



- 1 Nile
- 2 Amazon
- 3 Yangtze
- 4 Mississippi
- 5 Yellow
- 6 Congo
- 7 Volga
- 8 Murray
- 9 Rio Grande
- 10 Danube
- 11 Zambezi
- 12 Ganges
- 13 Orinoco
- 14 Tigris
- 15 Churchill
- 16 Volta
- 17 Niger
- 18 Parana
- 19 Purus
- 20 Thames

O	G	N	O	C	T	A	I	V	O	L	T	A	C	E	A
K	R	P	Z	A	M	B	E	Z	I	U	M	F	I	M	N
Y	B	I	G	D	G	L	B	Q	M	U	R	R	A	Y	A
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N	N	A	I	O	T	T	N	N	F	A	O	B	P	X	I
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T	O	B	J	X	J	L	O	W	O	L	L	E	Y	F	M
R	I	O	G	R	A	N	D	E	N	T	V	C	B	D	R

Its quiz time again!

In this issue, our wordsearch includes 20 rivers. All you need to do is find them and send your answers in to Suzanne Langridge in Personnel, using a photocopy of the page if you wish. The winning entry will be drawn on Friday 6 November from all the correct entries received. The lucky winner will receive a prize of £50 in Marks and Spencer vouchers.

Written by Avencia PR
Designed & produced by Parker Design Consultants Ltd



Frank Roberts & Sons Limited, Rudheath, Northwich, Cheshire, CW9 7RQ
Tel: 01606 41122 Fax: 01606 41503

PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST SWINE FLU

Swine flu is spreading fast in the UK and there are still many thousands of new cases every week. There are ways you can help to protect yourself by:

- learning to recognise the symptoms of swine flu - see page six
- practicing good hygiene - wash your hands regularly, use tissues when you sneeze and keep surfaces clean
- establishing 'flu friends' - friends and relatives who can help if you fall ill
- keeping paracetamol-based cold remedies in the house
- having a thermometer available so you can check your temperature if needed

There's more information about swine flu and tips on what you can do on page six.

"I've been to London to see the Queen!"

Sheila Gerrard tells us all about her afternoon tea at Buckingham Palace on **page seven**. Wonder if they use Roberts' bread in those famous cucumber sandwiches?

Wordsearch

Our regular wordsearch appears on the back page. It's your chance to win £50 of Marks and Spencer vouchers and spoil yourself.



SELLOUT Cheshire show

2009 was our fourth year of sponsoring the Roberts Bakery Food Hall at the Cheshire Show. The show brought more people than ever to the stand and we sold thousands of loaves of bread.

Our bread was even used by local chef Jason Palin to create the definitive 'Made in Cheshire' sandwich. Botanist David Bellamy OBE was on hand to try the sandwich and gave it the definite thumbs up!

Read more about the show on page four.



Biting back at the recession

There's little doubt that the recession continues to affect the economy and individuals alike, and will do for some time. Unemployment is rising and people are finding that their incomes are under more pressure than ever before. The sheer number of mortgage defaults is an indication of how tight the situation is for many people. Fortunately, we are in a good value sector; there are plenty of economical meals that can be made with a loaf of bread!

Whilst it is great to be a busy business, we should never be complacent. Our customers rightly expect us to deliver what they want, when they want it

and in full. There is definite room for improvement here and we should always strive to respond to customers' needs and keep them feeling great about us as a supplier.

I'm pleased to report that the board is considering plans for further expansion. We are currently discussing a number of exciting projects, not just on this site but elsewhere too. The family and the board are united and committed to the expansion and as the project develops we will share the plans with everyone in the business.

The family and the board are absolutely delighted to formally

announce the appointment of Mike Braddock as Managing Director. Mike demonstrated great qualities of leadership and attention to detail in his previous role as General Manager and we are certain that he is the right person to guide the business through the challenging times we face ahead.

We are also very pleased to welcome Bob Stott on board as non executive director. Bob is a very experienced food executive with many years working at the highest level in the food industry, most notably as Managing Director of Morrisons, the supermarket group. Bob will be a great asset to the business.

Bill Mustoe
Chairman

We welcome Bob to the board



Bob Stott

We are very pleased to welcome Bob Stott to the Company as a non executive director. The appointment of Bob, who has many years experience in the food industry, will assist in taking our business through our next stage of development and growth.

Bob began his career with Mars in the 1960s. After 10 years with the company, he moved to William Morrison Supermarkets as a buyer. At that time, Morrison's only had 12

shops and Bob's appointment doubled the size of the buying team! Attracted by a new challenge in 1987, Bob moved to fresh produce supplier Geest. He joined as Managing Director for the wholesale division and ran this division for five years before moving to head up the company's Banana Division – for which Geest was best known.

Bob returned to Morrison's in 1996 as Buying Director before being promoted to Joint Managing Director and then Chief Executive, the position he held until retirement in September 2006. Bob stayed on at Morrison's for a further 18 months as a consultant to the business, when he was heavily involved with the Competition Commission during their two year inquiry into the Grocery Industry between 2006 and 2008. He finally left the Company in May 2008.

Still actively involved in business and sport, Bob is also a non executive director of the Governing Body of the Rugby Football League. He sits on the board of Leeds Building Society and was also recently

appointed as an Independent Director of the new governing body for greyhound racing (the Greyhound Board of Great Britain). He is also on the Members Committee of Yorkshire County Cricket Club and is a trustee of the YCCC Charitable Youth Trust. "I really enjoy being busy and like to feel that I can add value to the various organisations with which I am involved, using experience and knowledge gained over my long and enjoyable business career" Bob says.

"I am delighted to have joined the Roberts board. It is a great business with great people who are proud of the product they produce, the Roberts brand and, most importantly, they value their customers. There is a very strong family ethic running through the business and the Company has a high quality management team - it's a rare combination these days and one to be greatly valued" he adds.

Bob has also been appointed Chair of the Roberts' Remuneration Committee.

Top glass

We were delighted to receive an award from Vale Royal Borough Council recently. The award was presented to David Roberts by the Mayor to mark our support and encouragement for the borough council's campaign to promote recycling and its environmentally sustainable refuse collection programme. The award is, appropriately, made from recycled glass.



Volumes up despite recession

By Mike Braddock

There's no doubt that the market that we're in has become harder over the past year and that the economic climate has increased the demands placed upon us by our customers.

We are well placed with our spread of business to manage the changing environment that we are in. This has been proven as we have seen sales to our foodservice customers fall, whilst sales to our retail customers have increased over the past year. It is good news that, despite all the economic turmoil, our volumes are up compared to last year on both bread and morning goods.

However, our customers need and demand the highest level of customer service and we have to consistently satisfy their expectations every day with every order.

Delivering expectations

Our service levels over recent weeks have unfortunately not been to the standards that we have set for ourselves and also what our customers expect from us. For a number of reasons, we have not managed to deliver our customers' orders on time and in full to them consistently enough.

Sandwich makers, in particular, are finding it hard in the current marketplace to remain viable. They need to look for every way to save costs in order to survive. We can expect the demands placed upon us to increase as our competitors constantly offer an alternative for our customers. We must remember that first class customer service is now expected in this highly competitive market place.

The sales team continues to explore areas to maintain and increase our sales volumes and has had great success in widening the Roberts brand across more and more retailers. We are now benefiting from the investment we have made in marketing. Our marketing manager, Carolyn Chadwick is now able to give us some great information about how our brand is performing against our competitors. As you will see elsewhere in this newsletter, the sales performance has been strong and more people than ever are buying Roberts bread!

Operationally, the summer months always provide challenges within the bakery with temperatures reaching high levels, which make working conditions hard. Dough temperatures are also high, making baking difficult and there are increasing volume demands on morning goods as the barbeque season kicks in. We continue to look for ways to improve working conditions despite some serious challenges and I'll talk more about the development plans in place later on.

Hat trick of promotions

Within the operation team, I am very pleased to announce the appointment of Stuart Borthwick as Director of Operations. Stuart has delivered some excellent operational improvements whilst in the Pastry Case and, with his background and experience, he will be an excellent leader of this critical part of the business. In line with this change, it is a pleasure to announce also the changes to the roles of Graham Mahon and Mark Owen. They became Director of Sales and Director of Logistics respectively as they take on site wide responsibility for their functional areas.

As we push more and more bread through our despatch facility each day, the challenge of delivering everything on time and in full increases, particularly with high customer expectations and increased volumes. The logistics team is constantly faced with demands for increased flexibility and more deliveries. The effort and commitment of the whole team is appreciated by all.

The impact of the "credit crunch" has been felt harder within the Pastry Case. It's been a difficult year with consumers choosing to buy their snacks and treats in other ways within the shops. However, looking forward the prospects are bright with sales for next Christmas expected to be bigger than ever.

Lots of innovation and development from the Pastry Case team has been delivered and welcomed by our customers. There are some exciting developments in the pipeline and in particular some new lines with Marks & Spencer which we will see in stores soon. Once again, the Pastry Case has



Mike Braddock

proved that it can innovate and create new ideas and then deliver operationally to target. Despite a tough year, sales will reach over 95 per cent of last year's level, which is good performance in difficult trading conditions, well done to all. We look forward to next year.

With regards to our major raw material - flour - we eagerly await the outcome of the harvest after some turbulent times in recent years. Early indications are positive that the combination of sun and rain has produced a good crop. If the quality levels of the crop are high, then we hope we may see some reduction in prices, but we wait to see where it will all settle. In the marketplace the price of our bread remains stable with a number of promotional deals being offered by the retailers of three for £3 or £1 per loaf.

Development plans

The site development plans have progressed well over the past few months and we are almost ready to make a start. It has taken the business a long time to finalise the plans and to carry out all of the other projects, such as the yeast tank move and the office relocation, that allow the despatch extension to take place. Below is a very brief outline of the work planned.

In October we hope the first works on site will commence with the expansion of the bottom car park to accommodate all site cars. Once the car park is complete, the ground works to construct the new yard area will start. It will involve a huge

amount of earth being moved to level the whole area. This will take all winter to do and, all being well, by next spring we will be in a position to start building the first phase of the new despatch building.

Our current despatch is around 1800m² and work will start on Phase 1 of a two stage build to build approximately 2500m² of new despatch space. Once completed, new slicers, baggers, conveyors and basket wash equipment will be installed into our existing despatch area to complete the job. If everything goes according to plan, we should be finished by autumn 2011. The project is a huge investment by the business and will allow us to continue to expand into the future. More communication is planned over the next few weeks across the business, so keep an eye on the notice boards.

As we come to the end of our financial year, it is pleasing to see that we have been able to weather the storm of the economic downturn and can look forward to next year in a good financial position. The Board is discussing some exciting expansion projects at the moment and further future investment in the business is being planned. We cannot afford to be complacent as our customers always have a choice about where they buy their bread. However we are in a good position to continue to build and grow the business going forward.

Thanks to everyone for all of your effort and commitment over the past few months.

Food...

The summer saw us celebrate our fourth year of sponsoring the Roberts Bakery Food Hall at the Cheshire Show. The show did not disappoint and was, once again a big success for Roberts. More people than ever visited the stand and a record two lorries full of bread sold out at the two day event.

The new seeded and white farmhouse loaves went down a storm with the locals and our Mega Toastie made hundreds of rounds of toast for visitors to munch on as they explored the stands at the show.

We also teamed up with a number of Cheshire food producers and local chef Jason Palin to create the definitive 'Made in Cheshire' sandwich.

Jason formulated a Cheshire-inspired version of the favourite BLT with Cheshire cheese, bacon, lettuce and his own tasty tomato relish. It was made with our new Seeded Farmhouse bread and all the other ingredients came from local suppliers. We gave away recipe cards so that people could see how to make their own sandwich and Jason demonstrated it live on our stand to a celebrity guest and a big audience!

Botanist David Bellamy OBE was the first to try the delicious sandwich, and judging by his reaction, he obviously enjoyed it!

glorious Cheshire food!

Our marketing manager Carolyn Chadwick explained: "Our new loaf is perfect for really tasty sandwiches and that prompted us to seek the ultimate 'Made in Cheshire' combination. The county boasts such a great range of local producers and we thought it was a great opportunity to show some of them off. The Cheshire Show was a really popular event once again and, looking at the amount of bread we sold and the great feedback from our consumers, it seems that Roberts is firmly in the heart of local people too."



David Bellamy OBE with Carolyn Chadwick



Singing in the rain at Whatfest

Not even the rain could dampen the enthusiasm for the three day local music festival Whatfest, which was sponsored by Roberts and held at Shipbrook Hill Farm in Whatcroft. Although only a fledgling event, Whatfest attracted bands such as The Bluetones, Dodgy and China Crisis as well as up and coming local bands, including The Cordels, Dirty Avenues and The Answering Machine.

Carolyn Chadwick said: "The festival was a real success considering the torrential rain that fell. As Sarah and I were stood with soaking wet feet in the middle of a muddy field putting up the Roberts banners before the event, we were worried that it would be a total washout. But with more than 2,000 tickets sold, it was far from it. Luckily, it would appear that a bit of rain can't take the shine off a great festival!"



by Graham Mahon

Exceeding Expectation in difficult trading times....



Graham Mahon

The retail bread market has been buoyant recently with the overall trade witnessing its first growth for three decades. Within Roberts, we too have seen the strength and focus within our brand paying dividend with branded sales up by over 75,000 loaves per week and this has superseded budgeted expectation in that sector, whilst helping to counter the declines in bread sales to the sandwich sector.

Within the sandwich sector, that market has witnessed declines of sandwich sales by as much as 15%, although our position within that sector bucks that trend with sales boosted by improving Export sales on the back of favourable currency exchange rates. Overall Roberts' bread sales are showing volume growth of 4.5% and only fractionally behind budget.

Meeting customer needs

Branded growth over this past year has benefited from a greater focus on category management and customer business planning. By using market data and trends, we have developed sales initiatives specific to customer needs, developed new products relevant to the market, rationalized where possible to ensure the right products are out there in the market place – the ones our consumers want to buy! Carolyn Chadwick discusses this work in more detail in her "Day in the Life" piece.

Morning Goods are in good shape

and again have benefited from some excellent annualised planning from Mark's team to delivery a maximized sales profile. Similar planning within the bread area this coming year will allow for increased sales as we push more towards capacity levels. Morning Goods is now 11.3% up on last year – an excellent achievement across all areas of the business and a massive step forward to where we were just three years ago.

"Best in class"

I wrote back in March on how the market was performing and paying more specific attention to our competitors – some of which are solely suppliers to the sandwich making industry and therefore have been hit harder than most in the current climate. With their sales down probably in line with where the sandwich market is generally operating, their strategy has been quite aggressive in approaching our customer base. Whilst we have seemingly rode this storm commercially to date, it has to remain our focus on providing best-in-class service and quality - getting it right first time is very much the focus in these highly competitive times.

Pricing has remained stable now for the past year with the fluctuations in wheat pricing, exchange rates, freight, transport and energy providing a fairly balanced market. The new harvest for wheat is upon us and

over the next month we'll understand more clearly where the market will settle and whether there will be a need to recover any increases.

Focus and innovation in The Pastry Case

As I wrote in March, The Pastry Case was being affected more by the credit crunch than Roberts and this highlighted to us that "treats" were secondary on most people's shopping lists. Over this period of time, the sales team has been working hard to secure promotional space within stores and proactively pushing sales. In addition, a greater focus on business planning is paying dividend with the major customers.

Seasonal business has remained strong across this past year with year-round business needing the majority of focus for the sales team. Within the highlights of the past few months, Tesco have extended their ranging of both cluster lines in to their Express store format. We are looking to extend the ranging of the mini gingerbread men in to the Express format – but first we need to pre-tub this line and that's what we're about to do!

Another area where we have seen some decline is with the DIY Gingerbread Kits. It's hard to understand where sales have gone, but we're refocusing efforts to reinvigorate the product with a lower cost price and hopefully this will allow the retailers to market the line at a

lower retail price making it more shopper-friendly as a treat! We hope to have the changes to the packaging and contents implemented with most customers by the new calendar year.

Whilst lots of other initiatives are ongoing with other major customers, The Pastry Case is about to break one of Roberts' long standing records of having a customer the furthest distance away. Whilst Roberts have supplied a customer in Japan for a number of years; The Pastry Case takes up the mantle of supplying a customer in Australia for the first time this Christmas with seasonal decorated gingerbreads.

As a consequence of the downturn, sales are not expected to reach last year's or budgeted performance. The proactive response from all the team in The Pastry Case holds us in good stead however. Sales are likely to finish the year at around £11m – around £2m behind budget and £1/2m behind last year.

There's quite clearly a stark contrast across the two businesses, with one perhaps benefiting from the downturn and the other somewhat riding the storm of the wider credit crunch. I personally am satisfied that the sales team has worked to their utmost to deliver sound sales initiatives to exceed expectation in these difficult times and tomorrow will bring about fresh challenges – it always does!



Chris heads down under

Welcome back to Chris Daniels who has been busy travelling to New Zealand and Australia looking at exciting new equipment. Chris will update us on what he's been up to in the next issue.

SWINE FLU

- what you can do

Swine Flu has been in the headlines over the past few months and some of us will either know or have been on the receiving end of Swine Flu, writes Jill Adams.

For anyone who has reason to suspect that they may have this illness, contact the National Pandemic Flu Service in the first instance on **0800 1 513 513** or log onto **www.nhs.uk** for information.

To use the National Pandemic Flu Service you will need the following

information about the patient or yourself:

1. Their date of birth
2. Their current symptoms
3. Their history of any serious medical conditions
4. Their home address, including postcode.

Before calling them, please make sure that you have a pen and paper to hand as you will be given information. This will include



information on how to collect the Tamiflu and where your nearest Anti Viral collection point is.

Please keep work informed and remember to call the "absence manager". You will also need to close it when you are fit to return to work.

If you cough or sneeze please remember **TO CATCH IT, BIN IT, KILL IT** in a tissue.

Remember to wash and sanitise your hands regularly and use the hard surface sanitising wipes that have been provided for your desks, keyboards, telephones etc whilst at work.

SWINE FLU – THE SYMPTOMS

The typical symptoms are:

- a sudden fever (a high body temperature of 38°C/100.4°F or above), and
- a sudden cough.

Other symptoms may include:

- chills,
- aching muscles,
- limb or joint pain,
- diarrhoea or stomach upset,
- sore throat,
- runny nose,
- sneezing, or
- loss of appetite.

ANTIVIRAL COLLECTION POINTS

Central and Eastern Cheshire

Universal House. ERF Way, off Pochin Way Middlewich CW10 0QJ. Telephone 01606 833917. Open 08.00 to 20.00 7 days per week.

Cheshire East

Senior Citizens Hall. Duke Street. SK11 6UR. Telephone 01606 833917. Open 08.00 to 20.00 7 days per week.

Runcorn (Halton)

OOH Service. Community Day Hospital (Halton General Hospital) WA7 2DA. Telephone 01928 842609. Open 09.30 to 20.00. 7 days per week.

Warrington

The Halliwell Jones Stadium. Winwick Road. WA2 7NE. Telephone 01925 843700. Open 07.00 to 22.00 Monday to Friday and 09.00 to 17.00 Saturday, Closed Sunday.

Western Cheshire

St. Martins Clinic, St. Martins Way. CH1 2NR. Telephone 01244 356800. Open Monday to Sunday 08.00 to 20.00.

Upton Clinic, Weston Grove, Upton CH2 1QJ. Telephone 01244 381366. Open Monday to Sunday 08.00 to 20.00.

Mercury House, High Street, Tattenhall. CH3 9PX. Telephone 01829 772512. Open Monday to Friday 09.00 to 17.00.

Hope Farm Clinic, Hope Farm Rd. Great Sutton CH66 2WW. Telephone 0151 347 4200. Open Monday to Sunday 09.00 to 17.00.

Widnes (Halton) Stobart Stadium Halton, Lower House Lane, WA8 7DZ. Telephone 07917 001609. Open 10.00 to 16.00 7 days per week.

TO AVOID SPREAD TO OTHER PEOPLE DO NOT VISIT YOUR GP AND DO NOT GO TO A&E. PLEASE DO NOT COME IN TO WORK.



A Royal affair for Sheila

Sheila Gerrard tells us about her once in a lifetime trip to Buckingham Palace in July

I was very fortunate to attend a royal garden party at Buckingham Palace with my husband Mike, who is a member of the Scout Organisation. We travelled down to London by train and then on to our accommodation, where we changed into our 'finery' ready to meet the Queen.

We looked a little over-dressed travelling on the tube train to Green Park, which is just a stroll from Buckingham Palace. When we arrived at the main gates, the queues already stretched back around the walls of the Palace. We took some photographs and watched the dignitaries being ushered through the ornate gates in their carriages. Some tourists asked me to pose for a photo with their family, I am not sure if they thought I was someone important!

We decided to avoid the queues and enter via the Wellington Arch entrance, through the gardens, past the huge, bronze herons on the side of the lake and onto the lawns at the rear of Buckingham Palace.

We had an hour to wander through the gardens, drink lemonade, listen to the bands and chat to guests before the arrival of the Queen, Prince Philip and the Duke and Duchess of Kent. The 'tea' was served in large marquees and consisted of sandwiches (including cucumber, with the crusts removed), bread rolls the size of a cocktail

sausage and tiny cakes. Mike had a tiny chocolate fudge cake with an edible, embossed, gold crown. These were served on white china with a choice of tea, iced coffee or fruit juice.

Just before 4pm the Yeoman of the Guard crossed the lawns, 'pushing' back the crowds and making a triangular route through the guests, where the Queen and Prince Philip would walk. The National Anthem played and the Queen, dressed in a cerise dress suit and matching hat, walked down the steps of the Palace, followed by Prince Philip. The Queen and Prince Philip walked in opposite directions and paused to speak to chosen guests. The Queen stopped a few feet away from us to speak to a couple about their interest in horseracing and commented on her bad luck with her 2009 Grand National horse. She seemed genuinely happy and interested in what people had to say. After an hour, she retired to the VIP tea tent.

We were then served ice cream and sat under the trees next to the bandstand to shelter from the sun and 'people watch'. At 5.55pm the Royal Party was escorted from the marquee to the waiting Rolls Royce, whilst the band played the National Anthem. We joined the rest of the guests as we exited through the Palace rooms,



through the central courtyard and onto the forecourt where throngs of tourists were taking photographs through the railings.

It was a lovely day, with great memories. We were very lucky

that we had a sunny day as the previous week there had been torrential rain and hailstones. If you ever have the privilege of being invited, say yes and wear a pair of comfy shoes!



Tipped for marketing role

Welcome to Sarah Tipton who joined our marketing department in June as marketing executive. Sarah joins us from retail consultant Kurt Salmon Associates where she was responsible for business to business marketing. Prior to that, she worked at NUS (National Union of Students) Services, where she was involved in marketing to both consumers and NUS members. A graduate from Manchester

Metropolitan University, Sarah was attracted to Roberts by the strong brand and the opportunity to work at product and consumer level. "My family has always enjoyed Roberts bread, so in a way, I have grown up with it," Sarah says. "I jumped at the chance to work at Roberts and have really enjoyed my first few months here. Everyone is so friendly and helpful and I am looking forward to the variety and the challenges that the role will bring."

Meet the weekend Hygiene team

The Saturday Hygiene team works enthusiastically every weekend to keep the bakery shipshape. Many of them have busy lives during the week. Georgina Maddock introduces us to them:

Joanne Nugent

Jo has just graduated from John Moores University in Liverpool with a 2:1 classification in Physical Education Sport and Dance. She will be starting at St Anne's RC High School in Stockport teaching P.E to 11 to 16 year olds. We wish her well in her new career, she will be sadly missed in the hygiene department.



Joanne Nugent



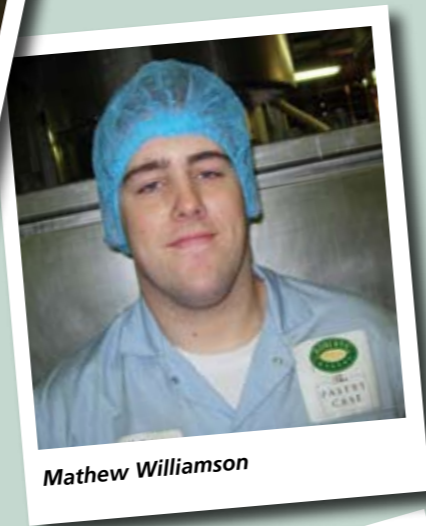
Carol Grant

Carol Grant

Carol has worked in hygiene for the past 23 years on a Saturday. She also works at a local doctor's surgery cleaning. Carol's time has been filled with looking after her mother, daughter and grandson.

Mathew Williamson

Mathew has been with the department for two years. He has just finished college and is at Staffordshire University studying Computer Network Security and Advanced Maths. He also fills in on basket wash and hygiene in the holidays.



Mathew Williamson



Hong u Gan

Jia Liu

Jia has been with the department for four years. She teaches Chinese at a variety of schools and also teaches Tai Chi in her spare time.

Hong u Gan

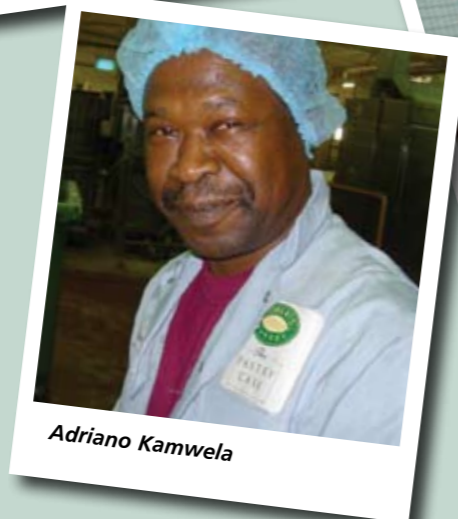
Hong has been with the department for three years. Hong is a housewife and stays at home to look after her husband and the dog. In her spare time, she enjoys watching DVDs.

Adriano Kamwela

Adriano, who has been with the department for four years, also works at the Regency Hospital in Macclesfield in the maintenance department.

Toni Louise Wilmot

Toni Louise has worked for the department for two years. She works as a child minder with her mum Carla. She left earlier this year to have her baby son, William Thomas, who weighed just over 6lb. Many congratulations to Toni.



Adriano Kamwela



Jia Liu

Working towards audit standard every day

Alison Ordonez kicks off by reporting on our fourth excellent BRC audit and our hopes to improve even further with "unannounced" status.

This period has been dominated by our annual BRC audit. There is a huge amount of preparation that goes into making the two days a success and it really is a credit to everyone involved. We achieved our fourth Grade A, which is an excellent result especially as this year it was against a revised standard with many new clauses. Well done to all.

We have agreed that next year we will go "unannounced", which continues to help us achieve our goal of "Audit Standard Every Day". This will be more challenging for us but will be a true test of our abilities and will come after our Tesco audit, which is also unannounced. We are currently working with the

whole site to ensure that everyone is aware of the requirements of the Tesco standard. This should help to ensure that the two day visit goes smoothly. As usual we are up against very tough competition from The Pastry Case who have set the standard by achieving their second "green standard" from Tesco.

FSA targets

We are busy working on salt levels in bread and have a race to the finish line (start of 2010) with our food service bread to get it to the FSA target levels (Retail bread is already there). To help minimise changeovers, our proposal to customers is to completely remove the catering bread range and

replace this with what we now call the RFRS range of breads. These recipes have low salt levels but are of a very good quality and will help sandwich makers achieve the targets that the FSA have set for their industry as well.

Congratulations to Jan Lindley (nee Northcott) who married Paul from Plant 2 production in May and honeymooned in Mexico after a lovely wedding and reception in Northwich.

Busy in NPD

Karol and Annette were kept busy at the Cheshire Show and have been working on new "stress free doughs" both on and off site with Rondo, who provide the equipment. They are also working on understanding how to produce Ciabatta and Italian style breads and how this could work in a factory environment. This is alongside the usual monitoring of our competitors' bread (both retail and food service) and conducting a large sandwich panel to see how our bread performs in the finished sandwich.



Alison Ordonez

Further congratulations to Sarah Steele and Magdalena Jasinska who achieved NVQ qualifications to Level 3 and 2 respectively. A lot of work on this has been done in their own time and is of great benefit to the team.

News from Manufacturing with Neil Burgess



Neil Burgess

It's been another busy year in Roberts with all plants operating at full capacity. The warm weather did give us a few issues, but the installation of the ice machine two years ago certainly made a difference by allowing us to control dough temperatures better whilst reducing waste. We passed our BRC accreditation with an A Grade, which is fantastic news. I'd like to say a huge thanks to all staff who contributed to this challenge, let's keep the good work up.

Staff

Welcome to Anthony Donaldson to the Plant 2 slicing department and to Stephanie Dutton on box making. We also welcome Grant Hickton and Neil Wilson from The Pastry Case to Morning Goods. We hope you all enjoy your new positions within Roberts Bakery. Congratulations to Paul Lindley and Jan Northcott as well as Dave Gleave and Rachel on their recent marriages.

Well done to Paul Hulse, Paul Lindley, Mark Dutton and Peter Leese on passing their handling awareness courses.

Plant

News from the plant:

- The Plant 2 moulders are going to be moved closer to where we put the dough into tins, which will improve

dough presentation as well as overall quality.

- A new dust extractor has been fitted to the depanner on Plant 2.
- New low level oilers have been fitted around the plants. These will help to control spraying whilst reducing over spraying and improving hygiene standards.
- Improvements have been made to the Plant 2 cooler presentation, primarily to prevent blockages within the cooler.
- The new seeded farmhouse has been introduced to Plant 2. We have purchased two new seeder units from EWL. These sit on top of the moulders and seed the product as it goes past to give it a full covering.
- The modifications to the Plant 1 cooler are now complete.

- The new Morning Goods' plastic cooler belt has been fitted. We have taken the metal ladder belt out and replaced it with a cleaner looking belt, which also moves around the cooler more efficiently.
- The 2010 salt reduction goals have now been met at Roberts, which is super news.
- We have also trialled a new concept for Roberts Bakery in slicing – a UBE Band slicer, which was installed for four weeks on line. Although we did have some teething problems with the new kit, there were major benefits in slicing quality and future trials will be done.
- We have now had the go ahead for Plant 2 slicing to convert to a 168 shift pattern, which will take place in the near future.

Wedding bells at Roberts

It's been a busy time once again for weddings at Roberts, with many couples tying the knot over the summer. Here are just a few.



Paul Lindley and Jan Northcott got married on 30 May at the Park Royal and then jetted off to Mexico for a luxury honeymoon. Jan is a Technical Assistant in Roberts Bakery and Paul is an Assistant Team Leader on Bread Plant 2 Production.

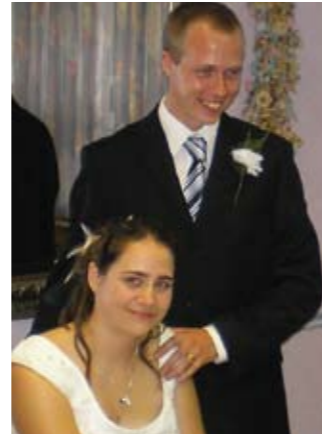


Congratulations to Dave Millington from the Pastry Case's Technical Department and Elizabeth Dunne who married on 27 June.

Congratulations also to Steve Wilson from Box Making who married Tracey Ann Eaton 11 September at Northwich Registry Office.



David Gleave from Plant 1 married Rachel Heaney-Mayers, who previously worked in the Pastry Case, on 20 June 2009 at St Bedes R.C. in Weaverham. The reception was at The Heathercliffe Country Hotel in Frodsham. The couple honeymooned in Ireland.



Very best wishes to Daniel Smith from Engineering who married Leanne Bower at Northwich Registry Office on 10 August.

Many congratulations to Simon Yould from Despatch who married Kelly Goldsworthy on 15 August at Northwich Registry Office.

Births

Many congratulations to Ben Fallows and his partner Laura on the birth of their son Evan who was born on 22 May, weighing a healthy 8lb 4oz. Congratulations also to Van Sales Assistant Tom Dineley and his partner Gemma Neild who welcomed their son Kieran Thomas into the world on 16 August, weighing 7lb 9oz and to Anna Dabrowski, Carolina Pawlicka, and Toni Louise Willmot on the safe arrival of their sons. Very best wishes also to Tony Walton and his wife Stacey on the birth of their daughter Kiera on the 21 June, weighing 7lb 2oz.

All the best Andrew

With wish Andrew Reynolds, who has worked in hygiene for the past 21 years, all the best in his retirement. He will be missed by all his colleagues and we wish him well for the future.

Condolences

Our sincere condolences go to the family of Grace Wakefield who passed away on 10 August aged 74. Grace worked in the Pastry Case from 1991 until 1999 and was a very popular member of the team.

Our condolences also go to the family of Robert Goulding, who sadly passed away on 28 August. Robert began working with Roberts in July 1955 and served the company until July 1995 when he retired due to poor health. Robert, who mainly worked on the Plant 1 oven, was a staunch Northwich Vics fan. He followed them both home and away and you would always see him with his Northwich Vics scarf around his neck. Robert's favourite mode of transport was his old push bike. He was frequently spotted cycling to and from work on it, come rain or shine.



Andy turns 50!

Congratulations to Andy Pickstock, our Financial Controller, who turned 50 on 10 May. Andy joined the Company in May 2003 as Business Analyst. As you can see from the pictures, Andy has changed a little over the years, but still has that cheeky grin!

Can you spot the difference? Andy is the one on the right. The one on the left is Mark, his twin brother, who is older than Andy by 20 minutes.

Wordsearch winner

Well done to Joan Evans, one of our pensioners, who won the wordsearch from the last issue. Lucky Joan won £50 of Marks and Spencer vouchers.



Well done Jackie and Sandra

A big well done to Jackie and Sandra Worrall who took part in the fifth annual Midnight Walk for St Luke's Hospice in June. Along with 2,000 ladies, the pair walked the 13 mile course, which began at midnight at Reaseheth College. They finished the walk in three hours, 38 minutes and raised nearly £500 for the charity, which cares for people with

serious illnesses living in the mid and south Cheshire area. The event hopes to raise a massive £278,500 in total.

Jackie said: "It was an absolutely fantastic night, with such a great atmosphere. We will definitely do it again, but will train a bit more for the next one - our feet were killing afterwards!"

Why not do something amazing?

We are hoping to start a blood donor day with the National Blood Service on site, where staff can conveniently give blood whilst at work.

Every year, the National Blood Service collects, tests, processes, stores and issues 2.1 million blood donations, but they always need more. If you are interested in giving blood and want to find out more, then please contact Jackie Worrall on extension 312.



In the Pink!

We will be taking part in the Wear It Pink day on Friday 30 October. The Wear it Pink campaign funds world-class research to improve breast cancer diagnosis and treatment. It supports around 130 projects worth £15million across the UK and Ireland.

By paying just £1 and wearing pink for the day, you will be helping the 125 women who are diagnosed with breast cancer every day in the UK. There will be a range of "pink" activities going on, including pink mop caps in the bakery and a cake sale.

For more information, please contact Sandra and Jackie Worrall on extension 700.



Norman smashes sponsorship target

A big well done to Brenda Stoneley's husband Norman, who ran in the London Marathon this year and raised £2650 for the Intensive Care Department at Leighton Hospital. Norman, who ran in memory of Brenda's father Dennis, smashed his original target sponsorship of £1500. Many thanks to everyone who sponsored him.



Day in the life...



It's been 10 months since Carolyn Chadwick took over the helm as marketing manager. We meet her in this issue and find out a bit more about her varied and challenging role to grow the size of the Roberts brand.

"I see myself very much as the voice of the consumer within the business," says Carolyn. "I'm always mindful that I need to anticipate the consumer's needs and meet their expectations, so I try and think more like them and less like a potential supplier."

Since joining the company from the Category Marketing team at Warburtons, Carolyn has been working hard to develop a strategy to take our brand forward. "It's involved going right back to grass roots and starting from the beginning," she explains. "We had very little information about our market and the role that the Roberts Bakery brand plays in it. Most importantly, we didn't clearly understand who our consumer was or what they wanted from us in a brand," she adds.

Understanding the consumer

Critical to the process is the collection and analysis of some very detailed market and consumer data, which Carolyn has been overseeing. This data is essential in helping Carolyn and the team to understand our company's current position

because it's important that we make plans for the future based on solid information. The next stage is to effectively position the product through advertising, packaging and other marketing activities.

It has meant that for the last few months, Carolyn has been frequently locked away in her office, pouring over figures, graphs and tables. Clearly, very dedicated to her role and genuinely passionate about the brand, Carolyn has brought a lot of experience and focus to this all important task.

Carolyn usually starts her day in the office at around 8.30am, checks her e-mails and then gets stuck into whatever the day holds.

Carolyn has already made some changes to the bread range. "We found that the range needed to be simplified. There was too much duplication and that can be confusing for the consumer, so we de-listed some products. Some of the range needed to work harder so, as a start, we updated the white farmhouse loaf. This has grown steadily since its overhaul. We have also introduced the seeded farmhouse loaf."

New products

Together with the NPD and Purchasing teams, Carolyn was instrumental in the launch of the new seeded farmhouse loaf. "Seeded is a growth area and we saw that there was a gap in the market for a seeded loaf. We now have listings with the top four supermarkets - Tesco, Asda, Sainsbury's and Morrisons. It gives me a buzz when I see the product on the shelves after months of hard work to get it right. It's important that we get behind this product now and really make it work for us in delivering extra sales," she says.

With a flair for managing data and a keen eye for detail, Carolyn has just completed the huge task of coding 18,000 in-store bakery products. This will give the Pastry Case some very valuable market data. Possibly the most comprehensive market intelligence in the industry, it allows the business to compare itself realistically against competitors and understand what changes are taking place in terms of what products people buy. It also helps us to look at future opportunities.

Much of Carolyn's day is spent planning and developing activities to support the product range, so there will be several meetings

with other members of staff to discuss ideas and put strategies in place. She has been busily scrutinising our range of products.

"We're looking at the products and assessing what they look like and what the packaging looks like. We're also analysing the messages on the packs, such as high fibre, and considering who the products are targeted at. We can then design the most effective way to develop the range and promote the brand, whether it's through advertising, sponsorship or local events," Carolyn says. "We have never truly marketed our brand, so there is a big opportunity to grow sales by getting our product look and advertising messages right," she adds.

In recent months, she has also been updating the Roberts website, organising display photography of the products and preparing advertisements and brochures. This involves lots of internal meetings and well as getting together with external suppliers. There's also been a hectic schedule of events and sponsorship in the local area.

Local focus

The local community has always been close to Roberts and events



are an important way of supporting the community and promoting the Roberts brand. You can often see Carolyn trailing through the offices with a selection of banners or leaflets for events such as the recent Cheshire Show. "Variety is the part of the job that I love the most. I'm equally at home analysing figures and spread sheets, getting stuck into a photo shoot or design project, or putting together a display at a local show," she enthuses.

Once the preliminary marketing strategy is completed, Carolyn plans to get out on the road more and spend some time with the retailers. "I want to take a closer look at what we do in store," she says. "I want to use the data that we now have in conversations with the buyers. We have a job to do in terms of building our sales in stores which are towards the edges of our geographical region and advertising the brand more will help with this."

Carolyn is extremely committed to getting the job done well and often takes work home to mull over on the sofa with a glass of wine in the evening. A very busy individual with a new home to stamp her personality on, she has little time to relax. She enjoys meeting up with friends, tending to her rapidly expanding vegetable patch and travel. She also likes to keep fit and runs regularly. Carolyn's real passion however, is rowing - a hobby which she took up whilst studying Biology at Oxford University. She has taken part in a few gruelling rowathon events and even has her own boat in Chester, which she loves to take out as often as possible.



Painted lady

Pastry Case NPD Assistant Amy Cookson jumped at the chance to have her face painted when she recently visited Sandiway Library with Annette Rathbone from the Test Bakery. The pair were decorating gingerbread characters as part of an open

day. It's the second event that Roberts has been involved in there and it's enjoyed by all the staff, children and parents that come in. On spotting a face painter there, Amy couldn't resist getting herself decorated - well it makes a change from doing the decorating!



Christmas party

Our Christmas party will take place on 11 December at Hartford Hall.

Christmas bazaar

After hosting some very successful handbag, jewellery and candle sales, we're delighted to be holding a special Christmas bazaar on 13 November in The Weaver room at the Pastry Case. It's the perfect opportunity to miss the crowds and stock up on Christmas gifts early, with stalls selling Thorntons' chocolates, jewellery, handbags, pet accessories and candles.

To find out more, please contact Jackie Worrall on extension 312.



Jewel of a fundraiser

Have you got any costume jewellery stashed away that you know you won't wear again? If so, then why not donate it to St Luke's Hospice, which is collecting old jewellery in any condition. Please bring in any jewellery and give it to Lesley Pearson or Sue Sherlock in reception by Monday 19 October. You can also leave jewellery at the staff shop.



Keep fit for £1

Pauline Newton is running keep fit classes every Wednesday at 5.30pm in The Weaver room at the Pastry Case. There are new routines every week and it costs just £1.00 to join in.

Interested? Then contact Pauline on extension 220 for more information.

Donate your old books

Pauline Newton is still collecting old books to raise money for local charities. You can donate all your old books to the book

club and collect some new ones from just 25p each. To find out more, contact Pauline on extension 220.

Keeping healthy and safe



by Martin Martlew

Now you see it...

...and now it's gone! The green building above the original reception has now come down, which has dramatically improved the look of the site. We have started a refurbishment programme on the canteen, which will remain in its current location. The works will include a new floor, ceiling, repainting, furniture and accessories.

We have re-established a fire risk steering group, where a small number of key employees meet on a regular basis to review fire incidents and precautions to prevent them.

Jill Adams reports on Swine Flu elsewhere in the newsletter, with information on what to do if you suspect you have the illness. As a business we are working hard to trade through the pandemic and keep staff as safe as possible. We are grateful to everyone for their flexibility during these times - it is in everyone's interest to keep the business functioning as efficiently as possible.

We are constantly looking at ways to reduce our energy usage and minimise the amount of waste we send to landfill. Thanks to everyone for doing their bit by turning off unnecessary equipment and recycling where possible.

We have been busy working on our long term health and safety plans - a five year strategy from 2010 to 2015. It focuses on the improvements we can make to health and safety by reducing accidents and making the business a safer place.

Mandatory hearing protection has been introduced in the Bakery's production and packing areas. Everyone working in or visiting Roberts Bakery must now wear ear protection at all times.

Can I also remind staff that protective clothing, such as safety footwear, high visibility clothing and goggles must be worn in the appropriate areas, which are clearly marked.



This building has now been demolished



Cricket triumph again for Roberts

The Roberts Bakery cricket team triumphed once more against the Toft's Tavereners at the annual charity cricket match. Captained by Jon McMullen, the team scored 118 in 20 overs in a match that was tense to the end. Mark Minton - the only player to score above 25 - was "Man of the Match". Steve Wall batted well, whilst bowler Bryan Jevkes was delighted to take his first wicket in five years.

Jon McMullen said: "The day is all about having fun and raising money for local pensioners to enjoy a trip to Blackpool. It was a great team effort and everyone enjoyed the day. Thankfully, there were no serious injuries, but Benny Proudman did take a bang to the nose. After a little cuddle from me, he was fit enough to continue playing though!"

Our best year yet

By Steven Wall

Our year end figures have been fantastic, with the bakery producing 78.5 million loaves - that's an impressive 5 million loaves up on last year which equates to three and a half weeks work! Well done to everyone for their continued efforts.

The 168 shift pattern has been introduced on Plant 2 slicing, which gives us the extra capacity for between 50,000 and 70,000 units per week. We'll also implement a slicing hall restructure to combine the key skills in this area.

Well done Morning Goods

Morning Goods has shown an exceptional performance this year, consistently delivering even in the warmer periods, which is great news.

We have regained the business with Freshways in Wolverhampton. Since the launch with them, we have been visited by managers, team leaders and quality personnel most weeks, which has given us the opportunity to demonstrate to them how the bread performs on sandwich lines. The exercise has driven improvements in our bakery



Steven Wall

and satisfied their concerns about our bread shape. A big thanks to everyone who was involved in helping us win this business back.

Strong foundation for success

We have had our best year ever in terms of profit, which is excellent, particularly in the current climate. However, we do still have some challenges for 2009/2010. We need to continue to reduce waste and improve manufacturing efficiencies, from the correct slice configuration to the changeover times across the bread plant.

There is work to be done, but with such a strong year behind us, we are in a great position to succeed.

More developments in The Pastry Case

There's been a lot happening in The Pastry Case, from new equipment to new product lines, reports Graham Finnigan.



Graham Finnigan

Exciting new print and apply labelling system

July saw us take delivery of our new automatic print and apply tub labeller for the chocolate cluster line. Chris Pennington has been busy sourcing the right equipment to cope with the many different sized tubs for our various customers. The machine has been custom built to our requirements, with the manufacturing team and Dave Nicholls all heavily involved at every stage. I am pleased to report that delivery and installation was on time and on budget. After commissioning and training, we were up and running by day 2!

The new system has improved the whole packing process, both in terms of the layout of labels and in minimising the handling of the finished tubs and outer boxes. It has also provided the business with some excellent cost savings

This new footprint is now planned to be repeated for the main biscuit line and the flow wrapper. As well as individual product print and apply labels, we are due to purchase three print and

apply outer box label machines. Once installed, all the labellers will become networked to ensure all printing of key product information, such as best before dates, will all be managed as one.

New 'Kronos' time and attendance system

The new 'Kronos' time and attendance system is now up and running in the Pastry Case. This has enabled us to move on from the old clock card format and is saving shift managers valuable time spent checking and authorising some 200 clock cards per week, along with providing the wages department with accurate information on which to pay

everyone. It is also proving to be a very fast and efficient way for all staff to clock in and out.



Christmas is coming...

At time of writing, we are about to start production for our busiest time of the year with Halloween and Christmas. Customer requirements are showing increased volumes from last year and it is with this news that we have welcomed a number of new starters to the team to help us cope with the extra demand. A special thank you to Collette, Claire and Amy who were heavily involved in the induction and training of the initial 14 new starters - a warm welcome to you all!

Successful audits

Recent audits and customer visits have produced some excellent results. Firstly, our annual EFSIS/BRC audit in June reported NO non-conformance for the second year running, against a new much tougher standard. This was quickly followed by a Tesco unannounced two day audit - again scoring a pass of a 'green' rating with fewer non-conformances raised than last year.

This is a truly excellent result on both audits and a huge thank you goes to EVERYONE in ensuring that we continue to work to our high standards of food manufacturing. We should all be very proud of our bakery!

We were saddened to hear that Grace Wakefield passed away in August. Grace worked on the production line for eight years in the 1990s up to her retirement. A popular character, who famously organised the annual Christmas shopping trip to Blackpool, she remained friends with many of her work colleagues.



Manual handling now complete!

Rob Newton talks about the challenges and triumphs in despatch.

I'd like to start by thanking Mark Curbishley for putting 80 staff through the manual handling course. It was no mean feat, but the exercise has been very worthwhile.

Generally it remains a busy time in the department with all orders increasing. Our business with Sainsbury's, Costco and Aldi are a constant challenge, with fluctuations in volumes, especially in good weather. Thanks to everyone for their continued commitment at this busy time.

KPI challenges

On our key performance indicators, sickness absence has increased a little. We need, also to manage

more closely the link between sickness absence and overtime. We are doing a lot of work on stock and stock variance too. Our check point variance continues to be erratic on occasions and we need a greater focus to ensure the continued availability of the product to the customer.

Steve Maddock is working on a project to identify issues with waste and will be recruiting people from the shop floor to participate on a corrective action team.

Steve Brown is working on a project on fire evacuation procedures in despatch. This links into a broader project which is being driven by Steven Wall to look at provisions across the entire site.

Mark Curbishley is currently carrying out a supervisor role on the Yellow shift whilst Martin Smith has been temporarily transferred onto planning. Mark is looking at work instructions and revising them in line with changing customer needs and business objectives.

A number of employees also carried out refresher training for harassment and bullying and more courses are being planned for those who could not attend.

And finally, congratulations to Mark Curbishley on passing his TLM 3 (NVQ 3) and to Mike Cross on passing his NVQ 3 and Danny Senior on passing his NVQ 2. Well done to all.



Rob Newton



Nick Crank

Fleet news from Nick Crank

lift gates will enable the safe loading and unloading of the Omega equipment.

MOT Pass Rate

Our MOT pass rate record over the last three years has continued at the high level set by the garage maintenance team. In 2007, the pass rate was 92%. In 2008, the pass rate was 95% and we currently stand at 94% for this year. It's a fantastic result from all the garage team - well done all and keep up the good work!

The MOT Pass rate and first time pass rate is a major part in protecting this business and our Operator Licence is monitored closely by VOSA.

Garage Development

We have had the go ahead to again improve the facilities. The garage will have a new inspection pit fitted. Also an old vehicle lift has been removed to allow access for the larger vehicles within the fleet. More recently, we have had a new door fitted to allow access for the semi trailers. It's a massive improvement and a huge boost for the team

Bunded Fuel (Diesel) Tank

The bunded diesel tank has been moved. This has improved the area as well as the turning circle for our larger vehicles. It will also hopefully improve congestion. The tank will

be repositioned to the site of the old fuel pump house. The new fuel tank weighs 13 tonnes, is nine metres long and three metres wide, and has a capacity to hold 60,000 litres of diesel. At the moment, our average fuel usage is 33,000 litres per week!

In Cab phones

We are about to start installing cab phones to the direct delivery fleet. This is to improve the safety of the driver's who deliver alone throughout the night to many different locations. It will also improve the communication from the driver back to the bakery if there are any issues with deliveries, such as problems with products or quantities delivered. This will then enable the distribution supervisor to

deal with the issue there and then rather than waiting until the driver returns to the bakery, which in many cases, can be several hours.

Direct Delivery

Over recent weeks, we have experienced very difficult times for one reason or another. Therefore, I would like to say a big thank you to all the direct delivery drivers and supervisors for going the extra mile and helping serve our customers. Thank you all!

Congratulations

Finally, congratulations to Paul Alcock and Matt Siwinski who have recently gained their level three NVQ in motor vehicle and to Dave Potts who passed his class C LGV licence.



Training update

with Andy McCormack

Mike Cross and Danny Senior have now both completed NVQ's in Distribution and Warehousing at levels 3 and 2 respectively. In addition to this qualification, both Mike and Danny have also successfully completed a 'skills for life' qualification which has helped to enhance their numeric and literacy skills. This is a fantastic achievement, so well done for your hard work and effort.

Mark Curbishley and Stacey Wright have both now successfully completed a management programme with Total People in Middlewich. This programme has been quite intense and has required Mark and Stacey to build a portfolio of work as well as attending a number of workshops at Total People. Again this is a great achievement by both and one that will no doubt be of great benefit as they develop in their roles.

A final congratulations to Sarah Steele (pictured) who has successfully completed a level 3 NVQ in Food Manufacturing Specialist Technician Skills. This is a brand new qualification that Sarah has completed, which will benefit her in her role.

Frank Roberts is working with West Cheshire College, to be able to offer the skills for life and ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) qualifications to our employees. There will be posters displayed

around the bakeries and offices which will give a little more detail, if you are interested in enhancing your numeric and literacy skills or working towards an NVQ, please don't hesitate to contact me.



Sarah Steele



Andy McCormack

It's around a year since we introduced the new NVQ into Frank Roberts, and what fantastic results so far. Almost 70 employees have now either completed or are completing the level 2 award in food manufacturing, which is fantastic. We are now hoping to develop this further by offering separate unit accreditations to support this.

Offering these separate units makes the NVQ a little more flexible and more specific to Frank Roberts as it will enable candidates to learn about areas that they may not normally have learnt. Whilst this is still in very early development stages, I hope to have something in place by early 2010. Congratulations to all those who have now successfully completed this award.

The customer is always king by Mark Owen



Mark Owen

Customer service is paramount to everything we do in the business and, unfortunately for varying reasons, we have been struggling recently. We have a lot of people focused on getting it right and

hopefully we are over the worst. Some of our customers are finding the current economic climate a challenge and, like us, are looking at all parts of their own businesses to improve efficiency and reduce costs. During this process, and at all times, they rely on good inbound service and are regularly looking for changes to delivery times to help with their own efficiencies.

Changing sandwich market

The sandwich market is also showing a reduction of 15% so the sales team continues to look at all areas to maintain our current volume in this declining market and within all areas of our customer

base. This sometimes means changes to what we have done in the past. We need to be increasingly flexible to meet the changing needs of our current customers and the high demands of any new ones. Inevitably our competitors are trying to do the same which makes it difficult for the sales team and easy for the customers to say 'No' or revert back if we do not meet their requirements. We need to be better and offer what ever the customer needs. We are constantly reminded - 'There are alternatives out in the marketplace'.

Improve and build

Saying that, we are performing well as a business and, under the new

leadership of Mike Braddock, we are in a strong position to improve and build the business going forward. The current economical climate has had some real disaster stories with regards to business failures so it is good to see we are in a good position and have plans to continue to grow.

I would like to thank everyone for their patience and commitment over the recent weeks and hope to be able to relay a more positive message for the next edition.

Finally, I'd like to welcome Jon Underwood, who has joined us as a senior distribution supervisor. We wish him a long and happy career with us.

Pastry Case gets stuck in to new systems

Chris Pennington talks about the developments in product labelling over at The Pastry Case.



Chris Pennington

Graham has touched on the new Print and Apply labelling system, which automatically prints and applies the product label onto the various cluster tubs on Cluster line number two. It's been an investment of £57,000 to improve the process right from the product exiting the cooling tunnel to reaching the finished tubs in their outer cases.

The team has been so impressed with the results that a further capital application has been submitted and approved for the packing line on the main Baker Perkins plant. This is scheduled to be installed at the end of November 2009. Included in the capital will be print and apply label machines for the outer cases on the flow wrapping line, cluster line number two and the Baker Perkins line.

The new label network system has also just been installed and commissioned. This system will centralise the control of all labels and back them up on the main server. The introduction of the system means that we won't need to print labels before each shift starts - instead, we'll print labels just in time. This will go a long way in further minimising waste and human error.



A busy time ahead

by Stuart Borthwick

Stuart Borthwick



After a worryingly quiet spring, the summer has been a bit brighter from a sales point of view. Behind the scenes, there has been a frenzy of activity developing our most extensive range of Halloween and Christmas products to date.

Much of this business has come on the back of our improved customer service levels, our ability to increase our capacity for decorating biscuits and some successful visits from our major customers (not to mention the hard sell from Graham and Caroline!)

We have seen demand for our decorated products grow again this year - so much so that virtually everyone in The Pastry Case will be decorating biscuits this autumn! This means our seasonal programme has had to start earlier than ever, so by the time you read this, our Halloween and Christmas production will be

in full swing - just as well because some of our product is actually being sold in Australia and it takes 6 weeks to get there by boat.

We have some really interesting and original products going out to customers, which will hopefully help us achieve our goal of securing some more all-year-round business later in the year.

Good luck Wilf

We wish Wilf Yarwood, who retired in April, well. A keen golfer, his choice of present from the company was a smart new golf bag along with many

bottles of whiskey from colleagues and friends. Wilf is a great character who always had a joke to tell!



Back to the Future!

Steve Faloona updates us on what's been happening within the transport support department.



Steve Faloona

the system. If we see consistent numbers being returned then other printed baskets may be purchased during the next financial year.

Unfortunately, raw material costs have starting moving up again and the price of both Virgin and repro plastic has increased. This has led to an increase in the cost of a new basket by 6 pence.

Better basket recovery

Monitoring and customer communication continues. This has led to significant improvements in basket recovery, both from our customer base and elsewhere, with the aid of our own recovery team and Basco.

July and August saw the return of an "old look" to the Roberts baskets. We have started to take deliveries of four loads of new baskets with "Roberts Bakery" printed on the front - 7680 in total! Hopefully the print should give the baskets more "ownership visibility" when out in the market place and help them become more recognizable as a Roberts Bakery bread basket.

This will be a trial to monitor if these baskets come back to the bakery once distributed through

There has been training within the team with both Tony Walton and John Flaherty achieving the "Managing Safely" certificate - well done to them both. This enables the team to have dedicated Health and Safety representatives who will help

with Risk Assessments and general house keeping of the back yard going forward

We are currently recruiting a part time logistics administrator as a replacement for Ann McAllister who is moving onto pastures new - we wish her well



Resolving issues, raising standards

Vikki Naylor tells us about her department's initiatives to improve customer service further.

We have seen a decrease in Customer complaints versus last year of 5.27%, however there has been a slight increase of 2.12% since the last issue.

As a result of this, we are dealing with customer needs by putting more focus on the daily issues meetings, with attendance from all key areas in the business. Issues are being identified that have the biggest impact on customers. They are then being addressed, with accurate reasons for any shortages to ensure that the issue is resolved.

This is followed by a daily meeting

with the commercial team to supply them with an update so we can go back to the customer in a timely manner with any findings surrounding the issue. Our customers are key to the business and we want to do all we can to ensure that we prevent the issues from recurring.

Improved recording

Focus is also on selected customers where orders are received late as this has a knock on effect on other customer deliveries and product availability in some cases. We are recording the time of order receipt to give

us a better idea of who we need to target so we that we can reduce issues.

There is also a decrease in input errors versus last year of 47.22%, just 2.78% away from the 50% target, an excellent achievement!

There have been a couple of changes within the department. Sales Orders is now manned by two members of staff until 6pm each Friday - our busiest day!

We welcome back Sam Middleton who returned from maternity leave in July. She has settled back in really well! We also say Goodbye to Ann McAllister who has been



Vikki Naylor

working within Sales and Logistics for the past 11 months. I am sure you will all join me in wishing Ann well for the future!

Finally, well done to Sandra & Jackie Worrall for completing the Midnight Walk - a massive achievement!

Van sales update with Andy Roden



Andy Roden

As I write this, we are just about to end the financial year, so I just wanted to say a few words about how we have performed and how the New Year is shaping up.

We will finish the year with figures of around 1% down year on year on bread volumes and 14% down on Morning Goods sales.

Although this may not seem

encouraging, we are aware of where we need to improve and the areas that are causing concern. There are already changes being put in place for us to be able to focus more on the selling opportunities in the next 12 months.

We will be looking at new areas, route amalgamation, and new

business as well as developing existing accounts. The next 12 months will be challenging with lots of opportunities ahead of us and also lots of changes that we need to embrace.

All that is left for me to say is thank you for the last 52 weeks and lets all look forward to the next 52!