



Norman Monahan – 100 not out !



Norman Monahan was born in 1923, eleven years before Shell-Mex and B.P. commenced trading and is one of the Company's best loved and most enduring alumni. He joined SMBP after service in the Second World War and over thirty-three years, before his retirement from Shell in 1983, played a major part in how SMBP and later Shell presented itself to Britain visually. And on retirement he applied his Communications talents to help promote institutions like the National Trust, as well as being a regular, and witty, contributor to this magazine. It was a pleasure to meet him in his home in Burton-on-Trent and to marvel at his crystal-clear recall of one hundred years. Norman's story begins on Page 4.

Useful Contacts

The 44 Club – For anyone who worked for Shell-Mex and BP

The SMBP 44 Association

Colin Hill Secretary
Shell Centre
London SE1 7NA
Tel: 020 7934 5132
Email: 44-club@shell.com

44 Club News

Honorary Editor
Paddy Briggs
40 Broom Park
Teddington TW11 9RS
Tel: 020 8977 1712
Email: pb@brandaware.co.uk

44 Club Website

Honorary Editor
Elaine Ellen
Little Finney,
Gartocharn,
West Dunbartonshire G83 8SA
Tel: 07703 578614
Email: elaine.ellen@btinternet.com
<http://www.44club.co.uk>

The Shell Pensioners Association (SPA)

– For Shell Pensioners

Amanda Hunt SPA Secretary
Shell Centre
London SE1 7NA
Tel: 020 7934 5129
Email: Amanda.A.Hunt@shell.com
<https://shellpensioners.org.uk>

The BP Society

– For anyone who once worked for a BP company - including Shell-Mex and BP

Administration Secretary
The BP Society
Chertsey Road
Sunbury-on-Thames
Middlesex TW16 7LN
Tel: 07850 244257
Email: BPSociety@uk.bp.com
<https://bpsociety.co.uk/>



The Future of the SMBP 44 Association

The Executive Committee of the Association has decided to place before the membership at the next AGM on Thursday 16th May 2024 a proposal to wind-up the Association's activities on 31st December 2025. This will be a remarkable 50 years since Shell-Mex and B.P. ceased operations at midnight on 31st December 1975. It will also mark some 48 years of the 44 Club's existence.

The most compelling pressures are twofold: Shell's Pensioner support function (unlike BP's) has generously supported us financially over the years but has in the last decade been a rather more challenging sponsor as it faces its own internal cost pressures. We have anticipated much of this which has contributed to a trusting and solid relationship, but we have reached the inevitable position when our core Club activities are threatened by real and potential funding limitations. For example, we sought Company support for our Birthday Card programme (previously funded by Diary sales) which was not initially granted. As the Club has very little revenue of its own (and for practical reasons we would not want to move to a subscription basis now) it faces having to stop or pare down the Birthday Cards - one of its most popular and valued offerings. The unanimous view of your Committee is that we do not want death by a thousand cuts!

The second pressure is an acknowledgement of Anno Domini. Whilst we still have a membership of some 2000 pensioners, their average age is in the mid-80s. Your Committee is a little younger but not in the first flush of youth – and it would be fanciful to believe we have a realistic succession plan. We have to accept that certain key roles are reliant on the incumbents remaining fit, healthy and willing ad infinitum.... It is probably better to be the authors of our own destiny rather than allow happenstance to determine our fate.

So we have looked at our finances and determined with Shell's help that we can carry on the Club's full activities for a further two years and then bring the curtain down with pride and satisfaction. To have reached 48 years is a notable achievement and tellingly rather longer than Shell-Mex and BP itself survived!

Formally winding up the Club (including general meetings, administrative services, birthday cards and the magazine) does not mean that Branch activity must cease – where there is sufficient interest and willingness in a branch an informal social organisation can, of course, remain but there would be no central coordination, funding or help available.

This proposal must be put to the Membership in a resolution that we plan to table at next year's AGM in Shell Centre. To accommodate the widest participation, we will be hosting the AGM both physically and online. To carry the motion, we will need at least a 75% voting majority from all Association members attending both in person and virtually.

I hope this message does not come as too much of a shock and I also hope that having considered the rationale you will be supportive of what the Committee recommends. All good things come to an end and to be able to do it with a degree of control and dignity seems to us a fitting end to what has been a splendid Association. Thank you for your part in making it just that and my very best wishes for the future.

Rick Westley

Club Chairman

Noticeboard



AGM

You will have seen from the Chairman's announcement opposite that the next SMBP 44 Association AGM will be held in Shell Centre on **Thursday 16th May 2024**. The next edition of the Club News after this one will be with members in mid-April and this will contain details on how to apply to come to the AGM – which, as ever, will also be a members' reunion. However, you may wish to put the date in your diary right away.

In order for us to gauge interest before the April 2024 edition of the magazine, can you please let Colin Hill know if you intend to be at the AGM? In responding, please specify whether you will be coming to Shell Centre or joining us online. The meeting will be available to members 'live' online so if you cannot attend personally you will be able to participate remotely.

Branch Activity

As you will see in the "News from the Branches" section beginning on Page 9 Branch activity is rather low at present. Branch membership has declined and it is also, in some cases, difficult for members to get to events. Clearly this is an inevitable consequence of the twilight years of the Club! That said, if the Club secretariat and Committee can do anything to help we would be pleased to - so don't hesitate to contact Colin Hill.

Welcome New Members

Mrs Doreen Jones - Newport
(Gwent)

Mrs Sue Wilkins - Bracknell

In Memoriam

Richard Springett writes:

It was with great sadness that we heard from Chris, Mike Baker's wife, that he passed away in November 2023. He had a serious diagnosis some weeks before and died in hospital in Cape Town. Chris and Mike had moved there some years back to be with Phil, their son.

I first met Mike when I was sent to Northfleet Terminal in 1968 for my first stint on the Operations Trainee scheme. He was already a supervisor – a position to which I aspired. Even more inspirational was that he drove an Austin Healey 3000. That car was replaced with a Ford Lotus Cortina soon afterwards. Mike always had a passion for speedy cars.

Mike was humorous, helpful and a good mentor when I worked alongside him. After completing my second trainee session at Northfleet, I did not meet Mike again until I retired and went to a 44 Club lunch in Kent which Mike and Chris also joined. He was unchanged and it seemed that only months had passed rather than decades. We met them both at several more lunches until they moved to South Africa.

Holiday trips to the Cape Town area provided opportunities to meet with them for very enjoyable lunches and dinners with shared memories of past times. He was enjoying being Chairman of the local Jaguar Owners



Club. We will be there again in 2024 and look forward to seeing Chris – but, sadly, without Mike.

Norman Monahan, centenarian extraordinaire

Sir John Greenborough (below), the last Managing Director of Shell-Mex and B.P. and the first President of the 44 Club was mentioned once or twice in my interview with Norman Monahan, the subject of this profile. Norman attributes a quote to Sir John of which he not only approved but, as we shall see, which was part of his life: *"Sell products, make profits, have fun."* Whether this

mantra still applies to our successors in Shell and B.P. we can only wonder. But that it was a valid description of the ethos of the company that employed Norman and all the rest of us in the 44 Club surely there is no doubt.



Sir John Greenborough

To describe Norman as having had one hundred years of fun might be pushing it a bit – but it has clearly been a century of enjoyment as well as achievement – and Norman's extraordinary memory stretching back over the decades allowed him to tell the story with charm, though there was always a twinkle in his eye. Norman, born in 1923, was almost an exact contemporary of John Greenborough and like Sir John served in the Second World War, joining the RAF in 1942. He is very short-sighted, and this meant that he had to do a ground support job rather than fly. When the war ended he returned to his pre-war

employer an import/export company specialising in the spice trade but found it hard to get a satisfactory job back with them. So, he looked around.

Norman had grown up in Beckenham Kent a genteel commuter town now in the



Norman Monahan

London Borough of Bromley. He had left school at 16 but then the war had intervened. He saw that Power Petroleum in Charlton, not far away, were recruiting. A vacancy cropped up in their Head Office in Bedford Chambers in Covent Garden – an old-fashioned office which had a Victorian "water" lift! He later moved to Cecil Chambers which was modern by comparison (!) Power, though part of the Shell-Mex and B.P. Group, was different - and very odd! Norman, despite having no special background in numbers, became the Sales Department's Statistician. Power was like that – you mucked in. This included writing stories and copy – a talent that emerged and led to his being offered the editorship of "Power Topics" an in-house magazine. This was additional to his other duties and Norman was given £10 per quarter extra to do this – only in Power! In 1962 he wrote the 40-year history of the company which appeared in the magazine.

Although the term was yet to be invented the employment in Power required "multi-tasking" – a great way to learn for a still young man. But promotion opportunities were limited, and Norman was ambitious and secured a move into Shell-Mex and B.P. proper in 1963. His

communications skills had been recognised and he found himself in Advertising Department run by Arthur Barton Jones and working for Colin Rose who was the Advertising Manager. Rose was able but eccentric, his office had a couch on which he reclined opposite a Buddha with joss sticks burning. And why not, you might think! Others in this very creative department included Hugh Wickham, John Collier, Tony King and Frank Flowers, and especially Reg Leach who was something of a mentor.

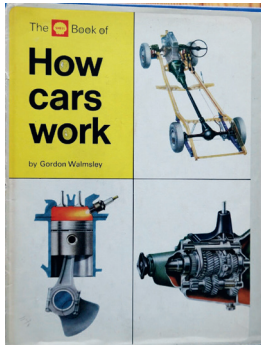
Norman initially took responsibility for Industrial Market advertising, including product/markets where SMBP was by far the leading supplier like Bitumen and, to a lesser extent, Industrial Lubs. They were heady days when communications included exhibitions and books as well as brand advertising for the wide range of lubs, mostly with shell related names. A key figure was Stanley Simmonds who headed up Advertising and from whom Norman learned a lot. He says that Simmonds *"knew everything about everything"* – quite an asset!

Another role in those days was the provision of administrative support to the Shell Racing Team under Ray Cunningham and David Dinbar.



Shell's motorsport links were always strong and the 1960s were a golden age with John Surtees and Ferrari world champions.

SMBP Communications generated a huge amount of print material handled by E. Christian and Co. who operated 39 dedicated delivery vehicles and with whom Norman liaised. He remembers that the



culture was really “learning by doing” where flair and ability were more important than academic ability – though graduate recruitment as the norm was around the corner.

The annual SMBP calendar was one of Norman’s tasks and this was a good example of SMBP’s often rather sophisticated communications culture. The subjects (like “Freshwater” or “Coastlines”) were artistic and subtle, and the artists commissioned produced artwork of real quality. (Ed: When I was a Sales Rep in the early 1970s a Christmas task was to deliver the calendars to our customers. They were always welcomed!). A print run of around 80,000 ensured very wide distribution – including many that were actually sold at petrol stations.

Publications were a key part of communications, and this included guides to the motor car and its workings written by Gordon Walmsley - a colleague of Norman’s – like this one (above) from 1966. And there were always promotional events with the chance to meet the stars, memorably, for Norman, one where he met his jazz hero Louis Armstrong (below). Working in Brand and Communications has its



perks though Norman emphasises that it was hard work often to tight deadlines. Whereas there were the occasional forays to Yates Wine Bar or the Wig and Pen Club Norman assures us that they took their jobs seriously and worked hard! At a Saints and Sinners Party Norman was characterised as a Saint (bottom centre)! The cat symbolises his love of all things feline.

In Shell-Mex and B.P. he says you never refused a job no matter how odd or challenging it might be – and “time and motion studies” didn’t work in that creative world!

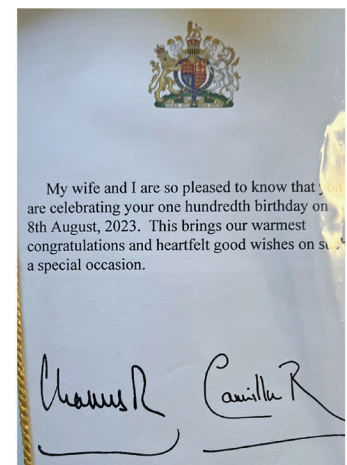
Norman had met his wife to be Peggy (top right) during the war and they were to marry in 1950 and have one daughter Frances. They made their home together in Surrey and then in Crowborough Sussex. They were set on their way by SMBP’s mortgage scheme which offered loans at 1% - Happy days, though it didn’t last! Peggy was from Doncaster and when Norman decided to retire in 1981 after 33 years’ service they decided to move north first to a bungalow in Derby and later to Burton-on-Trent where Norman now lives alone after Peggy’s passing in 2016. They had been married for 66 years, in a bungalow in a quiet and peaceful location far from the madding crowd.

Norman is the archetypal example of using your post-retirement third age usefully – though for few does this extend to 40 years and counting! Peggy had been a keen churchgoer and Norman joined her as a church warden and on the Parish Council. It wasn’t political – “What is political



about putting a lamppost at the corner of the road?” he says with much wisdom. Derby Is a museum town and soon Norman was the Editor of a magazine for them and taking a particular interest in Calke Abbey, the village of Tinknall and the Harpur family. This included writing a definitive history published in 2014 (bottom).

Norman has done voluntary work with the National Trust for 35 years and heartily recommends it. He has taken an interest in East Midlands heraldry and genealogy and he developed a talent for writing humorous verse as well as the more cerebral histories. On his 100th Birthday he received a card from King Charles and had a Party attended by 55 friends and family.



Norman has been a regular contributor to the “44 Club News” and he has a special gift for talking and writing entertainingly – especially about the eccentricities of life! It was a pleasure to spend some time with him, to travel back in time and to look forward to a good few more years of storytelling **PSB**

Birthday Thanks/Your Letters

Tony “Rabbiting on” again!

It's always a pleasure to cast an eye across the pages of the 44 Club News as there is almost always a name or two that I recognise somewhere amongst the pages, sadly, now and then, amongst the Obituaries. More so for me, than reading the Shell Pensioners News journal, as despite being branded Shell at Brand Separation, I never worked in Shell Centre or was appointed to a Shell job.

I was a bit taken aback, to see in print another of my rambling “Thanks for the (85th) birthday card” letters. I seem to recall that the same thing happened following my “thank you” letter for my 84th birthday card. You will, no doubt, deduce from this little missive, that I rarely find a short thank you note sufficient but rather tend to rabbit on. I guess it must be partly due to the garrulous nature of old age, but also the memories that are invariably evoked by something or other in the magazine. This time it was the letter from Richard ‘Dick’ Hiseman. Our paths didn't actually cross in the flesh, but the name was familiar to me from my days working as a Routine Analyst. Industrial Relations and Manpower, as it was then, were involved with the work studies of drivers' activities in Operations, and Dick too had been an Analyst. Initially I had been involved in travelling round to numerous terminals introducing clerical staff to the business of analysing and recording data from Drivers log sheets. By the time I had actually trained to become an Analyst working with drivers, if memory serves me right, Dick had already moved on and back to Operations. I was kept up to date with Dick's activities by another very good friend, sadly now deceased, Brian MacElwee, another Routine Analyst with whom I worked. Brian also eventually moved back to

Operations, as Chief Clerk at Bishopbriggs Terminal, which was one of the terminals for which Dick had responsibility. It's good to see that Dick has survived to enjoy his Shell Pension.

Sadly, the Obituaries in the Summer edition of the news, also recorded the passing of Alan Roman, the Print Buyer in Reprographics. Alan and I had a regular working relationship from my days In Marketing Communications, as it became. As the workload for me in Routine Analysis steadily declined, I was interviewed for a follow-on appointment in Advertising, by the wonderful Tony King. Tony had been involved in aircraft manufacturing at some stage earlier in his working life and we spent best part of an hour talking about flying and helicopters that I had flown in the Royal Navy before joining SMBP. At the end of that conversation, he told me that the job available to me was in the field of advertising for the whole gamut of markets and products in the Industrial Marketing Division. I pointed out that I had never been involved in marketing or advertising and that I knew absolutely nothing about either. His response was, *“Don't worry about that. All you need is a bit of common sense and a good pair of legs.”* And so I was duly appointed. I worked my way through that minefield, with Stanley Simmons and then Hugh Wickham as Divisional managers, ending up working for Tim Kenny, doing all the budgeting for Marketing Communication. At that point I decided to take advantage of the voluntary redundancy package that became available in 1990. Leaving after 25 years with the company, my wife and I achieved one of my great life ambitions, to live in the West Country. We spent 30 years in Bigbury in south Devon, before age and general decline made our current move advisable, back to a bungalow next door to one of my

daughters in Yorkshire.

I'm sorry to have gone on for so long. A strange kind of “thank you” letter. But the News has always been a great way of keeping in touch with the “doings and goings on” of old colleagues some only names that were incidental in the general to and fro of working life.

Tony Wilson.

(Ed: Keep rabbiting on Tony!)

A new member writes:

I really enjoyed my first two 44 Club News magazines - they brought back so many fond memories of my time working for the company at the SMBP Manchester Regional Office. The tribute to Barrie Dugdale chimed with my memories of him when he worked in Manchester, and I had the pleasure of meeting him from time to time while he was looking for news stories that would be of interest to the press and public. He was an enthusiastic member and performer at Altrincham Garrick Theatre. His theatrical talents were much valued and appreciated by that theatre.

I also had the pleasure and good fortune of working alongside Ian Ward who featured in the summer issue when he was based at the SMBP office at Peter House Manchester. We both worked in the same office. I was a very junior member of the team, but he was always there to encourage and support his colleagues and made me feel valued.

Roy Havery

Ian Ward

I thoroughly enjoyed the feature on Ian Ward in the last edition. I had



extensive dealings with Ian while I was chairman of the London Branch of the Institute of Petroleum for 5 years with many meetings and events at New Cavendish Street but never knew his background in SMBP and BP, he never really talked about the old times! I noted just one memory lapse error that I can forgive him for - he actually visited Lensbury in October 1997 when he attended the annual IP Branches Conference which I hosted there! Here's a photo of him sitting with the assembled group. OK it was 26 years ago and at our ages there's not a lot of difference between 26 and 50 years when looking back! Ian is front row, extreme left. I'm next door but one to him.

Andy Hull

Memories from Julian

I have just received the latest edition of the magazine to which I always much look forward. A couple of the letters and articles really brought back long-ago memories in the fondest way

Tony Wilson worked in Guy Ackers' team in the group that did Time and Motion Studies. I was with Peter Yarranton's Industrial Relations and Richard Springett was a young trainee attached to that team. We remained in touch throughout our careers that were spent in HR. Tony led a mean game of cribbage at lunchtimes. He was a really friendly

and fun person to be around, so it is great to see that he is obviously thriving at 85. Those days in 1969 seem a long time ago but "a thousand ages in thy sight are like an evening gone; Short as the watch that ends the night before the rising sun"

The other letter that really threw me back in time was the one from Paul Heseltine regarding **John Nowill**. John used to look after the Sandwich Course trainees as the Education Officer. He interviewed me, after Henry Josselyn, for my entry into SMBP. Initially I was told that I would be considered for the entrance to the programme the following year because the intake had already been picked and was about to start (in the next two weeks.) Pretty soon after I got a call that someone had dropped out and would I like to start immediately! A pretty quick yes from me of course but I had two weeks before I started, and they attached me to John. He was very kind and encouraging, he seemed to know everyone and was obviously held with respect and fondness by all that he connected with. Not long after that he left to join the Petroleum Industry Training Board and I never thought I would see his name again. I am glad that he is still with us and hopefully you will be able to let him know I remembered him fondly somehow.

Julian Dalzell

95th Looking back I find that I have now been retired longer than I worked for the Company, but those 38 years hold so many happy memories of interesting and, sometimes, challenging experiences that the many sales and marketing changes and developments presented during those years. Also, of course happy memories of the many colleagues with whom I worked and the friendships that were forged and, in many cases,

retained to this day. The popular 44 Club News is also a very welcome magazine for those of us who have memories of those times.

I first joined the Petroleum Board in Tunbridge Wells in 1945, just as WW2 was ending and started work in the Mailing Room. Colleagues from those days included Len Evans, who I had known for some time as he lived in the same village and Des Hall a renowned local cricketer and fast bowler, star of our SMBP evening cricket team.

In 1947 the Petroleum Board was wound up and I was then employed by SMBP working mainly in General Sales. In 1950 I joined three other colleagues from other Divisions and six new entrants on a fifteen-month training course experiencing many of the differing elements of the Company's operations, from portside deliveries (Avonmouth in my case) through to sales at the sharp end. Finishing the course I spent short spells in the Commercial market in Swansea, Pontypridd and Brecon, where I first met my very good friend Maurice Garwood and also where I spent almost two seasons playing football for Brecon in the Welsh League. Although I had only eight months in Pontypridd it was of sufficient time for me to meet Jean, the lovely girl who became my wife and who has shared a happy life with me for over seventy years.

In 1954 I took over a Retail territory from Alec Lewis, the England Rugby International, covering parts of Dorset and Somerset and spent the following ten years there busily endeavouring to convert sites to Shell or BP against the competition presented mainly by Esso and Regent.

It was during this period that the Lubricants DIY market became a reality and we were being asked to investigate and expand our sales into non-traditional outlets – another challenging but exciting time. Hypermarkets, Supermarkets, Department Stores and Motor

continued on page 8

BIRTHDAY THANKS/YOUR LETTERS

Accessory shops, even Woolworths with its massive 1200 stores, were our main targets where different pricing, sales and merchandising techniques were required to obtain lubricant sales in a highly competitive marketplace.

This new market developed rapidly and in 1970 I was transferred to BP Oil Head Office as manager of the new High Street Market under Geoff Sheppard to work with the creative man who taught me so much and became my very good friend, Gordon Wiles.

Eleven demanding but rewarding years followed as, with my friend and colleague David Best and valued co-operation from Don Miller of the SP&M Agency, we established a specialist sales and merchandising force that achieved considerable profitable success, working as a separate unit in a different and very competitive environment to the traditional Retail market.

In early 1982 I was asked to examine the potential development of shops on retail sites and to produce a policy that could be recommended and implemented on BP dealer and company owned sites. This involved discussions with dealers, potential suppliers, and the examination of successful operations in both Switzerland and Sweden.

This was a very interesting exercise and, following acceptance of the recommendations, a series of presentations to BP dealers were made at the end of 1982, since when of course shops have developed enormously throughout the dealer network.

That seemed the appropriate time to take the opportunity of generous early retirement and in March 1983 I joined my long term friend Don Miller in forming a Conference arm to his Company which we called D&D Conferences.

Looking back, whether with the Petroleum Board, SMBP or BP they were great years, sometimes frustrating, sometimes very

rewarding and, where life has been kind, many friendships were forged that remain to this day.

Don Dray

81st Returning from Paris after watching Ireland beat South Africa I was touched to receive a birthday card once again from my fellow members. The floating filling station depicted in the card is a beautiful reminder that as we float through retirement the company will always be there in our hearts.

Thank you from the bottom of mine.

John Long

92nd Another year has gone by, and I am still here in reasonable health. Recently I took an old colleague and his wife, Ray and Liz Stacey, to one of the best venues in Dorset – the



“Abbey House” in Abbotsbury. Its very popular with celebrities and Americans. Superb food! I would like to pass on my good wishes to old colleagues David Down, Barry Hiscock, Nick Fletcher and Rodney Coffin.

Peter Phillips

91st I am still around – just! Somewhat diminished, but still able to appreciate the kind gesture from the 44 Club – after all these years!

Martin Spankie

91st I still enjoy gardening, oil painting and wood carving although my hands tell me to take a break more often! As I write we are having wonderful sunny weather and just hope the Winter will not be as severe as it was 60 years ago. We still have the calendar with that photo as on the front page of No 174 44



Club News. We all remember those long, long weeks but Brenda and I remember especially as our first child Robert was born in December 1962. They were both discharged from the nursing home on New Years Eve, after the obligatory ten days (fancy that! as opposed to new mothers today, they are up and about within hours!) to be driven home by taxi. Baby on lap as taxi negotiated the deep snow to home. Robert has recently retired - where have all the years gone!

Once again, thank you to all the wonderful volunteers concerned with sending Birthday greetings.

Norman Cooke

89th I happened to be in Perth, Western Australia for my birthday and our wedding anniversary and our eldest daughter's 60th birthday – we had lots to celebrate! It was June, their winter and really cold at night!



Michael Beacham (ex BP Oil Computer Centre, Hemel Hempstead)

“Wyvern”

82nd The picture of Embankment Gardens with Shell-Mex House towering in the background brought back many memories. I’m sure that I read somewhere that the clock face is bigger than Big Ben which if



so would make it one of the biggest in the country. (Ed. That’s right, the clock at the top of Shell Mex House is even bigger than the clocks on top of the Elizabeth Tower (Big Ben). Each of Big Ben’s four clocks is 7 metres in diameter whilst the clock on top of Shell Mex House is 7.62 metres in diameter, not only making it the biggest clock in London, but the biggest in the entire United Kingdom.)

Most dinner times, weather permitting, we used to try and walk off a substantial lunch in the restaurant (three courses for a shilling) or take a swift half in the Ship and Shovel at Charing Cross which was more welcoming than

the Rose of England in SM House forecourt!

In the summer when the Test matches were on there was a room with a TV in the bowels of the building where you could watch a few of the pre lunch overs.

The annual birthday card is a catalyst to revisit my years spent in Capital Accounts, Accounts General and Internal Audit. Happy Days.

Roger Smith

Thanks also received from: Anthony Evans (82), Alistair Forrester (90), Ken Doran (92), Ian Kerr (83), Bryan Jenkinson 92), Gordon Pattenden (89), Ken McNab (75), John Hoare (85), George Dickson (99)

News from the Branches

Sadly, we have only been advised of events, or planned events, in five Branches. Hopefully Christmas events will mean more next time

Inverness

Contact: Keith and Mary Pickering

We are still meeting, and lunch arranged for January in Kingsmill hotel as usual.

Aberdeen

Contact: Graham Walker

Glasgow

Contact: Elaine Ellen

www.smbp44glasgow.weebly.com

Belfast

Contact: Norman Mavitty

Christmas lunch was held at Clandeboye Golf Club on Friday 15th December.

Northumbria

Contact: Keith Taylor

West Riding

Contact: Bram Allport

Teesside

Contact: Brammer Allport

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NEWS FROM THE BRANCHES

Manchester

Contact: Pat Withers

North Midlands

Contact: Frank or Carol Barnett

South Midlands

Contact: Malcolm Bury

In early September we made a very enjoyable visit to the Heritage Park at the Pitstone Green Museum. This Museum houses a diverse mix of attractions from a bygone age when life was harder but slower than today. Although we were not large in number, our group was able to explore the rural life exhibits of farming, country life and trades and professions from the local area at a leisurely pace. Although it is a long-established local area attraction, many of us were unaware of the Museum's existence until our visit. Exploring historic machinery such as a Monster Rack Saw and a Crossley gas engine, a rural shop and a 1940s room proved to be fascinating and one man's personal collection of vintage household memorabilia prompted numerous comments along the lines of "we used to have one of those at home when we were young!". Although our visit was self-guided, we were very fortunate to enjoy the knowledgeable support of an impressive team of Museum volunteers who were only too pleased to answer questions and to explain the history and workings of the many exhibits. Several members of our group are intending to return to the Museum at a future date. Thanks are due to Bernadette McConville and Ken Longhurst for their organisation of the visit. At the end of the morning most of our party moved on to The Oak in Aston

Clinton for a pub lunch and were joined there by some additional members who were unable to be with us earlier in the morning at the Museum. As usual, Malcolm Bury took care of all the lunchtime details with the management at The Oak.

A second visit of the year to The White Horse at Bourne End near Hemel Hempstead (see photo) in mid-October rounded off our 2023 programme of pub lunches in fine style. This year our attendances have been a bit below par at times but on this occasion nearly 40 members and guests enjoyed the usual good food and efficient service from the White Horse staff. This excellent turnout was boosted in no small measure by a strong and very welcome contingent of British Pipeline Agency members. Our thanks must also go once more to Christine Cowie for making all the prior arrangements to ensure that everything ran smoothly on the day.

The Branch Committee is now looking forward to holding another full programme in 2024 and, despite the march of time having some inevitable impact on our number of active members, to anticipating the continuing strong support from the Branch for all our activities.

Coming up: We are planning to hold our first pub lunch of



South Midlands Branch

2024 as usual in early/mid-March and the actual date and venue will be chosen at our next Committee meeting in January. Our customary diary circular giving full details of our 2024 programme will be circulated to all active members in February.

Chelmsford

Contact: Tony Scott-Russell

For its autumn lunch the branch returned to the Beauvoir Arms at Downham on 21st September. The weather was kind to us, allowing some to enjoy pre-lunch drinks in the outside patio area. 32 members and guests attended the function, a similar number to last year. As



Chelmsford Branch

usual, the selection and quality of the dishes was well appreciated along with the friendly and attentive service.

Ipswich

Contact: Tony Grayston

Or **Contact:** David Cattermole

South Wales

Contact: Viv Perry

<https://www.44club.co.uk/south-wales.html>

We met on Wednesday 6th September 2023 trying a new establishment on the Mumbles Swansea. We ventured a little deeper into the Mumbles to a restaurant called 'The Mermaid Café Bar & Restaurant, recommended by one of our BP members Clive Hillman who had several nice meals with his wife Flo in the past. Like many restaurants today especially in a tourist location there are staff shortages. Even though our group has severely depleted for this meeting due to illnesses and mobility issues (our best wishes to all who could not attend) the service left a lot to be desired. Moreover, the quality, likely because of staffing took a nose dive. So, not the best of experiences. BUT it must be said everyone had a great time, the conversation buzzed



Greater Bristol Branch

and there was a lot of laughter. By the way we had to pay for parking which Swansea Council had raised to £2.50 an hour.

With our numbers getting so small we did discuss whether the group should fold and maybe we call it a day. The members' spouses made it clearly understood that this was unacceptable, and we should continue. Shell Mex & BP clearly 'lives on' with the camaraderie spirit members enjoyed when in the work environment. – mainly group are Terminal members. (Drivers, Mechanics and Admin). With the next RPI pensions award coming, a brief discussion took place on the next pension rise and whether any retrospective adjustment would be considered – we await. As a group we discussed Christmas, yep it needs to be booked once again. We all agreed to return to 'The Norton Hotel' with free parking and pleasant surroundings.

Coming Up:

Our next meeting we have agreed will be in March - Wednesday 6th

or 13th 2024. We are going to try another venue King Arthur Hotel, Reynoldson, Gower SA3 1AD All who can join us please let Viv know.

Greater Bristol

Contact: Roger Gamlin

Our Autumn lunch event was a return visit to The Woodford Lodge, situated beside Chew Lake in the Chew Valley just south of Bristol on Thursday 21st September 2023. It was a couple of years since our last visit there mainly because of Covid restrictions. The venue was still excellent, as was the service. The same can be said about the food and drinks. Our happy group found much to chat about and to reminisce over events in the past. We all came away with a smile on our faces, having remembered times gone by, and absent friends. Please remember to take a look at the SMBP 44 Association web site, especially the Greater Bristol branch section, to enjoy the photos and memories of our past Branch events. Many ex-colleagues faces to admire.

Harrow

Contact: Greta Chandler,

Although Branch is in abeyance Greta would be pleased to hear from anyone in the area who would like a chat.



South Wales Branch

The focus on the Brand

One of the peculiarities of the multinational oil company, and it applies to them all, is the in-built dichotomy between the “Upstream”, “Manufacturing”, on the one hand and Marketing on the other. They have always been three very different businesses with different priorities, skill requirements and challenges. I once worked in a Shell Opco where the Chief Executive was a very senior and talented geologist – a man, therefore, of the ‘Upstream’. I was working on the Country Business Plan, and he asked me to explain something in the draft. “Tell me again”, he said, “what is the difference between ‘Trading’ and ‘Marketing’”. In his world, he revealed that once the oil leaves the ground en route to the Refinery and beyond, the producers call it ‘disposal’!

The days before ‘Solus’

Shell-Mex and B.P. didn’t have to worry about such messy things as looking for and producing crude –

that was somebody else’s problem. And we didn’t have refineries either – that was for the “parent companies” to do. No, SMBP was pure marketing – and, you might agree, all the better for it! Which brings us to the “Brand” - and now things begin to get a tad complicated. In 1970 I went out “on the road” as a Group Commercial Representative – the Industrial Market. My Business card had both the Shell emblem (Pecten) on it and that of BP (Shield). But when I gave it to the receptionist at the customer’s premises she would phone the buyer and say “It’s the young man from Shell here Mr Pannell” – they were very polite in North London.

My job was dual branded (sort of). I ‘sold’ Shell and BP lubricants which were distinctively branded but the Fuels business was technically ‘Shell-Mex and B.P.’ – though none of my customers called it that. I was the ‘Young man from Shell’. My researches over the years

have confirmed that the absence of brand identity was an issue (understandably) for BP in the run up to the Brand Separation decision.

But well before Brand Separation there was an exercise in Retail which was very Brand driven. Whilst in the past SMBP’s Retail business was conducted through independent Dealers gradually two things happened. Company-owned sites rapidly increased and these and Dealer sites became “Solus” – that is they carried a single brand – Shell, BP or National. It was logical in an age during which branded marketing became the norm in so many product sectors. It meant that the brands could be associated not just with the product delivered by the pump but with the whole refuelling experience of the motorist. We have taken this for granted as the norm for a very long time. But it’s worth recalling that SMBP was the innovator. **PSB**





Wedding Anniversaries

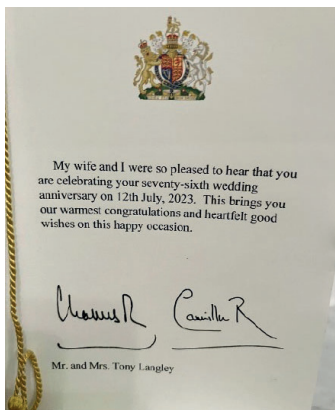
76 Years

Jean and Tony Langley

12th July 2023



Jean and Tony Langley



Platinum (70)

Bob and Betty Gregory

14th November 2023



Bob and Betty Gregory

Diamond (60)

Neville and Margaret Brown

7th September 2023



Neville and Margaret Brown



Obituaries

We are sorry to report the loss of the following members. Our condolences are sent to their families, friends & past colleagues.

BAXTER (96). Mrs Mildred Baxter of Omagh died on 24th June 2023. She was the wife of the late Mr D J Baxter, once a Driver at Londonderry/Derry.

BEAVIS (86). Mr David Beavis of Wells died on 7th July 2023. He was an Admin Supervisor (H&A) at Manchester Regional Office when he left group service in 1973 after 15 years.

BORROWS (94). Mr Jack (John) Borrows of Bebington died on 11th October 2023. He was Plant Operations and Engineering Manager, Stanlow, when he left group service in 1989 after 18 years.

BUCKINGHAM (101). Mr Thomas Buckingham of Birmingham died on 4th July 2023. He was a Senior Operations Assistant at Warley when he left group service in 1978 after 27 years.

BUGG (84). Mr Ronald Bugg of Eastbourne died on 28th June 2023. He worked as a Driver/Terminal Assistant at Wandsworth when he left group service after 30 years.

CLARK (83). Mrs Wilma Clark of Inverness has died. She was the wife of the late Gordon Clark, once a Driver at Inverness.

COOPER (88). Mr Brian Cooper of London died on 23rd July 2023. He was a Motor Engineer, Distribution, Shell-Mex House when he left group service in 1988 after 37 years.

CRADDOCK (92). Mrs Doreen Craddock of Plymouth died on 25th August 2023. She was the wife of the late James Craddock, once a Terminal Operator 1.

CROXFORD (89). Mrs Sylvia Croxford of St Neots died on 20th July 2023. She was the wife of the late John Croxford, once a Driver at Buncefield.

CURRAN (86). Mrs Mary Curran of Macclesfield died on 12th October 2023. She was the wife of the late William (Bill) Curran, once Head of Market/Consumer Liaison, Distribution, Manchester.

DUNKLEY (91). Mr Peter Dunkley of Bromsgrove died on 13th October 2023. He worked in Public Affairs, Shell-Mex House when he left group service in 1983 after 17 years.

DUROWSE (89). Mr Henry Durowse of Totnes died on 15th August 2023. He worked in Public Affairs, Shell UK Limited, Shell-Mex House when he left group service in 1992 after 24 years.

EARLY (102). Mr Alec Early of Saxmundham died on 10th May 2023. He was a Manager, MWSA, Shell-Mex House when he left group service in 1977 after 22 years.

FRY (85). Mr David Fry of Blackrock, Co Cork died on 27th September 2023.

GEBLER (95). Mr George Gebler of Barton-le-Clay died on 13th June 2023. He was Department Manager, Property Division, Shell-Mex House when he left group service in 1987 after 25 years.

GUMBRELL (86). Mr Robin Gumbrell of Huntingdon died on 30th October 2023. He worked in Marine, London when he left group service in 1989 after 35 years.

HARRISON (94). Mrs Clemency Harrison of Nottingham has died. She was Secretarial Services Supervisor, Leeds Regional Office when she left group service in 1981 after 14 years.

HUDSON (95). Mr John Hudson of Reading died in December 2022. He was the husband of the late Pamela Hudson who was once a secretary.

HUNT (87). Mr Roy Hunt of Haydock died on 10th July 2023. He was a Driver at Stanlow when he left group service in 1992 after 21 years.

HUNTER (88). Mr John Hunter of Pirbright died on 7th October 2023. He was Director, Corporate Affairs, Shell Expro, Shell-Mex House when he left group service in 1990 after 31 years.

ILIFFE (90). Mr Reginald Iliffe of Grimsby died on 13th June 2023. He worked at Killingholme Terminal when he left group service in 1991 after 34 years.

JONES (95). Mr Cecil Jones of Wilmslow died on 24th May 2023. He was Group Plant Engineer, Distribution Division, Manchester when he left group service in 1988 after 32 years.

JONES (89). Mr Gordon Jones of Newport (Gwent) died on 22nd August 2023. He worked in Terminal Operations, Newport when he left group service in 1979 after nine years.

KENNEDY (93). Mr John Kennedy of Paisley died on 13th October 2023. He was a Sales Office Manager, Retail, Glasgow Regional Office when he left group service in 1982 after 19 years.

KIMP (95). Mr John Kimp of Kidderminster died on 8th August 2023. He was a Vehicle Maintenance Supervisor at Bishopbriggs Terminal when he left group service in 1987 after 39 years.

L'ANSON (97). Mrs Ruth L'Anson of Paignton died on 30th August 2023. She was a Regional Cashier, Shell UK Oil, Bristol Region when she left group service in 1978 after 18 years.

LARGE (88). Mr Ray Large of East Grinstead has died. He was a Cashier with BP Oil Limited, Victoria when he left group service in 1984 after 27 years.

LATHAM (91). Mrs June Latham of Birmingham died on 29th June 2023. She was the wife of the late William Latham, once a Vehicle Tester at Warley.

LEYLAND (95). Mr Barry Leyland of Taunton died on 11th August 2023. He was a Commercial Representative, Bristol when he left group service in 1982 after 25 years.

LILLY (87). Mr Robin Lilly of Letchworth died on 12th November 2023. He was Manager, Spares Distribution Centre, Luton SDS Stores when he left group service in 1978 after 21 years.

LOVATT (97). Mrs Mary Lovatt of Chorley died on 31st August 2023. She was the wife of the late William Lovatt, once a Driver at Haydock.

LOVE (92). Mr Frederick Love of Cheadle Hulme died on 27th August 2023. He was Household Services & Purchasing Supervisor when he left group service in 1990 after 25 years.

LUCAS (94). Mr Roy Lucas of Seaford has died. He was Retail Finance Adviser, Birmingham Regional Office when he left group service in 1983 after 34 years.

MARTIN (88). Mr Bryan Martin of Dartford died on 21st June 2023. He was a Driver at Shell Haven when he left group service in 1995 after 25 years.

MORNE (99). Mr James Morne of Preston died on 24th August 2023. He was a Driver at Haydock when he left group service in 1969 after 21 years.

PRITCHARD (86). Mrs Barbara Pritchard of Birmingham died on 13th June 2023. She was the wife of the late Jack Pritchard, once a Commercial Representative, Birmingham.

RAE (90). Mr John Rae of Broxburn died on 7th September 2023. He was a Driver at Grangemouth when he left group service in 1987 after 29 years.

RATCLIFF (97). Mrs Jeanne Ratcliff of Berkhamsted has died.

RUTHERFORD (91). Mr Maurice Rutherford of Jarrow died on 15th July 2023. He was a Driver at Jarrow when he left group service in 1982 after 33 years.

SIMPSON (87). Mr Ewan Simpson of Northwich has died. He worked in Retail Administration at Manchester Regional Office when he left group service in 1991 after 30 years.

TAYLOR (88). Mr David Taylor of Stourbridge has died. He was a Materials Controller at Joseph Batsons & Co Ltd at Tipton when he left group service in 1990.

THOMPSON (88). Mr Roy Thompson of Shoreham-by-Sea died on 3rd October 2023. He was a Yard Operator, SUKO, Portslade when he left group service in 1988 after 21 years.

TILBURY (86). Mr George Tilbury of High Wycombe has died. He was an Airfield Operator at Heathrow when he left group service in 1990 after 18 years.

WATERS (80). Mr Thomas Waters of Newcastle-upon-Tyne died on 20th July 2023. He was a Terminal Manager at Jarrow when he left group service in 1993 after 24 years.

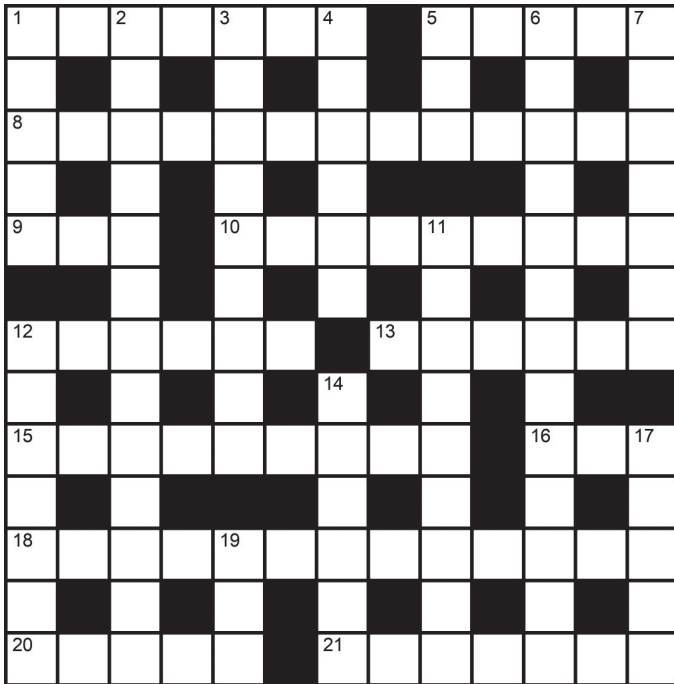
WRAY (96). Mr William Wray of London died in November 2022. He was a Purchasing Manager, South-East Region, Knightsbridge, when he left group service in 1982 after 24 years.

and Finally ...

Quotable Quote

"Sell products, make profits have fun"
Sir John Greenborough

Prize Crossword

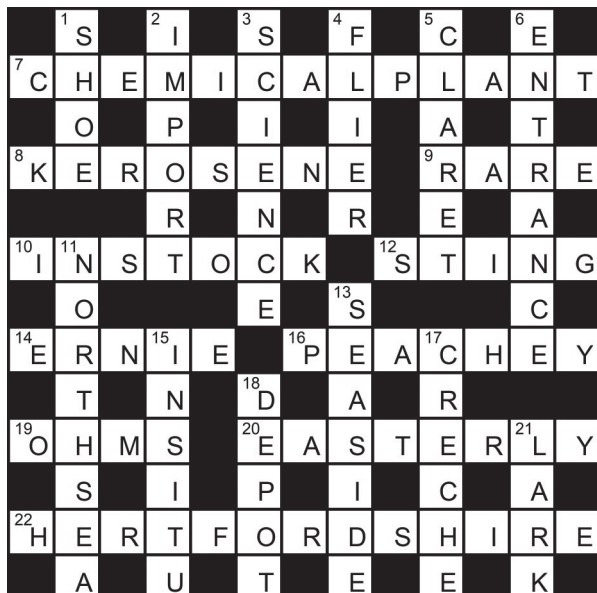


Across

- 1 The man in the dock (7)
- 5 Forbidden (5)
- 8 SMBP Head Office (13)
- 9 When you're alone you're on your ____ (3)
- 10 Looked like (9)
- 12 Held 200 litres of lubricants (6)
- 13 Real _____ is property (6)
- 15 In an academic way (9)
- 16 Strong and resilient English tree (3)
- 18 Statements to the media (5,8)
- 20 BP's dominant colour (5)
- 21 Computer _____ (for example) (7)

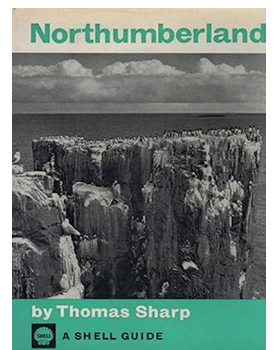
Down

- 1 Something of value owned by a Company (5)
- 2 Popular OLDE pub in Fleet Street (7,6)
- 3 Converts Light to electricity (5,4)
- 4 What you wear to a smart occasion (6)
- 5 Bayer Leverkusen and Germany defender (3)
- 6 Fish soup (French) (13)
- 7 Late (7)
- 11 Essential with fish and chips (5,4)
- 12 Porcine inhabitant of forests, woodland (etc.) in East and Southern Africa. (7)
- 14 Beware gifts borne by them (6)
- 17 Essential for refuelling (5)
- 19 Tottenham's Korean Captain (3)



Last Issue's Crossword

An excellent twenty all correct entries from which the winner, John Swan of Newcastle upon Tyne, was randomly selected. A copy of the historic "Shell Guide to Northumbria" on its way to you John.



Closing date for next issue
20th February 2024