

*Built on reputation since 1985*

APRIL 2014

**ROB REXTON – MANAGING DIRECTOR**

A very warm welcome to all reading our Newsletter the first one for 2014, I trust that you are all looking forward to the Easter break and the forecasted sunshine.

It is not only the weather that is looking bright; we welcome the improved conditions in residential housing. The RICS reports that house sales hit a 6 year high in the first quarter of 2014. This is driven by increased availability of mortgages and government incentives like 'help to buy'. This is great news for all of us, the more houses our clients sell, the more work for us. All of our clients report an increase in turnover and profit for the year end December 2013. Let us hope the other sectors see improvements to further help the economy and bring better times for us all.

We are receiving a steady flow of new tenders from current and also from new clients which is increasing our options and giving us greater choice on where we work.

I want to extend a big thank you to all for working to the high levels of health and safety and quality standards that we as a company set and expect. This has been especially difficult to achieve with the terrible wet conditions that have had to be endured earlier this year.

Our reputation as the best ground worker in our area is something we are very proud of.

Please continue the good work.....

**Rob**

P.S. The workplace pension scheme – “We are in”- You will have seen the advert on TV and in the national press. As you all know, from 1 May 2014 the workplace pension scheme arrives at Agetur for all eligible employees. Those who do not wish to take part must remember to 'opt out'.



*“Have a great  
Easter Bank  
Holiday”*



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### **Health & Safety**

A reminder to you all to refresh yourself on the company health and safety policy and any relevant site specific method statements, risk assessments and reporting procedures.

### **My Story at Agetur – Lee Brain, Health and Safety Advisor**

January 17th 2000 was my first day with Agetur UK. To be honest I wasn't quite sure what to expect, all of my previous jobs had been in the manufacturing industry so construction was a completely different ball game. My dad predicted I would last a week!

My first site was Cold Harbour Farm, Aylesbury and I was working with Bob Paul who was the gangerman at the time. I was given a hard hat, shovel and one piece of advice ..... to look busy if and when a dark green Volvo turned up on site. To this day I'm not sure whether I should have been looking out for John Gaughan or Peter Cave. Because I worked alongside my dad and his JCB (there's a song in there somewhere) my first few years with the company were pretty nomadic.

One week on one site, maybe a couple of months on another, but it was due to the amount of travelling, that I was fortunate to meet and work with the majority of the blokes who worked for the company and many of them are still with us now, albeit that some have left and come back, which speaks volumes for the company and its attitude towards the people who work within it. Either that or nobody else will have them! During this time I worked with many of our longer serving staff; Jim Howard, Packy Gaughan, Badger, Stuart Campion and Eddie Clark, to name but a few and I can safely say that I learned a lot from each and every one of them, not all of it good I hasten to add, but the good habits far outweigh the bad ones.

I somehow managed to inherit a company phone around 2006 and although I was still job hopping with the JCB I was also given a little more responsibility with regards to managing sites and it was important for me to be given the opportunity to learn new skills. At the time I felt I needed a new challenge and I'm sure I am not alone when I say that managing a site can be challenging at the best of times, what with unrealistic deadlines, nervous site agents and the minor issue of Health and Safety taking over what used to be such an uncomplicated job!

This brings me to the next stage of my Agetur career. In June last year I was moved to our job in Cumnor Hill. It was during my time there that Wally called me to ask if I would be interested in the role of Health and Safety Advisor. Once again, as it was 13 years previously, taking on a completely new job was going to be challenging, hard work and completely alien to what I had become used to. After some consideration I decided to apply, somehow got offered the job and then spent the next eighteen weeks studying, revising and sitting exams. I can't remember school being quite so tough!

The job itself is proving to be very interesting, with new things to be learned almost on a daily basis. Knowing and having worked with most of you at some point over the last fourteen years was always going to be an advantage when taking on the job, and I only hope that I can use that experience in a positive way. We'll see .....

Lee



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**John Gaughan, Contracts Manager**

Thankfully the sun is shining brightly as I write this. The unprecedented weather we have seen over the recent months has been incredibly challenging for all of you working on our sites, and we very much appreciate the endeavours and resoluteness displayed by all in keeping production moving forward in such circumstances.

I now cross my fingers in saying that hopefully we are seeing the weather on the turn for what may be a repeat of last years summer and a productive few months ahead.

It is looking to the future and with the confident feeling in the House-building sector that we are currently enjoying, that has prompted me to look to establish an apprenticeship scheme for young person's within our organisation.

With the variety and scale of work that our operations encompass I would like to set out and make it clear that Groundwork's and Civil Engineering is a trade and career that is essential and important in the construction industry and most certainly within the House-building industry where we establish the infra-structure for all new residential developments. As such we are looking to develop apprenticeship schemes along with the CITB to offer training at the National Construction College along with practical experience on site to develop the ground-workers of the future for Agetur UK.

It is with pride that as an organisation we have seen some of our young starters develop and flourish within the company over the years and it is with reference to this that we look to continue to bring young eager talent into the company to develop for our continuing success in the years to come.

If anyone knows of someone that may be interested in applying to our scheme please let them know there are further details within this newsletter.

On that note I would like to wish everyone a Happy Easter and hope you all enjoy the break.

John



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### **Sam James, Project Engineer**

Great Western Park, Didcot

GWP continues to plough ahead on all fronts, we are currently working on the smaller section of 278 which fronts a new sales complex to the south of the northern neighbourhood, and this is on target for an Easter opening. The other phases continue to push along with large amounts of block paving finishing, much of it being the priora porous system.

The large 77,000m<sup>2</sup> boundary park is now underway which Agetur is required to hand over for a sports pitch construction in May. The proposed opening for the park which includes, full size rugby, football and cricket pitches as well as tennis courts and children's pitches is Sept 2015 to coincide with the Rugby World cup.

The main road through the site is named after Sir Frank Williams, the F1 team owner and he was here at a naming ceremony last year as the team used to be based in Didcot. The programme for this year looks to be as intense as previous years with potentially 3 new pump stations to be built, the eastern link road and new housing phases.

We continue to train engineers on the site with Jack Tokelove finishing his HNC this year and Piers Mcglynn in his first year at college, both have shown what can be achieved with good training and have become an asset to the company.

Thanks to all the team at Didcot

Sam



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**James Phillips, Senior Quantity Surveyor**

Firstly it's great to see Richard back in the office following his recent health problems, the last 6 months must have been extremely difficult for him and his family and we are all relieved that he is back.

Following a difficult start to the year in terms of weather we have continued to make steady progress with monthly turnover on the increase. In order to maintain these levels of turnover we are currently working on securing new contracts. Since the start of the year we received a healthy number of tender enquiries from both existing and new clients and this would seem to be continuing throughout the year.

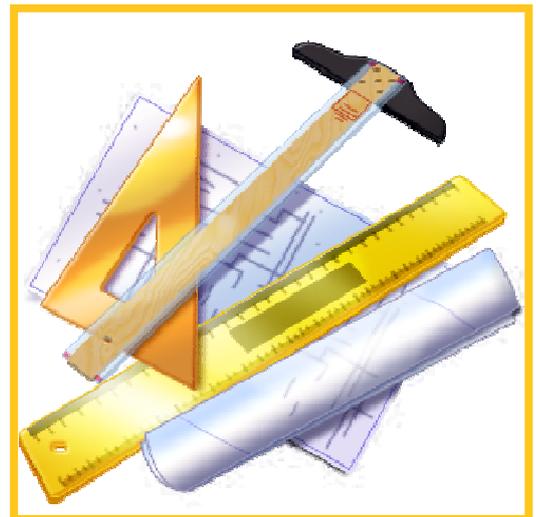
We are currently awaiting news / feedback on 7 possible new jobs, are in the process of tendering another 5 developments and are expecting at least another 8 tenders over the forthcoming months.

Needless to say it has been extremely busy in the commercial department, so much so that we are looking to employ a trainee surveyor to help out in the office. If anyone knows of someone who may be interested please let me know.

As a company we have endured extremely difficult economic conditions over the past 7 years which forced us to work within very strict constraints in order to maintain turnover and attempt to make a margin in many circumstances. Whilst I'm sure we are all happy that as an industry we have well and truly come out of recession it is important that we do not forget the sound working practices we were forced to employ during the recession. Please continue to check things like foundation depths and road constructions with the relevant surveyor so we can all be sure we are working within the parameters of our order.

Many thanks for all your help

James



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### **Plant Department**

Since our last newsletter we have been very busy, hence we have hired more plant recently, but as usual thanks to your help we have tried to keep this to a minimum.

During the last 4 months we have also bought many small items of plant (stihl saws, compactor plates, lasers, etc) this is due to the increased workload, groundwork staff and also to replace older kit and dare I say it a few stolen items too. On the replacement front we are constantly looking and purchasing plant equipment and vehicles when and where we see fit.

Our recent purchases include a 120 Roller, 10m Telehandler and a couple of vans. We do recognise there are a few vehicles out there that still need replacing; unfortunately we have also lost a couple due to uneconomical repairs and accidents. With that in mind and the increased workforce I have thrashed out a deal with a company who have provided us before and hopefully will again. If all goes to plan we may see some new additions/replacements soon. We will also be looking to replace some larger plant equipment during this year as part of our long term replacement plan.

### **Site Security**

Sorry to keep going on about site security but it does seem to be working, as we came through the Christmas period, where we normally get hit, completely unscathed!

We have however had a couple of thefts in the last few months on various sites which include a site office break in, a container and also diesel theft; although the latter seems to have slowed down dramatically.

Please continue to be very aware when locking up as we are still very vulnerable on ALL sites.

### **External Hire**

As always please keep external hire to a minimum wherever possible. Hire Suspensions are possible as long as we are given NOTICE to reduce transport costs. Please remember to fill up machinery when off hiring.

### **Maintenance**

Remember: It is your responsibility to ensure that "user maintenance" of plant and equipment is completed when you use it. Daily checks must be carried out, and the necessary checklist completed and any faults reported. **If the plant/equipment is unserviceable do not use it.** Regular greasing, level checks etc **DOES** help reduce major repairs. Steve and Jon are working hard on keeping the plant and vehicles maintained; your help with this is vital and appreciated.

With sites coming to an end and new ones started, a new schedule will be with you very soon.

Thank you for your continued help and support in all the above mentioned.

Gary & Karla



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### **CITB Construction Apprentice**

This course covers subjects that are essential to today's construction sites. All candidates will be required to complete a Skills Learning exercise, and some will need to attend the college for further tests.

This will be a combination of classroom based theory and simulated site activities which will take up to 2 years incorporating 16 weeks at college. At the end candidates will gain level 2 in construction diploma in construction operators, NVQ/SVQ in construction operators, level 1 functional skills and Personal Learning and Thinking Skills.



### **CITB Civil Engineering Technician**

This Course aims to prepare apprentices to become responsible and skilled workers within civil engineering. Entry requirements are a minimum of four GCSEs at grade A\*-C or equivalent (to include Maths, a science subject and English). All candidates will be required to complete a skills learning exercise and to attend the college to complete a maths test.

The duration of the course is 3 years and can either be done as either a standard course with 19 weeks of college training or as an extended course with 27 weeks of college training. The college training is completed in year 1 with year 2 and 3 being employer-based work experience with assessment for the level3 NVQ/SVQ Diploma in Construction contracting Operations, carried out by the National Construction College.

This will be a combination of classroom based theory and workshop based practicals. At the end candidates will have a BTEC Diploma Level 3 Construction and Built Environment, level 3 NVQ/SVQ Diploma in Construction Contracting Operations, Level 2 Functional Skills and Personal learning and Thinking Skills.

**For more details or to apply for either course please contact head office.**



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