

60 years at the University

In 1945 the Cardiff office of Hills was set up on the back of work for the University and there has hardly been a period since when they have not had a project on the campus.

Work will commence in October on the refurbishment of the West Wing of the Bioscience building. This is a '70s building which is being upgraded over a period of time. The School of Biosciences has over 350 research-active members focused within the six major research areas of biodiversity and ecological processes; connective tissue biology; genetics; microbiology; molecular cell biology and neuroscience. Professor Sir Martin Evans FRS, The Director of the School of Biosciences and Professor of Mammalian Genetics was awarded the Nobel Prize for Medicine in October last year and has been described as one of "Ten Britons who have shaped our world". The international reputation of the School's research is reflected in the revenue that it attracts, some of which is being used to upgrade laboratories, equipment and furniture in the unit. The alterations and refurbishment which will take six months.

Another Cardiff University project, this time at Heath Hospital, the University Hospital of Wales (the NHS merged with the University in 2004), is the new Cancer and Genetics building which commences on site in August. This £4 million concrete frame building on stilts will house offices and research rooms and is an eye-catching design – like an upside down icecream cone with a slice taken off the end.

IN MINT CONDITION

Hills will be involved with the refurbishment of the Royal Mint Visitor Centre at Llantrisant, six miles outside Cardiff. This is the site of the factory where our coinage is made and visitors are able to view the manufacturing process and buy related products at The Coin and Gift Shop.

During an 11 week period there will be a refit of the interior of the gift shop which will focus on improved display of the products which include stamp and coin sets, historical coins, jewellery, medals, books and art; upgrade of the hospitality area to provide a meeting space that focuses on the product and provides an informal, contemporary feel with large photographs on the walls which reflect the diversity of the product, technological advance in its production and refer back to the history of the Mint; refurbishment of the coin locker room and staff entrance area using primary colour walls influenced by Donald Judd, an American artist.



RETIRING TO GERMANY

After 37 years with Hills (the last two as a consultant) Steve Baker put his calculator away in a drawer on 31 July and was given a warm send-off by his colleagues from Cardiff and Bristol and a number of clients and professionals.

He and his wife will be moving to her childhood home near the Black Forest in Germany and Rob Cleaver and everyone at Hills wish them a happy and healthy retirement.

GERMAN INVESTMENT IN UK

As food prices push inflation to a 16 year high we are told that consumers are trading-down in order to seek out cheaper alternatives of their favourite meals and the latest figures on UK grocery sales show stores such as Aldi are gaining market share. The German discount retailer has seen sales jump by 21% and has earmarked investment of £1.5bn for the UK market with plans to build a store a week for the next five years – quite a programme!

Hills are part of the team in the South of England assisting with this programme. They act as quantity surveyors, negotiating with developers on behalf of Aldi, overseeing cost control of the shopfitting process and placing direct orders for items such as refrigeration, trolley parks and security. So far they have been involved with extensions to stores in Plymouth and Camborne; conversion of a store on a retail park in Shepton Mallett; fitout of a new store on new retail park in Weston super Mare and are currently supervising the fitout of a store in Exeter formerly owned by Staples. (The bright red walls will go during the rebranding!" says Alun Owen who is running the projects). The next project will be in Cardiff and within walking distance of the office.

CARE OF THE ELDERLY

The Bristol office are involved with three very different projects for the elderly. Moor Hall Convent in Stroud is run by The Benedictine Sisters of Grace and Compassion and the project here involves an extension and the addition of ensuite facilities to the 12 single rooms.

At Clarence House in Weston super Mare, owners, The Locking Deanery Housing Association Ltd, are spending £1.4 million on a three storey extension to provide self-contained care flats which will be complete in April 2009 and further alterations to existing buildings will be completed in December.

In its early stages is a project at Nunsfield Court, Taunton to build an extension housing nine one and two bed sheltered flats for the client, Places for People. They will also be carrying out alterations and modernisation of existing flats to create 28 units with a warden's accommodation and common rooms.

NEW FACE IN BRISTOL

Kevin Locke joined the Bristol office in March last year after working for a contractor as well as being self-employed. He will be studying for chartered status but as a graduate he will take the postgraduate conversion course—a shorter route than many of his colleagues in other offices!

Kevin lives in Gloucester, is getting married in October and plays Rugby, both League and Union and has played for Welsh Universities and Gloucester Warriors.



Sixth Formers return to new facilities

Work in two secondary schools in Wiltshire will be completed in time for this year's intake of sixth formers. Working for Wiltshire County Council, Hills have been involved with the construction of a new Sixth Form Building at Abbeyfield School in Chippenham. The construction cost of £2.3 million was funded by the Learning and Skills Council to accommodate the growing number of sixth form students at the school. The building will include a dedicated sixth form common room and study space, classrooms, IT facilities and purpose-built dining room for sixth form students and staff.



At Wootton Bassett School, a Specialist Technology College, development includes a new Sixth Form Centre and a new larger Computer Learning Centre and a Science/Technology classroom in the main school plus new car parking facilities. The new building will provide a dedicated Media Suite, Business suite, Lecture Theatre, classrooms for psychology, sociology and law and a new Common Room with a snack bar. The school has 310 sixth form students starting this year and the Centre will enable the school to offer new "A" level subjects such as photography as well as the International Baccalaureate commencing in September 2009.

Consolidation of Mortuary Facilities

A project on Hills' doorstep is the construction of the new public and forensic mortuary at Flax Bourton which is nearly complete and will result in the provision of a centralised service for Avon and the closing of out-of-date mortuaries throughout the area. It will deliver state-of-the-art facilities to serve police and pathologists dealing with challenging cases from as far away as Dorset and Cornwall. The new centre will provide six post-mortem tables, a range of hi-tech equipment, storage for up to 120 bodies and a separate Home Office-approved secure forensic mortuary area. This will be fitted with web cams and digital recording equipment to enable evidence to be played back to police Scenes of Crime Officers and investigating detectives, who will benefit from a separate viewing and work space equipped with plasma screens and photographic and computer facilities.

The West of England Coroner's court is also being upgraded to enable it to deal with about 5,000 sudden or suspicious deaths each year. The project will significantly improve the coroners' court facilities. The new, extended courtroom will be fitted with modern comfortable seating to replace the existing hard benches; new heating and lighting and a dedicated press room to help the media report public hearings. Working with English Heritage, care has been taken to preserve historic aspects of the listed building. The original Victorian cell blocks will be retained and restored - although they will continue to be used for storage. Whilst building work is carried out inquests are being held in the nearby Flax Bourton village hall.