol has reopened but most employees, including the pensions team, are working flexibly, splitting their time between office and home working.

The pensions team is fully set up for home working, so service to members will remain unaffected. If possible, the team should be contacted by email or phone, but postal correspondence will also be dealt with in a timely manner.

"It is important to remember that if your bank or address details have changed, we will need to receive the new information in writing, accompanied by your signature," said pensions manager Jan Killick. "That way we can ensure the alteration is genuine and no mistakes are made."

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

✉ pension.enquiries@uk.imptob.com

☎ 0117 953 0000

Lizzie will donate magazines to M Shed museum

◆ I'm delighted to have heard from a few past employees and children of former employees, who have shared their experiences and anecdotes of working at the No.1 factory in East Street, Bedminster, following my request in the last issue of the Gazette.

Their stories are helping to provide authentic information for a series of six fictional novels I'm writing about a group of three girls working at the factory during the war years.

One employee, who worked in the accounts department at roughly the same time as I worked as PA to the chief medical

officer of Imperial Tobacco, donated a collection of about 30 copies of Wills World magazine from the 1950s to the mid-1960s which contain lots of lovely old photographs. She explained that they had belonged to her father, who had also worked for the company.

They have been useful research aids and I intend to donate them to the M Shed museum in Bristol, once I've finished the last book in the series.

Imperial was part of life in the area of Bristol where I grew up and, after having over 50 books published, it seemed somehow natural to go back to my roots

and write about working class girls adjusting to the greatest conflict of the twentieth century.

It turns out that all three books now published in the series – The Tobacco Girls, Dark Days for the Tobacco Girls and Fire and Fury for the Tobacco Girls, which came out in September – were in the top 50 best-selling sagas on Amazon.

If anyone would like to share any further information, please get in touch by email or seek me out by typing in LIZZIE LANE on social media.

LIZZIE LANE (Jean Goodhind) ✉



Useful aid to research: a Wills Magazine from the 1960s

Plea brings great response

◆ In the July issue of the Gazette, I requested information about the history of Wills and Imperial in Bristol as I am a local historian researching to write a book on this subject.

I've received a very positive response and have met a range of very knowledgeable, friendly and supportive pensioners, all of whom have already contributed greatly to my research.

I now have two further requests and would be grateful if anyone can provide information about the history of Mardon's or St Anne's Board Mill, both in Bristol, and the companies that manufactured the cigarette papers and filters.

Once again, any help would be much appreciated.

Simon Birch

Roy's interview fame

◆ I have received so many nice comments from ex-colleagues, including some I've not heard from in a while, who enjoyed reading my interview feature in the last issue.

Everyone has a story to tell, and I want to thank the team behind the Gazette for making it possible to share mine – I've even been recognised by pensioners in my local shops and at Ashton Gate stadium!

The Gazette is such an enjoyable read for us all and I'm sure there are many others with their own stories to recount. Keep up the good work.

Roy Jacobs

If, like Roy, you have a memory or anecdote about your time with the company or some news you may like to share, please contact the Gazette team (details on the back page).

There's a new face among the pension fund trustees

JAMES KING has been appointed to the Imperial Tobacco Pension Trustee Board as a company nominated trustee. He replaces Tom Tildesley, who left the company earlier this year.

James, who works in investor relations, joined Imperial in 2005 and has worked in a number of finance and commercial roles. He is a chartered accountant and corporate treasurer.

Having started in Imperial's treasury department managing the Group's day-to-day cash flows, foreign exchange and debt facilities, James worked through several major acquisitions.

In 2012 he moved to be a divisional finance manager, supporting the sales and marketing teams to deliver their targets, before returning to lead the front office treasury team in 2015 after further



debt investment by Imperial to increase its presence in the USA.

In 2020 he joined the investor relations team, which represents the company by building relationships with shareholders and analysts, communicating its new strategy and providing transparency of Imperial's value creation opportunities.

James said: "My role enables me to

engage and hear directly from both existing and potential future investors. I feel fortunate that I have been involved in several areas of our business during my career at Imperial; experience I can draw on in investor meetings."

He is looking forward to working together with the other trustees, advisors and administrators in the interest of the Fund's members and beneficiaries, adding: "The trustee role is an opportunity to put my financial knowledge and experience to good use and I am looking forward to further building on my pensions knowledge."

"I view the responsibility as a challenging but rewarding one, supporting the good governance of the Fund to serve our members' best interests so they can enjoy their retirement."

The **Player's Flying Club** took off in 1967 with a single Piper Cherokee 140 light aircraft and ran for just three years, but its legacy lives on through the memories of former employees who learned to fly with the club.

FLYING GIFT THAT SHAPED A CAREER

PART OF the company's athletic club and based at Tollerton airfield, about three miles from the centre of Nottingham, the Player's Flying Club owed much to the enthusiasm of company director Geoffrey Kent, who served with the RAF from 1940.

Its members, all John Player & Sons employees, used it for recreational flying. This included full members – instructors, qualified and student pilots – as well as associate members who could take part in non-flying activities, such as social events, and travel as passengers with qualified pilots.

Equipped with one aircraft, the club's three pilot instructors – all serving RAF officers – provided free tuition and trained about 50 students, mostly from the Player's shop floor, with 19 achieving their private pilot's licence.

The club was heavily subsidised by the company but, after this subsidy was reduced, flying fees increased and membership dwindled until it was no longer viable.

Graham Whitehead, who joined Player's as a mechanical engineering apprentice in 1963 and later transferred to the drawing office as a mechanical engineering draftsman, was its last remaining member.

"During my apprenticeship, I joined the club and obtained my private pilot's licence in 1968," said Graham, who married his wife Margaret in the same year. "The cost of flight training provided by the company was set at

£1.50 per hour, compared to Sherwood flying club's rate of £4.00 an hour.

"It took 40 hours to achieve my pilot's licence and the £60 cost was deducted from my pay cheque over the course of a year. It was a gift that changed my life and for which I will always be grateful."

When the Player's flying club was disbanded in 1970, Graham went on to become a volunteer flying instructor at Sherwood – which was also based at Tollerton – where he flew for 10 years. He left Player's in 1982 and moved to America, where he gained his commercial pilot's licence.

"It's funny how seemingly unconnected events shape our lives and, after persuading Margaret, together with our daughters

"It was a gift... for which I will always be grateful."

Joanne and Samantha, to emigrate to Texas, I was fortunate to obtain a green card, followed by citizenship, my commercial pilot licence and a job with American Airlines," said Graham who lives in Argyle, Texas and joined American Airlines in 1986 as a flight engineer on the Boeing 727. "I was later promoted to first officer flying the Boeing 727, MD 80, Boeing 757 and 767 and then as captain on the F100 in 1996, before retiring as captain on the MD 80 in 2007."

Graham's piloting highlight, however, came in retirement when he flew in a Mk IX Spitfire from Sywell Aerodrome in



▲ **Graham Whitehead and his wife Margaret just before his flight in 2016**

Northamptonshire on a return trip to the UK in 2016. "The flight was part of a full day by Aero Legends in which I experienced the order of training for fighter pilots during WWII," he said.

It was over all too quickly

"The initial flight was in a de Havilland Tiger Moth followed by flight time in a T6G Harvard and then a 40-minute flight in the 1944 Mk IX

Spitfire which included formation flying with the Harvard. It was over all too quickly, but the memory will last forever."

Graham is also still in contact with former distribution manager James Gunn, who also obtained his private pilot's licence at the Player's Flying Club and flew with Graham on numerous occasions.

"Graham was my co-pilot and gifted me a model of the aeroplane G-AVLE on which we learned to fly," said James, who joined the company as a management trainee in 1950 after four years in the Indian army. Three years later, he became an assistant to sales director John Anstey and was later promoted as distribution manager for Imperial, a senior management role which he remained in until

A view from the Harvard taken during Graham's formation flying experience



his retirement in 1983.

"It was all go at Player's in the late 1960s," he recalls. "From the modernising of Medium Navy Cut and the successful introduction of Gold leaf – which introduced us to the glamour of motor racing – through to the outstanding launch and success of the Player's No. 6 cigarette. Much of the change should be credited to the arrival of Geoffrey Kent, when cigarette marketing became glamorous and new ideas, including the Player's Flying Club, were encouraged.

"The club was very much his baby and a bold addition to the athletic club which had always been an extension of the company's concern for the wellbeing of its employees."

Many employees joined

James, 96, learned to fly with the club under the instruction of Steve Smoothy and two RAF instructors but his commitments to the Territorial Army (TA) made joining impossible at the outset.

"Many employees joined the club when it first launched and G-AVLE, the Piper Cherokee, was seldom standing idle," he said.

"I had a nine-month break from the TA before I took over the Army Cadet Force so learning to fly came at exactly the right time, when the first flush of employees had either learned to fly or given up. I caught the bug and was able to use my newfound flying ability to visit both Army cadet camps and cigarette distribution depots around the UK – a real benefit to the company and much to my own enjoyment."

At the time, theft was a big problem in cigarette distribution and James' ability to inspect the cigarette depots easily and quickly enabled him to keep his eyes on that ball and added a personal touch with managers, which was much appreciated. His co-pilot, Graham, who was then working in research and development under Bob Watson and Mike Lord, was able to maintain the plane while he worked.

James added: "I stopped flying in 1977 and Graham eventually left Player's to become a professional pilot. I very much value my friendship with Graham, who has worked hard to achieve his highly respected flying career and like to hope that I played a very minor part in that." 



◀ An article in the Player's Post from 1970 details Graham's involvement in the Kings Cup Air race, an air show with a 91-year history that took place at Tollerton airfield in 1967, 1968 and 1970.

John Player & Sons was one of the sponsors of the race – a handicapped event emphasising piloting abilities and aircraft preparation where the fastest aircraft rarely won.

"It was the last race to be held in Nottingham and I was co-pilot to the then joint assistant managing director Geoffrey Kent," said Graham.

"We flew the 95-mile course in our Piper Cherokee, but did not secure the cup for Player's. If my memory serves me, we placed a very respectable 14th.

"The difference between 1st and 14th place was less than 3.5 seconds! I think I still have a thank you letter from Mr Kent somewhere."



▲ James Gunn's model of G-AVLE, the Player's Flying Club's Piper Cherokee 140



Graham's first flight from Sywell aerodrome was in a de Havilland Tiger Moth...



...his second was in a T6G Harvard

THE ART OF TOBACCO SCIENCE

Chartered scientist and badminton enthusiast **Steve Purkis** enjoys keeping his brain and body active. After his 43 years with Imperial, his work in tobacco science was rewarded by the global tobacco scientific community, earning him a distinguished CORESTA Prize in 2016. In retirement he has swapped test tubes for paint brushes, pursuing his love of art.

Steve plays badminton twice a week with former colleagues from the research department



S

TEVE PURKIS grew up in Lockleaze, Bristol, and was educated at Cotham Grammar school before joining Imperial in 1971 where he gained his

honours degree in chemistry through part-time study.

His career as a chartered scientist saw him spend many years at the Raleigh Road laboratory researching tobacco and smoke composition until the mid-1980s when he became more involved in product development and stewardship.

He retired in 2015 and it was around this time, when he moved to Saltford, near Bath, that his wife Val convinced him to join a local art group. Steve now paints regularly from his home studio and posts his artwork on Facebook.

"I had not picked up a paintbrush for about 30 years as I didn't have enough time when working but now paint a picture most weeks, especially in the colder months," said Steve, who has been married to Val for 43 years and attends art class once a week.

"My favourite is painting portraits although I also try landscapes and have been asked by several people to do commissions. I use mostly acrylics but also oils and watercolours to a lesser extent.

Delighted with finished work

"Funnily enough I was asked by Yvonne, sister of the Gazette's last interviewee Roy Jacobs, to paint a picture of her cat. I initially said 'no' as I don't do animals, though eventually agreed and she was delighted with my finished work. I'm currently painting one of my new grandson, Finley, which my daughter, Katie, doesn't yet know about."

As well as painting, Steve, who began his career in process research at Upton Road and also worked at the Claverham factory for a year helping with the upkeep of a small tobacco waste treatment plant, enjoys hiking and playing badminton with Val and a few former colleagues.



▲ Steve and Val have been married for 43 years



Portraits are Steve's favourite and he is currently painting one of his new grandson Finley

"I play for two hours each Monday and Friday with John Britton and Deb Hamlin, who were involved in scientific work in the research department. Keith Milsom also used to join us," said Steve, who played badminton and 5-a-side football with Imperial colleagues for about 25 years. He still enjoys football and is a season ticket holder at Bristol City FC.

"I meet with about 15 ex-Raleigh Roaders for a Christmas meal, including Tony Bolt, Brian Chard and John Sadd, thanks to Alan Thorne who organises it, and have lunch with other colleagues such as Steve Stotesbury, yet another scientist and PAs Lynn Smith, Julie Rhodes and Pam Redwood from more recent times in corporate affairs at Upton Road.

"There was a real sense of family atmosphere at Imperial and we all looked out for each other which is why the friendships I made, right from the beginning of my career, have lasted."

As a young chemist, Steve was involved in analysing tobacco flavour at Raleigh Road with the aim to enhance the taste of low tar products. He spent about five years in a team studying the composition of tobacco biomass aiming to make a suitable but less harmful smoking product.

Later, the Hanson takeover saw Steve working within a much smaller team. This led to opportunities for him to turn his hand to other technical aspects, including information science retrieval and databases, managing the patent portfolio, product development projects and smoking and health issues.

"I was fortunate to keep my job and was

involved in product development projects across cigarettes, cigars, hand rolling and pipe tobaccos, sometimes taking experimental work through consumer testing to finished commercially available products," explained Steve. "I then became heavily involved in product stewardship issues, essentially ensuring the company knew about raw and blended tobacco composition and that of our various products when smoked.

"It was important to have standardised methods for the measurement of regulated

components in smoke, which regulators have been asking more about since the 1990s. It was when my career really took off."

He continued:

"The emphasis was on making safer products – it still is today – and I was involved in making sure Imperial had data on all its smoking products to show it was a responsible company that knew what it was selling. Today, there are more than 100 compounds which regulators require information on. Back when I started it was just tar, nicotine and carbon monoxide although, even then, Imperial collected a lot more than that!"

Meeting and helping colleagues

Steve's career enabled him to travel the world from visiting a lab in Hamburg every two weeks or so to representing Imperial on various committees including the British Standards Institute and others set up by CORESTA (Cooperation Centre for Scientific Research Relative to Tobacco), an

"There was a real sense of family atmosphere at Imperial..."

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international organisation which included industry, governmental and contract laboratory scientists.

"I travelled extensively with Imperial and always enjoyed meeting and helping colleagues in the wider company and at international meetings," said Steve who also published numerous key scientific papers, which provided perspective in discussions with international regulators in Europe and America.

"I liked to explain aspects of tobacco science and to challenge uninformed reports and found it rewarding to work for a company which provided a breadth of chances for me to influence some of the regulation. My work travels saw me get stuck a couple of times: in North Carolina during 9/11 and in France due to ash cloud disruptions caused by a volcanic eruption in Iceland, but thankfully, I made it home safely on both occasions."

Scientific achievements

Steve was elected president of the Smoke Science Study Group of CORESTA three times over a six-year period and received bronze and silver medals for his contributions to that and its various working groups over a 20-year period.


About 18 months after his retirement, he was awarded the CORESTA Prize for distinguished scientific achievements and gave a presentation at its annual conference



Steve was awarded the CORESTA Prize for distinguished scientific achievements

in Berlin in 2016. "I was very proud of this achievement and rather taken aback when I found out the scroll, which I had been presented with, featured images of tobacco plants on it that had been hand drawn by a nun in a monastery," he said.

Steve remains connected to the scientific world and is a member of the editorial board of a scientific journal, for which he has also painted its Christmas cards for several years. He also has a keen interest in genealogy and has written a book on his family's history.

"It started when Val fell pregnant 29 years ago and the book is now two inches thick," said Steve, who also enjoys rock music and hopes to attend a few concerts in the coming months as well as go on holiday now Covid restrictions are lifted. "We mostly have an agricultural ancestry and there are lots of clothiers from nearby South Gloucestershire. One famous connection includes the 17th century barrister and judge Sir Matthew Hale, though I seem to be the only scientist in the family." 

DIARY DATES

The following events are planned to take place, subject to COVID-19 restrictions:

- ◆ The Player's garage and motor vehicle repair reunion is set to be held on Monday December 6 from the new time of 3.30pm onwards at the Bell Inn, Nottingham. Contact Phil Bradley or Dave Lowe for more information.
- ◆ Plans are in place for a second reunion for Player's pensioners on Wednesday December 15 from 3.30pm Contact Dave Clay for details.

The annual Scottish pensioners' lunch, set to take place on Wednesday 15 December at

the Whitevale Bowling Club in Dennistoun, Glasgow, has been cancelled.

The decision was taken by organiser Colin Martin due to ongoing concerns surrounding an increase in the number of Covid-19 cases in Scotland and a resulting lack of ticket requests to attend the annual event. It is hoped that the lunch will take place again in 2022 and more details will follow in the next issue of the Gazette.

"I appreciate this will come as a disappointment to those pensioners who have enjoyed our lunches over the past 12 years, but it is in our own interest to stay safe and eliminate any risk of catching the virus," said Colin. "I would hope that we will be clear of any Covid-19 restrictions by next December and in a position to continue with future lunches."

Contact Colin Martin.

CLUB NEWS

Bristol

Wills Staff Pensioners Association

Secretary: Ruth Bwyne

Club meetings recommenced in October and are set to continue at 2pm on the second Wednesday of each month until April 2022 at the Bristol Indoor Bowls Centre, South Liberty Lane, Ashton. New members are always welcome.

Newcastle

Sinclair Staff and Pensioner Group

Organiser: William Lynn

There are currently no plans in place to meet due to ongoing COVID-19 restrictions. It is hoped that meetings will recommence in the new year.

IMPAC

An organisation for all Imperial Pension Fund members

Website: www.impact.org.uk

FUTURE MEETING DATES

The National Council has provisionally scheduled the Annual General meeting for May 2022, to be held in Nottingham, subject to local health and safety guidelines. If successful, a full programme of autumn open meetings will be scheduled in Bristol, Nottingham, Glasgow and Stirling. Members in Liverpool and Ipswich will also be contacted, with a view to adding these two locations to the schedule. Further details will be published in the next issue of the Gazette.



IMPAC members' helpline:

email: helpline@impact.org.uk or write to IMPAC, PO Box 10486, Oxtun, Southwell NG24 9NL.

For membership queries

IMPAC membership agency (to update membership details only): email: 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. Membership is free for the first 12 months.

A close call with a convincing pension shares scam prompted former Imperial sales rep **Paul Marsh**, who lives in Eastwood, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex, to contact the Gazette to share his story and raise awareness.

PAUL ESCAPES BEING SCAMMED



RECEIVED a call from a well-spoken American-sounding chap, who said he was calling from Winfield Corporation Partners LLC – a company

that was buying up shares and acting on behalf of another company that was in the process of taking over Imperial.

“He knew my name and advised that I had been given 798 Imperial Brands shares but hadn’t been told about them. He said the shares were given as a loyalty for my long service to the company when Imperial Tobacco changed to Imperial Brands. This sounded plausible as I worked as a sales rep from 1978 until 2012 covering an area from the East End of London to the south east coast.

Raising money for a cause

“The chap, whose name I can’t recall, then said he wanted to buy them from me and the company would offer between £19.00 and £27.00 for each share, though he wouldn’t be able to provide me with an exact figure until he knew more details.

“Our call ended with the promise of an email providing more information and a form to complete. An email followed from

Winfield Corporation Partners LLC, 645 Fifth Avenue, New York, which tied in with the caller’s American accent. It was all very convincing and there was also an attached ‘confidential’ part of the email to complete.

“Fortunately, before I could click to open it, the Norton security software on my computer alerted me with a notification: *Do not open. You’re giving access for this person to look through your account details.* Obviously, I stopped what I was doing immediately.

“I communicated what had happened to Imperial’s head office and forwarded the email for them to investigate. They confirmed I didn’t have any Imperial Brands shares and the realisation hit me that I had narrowly avoided becoming victim to this very sophisticated scam.

“I informed the police, who weren’t too interested, and neither was my bank as there are just so many scams out there but I think there needs to be more awareness so pensioners can be more alert to potential scammers, which is why I’m sharing my story.” **G**



Lucky escape: Paul Marsh, pictured with his grandson, Connor, was alerted to a scam by his computer

◆ If you think you have been the victim of a pension scam, call Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040 or report the scam online at www.actionfraud.police.uk/reporting-fraud-and-cyber-crime. You can also speak to The Money and Pensions Service on 0800 011 3797. More information about how to avoid pension scams can be found at: www.pension-scams.com

Wartime evacuation friendships that lasted a lifetime

Gordon Bridges worked in the Player’s purchasing and supply department for 35 years but will always remember his experiences as an evacuee during the second world war. He was moved from his home in London to Wrington in North Somerset – coincidentally the village where the Gazette team is now based. The former supply systems manager, who now lives in Nottingham, remembers:

“We are told that the evacuation of schoolchildren from London went without a hitch. The children, smiling and cheerful, left their parents to board trains for unknown destinations in the spirit of going on a great adventure.

We’ll be back in a week

“Allowing that wishful thinking, one of the earliest schools to start the evacuation was Carlton Vale, my old infant school in northwest London. Forty children aged between four and seven assembled before dawn; each carrying a gas mask, food and change of

clothing and wore three labels. Arriving at Paddington Station, a teacher cheerily told my mother: *We’ll be back in a week, the weather’s glorious for a nice holiday.* However, I was still an evacuee three years later.

“The journey to the West Country lasted a long time and accompanying us, the Carlton Vale contingent, were two teachers from our school determined to continue our education, wherever that would be. Upon our arrival, we were taken to a village called Wrington. Being five at the time, my only recollection of the first evening of my stay with the family of Mr and Mrs Oliver Millard and their daughters Lillian and Olive was a hot drink and a comfortable bed.

“Lillian and Olive were put in charge of me and two other evacuees Barry and Ann Johnson, who, overnight, became my brother and sister. School was one side of a curtain that divided the Memorial Hall until a few weeks later when we were allowed to attend the village school.

“On the journey to school each day, I had to pass Sullivan’s Bakery the window of which –

even in wartime – was attractively decorated with what appeared to be cream cakes. As luck would have it, Mrs Sullivan thought I looked like a nephew of hers so the trip to school took a little longer for, on seeing me, a cake was always given and gratefully received!

Given love and affection

“I have many fond memories of Wrington and on my many return visits I always feel that I have come home. It is ironic that the village is now home to people who moved from Nottingham to take up jobs when Imperial Tobacco centralised its head office in Bristol. Some of whom I know from the time I was Player’s supply manager.

“So, my evacuation turned out fine. I was treated as a member of a wonderful family and given love and affection, which secured friendships to last a lifetime.

“For some of us it was a life-enhancing, mind-broadening experience, leaving us with memories we treasure to this day. Namely the generosity of those who took us into their homes.”

Finlays pensioners, **John Newham** and **Joseph Marney**, reminisce about their experiences working at 'kind and family-orientated' Finlay & Co, including specialist House of Bewlay shops.

THE PLEASURE OF WORKING FOR FINLAY & CO

IN 1927 Imperial gained a share in the Finlay chain of tobacconist shops and kiosks, which eventually led to it becoming wholly owned by the company in 1963. Trading as Finlay & Co, then later, Finlays, it played a significant role in the national launch of new Imperial brands.

By the late 1970s, Finlay & Co had almost 1,000 outlets – from the smallest kiosks on the platform of train stations to the specialist House of Bewlay tobacconist shops – and was the largest group of retail tobacconists in the UK.

John Newham, former Finlay & Co tobacco goods buyer, said: "It was the public face of Imperial and ensured that new brands, including Embassy, Richmond, John

Player Special and Lambert & Butler, were in prime positions on shop gantries and large window displays. The specialist House of Bewlay shops were top-end with their period furnishings and fittings, and expert service to match, extending from normal sales to pipe/lighter repairs and a postal service, if requested."

Everything was done in style

John's life in the retail side of the tobacco trade started in 1961 when he joined Bewlay tobacconists as a shop assistant in the Royal Exchange branch in London, which retained the old Victorian gas lamps and used them when the power failed.

Like most Bewlay shops, it stocked a range of loose tobacco, some own blends and some from the major suppliers, which were weighed and blended, if required, to a customer's own recipe.

"Everything was done in style," said John, who worked for Finlay & Co until 1982.

"Loose tobaccos were stored in distinctive Royal Doulton jars with gold lettering, the staff always looked smart in appearance, and refilling petrol lighters or replacing flints (even opening the cigarette packet) was also part of the service – at no extra charge.

"My first task each day was to polish the brass tobacconist plate on the front

A fond look back at the annual Finlay & Co pensioners' holiday



Finlay pensioners holiday, Isle of Wight, late 1970s

◀ Welfare officer John Dodds, director Bob Hendy, director Jeff Wakefield, chairman Dennis Groom and unknown are pictured seated from left to right in front row, centre of photo.

◆ Finlays closed in 1989 but one former employee, Joseph Marney, contacted the Gazette after finding a photograph of a pensioners' holiday organised by the company dating back to the late 1970s.

Joseph joined Finlay & Co as a window dresser in 1951, aged 23, and remained in the role until he was promoted to display manager in the mid-1970s. He left the company in 1982.

"I was sorting through a drawer when I came across the photo of the annual Finlay & Co pensioners' holiday to the Isle of

Wight, which took place during the last two weeks of May," he said.

"Although I'm not in the picture, I was one of the employees who volunteered my time to help organise the holiday and can identify the names of some of the bosses, including John Dodds, Bob Hendy, Jeff Wakefield and Dennis Groom.

"Pensioners from across the country would gather at Collingwood House, having been met by members of staff, including myself, at various London railway stations.

Refreshments were provided in the canteen prior to a subsequent journey by coach to the holiday destination.

"There were usually three or four coaches, each supported by two Finlay & Co employees. On arrival, we would get pensioners settled into the holiday camp, stay for a night and return after two weeks to take them back to London, where they would make their way home.

"I recall meeting many managers and assistants from the various shops that I had worked in over the years, who

had retired, though I've lost touch with many.

"Finlay & Co was a very kind and family orientated place to work. I believe it started life as a shop in Newcastle and its head office was so named because of this – perhaps someone can clarify?"

Do you remember the company's annual pensioners' holiday? Please write to The Editor at James Reed PR, Archway Office, Barley Wood Stables, Long Lane, Wrington BS40 5SA, email: gazette@jamesreedpr.co.uk or call: 0117 428 8725.

window and the counter-mounted smokers' unit, lit by gas, which held wooden spills for customers to light their cigarettes and cigars. This had to be done before my area manager, Jim Russell, arrived to work in his office above the shop as he would always use it to light his pipe."

Following Imperial's takeover in 1963, the two chains – Bewlay and Finlay & Co – were merged and Finlay & Co became a CTN (Confectionery, Tobacco, News) outlet, also promoting smokers' gifts and other fancy goods. The main railway kiosks were mostly restricted to tobacco and confectionery.

Sales development team

John spent seven years as a branch manager before being promoted to Finlay & Co's head office at Collingwood House in North London as part of the sales development team, dealing with shop openings, closures and retrofits across the country.

A year as area sales manager for central London and the north/east home counties followed before he took on the role of tobacco buying assistant. He was promoted to tobacco goods buyer 18 months later, a role which involved dealing with the manufacturers of tobacco and cigarettes and importers of all major cigar brands.

"We made sure that the stock and distribution terms were as good as we could get and, in return, ensured good supply and displays on shelves/gantries in store," said John, 83. "At times we visited suppliers and I was able visit Wills in Bristol to see the route of cigarette and cigar production. I was also



▲ Finlay & Co colleagues during a visit to Wills in Bristol (from left): sales director Bob Hendy (deceased), tobacco goods buyer John Newham, (Wills host), ex area manager Eddie Richards, sales development manager George Epsom (deceased), (Wills host), news/magazines buyer Peter Walker, area sales manager Alan Goodwin (deceased) and (Wills host).

lucky enough to be invited to many events, sporting and otherwise, by sponsors of key brands.

"As a fan of motorcycle speedway, a highlight was watching some of the races from the centre area at the Embassy

International Speedway meeting at Plough Lane in Wimbledon.

"My time at Bewlay/Finlay & Co was very satisfying and I had the pleasure of working with some lovely people there. I'm sure others will also have fond memories." **G**

Finally, the end of our quest to identify everyone in photo

There has been a case of mistaken identity in the GMS systems team photograph first published in the March 2021 issue of the Gazette.

Both IT specialist Reis

Braganza and former pensions manager Mike Paige wrongly identified John Brooksbank, when the photograph, in fact, shows Chris Phillips, who worked as a systems analyst for

GMS for a short time until its closure in the early 1980s.

"Chris got in contact with me following my letter that appeared in the last issue of the Gazette," said Mike, whose career with Imperial spanned almost 40 years.

"I hadn't heard from him for many years so was delighted that he got in touch – even if it was to point out my mistake!"

Humour and sport

Chris left Imperial for another systems analyst post in Bristol, before moving into the documentation business which led to a job with IBM in Italy, where he has lived since 1991. He now works as business analyst for satellite communications company SES in Luxembourg, but fondly recalls his time with the GMS team.

"We had a great spirit, with hard work tempered with lots of humour and sport, and that mostly stemmed from

characters such as systems team manager Alan Ford and GMS manager Brian Thatcher," said Chris, who played a range of sports for GMS and captained its skittles team.

"A few of my personal highlights were the weekly systems team meetings and the resulting minutes which had to be written in a humorous way; the ground-breaking work we did in bringing online data input (MATS) to Bedminster for the first time; and walking through the echoing, tobacco-smelling corridors and halls of the old Wills factory."

Since contacting Mike, Chris has also heard from former GMS colleagues Mike Downing, Alan Ford and Dave Andrews, much to his delight.

"I was only at Imperial for a few years, but they were important ones for my personal and professional growth, and I will always be grateful to those who helped make them so," he added.



▲ Standing from left: Mike Downing, Adrian Baldwin, Keith Britton, Alan Ford and Dave Andrews. Seated from left: Chris Phillips, Caroline Pindar and Reis Braganza

Former managing director was 'a Smedley man all his life'

Former Smedley's managing director Michael Smedley has died, aged 91.

Born in Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, in 1929 he was the eldest son of Wallace Smedley, who, along with Michael's grandfather Samuel Wallace Smedley, established food canning and preserving company Smedley's Ltd in 1925.

Michael joined the company as a management apprentice in 1946 before completing his National Service in the RAF. He then studied natural sciences at St Andrews University where he met his wife Marjorie, who was reading medicine. They married in 1952 and went on to have five children – Jennifer, Diana, Ian, Clare and Paul – as well as six grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren.

Promoted to vice chairman

After graduating he transferred to Smedley's Wisbech canning factory and spent 12 years in the factories before a spell as a salesman and sales manager. He then joined the marketing team at the head

office at Caterham, Surrey. Michael later became director responsible for advertising and marketing and was promoted to vice-chairman on his return from the Harvard Business School in 1966.

Imperial took over Smedley's in 1968 as part of the company's diversification and amalgamated it, along with a number of other food companies including HP, Lea & Perrins, Golden Wonder, Ross Foods and Young's Sea Foods, into Imperial Foods.

Michael was appointed managing director of Smedley's in 1971 and, after the merger with HP the following year, became overseas director of Smedley-HP Foods, which involved working with export agents in more than 90 countries. He also became a director of Lea & Perrins and represented and sold all Imperial Foods brands globally.

He travelled extensively over the following seven years to the Americas, Middle East and Asia and grew the export sales to account for more than 50 per cent of the company's profits.

Michael left Imperial in 1979 and

spent the next five years working for the Caribbean Food Corporation, based in Trinidad, and supporting the growth and sales of Caribbean food production. This was followed by several years based in Washington working for the World Bank.

Chairman and trustee

The lure of home and family encouraged Michael and Marjorie to return to the UK and they settled near Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, in 1986. He then became a consultant with projects in Russia, Turkey and Eastern Europe as well as parts of Africa, using his experience to help many companies grow and successfully sell their products domestically and internationally.

Michael became chairman of the Samuel Wallace Smedley Charitable Trust, a charity set up by his grandfather to support former Smedley's workers who were in need, serving as a trustee and chairman for over 33 years. He expanded the Trust's work and was instrumental in growing its home in Wisbech, which now has 37 residents.



He was also an active member of IMPAC, serving as chairman for 13 years from 1991, and helped set up a national organisation for occupational pensioners (COPAS) in 1994. At its height COPAS had over 40 member associations including British Airways, British Steel and the BBC and, together, they influenced pension policy by talking directly with ministers in Westminster.

His hobbies included woodworking and making and flying remote controlled planes and he also wrote and published books about Smedley's and his years in consultancy.

Prior to his death Michael and Marjorie, who both enjoyed gardening and preserving their home-grown produce, celebrated their 69th wedding anniversary.

"My father was a Smedley man all his life and he was very proud of what he and the company achieved," said his son Ian.

A people person, born salesman and family man



William (Bill) Brennan, a former sales rep and advocate of the Tobacco Trade Travellers' Association (TTTA), has died, aged 87.

Bill, who was born in Stoke-on-Trent, completed national service in the Transport Corps where

he was posted to Malaya, Singapore and Hong Kong. He later joined Tate and Lyle as a driver, then merchandiser, before marrying Joan, his wife of 60 years, in 1957. By the time he joined Wills to train as a mobile salesman in 1961, the couple had a daughter, Christine. The arrival of twins, David and Julie, prompted a kickstart in Bill's career and he transferred

south with his family to Ringwood in Hampshire to work as a sales rep.

He represented the company at various local sporting events to hand out trophies, including the Wills-sponsored Dirt Track Winners Cup on Salisbury Plain, and threw himself into the Scouting movement, starting up the first Sandleheath Scouts – from a windmill – in the nearby New Forest.

Another promotion in 1974 saw Bill move to Wirral to continue his duties as a sales rep. He became involved in the Merseyside branch of the TTTA, where Ogden's was based, part of the fellowship of benevolence which consisted of tobacco trade representatives from regions across the UK. He was appointed as its chairman in 1977/8 and remained so until Ogden's closed its doors and the branch had

to shut. Bill, who enjoyed fishing, gardening and painting, was one of 20 sales reps to retire in 1985, following a reorganisation of sales journeys. Since then, he kept up many of the friendships he made during his time at Wills and developed a keen interest in golf, recently captaining the veterans who played at Prenton Golf Club.

He also volunteered at a Help the Aged charity shop. "He was a kind people-person, a born salesman and a family man with a positive outlook on life," said Bill's daughter Christine. "He was so proud of WD & HO Wills and we are of him."

Bill, who lost his youngest daughter Julie in 2012 and wife Joan in 2017, is survived by Christine and David, grandsons Jonathan and Timothy and great-grandchildren Martha and Daniel.

Edna's family had many Wills associations

WD & HO Wills centenarian Edna Exon, who worked in the management restaurant at the cigar factory in Raleigh Road, Bristol, has died.

Edna married William (Bill), both pictured, her husband of 66 years, at St Mary Redcliffe church in 1945 after he wrote to her during his service with the Royal Army Service Corp. At the time, she was enlisted in the Women's Land Army and spent the war years working at Cottons Farm in Dumbleton, Gloucestershire. The couple had their first child, Barbara, in 1947 when Bill joined

the cigar factory, and their son, John, the following year. Bill went on to work for the company for 30 years and Edna retired on her 60th birthday in 1981.

By this point, John had also joined Imperial, working in the technical development section then sponsored events department until this was outsourced in 1989. He continued to be employed with the company's consultants, World Promotions, until tobacco sponsorship was banned in 2005.

Edna's family has had many associations

with the company over the years, ranging from roles in the computer department and restaurant at the No. 1 factory in Bedminster, through to the warehouse at the Hartcliffe factory. Her grandson, Alan Whitelock, currently works for Imperial Brands.

Both Edna and Bill, who died in 2011, were diagnosed with dementia in 2008 and, two years later, became residents at a care home in Whitehall, Bristol where Edna spent the latter years of her life and celebrated her 100th birthday.

She is survived by John, six grandchildren,



nine great-grandchildren and four great-great-grandchildren.

Player's pensioner Joan Broughton, who worked in the Nottingham factory from 1972 until 1981, has also died aged 100.

The deaths are reported, as at 30 September 2021, of the following retired employees:

HEAD OFFICE AND ITL

Leonor Debora Appleton, 78;
Gavin Richard David Bell, 78;
John Frederick Cole, 87;
Mary Elizabeth Cook, 92;
Kevin David Hardwick, 73;
Charles William Headley, 86;
Thomas Holmes, 85;
Byron Miller, 84;
Peter Ellis Milne, 90;
David Stewart Moffatt, 69;
Julia Paulette Parsons, 82;
Roy Stark, 88;
Phyllis Joan Webb, 92.

WD & HO WILLS

Margaret Joyce Atkins, 67;
Brenda Alice Irene Ballantyne, 88;
Royston Bird, 83;
William John Brennan, 87;
Pauline Clay, 79;
Betty Ann Cridland, 88;
Brenda Donald, 84;
Joan Downing, 87;
Gordon Raymond Edwards, 90;
Edna Elizabeth Exon, 100;
Thomas Kennedy Ferguson, 76;
Ronald Flower, 90;
John Stanley Campbell Fry, 88;
Alan Gillespie, 97;
Myrtle Glover, 96;
June Ethel Godwin, 95;
Stanley Owen Granton, 60;
Maurice Stanley Graves, 93;
Patricia Ivy Greaves, 84;
Alma May Gunningham, 85;
Doreen Daisy Frances Guppy, 89;
Dorothy Mabel Hayward, 99;
Jean Patricia Hibberd, 81;
James Hislop, 82;
Violet Madge Howell, 95;
Catherine Incledon, 90;
Barry Charles James, 69;
Gwendoline May Kavanagh, 93;
Mary Rose Kavanagh, 81;
Robert George Knight, 71;
George Logie, 94;

Ethel Ann McMeekin, 97;
Dennis James Mitchell, 92;
Josephine Moffat, 88;
Dorren Estella Palmer, 88;
Patricia Anne Phillips, 76;
Peggy Phillips, 87;
Sonia Elizabeth Povey, 83;
Harold Victor Powell, 93;
Barbara May Price, 89;
Margaret Grace Rodgers, 83;
Beryl Doreen Sandle, 95;
Mary Patricia Sargeant, 79;
Leslie Scullion, 89;
Mary Rose Shipway, 84;
Andrew Greenhill Simpson, 93;
George Davidson Southern, 83;
Anna Teresa Spring, 93;
Alan Keith Thomas, 84;
Elsie Rosina Thomas, 97;
Eileen May Whereatt, 94;
Andrew Young, 85.

JOHN PLAYER & SONS

Peter Arnold, 72;
John Harold Astle-Fletcher, 95;
Douglas Barks, 90;
David John Barlow, 79;
Archibald Brodie, 87;
Joan Mary Broughton, 100;
Norah Rose Clarke, 87;
Rosa Del Gaudio, 91;
David Evans, 81;
Joan Fell, 99;
Ena Kathleen Fountain, 90;
Peter Alan Garton, 80;
Charles William Grover, 88;
Malcolm Irvine, 85;
Doris Hilda Keetley, 98;
Betty Kerry, 78;
Steven Ronald Linley, 69;
Raymond Mason, 90;
Jean Wilson McArthur, 90;
May McLean, 88;
John Roger Mowson, 79;
John Manvers Neilson, 91;
Kenneth John Newnes, 94;
Alexander Robert Nicol, 76;
Brenda Joan Oxford, 84;
John Palmer, 91;
Alan Robert Pare, 92;
Evelyn Rayns, 83;

George Arthur Robinson, 91;
John Evelyn Rose, 87;
Joyce May Rose, 84;
William Derek Shaw, 87;
Margaret Irene Shevlin, 91;
Herbert Leonard Orme
Topham, 98;
William James Uprichard, 88;
Steven John Williams, 63;
Marieann Philomena Wood, 79;
Rita Alma Wright, 91.

OGDEN'S

Margaret Banham, 97;
Beryl Brennan, 84;
Joyce Disley, 94;
Thomas Edward Fox, 79;
Olive Frizzell, 87;
Dorothy Shaw, 91;
Herbert William Wadsworth, 91;
Brian Andrew Walls, 83;
Vera Williams, 92.

FINLAY & CO

Fiona Margaret Wright, 77.

HARDY & COLLINS

Irene Mary Bean, 95.

LOWFIELD DISTRIBUTION

William Stanley Bygroves, 83;
Ivor Douglas Cox, 78;
James Cameron Rankin Gracie, 79;
David Malcolm Lynn, 89;
Thomas Richard Meakings, 86;
Barbara Moore, 81;
Gary Roberts, 66;
James Charles Walker, 85.

SINCLAIR COLLIS

Kenneth Frank Morey, 74;
Derrick William Osmond, 88;
Elizabeth Jean Woodsell, 70.

ST ANNE'S BOARD MILL

Colston Beverley Ash, 76;
Royston George Berry, 74;
Metford Spring Elsworth, 94;
Mervyn Robert Hanger, 79;
Leonard Haskins, 92;
Clive Paul Jones, 78;

Kenneth Albert Merritt, 92;
Royston Stanley Phillips, 92;
Alan Yendle, 82.

IMPERIAL FOODS LIMITED GOLDEN WONDER

Ethel Jones, 97;
Edward Taylor, 72;
David Wyler, 69.

ROSS FOODS

Danny Thomas Cook, 64;
Lesley Denise Davison, 75;
Douglas Alfred Easom, 91;
James Baxter Forrester, 71;
Margaret Glen, 89;
Colin Horner, 92;
Geoffrey Benjamin Lemon, 99;
Winifred Joan Matthews, 96;
Alan Stanley Oliver, 80.

SEVEN SEAS

Maurice Houlden, 92.

SMEDLEY-HP FOODS

Sheila Agnes Brown, 89;
Colin Clifford Burton, 79;
Grace Dorothy Fiske, 85;
Marcus Samuel Horspool, 83;
June Elizabeth McGuire, 81;
John Eddie Neeld, 92;
George William O'Mahony, 84;
Christina Rogers, 85;
Michael John Smedley, 91;
Peter Thomas Smith, 85;
Judith Wing, 79.

WELCOME BREAK

David Colin Hayton Speight, 87.

YOUNG'S SEAFOODS

Joan Winifred Branson, 92;
Elizabeth Chassar, 93;
Terence Walter Hodgson, 80.

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

Russell Smart

G LETTER

Memories of tennis player Valerie Smart

It is with sadness that I report the death of my mother, Valerie Smart, who died peacefully, aged 89.

She was the widow of Dennis, a lifelong employee at St Anne's Board Mill, whose obituary featured in the July 2020 Gazette.

My parents attended many of the company's reunion dinners together over the years and both

were especially well-known for their affiliation with the Imperial Athletic Club in Knowle. The whole family played tennis there, representing both the mens and ladies first teams and winning club competition honours over a 20-year period from the early 1970s.

Valerie also played in the Bristol and District leagues and

had a wicked sliced backhand. In the 1990s she turned her hand to bowls, playing at West Backwell bowls club where her wake was held. She also represented Somerset twice at the English National Championships in Leamington Spa.

Valerie lived in Nailsea for the last 37 years and was involved in several local groups such as the

Backwell Townswomen's Guild, the local drama group and the Nailsea Walkers and Strollers. She led an active life to the end and kept in touch with many of the friends she met at Imperial and St Anne's who, I'm sure, will remember her fondly.

Russell Smart

While losing a loved one can be devastating, it's still possible to stay active and find happiness if you know where to look for support.

GETTING BY WITH A LITTLE FRIENDLY HELP

BEREAVEMENT AFFECTS us all and has been felt intensely during the pandemic, which, due to restrictions, has left many pensioners feeling isolated and lacking support.

But support is out there and groups, such as Nottinghamshire-based Kindred Spirits, exist to help alleviate loneliness by providing the opportunity to meet others and talk.

Former Player's garage and motor vehicle repair mechanic John Hogg, who died earlier this year, used to regularly attend events organised by Kindred Spirits following the death of his wife, Betty, in 2003. The couple had been married for 50 years.

"Kindred Spirits really helped my dad with his loneliness, and he made good friends through it," said Timothy, John's son.

"He hated being on his own and it offered a place where he could be himself again in the company of others, many of whom were also on their own.

"Dad went almost daily to a coffee morning or lunch organised by the group – there was always something to do. I feel if others knew about it, they might benefit also."

Support for lonely people

The group was originally set up by Age UK in the mid-1990s to support lonely elderly people and was run by the charity until 2016 when the service had to close.

Fortunately, and because a real need was recognised for its services to continue within the community, Kindred Spirits has since operated independently with no membership fees and is run solely by volunteers who are pensioners and co-ordinate and host its activities at different venues across the county.

Susan Jones, a retired civil servant, is one of the group's hosts responsible for organising the informal and inclusive events and remembers John fondly.

"I was sorry to hear that John had died,"

said Susan, who lives in Mapperley and has been supporting Kindred Spirits since 2008. "He was a long-standing attendee of the group, which provided him with a place of comfort and companionship.

"John was a gentleman and friendly voice to anyone who took part in our

"...suffering a bereavement shouldn't mean that your life is over..."

organised activities and he loved music – we even went to a few Theatre Royal concerts together."


The group was forced to put its activities on hold during Covid but is now back and running and keen to get its attendance levels up to pre-pandemic levels. At present, it runs coffee mornings, crazy golf and bowling, though Susan has just started a scrabble group and would be delighted for more people to become involved.

Kate Goslin, who worked as a secretary at Player's from 1965 until 1973, has also been affected by bereavement, losing her husband Keith in January last year, just before the Covid pandemic took hold. He worked for the company as a senior development engineer between 1970 and 1983. Speaking of how she has been coping with her loss, she said: "Grief affects

us all in different ways and it can be utterly devastating, even when death is expected.

"Losing Keith and then going into lockdown has felt like I've been in solitary confinement, almost like I'm the one who has died. But suffering a bereavement shouldn't mean that your life is over, you should still be able to enjoy it, and I think groups like Kindred Spirits are an excellent thing."

Kate, who lives in Gwynedd, makes herself walk to the seafront daily to keep fit, stay well and she also finds it helps her to cope mentally.

"I'm virtually the only person there but it is quite beautiful and reminds me of the rock climbing and mountaineering Keith and I used to do," said Kate, who first met Keith at a rock-climbing club. "It's nice when someone says hello, which can make all the difference some days. I'm also lucky to have some lovely neighbours nearby as well as friends and loved ones who often pick up the phone to check I'm ok, but I know there are many who struggle to cope." 



● For more information about Kindred Spirits in Nottinghamshire visit: www.kindredspiritsnotts.wordpress.com or contact Susan (s-j-jones@hotmail.com).

Other services such as churches and libraries often hold social events and organisations like U3A provide members with the opportunity to learn, stay active and have fun in later life.

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