

# GREEN

SPRING 2012

The magazine for National Grid grantors



nationalgrid

## Victorian vintage

The Black Country park  
recreating its glorious past

## FIFTY YEARS ON THE FRONT LINE

A gas technician looks  
back at his career

# Out of the darkness

Shining a light on rhubarb growing in Yorkshire

PLUS: Casting a spell in Cornwall • A capital response • Biting into a new market • Wine and Dine competition

# WELCOME TO GRIDLINE

Our first edition of 2012 has a **sparkling new look**, but the same rich blend of **fascinating** stories

**A** belated Happy New Year to all readers. As you'll see, our Spring issue has had something of a facelift as we strive to keep Gridline a fresh and engaging read that appeals to different grantors everywhere.

As well as having a fabulous new image, the revamped Gridline will help us include even more grantor stories: articles that take an in-depth look at people who apply both innovation and industry to their land.

This time round we get the inside story on rhubarb growing in Yorkshire, then visit two vastly different grantor sites in the Midlands - one a recreational park in the Black Country, and the other a crisp manufacturer in Staffordshire.

All three stories are a testament to the sheer breadth of expertise that enterprising grantors are showing on their land. We're always looking for similar profiles to feature in future editions of Gridline, so if you use your land in an interesting and diverse way, we'd love to hear from you via the telephone number or email address on the right.

With its reach to over 36,000 people,



Gridline is an ideal way to showcase your speciality interests.

And a showcase is very much what we've given Barry Clarke: a National Grid employee who is celebrating 50 years in the industry, which itself turns

200 years old this year. Barry's story offers a rare first-hand perspective on how the industry has changed since 1962, just as we offer a glimpse of what the future may bring too.

Enjoy the magazine!

**Dawn McCarroll**  
Editor, Gridline

## GOT A STORY?

Please contact Gridline if you have any news or stories that you think would be of interest to other grantors.

**Tel:** 01926 656 325

**Email:** [gridline@uk.ngrid.com](mailto:gridline@uk.ngrid.com)

**Write to:** Gridline,  
Summersault Communications,  
23-25 Waterloo Place, Warwick Street,  
Leamington Spa, Warwickshire CV32 5LA.

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## National Grid's Land and Development Group

The Land and Development Group is responsible for acquiring all rights and permissions from statutory authorities and landowners needed to install, operate and maintain National Grid's electricity and gas transmission networks. The Group acts as the main interface for landowners who have gas and electricity equipment installed on their land. Your local contacts are listed below.

### ELECTRICITY AND GAS

- North-west and Scotland 0161 776 0706
- South-east 01268 642 091
- South-west 01452 316 059
- East 0113 290 8235.

### WAYLEAVE PAYMENTS

- For information on wayleave payments, telephone the payments helpline on 0800 389 5113.

### CHANGE OF DETAILS

- To inform National Grid of changes in ownership or contact details, telephone 0800 389 5113 or email [grantorservices@uk.ngrid.com](mailto:grantorservices@uk.ngrid.com).

### ELECTRICITY EMERGENCY

- Emergency calls to report pylon damage to National Grid can be made on 0800 404 090. Note the tower's number - found just below the property plate - to help crews locate it.

### ELECTRIC AND MAGNETIC FIELDS

- For information on electric and magnetic fields, call the EMF information line on 08457 023 270 (local call rate). Website: [www.emfs.info](http://www.emfs.info).

### GAS EMERGENCY

- 0800 111 999.

### DIAL BEFORE YOU DIG

- Before carrying out any work in the vicinity of gas pipelines, overhead power lines or underground electric cables, you should contact Plant Protection on 0800 688 588 so that searches can be made to determine the exact position of any National Grid assets.

### CUSTOMER COMMENTS

- Write to Land & Development, National Grid House, Warwick Technology Park, Gallows Hill, Warwick, Warwickshire CV34 6DA. Or email [ld.customercomments@uk.ngrid.com](mailto:ld.customercomments@uk.ngrid.com).



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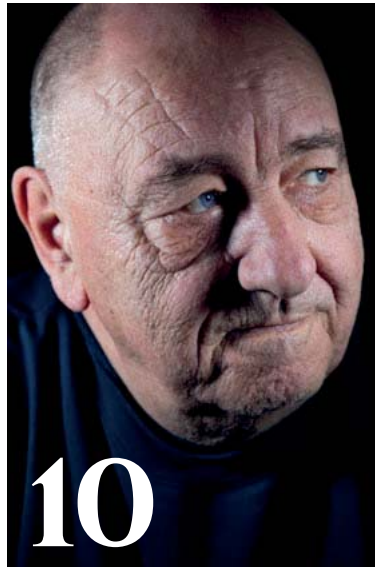


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Turn to page 20 for the result of last issue's photo competition

## M&S giftcard competition winner

Congratulations to Cambridgeshire gas grantor Margaret Seed of Ash Tree Cottage, Thurning, near Peterborough, who is the winner of Gridline's £150 M&S giftcard competition in the last issue.

"We heard about our win while on a winter break in Majorca, which made the holiday even more memorable," said Margaret, who runs a business selling animal feed and horse bedding. "Rather than fritter the £150 away on food, I've decided to treat myself to some new clothes," she added.

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National Grid had to access more than 650 pylons from southern Scotland to Teesside and grantors played a vital role

## Transmission project a massive team effort

A MAJOR FIVE-YEAR transmission reinforcement project in north-east England has been completed, so that much-needed new wind generation schemes north of the border can be connected up.

The purpose of the Transmission Investment for Renewable Generation (TIRG) project was to increase north-south transfer capacity and eliminate transmission bottlenecks in north-east and north-west England.

National Grid lands officers liaised with more than 300 grantors during the project, arranging access to 650-plus towers over numerous overhead power lines from southern Scotland to Teesside. New wayleave agreements were

needed with landowners for major parts of the works, as well as planning and other consents.

"In some cases, temporary roads, bridges and other significant works were needed to access towers with heavy machinery," said Wilson Holmes, lands officer east. "All work had to be carried out with minimal

disruption to farming activities.

"The project was also delayed by the weather - major floods in 2008 and the severe winter of 2010/2011. We worked on some areas of land for more than two years and the co-operation of all the affected grantors during this time was crucial to the successful delivery of the project."

### TIRG - the key elements

- A new 22km section of 400kV power line between Norton (Stockton-on-Tees) and Spennymoor (County Durham). A total of 76 towers on the existing 275kV line were dismantled and replaced with 70 new towers.
- Overhead lines refurbished between substations at Stella West (near Newcastle upon Tyne), Eccles (near Coldstream, Scotland) and Blyth (in Northumberland).
- The Spennymoor to Blyth line was upgraded to 400kV.
- New construction and extensions to the 400kV substations at Blyth, Stella West, Spennymoor and Norton.

# Customer first

National Grid has a good reputation for safety and reliability, but what's its customer service like?

## NATIONAL GRID UK

Transmission recently published a customer commitment setting out a fresh approach to how it delivers its services.

"Our company plays a vital role at the centre of the energy industry, transporting gas and electricity to customers and communities," said Diane Whilding, customer strategy manager at National Grid.

"It's important that we maintain open and honest relationships with customers and stakeholders, and understand their needs and expectations.

"Our commitment is to make our activities more transparent, to communicate better, and to work more flexibly."

Keeping customers and other stakeholders happy also makes good business sense.

From 2013, National Grid will operate under a new regulatory regime, which offers rewards - in the form of incentives - to those energy companies that are able to demonstrate excellent

customer service.

"We are conscious that our business and processes can be complex and difficult to understand," said Diane.

"But we are committed to finding solutions that work for our customers and other stakeholders.

"In many cases it's about getting the basics right. For example, responding quickly to customer enquiries, keeping people informed about the progress of a particular issue or timescale change, and being proactive in finding solutions."



## For more information...



... visit [www.nationalgrid.com/uk](http://www.nationalgrid.com/uk) and search for 'customer commitment'.

## Our customer commitment

- We will work closely with you to build a foundation for trust through open and honest relationships.
- We will listen, understand your needs and expectations, and seek solutions that work for you.
- We will help you understand our business so that we can work better together.
- We will be accountable for delivering a clear and timely service.
- We will seek and act upon your feedback.

## News in brief

### CAUGHT IN THE ACT

A man has been sentenced to three years in prison following three incidents last August, where sections of aluminium earth wire were stolen from a 275kV overhead power line in Middleton, Manchester.

National Grid engineers alerted police who chased and caught the defendant.

The scrap value of the wire was only around £100, but the repairs have cost National Grid £100,000.

The next edition of Gridline will look at the problems of metal theft in detail, and examine how National Grid is looking to work closely with grantors to protect the Company's assets and, of course, grantor property.



### FLYING START

There's nothing like first-hand experience when it comes to identifying birds of prey.

That was the thinking behind a session organised at The Gauntlet Birds of Prey Centre in Knutsford, Cheshire, for a team of National Grid linemen working in the area.

"Before any works, we always identify safety or environmental risks - including birds of prey," explained Alan Clark, the team's environmental coordinator. "Seeing the birds provided a new dimension to the whole learning process."

## County show dates

NATIONAL GRID will be hosting a marquee at eight county shows this summer, offering hospitality, by invitation only, to grantors affected by major projects.

### JUNE

7-9 Royal Cornwall  
7-9 South of England  
19-20 Cheshire

20-21 Lincolnshire Show

### JULY

10-12 Great Yorkshire  
24-26 New Forest & Hampshire

### AUGUST

14-16 Pembrokeshire

### SEPTEMBER

15-16 Newbury



## Contact Gridline



Call, email or go online.  
Tel: 01926 656 325  
Email: [gridline@uk.ngrid.com](mailto:gridline@uk.ngrid.com)  
[www.nationalgrid.com](http://www.nationalgrid.com)

## Animal rescue centre appeals for help

SPIRALLING FORAGE COSTS have led to an appeal for donations of straw and hay for an animal rescue centre in Somerset.

Sheila Brislin, the owner of Puriton Horse and Animal Rescue Centre (a National Grid grantor), said that the price of hay has doubled in just two years.

In the past 18 years, the centre has rehomed more than 10,000 horses, and also has dogs and small animals in its care.

"If an animal has been ill or mistreated, we nurse it back to health and find it a new home where it will be loved," said Sheila.

The centre also needs willing volunteers. Contact Sheila on 07731 732907 for more details.

### For more information...



... about the centre go to: <http://www.puritonhorserescue.org.uk/>

# Hat-trick of wins for Stuart

CONGRATULATIONS TO electricity grantor Dr Stuart Winchester, whose cross-bred Texels were the overall 'champion pen of lambs' for the third year in a row at the 170<sup>th</sup> Hailsham Fatstock Show, in Sussex.

Another of Stuart's pens was awarded reserve champion status and he also won 'first in class' for pens of three, four and five lambs.

"The judge looks at the physical traits of the lambs - that they have a good loin, back end and are in generally good condition - but also at the overall evenness of the pen," explained Stuart. "Before the show, I shortlisted about 21 sheep from the flock of 180 and made a final selection from that."

Stuart keeps Texel sheep because he says they are highly adaptable and do better than other breeds on the poorer, slower-growing grasses that predominate on his 200-acre farm in Ninfield, East Sussex.



## Project watch



## New power link with Belgium

**WHAT?** The demolition in March of three landmark cooling towers and a chimney at the redundant Richborough Power Station in Kent will pave the way for redevelopment of the 300-acre site into a green energy park and the terminal for the first electricity interconnector with Belgium.

**WHO?** The 1,000MW HVDC electricity interconnector project between Zeebrugge and Richborough is being jointly developed by National Grid International Ltd and Elia, the Belgian transmission operator.

**WHY?** Expected to be operational

in 2018, it will provide greater access to electricity markets, promote competition, increase the diversity of supply and contribute to energy security in the two countries. The energy park master plan from site owners Richborough A Ltd calls for multiple operators to produce sustainable energy from materials including wood, crop residues, gases, and household and commercial waste.

### For more information...



... on the Richborough development, go to: <http://www.richboroughenergypark.co.uk>



## One-minute interview



**Oliver Heselton,**  
lands officer  
North-west  
and Scotland

**BACKGROUND:** I joined National Grid in September 2010, after working as a private practice land agent and chartered surveyor specialising in utility surveying and estate management. I have just been appointed vice-president of the Lancashire Agricultural Valuers Association, and will take over as president of the organisation in 2013.

**CURRENT FOCUS:** Electricity and major gas pipeline projects, as well as gas distribution easements, various land issues and acquisitions.

**WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT YOUR JOB?** It has a good balance between the office and getting out to meet new and existing grantors.

**DREAM JOB:** In the motor sport industry – combining business and pleasure!

**TIME OUT:** Spending time with my family, competing in 4x4 off-road events and mountain biking.

**IF YOU WON THE LOTTERY, WHAT WOULD YOU BUY?** A nice country house in the Lake District and a ski chalet in Claviere, Italy.

**IDEAL DINNER GUEST:** Peter Kay, whose brand of comedy is in line with my own northern sense of humour.

**FAVOURITE FILM:** Any Harry Potter film – very cleverly done, and great to watch with the family and some popcorn.

# It's a kind of magic

### A couple's fundraising wizardry helps deliver a much-needed new treatment centre in Cornwall

DAVID AND LORRAINE JASPER are staunch supporters of the Merlin Project - a campaign to develop a centre of excellence in Cornwall for treating people with the disabling neurological condition multiple sclerosis.

The couple - who are National Grid electricity grantors - have raised £25,000 for the centre, near St Austell, since they lost their son Andrew to a similar degenerative disease in 2003. Their efforts were recognised two years ago by an invitation to a garden party at Buckingham Palace hosted by the Queen.

"We got involved after hearing an inspiring talk by Derek Murphy, who started the campaign back in 2001," explained David. "It was called the Merlin Project because raising £2 million was going to require a bit of magic - and Merlin is the one name linked to magic in Cornwall!"

In keeping with the theme, David often puts on a Merlin costume - borrowed from a drama club - when they're out and about raising money. Along with other dedicated volunteers, they fundraise at various events, including their local garden open day.

The Cornish MS Therapy Centre opened in April 2009, offering a range of physiotherapy and complementary treatments, a gym and meeting rooms. Three more treatment rooms were added last year, and the target is now to raise another £200,000 for a hydrotherapy pool.

"The centre has no NHS funding and needs continual financial support just to operate on a day-to-day basis," said David. "It's a real lifeline for the 1,500 people living with MS in Cornwall, and makes a huge difference to their quality of life."

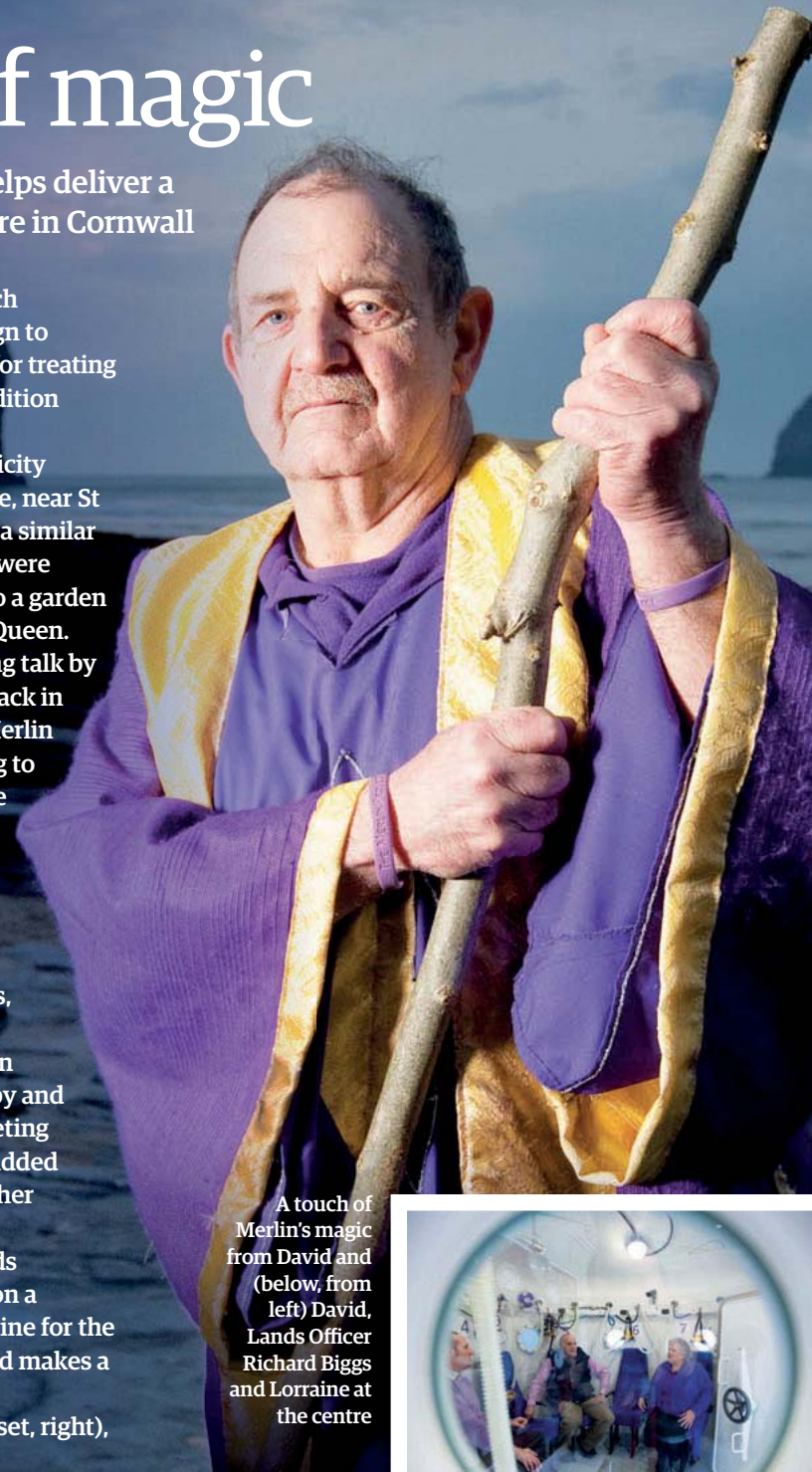
A state-of-the-art hyperbaric chamber (inset, right), which delivers high doses of oxygen for symptom relief, has been a particular asset. Previously, people had to travel outside the county for treatment.

Lands officer Richard Biggs has known the Jaspers for years. "They're a lovely couple and I admire them tremendously for the time and effort they put into the fundraising," he said.

## For more information...



... on the Cornish MS Therapy Centre go to: <http://www.merlinproject.org.uk/>



A touch of Merlin's magic from David and (below, from left) David, Lands Officer Richard Biggs and Lorraine at the centre



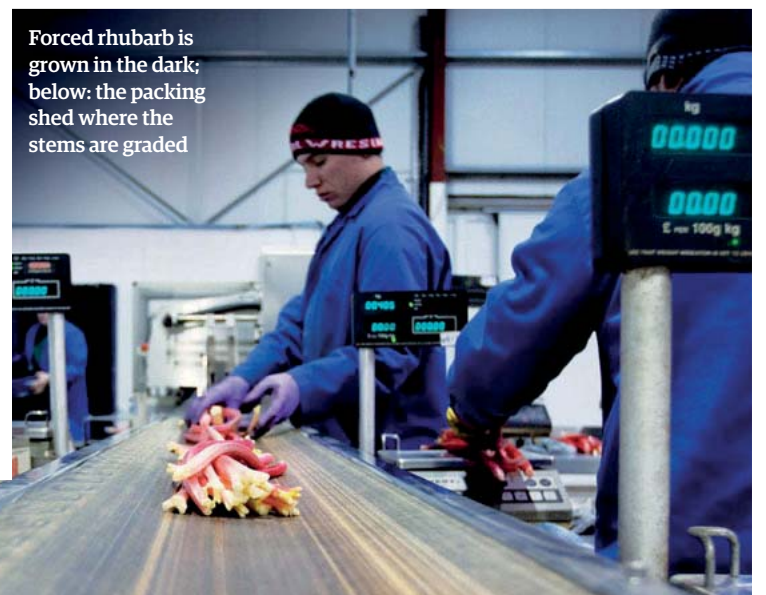


Left: Janet Oldroyd Hulme in the candlelit forcing shed; above: Carlton in Yorkshire is home to E Oldroyd & Sons

# RHUBARB

## STEPS OUT OF THE DARK

**Yorkshire Forced Rhubarb** is a rare local delicacy to be savoured in the cold winter months when imports dominate. And it's enjoying a wave of popularity



Forced rhubarb is grown in the dark; below: the packing shed where the stems are graded





Above: Oldroyd's supplies forced rhubarb to some of the country's leading supermarkets; right: Oldroyd's premium Crimson Crown stems go to Covent Garden in London, where they find their way into some of the country's top restaurants

In a long, low-roofed shed, a sea of shocking pink and yellow rhubarb stretches into the distance. Flickering candles mounted on iron stakes driven into the ground cast eerie shadows, providing just enough illumination for the 'pullers', as they are known, to harvest the tender stalks.

Rhubarb has been grown in dark, heated forcing sheds, like those of E Oldroyd & Sons (a National Grid grantor), for 150 years. The company is based in the Yorkshire village of Carlton - in the heart of the famed Rhubarb Triangle, a nine-square mile area between Wakefield, Morley and Rothwell.

In a frost pocket of the Pennines, the area provides ideal rhubarb-growing conditions, with its deep, cold top soil, which retains moisture. Shoddy, a waste product of the wool industry, is used as a nitrogen-fixing fertiliser along with manure, and the sheds are now heated by propane gas or diesel (they used to be heated by local coal).

Janet Oldroyd Hulme, the fourth generation of a family of growers, is known as the 'high priestess of forced rhubarb' for her achievements in promoting the industry. It was she who masterminded the six-year campaign to win Protected Designation of Origin status in March 2010. Only produce grown in the area using traditional methods can now be sold as Yorkshire Forced Rhubarb.

"We were the first fresh product grown on mainland soil to get the PDO status, as opposed to a prepared product, and it really put us on the map," said Janet proudly.

### The history of rhubarb

The Oldroyd family have grown the vegetable (it's not a fruit because it doesn't have seeds) since the 1930s. In the heyday of the triangle, there were 200 growers supplying 90 per cent of the world's forced rhubarb production. Until the 1960s, the railways ran a daily Rhubarb Express, taking crates of rhubarb to London to be sold in Covent Garden market.

Rhubarb helped sustain the nation in World War Two. But sugar rationing and exotic imported fruit led to a decline and now there are only 11 growers. In the 1960s, Janet's father Ken fought hard to save what was then a dying industry. There was massive over-production and with prices falling, many growers went out of business or turned to other crops.

Happily, forced rhubarb has enjoyed a remarkable renaissance, with celebrity chefs finding new ways to use the vegetable, not just in puddings but to accompany rich meats, such as duck, or oily fish.

"There is also renewed interest in buying locally sourced seasonal produce with reduced air miles," said Janet.

The vegetable is something of a superfood too. It's low in

### It's a fact

- Only three plants can be forced - rhubarb, chicory and asparagus.
- Rhubarb roots intended for forcing are kept outdoors for a minimum of two years without cropping to ensure an energy store is laid down in the root. Once the frost has broken their dormancy, the roots are carefully lifted by hand and placed on the bare ground in heated forcing sheds where they are grown on in dark conditions.
- Being deprived of light and food forces the roots to use their stored energy reserves for growth - effectively conning nature to produce a crop out of season.
- Unwisely, rhubarb leaves were eaten as table greens in Elizabethan times - the oxalic acid in the leaves is highly toxic.
- Chef Rick Stein says rhubarb is 'the best pudding in the world'.

calories and acts as a metabolic stimulator, making it ideal for those on diets. It's high in calcium and contains fibre, which lowers cholesterol, and potassium, which is good for the heart.

"The stems are rich in polyphenols, natural chemicals, which, recent research suggests, may help to mop up the pollutants that trigger cancer," said Janet.

Today, the supermarkets account for the majority of the 1,000 tonnes of rhubarb (200 forced) sold by E Oldroyd & Sons. The forced crop usually appears from January to March, with the outdoor variety replacing it around April.

Current challenges include the rising costs of fertiliser and fuel. Changing weather patterns are also a concern. "In my father's day the season for forced rhubarb was December to April - two months longer," Janet said. "Yields have also been affected by summer droughts and milder weather in the winter.

"But our customers continue to love the story behind rhubarb - and they like the taste even more."

### In numbers

**200** tonnes of forced rhubarb grown by E Oldroyd & Sons is sold to supermarkets and wholesalers. The forced crop appears from January to March.

### For more information...



... on forced rhubarb visit:  
<http://www.yorkshirerhubarb.co.uk>



“Some of the people who trained us had fought in the war and watching how they dealt with situations really toughened you up”

# CONNECTING PEOPLE

As the gas industry turns **200 years old**, one of National Grid's **longest-serving gas technicians** explains why, although the technology may have changed, **caring about the customer** is what matters most

**I**t was 30 April 1962 when a fifteen-year-old Barry Clarke first reported for work at the Abbots Lane depot in Coventry, beginning a fascinating five-decade career in a job he still loves to this day.

"Things certainly have changed around here since then," said Barry, a first call operative who turns 65 this year. "But it's been change for the better, I think. To keep doing the job we enjoy doing, we've had to adapt with the times."

When Barry started as a gas fitter's apprentice, he was given a pushbike and the unenviable job of carrying his boss's tools around Coventry. This was in the era of manufactured gas, when 90 per cent of the UK's supply was derived from coal and where the gas itself could 'kill you in an instant', according to Barry. "Safety standards just weren't the same back then," he said.

But in the same year he started work, seismic surveys of the North Sea were taking place, paving the way for the discovery of natural gas and a remarkable transformation of the industry.

Five years later, the first natural gas was brought ashore at the Easington terminal in the East Riding of Yorkshire. A national programme of conversion followed that lasted for a decade, as engineers converted around 40 million household appliances during this period so they could run on natural gas.

"In the early days, you would be trained to fit appliances, work on central heating, and repair gas fires and cookers," explained Barry. "Now you need different skills and it's more about handling the customer, identifying the problem and asking someone else to come and fix it."

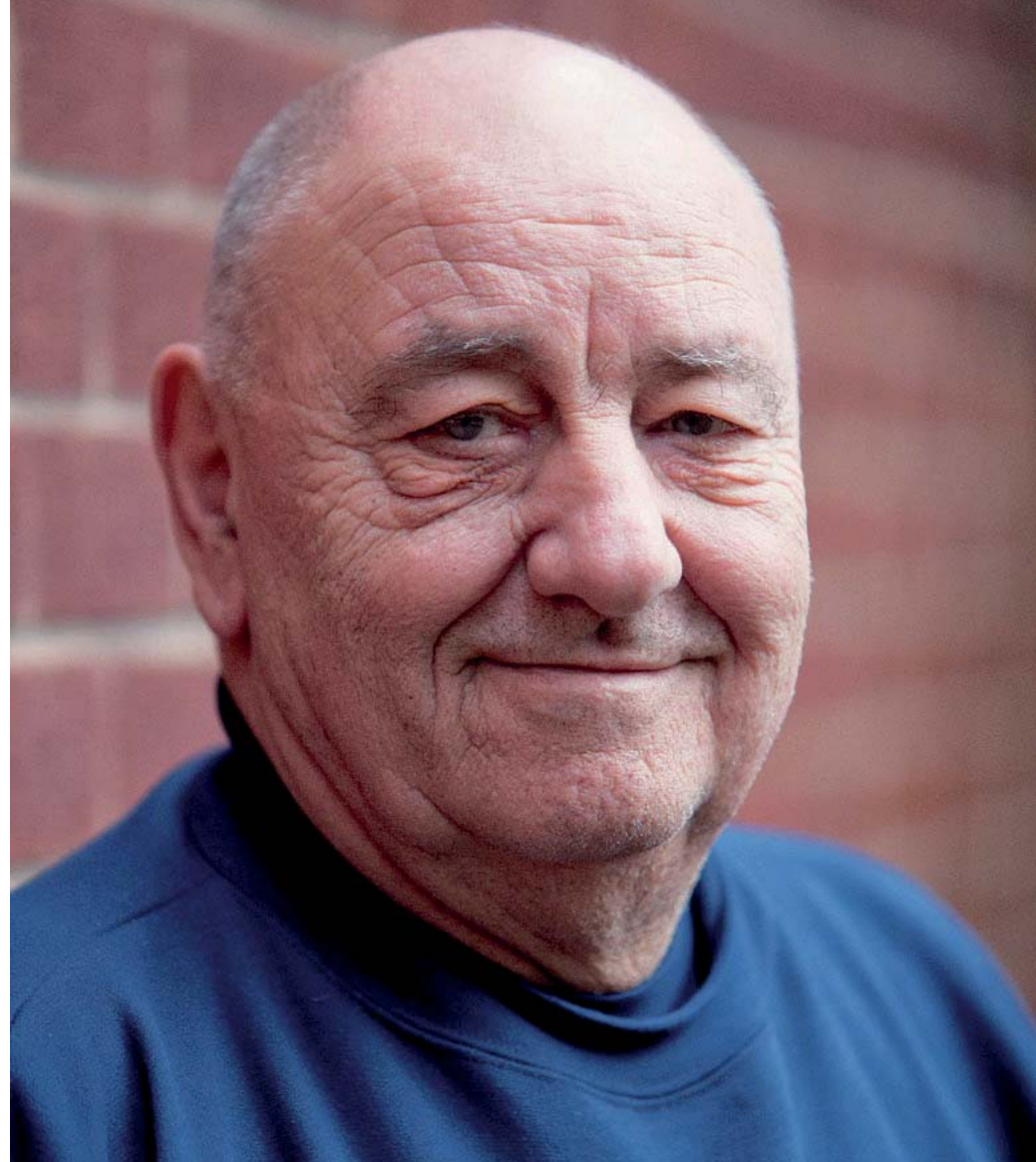
"In the past, you would turn up at the depot and your gaffer would give you tickets that told you what you were working on that day. Now you can start the day from home

and because of that, you don't get to spend as much time with workmates."

Not that there's a sense of camaraderie missing from the Abbots Lane team. Having a good sense of humour is ingrained in the culture there, and it was one of the first things noticed by fellow first call operative Geoff Secret, who started in the early 1970s as Barry's apprentice.

"The banter is really important," said Geoff. "It's character building. When I started, some of the people who trained us had fought in the war and watching how they dealt with situations really toughened you up. But deep down we've always cared about one another here. I still take one of the retired fitters out for a drink when I can." ➔➔





### In numbers

# 13 million

customers went through the natural gas conversion programme in the 1960s and 1970s

# 84%

of all UK properties today use gas for heating, which includes 22 million residential houses

# 45%

the forecasted increase in global gas production and demand to satisfy growing economic needs

# 2020

the year by which the UK could be importing between 60 and 80 per cent of its gas through transnational pipelines linked to Norway, Belgium and the Netherlands.

**Fitting and fixing gas fires was once part of Barry Clarke's job, but times have moved on; Barry is dedicated to the job he loves and is not planning to retire any time soon**

➔ Both men look back fondly on the 1970s and 1980s: a period when separate gas boards joined together to form the centralised British Gas Corporation, and when the National Gas Transmission System developed with terminals opening in Theddlethorpe in Lincolnshire and St Fergus in Scotland. It was a truly national operation, as Barry found out one Christmas when he received an unexpected call from his boss.

"I was asked to drop everything and go up to Edinburgh to help switch three villages back on to the grid," he recalled. "At first I thought it was a wind-up, but I was soon up there getting my hands dirty. That's what it's all about: you've got to take it as it comes and just get on with it."

#### **A living legend**

Barry's can-do attitude and terrific work rate have certainly made him a legend in his own right at Abbotts Lane, as Geoff explained.

"He used to work 100-hour weeks at times and we even called him the Prince of Darkness because he could work nights like nobody else. I can't imagine anybody who's put

**"I love the job. We're like a big family here. There's always plenty of banter - it's almost drummed into you from when you start"**



Customer service and spending time with people is just as important today as it was for employees in the early days



in more hours for the Gas than Barry - and I can't imagine him ever retiring either!"

So why doesn't Barry call it a day and do more of his favourite pastime, fishing? "I love the job," he said. "We're like a big family here. There's always plenty of banter - it's almost drummed into you from when you start - but it helps ease the stress of the job and brings people together."

### More than simply doing the job

Although both Barry and Geoff have been through many changes in the past couple of decades - privatisation, developments in technology, British Gas plc, Transco and now National Grid - there are some things that will always stay the same.

"You've got to know how to listen," said Barry. "There's something in the way I was taught and trained in the early days that has stayed with me. Basic customer service stuff, like how to greet a customer, what questions to ask and the first impression you make.

"I always remember one time in the 1980s when I was called out to visit a council flat to help a lady who had trouble hearing and was part blind. She said there was a gas leak, but really she just wanted to talk.

"It's amazing how much you learn about people in this job: it's like you can sense what they're thinking and feeling just by looking at them. And understanding people, and caring about them, is what this job's really all about."

## From manufactured to natural to renewable

Barry Clarke is one of the few current National Grid employees to have worked in the era of manufactured gas. Stephen Marland, National Grid's future projects and innovation manager (below), explains how natural gas is giving way to a third kind: renewable gas



"Over the past 200 years, gas has transitioned from town gas, which saw gas manufactured synthetically from coal, to natural gas," said Stephen. "In the future, we envisage a world where we blend renewable gas with natural gas within our networks."

Renewable gas is technically the production of methane (the major component within natural gas) from biogenic or thermochemical processes. Methane is emitted from the decomposition of organic wastes.

"Wet wastes, such as sewage or agricultural waste, can be treated to speed up the decaying processes through anaerobic digestion to release methane," explained Stephen.

"The methane can be captured and refined so that it may be blended with gas in our grids. Similarly, and potentially on a larger scale, we also envisage gas could be manufactured synthetically from biomass or municipal and commercial wastes using high temperature gasification technologies.

"In the home, gas-fired fuel cells are predicted to enter service in the next few years, which allow customers to convert gas into electricity and heat. Hybrid heating appliances, using electricity and gas, could use low carbon electricity, when available, and gas in winter when electricity production is less economic."



Adnams' groundbreaking anaerobic digestion plant in Suffolk, which uses brewery and food waste to deliver renewable gas



As the eyes of the world turn to London **this summer**, National Grid is **focused on delivering** an exceptional safety performance for dealing **with gas escapes**

# PREPARING FOR A CAPITAL **RESPONSE**



"We need to make sure we can respond quickly and effectively in the event of an emergency... safety is our foremost concern"

**T**his summer everybody will be looking to London as the city prepares itself for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, the world's biggest celebration of sport and a host of other high-profile events that are part and parcel of life in one of the planet's major cities.

As thousands of people gather at venues across the city to catch the action, and with millions of television viewers watching around the world, event organisers are making safety their absolute priority - and National Grid is on standby, playing a pivotal role to help.

John Elsegood and his team in Gas Distribution have been preparing for emergency responses should there be a gas leak at one of the many venues and locations in use.

**During the summer, First Call Operative Tom Foy (above and inset) and a team of colleagues will use fast-response bikes to deal with any incidents at venues in London**

## Gearing up for a busy summer

- Maintenance work took place at key strategic gas and electricity sites, including those that support Parliament Square and The Mall.
- Electricity substations manned to ensure faster fault response.
- Resilience improved on the electricity transmission system.
- Royal Wedding and London to Surrey Cycle Race used as test events for mobilising the field force.

"This year there will be a huge spotlight on the city and on National Grid too," said John. "So we need to make sure we can respond quickly and effectively in the event of an emergency. As with everything we do, safety is our foremost concern. But with all the big events comes plenty of extra challenges. More people, more traffic, more media attention and more scrutiny. So we've had to work closely with event organisers to make sure any gas escapes are dealt with quickly and successfully."

National Grid has been liaising with local authorities to ensure minimum disruption and maximum effectiveness in its response to incidents. Certain roads around the capital have to be kept free from planned utility works. The Company is also creating 'playbooks' to share with the Gas Distribution field force, which will contain useful information that will help improve service.

Flying squads using fast-response bikes will help National Grid respond quickly to incidents at locations across the city. Equipped with satnav, hands-free phones, laptop computers and normal gas-detection equipment, the fast-response bikes are supported by van-based operatives for more complex jobs or follow-on work. These vehicles have proved to be invaluable in recent high-profile public events including the London Marathon, State Opening of Parliament, the Notting Hill Carnival and last year's royal wedding.

"It's about good communication and transparency of information," John continued. "This summer our usual systems will remain, but we are being funded to provide an enhanced emergency service. We will also keep event organisers and Transport for London notified of any operations too.

"In many ways it's business as usual. But the processes have just been adapted to cope with the safety risks inherent in what are, after all, once-in-a-lifetime events. Our aim is to make National Grid an invaluable, though very discreet, part of London's showcase events."

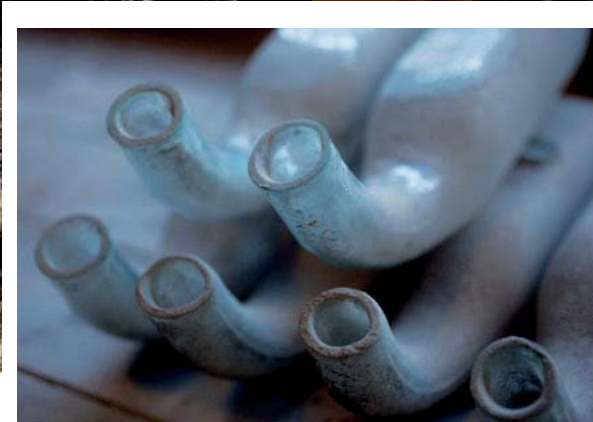
## In numbers

**9m** the number of extra people expected in London to watch this summer's sporting action

## If you smell gas...



... call the National Gas Emergency number on 0800 111 999, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year



The region's famous industrial and agricultural heritage takes pride of place at Sandwell Valley Country Park



John Stokes (right), the senior countryside officer who coordinates school educational visits, with some of Park Farm's Hereford cattle; (inset) visitor centre and countryside manager Chris Moore







# A BREATH OF FRESH AIR

A **restored Victorian working farm** is perhaps the last thing you would expect to find in an **urban park in West Bromwich**, but **Sandwell Valley Country Park** has a good many surprises up its sleeve

**A** glance at a map of the West Midlands reveals a green oasis in the conurbation of housing estates and industry that forms the Black Country.

On the outskirts of West Bromwich - and only five miles from the centre of Birmingham - Sandwell Valley Country Park offers nearly 660 acres of picturesque lakes, streams, woodlands, meadows and farmland.

The park is owned by Sandwell Council (a National Grid grantor), and is managed by its Parks and Countryside Services department. It draws an estimated 500,000 visits annually and, for the past three years, has received a prestigious Green Flag Award in recognition of its quality as a visitor attraction.

It has been the continuous occupation of the valley since it was given to the monks of Sandwell Priory in the Middle Ages that has helped it to escape the residential and industrial development that is typical of so much of the surrounding area.

Chris Moore has worked in Sandwell Valley Country Park for 27 years, and as the visitor centre and countryside manager, he leads a team of 50 full-time and part-time staff, including countryside rangers, farm workers, estate workers and other employees. He was born a stone's throw from the park and feels a real sense of pride at how it has developed.

"The heritage we've got in this area is absolutely fantastic and even today, after all these years, I'm still amazed by how the park has survived," he enthused. "The council has always

viewed it as an extremely valuable asset and committed tremendous financial resources into retaining its status as a country park.

"Our mission today remains very much to preserve and enhance this legacy, whether, for example, it's restoring historic farm buildings, or caring for the 20 miles of traditional hedgerows we've got."

The country park has two working farms, adventure playgrounds, access to miles of walking and cycling routes, sports and leisure facilities, and a 25-acre RSPB reserve. The council's rangers also manage a total of nine nature reserves in the valley, as well as areas along the River Tame.

A full programme of events ranges from weekly health walks to the annual Sandwell Show, which attracts 50,000 visitors, as well as regular food and craft fairs and the very popular Victorian Christmas celebrations.

Under the tutelage of the Earls of Dartmouth, the Sandwell Valley became a centre for mining operations in the 19th century. Then in 1947, the estate was acquired by West Bromwich Corporation, starting a slow process of conversion to a country park as tenant farmers surrendered their land over the years.

"A number of the lakes and pools, which now form wildlife havens for waders, date from the ➔



➔ mining era," explained Chris. "Swan Pool, for example, was originally a holding pool for water pumped out of the Jubilee Colliery. The lake is now a thriving water sports venue and the sailing club is based at the former pithead baths for the miners."

The end of mining operations and the construction of the M5 motorway through the park in the late 1960s provided further impetus to relandscape and develop the area.

## Past and present farming

Two farms in the park have been restored from derelict buildings. Park Farm is a working Victorian farm, a registered Rare Breeds Centre with a historic farmyard and walled kitchen garden. It was built around 1800 to supply food throughout the year for the Earls of Dartmouth's estate and the big house, Sandwell Hall. The hall was demolished in 1928 because of damage caused by subsidence from mining.

Park Farm also contains a collection of vintage agricultural machinery, as well as a display charting activities in the valley since prehistoric times, blacksmith and wheelwright workshops, tea rooms and a gift shop.

Nearby Forge Mill Farm, as a deliberate contrast to Park Farm, is a modern dairy operation. It is home to a pedigree herd of Jersey cows that visitors can see being milked each day from a glass-fronted viewing gallery.

The bulk of the restoration programme on both farms was carried out by apprentices on a youth training scheme. The work started in the late 1980s and continued on a piecemeal basis for nearly 20 years.

"A lot of people gained their first work experience on the project - including bricklayers, plumbers, electricians and carpenters - and they often come back with their families and comment on what a fantastic opportunity it was," said Chris.

The restored kitchen gardens demonstrate the techniques used to supply vegetables and fruit to Sandwell Hall before 1900. The high walls provide protection from the wind and frost, creating a warmer microclimate in which plants thrive. Exotic plants, including citrus fruits, are grown in glasshouses.

Nobody at Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council is letting the grass grow under their feet. A new cycle hire centre, high rope aerial adventure course and playground have all opened in the park within the past six months. And the nearby formal Dartmouth Park, which provides a link with West Bromwich town centre, is being given a £6.3 million facelift, jointly funded by the council and the National Lottery Heritage fund.

The result will be to provide visitors with more ways to spend their time at this fast-developing visitor attraction.



## In numbers

# 220

bird species have been spotted at Sandwell Valley Country Park

# 500,000

the total number of visits to the park each year

# 660

acres of woods, farmland and water for the public to enjoy

The restored kitchen gardens (top) show how the Victorians grew all the fruit and vegetables they needed all year round; a Berkshire cross pig (above) at Park Farm, which specialises in rare and heritage breeds

## Visitor numbers

# 50,000

visitors attend the annual Sandwell Show at the park, the highlight of the council's event calendar

## For more information...



... on Sandwell Valley Country Park go to: <http://www.sandwell.gov.uk/sandwellvalley>

**"I**t's one of the most competitive markets in the world," said Anthony Froggatt from Wade Lane Farm, near Rugeley in Staffordshire. "And we had to learn everything from scratch in just two years."

When the farmer decided to launch his Just... Crisps range of snacks, made from potatoes and rapeseed oil grown on the farm, it felt like a natural extension of what he'd been doing already. The Froggatt family produce a premium range of food products under the Just... brand, including oils, salad dressings and mayonnaise. It's the simplicity and natural qualities suggested by the brand name that Anthony is most passionate about.

"We're the only crisp manufacturer providing a totally integrated solution like this," he said. "It's a great feeling to grow something and then turn it into a product yourself, rather than just putting it on the back of a lorry."

"The crisps are darker than most and have a different taste because they're made from cold-pressed rapeseed oil rather than the chemically extracted oil used by the big manufacturers of crisps," he explained.

"It does mean production costs are high, but we're targeting the premium market and we feel our methods will give us a real point of difference. A new kind of packaging is in the works too."

Anthony is now hoping to reap the rewards of his hard work and enterprise. After extensive market research, experimentation with thickness and flavours, and a successful trial in local shops, he's secured a deal with a national wholesaler.

Such continual innovation has been the hallmark of Anthony's family, who have worked this patch of land for four generations.

"My great grandfather bought Wade Lane Farm and was a bit of a pioneer himself," added Anthony. "If you can't expand your land, then you must diversify. Just... Crisps is another way of us carrying on the Froggatt family tradition."

# WHEN IT CAME TO THE **CRUNCH...**

**... Anthony Froggatt** wasn't found wanting. The **potato farmer** tells all about launching his **own brand of crisps**



# Lastword

Your chance to enter two great competitions



Photo competition

## SHEEP ON THE MOVE

Congratulations to gas grantor Hazel Foster from Ripley, North Yorkshire – the winner of last issue's photo competition on the theme of 'winter wonders' – for this great photo of a flock of sheep scurrying across the skyline.

WIN!

## A Wine and Dine experience

Win an overnight stay and an evening meal at a top Mercure hotel

A FABULOUS HOTEL STAY and evening meal for two people at a top Mercure hotel - that's what Gridline is offering the winner of this issue's photo competition.

The winning duo will enjoy a five-course taster menu accompanied by selected wines from the acclaimed Les Grand Vins Mercure fine wine collection.

The Wine and Dine Experience is available at 18 stylish Mercure hotels throughout the UK, each offering a unique character and style, and top-quality locally produced food.

The theme for this issue's competition is 'nature'. Send in your photo to Gridline Photo Competition, 23-25 Waterloo Place, Warwick Street, Leamington Spa CV32 5LA, or email it to [gridline@uk.ngrid.com](mailto:gridline@uk.ngrid.com). The closing date is 26 April 2012. Only National Grid grantors are eligible to enter.



### INCLUDED IN THE PRIZE

- One night's accommodation for two people.
  - Five-course dinner for two with wine.
  - Full English breakfast.
- For more details about participating hotels visit: [www.mercure.com](http://www.mercure.com)

### TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Prize must be taken by 30 September 2012, subject to availability, and must be taken as detailed, there is no cash alternative. Accommodation is based on two adults sharing a room. Additional costs apply for extra guests. Standard Mercure terms and conditions apply.

WIN!



## A YOUR M&S GIFTCARD

The lucky winner of this issue's competition will receive an M&S giftcard preloaded with £150.

Similar to a credit card in size, M&S giftcards can be spent at more than 600 M&S stores in the UK or online on fashion, food, entertainment, home, accessories and more.

Giftcards are valid for 24 months from the last transaction and the balance cannot be converted back into cash. They cannot be used as payment for made-to-measure shirts or large appliances.

To be in with a chance of winning an M&S giftcard, simply answer the following question correctly.

**Q** How many rhubarb producers currently operate within the Rhubarb Triangle?

Send your answer to Gridline M&S Competition, 23-25 Waterloo Place, Warwick Street, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire CV32 5LA. Please note you must be a grantor to enter. Closing date is 26 April 2012.

### Contact Gridline



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Email: [gridline@uk.ngrid.com](mailto:gridline@uk.ngrid.com)  
[www.nationalgrid.com](http://www.nationalgrid.com)

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