

Journal

J5 JOURNAL IS PUBLISHED FOR EMPLOYEES OF J SAINSBURY, SAVACENTRE AND HOMEBASE

JANUARY/FEBRUARY
ISSUE
1994



- Prize garden
- Subsidiary special - Homebase set to increase growth
- Win a stereo CD system



FRONTLINE



COVER STORY

FANHAMS HALL'S GARDENS HAVE WON AN AWARD FOR DESIGN FROM THE LANDSCAPE INSTITUTE. SEE PAGE 3.

GET THE MEASURE OF HOMEBASE

SEE PAGES 14-19



Ian Pritchard, horticulturist, Walton-on-Thames Homebase.

A Happy New Year to all our readers

We launch 1994 with a focus on Homebase, in the last of our supplements on the Group's subsidiaries. Last, but, as they would be keen to point out, by no means least, Homebase is proud to have survived the recession and is coming up smelling of roses having increased its market share. Check out the facts, the figures and future

plans on pages 14-19.

Our hearts went out to Chichester on December 16 as their store was destroyed by fire. We can only be grateful nobody was hurt, and that was only because staff kept their heads, prevented panic and followed proper procedures.

Full story page six. ■

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Bulksava opens at Beckton



Store manager Bob Bishop and Mike Broomfield cut the ribbon.

Savacentre opened the first of a brand new type of store at Beckton in East London on January 14.

The 33,000 sq ft Bulksava store alongside Beckton Savacentre offers customers the chance to save money by buying in bulk. The store sells only multiple packs and cases of both leading brand and own-brand goods. A selection of competitively priced domestic items and clothing is also available.

Says Savacentre managing director Mike Broomfield, 'We are offer-

ing a whole new way of stretching the family budget even further: no membership or fee is necessary to take advantage of buying in bulk and making substantial savings.'

Store manager of the new Bulksava is Bob Bishop. He reports to Beckton Savacentre store director John Lavin and has his own team of 40 staff. They run the store, maintain its 1,300 lines and man the five checkouts. Bob said on opening morning, 'Many people are coming in from next door since about 20 per cent of our lines are only available at Bulksava, including heavily discounted one-off purchases

and 'end of line' goods. We've had a lot of interest, and a lot of people looking around - even Terry Waite came in and filled a trolley.'

'Checkouts of the future' unveiled

A new checkout scanning system unveiled by a South African research organisation on January 11 was described by director of branch services Hamish Elvidge as a potential 'revolution in customer service'.

London radio station GLR had come to ask his views on the prototype 'Supertag' system which can process 50 items per second. It uses radio signals to detect tiny chips incorporated into the packaging. Unpacking trolleys at the checkout would become a thing of the past, as would queues.

Oliver Randall of retail systems development says, 'Yes, we're always interested in new technology that may improve customer service. However, the tags that go on each item are just too expensive at the moment. We may be five years away from trialling it in stores so don't get too excited about it just yet!'



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HEADLINES

Sainsbury's encourages the study of wine

Sainsbury's is to support The Institute of Masters of Wine with nearly £30,000 over the next three years.

The Institute raises standards of appreciation and knowledge in the wine trade and holds examinations which result in around ten to 15 people becoming Masters of Wine each year. Part of the JS support will involve the sponsorship of a study tour to a wine producing region, to be presented to the MW examinee who produces the best dissertation. Departmental director of off-licence buying Mike Conolly commented: 'There are three MWs among past and present staff of Sainsbury's wine department and we know the value of the outstanding training the Institute provides.'



Deputy chairman Tom Vyner presenting a cheque to David Stevens MW, executive director of The Institute, at Vintners' Hall on November 22.

Mr Blobby is on the beat



A girl who fled after being discovered presenting a stolen cheque card for payment at Durham branch found herself being chased by Mr Blobby!

Store training section manager Joan Russell was collecting for Children In Need on November 26 in Mr Blobby guise when she spotted the situation.

Customers and staff alike stood open-mouthed as the pink pursuer closed on the suspect, waddling across a snow covered car park. When the police took the girl away for questioning, Joan took a bow and received a round of applause from customers.

Incidentally, Durham raised £2,480 for Children In Need. For more fundraising news turn to page 24.

Fanhams awarded for green fingers



Fanhams Hall, Sainsbury's training and conference centre in Hertfordshire, has been hailed as having one of the best designed gardens in the country.

The Landscape Institute chose the gardens from 71 entries and awarded landscape architects Higson Pearson the President's Award for Design. The formal gardens were restored and improved as part of the recent extensive rebuilding of the house and grounds.

Says head gardener Carmel Ovenden, 'When Sainsbury's took over, the gardens were in a poor state. Since then, there

have been a number of projects, mainly based upon restoration, which have been very exciting.'

Chairman of the award group Roger Greenwood praised the gardens: 'It is my view that the Fanham Hall gardens are in the hands of owners, staff and consultants who are taking care and pleasure in unfolding the schemes to their full potential.'

The store with built-in shopmobility



Christine Nunn, food and store safety officer at Plymouth, accepts the award from the Lord Mayor of Plymouth.

Plymouth store has been presented with a Shopmobility award by Plymouth City Council.

Shopmobility is a

charity organisation, backed by Plymouth City Council, which provides facilities and equipment to give disabled people easier

access to the city centre shops.

The charity was impressed with the store's wide aisles, disabled checkouts and the delay on lift doors closing which gives disabled customers more time to enter and exit the lift. What impressed the judges most though was the helpfulness of the staff.

HEADLINES

Pupils assemble for roll call 68 years later



A school roll call for Truro Grammar school dating back to 1925 has been discovered within the foundation stones of the site for the first Sainsbury's supermarket in Cornwall. Sainsbury's is to honour the roll call by handing it over to the County Records Office as a gift to the local community.

The time capsule was discovered following a claim by former pupil Phyllis Prideaux that a sealed glass jar containing

a roll call was lying within the foundation stones of the school building, having been placed there in 1925 by Lord Eustace Percy, Minister for Education at that time. The jar was found with the seal still intact and the roll call preserved.

The Truro County Records Office will ensure that the roll call is correctly maintained while making it available to both the local community and social historians.

Store manager Ian Elkins and Cornwall County Council's chief archivist Christine North (far right) study the time capsule with former pupils of Truro Grammar School for Girls, and signatories, Phyllis Prideaux and Marjorie Rundle.

The 40 year lunch bunch



There is a lot of reminiscing to do when you have worked for Sainsbury's for 40 years. A dozen staff who reached this landmark in 1993 did just that when they and their partners arrived at the Savoy on January 10 for a formal lunch.

The chairman David Sainsbury congratulated the total of 15 staff who completed 40 years of service last year and thanked them for helping the company increase profits from £1 million to £733 million in that time. He also noted the pressure that puts on partners. 'You too can be enormously proud of what has been achieved in the company in those years,' he said.

Director Angus Clark (left) chats with Cecil Frost, reception manager at Worle (centre), and Brian Dye, meat section manager at Waltham Cross.

The power savers



Pictured at the award ceremony are (l to r): Roger Borer, design manager refrigeration and mechanical; Graham Mackenzie from Eastern Electricity; David Littler, senior electrical engineer, and Mark English and Nick Thompson from the JS contract quantity surveyors.

East Maine in Basildon has been declared the most energy efficient and environmentally friendly shop in the East of England.

The store was chosen to represent JS's economical and green modern stores in the Eastern Electricity Commercial Property Awards and snatched the top prize in the Retail category.

Aspects of the store's design, such as its pioneering ozone-friendly refriger-

ant, the integrated energy controls in the store and refrigerant leak monitoring, ensured the success of the JS entry. The £1,000 prize money was donated to Neighbourhood Energy Action, a charity engaged in improving energy efficiency in the homes of low income families.



Keith and Bob accept the award from the Mayor.

Purley Way branch manager Bob Simmons and food and store safety officer Keith Harris were proud to pick up a Good

Hygiene Award for best retail premises in the borough. It was presented to them by the Mayor of Croydon.

Computers arrive at the back door



SABRE
SERVICE
THROUGH
SYSTEMS

Computer terminals are not a new line for the stores but the next development of the far-reaching SABRE computer system.

From February, around 12 branches a week will go live with parts of Phase III of SABRE. This phase introduces the system in two parts, first to the back door area for receiving deliveries, followed later by an improved ordering system for most perishable commodities in the branch. By Christmas, SABRE Phase III will be installed in all branches.

Twenty six branches have been using the Phase III receiving system for several months now. These pilot and trial branches have tried out the system over the busy Christmas period and proved that it really does help in the reception of deliveries.

The most obvious change is that the branches now have a computer terminal in the loading bay. This initially caused concern to the departments who look after computer equipment, with images of roll pallets crashing into the expensive equipment. But the terminal is very well protected by a specially constructed cage, as you can see from the photograph.

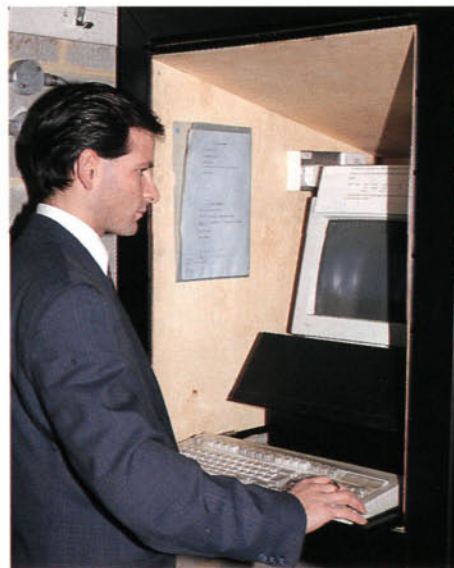
A lot of the paperwork involved in receiving goods into the branch is now no longer needed,

saving time in both the reception area and the general office.

Angelo Piscina, reception manager at Wandsworth, which is trialling Phase III of SABRE says, 'If you hit the wrong key, an explanation of what you are doing wrong comes up on the screen. The paper system was more complicated.' Section manager Darren Steven adds, 'If the vehicle is straightforward, and everything is there, you do save time.'

In the office, the receiving part of Sabre is also good news. 'We don't confirm debits any more; this has gone over to the back door,' explains Wandsworth's general office manager, Sanita Bhikhar.

The receiving system is also easy to learn. Specially designed screens largely replace the existing



Angelo Piscina, reception manager at Wandsworth: 'It's quite hard to make mistakes.'

paperwork. This meant that after a few runs through with an installer, the reception management and staff at the trial branches were happy to use the system on their own.

Angelo says: 'It's quite hard to make mistakes. The system can be picked up pretty quickly - in about two to three days - but you shouldn't be afraid to ask if you do get stuck.'

The effect of the SABRE receiving system also extends to depot staff and drivers. Information about a delivery can be accessed in the branch as

soon as a vehicle leaves the depot. Once it has arrived, the driver agrees the details the branch staff have entered on the terminal by keying in a special authorisation code.

Basil Womack, a driver from Charlton, says, 'If branch staff aren't happy with the delivery, we check the "shorts" together. It's a good idea and it's tightening up on things.'

The next *JS Journal* will report on how the major part of SABRE Phase III - perishable ordering - is affecting branches.

News in brief



Menisha Barber, coffee shop assistant at Alper-ton, is the winner of the latest SSA quarterly draw.

A Welsh language speaker has joined the team of 18 Sainsbury's speakers.

Myfanwy Stubbs speaks Welsh fluently and will give presentations mainly for property public relations in areas of Wales where the company is either building a new store or planning one. She will also give consumer presentations where a Welsh speaker has been specifically requested.

Builders broke the ground this month at Marsh Mills, Plymouth, where a stunning new JS is being built. The design features an arcade of sails at the front of the store and a semi-

circular car park. The store is scheduled to open in the late summer.

1994 is the UN International Year of the Family and the organisers chose

Blackfriars head office for the UK media launch in December. Joint managing director David Quarmby explained how Sainsbury's was a family business that strived to help parents.

Health secretary Virginia Bottomley spoke endorsing the aims of the year.

Sainsbury's has become a corporate member of the Tommy's Parent Friendly Campaign. The company thereby pledges to adhere to commitments to make life easier for customers and staff with children. JS already has baby changing facilities in 146 stores and Career Bridge and paternity break schemes. The company won the supermarket category of the *Daily Telegraph*/Tommy's Parent Friendly Award in 1992.

INFERNO DESTROYS CHICHESTER JS

Chichester store was burnt to the ground on December 16. It was the biggest firefighting operation the county had seen and involved 200 West Sussex firefighters.



(above) Chichester's trolleys are put to good use by the firefighters.



(left) Members of management stayed around well into the night as firefighters got the fire under control.

The blaze started at around 2.40pm in the warehouse. Branch manager Chris Davies explains: 'Lunch-breaks had just finished and we were preparing for the busy afternoon when the intermittent alarm sounded around the branch. Two minutes later, management on the scene saw the fire and the evacuation message was spread.

'The evacuation went very smoothly and there was no panic. Everyone was out of the branch very quickly.

'It soon dawned on us that the fire was rapidly gaining in strength and shock followed as the flames engulfed the whole store.'

One of the last people to leave the store was checkout assistant Nancy Glue. She helped to make sure there was no-one left in the building before going outside. 'We were standing looking at the building when there was quite a loud crash and a ball of flame shot up into the air.'

Chris Davies adds: 'About an hour after the evacuation, it was clear the store was lost, and with this realisation a feeling of great sorrow spread among the staff and management.'

All the 400 plus customers in the store were evacuated without injury. John Colam, Sainsbury's chief fire officer explained that the cause of the fire was not yet known.

The senior fire safety officer, Barry Williard, and the chief fire officer of West Sussex, Ken Lloyd, attended the scene the following day and both officers paid tribute to the JS fire training arrangements and in particular congratulated the manager for control and leadership on the day.

Chichester's permanent staff are temporarily working at neighbouring stores: Farlington, Rustington and Lyons Farm. A free bus service to these stores has been set up for staff and customers of the old store.

Work has already begun on the

development of a new store on the site. Ray Riley, project manager for the scheme, told the *Journal*: 'The demolition and salvage operation started the day after the fire. The new store uses roughly 80 per cent of the original foundations. We hope to have construction completed by August, and subject to obtaining the necessary planning consents at the earliest possible time, the store should be trading by September.'

For the time being, the site still has a fully functioning petrol filling station and a Portakabin in the car park. A sign on the door says simply

'Chichester 006'.

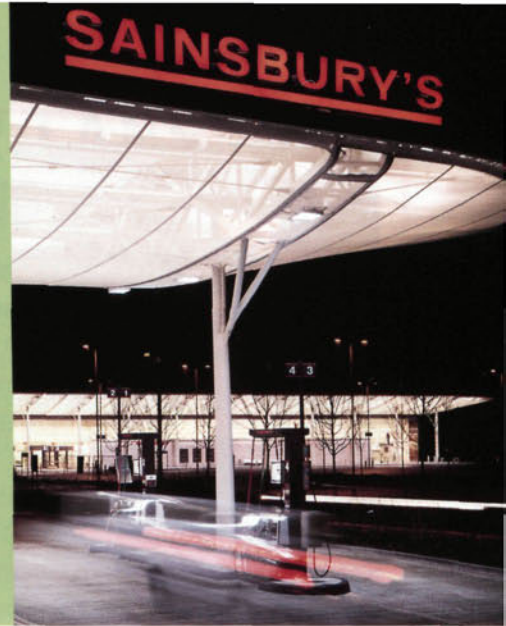
The portakabin is currently manned by the BPM and a small team of staff while the process of reallocation of staff to other branches is completed. The manager and deputy manager are working on special projects until the store re-opens. Once the job of reallocation of staff is complete, the Portakabin will continue to be manned by personnel staff, in order to deal with any queries from customers or staff.



Pictures courtesy of Chichester Observer.

Coffee Shop

IN-STORE
BAKERY



Bob Emmott.

We announced in the August/September *JS Journal* that Bob Emmott had come to JS as a new director responsible for petrol stations, instore bakeries and JS restaurants - known collectively as the specialist businesses. Six months into this new role, the *Journal* spoke to him.

Bob: 'These three businesses were originally created as additional facets of customer service to the core supermarket business. The company has come to recognise their potential and it is our job to make them trade better and to make them more profitable. They are now regarded as a genuine trading opportunity with their own natural demand.'

The businesses will be listed separately in the accounts and

each has a general manager for the day-to-day running and a management board with directors relevant to the business.

But aren't the businesses too different to be brought under the same umbrella? Bob answers: 'They are not that diverse really - they are all retail formats. They represent frequent purchase products that sit comfortably with the rest of our supermarket offer. Our policy is still to provide quality and value for money.'

'It has taken a lot of work to prepare each business to be run separately but it has all been quite exciting,' he continues. 'We expect a process of evolution now. It is a matter of improving product ranges and marketing.'

Bob tells us there are several other ideas in the pipeline for these businesses and perhaps some new ventures. We have accepted his invitation to come back in a few months to find out more, so watch this space!

A SOUND PRIZE FOR KNOWING YOUR MEAT



Retail training has launched two new product knowledge audio tapes. To mark the occasion, they are offering *JS Journal* readers the chance to win a portable stereo CD system.

The new product knowledge tapes - 'Fresh Meat' and 'Get Hooked on Fish' - follow the introduction last year of the first tapes on exotic fruits and wine. The interactive audio tapes introduce listeners to products in a fun way that involves feeling, smelling and looking!

The 30 minute tapes are designed to be played on the shop floor using tape players and headphones

available in every branch. As a mini-expert on the respective departments it will never again be necessary to tell a customer 'Sorry I don't know what goes with Côtes du Rhône' or 'the taste of Dover sole - no idea'. And it might even help you to choose the best cut of beef next time you are out shopping.

Now, down to the nitty-gritty - how to win the portable stereo, incorporating CD, radio and twin tape decks, very kindly donated by Dixon's. Just listen to the new fish and meat tapes then answer the questions on the entry form, right. To find out how to obtain a tape, contact the retail training department on ext 6851.

Send your completed entry form to *JS Journal*, 10th Floor, Drury House, Blackfriars, or by Royal Mail to the address on page two. Your entry must reach us by March 4. Entrants must work for JS, Savacentre or Homebase. Only one entry per person please.



ENTRY FORM

Product Knowledge Audio Tape Competition

1. Name one of the two 'molluscs' mentioned in the fish tape.

.....

2. What section follows the 'pork' section on the meat tape?

.....

Now complete the tie breaker in the most witty and appropriate way, using no more than ten words:

'The product knowledge tapes are useful because.....'

.....

.....

Full name

.....

Location

.....

Contact phone number

.....



SUPERMARKET

O P E N I N G S

WORKSOP

Opening date: November 23, 1993
Address: Highgrounds Road, Rhodesia, Worksop, Nottinghamshire
Opened by: Chairman David Sainsbury
Branch manager: Gary Biddulph
Project manager: Richard O'Callaghan
Staff: 220 (197 new staff)
Sales area: 24,241 sq ft
Car park: 387 spaces

HASTINGS

Opening date: November 23, 1993
Address: John Macadam Way, St Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex
Opened by: Area director Colin Etheridge
Branch manager: David Hunt
Project manager: Keith Butler
Staff: 333 (149 new staff)
Sales area: 32,000 sq ft
Car park: 517 spaces

WATER LANE, FARNHAM

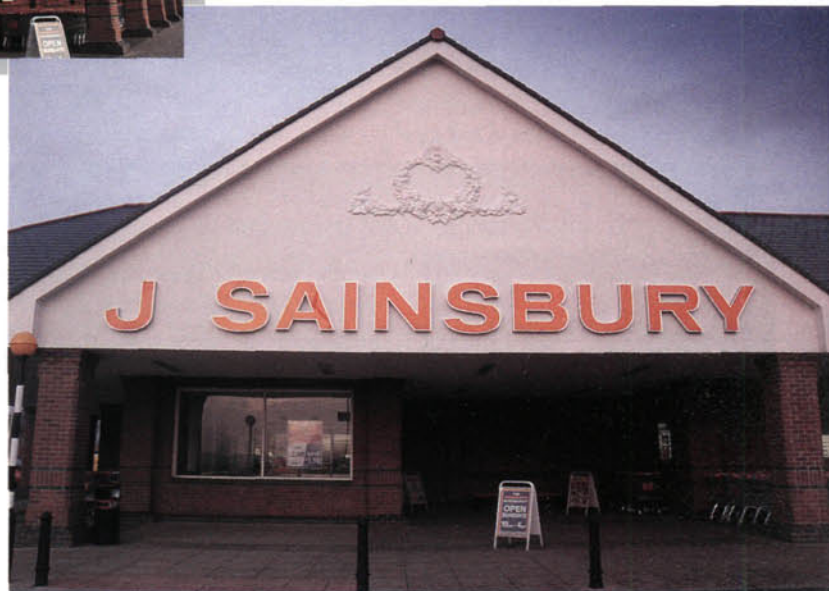
Opening date: December 7, 1993
Address: Water Lane, Farnham, Surrey
Opened by: Deputy chairman Tom Vyner
Branch manager: John Hardeley
Project manager: John Maunder
Staff: 509 (305 new staff)
Sales area: 35,813 sq ft
Car park: 680 spaces

WORKSOP

The new supermarket at Worksop is in an area formerly occupied by Robin Hood's Sherwood Forest. It may not rob the rich to give to the poor like the legendary man in tights but local residents do benefit from the tree planting programme JS started last year. Oaks planted beside the store in November are intended to help restore the once-great wood. Sherwood Forest is also commemorated in one of the three bas-relief brick sculptures on the outside walls.



Store manager Gary Biddulph welcomes all to Worksop.



Janice Walker knows the store is set to be a sure-fire success.

Preparing sausage sandwiches for the hungry hordes are staff restaurant section manager Sandra Grice (left) and assistant Trudy Hocker.



Customer service assistant Cath Veness shows off the new in-belt scales as she prices and weighs apples. Customers look on with great interest.

WATER LANE, FARNHAM

John Hardeley has seen a few changes in the 27 years he has worked for JS, during which time he has served in all four of Farnham's Sainsbury's stores. 'I worked as a butcher in the Borough store in 1967 when it only had 40 staff, and now I look after more than 500 people as manager of Water Lane. In that time our trading style seems to have come full circle: we built our trade on personal customer service, then had a period when we let the customers get on with their shopping. Now we are talking to them again with services like our fish counter and deli.'



Manager John Hardeley.



With the cake that was specially baked to celebrate the opening are (l to r): Denis Clarke, Joy Saunders, Paul Greenstreet, Lorna Blencowe, Sue Ewers and Joanne Boothman.

Paul Urban and Cynthia Murphy, area display specialists, make last-minute adjustments to the crockery shelves.



Beryl Tate gives the flowers a final spruce up before the doors open.

HASTINGS

Hastings is the first new store to incorporate a new style of checkout, revolutionary to British supermarkets. Research and development project manager Mike Crouch explains 'These new checkouts have in-belt scales. The idea comes from Sweden and replaces the old scales located beside the cashier. Hastings has five of these new checkouts which do away with the old twisting and lifting action. It improves comfort for the checkout assistant and has the potential to speed up the process of weighing and pricing. Three months from now we expect all openings to have this facility if our trials are successful.'



Price controller Martin Robinson's box says it all!

What the customer does not see: in the office all is under control as staff rush to make final preparations behind the scenes.





HOMEBASE

O P E N I N G S

WALTON-ON-THAMES

Opening date: December 10, 1993

Address: New Zealand Avenue, Walton-on-Thames, Surrey

Opened by: Homebase chairman Dino Adriano

Branch manager: Julian Lowndes

Project manager: Neil Hotston

Staff: 50 (41 new staff)

Sales area: 43,650 sq ft

Car park: 160 spaces

ST ALBANS

Opening date: December 17, 1993

Address: Griffiths Way, St Albans, Hertfordshire

Opened by: Homebase chairman Dino Adriano

Branch manager: Alan Paterson

Project manager: Neil Hotston

Staff: 45 (35 new staff)

Sales area: 32,530 sq ft

Car park: 199 spaces



General assistant George Morrow clears the winter leaves from the car park.

ST ALBANS

When manager Alan Paterson was looking to fill the vacancies at the new St Albans store he sought a healthy proportion of more mature staff. 'I wanted a good mix of ages,' he explains, 'because the younger generation have plenty of energy while the older staff have more experience of DIY and can be better placed to advise customers.' St Albans' former light industry, such as British Aerospace, provided a convenient source of potential staff.



Former aircraft engineer John Gardener tries out a form of transport with which he admits he is a little less familiar!



Dino Adriano and the first St Albans customers get into the Christmas spirit.



WALTON-ON-THAMES



Carole Mitchell and Tammy Reynolds (back) stock up the checkouts with a ready supply of change.

The new Homebase at Walton-on-Thames sits on land formerly occupied by the town hall, beside lush Surrey parkland. The store was built around many of the local mature trees and new trees were planted to help the store fit in with its verdant surroundings. The design of the store also pays respect to the local environment: the truncated gables of the roof and combination of brick and render of the walls is typical of the Walton area.

Ready for the opening rush are (left to right) Kathleen Miller, information desk assistant; Ray Hopkins, general assistant; Pauline Harris, extra choice assistant, and Ralph Gray, general assistant.





J range shows off

Sainsbury's proved itself to be the most fashionable of supermarkets when, for the first time, it joined a host of famous names from the fashion world at the Clothes Show Live event at Birmingham's NEC.



Beryl Kirtland, a Sainsbury's food advisor gives a customer some advice on what to buy.

JS had two stands at the event which ran from December 11-16 and welcomed over 200,000 visitors.

The company made its debut in style, with one stand selling the complete range of J cosmetics and the other turning members of the public into cover girls. And Sainsbury's certainly grabbed the spotlight as these were the only cosmetic stands to be featured on the Clothes Show TV programme's report of the event, screened on December 12.

Visitors paid £40 for a make-over and the four make-up artists completed more than 500 make-overs over the six days using make-up from the J range.

Hairdressers provided the crowning glory and stylists put together Clothes Show outfits before these models-for-a-day were photographed for a mock-up cover of the

The making of a cover girl.



Clothes Show Magazine.

Each person was given a list of all the products used, and many went on to buy them from the sales stand opposite. The sales stand incorporated two in-store display units, so customers who visited the stand would easily recognise the same products in a store.

Stephen Sunnucks, departmental director of toiletries, explained why Sainsbury's became involved in one of the nation's biggest fashion shows: 'Last year the Clothes Show did a series on supermarket cosmetics and featured the J Range. Following this they invited us to become involved with the make-over stand. The J Range has recently been relaunched in new aquamarine packaging and we have tried to target a younger audience, without alienating our loyal customers. This market tied in very closely

with that of the Clothes Show Live, which appeals to teenagers as well as their parents.

'Sales were above expectations with enthusiastic comments from many visitors. Because of this success we have every intention of participating again next year. Who knows, we may even use Lifestyle clothing on the make-over stand.'



25p OFF

SAINSBURY'S J COSMETIC RANGE

To the customer: This coupon can only be used as part payment of any product in the J COSMETIC RANGE by 31st March 1994. Only one coupon can be used against each of the products purchased. Please do not redeem this coupon against any other products as this may cause embarrassment and delay at the checkout. This coupon is also valid at Savacentre.

SAINSBURY'S

Valid until
31 March 1994



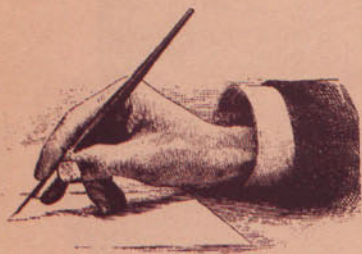
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Department Code: NF2



WRITELINES

*P'enfuit la lettre
nous auons ceste finon
que la vertu lance quelque
deur en l'entendement de t
x qui ne la suyuent ne lai*



ALL SHE WANTED FOR CHRISTMAS

Jean Griffiths, delicatessen department, Lewes Road, Brighton
Christmas week was very busy and a regular customer who is an elderly lady came up to the department deciding what she was going to buy. Our manager told her that if she would like to leave her list, to save her waiting, she would have it all ready for her to collect. The customer was delighted; she handed over the folded list and left to call back later.

When it was looked at there were hoots of laughter. The shopping list had 3lb flour, sugar, eggs, milk etc. We didn't disappoint her, and had her shopping waiting.

TASMANIAN DEVILS?

Check out this idea



IT seems so obvious that I can't imagine why our own checkout chicks aren't provided with the same amenities — the humble chair.

Expatriate Brit Chris George of Lindsfarne — just back from a trip to England and places beyond — had brought with him this

picture taken in a supermarket at Aylesbury, England, where the checkout operators are allowed to sit while they work.

Now why didn't someone here think of that? Must do wonders in helping to prevent varicose veins and swollen ankles.

Chris Fing, Tasmania

This cutting from the *Sunday Tasmanian* of November 7 may be of interest to you.

The photo was taken by my son in your store last April when we were staying with my sister-in-law in Aylesbury. She is one of your customers.

The picture and the text have given rise to much comment here, especially among the checkout girls!

GLASS ROOTS

Melanie Thrift, checkout assistant, Kempshott

Just come into my possession is the family tree of my father's mother's maiden name of Hellaby. When spread out it is about 16 feet long and very interesting.

I have been told by my old aunt, that one, possibly two, daughters of my grandmother's owned a glass factory, which it is thought made chandeliers among other things, and it stood on the site of Sainsbury's head office at Stamford Street. We think the aunts sold it to Sainsbury's.

Is it possible to find out if this was so? Perhaps Sainsbury's have got the old deeds. I would like to know the name of the glass factory and the date it was sold.

I hope you can shed some light on the subject, as I would like to add this to the tree.

Karen Fielder from the archives department replies:

Sainsbury's first site on Stamford Street was Wakefield House purchased from George Cox in 1891, and was formerly stables. Stamford House was built in two stages completed in 1913 and 1928, on a site bordered by Bennett Street (renamed Rennie Street in 1939), Stamford Street and Upper Ground. Previously, this area was primarily residential, including old waterside cottages and the insalubrious Queens Arms Court.

Opposite this site, on the other side of Bennett Street, there were several small manufacturers, including a gas fitter and a hat manufacturer. Sainsbury's acquired many of the buildings in the vicinity of Stamford House from 1923, including four wharves and their associated buildings and workshops - Crown, Bullstairs, Hope and Fleet. These were demolished to make way

for the Kings Reach development around 1968, by which time many of these little factories had long since ceased to function for their original purpose. There was a glass cutter in Bennett Street in 1884 named Benjamin Hastwell, but we can find no mention of your aunts in the deeds held by the company's archives. However, there were many small industries along this stretch of the river, and it may be worth pursuing your enquiry through the Guildhall Library, who have very good records of the area. We would be interested to hear if you can find anything out.

CUT COSTS, NOT STANDARDS

Michael Fowler, non perishable warehouse assistant, Hoddesdon depot

Could somebody please explain the company's current policy regarding canteen facilities, because here at Hoddesdon, after nearly 30 years with a successful canteen, we are being told it now runs at a loss.

Maybe so, but surely cutting services, cutting quality, cutting standards, (all management instigated I might add), does not solve the profit/loss problem.

I'm sure the shareholders' interests would be better looked after if the staff were properly fed and watered, instead of being catered for in a canteen, that in our opinion is being run down pending closure. After all, do all the branch/head office canteens show a profit.

If our canteen does close, it does not say a lot for the 'cost less' slogan, does it?

Bernard Cullen, Hoddesdon depot manager, replies:

Hoddesdon depot has been involved in an assessment of all aspects of the operation to ensure services provided are the best quality and value available.

The canteen review is being undertaken by a work group involving representatives from all areas of the depot, and their recommendations will be discussed with canteen staff when they have been finalised. No decision has yet been made. However, I would emphasise that whatever the outcome, similar arrangements will apply regarding a subsidised catering service at Hoddesdon depot.

FALLING FOR BOSTON



Pauline Johnson, reception, Northern area office

I write to say thank you for the article in the November issue of the *JS Journal* 'visiting distant Shaw's'.

Having just returned from a wonderful holiday in 'Boston in the fall', I can only confirm everything that was said about both New England and about Shaw's.

We did in fact visit several Shaw's stores while we were over there and found the standards generally to be very high, and as a customer it was nice to find that the staff were very genuine and helpful. The wide selection of lines was particularly welcome, many of course were new to us. I noted with amusement the display of Hallowe'en goods in one of your photographs. The Americans really do go mad at Hallowe'en time; I've never seen so many pumpkins in my life!

Having worked for Sainsbury's now for five

Which is worse for Tasmanian checkout assistants - having to stand up throughout their shift or being called 'checkout chicks'?

years, it is good to get some background information about the 'other companies' in the group. Seeing Shaw's, and also being a former employee of Homebase, I again thank you for the article and look forward with great interest to the rest of the series.

ALL PART OF THE SERVICE

Ken McFadzean, security advisor, distribution security.

Recently, our son Thomas was christened, together with two other children from the families of relatives, at a local church in Yorkshire.

When we all gathered about the font, our eyes were drawn to a large bottle of spring water nearby. The christening service was underway when one boy in the congregation asked rather loudly, 'Mum, do they do holy water in Sainsbury's?'

CHRISTMAS IS NOT WHAT IT USED TO BE

Mark Monger, dry goods deputy, Winchmore Hill

While I am sure that every member of staff and management appreciate the Christmas gift from the chairman and directors, I wonder if it would be possible to include the gift in the pre-Christmas pay cycle rather than on Christmas eve, thus enabling staff to spend their Christmas gift before the event! Furthermore, due to the management's long standing gift of £200 (maximum), that has not changed for over a decade, are we to assume that the management of ten years ago deserved a far better Christmas gift than the management of today? Bearing in mind that the company's profit performance over the past decade has shown an enormous and consistent year-on-year growth, we must all surely assume that, on past



HORSE POWERED FLEET

Maurice Janaway, maintenance electrician, Basingstoke depot
During my recent holiday with my wife Christine and daughter Zoë to Fuengirola, Costa Del Sol,

I think we may have spotted one of the new fleet of JS environmentally friendly vehicles on test. The letters JS are on both steps, the rear and both sides of the carriage.



SPOTTED IN CYPRUS

Majella McColgan, customer service section manager, Keighley

While getting away from it all in the resort of Paphos on the island of Cyprus, imagine my surprise when I saw the Paphos branch of Homebase, this must be one of the new stores!

evidence, the company will be phasing out our little gift.

Sally Watson, senior manager remuneration and benefits, replies:

The Christmas gift is a discretionary benefit given to acknowledge the increased workload at this time of year. The gift has always been made in the December salary payment nearest to Christmas in order to ensure that it is paid to those who have worked throughout the busy Christmas period. Most employees received the gift during week ending December 19. For salaried employees it was a week later, and possibly rather too close to Christmas. It will be in early December this year.

The payment of the Christmas gift and its level is reviewed in the context of the whole remuneration package. This, for example, now includes staff discount which was not present ten years ago, and profit sharing entitlement which allows staff to share in the company's performance.

SHOULD WE PLAY THIS GAME

David Platts, retail training, Blackfriars

Obviously in this day and age with competition to Sainsbury's taking many forms, it seems logical that the company moves ever forward into new markets. I would therefore question why, after proving successful in both the video and publications markets, we have not yet moved in on the massive computer entertainment industry.

Stocking a variety of games (ie top ten best-sellers and highly rated new releases) on the four major formats (SNES, Sega, PC and Amiga) would provide an immediate long-term market. I would see the majority of sales coming from older customers who at present feel uncomfortable shopping in surroundings full of so called 'computer whizz kids'. I can only foresee a couple of apprehensions that could exist with regard to the stocking of computer software:

i) Security - This would be negated by the same means

as current video sales ie. empty display cases and/or some form of electronic tagging.

ii) Social responsibility - The arguments regarding addictiveness and corruption through software violence will continue for many years, but many software releases are now leaning towards being educational or are aiming to help develop a strong sense of logic.

At present the profit margin on software is phenomenal and by reducing this slightly, we could provide the customers with quality products at cheaper prices. After all, is this not the main aim of Sainsbury's?

Stephen Sunnucks, departmental director for non foods ii and iii, replies:

Savacentre has sold computer games for a number of years. Sales this year have been disappointing and it would seem that the market is in decline. Certainly Dixons in their recent results cited computer games as a reason for their decline.

HIGH AND DRY

Wendy Southcombe, stock replenisher, Christchurch

This photograph was taken recently in the beautiful Annapurna region of the Himalayas. My Sainsbury's bag on this trekking holiday came in useful as a rucksack liner.



WITH THANKS

Derek Lobb, former manager of Warwick
D L Lobb 1956 - 1993

No, it's not for my headstone, just my career with JS. This is a short note to you all for a wonderful send-off, or should I say send-offs, that you gave me and my wife.

As you can imagine, after all this time I have some very fond memories, too many to put into print. Some hilarious, others not so good - er, we won't go into those. Gerrards Cross (now closed), St Albans (now closed) then the old Dunstable (now closed), you can see I made an impression as I carved out my career.

Seriously, I would like to thank all those who have helped me.

Do I miss it? The answer has got to be yes. I miss the customers, the staff, and of course the day to day problems, not to mention the camaraderie. As they say, look to the future - more time to use my 53 year old Rover and the BMW motorbike. Keep the PF (pension fund) on target. My thanks to you all.



LETTERS ARE WELCOMED AND SHOULD BE SENT THROUGH THE INTERNAL POST TO THE EDITOR, JS JOURNAL, 10TH FLOOR, DRURY HOUSE, OR BY ROYAL MAIL TO THE ADDRESS ON PAGE TWO.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 31)

Homebase are doing it for themselves

At a recent conference, chairman David Sainsbury described Homebase as the Jewel in the Crown of the Group. In the last of the Journal specials on subsidiaries, we evaluate our house and garden business.

GROWING THE BUSINESS



Dino Adriano
Chairman and
managing director

'We have a very upbeat story to tell at Homebase,' says chairman Dino Adriano. 'The big news is that we are growing the business faster by doubling the opening programme, from seven new stores this year to 14 in 1995/96. Within ten years, we will have 150-200 stores.'

'Our sales and operating profit have grown consistently in a recession-hit market. Our market share growth has also been good. Although we have far fewer stores than the main players, we're ranked four in Britain and number one in London.'

'The principal factors that have contributed to our success have been putting the customer first, a strong marketing package, Spend & Save, the growth of central distribution, a strong gardening offer and a growing own label presence. All this is bound together by highly committed people in our business led by a strong and innovative management team.'

Finance director Steve Bradbury elaborates: 'We are in our 13th trading year and so far it is the best ever by a long way. In our first two years we suffered small losses, followed by two years of tiny profits, but for the last eight years there has been a steady increase in operating

profit margin. From having the lowest operating margin of the DIY superstore operators just five years ago, we hope this year to overtake the market leader B&Q and I think we'll end up with the highest.'



Ross McLaren
deputy managing director

Ross has 26 years' experience spent in all parts of the Group. His first year at Homebase, he says, has been one of the best. 'Homebase takes me back to the early days in JS when it was still a small company. We have short lines of communication and a refreshing lack of bureaucracy. The product range is diverse and exciting with the buyers holding responsibility for large numbers of lines and a fragmented supply base.'

'Here we pride ourselves on being lean and mean! There is a great deal of confidence and we work very much as a team with few departmental barriers.'



Steve Bradbury
finance director

'It is still possible to put your hands around this business, which is run very much by teamwork. I'm pretty close to saying I would come in even if they didn't pay me. I joined 12 years ago when there were just two stores. As we grow, we must seek to maintain the virtues of a small company.'



Bill Williams
retail director

'I joined Homebase after 26 years at JS, initially with reservations, but I now feel it's the best move I could possibly have made. There are only two small teams of retailers at head office: planning/merchandising and central administration. Then five regional managers and the 76 stores.'

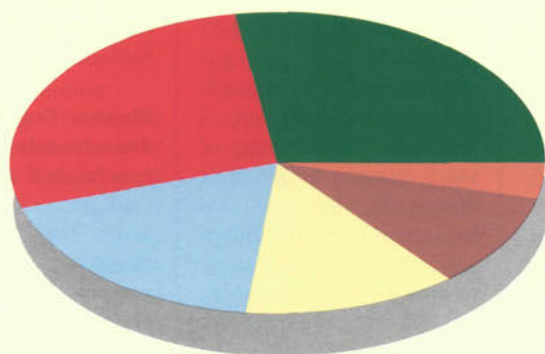
'Because Homebase has had hard times, and because we have

three much bigger rivals in B&Q, Texas and Do-It-All, we fight harder for trade, and the commitment and hard work of our store management and staff is tremendous.'

'With fewer tiers of management than JS, and fewer rules and procedures, we rely a lot on the common sense (and business sense) of our store managers.'

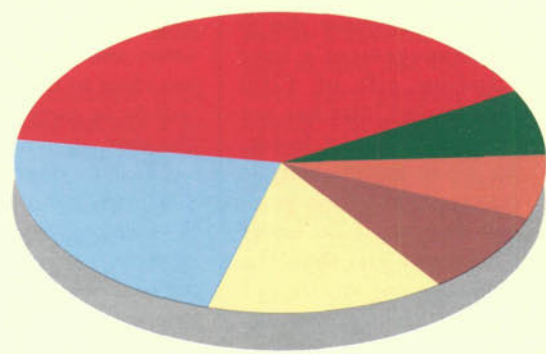
'With our enhanced opening programme we will be looking to JS for some deputies and store managers to transfer to Homebase soon.'

**DIY SUPERSTORES
MARKET SHARES IN GREATER LONDON**



- HOMEBASE : 28%
- B&Q : 27%
- TEXAS : 19%
- DO IT ALL : 11%
- WICKES : 11%
- GREAT MILLS : 4%

**DIY SUPERSTORES
NATIONAL MARKET SHARES**



- B&Q : 38%
- TEXAS : 24%
- DO IT ALL : 14%
- HOMEBASE : 9%
- WICKES : 8%
- GREAT MILLS : 7%

WHAT DID YOU DO IN THE DISCOUNT WAR?

Homebase trade relies on people enhancing and maintaining their homes, and the former is often done before or after moving house. As recession pulverised the property market in this country, the DIY businesses found themselves battling for their share of a shrunken market.

Finance director Steve Bradbury tells how recession led to a discount war among the big operators while Homebase kept its head and improved its market share:

'The recession happened almost overnight in May 1989 and the bottom dropped out of the housing market. House moves halved almost immediately and we lost ten per cent of our sales. In the following year, we lost another six per cent. But we acted much more quickly than our competitors on cutting costs. We were always lean but we were amazed at what we could save when we had to. After all, we were battling for survival; Sainsbury's could have pulled out of Homebase.'

One of the early cost-cutting exercises involved reducing store management. Homebase was pleased at this time to have its parent company because a number of managers were able to transfer to JS on a temporary basis.

A recent development has been the rationalisation of the in-store personnel function, says company personnel manager Joe Marsh: 'We carried out a full review of the personnel activity and found that a personnel manager in each store was unnecessary. We now provide a service on a "cluster" basis, with the personnel manager responsible for two or three stores. This has resulted in a broader and more challenging job for those appointed to the new positions and a reduction in number from 75 to 31. We were successful in redeploying most of the remaining

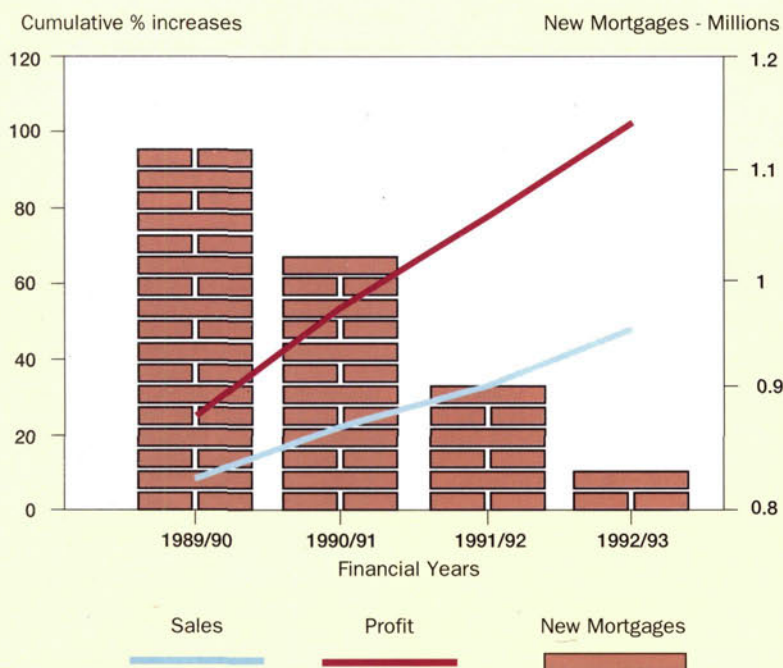
staff, some into line management in Homebase and others to JS, but inevitably there were some redundancies.

Steve Bradbury: 'Nearly two years into the recession we launched the Spend & Save loyalty card in its present form and this stemmed further loss of sales. Then, in the autumn of '91, Texas started a discount war. All our competitors joined in but we stayed out of it. In JS style we concentrated on offering long term value for money. In the end our competitors just hurt themselves, gave a poor service to customers, and confused people with their pricing policy. As the discounts ended, we launched our own trading initiative. We had always had Base Price products offering long term low prices on those products most frequently purchased; we increased their number, sharpened prices and introduced "Best Buys" to add excitement. We increased and improved our press advertising and strengthened our price message. We were also able to communicate directly with our customers through Spend & Save.

'This year, to date, we have volume increases of ten per cent in like-for-like stores. The property market has not yet expanded, it has just bottomed out, so this increase has come from grabbing a larger market share. And we intend to continue this. If the market grows by two per cent next year we want to increase our sales volume by four per cent.'



SALES AND PROFITS DURING THE RECESSION



BUILDING MORE STORES

Property and development manager Chris Fenner is delighted the Sainsbury's board has given Homebase the go ahead to double its opening programme. But how will he find all those extra sites? 'With difficulty,' he tells us. 'Unfortunately there is no magic formula. You have to be a bit of a blood hound!'

'Basically, we will look at any site in a prominent location which has good access, three acres and 60,000 houses within 10-15 minutes travelling time. Inevitably, we will concentrate more on the Midlands and the North than we have in the past but we will not ignore opportunities in the South East which has been so successful for the business in the past. We have no plans to move into Scotland yet.' Will every JS soon have a corresponding Homebase store? 'No. Merely building alongside a JS does not guarantee success for Homebase, although we have dual sites which work very well. Sites shared with JS, and on retail parks for that matter, can be perfectly good places for us to trade, providing they possess the specific qualities we need to serve DIY customers.'

'Forecasting sales in the DIY market is very difficult because of the lack of reliable data and our limited experience of some parts of the country.' But Homebase thinks it has found the solution at Leeds University: 'They have been developing a computerised sales forecasting model for us which deals with far more factors than Homebase has previously been able to. The accuracy of the model has been tested and proven in a regional pilot and should be fully adopted by Homebase by the summer.'

'These more accurate sales forecasts will not only aid new investment decisions but will also help decide which of the three new store models is appropriate for new sites. These new models all allow merchandising to be changed around more easily as the business evolves. There is a rectangular sales area with the staff and warehouse facilities "bolted on". More space will be given to the garden centres to allow canopies to be introduced at all the new stores. Canopies have already been introduced at some stores and these are proving very useful for promoting the sales of nursery stock and for use in poor weather. As one garden centre manager said: 'It's a great boon being able to move stock under the canopy to sell it when people don't want to venture outside.'

What will the stores of the future look like from the outside? Chris: 'Overall, we have learned a lot from our Belgian partners GIB, in particular about alternative building methods. As a result of one recent joint study with GIB, stores on retail parks and in commercial settings will in future be more basic in appearance but without diminishing the in-store facilities and ambience associated with our business. In more sensitive locations, we will continue to build our brick and tile stores.'



Laura Ashley was incorporated as a concession from the first store at Purley Way, Croydon.

Homebase is a subsidiary of Sainsbury's and was incorporated in 1979 with Sainsbury's holding a 75 per cent controlling interest and the Belgian company, GB-Inno-BM (GIB), holding the remaining 25 per cent.

GIB is the result of a merger, in 1974, of Grand Bazaar-Innovation and Bon Marche.

There are currently 76 Homebase house and garden centres. The company has 4,500 employees.

The horticultural distribution operation is based at Swindon. The non-horticultural distribution centre is at Brackmills, Northampton. Head office is in Wallington, Surrey.



THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOMEBASE

One thing we discovered about Homebase is that it knows its place - its place in the market that is.

Homebase is the upmarket house and garden centre. Andrew Molle, head of marketing, explains that the company achieved its positioning very quickly: 'From the first store at Purley Way, Croydon, Laura Ashley was incorporated as a concession. This very well known brand was perfectly positioned in the market, and its association with Homebase helped to establish our niche position. The original slogan "There's no place like Homebase" showed that Homebase's objective was to be different from the competition. Today we stand alone in the DIY market place in the mid to top end of the market. And thank goodness for that because there are plenty of problems in the middle market ground.'

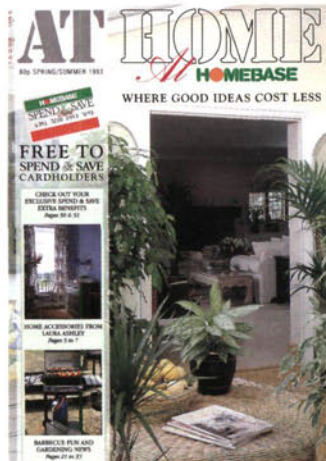
Does upmarket mean pricy? 'No, but Homebase has been perceived as expensive in the same way that traditionally customers have perceived JS to be expensive. But we monitor the prices of our competitors, ensuring we remain competitive and use weekly press advertising, concentrating on powerful special offers marketed as Best Buys. We can now measure an improvement in price perception. As our current slogan says, "Good ideas cost less at Homebase".

'A Spend & Save loyalty scheme was introduced in 1987. It was stamp based and ran for 12 weeks at a time. Then in March 1991 we switched to a magnetic strip loyalty card. This was the first offered by any retailer in the UK. There are now more than 1½ million cardholders and we can write to them about special promotions. We are currently working out extra privileges for our Spend & Save cardholders and our At Home at Homebase readers.'

At Home at Homebase is the company's new magazine-cum-catalogue. There have been two issues so far and the plan is to produce them quarterly. Says Andrew, 'The magazine enforces the special relationship between ourselves and our customers and it helps to build our brand image.'

Also taking care of special relationships is the customer relations department. Andrew: 'Our suppliers leave us in no doubt that Homebase pays far more attention to customer relations than our competitors. We believe that having invested so much in persuading someone to be our customer, it is most important to retain them.'

Asked what is the marketing department's greatest challenge, Andrew replies: 'Maintaining the leading brand image we have historically enjoyed. We can use all forms of communication including such things as our in-store advertising to keep several steps ahead of the competition. We must not let the others catch up.'



The new magazine for customers has a cover price of 80 pence but is free to Spend & Save cardholders.



Weekly press advertising concentrates on special offers.



Customers sign up to the Spend & Save scheme.



Upton store manager Chris Alvin.

'WE HAVE ALL GROWN UP TOGETHER'

Upton's store manager Chris Alvin has seen Homebase develop from a company with a handful of stores 'each with their individual operation' to a 'much more structured organisation'.

'When I joined in 1983 as a departmental manager in training at Nottingham, there was a strange head office above Croydon store as well as a small two storey building in Thornton Heath. I used to go there for training.

'There were only four buyers and they would often phone us to ask what we thought should be

stocked and for our opinion on new products.'

'Even today, with 76 stores, we have no "ivory tower" view of head office. It may be a fair distance away but if I ever have a problem, I just pick up the phone. We're still relatively small, and we have all grown up together.'

'The biggest change has come with computerisation and central distribution. Originally, the operation was manual. A big box full of order forms for every supplier came weekly from head office.

'All deliveries were direct. Now

we take delivery from our depots of products from around 400 different suppliers every week, so central distribution makes an incredible difference.'

Chris's father served 40 years with JS and Chris sees Sainsbury's philosophy as the heart of Homebase. 'All the principles of merchandising, buying and management are the same but Homebase has a unique style. I think we have more freedom to use display techniques, particularly with such things as Christmas decorations. We use guidelines

given on videos made in-house at head office. The rest is up to us.'

We asked Chris what is his favourite part of the job: 'Talking to customers. We're really lucky at Upton because we have extremely nice customers - including most of Liverpool Football Club!'

IT'S ALL PART OF THE SERVICE

Homebase stores stock a minimum of 20,000 products and a further 4,000 products are available to order. The range includes decorating supplies, tools, hardware, bathroom and plumbing, electrical and lighting, building and timber, as well as an extensive range of houseplants, nursery stock and gardening equipment.



OWN BRAND

The company was launched with a handful of own brand products, including some paint, nails, screws and a plant sprayer. Now there are 2,500 lines, accounting for 25 per cent of the total range.

Says own brand development manager Barbara Jennings, 'We work differently from the rest of the Group in that we have one department devoted to developing own brand products, which we then hand over to the buyers after launch. But we have exactly

the same cultural beliefs. Our own brand products must be unsurpassed in terms of quality and value for money.'

PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE

'Most customers expect our staff to know something about the products we sell,' says Homebase personnel manager Joe Marsh. A new training scheme for garden centre staff has been introduced. In addition, there are product knowledge workbooks which staff work through systematically, ticking off sections on checklists within the store. Staff are also kept informed about developments in the service offered by their stores through the Retail Review video, made entirely in-house by the training department and introduced by retail director Bill Williams.

Teamwork - Staff from Cheltenham helped out at the opening of St Albans last month.



BRIGHT FUTURE FOR LIGHTING

The lighting department is a very bright star in the Homebase firmament.

Deputy head of decorative buying Nick Bell says, 'It has been a phenomenal success and we have barely been able to keep pace since we began to roll out a range of fabric shades and table lamps in mid 1992. We have seen sales increases of 30-40 per cent.'

'Now we are working on new layouts for a 'shop within a shop' concept. In the future, our lighting departments will encompass a wider range of all lighting sectors and include a canopy for pendant lights. Own brand lighting is planned to be introduced in the late spring.'



Inside Brackmills depot.

- The combined sales of JS, Homebase and Savacentre make Sainsbury's the largest retailer of houseplants in the UK

- Homebase is the largest retailer of Christmas trees in the UK

EVERYTHING IN THE GARDEN IS LOVELY

'We are the only DIY chain to have a garden centre in every store and this is the single most important thing which makes us different,' says head of horticultural and seasonal departments Simon Wharton.

'Their success is due to Homebase's investment in people with an understanding and knowledge of the gardening business. All our buyers and merchandisers of living plants are trained horticulturists, as are our five regional garden centre specialists, and most of our garden centre management.

'When we found there were just not enough skilled management candidates for our expanding business, our training department worked with Hadlow College, a horticultural college, to develop a new block release scheme to train potential managers with the horticultural knowledge needed to run a garden centre department. To date, 33 management trainees are on this training scheme, which includes the completion of an NVQ Level Four in management for our existing staff.'

Austin Myers, Upton's garden centre manager, gained a City and Guilds in horticulture ten years ago. But he has a new certificate of which he is very proud - an achievement award for stock results and sales increases in the store's first year: 'I get a great feeling from maximising sales

to the full by using displays and seeing them blitzed after a busy weekend. And we are never more pleased than when a customer leaves happy with a purchase we have helped them with.'

'I used to see myself as a horticulturist first, retailing came second. Now I see myself as a retailer first and foremost.

'The good thing about Homebase is that there is plenty of room for innovation. I'm on a long leash but I have great support from above and below. There would have been no achievement award otherwise.'

Within the garden centre, Simon Wharton explains that Homebase's range is unique: 'Supermarkets have taken much of the cut flower and smaller houseplant market away from the garden centres which are concentrating on such things as nursery stock. No-one else carries such a breadth of houseplants - 300 at any one time - from tiny bottle garden plants to a Kentia Palm which retails for as much as £80.'

Swindon depot is another unique feature at Homebase and one which provides a distinct advantage over the competition. Simon: 'Our horticultural distribution operation based at Swindon allows us to sell fresher, better and cheaper products. Unlike our competitors, we can deal direct with specialist nurseries as well as the European market (50 per cent of houseplants in the UK are imported). Our competitors have to deal with middlemen all the time.'

The Swindon depot has 45,000 sq ft of covered warehouse and, unlike the Sainsbury's fresh food chain, where the chill factor is all, the temperature has to be kept at a cosy 17°C. Outside is a further 35,000 sq ft of yard space which in the spring is a riot of colour with bedding plants, hanging baskets and garden plants.

Homebase is planning to introduce similar computer systems to those used at JS and Savacentre to ensure that hydrangeas at Homebase are as fresh as a joint of beef at JS.

But as short as their stay at Swindon is, care of plants is still a vital part of the operation. Staff are skilled in maintaining the stock in peak condition.



Upton's garden centre manager Austin Myers (front) with skilled general assistants Tony Evans and Chrissie Shepherd.



In Swindon depot, stock is cared for at a constant temperature of 17°C

BRACKMILLS CAN HANDLE IT

With almost everything for the garden centre being supplied from Swindon, the rest of the store is supplied either by the company's depot at Brackmills, Northampton, or by direct deliveries in the case of items such as garden sheds.

When the depot's predecessor at Westgate, Northampton, opened in February 1987, Homebase became the first DIY retailer to have a centralised means of distribution. In October 1992, the operation moved just up the road to Brackmills and increased its commodity capacity by one third. At the time of the opening, distribution manager Gordon Lambert said: 'Buyers will be able to extend the range of goods available from Brackmills to the stores and have greater control over availability of goods. Systems enhancements are in place and changes in documen-

tation and delivery units are planned that will make checking in at stores much less arduous.'

Although Homebase has learned a great deal from JS, and indeed Gordon himself had 20 years' experience of JS distribution, the house and garden business poses some very individual problems. Gordon: 'Products on the whole move far more slowly; we have developed a unique facility to handle the slowest moving lines, and have devised separate storage and handling techniques for products that range in size and shape from copper pipe and deckchairs to screwdrivers and nails.

'Being centralised, our distribution enables us to support our special promotion days which have created a lot of interest. We can pre-place stock in stores, recover quickly from a sudden rise in sales and be ready to wind up again when required.'



Disabled we are, incapable we're not

- a follow up

Four years ago' the *JS Journal* met four Sainsbury's staff with disabilities .

This month a new information pack on employing people with disabilities is being distributed by the personnel policy planning unit. The *Journal* took this opportunity to catch up with the original four interviewees from the October 1990 *Journal*.



Philip Marshall of South Harrow has Down's Syndrome and was living with his family in 1990. 'Now he has much more confidence and he is looking after himself in a hostel,' says his former BPM Doreen Collins, who now works at Uxbridge. 'You would not believe the transformation,' Doreen says, 'Things would be much tougher for him without this job and he would have developed a lot less.'

And Philip clearly revels in the responsibility, 'I like working here - I make my own decisions. I don't like it when it is quiet and there's not much to do: it's better when it's busy.' Current South Harrow BPM, Philip Cawthorne, adds 'We're very proud of Philip's contribution, and the customers love to see his happy face.'

Karen Grant, a wheelchair user at Taunton branch, was visited by the *Journal* in 1990 and now she is Karen Dale. She was married a few months after our visit after having moved into her own house. She says, 'It has been much better for me working in an able-bodied environment. It means I get out and do things for myself more. Over the last four years, I have been trained on the checkouts just like anybody else - it's really been no different. My disability doesn't worry me: it's other people's problem.'

Michael Stephenson of Lancaster JS has a disability which is not as restrictive as Karen's, but he still found some people that did not understand what it meant to have limited use of one's right arm. 'It is difficult for some able-bodied people to understand what it is like to be disabled. But since your last article I found some people have become more tolerant. I can't always do things at the same speed as everyone else but I'll always give it a try.' And Michael has clearly proven himself. Formerly part-time trolley retrieval, he now works a full time contract and additionally packs and replenishes when required.



Steven Gray says he has benefited by having very supportive colleagues and OASIS, Sainsbury's electronic messaging system. He has been profoundly deaf since birth and thus has difficulty with his speech. Four years ago, he was just finding his feet as training and admin assistant at Homebase head office. 'I have lots more jobs,' he tells us. 'In 1990 I was not always that busy but now my managers are always giving me new jobs. Now I prepare training aids for new stores and book hotel accommodation.' Colleagues have gone to the effort of learning to sign-spell and one, Paul Lovel, has just received a certificate in sign language. 'I feel much more confident meeting people and much happier too, for having this job,' Steven concludes.

SAINSBURY'S COMMITMENTS

This month sees the relaunch of a revised Code of Good Practice for the employment of disabled people as part of the information pack aimed at line and personnel managers.

Two years ago, Sainsbury's joined the Employers' Forum on Disability. The EFD advises on best policies for businesses, works with disabled groups and lobbies government policy makers.

We are a member of the National Advisory Council for the Employment of Disabled People.

The Group's equal opportunities policy enshrines the equal employment rights of disabled people and the able-bodied.



The *Journal* also spoke to two new employees with disabilities.



Mike Wilson had been working on the customer service desk at the new Walton Homebase for 11 weeks when we spoke to him. He has used a false arm attached at his right elbow for the last 14 years. 'My colleagues asked about my arm at first and then that was it. I don't get treated any differently most of the time, though some people offer me help lifting because I'm "disabled", but I usually don't need it.' Mike's disability is evident but he often finds that customers just don't notice because the store is usually so busy. 'I forget about my arm mainly because it doesn't really affect the way I do my job' he says.

Steven Bolt told the *Journal* 'Everyone thought I couldn't hear when I started.' He has been a checkout assistant at London Colney Savacentre for five months and he has needed a hearing aid in each ear since he was three. He is now 24. 'My colleagues would shout at me at first but I'd say to them "I don't want to be made deafer!". People don't generally treat me any differently because they don't notice my hearing aids. Working here gives me a chance to prove to everyone else and myself that a deaf person can 'do the job like anyone else.'

And the message? Disability is only a disadvantage as the able-bodied perceive it. The disabled person has usually accepted their disability and each of our interviewees want to be treated as much as possible like an able-bodied person. All able-bodied people can make the lives of those with disabilities easier with this simple shift in attitude - try it today.

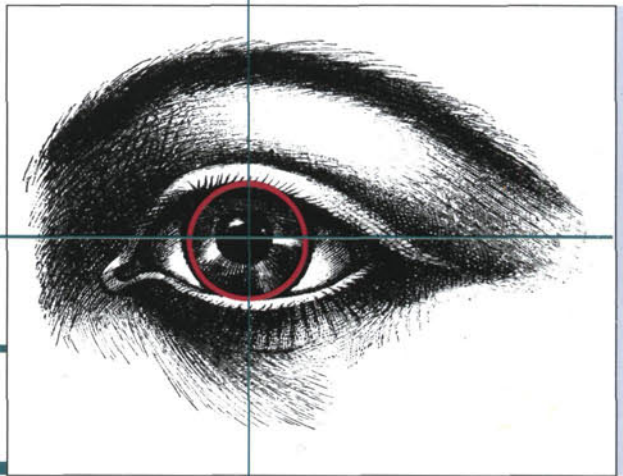
HOW THE ABLE-BODIED CAN HELP

By understanding the feelings of the disabled, you can do a lot to help them compete on equal terms. Here are a few pointers:

- Avoid the word 'handicapped': it sounds too much like 'cap in hand'.
- A wheelchair represents freedom to its owner so avoid phrases like 'wheelchair-bound' and rather say 'wheelchair user'.
- When talking to a wheelchair user, try to crouch to be on a level with them - it is not comfortable looking up all the time.
- Don't use gestures more appropriate for children like patting on the head.
- Offer assistance to a disabled person if you wish, but wait until your offer is accepted.
- Not all disabilities are visible - deafness and learning difficulties may not be apparent.
- Don't be embarrassed by using common expressions that relate to a person's disability, such as 'see you later' or 'I'll be running along now'.
- Avoid the phrase 'deaf and dumb' - 'deaf/hard of hearing without speech' is better.
- Avoid the term 'mentally retarded'. 'People with learning difficulties' is preferable.

PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

WINNING SHOTS



In December's *JS Journal* we published the winners of the *JS Journal* Photographic Competition 1993. Their talent was spotted by competition judge Eve George, editor of *Hello!* Magazine.

We did not have sufficient space to include Eve's runners up and commended photos but, as promised, we are pleased to present them now.



RUNNER UP HA HA!...

**Michael Setek, cashier,
Bybrook, Ashford**

'This is spontaneously funny. You can see the groom laughing through the veil. The photographer just caught the moment.'



RUNNER UP AAH!...

Huw Griffiths, product manager, Blackfriars

'This is very professional. It's nice that the little girl isn't looking straight at the camera; she's natural even though it is posed. Very cute.'



RUNNER UP OOH!...

**Stephen Johnston, general
assistant, Washington Savacentre**

'Quite a spectacular image. You can imagine being there, just as the sun breaks through.'



**HIGHLY COMMENDED
OOH!...**

Matthew Wharf, Dagenham



**HIGHLY COMMENDED
HA HA!...**

Sharon Gibson, Norwich House, Streatham



**HIGHLY
COMMENDED
AAH!...**

Stella Smooth, Hitchin

Janet is **BOSTON** bound ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



Janet Weston is in jubilant mood after being told she has won our trip for two to Boston.

The *JS Journal* likes to be the bearer of good news so we were delighted to call **Janet Weston** food safety officer at **Gloucester** with the news that she had won our Boston holiday competition.

Janet's name was on the entry form picked out from over a thousand correct entries by marketing director, Robin Whitbread.

She will be flying off to Boston in June to spend a week exploring the famous city, and she has chosen her mum to accompany her.

When the *Journal* told Janet she had won a holiday of a lifetime she was amazed. 'I kept

trying to get my breath when I was told about it. I thought it was Beadle's About to start with.' 'It's the second time I've won something from the *JS Journal*. A few years ago I entered a competition where you had to send in jokes for Christmas crackers. Mind you, then I only won a box of crackers.'

Janet's winning answers were:

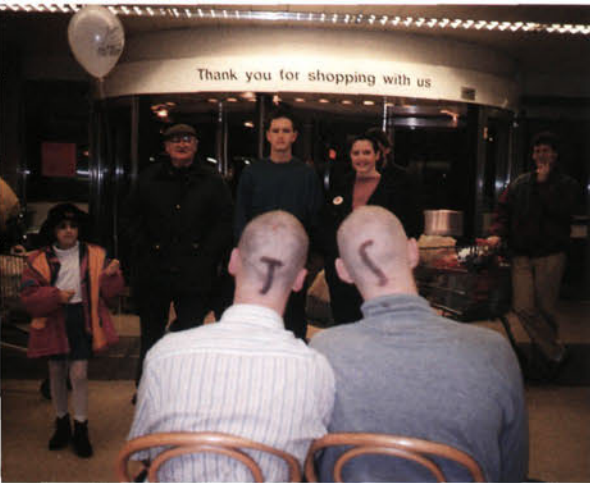
- There are 45 Shaw's supermarkets in Massachusetts.
- Phil Francis is president and chief executive officer of Shaw's.
- An example of a product sourced in New England and sold in JS and Savacentre stores is lobster.



Robin Whitbread, with secretary Kay Altwegg, picks Janet's entry.

We will announce the winner of our Hong Kong competition in next month's *Journal*.





Lee Coburn (left) and Grant Woodfield with their own brand haircuts.

A proliferation of Pudsey's at Christchurch.



Pudsey, Pudsey and Pudsey were at Christchurch collecting for Children in Need. Jean Codling, Claire Hancock and Heidi Hancock collected £2,022.

▲ It was a close shave for two staff at Courthouse Green who shaved their heads for Children in Need.

Provisions assistant Grant Woodfield and butcher Lee Coburn showed their loyalty to the company by leaving only a J and S on their heads.

A car wash and a 12 hour cycle on an exercise bike left the rest of the staff feeling rather worse for wear, but Children in Need £2,766 better off.

Scott with the Pudsey crew from Rugby.



◀ A star from the West End musical Starlight Express pulled in at Rugby to stoke up funds for Children in Need.

Scott Pattison, who plays Greaseball in the hit musical about trains, picked the winning tickets for the trolley dash. Raffles, race nights and teddy bear picnics helped increase the total raised to £4,500.

Celebrities join staff to raise funds

Roving reporters from across the country have been sending in those Children in Need stories. Here are just a few more of the countless activities that went on to raise money.



Sally Gunnell with some of the staff of Kempshott.

▲ Staff at Kempshott overcame every hurdle in their way to raise money for Children In Need. And they had expert tuition at hand as Sally Gunnell joined them in their fundraising efforts.

A collection in the lobby and the raffle of a Pudsey Bear cake raised £2,138.

Pudsey Bear at Wigston almost had kittens when he came face to face with his fundraising colleague for the day.

After some effort he managed to tame the beast, and together with other staff who really went to town on dressing up for the day, they collected £1,375.

Hazel Groves, checkout/replenishment, lashes out at the photographer, while Pudsey (alias Mo Langton, food and store safety officer) keeps her under control.



* Customers at Wolverhampton were greeted by the sound of a fair organ as they parked their cars. Inside the store things were a little less conservative, with Mr Blobby and a number of clowns running riot. Their efforts raised £1,344.

* Julie Donald from Loughborough, known as the champion chatterbox of the branch, had a really tough task for Children in Need. She completed a sponsored silence. Kath Tyers was Pudsey Bear, and between them they raised over £1,000.

* Bugs Bunny and The St Trinian girls were on the loose at Coldharbour Lane. They collected £920.

* Darnley had trouble on their hands as Dennis the Menace ran amuck in the customer service area. The store raised £1,971.

* Staff at Thorne Road raised a record breaking £1,400 - the highest on their district. Not bad for their first charity event.

* Customers at Preston were asked to guess the weight of a cake, made by confectioner, Steven Manns. This and other activities raised £1,500. The cake was later donated to a local hospital.

* The management team of Cannock completed a one hour sponsored 'step', under the watchful eye of Shirley Haines, section manager, petrol. In total they raised £1,750.

* Hadleigh Road collected over £2,100, and great fun was had by all according to the BPM.

* Staff at Alton took a real 'Pause for Pudsey' when they had a lie-in. A bed was made up in the foyer, and £1,300 was raised. Everyone enjoyed the rest.

* Stevenage raised £1,650 as employees tried to recapture their youth, dressed in school uniforms to collect in the foyer.

* Staff at Tunbridge Wells were dressed as pirates as the store manager ran the show, dressed as Captain Hook. They raised over £3,930.

* Customers at Whitstable had the chance to roll a dice to win a car. This along with other fundraising activities raised over £1,400.

Some of these events are organised by the SSA, and bookings will be made directly with them. Others will be organised by outside companies, in which case all bookings by staff will be made directly with the organisation concerned. Please contact the central SSA office, employee services department on ext. 7227 if you are in any doubt as to who to book with.



IS THIS UP YOUR STREET?

GRANADA STUDIOS TOUR Tuesday April 5

COST
£15.95
PER PERSON

This includes return travel by executive coach, departing from district manager's office/store (subject to numbers) and entrance into the theme park.

Please note, the further away from Manchester you are, the earlier the start and the later the finish.

To book, contact The International Travel Club on 0484 450111.

INDIVIDUAL BOOKINGS TAKEN

Win a luxury camping holiday

Canvas Holidays offer self-drive camping holidays in fully equipped tents and mobile homes all over Europe, ensuring 'camping at its most civilised'.

They have many special offers for those who can take advantage of an early holiday or simply want a break for a long weekend.

Canvas Holidays are offering SSA members (including veterans) the chance to win a luxury, self-drive camping holiday for two adults and up to four children (under 14). The prize includes two weeks' accommodation in a luxury ready-erected tent at any one of their 89 European campsites, plus a selected ferry crossing and overnight stops, up to a maximum value of £500.

For other information contact Canvas Holidays on **0383 621000**, or for your free copy of their brochure phone **0800 592895**, and quote SSA.



OPERATIC WINNER

The winner of the opera weekend competition was **Rita Knocker** from **Bowthorpe**.

Congratulations Rita, we hope you enjoyed your New Year's Eve treat!

ENTRY FORM

1. What is the telephone number for Canvas Holidays freephone brochure line?
2. Can you identify the campsite in the picture above - please quote the campsite name and page number from their 1994 main brochure.
3. Name the campsite voted overall favourite by Canvas holidaymakers in 1993 (answer is in 1994 brochure).

The closing date is February 28, 1994. The winner will be the first correct entry pulled from the hat.
Send your entries to Canvas Holidays Ltd, 12 Abbey Park Place, Dunfermline, Fife KY12 7PD.

FULL NAME

ADDRESS

TEL NO

SSA

SAINSBURY'S

STAFF ASSOCIATION

Tel: 071 921 7227



HIGHLAND FLINGS

£130 per person

Head for the Highlands with this special Scottish skiing offer. Accommodation is in a first class hotel and the price includes:

- Three nights accommodation
- Three full English breakfasts
- Two nights dinner
- Two days skiing - including equipment hire and instruction

Choose any weekend until March 25, 1994.

To book, or for further information, contact Tourplan Scotland Ltd on 0540 673751.

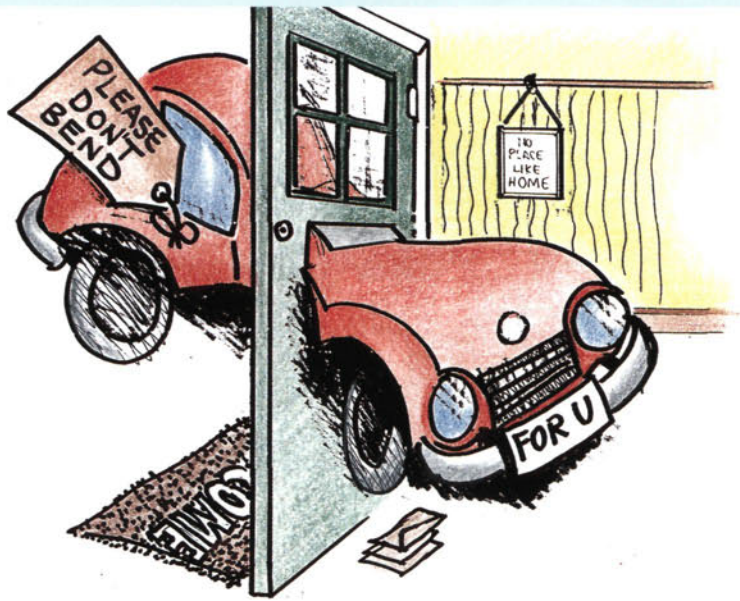
If skiing is not your forte why not try some of the other unusual breaks offered by Tourplan including:

- Highland Delights
- See Scotland at Work
- The Scottish Malt Whisky Trail
- Toffs & Tinks
- Taste & Tipple
- Tartan & Tweed
- Fur, Feathers & Flowers

Five day or long weekend breaks can be arranged for groups or individuals.

CHECK THIS OUT

Car came with Liz's Christmas cards



Liz Brooks, a produce assistant at **Bridgemoor** found herself believing in Father Christmas when she opened her mail and found she'd won a new car.

Liz entered the prize draw organised by Fords at the Brunel Centre in Swindon and forgot all about it until she received the letter in December.

She phoned her husband to say it must be a joke, but Ford staff later confirmed that Liz had won a brand new Ford Mondeo.

Liz said: 'I've entered a few competitions before but the only thing I've ever won was a pen.'



Betty with her sparkling Christmas present.

Diamond delight

Christmas certainly sparked for **Betty Porter**, a checkout assistant at **Bath**.

Betty won a beautiful diamond ring in a competition run in the local newspaper. She answered a set of multiple choice questions and was picked as the lucky winner.

Betty told the *JS Journal* 'I enter lots of competitions, then forget all about them. I thought someone was pulling my leg until they confirmed it in writing.'

The ring is made of a large champagne diamond, which is very rare, surrounded by white diamonds.

Bracknell's best loved bachelor is no more!



Sid and Winifred on their big day.

Bachelor boy **Sid Boswell**, who has worked at **Bracknell** for almost 12 years, met his true love in Winifred Orchardson and proved that good things come to those who wait.

Sid, aged 64, gave up his bachelor days and married Winifred on November 27.

The story of his romance was printed in the local newspaper and Sid, who is very popular with the locals, was inundated with cards and presents from customers and other shops in the precinct.



Ferry merry Christmas

Staff at **Springfield** had a swinging time over Christmas.

The children's Christmas party provided entertainment for 75 children, and a day trip to France proved most successful for staff. They made the most of the cheap prices and stocked up on the duty-free - most of which was then consumed at the Christmas disco.

Innes is so proud of his mum



Innes Gunn (right) with his mother and two brothers.

The **Gunns** were out for a visit to Buckingham Palace.

Innes Gunn, senior deputy manager of **Hornchurch**, visited Buckingham Palace on December 9 with his mother, Justice of the Peace Bunty Gunn OBE. She was presented with a CBE.

Brentwood's birthday bash

Brentwood are holding a 25th anniversary dance at the New World Inn, Brentwood on March 26. Any past members of staff would be most welcome. Tickets are available at £12.50 each from Joan Craig on 0277 226486.

Following in Ivy's slipstream



Ivy and Graham with their transport for the day.

Ivy Beaumont has worked at Kempston for almost eight years, and her last day was just like any other.

Branch manager Graham Sherwood offered to collect Ivy and drive her to work in his car but Ivy was adamant, saying she had cycled to work every day, and had every intention of doing so on her last day. So, Graham compromised. He got on his own bike and escorted Ivy to work. Ivy rode the five miles with Graham on his mountain bike following in her slipstream.

Graham later told the *JS Journal*, 'I think I'll stick to the comfort of my car in future'.



Calling all lookalikes



When we saw this photograph of Debbie Pope, checkout/replenishment at Wigston, taken on Children in Need day, we thought she looked very much like a certain member of the royal family. We began to wonder how many lookalikes we have among our 100,000 plus staff. If you or one of your colleagues is a dead ringer for someone famous drop us a line - 10th floor, Drury House - or call us on 071 921 6660.

Children get carried away with their big production



Olive, who retired in 1989, enjoyed her meeting with Santa.

Who is behind the beard

For the past 18 years, Leicester has been inviting veterans who have retired from the branch to their Christmas lunch.

On December 15, 24 veterans joined staff for a turkey and tinsel Christmas lunch. Dorothy Busby, who retired in 1975, attended and pointed out that in 1975 there were only eight veterans at the lunch.

Steve Croxon, section manager warehouse, was dressed as Father Christmas, and brought a smile to Olive Lockton's face as she sat on Santa's knee.

JS is just the ticket for Julie's trip



Andy and Julie with the vital supplies.

Kettering has given customer Julie Foster a double deal to help her voluntary working trip to India.

Julie, who is spending six weeks working at an orphanage and hospital in Southern India, collected her till receipts and took advantage of the Sainsbury's/ British Airways promotion and saved £200 on her airfare.

Deputy manager Andy Brooks also presented her with a basket of medical supplies donated by the branch.

Commented Julie, 'The conditions out there are so basic that anything and everything is useful.'

Swansea's deputy manager services, Steven Hansen, was invited to a production of Snow White and the Seven Dwarves by the store's link school, St Thomas Primary.

He was very impressed with their costumes, which gave Sainsbury's prime time advertising at rates that would make even Grumpy happy!

Rather unusual contents for Sainsbury's carrier bags.

CHECK THIS OUT

South Eastern branches put their brains to the test



David Dahms, quiz compere, presented the trophy to Colin Etheridge (left). On the far right of the picture is Mick Scholey, area quiz coordinator.

On November 30, area services manager **David Dahms** put staff from the **South Eastern** area, including area director **Colin Etheridge**, through the third degree at the area quiz final.

The final involved branches from across the **South Eastern** area. The victorious area office team comprised: Colin Etheridge, **Barbara Dowle**, **Sally Whitworth**, **Kevin O'Connor**, **Chris Sutcliffe** and **Mick Evans**. **Central Croydon** came a close second. Both these teams will go on to the company final.

France to England - on foot!

South Eastern area director **Colin Etheridge** and **West Wickham** manager **Roy Watts** are walking from France to England on Saturday February 12 through the Channel tunnel. 'Le Walk' has been organised to celebrate the completion of the tunnel. All proceeds from sponsorship will go to the Children's Society. Each walker hopes to raise at least £10,000. Anyone wishing to sponsor these 'Tunnellers' should send donations to Chris Thomas, South Eastern area office with cheques made payable to the Children's Society.

Incidentally, both Colin and Roy will be taking part in the retail management conference on February 14 in Birmingham. They stress they will not be walking there!

Sue gets a break she hadn't bargained for



Sue celebrates with Robert.

Sue Maguire left JS in March 93 to take a career break following the arrival of son Robert. But, colleagues who haven't seen Sue for a while had a chance to catch up on her news as she hit the headlines in London's *Evening Standard*.

Sue, who worked in the pensions department at Blackfriars, was the winner of £25,000 in the *Evening Standard* London Lottery.

When Sue was featured in the paper, she said 'It is an incredible surprise. I'm still shaking'.

Sue and her husband Stephen decided to enjoy the money. First on the agenda was taking all the family out for a celebration dinner. Next, little Robert was in for a few surprises, followed by a summer holiday for the family, before the rest of the money is tucked away towards a bigger house in the future.

Fanhams Hall Massacre Weekend



Fanhams Hall, Sainsbury's residential training and conference centre, is set in the darkest recesses of the Hertfordshire countryside and the house includes all the right ingredients for a successful murder - extensive grounds and woodland, a wood panelled Great Hall with minstrels gallery, drawing rooms, study, conservatory and library complete with secret door. Meet at 10.00am on Saturday for coffee and a chance to meet other guests, some of whom may not be who they appear to be! As the day progresses, the plot begins to

DATE: Saturday March 26

TIME: 10.00am Saturday - Sunday lunchtime

LOCATION: Fanhams Hall, Ware, Hertfordshire

ACCOMMODATION: One night

FOOD: Lunch, dinner, breakfast inclusive

COST: £99 (50 per cent deposit)

unravel. Nobody knows who to trust, who are the genuine guests and who is in league with the murderer or murderers?

A buffet lunch will be followed by an afternoon looking for clues and during dinner be prepared for all sorts of shocks. Beware that night as you go to bed; the villains are everywhere, plotting against you. By breakfast time you may have an idea who to trust and who to accuse. During the morning, all will be revealed and prizes given to those who successfully reveal the culprits. Sunday lunch is optional at £12.50.

**FOR MORE DETAILS OR A BOOKING FORM
CALL 0707 876391.**

Letter of thanks from Egon Ronay

Calcot Savacentre was delighted to receive a gold star and a tick from none other than Egon Ronay. This fine food establishment's watchdog was not on official duty when he visited the store. He was simply filling up at the petrol station when he discovered he had mislaid his wallet. He subsequently wrote to the store, 'I would like to thank you for the petrol station staff's courtesy in solving an embarrassing situation so quickly and smoothly.'

Carrying on the work Ken began



When staff at **Belgrave Road** learned of the death of one of their customers they decided to continue with the good work he had begun.

Ken Gill, who always shopped on a Thursday evening with his wife Betty, was raising money for diamorphine machines for St Martha's Ward of the Leicester Royal Infirmary where he spent his last weeks.

Staff made donations and the funds from the Penny Back Scheme brought the total to £364.43.

The money was presented to Sister Mandy from St Martha's Ward by David Males, senior deputy manager (now moved to Castle Boulevard), Joan Teasdale, checkout/replenishment (left), and Sue Grassby, grocery assistant were also present.

Clare's model role



Clare Topham, supermarket assistant at **York**, has become something of a role model for her peers.

Clare was nominated by her colleagues for the Model For A Day slot on Yorkshire Television's Calendar Fashion Show. She made such an impression, that six foot Clare has already been back to the studio to model knitwear and little black dresses.

She told the *JS Journal*: 'I really did enjoy the modelling and I'm going to spend a few days in London going around all the modelling agencies in the hope of getting some more work.'

Dancing team were PHAB

On November 13 the Solent Wheelers Physically Handicapped and Able Bodied (PHAB) Dancing team, of which five members are from JS, became International Champions.

The team qualified to enter the championship when they won the South of England Championship in Bodmin earlier last year, and went on to win the final with their The Charleston.

The team consists of six able bodied dancers, five of whom are JS employees, and their six wheelchair partners. The JS people are: Ann Badger, South Western area; Mike May, Lordshill; and Tony Lendon, Lee Thompson and Debbie Hume, all of Shirley.

The team wishes to express gratitude for the support of stores on **Neil Brassington's district** who raised money for the team.

A different angle on the 'hardest marathon'

Kerri Taylor, fish assistant at **Hedge End**, enjoyed reading the report from **John Steward** of **Buntingford depot** about his experiences in the Snowdonia Marathon on October 31. But Kerri also took part and decided that she too should put pen to paper...

'9.15, I'm queuing for the one ladies' toilet, freezing cold in my running suit while all around are kitted out in thermal gloves, tights and hats. All I can think of is at 18 years of age, is a few 15 mile training runs sufficient preparation for my first marathon attempt? All I can see is the first four mile stretch - uphill. The gun goes and it is every bit as bad as I imagined. The scenery? - I didn't have a chance to look, I was too busy gazing at the ground and contemplating why I was doing this - knees aching, breathing erratic, logical thought non existent!

'After a descent and major uphill pull I reached the 'level'

part and 'hit the wall' - my run slowed to a crawl. 'I will not stop and walk' I repeated over and over. The hardest part appeared as a blessed release at 21 miles - I now know I will finish. Up the quarry and hit the downhill - running on pure adrenaline to the finish with wings on my feet and cracking 13 minutes for two miles - not bad after 24 miles! The end looms and I'm through the finish, crying with relief as I see a member of my club waiting for me.

'My goal was only to finish, but to my surprise I won the female junior section, only one minute behind the junior male winner, and received some lovely prizes, including a painting of a scene from the route. Then back to Sainsbury's - down to earth - doing my day job as a part-time fish assistant. Perhaps I'll see you there next year John! Oh - and my time? Eight hours, 57 minutes.'

Four into ten



Left to right: **Ken Evans**, **Jim Rooney** and **Ray Clark**, all past managers, and **Vince Balzen** who was manager at the time of the anniversary, but has since moved to South Ruislip.

The four men who managed a decade of trading at **West Ealing** got together to celebrate the branch's tenth anniversary.

The party, held in a local hall,

was attended by past and present staff. Everyone enjoyed dancing to the disco and listening out for the winning numbers in the raffle.

NEW LINES



ALL STORES

BUYERS ROLL OUT THE BARRELS OF FRENCH WINE

Sainsbury's wine buyers have sourced a selection of wines from France to start 1994 off in Gallic good taste.

The wines will follow one another throughout the year on a rolling basis, all under the banner of 'Sainsbury's Buyers' French Selection'.

Each of the wines, which come from the South of France and are priced at £3.35, will be available for around four to six weeks.

The first five wines are: Côtes du Roussillon Villages, Saint Vincent, 1990; Domaine de Serres-Mazard 1991; Château de Fountgraves 1992; Château de Jonquières 1992 and Château Vermeil, Costières de Nîmes 1992.

- Sainsbury's has introduced a new Bottle Conditioned Ale which has a complex flavour derived from different roasted malts and aromatic hops.

It comes in a 500ml bottle, and the ale goes through a secondary fermentation in the bottle which helps give it a distinctive character.

Because of this brewing process, a yeast sediment can sometimes be found. It is not harmful but careful pouring of the ale is recommended.

It retails at £1.49.

HOMEBASE SEALS A GOOD DEAL



ALL HOMEBASE STORES

Homebase has launched a new range of four sealants and one flexible decorating filler; most in a choice of colours.

The range consists of both acrylic and silicone sealants. The silicone sealants are especially suitable for areas needing greater flexibility.

The sealants can be used for both interior and exterior purposes, and all have easy to follow instructions. Prices range from £1.99 for the Flexible Decorating Filler up to £6.29 for the Silicone Frame Sealant.

READY AND WEIGHTING

JS has launched a range of ready meals onto delicatessen counters, giving customers the freedom to choose exactly how much they want of a product.

Currently stocked are Chicken Tikka; Creamy Chicken Tikka; Lamb Rogan Josh; Sweet & Sour Chicken; Vegetable Jalfrezi; Moussaka; Pilau Rice; Chicken Balti; Vegetable Balti, Chicken & Cashew Nuts and Special Fried Rice.

Seaweed, Paella and Ribs are just some of the ideas that may be introduced in the future.

CLEARLY A GOOD IDEA



MOST STORES



Sainsbury's is one of the first food retailers to launch an own label contact lens care system. The range offers both soft and hard lens wearers products which meet the strictest quality standards but at very competitive prices.

Available are: All in One Solution for hard lenses, £3.39; Stage 1 - Disinfecting Solution,

£2.79; Stage 2 - Rinsing and Neutralising Solution, £3.99; Contact Lens Case, £3.39; Daily Cleaner for Soft Lenses, £3.29; Saline Solution, £1.99 and Purified Water, 75p.

SELECTED TRIAL STORES



PEOPLE



Paula and Stewart.



Phil and Helen.

WEDDINGS

Congratulations to:

STEWART MILLERS, section manager provisions, and **PAULA KEEN**, price controller, both from **Aylesbury**, who were married on September 25.

PHIL SMITH, deputy manager, **Farlington** and **HELEN TURNER**, departmental manager at **Talbot Heath**. They were married on October 2.

LONG SERVICE

Employees who have completed 40 years' service are: **RONALD DART**, senior deputy manager services, Bexhill.

Employees who have completed 25 years' service are: **MICHAEL ARNOLD**, clerk, Hoddesdon depot. **BRIAN BARKER**, area services manager, Midlands area. **GRACE BUNCE**, price controller, Cowley. **GEOFFREY CHALLIS**, store manager, Warwick. **JOHN CROWLEY**, accountant, Norwich House. **SYLVIA DAVIS**, system 25 assistant, Lordshill. **DEREK DEAR**, non perishables ware-

house assistant, Hoddesdon depot. **KENEATH DEAR**, non perishables chargehand, Hoddesdon depot. **ROBERT DUDLEY**, driver, Buntingford depot. **IAN ELKINS**, district manager, South Western area. **PAUL FOULGER**, manager, catering and employee services, Blackfriars. **JOAN FRANKLIN**, meat preparation assistant, Camden. **SYLVIA FROST**, dry goods reduction control, West Park Farm. **PETER FRYER**, deputy manager, dry goods, Kempston. **COSTAS GREGORIOU**, manager labour costs development, Blackfriars. **THOMAS GUEST**, deputy manager services, Blackpole. **FREDERICK HALSALL**, non perishables warehouse assistant, Buntingford depot. **ROSA HERBERT**, dry goods code controller, Redhill. **DELIA HIRST**, checkout/replenishment, Ipswich. **KATHLEEN ISLES**, bread and cake assistant, Northampton. **ARTHUR JAMES**, central stores, Charlton depot. **TONY KINSMAN**, section manager, fresh food, Kingsheath. **CAROL LEWIS**, bakery counter assistant, Bath. **ERNEST MACARTNEY**, project manager, Blackfriars. **URSULA**

MYSON, fresh food replenishment assistant, Hoddesdon. **PAUL PELLETT**, driver, Basingstoke depot. **LESLEY PRINCE**, non perishable warehouse assistant, Basingstoke depot. **MAUREEN REED**, checkout assistant, Southend. **PETER RUFFLES**, produce warehouse assistant, Basingstoke depot. **TOM RUSTED**, reception manager, Winterstoke Road. **KATHLEEN SPENCER**, fresh foods assistant, Northampton. **MARK STALLARD**, food safety officer, Blackpole. **WILLIAM THORNE**, driver, Charlton depot. **GEOFFREY TRUSCOTT**, area services manager, South Western area. **MAURA WALSH**, checkout assistant, Debden. **RAY WENTZELL**, non perishables warehouse assistant, Basingstoke depot. **BRYAN WRIGHT**, senior manager, Blackfriars. **BARBARA YOUNG**, meat replenishment assistant, Crayford.

RETIREMENTS

Length of service in brackets

TED WHITE, fresh meat section manager, Winchester (40 years). **BILL DAVIS**, supervisor, Hoddesdon depot (31 years). **FRANK JENNINGS**, senior store warehouse assistant, Bishops Stortford (28 years). **MARGARET BIRCHER**, chief display assistant, Gloucester (24 years). **MARIE EADE**, checkout/replenishment, Kempshott (23 years). **MARCELLE LASSETER**, section manager, customer services, Gloucester, (22 years). **JOAN TIDY**, supermarket assistant, Queens Road (21 years). **TED KINGHAM**, clerk, Hoddesdon depot (20 years). **MARJORIE LONGNEY**, checkout/replenishment, Gloucester, (19 years). **SYLVIA PALMER**, store

detective, South Western area office (20 years). **FREDA LAWRENCE**, BPM, Debden (20 years). **EILEEN LAMBERT**, checkout/replenishment, Chichester (18 years). **IRIS FRITH**, cook, Wandsworth (15 years). **SHEILA PARRIS**, kiosk assistant, Haywards Heath (15 years). **JUNE CLAY**, fresh foods assistant, Barking-side (14 years). **KAY GARDNER**, checkout assistant, Lewisham (14 years). **CYNTHIA COTTON**, checkout/replenishment, Kings Heath (10 years). **TONY HORROD**, trolley retriever, Surbiton (8 years). **KATHLEEN BARNETT**, bakery counter assistant, Chichester (7 years). **PETER HULL**, fresh food replenishment assistant, Burpham (4 years). **JACK PETTIT**, trolley retriever, Letchworth (3 years).

After 40 years with the company **PAT HARDING** has retired from South Western area office as assistant accountant.

Pat joined JS in 1953 as a grocery hand at Tolworth. She then went on to become first clerk at Surbiton, and chief clerk at



Pat Harding.

Wimbledon and Kingston. When the payroll was taken out of branches, Pat moved to the Kingston area office as payroll supervisor. She then moved to the Woking area office and, when the payroll was transferred to Blackfriars, Pat became the financial control assistant, before being promoted to assistant accountant.

Since her retirement, Pat has joined a cake craft class where she makes sugar flowers and decorates cakes. She said: 'I would like to thank all my many friends and colleagues for organising such a memorable farewell party for me. I am thoroughly enjoying my retirement and now realise that it is true when retired people say they don't know how they found the time to go to work.'

OBITUARY

Length of service in brackets

BILL FREEMAN, petrol station assistant, West Park Farm, Folkestone, died after a short illness on December 8, aged 51 (18 months). **MATTHEW GREENFIELD**, section manager, fresh foods, died suddenly on December 8, aged 23 (4 years). **JACKIE OTTAWAY**, checkout/replenishment assistant, Duns-tabled, died on December 27 after a long illness, aged 53 (15 years). **SUSAN PIGRAM**, bakery counter assistant, Bishops Stortford, died in a

car accident on January 1, aged 34 (8 years). **RAYMOND POLLEY**, night shift warehouse assistant, New Barnet, died following an accident on October 7, aged 34 (12 years). **VIOLET THORNTON**, checkout/replenishment assistant, East Grinstead, died suddenly on December 24, aged 59 (19 years). **RITA TURNER**, checkout assistant, Crayford, died after a short illness on January 1, aged 49 (7 years). **HELEN VINCENT**, checkout/replenishment, Winton, died after a long illness on December 20, aged 58 (12 years).

WRITELINES

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13)

Colin Etheridge, South Eastern area director

Through the medium of the *JS Journal*, I would like to thank David Dahms, our present area services manager, for his commitment and contribution to the area prior to his move to Savacentre.

David has become, over his 22 years on the

area, a pillar of the establishment and this reflects extremely well in his professionalism and competence. In his 22 years, David has aided innumerable area directors and district managers, has presided over the move from the old over-crowded area office above the old Bromley store to our

present pristine building, and seen his own job and responsibilities grow from that of the old area admin manager to that of area services manager. In all this time he has conducted himself with integrity and honesty but at the same time has presented the human face of the task.

He has a tremendous sense of humour and fun and his encyclopaedic knowledge on such diverse matters as model railways, buses and the old days in the JS factory are legen-

dary. May I take this opportunity to wish him well and state that our loss is Savacentre's gain.

Eileen Harris, veteran

I would like to say a big thank you to staff around the country who have sent me used postage stamps for the Raynauds & Scleroderma Association. Keep them coming please, however small the amount. If you would prefer to send them direct to the association, the address is: Raynauds & Scleroderma

Association, 112 Crewe Road, Alsager, Cheshire, ST7 2JA.

The last lot of stamps the association received raised £436 so you see every little helps. Thank you once again.

To **Bolton** from Peter Thurnham MP, after the store raised £2,000 for Leukaemia Research: 'Please convey my congratulations to everyone concerned with this most worthwhile enterprise.'



< Victoria branch window 1934. Note the egg cartons wrapped in brown paper, tied with string and ticketed 'packed for travelling'.



1930s egg box of the type featured in the window display, left.

WHERE EGGS CAME BEFORE CHICKENS

In some religions, the egg symbolises the soul. For JS, it is a fragile product which has presented a packaging challenge ever since it was sold from the original Drury Lane store.

Eggs were one of the first products sold by Sainsbury's at the original shop in Drury Lane in 1869 (chickens and other poultry came later in 1882). Although some supplies could be obtained from farms outside London, the bulk was imported from as far afield as Australia, Poland and Romania. Mr L J King recalled working at Balham branch around the turn of the century. The best new-laid eggs were from

Brittany, with Irish the next best in quality. Mr King could tell where the eggs had come from simply by looking at their yolks - those from Brittany he described as 'scintillating globules of rich gold'.

In 1902, Frank Sainsbury, third son of the founder, began to supply JS with eggs from his farm, Blunts Hall, about two miles outside Haverhill. In 1912, Frank started an egg collection scheme, following the Dutch example, the first scheme of its kind in Britain. The eggs were initially collected from local farmers by pony and trap, brought to Blunts Hall for testing, and then packed and forwarded to Blackfriars by rail. After the First World War, more of Frank's egg collecting and packing stations were opened in Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire, and at one time, there were around 40 stations.

Until the Second World War, JS eggs were frequently sold from stalls outside branches. The post of 'egg boy' was one of the most junior, and many a young boy progressed through Sainsbury's rigorous training programme to become branch manager. Even Mr J B Sainsbury, eldest son of the founders, began his career serving as egg boy at the Queen's Crescent branch. Egg boys started when they were 13 or 14, and, although the post did not require any specific skills, it provided training in salesmanship and handling money. The post required standing outside the shop in all weathers to guard the egg displays. The winter of 1929 was so cold that the eggs outside Lewisham branch froze as Mr S. Dyer recalled.

The eggs were displayed in large wooden crates or whicker baskets, and were served to customers in small paper bags. Eggs were measured by 'hands', with six eggs to one hand. Twenty hands made up a Long Hundred, three Long Hundreds made up one box, and four boxes made a case. Polish eggs arrived wrapped in straw, while Chinese eggs were generally packed in rice husks.

Harry Younger worked as an egg boy for Sainsbury's in the busy market street of Queen's Crescent in Kentish Town. He recalled one old lady who, to his alarm, picked over his eggs and from time to time tucked one into her blouse. He signalled for the manager, who saw what was happening and strolled over to the lady. 'Now then', said the manager, tapping her arm, 'you be careful', and as she straightened up he said, 'Our eggs have to be treated very carefully, you know'. And with each word he slapped her waist with the back of his hand as if to emphasise each word. The thief retired damp and confused.

Following the de-rationing of eggs in 1953, JS sold eggs self-service for the first time in a specially designed cardboard basket holding four eggs. Fresh eggs were still something of a luxury item then, and at 2/2 (11p) for four - an astonishing £1.50 by today's prices - it's hardly surprising! Packaging eggs was a notoriously knotty problem for the self-service operator and in 1956 the flimsy four-pack was replaced by a sturdier three-egg pack which could be made up by machine.

In 1983, JS became the first major multiple to sell free-range eggs. Only a very small number of branches were supplied with these eggs at first, due to the lack of land available for free-range farming. The JS egg buyer at the time pointed out that 'to house the 45 million birds required to supply the UK market, an area the size of Berkshire would be needed.'



The 1956 three-egg box.



Newspaper Ad, 1939.

Property and development manager Chris Fenner is delighted the Sainsbury's board has given Homebase the go ahead to double its opening programme. But how will he find all those extra sites? 'With difficulty,' he tells us. 'Unfortunately there is no magic formula. You have to be a bit of a blood hound!'

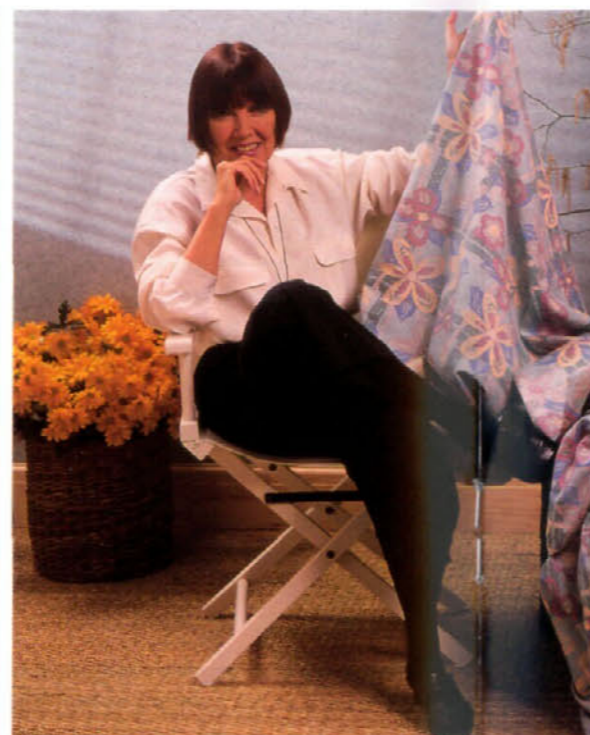
BUILDING MORE STORES

'Basically, we will look at any site in a prominent location which has good access, three acres and 60,000 houses within 10-15 minutes travelling time. Inevitably, we will concentrate more on the Midlands and the North than we have in the past but we will not ignore opportunities in the South East which has been so successful for the business in the past. We have no plans to move into Scotland yet.' Will every JS soon have a corresponding Homebase store? 'No. Merely building alongside a JS does not guarantee success for Homebase, although we have dual sites which work very well. Sites shared with JS, and on retail parks for that matter, can be perfectly good places for us to trade, providing they possess the specific qualities we need to serve DIY customers.

'Forecasting sales in the DIY market is very difficult because of the lack of reliable data and our limited experience of some parts of the country.' But Homebase thinks it has found the solution at Leeds University: 'They have been developing a computerised sales forecasting model for us which deals with far more factors than Homebase has previously been able to. The accuracy of the model has been tested and proven in a regional pilot and should be fully adopted by Homebase by the summer.

'These more accurate sales forecasts will not only aid new investment decisions but will also help decide which of the three new store models is appropriate for new sites. These new models all allow merchandising to be changed around more easily as the business evolves. There is a rectangular sales area with the staff and warehouse facilities "bolted on". More space will be given to the garden centres to allow canopies to be introduced at all the new stores. Canopies have already been introduced at some stores and these are proving very useful for promoting the sales of nursery stock and for use in poor weather. As one garden centre manager said: 'It's a great boon being able to move stock under the canopy to sell it when people don't want to venture outside.'

What will the stores of the future look like from the outside? Chris: 'Overall, we have learned a lot from our Belgian partners GIB, in particular about alternative building methods. As a result of one recent joint study with GIB, stores on retail parks and in commercial settings will in future be more basic in appearance but without diminishing the in-store facilities and ambience associated with our business. In more sensitive locations, we will continue to build our brick and tile stores.'



Laura Ashley was incorporated as a concession from the first store at Purley Way, Croydon.



The new magazine for customers has a cover price of 80 pence but is free to Spend & Save cardholders.



Weekly press advertising concentrates on special offers.

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOMEBASE

One thing we discovered about Homebase is that it knows its place - its place in the market that is.

Homebase is the upmarket house and garden centre. Andrew Molle, head of marketing, explains that the company achieved its positioning very quickly: 'From the first store at Purley Way, Croydon, Laura Ashley was incorporated as a concession. This very well known brand was perfectly positioned in the market, and its association with Homebase helped to establish our niche position. The original slogan "There's no place like Homebase" showed that Homebase's objective was to be different from the competition. Today we stand alone in the DIY market place in the mid to top end of the market. And thank goodness for that because there are plenty of problems in the middle market ground.'

Does upmarket mean pricy? 'No, but Homebase has been perceived as expensive in the same way that traditionally customers have perceived JS to be expensive. But we monitor the prices of our competitors, ensuring we remain competitive and use weekly press advertising, concentrating on powerful special offers marketed as Best Buys. We can now measure an improvement in price perception. As our current slogan says, "Good ideas cost less at Homebase".'

'A Spend & Save loyalty scheme was introduced in 1987. It was stamp based and ran for 12 weeks at a time. Then in March 1991 we switched to a magnetic strip loyalty card. This was the first offered by any retailer in the UK. There are now more than 1 1/2 million cardholders and we can write to them about special promotions. We are currently working out extra privileges for our Spend & Save cardholders and our At Home at Homebase readers.'

At Home at Homebase is the company's new magazine-cum-catalogue. There have been two issues so far and the plan is to produce them quarterly. Says Andrew, 'The magazine enforces the special relationship between ourselves and our customers and it helps to build our brand image.'

Also taking care of special relationships is the customer relations department. Andrew: 'Our suppliers leave us in no doubt that Homebase pays far more attention to customer relations than our competitors. We believe that having invested so much in persuading someone to be our customer, it is most important to retain them.'

Asked what is the marketing department's greatest challenge, Andrew replies: 'Maintaining the leading brand image we have historically enjoyed. We can use all forms of communication including such things as our in-store advertising to keep several steps ahead of the competition. We must not let the others catch up.'



Customers sign up to the Spend & Save scheme.



Homebase is a subsidiary of Sainsbury's and was incorporated in 1979 with Sainsbury's holding a 75 per cent controlling interest and the Belgian company, GB-Inno-BM (GIB), holding the remaining 25 per cent.

GIB is the result of a merger, in 1974, of Grand Bazaar-Innovation and Bon Marche.

There are currently 76 Homebase house and garden centres. The company has 4,500 employees.

The horticultural distribution operation is based at Swindon. The non-horticultural distribution centre is at Brackmills, Northampton. Head office is in Wallington, Surrey.

'WE HAVE ALL GROWN UP TOGETHER'

Upton's store manager Chris Alvin has seen Homebase develop from a company with a handful of stores 'each with their individual operation' to a 'much more structured organisation'.

'When I joined in 1983 as a departmental manager in training at Nottingham, there was a strange head office above Croydon store as well as a small two storey building in Thornton Heath. I used to go there for training.

'There were only four buyers and they would often phone us to ask what we thought should be

stocked and for our opinion on new products.'

'Even today, with 76 stores, we have no "ivory tower" view of head office. It may be a fair distance away but if I ever have a problem, I just pick up the phone. We're still relatively small, and we have all grown up together.'

'The biggest change has come with computerisation and central distribution. Originally, the operation was manual. A big box full of order forms for every supplier came weekly from head office.

'All deliveries were direct. Now

we take delivery from our depots of products from around 400 different suppliers every week, so central distribution makes an incredible difference.'

Chris's father served 40 years with JS and Chris sees Sainsbury's philosophy as the heart of Homebase. 'All the principles of merchandising, buying and management are the same but Homebase has a unique style. I think we have more freedom to use display techniques, particularly with such things as Christmas decorations. We use guidelines



Upton store manager Chris Alvin.

given on videos made in-house at head office. The rest is up to us.'

We asked Chris what is his favourite part of the job: 'Talking to customers. We're really lucky at Upton because we have extremely nice customers - including most of Liverpool Football Club!'

IT'S ALL PART OF THE SERVICE

Homebase stores stock a minimum of 20,000 products and a further 4,000 products are available to order. The range includes decorating supplies, tools, hardware, bathroom and plumbing, electrical and lighting, building and timber, as well as an extensive range of houseplants, nursery stock and gardening equipment.



OWN BRAND

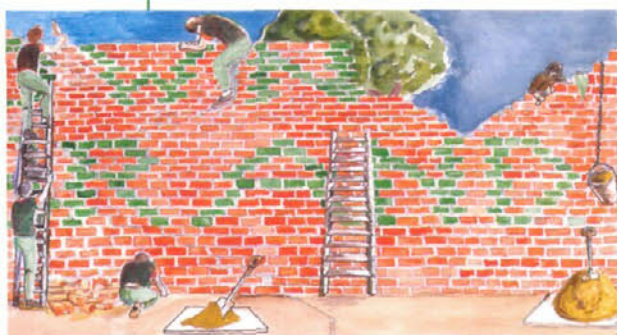
The company was launched with a handful of own brand products, including some paint, nails, screws and a plant sprayer. Now there are 2,500 lines, accounting for 25 per cent of the total range.

Says own brand development manager Barbara Jennings, 'We work differently from the rest of the Group in that we have one department devoted to developing own brand products, which we then hand over to the buyers after launch. But we have exactly the same cultural beliefs. Our own brand products must be unsurpassed in terms of quality and value for money.'

PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE

'Most customers expect our staff to know something about the products we sell,' says Homebase personnel manager Joe Marsh. A new training scheme for garden centre staff has been introduced. In addition, there are product knowledge workbooks which staff work through systematically, ticking off sections on checklists within the store. Staff are also kept informed about developments in the service offered by their stores through the Retail Review video, made entirely in-house and introduced by retail director Bill Williams.

Teamwork - Staff from Cheltenham helped out at the opening of St Albans last month.



BRIGHT FUTURE FOR LIGHTING

The lighting department is a very bright star in the Homebase firmament.

Deputy head of decorative buying Nick Bell says, 'It has been a phenomenal success and we have barely been able to keep pace since we began to roll out a range of fabric shades and table lamps in mid 1992. We have seen sales increases of 30-40 per cent.'

'Now we are working on new layouts for a 'shop within a shop' concept. In the future, our lighting departments will encompass a wider range of all lighting sectors and include a canopy for pendant lights. Own brand lighting is planned to be introduced in the late spring.'



Inside Brackmills depot.

BRACKMILLS CAN HANDLE IT

With almost everything for the garden centre being supplied from Swindon, the rest of the store is supplied either by the company's depot at Brackmills, Northampton, or by direct deliveries in the case of items such as garden sheds.

When the depot's predecessor at Westgate, Northampton, opened in February 1987, Homebase became the first DIY retailer to have a centralised means of distribution. In October 1992, the operation moved just up the road to Brackmills and increased its commodity capacity by one third. At the time of the opening, distribution manager Gordon Lambert said: 'Buyers will be able to extend the range of goods available from Brackmills to the stores and have greater control over availability of goods. Systems enhancements are in place and changes in document-

ation and delivery units are planned that will make checking in at stores much less arduous.'

Although Homebase has learned a great deal from JS, and indeed Gordon himself had 20 years' experience of JS distribution, the house and garden business poses some very individual problems. Gordon: 'Products on the whole move far more slowly; we have developed a unique facility to handle the slowest moving lines, and have devised separate storage and handling techniques for products that range in size and shape from copper pipe and deckchairs to screwdrivers and nails.'

'Being centralised, our distribution enables us to support our special promotion days which have created a lot of interest. We can pre-place stock in stores, recover quickly from a sudden rise in sales and be ready to wind up again when required.'

In Swindon depot, stock is cared for at a constant temperature of 17°C



EVERYTHING IN THE GARDEN IS LOVELY

'We are the only DIY chain to have a garden centre in every store and this is the single most important thing which makes us different,' says head of horticultural and seasonal departments Simon Wharton.

'Their success is due to Homebase's investment in people with an understanding and knowledge of the gardening business. All our buyers and merchandisers of living plants are trained horticulturists, as are our five regional garden centre specialists, and most of our garden centre management.'

'When we found there were just not enough skilled management candidates for our expanding business, our training department worked with Hadlow College, a horticultural college, to develop a new block release scheme to train potential managers with the horticultural knowledge needed to run a garden centre department. To date, 33 management trainees are on this training scheme, which includes the completion of an NVQ Level Four in management for our existing staff.'

Austin Myers, Upton's garden centre manager, gained a City and Guilds in horticulture ten years ago. But he has a new certificate of which he is very proud - an achievement award for stock results and sales increases in the store's first year: 'I get a great feeling from maximising sales

weekend. And we are never more pleased than when a customer leaves happy with a purchase we have helped them with.'

'I used to see myself as a horticulturist first, retailing came second. Now I see myself as a retailer first and foremost.'

'The good thing about Homebase is that there is plenty of room for innovation. I'm on a long leash but I have great support from above and below. There would have been no achievement award otherwise.'

Within the garden centre, Simon Wharton explains that Homebase's range is unique: 'Supermarkets have taken much of the cut flower and smaller houseplant market away from the garden centres which are concentrating on such things as nursery stock. No-one else carries such a breadth of houseplants - 300 at any one time - from tiny bottle garden plants to a Kentia Palm which retails for as much as £80.'

Swindon depot is another unique feature at Homebase and one which provides a distinct advantage over the competition. Simon: 'Our horticultural distribution operation based at Swindon allows us to sell fresher, better and cheaper products. Unlike our competitors, we can deal direct with specialist nurseries as well as the European market (50 per cent of houseplants in the UK are imported). Our competitors have to deal with middlemen all the time.'

The Swindon depot has 45,000 sq ft of covered warehouse and, unlike the Sainsbury's fresh food chain, where the chill factor is all, the temperature has to be kept at a cosy 17°C. Outside is a further 35,000 sq ft of yard space which in the spring is a riot of colour with bedding plants, hanging baskets and garden plants.

Homebase is planning to introduce similar computer systems to those used at JS and Savacentre to ensure that hydrangeas at Homebase are as fresh as a joint of beef at JS.

But as short as their stay at Swindon is, care of plants is still a vital part of the operation. Staff are skilled in maintaining the stock in peak condition.



Upton's garden centre manager Austin Myers (front) with skilled general assistants Tony Evans and Chrissie Shepherd.

