

## 19 LANDFILL AND OTHER DIVERSIONS

The adventures to be detailed in the pages which follow may read almost like an attempted history of the companies concerned. That is not my idea, rather, I am putting forward a resumé of my personal contacts with them. There may well be errors; there are certainly gaps, and in particular a general shortage of names except for those of people, usually the key people, with whom I came into most frequent contact.

My background and inclination are such that I never even remotely considered a venture into the commercial field as part of my game plan. Had any such idea tried to insinuate itself into my mind I would have fiercely rejected it, not only during my early years but until well into my second retirement. Nevertheless the machinations of Robert David caused me to become substantially enmeshed in this field from about 1989 onwards. The excuse was that there were certain vaguely geological elements which I could handle and the others could not. Also, though I say it myself, I seemed - surprise, surprise - to be better at arithmetic than most. Also, there was at times a clear need to help keep the ship afloat.

I suppose the experience constituted an education in Western life as it is lived which would otherwise have passed me by, and I confess there is a certain pleasure to be derived from getting one's teeth into a problem and pursuing it through to some sort of end. Not that I was always successful, but at least I feel I can reasonably say I usually had a good try.

There were side benefits. Some of the consultancies permitted distinct echoes of my BGS field survey days; the office work provided a propulsion to keep up with the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century explosion in office technology; the whole exercise supplied – I suppose - the psychological boost of comporting myself as a member of the employed caste at a period in the life cycle when one might be expected to slip into a lower order caste. Not that I felt in need of that particular boost.

The time requirement of my varied commercial roles ranged from a great deal more than normal working hours, down to nothing at all for weeks on end. Flexibility is an inadequate word to encompass the requirement. Between 1989 and 2000 I suppose around 33.3% of my available time was put into RD's operations. Enough, particularly when unexpected family commitments arose, to make a significant dent in the planned activities for these years, which had centred around writing and marine matters. For long periods the planned activities were forced, not merely onto a back burner, but pretty well out of sight. However, the facility of flexibility is one of the great human virtues, to be encouraged and developed.

Following his first not-very-brilliant stint at Aberdeen University, RD had a somewhat eventful early professional career in the late 70's and early 80's which would adequately fill a book some time, but which I do not propose to go into. I will leave that pleasure to him.

Financed by his earnings, however, he returned to university, this time Warwick, to take an EDAT degree – on engineering for the Third World – since his early experience had persuaded him he wished to apply his undoubted talents to some

useful activity. There followed two commercial jobs related to utilisation of landfill gas, both with smallish firms but both involving leading edge technologies in a relatively new field. RD was fortunate in being on the spot at a time when landfill gas, one of the rapidly increasing by-products of a throw-away society, started to come to public notice as a problem and an opportunity.

The first of RD's jobs was development of a mobile plant for liquefaction of LFG to run site vehicles; the second was construction of a small power station using LFG as its fuel. The liquefaction plant was virtually complete, sitting in two containers, when it was rendered uneconomic by an abrupt drop in conventional fuel costs. The second job, for Greenland Reclamation, a subsidiary of a Thames Valley gravel firm, resulted in the LFG-fuelled Wapseys Wood Power Station. This was a 3MW generator which came on line in December 1987, only the third installation in the UK to make use of this (at the time) novel power source.

By the late 1980's it was, however, becoming more clear than it had already been that RD was not too good in the role of employee responsible to an employer who was apt to have his own point of view. He started casting around in several directions whilst he still had the useful security of employee status.

A recurrent theme for many of these years was preparation of his extra-mural PhD thesis for Warwick University on the use of water lilies as an energy source for power generation. This involved frustrating visits to Bangladesh (his lilies got swept away in a flood), frustrating construction of a lily tank on the roof of Warwick Engineering Department (it got blown off in a gale), and frustrating construction of a similar tank in his own back garden (despite every comfort, including many cow pats, the lilies could not be persuaded to get going). A key aspect of this particular PhD topic was, though, that it permitted continuing familiarisation with the Far East, out of which RD was able to develop other activities. Eventually, but not until 1994, a PhD resulted. No doubt deserved for persistence.

One early RD endeavour concurrent with the PhD studies was a partnership with Jenny Davies ('Jenny', she called herself on the phone, 'from Coventry') in setting up a holistic organisation called the 'Eden Centre' based in North Devon. This included bringing members together for activity gatherings in the summer months. My first job for RD comprised leading some of these groups on short archaeological-cum-geological excursions to Exmoor. Initially I had myself to reconnoitre the area, which I was very happy to do, then present myself on the appointed days. Members of Jenny's organisation were apt to have an individualistic approach, so leading them was far from being a chore – in all I led three such groups in 1987.

I call the Eden Centre 'Jenny's organisation' because although she and RD were the founding partners it was Jenny who was the operator and intellectually the guiding light. RD, still in a salaried job at the time, was the weekend financial and administrative supporter and adviser. It could not last. After a policy disagreement, RD withdrew from the partnership at the end of September 1987. He thought Jenny was impractical and lacking in business acumen. The relationship remained good, but I was not asked to lead any more groups – my input was in any case somewhat adrift of the Centre's mainstream interests and I had no doubt been included partly as a handy make-weight.

In the period 1986 to 1988 there were other endeavours, notably with Terry Scott. I believe the first commercial entity to have been called 'Surplus Process Equipment and Plant', probably founded in 1986 with Terry, although mercifully I was not involved in any way. I still have a supply of headed stationery of this group, though, with a PO Box address (Box 2AW) in Newcastle upon Tyne.

RD did not resign from employment on the Wapsey's Wood Power Station project until mid-1988, by which time the Newcastle firm had been succeeded by two parallel trading entities: 'UK Plant Services' (Sole Trader), and UK Plant Services Ltd. The limited company was registered in 1987, with RD as the single director, and the Sole Tradership was also in his name. Although Terry was involved from a very early stage, he had a family to support, hence was obliged to come and go to an extent, certainly he was based in Edinburgh as Sales Rep for a carpet firm in early 1988.

The first RD/Terry endeavours were concerned with dealing in various items of industrial equipment. They fell into three broad categories: purchase in the UK of surplus cryogenic tanks for refurbishing and shipping abroad, purchase and sale in the UK of second-hand chemical engineering equipment as the agent of an American firm (Universal Process Equipment - UPE), and purchase through competitive tenders of new items (mostly industrial instruments) in the UK as agent for a Thai family firm (Kinetics).

RD established relationships with two senior chemical engineer consultants, Derek Purchas and John Arregar, and through one of these he obtained the UPE agency. UPE had a large dump of second hand chemical machinery in the US, and periodically produced a catalogue in which available items were detailed. Sales and authorised purchases in the UK produced a 10% commission for UK Plant Services. Other duties of the agency included putting out catalogue mailshots to around 1000 potential clients in the UK, and compilation of a data base of 250 preferred clients. In Autumn 1989 Nicole was employed to phone up the 250 firms and discretely discover the names of key staff to whom personal letters could be addressed. It was not a job which Nicole enjoyed, but I presume it must have added to her experience of life.

The UPE director with responsibility for attempting to expand the UK operation was a colourful gentleman by name of Zeev Aviram, who had a physical resemblance to the Wizard of Oz. Despite being colourful, he was too commercially awake to inspire any close personal feeling. It was I who had to alert him to the need to pay VAT on UPE's British sales. At least he accepted the unwelcome news without too much upset.

A crucial point occurred in mid-1988, when RD acquired 50% of a shared 400ft<sup>2</sup> room at the Barclay Centre of Warwick University Science Park. The joint occupant was John Drain, a self employed computer maintenance man. At about the same time RD left his salaried position with Greenland Reclamation, and Terry Scott was tempted back in stages from his carpet sales job in Edinburgh.

It was on 27<sup>th</sup> May 1988 that I established my credentials as a strategic councillor, by advising strongly and in writing against putting available funds into the purchase of a company house for Terry in Kenilworth. House prices had been climbing inexorably like some latter day South Sea Bubble, to the extent that a house seemed an excellent

repository for spare capital. Prices had, however, reached levels which in my correct judgement were unsustainable. My advice was taken, saving the acquisition of a hefty negative equity. When he eventually moved to Kenilworth Terry made do with rented accommodation.

In late 1988 I was becoming increasingly involved. Somebody needed to deal arithmetically with the accounts of the two companies, including salaries and PAYE, and VAT returns. Having found a minor error in RD's books, I confess I volunteered to undertake this minor chore. Unwise. The accounts at the time were in two neat red foolscap books, with manual entries for each month on facing pages, amounting to no more than half a page on the expenses side and rather less on the receipts side. Little did I anticipate the Topsy-like growth to which these accounts would be subject. That, however, was a matter for the future.

Other early involvements were odd jobs such as traveling in winter to Manchester to switch a batch of grubby broken-down gauges off cryogenic tanks from one factory to another for refurbishment. Much of the M5 motorway had just two lanes at that time, of which one was occupied by a solid stream of faceless container trucks moving head to tail at a steady maximum speed in cocoons of darkness and spray. A memorable trip in December 1988.

Preparing the UPE catalogues for the mail shot was a mass production job in which Lucette and others assisted. For some reason these had to be dispatched from the back entrance to Honiton Post Office, Ottery not having the facilities to handle bulk mail. We dealt with them in several batches. Addressing and putting inserts into 1400 envelopes (that's what my records say) was not without its downside as a means of passing the time. On behalf of UPE I even on occasion inspected equipment available for purchase, for example some centrifuges in a Fissons factory at Loughborough. Zeev Aviram was, however, far from generous in his offers for such items.

On 13<sup>th</sup> March 1989 a company phone was installed at Whirlow, and on the same day I had my first experience of e-mail, using a system called Chit Chat. The company phone was soon followed by a company fax, which I recognized as being a tarted-up version of a machine used by BGS survey ships to obtain weather forecasts fifteen years earlier - in 1974. UPE enquiries started getting diverted to Whirlow when there was nobody in the Barclay Centre office, and on 25<sup>th</sup> April 1989 I recorded eleven such enquiries plus two telexes from Zeev Aviram. I also handled Kinetics enquiries and tenders when RD was away in Thailand, as he was, for example, during four weeks in May 1989

Starting in March 1989 I copied RD's procedure of keeping a running note of my activities in a fat A4 notebook, so as not to overlook actions required. I seem at times have been a very busy person, passing messages and negotiating, about such items as a 3m<sup>3</sup> paddle vacuum drier, a Pila centrifuge, an edible oil refinery, flakers, spray driers, resin-manufacturing kettles, Titan Banding Machines. You name it.

The UPE and Kinetics activity, though, was not particularly financially rewarding for the Sole Trader, in whose name it was carried out. 10% of a few thousand pounds is not all that much in business terms unless it is acquired frequently, and actual sales –

as opposed to enquiries – were not sufficiently large or frequent to produce much excitement. Purchases, at the rates offered by Zeev Aviram, were minimal. There were, however, and if one may mix metaphors, bigger fish on the horizon. Eventually we gave the required six-months notice of withdrawal from our agency contract and said goodbye to UPE.

On 16<sup>th</sup> February 1989 UK Plant Services Ltd obtained a contract to construct a flare stack for Derbyshire County Council at Loscoe Landfill Site, where there had been a well publicised landfill gas explosion which had destroyed a near-by bungalow. As I understood it, RD's role was to act as intermediary between the designer and the manufacturer, a firm called United Engineering. He was the organiser and took a share of the profit, but this experience persuaded him he could handle the whole of this type of job, including design and construction.

Other small contracts followed (such as a small flare at Scullwood, East Sussex, ) and RD started gathering together a little band of dedicated part-time workers, some of whom I met for the first time on 10<sup>th</sup> August 1989. Apart from Terry, present with his family, there were Bruce, a retired draftsman who produced impeccable machine drawings, Gordon Doody, a rough but competent hands-on engineer employed in a Coventry car plant, and Paul Blower, an engineer who had lost much of his stomach in an operation but who owed a loyalty to RD because he had caused him to become Manager of the Wapseys Wood Power Station.

The financial inter-relationship of UK Plant Services Sole Trader and UK Plant Services Ltd soon started becoming complicated, to the extent that I had to put in a good deal of effort trying to keep them disentangled – and the problems became worse with the passage of time. Initially the former group was financed for a substantial period by an overdraft facility secured against RD's house and arranged by him with a friendly and unusually co-operative NatWest bank manager on the university campus.

It was the Sole Trader who had the main overdraft facility, but as orders built up it soon became the Limited Company which had by far the larger need for finance. Since overdrafts were specifically not forthcoming on the security of orders obtained by the latter, I caused the former to make the latter a loan backed by its own overdraft. It was also necessary to make retrospective inter-company adjustments for operating costs, accommodation and salaries. All very messy. After a while I had significant help from John Richardson, a forbearing accountant based in Ottery St Mary, whom we appointed as auditor for both companies

The first flare-stacks were put together in his spare time largely by Gordon Doody in an unofficially occupied shed in a corner of the car plant where he worked. Gordon was a man of decided views, notably concerning women. When he said to me, 'I don't like women', I pointed out that if there hadn't been a woman there wouldn't have been a Gordon Doody. His immediate response was, 'Oh well, that's the jug that carries the water.' Later I instanced that Tum (who appeared in the UK on 24<sup>th</sup> October 1989) had been very useful in painting one of the rigs. This time he replied, 'Oh yes, she helped with the painting, but that's what they're for, isn't it? That and the cooking.' He had other forthright views. 'What's he (RD) want to go off to Thailand again for? Is he going to bring back a bit as a reward for you this time?'

From mid 1988 to mid 1992 I was Secretary of the Limited Company and finance wizard for both, holding the cheque books, making all payments and invoices, manually preparing rudimentary cash-flow projections and profitability assessments, and generally keeping the two companies solvent by switching funds around. One of my procedures, which we later discovered was unusual but which caused us to be regarded as good clients by some suppliers, was to pay all accounts on time, usually within 30 days. Several times I found myself holding the fort for substantial periods during the absences of RD in Thailand; in May 1989 I operated from Whirlow, in October 1989 partly from Nicole's house, and for a fortnight in February 1990 from RD's house in Kenilworth.

In November 1989 we tendered for a flare stack and field installation at Target Closed Landfill Site, near Airdrie, Scotland. It was our first full site job, and the largest to date. The tender resulted in a visit to view the flare at Loscoe, Derbyshire, by no fewer than six officials from Monklands District Council. They clearly regarded their time as valuable, travelling both ways by air, and were very concerned that the installation be vandal proof. They appeared, though, to be proud of the wrecking abilities of their vandals which, basing their judgement on the Loscoe flare, they thought to be superior to those of Derbyshire. They had built a state-of-the-art community centre on Target Site with EU funds, then could not open it because landfill gas had been found in the basement. The vandals had lit a small LFG fire elsewhere on the site, and tried to light one in the community centre by building a bonfire against an air vent.

We had wanted to put in a joint tender with a gentleman called Andrew Dickinson for the Target job, Andrew handling the field installation (gas wells, pipelines, monitor wells and condensate traps) and ourselves manufacturing and installing the flare. MDC insisted, however, that one firm must take full responsibility, with the other as a sub-contractor. As we were the MDC contact it had to be UKPS Ltd which was the main contractor. In particular the contract specified significant financial penalties against the main contractor for late completion.

Andrew Dickinson was an ex-British Gas field engineer whom we had met on a site at Scullwood, where he had been installing pipework. He seemed a pleasant and competent person and in our innocence we took him at face value, leaving all Target field arrangements and costing to him as if we were equal partners. This was the first of the inaccurate personal assessments which were to cost UKPS dear. We were about to learn that an ability to make accurate personal assessments is vital to success in the business world.

Andrew selected and instructed a driller and a pipelayer. He ordered all the field materials, including pipework, wellheads, manholes etc, to be delivered to site and to be paid for out of proceeds when received. Although we had a written agreement of sorts with Andrew, it later turned out that unfortunately for them he had no more than a verbal understanding with his driller and pipelayer.

I was appointed the contractor's site engineer, making weekly day-visits from Devon, travelling up and back on successive nights by sleeper. This proved to be a cost effective procedure in terms of both time and money, since I was able to travel

relatively cheaply using my old folks rail card, and there were no hotel bills. My job was to liaise with the sub-sub-contractors of Andrew, also to get a power supply, concrete platform and compound installed ready for the flarestack. We thought it necessary to obtain three competitive tenders for each of these – perhaps a heavyweight process in retrospect – it may have saved a bit of money, but it took time, particularly for the sourcing and routing of the power supply.

There were no problems with Andrew's driller, Jimmy McCringle, who completed work and left site before any of the pipes were laid. The pipelayer, however, John Kane, soon realised he had not understood Andrew's instructions for the proposed condensate traps, in that he was required to install them in massive vertical reinforced concrete cylinders through which holes had to be cut manually for the gas pipework. Also the gas mains were supplied in shorter lengths than he had anticipated, so their assembly involved about twice as much pipe welding as it needed to have done. He started by getting on with the welding, but required his fee to be renegotiated. When Andrew refused he withdrew his men from the site. Andrew then proposed to get a scratch team together to do the pipelaying, including himself and his brother when available at some poorly specified time in a week or so.

Andrew had by now realised he had also forgotten to order the innards of the condensate traps with the rest of the pipework, or to include their significant costs in his quotation for the field installation. His part of the job began to look as if it was in serious trouble, both in terms of funding and completion on time to avoid an overrun penalty.

This was the point at which the suppliers of the pipework (Marton Geotechnical Supplies) indicated they were sufficiently concerned about their money to request direct payment from UKPS Ltd for the considerable list of material ordered by Andrew.

Andrew dealt with this situation by becoming stroppy. He refused to attend a meeting called by MGS to discuss the problem, and wrote an ultimatum that he would withdraw from the contract unless by a specified time UKPS gave an undertaking not to make direct payment to MGS. We did not respond, and were rewarded by Andrew with a written notice of withdrawal dated 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1990. A few days later he withdrew his withdrawal, but it was too late. We had become seriously concerned about his ability to complete, had gratefully accepted his withdrawal, and had started making other arrangements to get the job finished as specified.

The legal position when a sub-contractor formally withdraws is that the main contractor takes away the cost of an alternative from any payment which may have been due to the one who has withdrawn. The alternative we used was Nigel Bawden, highly reliable, on the job in a flash (we met him on site on 26<sup>th</sup>), but expensive. He re-planned some of the evidently old fashioned elements of Andrew's design, notably the condensate traps and wellheads, and completed in good time. After we had paid Nigel, there was little money left for Andrew or for him to pass to his unfortunate sub-contractors .

This was the end of our involvement with Andrew, but not the end of the job, because it was decided by the clients that, as the pipe trenches proved to have been cut mainly into landfill rubbish with very little clay cover, they were to be backfilled with

imported clay, the spare rubbish being gathered up and removed. UKPS was asked to supervise this operation as a separate £20K contract, and a local operator was recommended.

In early March 1990 Lucette and I stayed for a week at Crieff Hydro whilst I 'supervised' this work, done by two heavy crawlers and a bulldozer churning in a sea of mud. It looked like the Somme battlefield minus the corpses. There was also a ferocious wind for part of the time – sufficient on my final visit to blow me flat on my back in the mud. It was after our return to Whirlow on 11<sup>th</sup> March that Lucette said she was feeling 'psychologically like a widow' on account of UKPS work.

Anyhow, all was completed on time. On 7<sup>th</sup> June 1990 there was a grand ceremonial opening of both the flare and the community centre by the mayor wearing his gold chain. I, wearing my suit, represented UKPS. Adrian Loening, who came on the scene around two months earlier, stood in as the UKPS technician, also wearing his suit. To make sure the flare was working, he ran it for a period beforehand, then switched it off until the mayor appeared. When the specially-installed external red button was pressed by the mayor after his appropriately political speech, the flare immediately roared into life amid cheers. Handshakes followed. Photographs were taken by the local newspaper. There was a grand civic reception with cream buns in the new community centre, where we were all able to admire the new gas sensors which had been installed by another firm.

The wires were pretty hot about the Andrew Dickinson fiasco for quite some period. It was a great pity about his sub-contractors, who were both pleasant and competent people, but UKPS emerged unscathed. We made a profit on all these early jobs because we kept a strict running tab on costs and timing. That is why Ecotec, amongst others, was later to think UKPS a good bet.

Target was the start of a on-off relationship with Nigel Bawden and his firm Soiltec. In April 1990 we built our first jointly owned mobile flare stack, the first of a fleet which was later to grow into a good money earner

I have a note that in early May 1990 UKPS overheads were running at around £4020 per month – sounds modest, but we were about to expand. We acquired our own workshop, a smallish lock-up in a communal set of workshops on the far side of central Coventry, which performed a very useful function as a dump, in addition to a facility for building control panels. In late May UKPS comprised RD, Ted Stone and Pete Sweetnam, another engineer.

In June I started work on a geological report on four landfill sites in the Midlands for Anglo American. I was required to report on steps necessary to make the sites safe from the LFG aspect. The work involved field visits which took me back to very near my 1940s/1950s BGS mapping area, in fact geological maps covering three of the sites had been surveyed by close colleagues of my BGS days. Interesting, and I could briefly have been back as a junior member of BGS staff. Later I was asked to liaise with two geologists of Goldings, consultants, representing another interested party, and agree a joint recommendation for action needed at these sites.



In June 1990 our order book was full, to the extent that we were having a problem with working capital. As a temporary measure this necessitated an additional bank loan, and it had to be against the security of Whirlow, about which I was quite happy since I could see no problem in covering it with reliable company income. However, the NatWest head office at Coventry, which was now handling the UKPS account direct- having retrieved it from their Warwick University branch - was uncooperative to a degree that caused us to switch our company account to the Royal Bank of Scotland at Exeter, where the manager at the time was a great deal more helpful.

This financial arrangement was a stop gap preceding an application for a so-called government-backed loan of £100K, which we submitted on 29 November 1990, together with a business plan and fanciful forecasts of future sales and cash flow. Prior to this application I had taken two steps to put UKPS accounts onto a firmer basis. In July John Richardson had become our accountant, and in September I moved from manual accounting to the use of Amstrad Supercalc 2 spreadsheets. It was high time to computerise – the arithmetic was becoming a bit too much, notably the cross checking was a real chore.

In September 1990 there were further geological reports - unpaid this time though – on Higher Urpeth, Arrowsmith Road and Wolverhampton sites. Higher Urpeth in Durham County, posed an unusual hydrogeological problem, and later, in 1991. we were commissioned by the client, Coalite, to dig some trial pits in a key area of leachate seepage into a local stream.

Our principal competitor was a firm called Realmside, which we were succeeding in undercutting on account of our low overheads and generally efficient operation - on relatively straightforward jobs. On 17 January 1991 Realmside proved unable to stand the pace, and went into liquidation. Its disappearance seemed to leave the main field open to us, but this proved to be an illusion. Had we been business-oriented we would have attempted to purchase Realmside and shut it down. By not doing so an opportunity was left for its acquisition as a going concern by a business entrepreneur who set about putting in a lot of capital and giving it a severe overhaul. He brought in an efficient management and renamed the firm Biogas – although it lacked anyone with the personal technical status of RD, it grew into an organisation seriously to be reckoned with.

UKPS, though, was very definitely on the way up in early 1991. On February 3<sup>rd</sup> we moved from Barclay Centre Room 12 to a larger office, Room 42, and on February 7<sup>th</sup> we were joined by Christopher and Oonagh, although the latter worked only part-time until 20<sup>th</sup> May. In the Financial Year to 30<sup>th</sup> April 1991 UKPS turnover was £500K, with mark-ups of as much as 82% and 101% on some jobs.

On 6<sup>th</sup> March 1991 the Sole Trader secured a major order for £123K for mixer-settlers for a monozite plant in India. The machines were manufactured for us by John Griffiths, who was grateful for our custom, having himself just gone into liquidation due to a shortage of general engineering orders. He had foreseen this, however, and had placed sufficient of his assets in the name of his fiancée to be able to continue operations effectively as her manager, but happily divested of a bank loan which had been irking him.

On 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> March 1991 RD arranged the first of the landfill technical conferences entitled 'Discharge -Your Obligations' and held at the Warwick University Arts Centre. There were other sponsoring organisations, but it was UKPS which was the prime mover. With 95 delegates, the conference was judged a success, and it was to be the first of a series of three meetings with the same name, each of which produced a useful set of published papers.

On 11<sup>th</sup> April 1991 our £100K government loan was approved, and the time had arrived for me to have some help on the finance side. Following an interview of eight middle aged lady bookkeepers in mid May, Pauline Heath was appointed and started work on 3<sup>rd</sup> June. On the same day Aareefa, a Pakistani school leaver with all the attributes of a local lass but with a traditional Pakistani background, started full time as a general office assistant. My method of work with Pauline was that she sorted out invoices, got them certified as correct, made out payment cheques, and forwarded a weekly batch to me for signature. The work was rapidly getting beyond the capacity of my poor Amstrad computer, which was making entries more and more slowly, almost grinding to a halt at times. On 25<sup>th</sup> June I moved to my first Toshiba.

I draw no morale from the following little story. On 13<sup>th</sup> July, a Saturday, RD caused CP and Oonagh to work on in the office until 2.30am the following morning, Sunday, preparing material for him to take on a visit to Thailand. He then remained working on his own in the office until 6am, when he awoke CP and Oonagh to take him to the coach station en route to the airport. He distinguished himself, however, by discovering at the airport that his passport was out of date, and by Sunday evening he was back in Kenilworth.

Three days later it fell to me to go to the Thai consulate in Birmingham to obtain a Thai visa in the new passport. I had to walk through the dreadful Bull Ring market, but when I reached the Consulate I was greeted by security guards, plush armchairs and obliging personal attention. I seemed to be the only applicant. As I departed I was wished a successful business trip to Thailand.

This was unfortunately not the end of the story of this particular expedition. On 20<sup>th</sup> July RD phoned from Bangkok to say he had lost his bags and ask CP to cancel all his credit cards, which was done rapidly and efficiently. However, half an hour later he phoned again to say his bags had been retrieved with all the cards intact, only cash missing. It was, though, too late to cancel the card cancellations. End of story.

On 13<sup>th</sup> September 1991 AR arrived in the UK for a three month stint with UKPS, although still 'on hold' with Sheraton Hotels in the US. Initially he lived with us at Whirlow, but immediately applied himself to re-computerising UKPS accounts from the beginning of the financial year, employing a more advanced system than I had been using. I had established in mid-August that the 'worth' of UKPS had been built up to about £95K, and AR was able to confirm this position.

The presence of AR greatly relieved my finance workload, although I continued to sign all outgoing cheques, and was for several months pre-occupied with a massively involved invoice which had to be sorted out for Bramfield site.

In mid-October both RD and AR went to the Sardinia landfill conference, and on 7<sup>th</sup> December a joint UKPS/John Griffiths Christmas party was organised in a pub on the far side of Nuneaton. We hired a somewhat ramshackle minibus for our party, which included Ted and wife Fiona, Pauline Heath and husband Peter, Mark Moulden, Matthew and Adam Smith, Aareefa, Tum and Nadine. Also Christopher, who drove the minibus on the outward trip. Nadine excelled herself by behaving impeccably, although she had just graduated to the stage of being able to walk somewhat unsteadily and only if there was something solid to hold onto. I was delegated to drive on the return trip, which I did over black ice and with some trepidation.

AR departed back to the US on 12<sup>th</sup> December, returning responsibility for UKPS finance to me with the assistance of Pauline, and immediately afterwards RD left for Thailand for Christmas. On 19<sup>th</sup> December John Drain was finally persuaded to move out of room 42, leaving it to sole UKPS occupancy. We finished 1991 in good style, with an award of contracts for three flare-stacks plus associated work in Cornwall – at United Mines, Wheel Prosper, and Tiscott Wood sites. CP was now concerned in much of the site work, but on account of geographical proximity I was to become significantly embroiled in supervision of operations at all these Cornish sites.

On 8<sup>th</sup> January 1992 AR returned to UKPS on a more definitive basis, but on 17<sup>th</sup> January Pauline resigned to take an advanced bookkeeping course. On 27<sup>th</sup> AR took over as signatory of UKPS cheques, and on the same day RD, AR and I together visited Turner, Manager of the Royal Bank, to discuss our need for more working capital. Later we were to be somewhat put out when we had very good reason to believe that Turner provided Coventry City Council with a sufficiently dubious confidential report on our financial status for us to lose a substantial contract which had been about to come our way. We allowed Turner to know that this episode did not enhance the warmth of our relationship with the Royal Bank.

My first task at Wheel Prosper site was to engage a local firm to remove the stone fill of an extensive system of venting trenches which had been constructed a couple of years earlier. The volume of stone proved to be alarmingly greater than we had expected at the time of our quotation, with the result that we seemed to be heading for a financial problem. Fortunately, though, the weather was appalling, and the machines were struggling to operate in a sea of mud. Because of the mud I was able to retrieve the situation by persuading the Cornwall CC engineer we needed to leave some of the stone on site to provide access tracks. In the end I suspect we left something like 75% of the stone on site, where it was doing no harm, and honour was satisfied all round.

Wheel Prosper landfill is located in a former metalliferous opencut mine, which was originally a deep hole with vertical sides. When our subcontractor, in this case Soiltec, attempted to drill gas wells into the waste it was found to mostly comprise waterlogged porridge-like material. It is not feasible to insert gas wells into material of this type, and even if they were inserted they would yield no gas through the sludge, which was believed to have been generated by unduly enthusiastic use of daily cover clay. As an alternative Nigel proposed to drill gas-collecting wells into the fractured country rock just beyond the edges of the site. This involved me in a pumping trial with one of the fleet of mobile flares which UKPS had built up jointly with Soiltec.

The trial was sufficiently successful for the Cornwall CC engineer to agree our proposed revision of plan, but the trial-well turned out to be at an exceptionally good location, and most of the other wells gave disappointing results. It took a lot of persuading to convince the County Council engineer that, given the nature of the site, our wells were the best feasible.

United Mines site was a different proposition. Here we had to replace a large Realmside flare-stack with a larger UKPS one. My jobs included arranging for a local contractor to fill the substructure of the Realmside flare with concrete to provide a firm platform, arranging minor modifications to the casing of the extraction fan, and inserting additional securing bolts to help the quite tall new chimney survive Cornish winter gales. Mark Moulden commissioned the new flare, and we came near to a diplomatic incident on first start up, as it produced a reverberating booming noise. Also it resembled a space rocket about to take off but with the flames issuing from the wrong end. RD eventually sorted that problem, but the chimney had to be heightened at some expense by inserting an additional ring..

A very professional second 'Discharge – Your Obligations' conference was organised at Kenilworth starting on 10<sup>th</sup> March 1992, then on 18<sup>th</sup> March Oonagh gave four weeks notice of her resignation from UKPS. She was interviewed for a landfill gas post with Wiltshire County Council, but I believe the interview persuaded her to withdraw her application on the grounds that it was for a non-job. Much later, at Chapel Farm Landfill Site, I was to meet two landfill gas young ladies from Wilts CC, and watching their activities came to the view that Oonagh was probably correct in her assessment.

In May 1992 both Ted Stone and I were looking for a larger workshop for UKPS than the small lock-up we had near the city centre. It was I who located a suitable building on a run down industrial estate belonging to P&O near Coventry Airport. Almost all the building were due to be demolished in the course of upgrading the site, but we secured a cheap temporary lease.

In June 1992 negotiations with Ecotec, a venture capital firm with interest in environmental investments, were proceeding apace. I was never directly involved, but did a good deal of checking of the extensive legal documentation. Ecotec was to invest £500K in UKPS in two tranches, firstly £300K, then another £200k later. The Eden family was to invest £30K, but RD retained a majority shareholding. It was expected that the company, having made a fortune, would in due course be floated on the stock exchange and all of us would be wealthy for ever after. We were definitely riding high.

The Directors were to be AR, RD and CP, all of whom had shareholdings intended as an inducement to take a personal interest, plus an Ecotec nominee. On 11<sup>th</sup> July I resigned as Company Secretary in favour of AR. The formal agreement was signed in London after a late night session on 6<sup>th</sup> August, but on 5<sup>th</sup> August CP had resigned his directorship and returned to me the shares he had been given. The founding Eden shareholders were therefore RD, AR and myself.

Peace descended. AR moved house from Exeter to Stratford, and I handed all the UKPS historic documents and financial papers to AR. I re-started my much neglected work on Lucette Kay.

Peace did not last for long. RD was always full of innovative ideas with which for some reason I usually seem to have agreed to assist him. One of the ideas, which was vaguely in my field because it involved hydrogeology, was to obtain a grant to deal with a leachate problem in house foundations at Eborn Close, Kenilworth. The plan was to set up a circulation by pumping leachate out, treating it by an exotic method, then re injecting. In the end we did not get the grant, and the proposed treatment, despite liaison visits to Imperial College, London, proved to be unduly exotic. It involved dosing the leachate with a substance fed to cows to reduce their flatulence, but which turned out not to be licensed for release into the environment.

RD's other innovative idea at this time was for the UKPS sales team to act as UK marketing agents for a US firm producing a material called Concover. This was a paper-based liquid formulated to be sprayed onto landfill waste at the end of each day's work. It solidified to form a thin protective layer performing the same sanitary function as the daily clay layer applied to most landfill waste, but occupying significantly less volume. It seemed like an excellent idea, and RD regarded John Hull, one of the senior directors of the US manufacturers, as something of a personal friend. The idea was that UKPS circulating salesmen (there were now three) would tow behind their cars a small spray machine, to be manufactured by UKPS, as they went about their business of selling flare stacks, and make time to give a brief Concover demonstration to clients.

There turned out to be problems which were gradually winkled out of John Hull's associates. The first was that the smallest spray machine was a hefty patented device made in the US and barely manageable even by a Landrover; certainly not suitable for casual towing. The second was that many of the landfill licensing authorities in the UK were not in a hurry to authorise new sanitary arrangements. The crucial point, though, was that the suppliers were not prepared to make any financial concessions to UKPS, their putative agent, in an attempt to get into the UK market. I undertook extensive correspondence with a gentleman called Savage about Concover terms, but he and his principals insisted that UKPS must purchase supplies at their full commercial price right from the start, with no certainty that we would ever be able to sell it on. In the end he made an effort to bounce us by dispatching two container loads of the stuff to the UK, to be released to us on payment. We left them in Folkestone docks and resigned our agency. What happened to them I do not know. This was a narrow escape, because I am not aware that the material has subsequently achieved any sales in the UK.

The end of 1992 and the first half of 1993 was a genuine rest period for me in respect of UKPS, but finance was not going too well. My salary was in fact suspended for the first three months of 1993, although it was back-paid in full on 31 March when there was an improvement. In July, though, the company was again on yellow alert.

On 26<sup>th</sup> August the position eased once more when Ecotec agreed to supply the final £200K of their £500K investment. A dangerous way out of financial difficulties. The problem was that the Edens were not seeing eye-to-eye, either with each other or with

Ted Stone. All were hard working and doing their best in their own ways, but with the top brass at odds the company had become almost uncontrollable.

In particular the inability of Ted Stone and AR to agree a system of project budget control meant that it was difficult to arrive at project costs. He was a keen machine designer, always looking for improvements and effectively starting drawings for each new project from scratch rather than seeking standardisation. Improvements were undoubtedly made, but the method resulted in a design log-jam, development errors, and serious project delays.

In an attempt at better project control, several clerical assistants and foremen were recruited, increasing overheads. Two key foremen proved unable to handle what were quite complex and responsible jobs, and several members of staff were clearly not particularly motivated – unsurprising in view of the conflict atmosphere which had developed in the company. The paperwork and timing of a number of major projects went seriously awry partly because timetables were not adhered to and proper records were not kept, due - it was claimed - to staff shortages, and overwork on the part of middle management. The fact is that control of one-off, complex constructions, phasing in at irregular intervals, is difficult without a disciplined, intelligent and co-operating team.

However, the company battled on. In October 1993 RD attended another Sardinia conference. He was becoming known internationally, and it was decided to expand into the overseas market. As an early step I attended a London seminar on Greece organised by the DTI. This resulted in a UK trade delegation representing about 20 companies flying to Athens on 3<sup>rd</sup> November, where each company set up a trade stand in a conference centre. We were received at the British Embassy, where I was able to admire the famous portrait of Byron, and the favourite fireside chair of Winston Churchill. We visited the Athens sewage works and were received by the Mayor of Athens, surrounded by a cohort of young technocrats. We were informed that the effluent stream from the works was the largest river in Greece, and it was clearly inadequately treated.

RD joined me in Athens on the 5<sup>th</sup> of November, and we had a midnight dinner together on the Plaza, below the Acropolis. This was the Greek visit on which we first met Frantzis, one of the young technocrats - he was to prove an important link into later Greek sales.

On 29<sup>th</sup> November I attended another DTI briefing, this time at the Europa Gatwick Hotel and concerning the Pacific Rim, mostly Tai Wan. This meeting, however, although interesting, resulted in no developments. At the time it seemed unwise to extend ourselves that far.

By December 1993 NFFO Round 3 (Non-Fossil Fuel Obligation) was rearing its ugly head and I was delegated to handle UKPS interests. This was a government-led auction of contracts to develop LFG power stations at subsidised rates at suitable sites. One had to select sites, agree draft contracts with the site owners, get outline planning permission, and bid a price per kW/hr at which one would, having constructed a power station, contract to feed specified amounts of power into the

National Grid for a defined number of years (often 15 years). The lowest bidders were to win a subsidised contract.

RD had been involved in power production in the very early days, in 1987, at Wapsey's Wood Site, but was not closely in touch with subsequent developments. Moreover UKPS - just surviving - was in no position to drum up the capital needed to build power stations. It was decided to aim at going in as a technical partner (on the LFG and geological sides) with two big boys, namely Norweb plc and Wimpey Energy Ltd. This was the first mistake. The second mistake was to accept their estimates of power station costs.

Norweb had developed a computer programme into which one fed various parameters and the computer then churned out a suitable price per kW/hr. This was handy, but later proved to be seriously pessimistic. Norweb was a huge utility monopoly, grossly overstaffed and capable of wasting indefinite time and money with every appearance of efficiency. Wimpey got things done but I would say was distinctly slapdash. In the end, having handed our best sites to these two we broke with them over financial arrangements and proceeded on our own with two small sites – Chapel Farm in Wiltshire and Dalmacoulter in Scotland.

Despite all the work over many months, including assessments of quite a few sites, endeavouring to drum up finance, and agreeing draft contracts with site owners, none of us – Norweb, Wimpey nor ourselves – won any contracts in NFFO Round 3. Our bids were all significantly too high. Firms which put in lower bids and won contracts subsequently made a good deal of money out of them. In view of the financial and organisational difficulties of UKPS, however, we would almost certainly have had a problem in developing and maintaining these two widely spaced small sites without any benefits of scale. Bad luck. We could have done it better now.

In mid 1994 RD agreed with his pal John Hull, the eminence gris behind the Concover imbroglio, to set up an Anglo-US environmental consultancy to be called Process Environmental Ltd. John Hull wished to expand his successful US consultancy into Europe, but here again there turned out to be problems when we got down to discussing details. His London solicitors produced a huge legal agreement including terms which I saw as onerous, such as salary differentials between US and UK staff on the same work, equal sharing of costs of top solicitors chosen by John Hull, and equal sharing of costs of transatlantic travel to be incurred by our US partners.

However, John Hull was willing initially to waive most of the onerous aspects in the interests of getting started, Christopher was nominated at the UKPS end and two lads (Mark Hoidas and Craig Caspar) at the US end. For several months there was an exchange of staff for familiarisation. On 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1994 a red alert was, however, declared at UKPS and Christopher had to be withdrawn to the UK. That was effectively the end of joint efforts in PEL, although the company continued in existence under UK ownership.

Apart from the onerous terms of the legal agreement, which we never got round to signing, the partnership had been seriously unbalanced financially and technically. Regrettably, UKPS had neither the staff nor the finance to move in any strength into

an entirely new field, however promising. Moreover - as in the case of Concover - there was a looming and unsolved problem of how to deal with the unsullied enthusiasm with which the John Hull team looked after its own interests.

Meantime there had been several workshop and office moves. Firstly the workshop I had located on the P&O estate was exchanged for another similar one, found I believe by Ted, then workshop and office were brought together in a substantial building in Siskin Drive on the same estate. The large open-plan office was upstairs and the workshop downstairs. The first time we had had such a convenient arrangement. This was the only building on the estate which was not to be demolished in the course of redevelopment – the building was later to be refurbished and UKPS was then to have the option of continuing at an enhanced rental.

However, after living through months of demolition dust and noise, another reasonably suitable but less expensive office/workshop was located at Currier Close in the southern outskirts of Coventry. Office and workshop were moved from Siskin Drive to Currier Close on 10<sup>th</sup> December 1994. In this case the office suite, a barely adequate set of small rooms, was located behind a generous sized workshop.

Ever since its £200K boost in mid 1992 the company had been struggling financially. With the assistance of AR, I developed my ‘profitability’ graph, which seemed to show that overall running operations were just about profitable, but left no margin for inefficiencies or for gaps in the order book.

The problem was the inefficiencies brought about by ineffective middle management. Also AR and Ted Stone had more nor less given up speaking to each other. In early 1995 AR decided the company was going nowhere fast, and to protect himself professionally he felt he must depart. Before he actually left, however, I was persuaded to spend two months full time in the Currier Close office to try to sort out operations. I was allocated a nice little room in the office and on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1995 Lucette and I moved into a rented flat at 10 Alpine Court, Kenilworth, paid for by the company.

I saw my main task as getting some sort of synoptic order into company activities, largely working with Bob Cooper, foreman in charge of operations. Check lists were compiled and there were regular operational, civils, policy, project and sales meetings in my room, which I converted into a mini-conference room. Staff allocations to jobs for some days in advance were posted on large notice boards, although not infrequently delays and absences resulted in it not being possible to keep to them.

It was not long before I became deeply involved in trying to explain away past failings, such a why work for Suffolk County Council, scheduled for 5 weeks, had actually taken 19 weeks, and why just about everything went wrong at a Shotton Steelworks job amongst others, including UKPS representatives failing to do things they were minuted as having agreed. The explanations I produced, dossiers compiled from positions of grotesque weakness, were immensely time wasting, involving going through files and records - such as they were - and attempting to put a reasonable gloss on fiascos. At least this time spend postponed decisions on proposed contractual penalties, but otherwise did very little good.



Early in January RD recruited Tom Battenbury as a roving business trouble shooter, and later Tom produced Gary Dunn as a finance man to replace AR, who finally resigned on 17<sup>th</sup> March. When I ended my two-month stint in early March Tom Battenbury became a two-day per week Operations Manager and moved into my room. The Battenbury/Dunn combine was beginning to take over from the Eden family combine

In the interests of a slimmer leaner company, on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> March notice was given to Ted Stone, Bob Cooper, Malc Wallam, and Carlton, the last three being middle managers whose positions had been under consideration for some time. In March, too, on the recommendation of Tom Battenbury, Graham Jacket - a civil engineer - was recruited to strengthen the Civils Dept. He turned out to be a walking disaster area.

On 19<sup>th</sup> April I again became Company Secretary in place of AR, but my main preoccupation for the first half of 1995 continued to be the dossiers concerning the major imbroglios where financial penalties were involved. Christopher obtained a job with CLP on the recommendation of RD, and left UKPS to start with this company on 7<sup>th</sup> August.

In July 1995 we were awarded a consultancy with Cheshire County Council to report on environmental aspects of Gatewarth No 3 Landfill, due to be developed as a nature reserve – it proved to be of significant geological interest, also with LFG and leachate problems. I caused BGS to be given a sub-contract to quantify the permeability of the site cap, and ended by producing a quite respectable report on the work needed to get the site into good condition..

On 1 December 1995 UKPS lost to Biogas a £1.2M contract for a shiny prestige job at Heathrow Airport - for which there had been extended negotiation and high hopes. Maybe the weakness of the UKPS position was beginning to be suspected in the trade, although with the leaner meaner UKPS which was being painfully forged this contract could well have proved a turning point to better things. However, from the wreck of Realmside had arisen a Biogas which already outdid us in leanness and meanness, and also in the availability of capital funding. UKPS was having the experience of being on the downside of cultural evolution.

On 8<sup>th</sup> December we were still calculating that the UKPS finance position was survivable, and 8<sup>th</sup> December was the day of the Christmas party at the de Montfort Hotel, Kenilworth. John Griffiths was there on friendly terms, promising me a bottle of whiskey for Christmas. Nadine, too was there, but got bored around 9.30pm and I had been retained to take her home when she wished to leave. Lucette and Lalana did not come, and spent the evening consoling each other for not having been invited.

Early in 1996 I, in my capacity of a staff member of Landfill Technology Ltd, a subsidiary company of UKPS, became engaged on a contract for the Energy Technology Support Group, jointly with Berwick Manley, a landfill consultant pal of RD's. The requirement was to compare and quantify the results of assessment of LFG volumes by various methods of site investigation. Basically LTL (me + Michael Prince, a likely lad from a Warwick University EDAT course) were to do the field

visits and data collection, and Berwick Manley + Alana Dixon (a likely lass) were to work it up into a report.

This contract was to get me to quite a few sites, high powered and less so, in the next few weeks, including brick manufacturers in the Midlands (Phoenix and Istock Brickworks), large sites in the Thames Estuary in the Rochester area, and other more mundane places. At the end of the day the conclusion of the study was that the best method of LFG assessment was to suck it and see. In the course of the work I visited Berwick Manley and Alana Dixon (on 7<sup>th</sup> March) at the home of the latter near Oxford. Her house was distinguished by being clad in weather-boarding which provided a home to around 400 bats. Lucky lass.

On 7<sup>th</sup> March, too, UKPS went into voluntary liquidation. This was a long story which I do not propose to recount in detail. It came about because the bank (at the time Barclays) withdrew its overdraft facility. This in turn came about because there was uncertainty as to whether several firms for whom UKPS had worked were going to make payment, on account of failure to avoid penalty clauses. It has to be said that my efforts to extract us from these substantial penalties were pretty unsuccessful – as, to be honest, they deserved to be. Sad. But, as I said, part of cultural evolution. RD nobly took the flak on his own, and survived well.

For several weeks it continued to be possible to access the Currier Close Office, and a skeleton staff continued working under the auspices of a new RD company, UK Process Systems, which had contracts in Ireland. In due course it became not possible to use Currier Close, and on 11<sup>th</sup> March 1996 RD's operational HQ became the famous shed at the bottom of his garden at 2 Crackley Cottages. The small loyal staff which moved there included Lynn, Hash, Mark Moulden, and a technician called John.

On 15<sup>th</sup> April, Organics Ltd came in to existence as the continuation company, advice being that a completely new entity was necessary. Lynn became the Company Secretary, Hash the sole Director and Nicole the sole owner, although later the new company bank, NatWest, required RD also to become a Director. On 30<sup>th</sup> April, after seven weeks in the garden shed, the mini-staff was able to move back to the Barclay Centre on the University Science Park, initially into Room 23a, then on 7<sup>th</sup> May to Room 14a, and in mid-June to Room 12. Fortunately the Science Park and both the Irish and the Greek clients stood by RD during this period, and so did ETSU, permitting work to continue, albeit at a reduced level. This time round, RD had made a resolution to manage without external financial subvention, notably without benefit of a bank overdraft. To start with there was a distinct emphasis on overseas work, including New Zealand as well as Greece and Ireland.

Another outfit which proved willing to continue to deal with us in our new manifestation was Cheshire County Council. This willingness was, I suspect, because the recently established Environment Agency was obliging CCC to take some action about their problem sites, and they found they were able to get a credible consultancy from me at a fraction of the normal commercial price. Towards the end of 1996 I was busy working up reports on Gatewarth 1 and 2 Sites, also Speke Road Site – all happily and visibly oozing leachate into the local watercourses.

The contract to report on these sites was followed late in 1997 by a further contract to carry out leachate pumping trials on them and on Gatewarth 3 Site, although the trials did not actually get started until early 1998. The first step was to design and manufacture two transportable mini down-hole pumping units.

In early 1998 I also became involved in reporting on Brant Road Closed LF Site near Lincoln for AAH, a chemical company. Here again I was quite pleased with my report, for which a good deal of data was available, revealing an unusual hydrogeological situation. The clients in this case were totally clueless about landfill sites and owned this one by a historical accident – they wished only to get both the site and the Environment Agency out of their hair. RD was at one stage negotiating to take over ownership of the site for a handsome fee, with the idea of using it for test purposes. It proved, however, not to be legally possible for AAH to pass on their ultimate responsibility for any leachate leakages.

During these early Organics years I was little involved in company finance, this being handled mainly by RD and Lynn. However, working was profitable enough for the acquisition of an additional room at the Barclay Centre. Room 5 was a larger one across the corridor from Room 12. Room 12 became the Conference Room and Sales Office. With the absence of any investors the need for Board meetings was not too pressing. I attended them, and usually took the chair, when they were called, but they were infrequent.

In mid and late 1998 I actually had enough spare time (between family commitments) to do a little more work on my boat, Lucette K, but it was not to last. With a growing Organics income went a growing staff and growing overheads, and RD became anxious not to repeat past mistakes. I re-started the 'Profitability' graph of UKPS days, and in addition became mildly involved in looking at overheads on the Cash Flow forecast.

The centre of gravity of sales was moving to Hong Kong, with a first major contract for a leachate plant at Went Site. This was scheduled to have been highly profitable, but because of technical difficulties which RD took many weeks to crack, ended by being something of a pot boiler. The impossibility of knowing how much this job was to cost made nonsense of my 'Profitability' graph, which I was obliged to abandon. At least RD's ultimate success at Went (not finally solved until late April 1999, led to other major contracts in the area, with useful up-front payments.

Meantime I was involved in reports on Trumps Farm Site, near the M25/M3 junction, Ano Liosia, Greece, which I did not visit and which was done for free, and on around twenty SITA power generation sites. The latter job enabled me to discover how to cost a power plant and the extent to which Norweb and Wimpey had misled us in UKPS days by overestimating costs for NFFO Round 3. The SITA work was supposed to have been done by RD, and came to me when he was manfully but unwillingly struggling as a technician in Hong Kong.

On 24<sup>th</sup> March 1999 RD organised another LFG conference in Kenilworth, successor to the former 'Discharge – Your Obligations' conferences of UKPS. This one was fronted by ETSU, from which RD was continuing to receive a number of useful 'research' contracts.

Arising from the long-drawn out Went problem, there was an immediate-cash-availability crisis in May 1999, which was partly solved by my purchasing back our blue Fiesta car, 'Norma' which had become a company car in the affluence of 1998. This episode, did, however, remind RD of the importance of an accurate cash flow forecast, at which it proved extremely difficult to arrive. Some weeks the outlook looked rosy, then the next week - with no notable change of circumstances - it looked appalling. Then RD worked on it and it became OK again for a period.

In October 1999 Ben, young but impressive, became Operations Manager and at about the same time Terry Scott, Sales Manager, moved to the US to front a joint Organics/Soiltec attempt on the US market. I took the lead in finding a replacement for Terry, for which post there were 45 applications. We ended with Andrew Wormington. The Terry Scott adventure was a failure, and after six months, plus a cost of £50,000, he was withdrawn. More successful was the Bangkok Office, semi-existing for some years, but enlarged and established in a rented house in late 1999 - its function is largely to provide drafting services, also to provide RD with a Bangkok base for his numerous Far Eastern forays.

Towards the end of 1999 and early in year 2000 I worked on natural methane shows in NW Turkey (I advised to forget them) and on locations for de-watering points at Eastpoint Phase 2 site, Dublin (I advised to re-look carefully at water levels). In neither case was field work involved.

In mid-2000 RD became increasingly restive about the accuracy of available financial data. He caused the company accountants to be changed, appointing Messrs Grant Thornton with a remit to produce bi-monthly accounts, but he also asked me to take a general overview of finance systems. By August 2000 I have looked at overheads, project costs, Work In Progress reports, and Bangkok Office costs. All four are in need of tweeking, and are in process of being tweeked, but once this has been done we should be able to arrive at a reliable cash flow forecast and profitability graph. The new accountants have reached the stage of compiling draft accounts for the year ending 30<sup>th</sup> April 2000, showing a turnover of nearly £3M and a profit of around £40K. The profit is not what it should be, but it is a profit; the turnover is not far short of that of UKPS in its heyday.

RD put in for a Coventry Chamber of Commerce competition for small company export achievement in 1999. This resulted in local press coverage centred round the 'start-in-a-garden-shed' story, and Organics was declared the runner up. The Chamber of Commerce, however, did not leave it at that. It put up the name of RD to attend the Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace in summer 2000, at which he duly presented himself, and later resolved not to repeat the experience.

All in all, by late summer 2000 it begins to look not too bad. At least the present lot go about it cheerfully, and it was a nice thought that they got together to give me a bottle of champagne (Möet et Chandon, no less) for my birthday. Also, despite the financial over-viewing and occasional Board meetings, I am beginning to get more disengaged again.

## ADDENDUM

From the perspective of February 2007 the above sounds rather too optimistic an assessment of the prospects of RD's landfill business. I do not, however propose to summarise the further history of this adventure here, partly because I have slipped out of active involvement and become unaware of most of the detail, and partly because it is a topic which – to do it justice – would need a book of its own. Suffice it to say that we still soldier on but we still await the big break. Much of the current business is in the Far East, to which RD has re-domiciled himself in Bangkok. I still draw a salary for formal secretarial duties and it goes towards the schooling of Nadine (Harrow, Bangkok) and Lalana (Princethorpe).

Nicole is giving me much-appreciated voluntary help with the RD work (nice to have a first class secretary again; it reminds me of the olden days!). She is, though, due to depart soon to join Philip in Egypt, where he has a BP job supervising submarine well-head completions in the Nile delta. AR has taken the lead in supervising our increasingly “home bound” post 80s life style, with much assistance from the others, for which we are very grateful. AR has also built up from scratch a promising Internet brokerage business mainly for domestic power supplies.

This leaves Christopher, my “Literary Executor” and principal firewood generator, who is with us as I write but is now domiciled in Spain, where he has gone a long way towards turning into a Spaniard, and where he also runs a small landfill oriented business and another more general Internet business. In August 2003 his wedding to Concha Alvarez Nuño of Seville was the event of the decade for the Devon Edens, attended by all members of the widely dispersed tribe who could make it. (RA, AR, Lise, Ewan, RD, Nadine, Lalana, Jessica, Nicholas, Nicole, Philip, Amy, Sara and Michael). Guests on Concha's side included her 99 year old grandfather, Rodolfo, a veteran colonel from the civil war, and her Father, also Rodolfo, a talented artist, plus a good contingent of other relatives. The wedding itself was a brilliantly staged formal ceremony and dinner amongst the trees of an Andalusian olive grove and under the stars of an Andalusian sky. Concha has since proved to be not only beautiful but endowed with a good element of the artistic sense of her Father. I presented Rodolfo with a framed copy of my poem on the ‘Galleas Girona’ in exchange for his portrait of a matador.

27 February 2007.