

Focus

The Norse Commercial Services staff newsletter



We've Moved!

Annex staff and Hall Road Transport division finally completed their long awaited move to the new Norse headquarters on Fifers Lane, Norwich, over the weekend of 4-5 April. After frantic packing and a final push of landscaping and building works on site, approximately 15,000 cubic feet of items in 13 x 17 tonne loads were relocated by Pickford's during Friday afternoon and throughout the day on Saturday. The last vehicle was emptied at 6.30pm on Saturday after fighting its way through the football traffic. Existing furniture was placed in position on both floors of

the new office and packing crates were next to workstations ready for staff to unpack early on Monday morning. Desktop computers, printers, phones, faxes, scanners, and bank terminals were all set up and tested by IT staff during Saturday and Sunday. All workstations were operational by 9am on Monday morning with no reported business disruption. Many thanks to all staff who assisted me with the move over the weekend and those staff from Grounds/BMU who completed on site works before and since the move.

Mark Emms

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2009
Spring
edition

News from the Top



As I write this article I can look over the new depot at Fifers Lane and appreciate all the tremendous work which has gone into getting us into this new location, whilst at the same time closing the six sites in the Norwich area.

I would like to personally thank all of you who worked so hard and also took part in moving us into this new location and I hope that you will all agree with me that all the effort was worthwhile and that we now have a company headquarters to be proud of.

All this coincides with changing our company name and although Norfolk County Services has stood us in good stead for the past 21 years, the time is now right to embrace the group name of Norse which has now developed into a very strong brand and will help us to spread our wings into other parts of the country. The other companies in the group are also rebranding to become Norse Property Services and Norse Environmental Waste Services.

The group as a whole had an extremely successful year last year in financial terms, generating a turnover of £162 million with NCS sales increasing by 11% to £87.5 million. This level of sales allowed us to meet our business plan and make a small profit which will either be returned to our partners or reinvested in the business.

Our policy of reinvestment has allowed us to fund the move to our new headquarters and still allowed us to upgrade our equipment and our vehicles in the normal way.

Much of our growth last year was brought about by our partnership with Waveney District Council and I would like to thank all of the staff working in Waveney Norse for their enthusiasm and commitment to make the new company a success. Certainly all indications are that they will have a bright future.

The Waveney Norse model is one which we are using to set-up a north London operation which should start on the 1 May this year. This new

work will essentially be the way the business has to keep growing in order to be able to weather the economic storm ahead.

As I said in my previous article we are expecting a tough time over the next two years and whilst many of our services have to be provided for public safety, we know many of our public sector clients will be operating with reduced budgets and will be relying on us to help them improve efficiency in order to maintain as many of these essential services as possible.

I know as an organisation we continually strive to reduce costs and improve service standards but the next two years will require us to be even more diligent and cost-conscious.

During the latter part of the year I was really pleased to see that we were able to expand our ISO9001 commitment by gaining quality assurance certification for both the Great Yarmouth street cleansing and Community Equipment Service.

It is really important for us as an organisation to be able to demonstrate our commitment to quality in order to reassure customers that we have the culture and procedures in place to give them confidence that we can provide them with value for money whilst helping them deliver services. At the same time that all this was happening we were able to transfer the trade waste operations from NEWS to the GYB operations in order to integrate this work with that which we currently undertake in the eastern area and, to date, this has been a huge success by being able to reduce costs and gain more work.

Many of you will have also seen in the newspapers that we were able to buy a 75% controlling interest in Eventguard Ltd which is a security company previously owned by Norwich City Football Club. We look forward to working with the football club to develop this business and feel confident that with the opportunities we bring to the business, Nigel Briggs and his team, can make Eventguard even more successful and play an active part in the comprehensive services we can offer to customers.

As you can see, we had a really successful and demanding year and now that I have seen each Director's budgets for the year 2009-10, I can see that each division is still ambitious to keep growing and I feel sure that this ambition will help to secure jobs and allow the company to continue its development.

Peter Hawes - Managing Director

Thinking about giving up smoking? We can help

No matter which way you look at it, there are only good reasons for giving up smoking. Your health will improve and you will be amazed how much money you will save.

Nicotine is addictive and successfully overcoming this addiction often requires a combination of both will-power and support.

Having started smoking when I was a teenager, it wasn't until I was about 47 that I finally quit. Sure, I had tried (on more than one occasion) to stop, but it was only with the help of my local GPs practice that I did it. Sheer determination, with additional support, helped me to achieve my goal.

Although I was fortunate that I never suffered ill-health as a result of the years of smoking, I had begun to notice how much longer it took for my breathing to recover after any strenuous exercise. Just walking up the hill between County Hall and the Annex left me puffing and panting! Now, however, it's a different story. A fairly brisk walk up the hill is no problem.

If you wish to give up, and would like some advice and assis-

tance to do so, then please get in touch with your local Stop Smoking Service.

If you live in Norfolk, call 0800 0854 113 to talk to one of the specialist advisors. This is a free, confidential service, and they can offer a range of advice and assistance such as intensive support, one-to-one, and specific support if you have tried several times to give up.

In order to access these services in a way which is comfortable for you, the help is available through a drop-in service, clinics, and supportive groups.

For similar services in Suffolk and Cambridgeshire, you should contact your local service at the following numbers:

For Suffolk, call 0800 085 6037 to talk to an advisor, and for Cambridgeshire, call 0800 018 4304.

Good luck, and, as they say, never give up giving up! You'll get there in the end.

Graham Findlay - Health and Safety Manager

Grays Fair Court

On Monday the 8 December, Grays Fair Court, a newly built sheltered housing scheme in Old Costessey, Norwich, opened its doors for the very first time. This is an exciting new partnership between Age Concern, Saffron Housing, Social Services and Norfolk County Services.

The complex consists of 34 sheltered housing flats, 20 respite care flats, facilities for day care and a restaurant. The building houses all the modern amenities for today's "silver surfers", with a full IT suite, library, quiet room, hair-dressers and chiropodist on site.

Glynis Cousins, Area Cook Manager for Healthcare has been tasked with getting everything up and running for NCS, working alongside staff from Age Concern to ensure everything goes smoothly.



Glynis Cousins, Cook Manager and the catering team.

Employee Helpline

Through our staff surveys, some staff have said they don't know how to use the helpline. All you have to do to access the helpline is telephone 0800 146 011. You can also get a leaflet on request from either your line manager or by telephoning the HR Department on 01603 222165.

If you live in and around Great Yarmouth, you can also use our Chaplain Service. This is led by Steve Andrew and he can be contacted on 01493 728546.

The helpline and Steve can help with a wide range of matters. Both are confidential and are available 24/7. So if you have a worry problem share it with a professional.

Training Academy

An exciting new opportunity that coincides with our move to the Fifers Lane site will be the development of a Training Academy. The aim is to bring together those individuals who are responsible for training across all areas of the organisation into one unit. Training currently is delivered through a mix of central and locally-based individuals.

With the move to Fifers, which will be well equipped for training, it makes sense to adopt a new approach and share information on learning, training and development. It was one of the recommendations from the Investors in People audit on company-wide training. The Academy will be led by Hilary Hale, our Learning and Development Manager.



Pictured left to right, Kevin Reynolds, Eve Huggins, David Gathercote, Norman Secker, Hilary Hale and Linda Savage

The Training Academy will be an opportunity to continue to improve our commitment to delivering high quality learning, training and development to all employees.

The academy will deliver everything from "Skills for Life" through to Health and Safety, Food Safety and Driving Assessments as normal, and much more.

The main benefits of the new training academy will be to:

- identify and explore new training opportunities
- improve training delivery through sharing knowledge
- to avoid duplication of activities within the services and to provide value for money
- to ensure we have the skills and knowledge to support the organisation's growth

This year will also see us re-establish Career and Development interviews, which will be an opportunity for all staff to meet with the HR Director and Service Director to discuss aspirations. Watch this space for more news on this.

New Partnership with EventGuard



In January this year, NCS commenced a new joint venture partnership with Norwich City Football Club and acquired a controlling interest in EventGuard. Formed in 2001, the company has become a leading provider of event stewarding and security services in the eastern region. As well as event guarding and stewarding, the company also supplies door staff, mobile patrols, cash collection and key holder services to both public and private sector clients.

In March this year, the security activities undertaken within NCS also transferred to EventGuard forming one brand within

NCS, able to supply a full range of security services. EventGuard are currently the only security company in Norfolk accredited by Norfolk Police with certain police powers allowing them to offer an unrivalled service to our clients. This accreditation, coupled with the Security Industry Authority Approved Contractor Scheme, sets the new benchmark by which other security companies must measure themselves.

Managing Director, Nigel Briggs, and his team have been successful in winning a contract to supply event stewarding for the first time this year at four race

courses run by The Jockey Club, including Newmarket. Nigel said, "The joint venture with NCS, along with the accreditations, increases EventGuard's impact not only in Norfolk but throughout the country. Our high profile within the industry is taking us further afield and, as a direct result, we are being asked to provide services for events such as the Isle of Wight festival, Hyde Park's Party in the Park and many other nationwide events."

EventGuard have relocated to our new HQ at Fifers Lane.

Managing Director Nigel Briggs top left.

Platform for Success

The Community Equipment Services provides wooden ramps and platforms to people with disabilities such as wheelchair users. Without this provision of this important service it would be difficult for them to get in and out of their homes and, in a lot of cases, could result in being house-bound.

Prior to moving to Fifers Lane, the requests from our customers and partners, Norfolk County Council Adult Social Services, for ramps and platforms were out-sourced to contractors resulting in high costs and long lead times.

The move to the NCS Fifers lane site resulted in a larger warehouse and additional space. It gave us the opportu-

nity to have a large woodwork workshop and as a result the ability to provide an in-house service.

A fabrication team of four was recruited to provide this work which involves assessing the property, measuring for the ramps, fabrication in the workshop, and finally, installation.

The team also carry out other fabrications such as: half steps, banister rails and chair raisers.

Having an in-house service not only means new business for Norfolk County Services Community Equipment Services, but also better control on quality, cost savings and shorter lead times for our customers.

Investors in People Champions

In the 2008 Summer edition of Focus, we told you about the success we had in achieving the Investors in People award and wanted to set up a small working group of staff representatives across all areas of business to look at ways we could improve on the standard already achieved.

Our champions (see below) have now met on three occasions and have made great progress on resolving some issues placed on an action plan.

One recommendation is to bring together our training skills under one roof and we are pleased to say that as from April 6th, the company will set up its own training section headed up by Hilary Hale and reporting to Tricia Fuller. The Training Academy, as we have called it, will pull together all of the companies training needs, so that we can deliv-

er learning and development initiatives and courses for staff. Examples of the sort of efficiencies and initiatives we hope to achieve can already be seen from the Driver Development training already being given to the companies 1000 drivers.

Another initiative is to reintroduce Career and Succession interviews. These will be offered to all staff allowing them to have an interview with HR Director Tricia Fuller and their senior manager, to discuss aspirations for their own personal development. These interviews will be carried out over the next two years on a division by division basis. Poor Tricia will be busy!

Finally the group decided it wanted to develop a set of standards for staff at all levels across the company and have created a Values and Behaviours' Charter. You will find

your own copy in this magazine. The charter is to help all colleagues feel valued and clearly sets out what is acceptable behaviour from colleagues, managers, customers and clients. If you feel that anyone you come into contact with during the course of your duties is not following the charter, we want you to contact us. To this end, we want staff to come forward to act as Values and Behaviour Champions. These people will be able to hear your concerns and hopefully help you resolve any differences by coming up with solutions. If you are interested in becoming a V and B Champion, please contact Paul Bonham - 01603 894290

Other initiatives are being developed and will be brought to your attention in the next edition of Focus.



When looks can make all the difference...



Gunton Football Club U13s pictured in their new kit with books to celebrate the National Year of Reading 2008

Tina Bacon, Cook Manager at Wroughton Junior School is the club secretary for Gunton Youth Football Club. Tina recently applied for some community funding from NCS towards purchasing new soccer kit for the U13s team. The contribution from NCS, together with money raised by Richard Harris, one of the parents who ran a 10k race for sponsorship, meant brand new kit and tracksuits for all.

And what a difference it has made! The U13's played in the first round of the Ipswich and Suffolk Cup a few weeks ago, travelling to Stowmarket in their new kit; they managed to win 9-1 against a strong team who were the previous season's cup winners.

Their success continues as the team are currently at the top of their division and are unbeaten in all matches.

The boys love their new kit and feel very proud as they now look like a professional football team. Tina tells us it has made all the difference and makes a lasting impression on the opposition when the U13s turn up looking so smart. The boys from Gunton Youth U13s would like to thank NCS for the kind donation towards the new kit and for the novel they all received to mark the National Year of Reading 2008.

Laura selected for Great Britain



Well done to Laura Wiseman who works at Wymondham. Laura has been selected to take part in the Olympics in Taiwan later this year. Like her family, all her colleagues are very proud and will be cheering on the Great Britain Football team. NCS have contributed £1000 to her training and expense fund. If anyone would like to make a personal donation, you can contact Sue Lepine on 07850 637775.

Continued Success



Steeley Worboys

The Talent Together Partnership with Meridian East where NCS find work placements within the company to help individuals back to work, has had some notable successes.

Meet Steeley Worboys, Steeley joined us on a work placement over a year ago at Bishop Herbert House, gaining experience in Catering by working as a Kitchen Assistant. The placement proved so successful that when a vacancy

arose Steeley was recruited into permanent employment.

Through the support and encouragement of his Cook Manager, Steeley has grown in confidence and has gone on to take his Level 2 Award in Food Safety in Catering, a nationally recognised qualification. Steeley has also developed a passion for cooking and is learning how to expand his skills all the time, so much so that he has now signed up to study for his NVQ Level 2 in Food Processing and Cooking. Not only is this a real credit to Steeley but also to those who have helped and supported him.

Steeley is now looking to fulfil a long term ambition of carrying out some volunteer work in Africa to help those not so fortunate as himself.

It just goes to show that through help and support we can make a difference, one of the key aims of the Talent Together Partnership.

St John's Football Club

St John's Football Club were delighted to receive £500 from our community fund. The club hadn't had any funding support for a number of years and were badly in need of quite a lot of kit. After replacing essentials such as flags and first aid kits there was enough money to buy the team training jackets which will have been very useful this past winter.

Human Resources Director, Tricia Fuller, (whose grandson Theo plays for the under 10's) is fixtures co-ordinator and said "The club are very appreciative of the money given, and it will be put to very good use. Thank you to NCS."



Trimley Red Devils

Formed in 1975 with a single team aged 9-11, the club has steadily grown and now provides qualified football coaching for some 200 young people, aged 6 to 18 years. In the last four years an adult team has been formed and mainly comprises former Trimley youth players.

Honours have been plentiful over the years with League and Cup successes, (including the Suffolk Minor Cup), with all age groups in a variety of leagues including the Black Tiles League, Ipswich and Suffolk Youth League, Suffolk and Essex League. Also the Felixstowe and District league, which Trimley were instrumental in forming and administering, and which has in 2008 expanded to the South Suffolk Youth League.

The club has been successful in nurturing players and is keen to provide a step towards football excellence with many players currently part of the Ipswich Town Player Development Centre, attending coaching sessions and playing friendly

matches against players from other professional clubs. Trimley players continue to enter the Ipswich Town and Norwich football academies and some have gone on to play at professional Level.

Trimley has also established a strong relationship with the Velo club from Wateringen in Holland and have enjoyed exchange visits since 1991, enabling the Under 12s, 14s and 16s age groups to regularly experience playing in Europe.

Naturally, all the coaches, and those who help with organising the footballing experience in their local community of Trimley, are all volunteers. Many, like Mel

West, the SCS General Manager, who is Club Vice Chairman, have been involved for over 15 years.

The club was grateful for the Community Grant received from NCS which enabled a range of equipment to be purchased that has added challenge and excitement to training sessions for the youth players. The financial support also helps maintain high standards of coaching, while ensuring the club can offer affordable and inclusive opportunities for participation by youngsters from the local community.

Trimley are currently working towards achieving FA Charter status and are also hoping to get a girl's youth team up and running for the 2009/10 season.



Norman Wanderers FC



The team holding their copies of 'Foul Play'

Glynis Cousins who works for us in the Healthcare Division applied for financial support through our Community Fund for the Norman Wanderers football team.

The money was used to get new kits and on 25 January 2009 wearing their new kit they beat the opposition by 10 goals to 4. The boys also got a copy of Tom Palmer's great book, 'Foul Play'.

Glynis says the whole experience of getting her employer to help financially has made her feel proud.

Community Payback Scheme

Some innovative thinking by Suffolk Coastal's Assistant Manager in Felixstowe, Marc James, has led to the team engaging with the local Community Payback Team. The scheme allows members of the local community who have committed minor crimes and misdemeanours to give something back to the community and also pick up some valuable work experience from SCS's Grounds and Street Cleansing Teams. The Community Payback Team have helped carry out some stirring work on projects on the Felixstowe seafront and in Allenby Park.

Green Travel Plan

Suffolk Coastal Services are in the process of drawing up their Green Travel plan. The plan will compliment improvements made to the offices and depot based in Ufford. With over 150 staff operating from the depot, our impact on the local community is key. As our business continues to grow and develop, we need to ensure sustainable solutions going forward. The Green Travel Plan looks at ways in which staff travelling to and from their place of work may take up opportunities to travel in a more environmentally friendly way utilising initiatives like car sharing.

A big thank you to all those staff who have completed their Green Travel Plan questionnaire and we can look forward to the full plan being implemented in early 2009.

When was the last time you had your eyes tested?

They are one of the most valuable assets we have, yet when did you last make an appointment with an optometrist to have your eyes examined? Most people's eyesight starts to deteriorate sooner or later, and once you have reached the age of 40, you are more likely to require 'assistance' in the form of spectacles or contact lenses. These might be prescribed to correct near or far sight deficiencies. Many people require glasses to drive or read, whether the latter is from a book or a computer screen.

Whatever your circumstances, it is advisable to have your eyes examined at least every two years. Some people may require examinations more frequently due to their medical circumstances. If you continually have to 'strain' your eyes in order to see things clearly, you are also more likely to experience visual fatigue, which may lead to tiredness and headaches.

Defects in a person's vision can be measured by a number of standard tests. Remember the 'Snellen's Chart' which requires a person to read letters of diminishing size from a distance of 6 metres? This is still used today for some basic tests, but it doesn't measure 'binocular vision', the ability of the two eyes to work together to provide proper depth and distance perception. This is where your vision should be tested by a registered optician or ophthalmic practitioner.

Under current UK health and safety law, employers are obliged to provide eye examinations, free of charge, to employees who regularly use VDU's (computer monitors) for work purposes. Norfolk County Services fulfil this obligation through a Specsavers' voucher scheme.

So what's stopping you? If you have never had your eyes examined, or it's a long time since your last visit to the opticians, book an appointment. It could be money well spent!

Let's get Cooking

The first ever national 'Let's get cooking!' campaign which aimed to get as many children across the country to cook a Shepherd's Pie on the same day took place on Tuesday 17 March.



Karen Newell, Cook Manager at Howard Infant School in King's Lynn got the children at her school involved.

The children got dressed in their own personal protective clothing and joined Karen in the kitchen. First of all they chopped up the onions (only crying a little bit!)

then fried them with the meat and other ingredients. They then cooked, mashed and piped their own Shepherd's Pie with the potato, being creative with the piping and design-



Young 'Shepherds' making their pies at Howard Infant School King's Lynn

ing the pattern on top of the pie. Once cooked the pies were ready for the children to sit down and eat, enjoying their own creation.

Howard Infant School then continued the 'Let's get cooking!' theme and invited parents into school during the afternoon to carry on cooking, with even more children taking part.

Recycling at Felixstowe Docks

November 2008 saw the commencement of the Felixstowe Dock and Rail waste management contract. Part of the SCS remit on start up of this contract was to steadily improve recycling figures, and it is pleasing to see that the Port is now recycling 43% of its waste. From a zero base in 2007 to where it is now is a significant achievement that is set to improve month on month with the recycling initiatives in place.

Community Cookery Club

Norse Commercial Services' school Chef Manager, Darren Barber, has long been an advocate of cooking healthy meals and involving both children and parents in the process. To this end he has taken the initiative and organised twice weekly cookery classes at Cliff Park High School and Junior School.

Darren says, "My main idea is to make the children more aware and more able to use basic cooking skills. This is very important as food technology and cooking has been neglected and cooking is a basic life skill for everyone to have." By working with both children and parents, Darren aims to broaden the variety of food used and to spark interest and respect in different foods so that everyone is much more willing to try new things.

The classes are proving popular and successful, with 20 people involved on each evening.



Darren Barber and his apprentices.

Darren is looking to give everyone simple skills so they can go home and make fresh food that's cheaper and more nutritional than buying a ready meal.

The initiative has captured the imagination of the local community as well with Norfolk Police making a donation of £500 to fund the project and the Mind, Exercise, Nutrition, Do It (MEND) group getting involved and asking Darren to run another class for them.

A Winter Feast at Tuckswood Primary School

Tuckswood Primary School is a multi-cultural school in Norwich, with a mix of Muslim, Hindu and Christian faiths.

This year, they decided to do things a bit differently and organised a 'Winter Feast' lunch to celebrate the festive season, and allow everyone to enjoy a meal together.



Parents, governors, school staff and children from all faiths came together for lunch.

The main organisers were: Debbie Tubby (Christian), Aashah Houssaini (Muslim), Balwunder Suwali (Sikh) and Cira McDonald Key Account Manager Norse Commercial Services.

The dining room was decorated, everyone dressed up for the occasion and teachers and staff served the lunch.

Tracey Arthurton and the catering team at Cavell Primary School were busy all morning cooking and transporting the lunch for all to enjoy.

The event was a real success as can be seen from the photos and the school are now thinking of other ways to celebrate their multi-cultural make up.



Cira McDonald in her festive pixie outfit!

Grasscutting with a difference...



Earlier this year, GYB Services were informed by a Borough Councillor that there was a considerable amount of fly-tipping in a rural part of Ormesby St. Michael near Gt. Yarmouth. Two operatives went to collect the items and discovered a strange aroma plus about 180 kgs of tin foil, face masks, light bulbs, plants, soil, etc.

Being very astute employees they recognised the tell-tale signs of a disused Cannabis factory. The Constabulary was notified and they were very appreciative of the awareness and co-operation of the GYB Services workforce.

People Page

Recognition from CPRE



Development Team and Adventure Playgrounds were employed to create a school grounds environment befitting the beautiful area in which it is set.

The team did a wonderful job creating a pond with a dipping platform, a slide-topped play mound that has become affectionately known as the Banham Peaks, a traversing wall and

a cultivation area all according to David Yates' plan. Further planting was carried out by the pupils and parents on 'planting days.'

Thanks in no small measure to the excellent work of David Ellis and Don Pipe, the groundsmen who maintain the school grounds, and gangmower driver Phil Killington, the site has continued to develop wonderfully.

The way that the grounds were developed and have subsequently been maintained didn't go unnoticed and it wasn't long before they came to the attention of The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE). The site

was shortlisted, judged and to everyone's delight, put forward as an award winner.

Alison, David and I, as the project manager of the development, were invited to attend an awards ceremony at The Assembly House, in Norwich where awards were given for projects that had excelled in enhancing Norfolk's rural environment.

I was presented with my certificate by Bill Bryson, the world renowned travel writer who is now a South Norfolk resident. I was hugely proud to receive this award, an award that would not have happened had it not been for the hard work and dedication of a good number of NCS Grounds' employees.

It's not everyday that one of us gets recognition from a national body for our efforts, let alone gets to share a stage with renowned travel writer Bill Bryson. However, that's exactly what happened to Grounds Advisor, Pete Chambers recently when he received an award from The Campaign to Protect Rural England. Pete takes up the story.

"In early 2007 I was contacted by Alison Callum, the Headteacher at Banham Primary School, about the possibility of developing their school grounds following a major building project on the site. With the assistance of David Yates, a Landscape Architect from NCC, a plan was drawn up incorporating ideas from teachers, children and 'experts' alike.

With the help of a grant from RBS 'Super grounds', NCS Grounds Landscape



Sue Kelly, Customer Services Co-ordinator at Interprint, will be running this year's 'Race for life' on 3 May 2009 at The Royal Norfolk Showground.

Sue has never attempted anything like this before, but decided to take on the challenge, after seeing her partner's father battle against cancer recently.

At the moment Sue is busy training for the event and hopes to run if not jog it, if you would like to sponsor Sue you can do so online – it's quick, easy and totally secure and donations can be pledged until 21 June.

www.raceforlifesporsome.org/suekelly5

NVQ Success



Congratulations to Thomas Mayes (Assistant Groundsman at Suffolk Coastal Services) who has successfully completed his NVQ level 3 qualification in Amenity Sports Turf. Well done Tom.



Goodbye Woolworths

The demise of Woolworths has saddened a lot of people included including me. Back in the late 1940s my parents bought me some plastic toy clowns and horses from their Norwich Store and these were the start of my collection of Circusiana.

Over the years various items were added including models of wild animals as seen in the circuses of the period.

In the late 1950s I added model trucks made by Corgi and later when 'Britains' produced some circus models they were purchased. Alongside the models, my grandparents had copies of pre Second World War Bertram Mills Circus programmes which I added to my growing collection. Over the years I have visited many shows when they have visited Norwich and acquired their programmes and posters.

I have regularly visited Gt Yarmouth Hippodrome since it reopened in 1951 after the Second World War and have copies of all the programmes since then and ever since Peter Jay took over, I also have copies of all his posters.

Since joining NCS in September 2004, with my connection with the Hippodrome, it has been my pleasure to have arranged well over 100 vehicles to take parties to see either the summer or Christmas.

Spectaculars at the Gt Yarmouth Hippodrome. Some schools, Tilney St Lawrence, Walpole Highway and Terrington St John in particular, have travelled 70 miles each way to see the Christmas shows.

On one occasion, out of the blue, we had a request from Whitefriars School, Kings Lynn for 5 coaches to go to Gt. Shelford to see a circus, it transpired that the circus owner's daughter went to the school and she had invited a few friends, (only the whole school!) to see a performance during which 2 of our drivers appeared in the ring.

My job entails booking transport for trips for schools and other organisations and I am frequently asked for ideas of where people can go on a trip and I find it very rewarding to be able to use some of my many interests in suggesting possible venues.

Without Woolworths, who knows, I might never have been interested in the circus?

Derek Eagle

Iain gets a 'Buzz' from his hobby



Iain Rainbird-Edwards, West Area Grounds Manager, took up apiculture last year (that's bee-keeping to you and me).

Iain has been telling me all about this fascinating and surprise-filled hobby. Believe it or not his bees are delivered by post. Yes, that's right, by post!

It all began with about 10,000 bees, including one mated Queen, delivered in a "nuc" box by a concerned looking postman who informed Iain that they "sound quite angry" not surprising considering that during their long journey from Devon to Norfolk their legs were hanging out of the wire mesh topped box!

Iain has a total of 3 hives: 2 WBCs traditional cottage garden style and 1 National 'champagne crate style'.

Iain had to allow the bees to settle down for an hour prior to opening the box and allow them a little fly around. After about three hours the frames containing the bees were introduced into the hive, with an additional 5 frames complete with foundation wax, (this has the outline of the cells pressed into the wax for the bees to start building on).

Following this, later in the evening, Iain had to feed them a gallon of sugar syrup (they have a sweet tooth!) This is to build up their food stores for them to start building the cells. The bees are left in an unopened hive for approximately 7 days whilst sugar levels are monitored. A total of 2 gallons of sugar

syrup were consumed in 4 days. This encourages the workers to start producing wax and building cells ready for the Queen to lay her eggs. The Queen will lay eggs for about 3 years. Then the workers will build Queen cells and rear new Queens to supersede the old or if the hive gets crowded and swarm, the beekeeper will replace the Queen.

Iain will be putting the frames on one at a time ready to build up with honey. The honey is then collected in April. Iain is hopeful the bees will produce around 200lb of honey this year... (I'm hopeful of a free jar!).

Iain informs me this is not a time consuming hobby, he spends approximately one hour a week checking frames, checking the Queen is laying and that the workers are fill-



ing cells with nectar and pollen, also ensuring that the bees are fit and well. Iain has been stung twice but was this was apparently his own fault for being a bit to clumsy lifting out the frames. I guess with 45,000 bees in one hive the odds are stacked against you!

After a long day at work, Iain looks forward to sitting in the garden enjoying a glass of wine and watching the bees in and out of the hives.

This is one venture that certainly has a sting in the tail!

Nicola Richardson

People Page

A Grand Day Out!

NCS School Coaches have been providing transport for the West Norwich Partnership during school holiday periods for several years.

The West Norwich Partnership arrange holiday activities for children and families in the West Earham, Larkman, Marlpit and Bowthorpe areas of Norwich.

For their Summer Sorted 2008 programme we provided some 45 vehicles to take families on trips around Norfolk and Suffolk. Top places visited were Pleasurewood Hills



Pictured R-L are Dave Mallett, Ray Heeds, Danny Strainger and Derrick Eagle, Coach Operations Assistant who takes the bookings for trips throughout the year.

and Africa Alive (formerly Suffolk Wildlife Park) at Kessingland with 5 coaches each, second place were the Dinosaur Park, Pettitts of Reedham and Gt Yarmouth. Hippodrome with 4 coaches each, 3rd place were BeWilderwood and Fritton Lake with 3 coaches each plus a variety of other trips to the Coast and Inland venues.

For the second year running, they held a poll among those who took part in the various activities to select their 'NCS DRIVER of the Year 2008' and this year they selected Ray Heeds as their No 1 with Danny Strainger and Dave Mallett as Runners Up in no particular order. Ray Heeds (although living in Norwich) acts as Relief School Coach Driver, who can be called on to cover any NCS School Coach Contract Routes at a moment's notice, anywhere in our operating area.

Christmas holiday 2008 saw the biggest take up for a WNP "Sorted" trip when 6 coaches transported 3 groups at different times of the day to North Norfolk Railway for the Santa Special. So many people wanted to go that NNR had to put on an additional train at 17.00hrs for them and involved 4 out of the 6 coaches.

Fundraiser Bridget in Marathon effort.



Fundraiser champion Bridget Wells has enjoyed a successful start to her latest charity challenge by securing over £6000 in sponsorship in just ten weeks. Bridget will be taking part in this year's London Marathon on Sunday 26 April.

The beneficiaries of Bridget's efforts will be 'The Norfolk Hospice Tapping House', based at Snettisham. she has received terrific support from family, friends, work colleagues and local business.

Bridget from Gaywood said "For years I have always wanted to run a marathon; it has always been a dream of mine". Bridget has completed six sponsored challenges over the past ten years, raising over £15000 for a range of charities. If anyone would like to sponsor her they can donate at www.justgiving.com/bridgetwells1

Not Quite Trainspotting...



Photograph shows Robin Garman, Terry Riches and Frankie Stokes (Caister Day Services).

Terry Riches has a keen interest in Refuse vehicles and looks out for the team carrying out the weekly collection. He regularly chats to the crew and asks all sorts of questions. He regularly attends Caister Day Services during the week so arrangements were made to give Terry a special treat one Saturday morning when the vehicle was not being used. He was shown how it works and taken for a drive to Caister Recycling Centre by Driver Robin Garman.

IOSH Success

Well done Mark.



Mark Naylor (GYB Services) competed in the Norwich Half-Marathon to raise money for the East Anglian Air Ambulance. He completed the course in a respectable 2 hours 12 minutes and in doing so raised £270 for this worthy cause.

This isn't the first time Mark has appeared in the Focus magazine as he abseiled down North Repps Church in June 2007 raising £123 for the Benjamin Foundation and in December 2007 received a certificate for giving his 50th pint of blood.

Barry Andrews, Grounds Foreman for the Syderstone Depot, receiving his IOSH certificate from Peter Negri, Commercial Director, following his successful completion of this challenging health and safety training programme. The Grounds Team from Syderstone show their support.



Employee of the Month at Waveney Norse



Graham Broadley of the Drainage Department at Waveney Norse received a Gift Voucher for improvements in Service. Graham had the idea of purchasing a Jetting Machine to go on the back of the stand-by truck. This could

be utilised when the Tanker was at Felixstowe docks and cut down on the impact and response time in Waveney. Therefore no need for two people to go and we can still gain additional income for drainage within the Waveney area. Graham said he was pleased to receive the voucher and recognition for his idea and also stated he was always looking for ways to improve the service to the public and to gain additional income for the company. He said the voucher will go towards his Christmas spending.

First E-Learning Qualification

Congratulations to Annabelle Farrant and Raelene Freestone from Community Equipment Services who have achieved their ENVO in Customer Care Level 2. The course was completed on-line. They are the first ENVO to be achieved at Norfolk County Services. "We thoroughly enjoyed the course and using the computer to send our work across to the Assessor was a really simple way of putting our portfolios together" said Raelene."



20 years' loyal service



Graham Jermyn presents Kevin Hunter (Toilet Attendant) with his 20 years' service award.



Spooky Night in Norwich

As part of our National Year of Reading Programme, 95 staff and their families enjoyed a Spooky Night at the Maid's Head Hotel.

The Man in Black took everyone to the spooky areas of Norwich before returning them to a reception with Pam Brooks, a Norfolk Author who writes about ghosts and legends – a thoroughly ghoulish night enjoyed by all. Watch this space for more events.



Reading wins a prize for Wendy!



Well done to Wendy Smith who has become our Reading Champion.

Wendy achieved her Literacy Level 1 and 2 and Numeracy Level 1 and 2, as well as her NVO 1 in Catering through our Learning programme because she wanted to help her son with his homework.

This inspired Wendy to read six books and enter our Six Book Challenge competition winning the first prize of a TV. "The whole family enjoy reading and it's something we all do together and now we have a new TV to watch together." said Wendy pictured here with Hilary Hale, Learning and Development Manager who presented Wendy with her prize at Wells Library.

Long Service Awards - 10 year club

January 09

James Matthewson
Ann Herrick
Tracey Perkins
Lilian Shreeve
Gordon McPherson
Judith Pal
Christopher Boxall
John Pearse
Douglas Milbourne
Kevin Postma

February 09

Peter Jeffery
Roger Marshall
Paul Davies
Marie Eke
Stephen Willmore
Pam Kirchen
Ann Bamber
Hazel Fountain
Joy Rye
Martin Stewart
Jeremy Scofield
Sarah Bone

March 09

Maureen Wightman
Sandra Reed
Geoffrey Payne
John Appleby
Matthew Wilby
Deborah Hall
Wendy Smith
Marjorie Cooper
Raymond Brown
Anthony Fodder
Reginald Steadman
Clive Bunn
David Barwick
Trevor Green
Patrick Romaine

Bon Voyage to Pat



Passenger Assistant Pat Parker retired at the end of January after fifteen years' service. Working primarily with adults with learning difficulties who attend the Black Horse Special Needs Unit and Sprowston Day Services. Pat brought an enormous degree of enthusiasm and common sense to her role. We all wish Pat and her husband the very best as they take up a new and exciting chapter in their lives by emigrating to Australia to be closer to their family.

Happy Retirement Penny!



Penny Stokes, catering Operations Manager for Healthcare has retired after 26 years' working in our Catering Division.

Penny joined the Catering service in 1983 as a Catering supervisor and progressed through a number of managerial roles within the service – including: Training, Marketing and Grant-Maintained areas – before taking up the role of Operations manager in Healthcare where she worked for 14 years before retiring at the end of March.

We all wish Penny a long and happy retirement.



Hello my name is Nick Smith. I began working for NCS in February as Catering Operations Manager for Healthcare.

I've come from the Catering department at the University of East Anglia and held the post of Departmental Catering Manager. The Catering operations there ranged from everyday snacks and meals for students, staff and visitors through to fine dining and wedding receptions.

Prior to this, I worked for Autograph Foodservice, within Initial Catering. My first role here was to train contract managers on weekly financial reporting procedures and budgeting skills and then to raise all the billing for each contract. On occasions, I would cover for managers, which lead to my second role. In this role, my main duty was to manage Police catering contracts in Norfolk and Suffolk as well as periodically managing other business and industry contracts.

My passion for catering began as a result of working in hotels whilst studying at College. This gave me valuable experience and provided the base for my career.

My induction has been great. As well as getting to grips with the business, I have had the opportunity to meet most people I will be working with and everyone has been very welcoming and helpful. I'm looking forward to meeting more of the team.

June Bye Retires

June retired on 18 December 2008 after 18 years working for SCDC and Suffolk Coastal Services. June Bye was a fantastic member of the team, extremely diligent, efficient and willing. We wish June a long and happy retirement - she will be sorely missed.



Former Assistant Operations Manager with NCS Transport Sue Warren retired through ill-health last year and is seen here with her Transport colleagues at a presentation evening to thank Sue for all the hard work and dedication she had given to the company. We all send Sue our very best wishes for the future.

Ron Foster, a Gardener with GYB Services retires. We wish him the very best of luck for the future.



David Watts (second from right in Blue t-shirt) Retired from Waveney Norse on 9 March 2009.

David had been with the team since October 1977 starting with the Sea Defence Team, then moving across to Grounds Maintenance in March 1980. David was highly skilled and valued and with a background in the building trade was always the one to be called upon over those unusual requests that often came into the department. A respected member of the team he carried his more recent work within sheltered housing schemes providing an excellent service which was much appreciated by residents.

Well Done David, we wish you enjoy a long and happy retirement.

Staff survey

Thank you to all of you who participated in the GYB and Catering staff survey. Each lucky winner will win a television. The raffle ticket numbers drawn are as follows:

	Winning number
High School/Civics	10
Healthcare	579
School Catering	158
GYB	926

Please send your winning raffle ticket with your name and address to Tricia Fuller, HR Director (at the address at the bottom of the page.

NCS AGM Quiz winner

The 24 November 2008 saw the Norfolk County Services AGM. The presentation detailed the progress of NCS through its start up to the present day. The annual quiz this year was won by Clare Beasley, of Suffolk Coastal Services, who answered all questions from our Managing Director correctly (even Peter's birthday!).

Clare works within the SCS Finance team as a Finance Assistant and started with the team at the beginning of October 2008. This is clear testimony to the high quality induction programme we have in place. Well done to Clare; and we hope you enjoy the DVD player.

Number Jig Winner

Congratulations to Derek Gricks, a relief Driver/Passenger Assistant based at Dereham Day Services in the Transport Division who was the lucky winner of the 'Number Jig Competition' in the last edition of Focus. He is pictured here with Neil Pestell, Assistant Operations Manager for Minibuses presenting Derek with his prize - a £40.00 Theatre Royal Voucher.



Pantomime Winners



Suzanne Workman was lucky enough to win 4 tickets to this year's Pantomime at the Theatre Royal – Snow White and The Seven Dwarves. Suzanne took her husband Kevin and his parents to the Panto on 2 January 2009 and they all thoroughly enjoyed

the show – especially the Red Arrows scene!

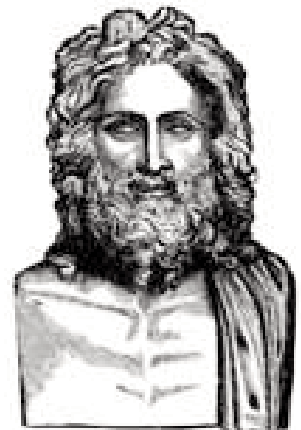
Another lucky winner of tickets was Tina Bacon, Cook Manager at Wroughton Junior School. Tina took her family along. Her daughter particularly loved Shorty, one of the dwarves.

A big thank you to NCS from Suzanne and Tina for a very enjoyable end of year treat.

Competition

Do you know...

You might have heard of these mythological God's but can you tell us what each one represents?



- Athena the Greek God of
- Nike the Greek God of
- Vesta the Roman Goddess of
- Mercury the Roman God of
- Vulcan the Roman God of
- Flora the Roman Goddess of
- Mars the Roman God of
- Venus the Roman Goddess of



Closing date: 1 June 2009

Send all entries to:
HR Department
Norse Commercial Services
180 Fifers Lane, Norwich, NR6 6EQ