

## JOHN'S RETIREMENT SPEECH FEBRUARY 1998.

Many thanks for these delightful gifts, You are very generous. It's more than I deserve.

How do I summarise nearly 50 years in just 30, sorry, 3 minutes.

Well, it all began on February 7th 1949, a starry eyed 15 year old with plenty of hair and enthusiasm came to Fielding's for the first time. I was however in good company from the outset because on that same day came Ted Williams, now director at Wil-el-mil; the late Larry Jackson who subsequently founded Tolgar engineering and last but not least our own Graham Taffy Hall who retired last November.

Our first instructor was a fine engineer and strict disciplinarian named Bert Ravenhill who subsequently became Ron Yardley's father in law.

My first pay was £1 1 shilling and 3 pence, (£1 6p in today's currency) for a 44 hour week. Out of that came 2/10d (14p) for National Insurance and 6 shillings (30p) bus fare from the Forest of Dean. When I became 16 a few weeks later that wage increased to £1 6 shillings and 7 pence,

It was a strange and exciting new world for us new lads. The Company was very large in those days, employing nearly 700 people, most of whom cycled or walked to work,

On my first venture into the works I espied a sign saying 'beware of trains'. I thought this was a joke until I was nearly run over by a steam loco delivering the daily swarf

truck into the heavy machine shop!. In those days there were 5 canteens and the best sports ground in the district on which were played all the popular sports, We even had an annual sports day. The changing rooms were a pair of railway carriages between which was sited a large concrete pit which served as a communal bath!

That was all a long time ago, From the days of the slide rule and Log tables we have progressed to the calculator, overcome the hurdle of metrication, passed through the CAD era and have now arrived at the modeller on which three dimensional drawings are generated. What will come next?.

During this time I've travelled around a bit; have been to the USA a couple of times, to France 7 or 8 times and also visited Sweden, New Zealand and Korea.

Not all the excitement happens far from home though, On one occasion Ron Yardley and I were travelling home from a visit to the Midlands, We stopped off at a pub for a bite to eat and parked in a car park adjacent. On returning to it a an hour later we found the car park locked!, It was a works car park which would remain locked until 5.30. We thought it unfair that F & P should be deprived of our services for so long and besides, Ron was having elvers for tea. So, using a builders plank and a pile of bricks we applied the principle of the lever and lifted this 12 foot high gate off its hinges. Having removed the car, we then tried to rehang the gate, but failed to do so.

The saddest moments I experienced were when the redundancy exercises came along, Friends who I had worked with for many years were suddenly not there anymore, It was a traumatic experience to go home and

tell your wife and family that you no longer had a job, I know, because I was made redundant in 1982 as part of a redundancy exercise, but returned a few days later to complete some unfinished work. I think I made it last a long time because, here we are, 16 years later and I'm still here!

Throughout all the years at F & P I've had the privilege to work amongst some super colleagues, some of the finest engineers, kind & considerate people, comedians, many optimists, a few pessimists and at least one politician BUT, all having something to contribute,

It has always been, and still is, this WORKFORCE that is the Company' greatest asset. A workforce of skilled and dedicated people, who take the greatest pride in the quality of their work and in helping one another. It is, after all, a team effort that achieves the best results. I have been privileged to work in such exalted company for so long.

I thank you all for your help, forbearance, co-operation and, most of all for your friendship. Apart from inviting you all over to the Whitesmiths to have a drink with me, I would like to wish you all, both collectively and individually, the very best of health, success and good fortune in the future.

Copies of the above may be obtained from HMSO!