

3p

Harlequin

Leisure Magazine of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Research Group and Associated Organisations



1977

THE MAIN-GATE, HARWELL

1947

JUNE 1977

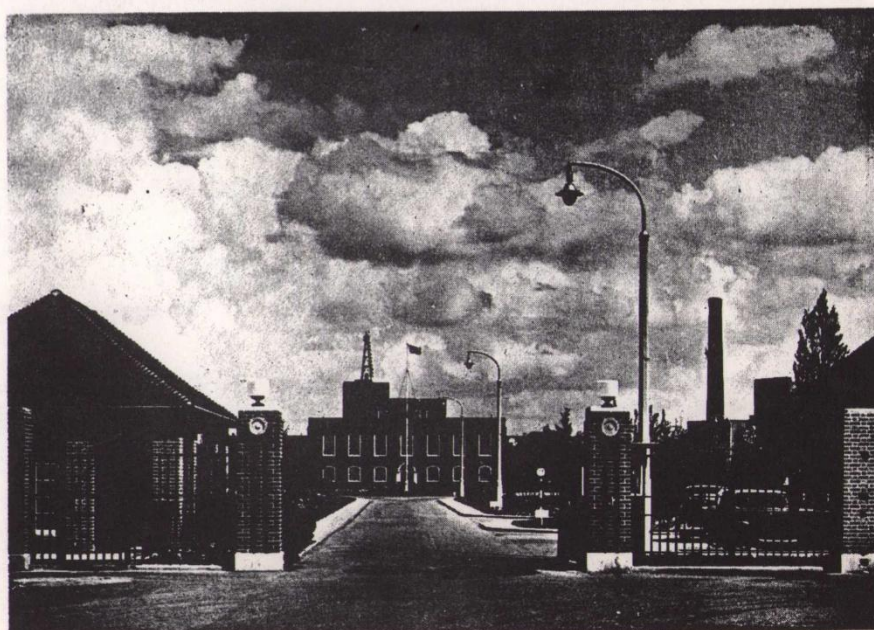
In this issue

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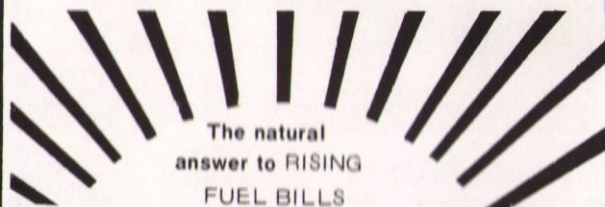
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WORK BY HARWELL ARTISTS

What the papers

say . . .

IN DEFENCE OF THE POWERFUL ATOM



THE SUNDAY TIMES

Most people in Britain are in favour of nuclear power, according to a survey just published in *New Society* - but the opponents of nuclear power still do most of the shouting. All over the world the nuclear industry is on the defensive. In Britain, objectors to expansion plans for the Windscale nuclear reprocessing plant have forced a public enquiry into part of the scheme. In Germany, courts have found in favour of environmentalists who oppose the building of nuclear power stations. California and other states in the US recently came close to a total ban on nuclear power.

The anti-nuclear lobby has won its victories with weapons ranging from serious, well-informed arguments to the crudest smears, but it is a curious feature of the debate that its partisan approach has never been matched by the other side. Until now, that is.

A book* unashamedly in favour of nuclear power just published in the United States suffers from none of the usual inhibitions of the pro-nuclear lobby.

Peter Beckmann, the book's author, wades into the anti-nuclear lobby with a gusto which, in Britain anyway, would probably be libellous. He is an engineer at the University of Colorado, not directly connected with the nuclear industry, so he can claim to be as "disinterested" as his opponents. He also has a flair for using their methods.

With a deft touch for the riveting statistic he points out, for example, that:

- Grand Central Station in New York could not be licensed as a nuclear reactor because the radiation from its granite blocks would violate safety standards;
- Sleeping with two people exposes a person to more radiation than a nuclear reactor because of the



natural radioactivity in the human body;

- A coal-burning power station sends several hundred times as much radioactivity up its chimneys as escapes from the commonest type of nuclear station with the same output.

These are debating points, as Beckmann freely admits. But they are the exact counterpart of equally true but misleading statements made by the opponents of nuclear power.

Beckmann's main purpose, however, is to compare the hazards of nuclear power with the alternatives, which for the time being means chiefly the fossil fuels coal, oil and natural gas. Not that he regards fossil fuels as unacceptably dangerous. "The point of this book" he says, "is not to argue how dangerous fossils and hydropower are, but that nuclear power is safer."

What follows are some of the more important points which Beckmann makes.

On Major Disasters It is impossible for a nuclear reactor to explode like a bomb. The worst possible accident would be a loss of coolant followed by melting of the fuel in the core. It could produce enough heat to melt its way right into the ground below.

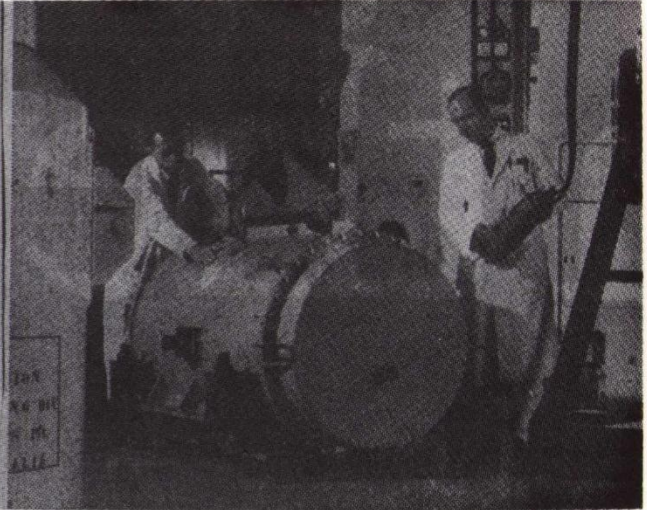
According to the most exhaustive study of reactor safety ever undertaken, the Rasmussen Report, the chances of such a melt-down are one in 20,000 per year for a given reactor. However most melts-down would not cause any fatalities. The Report estimates the chance of an individual being killed in a reactor accident are about the same as his being killed by a meteorite. This minute risk, says Beckmann, should be compared with the far greater dangers of conventional methods of electricity generation.

A hydro-electric dam disaster, for example, is 10,000 times more likely to kill someone than a nuclear reactor accident. In the United States there is one dam whose failure could cause up to 200,000 deaths. And big dams do fail: 412 died in this way in France in 1959, 2,000 in Italy in 1963, 118 in West Virginia in 1972.

Major oil fires are by no means uncommon either. There have been two in the 1970s in the New York City area alone. If weather conditions at the time had been less favourable "thousands would have died as they did in London in 1952 under much less severe air pollution."

Liquid natural gas (LNG) tankers which could explode with the force of an atomic bomb regularly dock close to city centres. LNG is stored in big tanks in densely-populated areas too (e.g. Canvey Island on the Thames). Major natural gas explosions have occurred in the past.

When, under pressure from environmentalists, the radiation emission limits for US nuclear power stations were lowered in 1973 the saving in lives was calculated to be three a year (the hypothetical figure for the US fell from four to one). The cost worked out at £500 million per life saved. Moving the 75 LNG storage tanks in US cities today to safer locations would save far more



These four film-stars are more exposed to radiation than the two men loading Cobalt - 60 at the Harwell nuclear lab

hypothetical lives at a cost of £600 each. It has not been done.

Routine operations The average resident in the US receives a dose of 0.01 millirems (radiation units) from nuclear power stations, less than a ten-thousandth of what he receives from natural causes. Coal-fired power stations actually discharge more radio-activity than nuclear ones, because of naturally radio-active materials in the fuel. But this is unimportant. What matters is the air pollution they cause. Estimates of the excess deaths from air pollution caused by coal-fired power stations in the US range from 10,000 to 50,000 a year.

Miners die winning the coal. Per billion megawatt hours of electricity consumed (this is rather more than a year's consumption in the United States) the cost in fatal accidents is 189 lives in coal mining for coal-fired power stations and another hundred in transporting it. The equivalent figure for uranium mining is two.

Wastes A coal-fired power station produces wastes in vast quantities, typically tens of thousands of truckloads a year. Like the coal it comes from, it is radio-active, and it exposes people to 180 times as much radiation as a nuclear power station of equivalent capacity. On top of this it contains poisonous heavy metals like mercury and selenium which, unlike radio-active materials, last for ever.

Yet it is dumped on the surface with no attempts at monitoring its contents.

Radio-active wastes on the other hand will be stored deep underground in the most stable geological structures that could be found.

Plutonium The statement that it is the most toxic substance known to man is "melodramatic nonsense." Arsenic trioxide is about 50 times more toxic when taken by mouth, yet it is used on the land as a pesticide.

Being unashamedly partisan, Beckmann's figures (which come from published sources) need watching. Some are more reliable than others. Those for miners' deaths, for example, are incontestable, but those for deaths from air pollution are guesstimates at best.

He is also guilty of the occasional factual error. He says, for example, that a reactor pressure vessel could not burst. This is certainly not the official view in Britain, where doubts about pressure vessels was one of the arguments used by opponents of American-designed reactors for use in Britain. He also says that nuclear power does not add to the earth's radioactivity. In the long-term this may be true, but it is certainly not true until several centuries have elapsed.

Beckmann's standards of accuracy are, however, no worse than those of

most of the opponents of nuclear power; his defence is the exact counterpart of their attacks.

Its chief strength is that it establishes a more rational framework for assessing the dangers of nuclear power. Too often in the past the risks have been balanced by arguments about its economic benefits. But as this is not comparing like with like, there is infinite scope for disagreement.

When the risks of producing a given amount of electricity by nuclear power are weighed against the risks of producing the same amount of electricity in some other way - from coal for example - it is possible to draw up a balance sheet on which many of the items are matters of fact, not of opinion.

As compiled by Beckmann the balance sheet makes out a very strong case for the superior safety of nuclear power. But there is one crucially important item he has omitted: nuclear proliferation. Miners may die digging coal, thousands may suffer from the effects of the air pollution it gives rise to. But none of these increase the risks of nuclear war.

Bryan Silcock

Reproduced by courtesy of

"The Sunday Times"

*"The Health Hazards of Not Going Nuclear," is published by The Golden Press, Boulder, Colorado.



BUILDING 166, WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

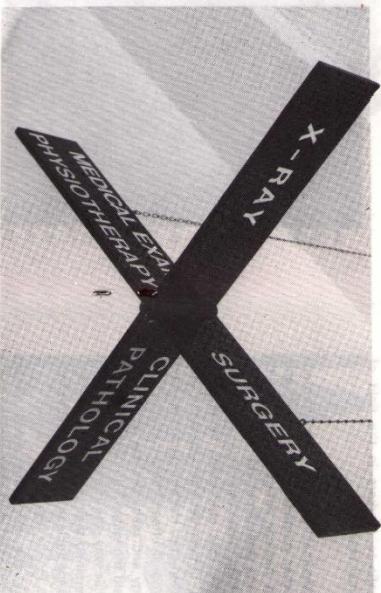
To the outsider the A.E.R.E. Medical Centre must appear to be a very luxurious first-aid post. With four qualified doctors and six fully-trained nursing sisters, to say nothing of the well-equipped X-ray Section, Path. Lab. and Physiotherapy Department, workers on the Harwell site certainly enjoy a luxurious standard of first stage medical care.

Before discussing the present function of the Medical Centre, we must investigate its past, and here we find many interesting parallels with Harwell policy since the war.

The layman's introduction to "splitting the atom" was when the allies dropped their first nuclear device on Hiroshima. Nuclear energy had arrived - with a bloody big bang - and the effects of that horrific episode, together with its successor, are still being felt by a large section of the general public throughout the civilized world.

That was the situation after the war when it was decided to found the Atomic Energy Research Establishment. The new technology was regarded with suspicion and fear by politicians and public alike. Even the scientists could offer little comfort as they had but limited experience. The accent throughout was to be on safety, and the Medical Centre was given the brief that it must be totally self-contained, as any contaminated patients could not be accepted by local hospitals.

Faced with this awesome prospect, the embryo unit set up shop in the old R.A.F. hospital, Building 166, now used by Housing, Hostels and Welfare. There, under the direction of the first Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Katie Williams, they soon had a small but highly efficient and specialised team ready to cope with any emergency.

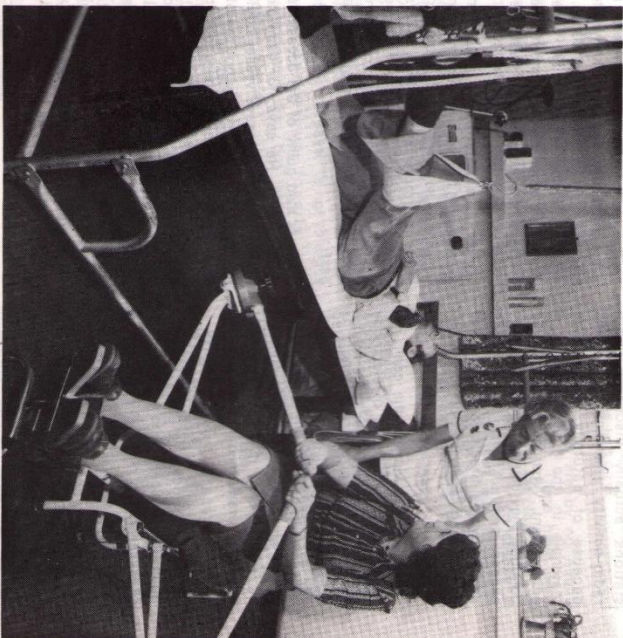


A SIGNPOST WITHIN THE CENTRE - BUILDING 364

THE HARWELL "MEDICS"

- as seen by John Butterworth (Engineering Division)

PHYSIOTHERAPIST LYN KING CARRIES OUT NINE THOUSAND TREATMENTS EACH YEAR IN TWO WELL-EQUIPPED ROOMS



DR. D'AURIA EXPLAINS A NOISE-MEASURING INSTRUMENT TO NURSING SISTERS (l. to r.) IRENE LASCELLES, VAL MOORE AND MARGARET FIDLER



demanding tasks. Probably the most exacting of these was the system of regular medical examination and recording of all employees involved with ionising radiation. The results of those early checks formed the basis for the later relaxation of over-cautious standards. A well-equipped surgery performed the non-mal functions of an industrial unit, while a

When Building 364 was completed, the Medical Division moved inside the security fence and took up residence under the same roof as their colleagues, the Health Physics Division, leaving only a small "sick bay" in Building 166 which eventually closed in 1959. The task of collating medical information continued in the more congenial atmosphere of the larger, modern building. Twenty years ago, for instance, any employee involved with radioactivity received annually a chest X-ray, the Bio-Assay Dept. required samples of urine monthly and the Pathology Lab. tested blood at six-monthly intervals, while a complete medical examination was performed once a year.

As mentioned earlier, those tests were negative. There were no "nuclear poxes" or "dreaded lurgies" attributable to the levels of radiation to which Harwell employees were exposed, and a gradual easing of standards has progressed to a stage where the average person on site now has just one medical interview every two years.

The professional staff have adapted to the changing priorities. Skills they developed for radiological protection are now much sought after by hospitals and research organisations. With approximately 6,000 people using the facilities of the Medical Centre, a large cross-section of the community can be accurately monitored and the results recorded with no real inconvenience or expense to anybody concerned. Volunteers for research projects are readily available from the Harwell and Culham

staff, and these people can usually be called at quite short notice.

The size and content of these research projects varies enormously. The five-year heart survey for instance, was part of a large national experiment, while the Radcliffe Infirmary recently organised a hypertension research project using our facilities and staff. The larger experiments are usually operated by doctors and nurses working together, but the nursing sisters often have smaller projects which they undertake on their own.

To most people who use the Medical Centre the focal point is probably the Surgery, and the primary function of the nursing sisters is still the care of sick or injured employees. The sisters themselves are highly qualified S.R.Ns. with extra qualifications covering all aspects of occupational health. All have held the position of sister in nursing hospitals before entering the industrial branch of their profession. Apart from dealing with patients and the research projects, they have a wide and varied scope of work. They are asked to attend safety committees and inspections, and to give lectures to new intakes on occupational health and the function of the Medical Centre. They also lecture on first-aid and make domiciliary visits to employees who have been sick for a long time so that, in

conjunction with the Welfare Department, any job problems can be sorted out before return to work. The Medical Section is the first line of call for any problems of occupational hygiene, such as fumes, noise, bad smells, indeed anything which could produce a health hazard.

The Harwell Medical Centre must be held in high regard by people outside for it is frequently asked to receive visitors from N.H.S. hospitals who are required to learn about radiation problems and the care of people at work. Most of Harwell's medical facilities are available to employees' own doctors, and the Physiotherapy Unit, Path. Lab. and X-Ray Section must save thousands of pounds each year in working time that would otherwise be lost.

Several equipment components of medical and scientific value have been invented in the X-Ray Section which are now in regular use internationally: the tubular dental cone and Ardran-Crookes penetrometer to mention but two. One of the most important aspects of the work of the X-ray Section has been to develop and use specialised techniques by which radiographs of high diagnostic quality can be obtained for the lowest patient exposure dose. In a similar way the Path. Lab. has done much to aid the medical profession in general, but has also devised new methods and techniques which are of

real benefit to workers in the field of pathological research.

The Medical Section was formed, among other purposes, to research and report on nuclear safety. Working with similar units throughout the world, it has proved that man can live alongside radioactivity, but only when he treats it with the utmost respect. Its point has been proved, that Harwell personnel have suffered no ill effects from radiation. Its technology and resources are now being used to aid the wider field of medicine as, in a similar way, the Harwell laboratories have diversified their R & D effort as the demands for nuclear research diminished.

Today the opposing sides of the "nuclear debate" seek every advantage to convince the world that theirs is the only course. Some exponents of the nuclear argument are prepared to issue odds, using incredible numbers that the layman could never comprehend, to claim that virtually nobody could ever be harmed by the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. But the figures used by these "nuclear bookies" are not available by accident; they are a tribute to all those people who were concerned with health and safety: professional and responsible people like those, past and present, who made the Harwell Medical Centre what it is today.

The Thames Counties Wildlife Appeal

by Reg Wilkinson

THE Thames Counties Wildlife Appeal was launched by Sir Peter Scott on March 11, 1975, and in two years has produced just over £100,000 in donations. The appeal was made by the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Naturalists' Trust in conjunction with the World Wildlife Fund and its target was £130,000 — the first £100,000 to be earmarked for BBONT and the remainder to be shared equally.

BBONT is one of the most active Naturalists' Trusts in Britain. The area it covers includes the Upper and Middle Thames, the Chilterns, the Berkshire Downs, the Vale of White Horse, the upper valley of the Great Ouse and part of the Cotswolds.

When the appeal was made the organisation was managing over 50 nature reserves, but owned only seven and it needed money to buy more. The trust was especially keen to obtain sites in Berkshire, because the total number of reserves in that county was reduced to five when boundaries were revised in 1974 and four reserves were transferred to Oxfordshire.

Money raised as a result of the appeal has already been used to purchase two new sites. A loan, which was taken up to build a house for the warden at Warburg Reserve, Bix Bottom, near Henley, has also been repaid. This site is very popular with parties from schools and colleges, as well as with the general public and an information centre has been built in addition to the house.

One of the new sites is Foxholes, a magnificent 58-acre oak wood overlooking the River Evenlode in the Cotswolds. Together with an adjoining wood which is already on lease it will provide the trust with a large woodland reserve of 160 acres. In spring

this wood is populated with nightingales and because the soil is slightly acid several plants grow which are uncommon in the district.

The second new site is Hartslock, near Goring, with commanding views along the Thames. This site combines woodland and downland in the form of a magnificent yew wood and a chalk slope which is the habitat of a variety of chalk plants, including one that is extremely rare.

Another site which the trust hopes to purchase is a marshy meadow in North Buckinghamshire where some unusual plants grow. The area is almost unique because it has not been ploughed within living memory and it has never been treated with chemicals. Land of this type is becoming increasingly rare.

In addition to the purchase of reserves, money is required for equipment and transport to enable workers to do jobs such as maintain fences and keep sites free of rubbish. Transport is also required for a small flock of sheep which is moved around the sites to keep the turf grazed.

Readers who are interested in furthering the work of the trust by contributing to the Thames Counties Wildlife Appeal and helping the organisers to reach their target of £130,000, are advised to write to the Appeal Treasurer, Mrs. Vera N. Paul, Overdale, Peppard Common, Henley-on-Thames, Oxon.

WINTER DRIVE THROUGH THE COTSWOLDS

The ribbon road rolls down between the hills
And rugged stone walls fringe the frozen fields,
The shabby sheep stand sullenly apart
Their sad eyes fixed upon the covering snow.

Tree skeletons lie flat against the sky
Their branching fingers clutching at grey clouds,
Hungry black crows are wheeling in the mist
And muffled silence blankets us about.

MARY SMITH

Booktalk

'On Wings of Spirit' by Percy E. Corbett. Published at £3 by Research Publishing G., Lincoln's Inn Field, London.

Percy Corbett retired early from AWRE in 1964 to continue his search for truth.

The search had begun in his youth and was further stimulated by a broadcast on life after death by Sir Oliver Lodge.

This book contains an account of the author's experiences which are supported by quotations from a remarkable variety of world-wide correspondence and publications on psychic, philosophical and religious matters. Now an active member of the Orthodox Church the author believes that properly conducted psychic research can enhance the Church's work. Some material in the book will cause scoffers to scoff and Thomases to doubt, while other points may annoy those whose attitudes have, perhaps through training or habit, become rigid. It seems fairly certain that no-one will be able to agree with everything in the book.

Whatever the reader's existing views the book can be a pointer beyond dogma, whether religious or material, to deeper values. Those who read it with an open mind may find that they discover another aspect of their own Truth. D.C.R.

Binder Twine & Rabbit Stew

Published by Bailey Bros. and Swinfen Ltd, Folkestone, at £3.25

A captivating collection of stories embracing the country year of less than 40 yrs ago, but for all their similarity to today it might as easily be the story of 100 yrs ago.

Modern haymaking, according to the author's father in the story 'Will never catch on. It's fine for prairie farmers but can you imagine any good farmer ruining his hay crop by packing it up in rolled square lumps'. Not only the haymaking has changed, but the whole way of life. Every page recalls some forgotten scene from a different world.

For the middle-aged it evokes memories, and to those who are too young to have experienced at first hand the laughter and sorrow of a pre-war and wartime life, it conjures up a fascinating true fairy story of the not-so-long-ago 'olden days'.

Each story is complete in itself, and each person and animal a unique character, not living in little boxes and all looking the same. The stories range from the deeply moving birth of the gypsy baby on Christmas Day to the hilarious account of the phantom jeep. Their authenticity rings clearly without any jarring sentimentality or elaboration. It is a bed-side book to be dipped into and savoured, not merely read straight through from page 1-149 at one sitting.

The illustrations by Martin Law add to the charm of the book.

C.T.T.

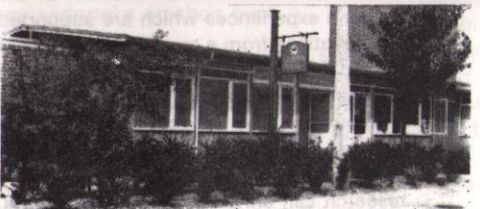


"In those pre-myxomatosis days it fell to the ubiquitous bunny to provide the mainstay of our meals.....

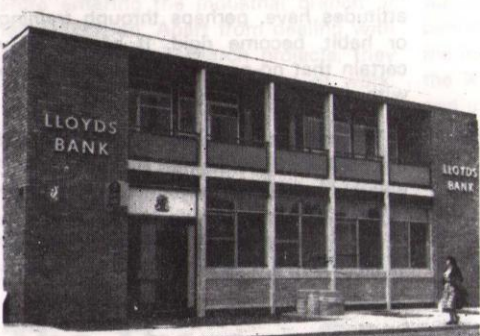
"We ate them stewed, we ate them roasted, boiled with dumplings, frittered, fried and battered, 'rabbit in the hole' or rabbit pasties and a thick pastry lid covered many a 'mystery' pie.



THE CHANGING FACE OF HARWELL: "THE BANK"



Mk. I and Mk. II



Mk. III nearing completion



**ROY WHITE (RIGHT)
WITH HIS DEPUTY
DAVID POWELL**

**THE ATOMIC MOTIF
IN THE COUNTER-
FASCIA**

For over a year the Harwell branch of Lloyds Bank has undergone extensive alterations to help meet the expanding banking needs of staff employed at the Research Establishment.

Since Lloyds first opened a small branch at Harwell nearly thirty years ago with one clerk and a guard who travelled twice a week from Didcot to the Nissen type premises it then occupied, business has grown beyond all recognition.

In 1954 the bank was opened five days a week, but it soon became apparent that the accommodation was inadequate to meet the increasing demand for banking facilities. In 1959 the bank had moved to a larger building in the shopping centre, formerly part of the A.E.R.E. typing pool and now a butcher's shop.

Three years later it became a full branch with a staff of nine and nearly two thousand accounts. The branch moved into its present premises in Curie Avenue later that year. A small sub-branch was opened at Rutherford Laboratory in 1965 to supplement the banking service and be open Wednesday lunchtime.

The recent alterations to the branch have involved extending the premises to the second floor of the building to encompass a foreign department which includes a bureau de change. "At least half of the staff at Harwell take foreign holidays," the manager Roy White told 'Harlequin'. "And there are over 1200 business trips a year



which make it essential to provide foreign exchange facilities."

On the ground floor, the banking hall too has been enlarged to include five cashier positions. Over the past few years, two of the bank's quick cash dispensers have been installed to ensure that customers requiring money in a hurry do not have to wait until a cashier is free.

To symbolise the location, an atomic motif has been incorporated in the counter fascia. The Deputy Chairman of the A.E.A. and former Director of Harwell, Dr. Walter Marshall, told the Manager recently that he was pleased to see that the bank identified itself with its surroundings, and went on to say that he knew of only one other branch bank in the world, at Oak Ridge in the United States, having similar designs.

The branch, which has been virtually rebuilt internally, now has a staff of seventeen, many of whom have strong family and social connections with Harwell through parents and husbands being employed by one or other of the bodies on site. One member of the Bank staff, Peter Harris, who is the son of the Bank's Wantage Manager, is currently captain of the A.E.R.E. Hockey Club, and Roy White is an active member of the Harwell Golfing Society.

Roy White, who became Manager in 1973, has, in fact, been associated with Harwell and its staff for 25 years. As a cashier in the sub-branch in 1952 he did not expect to return as Branch Manager. He worked in branches at Wallingford, Pangbourne, Goring on Thames, Newbury and Thatcham before returning to Harwell. During the intervening years, he kept in touch with Harwell through the staff who kept accounts at the branches where he worked. His daughter Carolyn is a secretary with the P.A.U.; his son Michael is on the staff of the Abingdon Branch and has been operating the sub-branch at Culham for much of the past two years.

Today the branch offers a full range of banking services. Apart from every-day facilities such as current and deposit accounts, a wide range of other services is available. On request, advice can be obtained on insurance, income tax and investment problems and many other personal services such as estate duty planning and the administration of wills. Plans for the future include additional sites for cashpoint machines available for staff holding cashpoint cards. Already these cards can be used at Selfridges, Oxford, and McIlroys, Swindon, and a further machine is planned for Broad Street, Reading - a useful asset during non-banking hours.



At AERE Nursery School, also at the shopping centre, it is more the faces that have changed over the years as another generation has grown up and gone out into the big world outside.

This photograph, taken on Coronation Day, June 1953, shows, on his tricycle in the front, the son of John Ballinger, Michael Ballinger, now a marine biologist. To the left of him is Margaret Walker, now in Toronto, and to the right of him is Christopher Walker of Culham Laboratory, who kindly lent us this photograph.

Other readers who recognise themselves in this photograph will perhaps have their own children at the school. We should be glad to hear from them.

□ □ □

"Harlequin" is always pleased to borrow old photographs, etc., which come to light during spring cleaning. We reproduce below from "SEAC", a newspaper which Charles Hiskins of Building Dept. had dropped to him from the air while in Burma with the 14th Army. This news item he cut out and sent to his parents in East Hendred, little thinking that he would be spending the safer (and better?) years of his life on the old base.

ATOMIC VILLAGE 'NOT WORRIED'

The remote Berkshire Downs village of Chilton, home of race horses trained by Jack Waugh, and with a population of 200 people, is to be the centre of Britain's new atomic energy research. It is to be built on the aerodrome at Harwell which, during the war, was an airborne trooping centre and from where the "Red Devils" left for Arnhem.

Chilton, with its two pubs, old farm workers and young stable lads is taking the matter calmly. "Well, I'm damned," was the first comment of landlord Tommy Rowland of the Horse and Jockey. "We are right opposite the airfield and if anyone should worry we

should, but I don't think anyone will. Perhaps they will be able to give some of the racehorses a little atomic energy; I wonder if these scientists drink beer."

Experts' View

In Didcot, three miles away, the people are in two minds. Some, despite reassurances of such experts as Professor Sir George Thompson and Lord Cherwell, formerly Professor F.A. Lingeman, think the research may be highly dangerous. "I don't think there is any danger," said Lord Cherwell.

Mr. Smallbone, fruiterer in the high street of Didcot, population 1,600 said: "I expect we shall live to a ripe old age unless something happens, and then it won't matter much." "They take these things as they come," said A. W. Cracknell summing up. "We shall be proud of the chance to make history."



TWENTY YEAR'S SERVICE

Back Row (left to right): G.A. Hall, H.G. Elliott

Middle row (left to right): A.G. Fowler, D. Pinder, E.R. Saunders

Front row (left to right): D.B. Waghorn, Mrs. M.C. Upchurch, Mrs. D.J. Roberts, H. Bowes

SOLUTION TO
LAST PROBLEM

1 N; 2 A; 3 L; 4 I; 5 H;
6 P; 7 T; 8 R; 9 O; 10 S;
11 E; 12 J; 13 C; 14 U; 15 W;
16 K; 17 D; 18 F; 19 V; 20 G;
21 Y; 22 M; 23 X



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7	6	5	6	6	4	3	7		2	1	10	5	7	4
6		6		5		4			2		7			20
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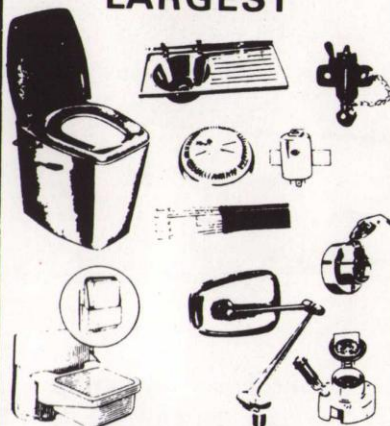
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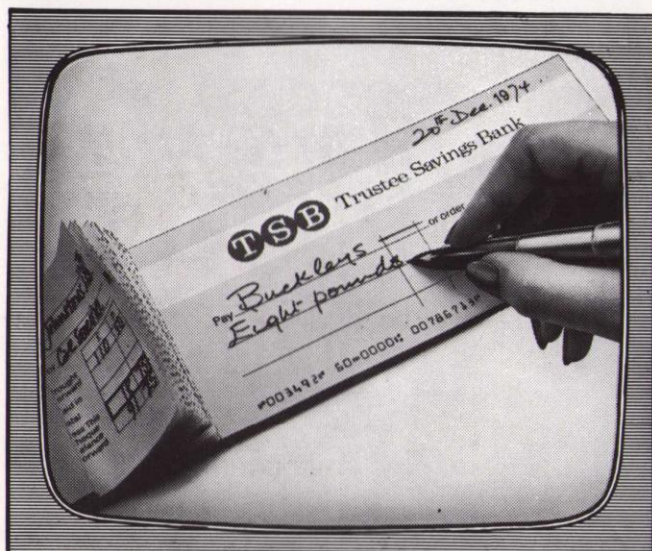
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