

WIRE LINE



worldwide
news &
views number 3

Chairman Retires

November 27th 1978 marked the end of an era in the history of BPB Instruments Ltd. On that date the company's Founder Chairman, J.R. Gunn, retired from active membership of the BPB Industries Group, to be replaced as Chairman of BPB Instruments' Board by D.R. Reeves.

WIRE LINE wishes Mr. Gunn and his wife an enjoyable retirement on behalf of all the company's employees and takes this opportunity to acquaint newer employees with a little of the company's history and the part played in its development by Mr. Gunn.

Eighteen years ago British Plasterboard Ltd established a Geophysics section within its Geological Department. The task of this initially small group was to apply geophysical techniques to the location and assessment of gypsum reserves. Seismic techniques were the main area of interest for a number of years although some experimentation with simple resistivity logging was undertaken as early as 1962 in gypsum deposits in Yorkshire.

By 1967 the Geophysics section had acquired some very basic wireline logging equipment in the form of a hand operated winch, a simple resistivity sonde, both 'home made', and a slimline gamma sonde bought from Neltronics, a company in the USA. In the late sixties successful demonstrations of this equipment in Germany led to increased interest in developing wireline equipment and expertise within the Group. Early experiments had demonstrated that this limited range of logging equipment could give worthwhile and repeatable results in coal as well as gypsum deposits. This followed a notable historic precedent established in the late twenties by the founding fathers of well logging, the brothers Schlumberger, whose trials, both in their native France and in Rumania, proved conclusively that resistivity logging could be a valuable tool in coal exploration.

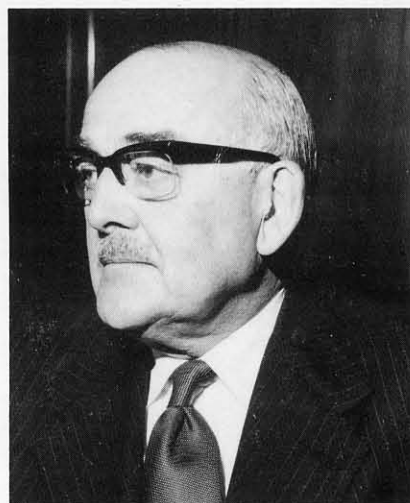
In 1968 the Geophysics section of the Geological Department was reconstituted to form BPB Industries Ltd Geophysics and Nucleonics Department with a specific brief to take up the development of a wireline service within the Group. At about this time a chance visit to the new Department led to an official request from Westroc, the Group's Canadian plasterboard manufacturers, for a feasibility study on a viable method of measuring plasterboard length in the production plant. Optical pulse generators proved to be the solution not only to the plasterboard plant's problem but, initially at least, to one aspect of engineering a wireline logging system, cable measurement. Despite the fact that improvements to winch design soon changed the depth measuring system, the Board Speed and Length Inventory Monitoring equipment which resulted from Westroc's request formed the basis of the company's later interests in plant instrumentation.

In 1970 the Geophysics and Nucleonics Department became BPB Industries (Instruments) Ltd., the company name having since changed to BPB Instruments Ltd. Its wireline logging system had developed considerably. It now included four types of radiation sonde; the gamma sonde, in something like its present form, a long space density tool, albeit somewhat primitive by comparison with CCS, a high resolution density tool and a neutron sonde. The newly developed Radiation Panel formed the backbone of the up hole equipment and a simple resistivity tool completed the system. This basic unit

had undergone a number of trials and was already proving useful not only to the Group itself but to outside clients, particularly the NCB, who were quick to realise its potential in large scale drilling programmes. In the early seventies some changes were also afoot on the plasterboard front. The Group's plant at Erith had acquired an Ehram digitally controlled knife after the closure of a board plant operated by ICI. The knife's control system proved somewhat outdated and the young company, by virtue of its involvement with Inventory Monitoring systems, was asked to help out with the Erith cutter, a request which led to the development of BPB Instrument's cutter control.

Over the eight years since the company's formation, progress has been extremely rapid. A complete and far reaching development programme has altered the wireline system almost beyond recognition. The ever increasing opportunity to compare log results with a variety of geological formations, coupled with the advent of magnetic tape recording and computer processing facilities for log data has provided genuine advances in coal log interpretation. And, in less than a decade, BPB Instruments Ltd has gained a reputation as a world leader in coal logging, expanding from a small department to become the UK's biggest mainland logging operation with bases as far apart as Canada and New Zealand.

J.R. Gunn



The company's guiding light has always been John Ridley Gunn. He joined the BPB Industries Group in 1953 as General Manager of the old Gyproc company in Robertsbridge, Sussex. He had a mining engineering background, having worked in the iron ore industry, after active service as an artillery Major in the 8th Army, and was appointed Group Mining Engineer in 1958. His interest in new exploration techniques was at the root of the formation of a Geophysics section in the Geological Department soon after his appointment to the Parent Board in 1960.

He supported the first tentative wireline logging experiments in gypsum deposits in Yorkshire and later in Germany and his efforts obtained funds for the purchase of the original gamma sonde equipment from Neltronics. He was responsible for the reconstitution of the Geophysics section in 1968 and the formation of the short-lived Geophysics and Nucleonics Department. Just two years later he produced a scheme for this Department to form BPB Industries (Instruments) Ltd.

The existence of the company, whose chairman he has been since 1970, was due in no small part to the fact that he alone of the Group's senior members had the foresight to see the potential of wireline logging techniques. His enthusiasm for logging and his active encouragement of both a rapid rate of expansion and the initial use of the service outside Group companies have proved major factors in the firm's success. Its growth from a small department to a major company on the verge of opening a new £500,000 Engineering and Production Block is due in large part to the fact that on no occasion since

1960 has a capital application for expansion been refused, and, through Mr. Gunn's influential support, the Group has always proved willing to provide the necessary backing where larger amounts have been involved.

In his position as Group Mining Director, Mr. Gunn had many responsibilities for Gypsum production around the world and it is remarkable that, in spite of these heavy commitments, he always found time to lend his enthusiasm, interest and considerable support to wireline logging activities.

Second Base

The youngest BPB operating base at Grand Junction, Colorado, started settling into its new accommodation late in November. WIRE LINE, hoping to prompt our New World colleagues to contribute to a forthcoming issue, decided to take this opportunity to give its readers some of the background to USA operations. Richard Wroot, ex-manager of the Evansville base was on hand to provide the information.

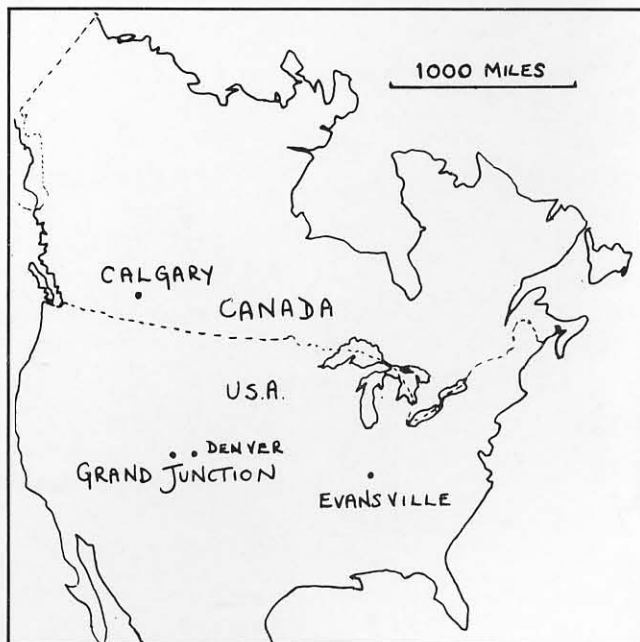
Evansville, the home of BPB's Eastern USA base, has a population of 150,000 and is situated at the centre of a farming community on the Northern bank of the Ohio river in S.W. Indiana. The 'Banks of the O-hi-O' provide pleasant if not spectacular scenery, rolling countryside reminiscent of England's midland counties rather than the treeless plains of the Western states. The climate, however, can be more spectacular, producing 20°F of frost and more snow than BPB's Canadian employees are likely to see in the winter. In summer, 100°F combines with high humidity to remind the Europeans at the Evansville base that they share the same latitude as southern Spain. The weather corridor which brings the humidity in from the Gulf of Mexico is also notorious for its ferocious summer thunderstorms and flash floods; the Ohio, even in mild flood is an awesome sight and after devastating floods in 1938 Evansville was surrounded by a system of artificial flood protection levées.

The town's most important claim to geographical fame, as far as logging is concerned, is that it is conveniently sited in the Illinois Basin, a massive bowl shaped geological formation and one of the world's major coal fields. Covering most of Illinois, Southern Indiana and Western Kentucky, the Illinois Basin coal deposits are the home territory of some of America's oldest coal companies. BPB's logging base is in the centre of the Basin's most actively worked portion, close to both the strip mines at the Basin's edge and the underground mines nearer its centre.

The Illinois Basin coalfield is by no means the sole market for Evansville's logging services. The past year has brought jobs as far apart as Texas to the SW and Pennsylvania to the NE, both 800 miles overland from Evansville.

BPB Instruments Inc., the operating company which works the base, was opened in August 1977, by Richard Wroot who had transferred from the Canadian base at Calgary. In September he was joined by Andy Reynolds (ex Indonesia and U.K.) and, the following month, Phil Waters on a mammoth drive brought a second logging truck down from Calgary, a journey of around 2,000 miles. Evansville's commercial success is reflected in its growth since then. The base now has a full complement of four logging units, five engineers, a manager and a secretary. In line with the company's policy of hiring local labour four of the six staff are American. Carol Day, BPB Instruments Inc. secretary, started work with the firm late in 1977. Mark Birch, the first American engineer on BPB's staff, also took up his post in late '77 and has since been joined by Chris Donahue and Mike Ward. WIRE LINE extends a late but nevertheless warm welcome to all four.

Geoff Grace took over from Richard Wroot as Centre Manager on 1st July '78 and BPB Instruments Inc. continues to establish itself as a major service company to a large number of coal exploration and production companies in the Illinois Basin.



WIRE LINE'S apologies to its readers for the quality of the map. The atlas has been shot.

The progress made to date is encouraging, especially in the light of the importance of the clients gained and the amount of competition present. Unlike some other BPB centres, Evansville has no single major client. Working both for coal companies and the coal departments of major oil firms, attracted into the industry by the federal policy of doubling coal output to reduce American reliance on foreign oil, has given BPB a favourable opportunity to demonstrate the advantages of logging over traditional coring methods. Evansville, like the Canadian and Australian branches of BPB, has to face competition from a number of other logging companies working in the same area. Our off site analysis and interpretation facilities have proved a great advantage here in building and maintaining BPB Instruments Inc.'s professional reputation.

As well as making significant inroads into the Illinois Basin logging market, Evansville has recently been providing a jump-off point for the establishment of BPB's second USA base at Grand Junction some 250 miles west of Denver, Colorado, in the heart of the Rocky Mountain Range. This second base allows BPB to cover the newer coal workings in Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Arizona and New Mexico; all areas where coal development is benefitting from federal plans for expansion.

Although the equipment and supplies needed to set up the Grand Junction base were imported through Evansville, the twelve hundred miles between the two centres meant that it was impossible to service the mineral exploration capital of Western USA, Denver, from Evansville on a regular basis. Mike Seal, the Grand Junction Centre Manager, and Eric Marshall, senior engineer at Grand Junction, spent the initial period in Colorado in hotels and at Coal Company Work Camps. In November however, the western base moved into its own office and garage accommodation and began independent life as a separate operating unit.

Although Grand Junction is not particularly grand — it's less than a third the size of Evansville — it is at a junction between the rivers Colorado and Gunnison, and it does boast spectacular mountain scenery and good winter skiing. From the Company's point of view, it is almost on the doorstep of

Ballad of Oaky Creek

Dear Editor,

After briefly thumbing through Issue No. 1 of your publication, and admittedly being most impressed by your eye for a good snap-photo, I must profess to being totally amazed at the lack of mention of God's Own Little Island. To get the Australian contribution off on a cultural footing, I hereby enter for critical appraisal a verse that should once and for all scotch the idea that youse poms are the only b*****s who can write a rhyme.

It goes without saying that due deference is extended to that master of the English language who composed the original epic, of which this little beaut is a much abbreviated (47 verses if my memory serves me correctly) parody.

Yours Antipodean Correspondent,

ROLAND TURNER

Historical Note: In the winter of 1977, Houston Oil & Minerals obtained the exploration rights for Oaky Creek. BPB Australia obtained a contract for the down-hole logging, which commenced in August 1977 and is still going on . . .

THE BALLAD OF OAKY CREEK

Gather round all youse pommies
And I'll tell youse what HOM is

When the sun gets warm on a Queensland morn
And the cess-pit begins to reek
Not a cloud in the sky
And the bull-dust is high
Youse must be at Oaky Creek

So push me a stool, and crack me a stub
And a tale to youse I'll relate
Of Rhino, Nick
And Bundy George
And the others who've shared their fate.

Since Bundy George and Rhino
Set forth for Oaky Creek
A thousand bores
Have been logged for the cause
Of locating German Creek.

Twass a time of great excitement
In those early years at HOM
With the 'roos and the booze
And the porn, and the scorn
If youse happened to be a pom.

For the drilling started thick and fast
But soon we began to see
That rarely a soul
Knew the depth of a hole
Save the boys of BPB.

Now certain things don't vary much
From Barnsley to the Barrier Reef
Too bloody right
A pathetic sight
A geologist in grief!

"How thick's my lovely coal seam?"
We hear the sad lament.
"There's a metre of core"
"But three-fifty four!"
"Is your chart-recorder bent??"

Glossary

HOM

Houston Oil & Minerals Australia Inc. — very easy to type.

Rhino

Affectionate nom-de-guerre of D.R.G. Williams.

Bundy

Nectar-like brown liquid distilled from sugar cane at Bundaberg and, of late, much favoured as a panacea by Z.J. Ciesla.

German Creek

Nomenclature associated with an expensive subterranean black substance of apparently inexplicable importance. Abbreviation of 'Stubbie'. Glass receptacle of characteristic shape and 370 ml. capacity. Much observed, notably in Queensland, singly, in half dozens (six packs) or in two dozens (cartons or cartoons) and usually containing Fouxex.

Fouxex (XXXX)

Brewed by Castlemaine Perkins Ltd., of Brisbane. A powerful bitter ale much in demand in Central and Southern Queensland. N.B. Should only be drunk cold and treated with the greatest respect at temperatures in excess of 15°C, when its explosive qualities are barely rivalled by TNT.

Carlton

Same genus as Fouxex. Not mentioned in narrative, nor very much in Queensland.

I have to go back to Oaky Creek
My field leave's passed in a trice
Why can't they find coal
In a nice, shallow hole
At Surfers Paradise?

I have to go back to Oaky Creek
To the home of the frozen stub
Where a man can forget
With Fouxex to abet
In that bush Loney Heart's Club.

Stone the crows and starve the lizard,
That Bolton Bard's a bloomin' wizard,
Spends half his time
Writin' rhyme,
And downin' tubes with exiled Poles.
Suits him more than loggin' holes

WIRE LINE

the main Denver offices of the organisations currently developing the coal in 'cowboy country' and it also gives Mike and Eric convenient main highway access to Wyoming, Arizona, New Mexico and the other Western Coal States. WIRE LINE understands that, to preserve BPB's American tradition of epic journeys Mike and Eric have already been logging in Washington state, a thousand miles to the North West of Grand Junction.

The future of both American bases looks bright. Bright in the East thanks to the company's growing reputation in an old established coal community. And bright in the West because the younger, more innovative, coal industry there is already familiar with logging thanks to the presence of a thriving mineral exploitation industry all around the Rockies particularly in the uranium deposits of Wyoming. Shallow oil and gas deposits close to both Eastern and Western bases also hold future logging prospects as a bonus to the excellent outlook for coal.

WIRE LINE wishes the staff of both centres well and hopes to hear from them in future editions.

WIRE LINE resisted the temptation to feature a picture of the first USA logging operation. Rocky mountain scenery appears instead.



First Catch Your Goose

Something in the air south of the Equator seems to urge BPB's antipodean representatives to great literary endeavour. From New Zealand Mick Chaplin sends WIRE LINE'S first ever cookery article . . .

It was a bright moonlit night at Piano Flats as the three hunters met to begin the night's adventure. Weapons were collected and checked; the spotlight was given a final polish; the five prongs on the spear were razor sharp and your intrepid reporter's camera was cocked, ready to get shots of the night's events to beam to East Leake by satellite for the latest issue of WIRE LINE.

Actually your roving reporter thought this could only be a complete washout. How could this compare with a midnight sortie to Loch Ness? True, we didn't see the monster, but only because we were asleep most of the time. Yet many people had said, "You get them this big" — stretching their arms, fisherman style, until you couldn't help but grin and think "Who's this joker?"

Still, every clue in the life of a WIRE LINE reporter must be followed to its very end, every trail must be exhausted in the search to bring our readers the truth.

The idea was to sneak along the banks of a creek, searching the water with a spotlight for these beasts, then, while they are dazed and confused, wondering how come dawn has broken so soon, one lunges with the spear and the hapless victim shouldn't stand a chance.

Actually it didn't turn out quite like that. The first two — skinny ones — were able to dodge the rather poor aim of the screaming and yelling hunters and, in the mud stirred up by the battle, they made good their escape. Then the spotlight fell on a log . . . which stirred . . . which moved . . . no more a log than me or you! The game was up.

The confusion of the next few minutes was pretty indescribable; blaming each other for the loss of the previous victims, two hunters fought for the spear. Your fearless reporter was in more danger than the beastie now trying to make a run for it downstream. This was its undoing for, in some shallows, the spear found its mark.

The next trick was to sling the prey up and over onto dry land but, because the spear had no barbs, it managed to get away. Trying to slither back to the creek, it was easily pinned down again. Keeping clear of its dangerous fangs, we tried to kill it by, first of all, cutting into the tail where its heart is supposed to lie, and then, by severing its neck.

A good catch, roughly three and a half feet long and about three inches diameter, big enough for a mighty meal.

Next issue, 101 ways to cook eel . . .

WIRE LINE COMPETITION

The winner by a majority vote — there were three entries and two of them were his — of last issue's caption competition was Nick Reade. Double congratulations to Nick, both on composing the caption "I always thought they could see in the dark, anyway", and on his new post as Deputy Manager, UKL.

WIRE LINE points out that the promotion had nothing to do with Competition. Nick's prize was an expertly forged £1 note. Another Competition will appear, if space permits in the next issue.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to All our Readers.

WIRE LINE invites copy from all BPB Instruments employees, wherever they are based. Its resources are limited and, unless it gains the support of overseas bases, it will become a magazine dominated by activity at East Leake. Please send any photographs or stories which you would like to see in the next edition to Martin Curran at East Leake. Subject matter does not have to be work oriented — WIRE LINE hopes to make its pages as full of variety and interest as the characters and interests of the people who form the Company.

BPB INSTRUMENTS Ltd., East Leake, Near Loughborough, Leicestershire, England.

Instrument Reading

Lack of space in this issue prevents WIRE LINE from doing full justice to all the happenings on the board plant side of the company since the last issue.

The Knife pictured above is the first of what we hope to be a long line of cutters built to a British Gypsum

design and marketed by BPB Instruments, a new venture for the company. When the photograph was taken the knife and its thyristor control were undergoing soak tests prior to their delivery to Domtar's Canadian plasterboard plant at Caledonia just outside Toronto. Domtar ordered the knife, its automated control system and a full set of spares and Board Speed and Length equipment from the company in Instruments' largest single order for plasterboard control systems; the first time the company has been responsible for a complete knife installation, cutter and control. To confirm the success of this new enterprise, a second cutter and control system has already been ordered by Westroc, Calgary.

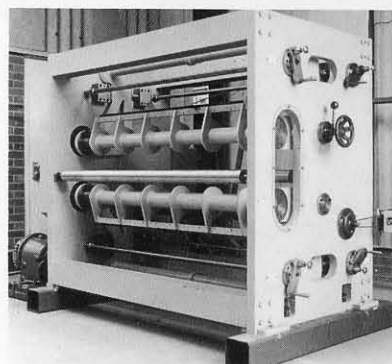


Photo
EUROBRIT
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Welcome Mat

Since the last issue a large crop of new faces have been welcomed into the company fold. Mixing its metaphors, as ever, WIRE LINE extends greetings and congratulations on their new and, by now, not so new appointments to the following: in R & E, Alpha Kanu, Winston Rose and Yvonne Taylor; in Production, Paul Melton, Dave Branson, Rob Wood and Cliff Batchford; in UKL, Chris McIlveen, Peter Charnaud, John Houston, Ian Donkin, Martin Dearlove, Tony Betts, Robert Askew and Christine Swift; in SAF, Rob Weihmann, Lawrence Brown and Steve Willsher; in CDN, Doug Wark and David Hall; in AUS, Patrick Daley; and for the second time this issue, in the USA, Chris Donahue and Mark Ward.



The photograph printed above was taken at the end of a logging training programme organised by Ops at East Leake in August. The relatively new arrivals in the picture, some of whom are now on assignment in SAF are as follows; L to R, Peter Charnaud, Rob Weihmann, Chris McIlveen, Lawrence Brown, Steve Willsher and John Houston. The other people in the picture are Wendy Raper, operations secretary and mainstay of East Leake's Portakabins, and on the extreme left and right of the group, John Pasley and John Kirwan, respectively, neither of them trainees!