

EXCITING NEW ACQUISITION NEWS!



Willbond buys Spital to boost regional coverage

We recently exchanged contracts to purchase the business and assets of Spital Tile Co. Limited in Chesterfield and opened our doors earlier this month.

Independent and established in 1937 Spital has been the town's leading Bathroom Showroom and Plumbers' Merchant for many years and currently employs 17 staff.

The strength of the business lies in its bathroom showrooms and this plus its useful Merchant operation makes it a good fit for us.

Willbond Bathroom Centre Director Lisa Jepson commented:

"We are delighted to have acquired such a reputable business which will now make our Bathroom Centre chain 4 strong and further increase our coverage of the East Midlands market. We shall be making a significant investment to bring the Showrooms and Trade sales areas in line with our corporate standard and preferred brand strategy.

We are particularly pleased to welcome the Spital staff into our team and we look forward to working with them and growing the business on the back of our renowned friendly and professional service."

Willbond already has a Plumbing Centre in Chesterfield and Director Ray Wheatley believes that the Spital business will strengthen the Willbond appeal to local tradesmen.

"When we opened in Chesterfield 18 months ago we had searched in vain for a site suitable for our preferred business model which is a combined Plumbing and Bathroom Centre and thus we are thrilled to now realise this ambition via the Spital acquisition. The addition of the Bathroom Centre adds value to our existing trade offering which will be really well received by local customers."



CHARITY GOLF DAY SUCCESS

63 Golfers (apologies for the loose terminology!) teed off on the beautiful Priory Course at Breadsall last month for our annual charity golf day.

The weather was beautiful and we had a worthy winner in Michael Skinner who scored 38 points off a handicap of 12.

The day culminated in our evening Presentation dinner when we announced that £800 had been raised for our chosen charity The Alzheimer's Society.

Photographed opposite is Purchasing and Logistics Director Simon Chambers presenting the donation to Kath Walker, Branch Development Officer from the Society. She said: "Although we're part of a national organisation we raise all our funds locally, so donations are always very much appreciated. We didn't know that Willbond were planning to raise the money for us so the unexpected phone call from them was a lovely surprise. The donation will allow us send out more copies of our newsletter and further raise awareness."



NEW LOGISTICS MANAGER

With 8 Plumbing Centres and 4 Bathroom Centres scattered across Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Lincolnshire the logistical challenge of getting the right stock in the right place and then delivering a 'right first time' service to our customers becomes ever more complex.



Following a review of the Department we have now appointed Scott Danby to the position of Logistics Manager. Scott joined us almost straight from school 9 years ago and in that time he has had experience of nearly all of our departments and several branches so he has a clear understanding of what both his internal and external customers require.

Scott (26) commented:

"I have really enjoyed my recent role as Manager of our West Bridgford branch and I will miss the customers and my colleagues there but I am very excited by the challenge that I have been set in Head Office Logistics and I am looking forward to making a positive difference."

WILLBOND - WHERE ELSE FOR JO AND TWIGGY?

Listeners to the Trent FM breakfast show recently will have heard Twiggy tell everyone that he was going to visit Willbond for his new bathroom suite. This prompted Jo and the rest of the team to burst into a spontaneous rendition of our famous jingle.... "Willbond - Where else?"

Free advertising - now that is a pleasant change!



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In our last Tradelink written in January I commented that the year ahead looked daunting and in retrospect this will probably prove to be the understatement of the year!

Construction nationally is taking a battering as government spending starts to dry up and the credit crunch bites into the new homes market and causes house prices to wobble.

Many householders are racked with uncertainty wondering what are the implications for their own housing equity but equally many are clearly making the decision to 'improve rather than move' and this is good news for all involved in the 'one-off' market.

Traffic and orders at our Bathroom Centres have held up well so far and we hope that this will improve further as more people come to terms with the housing market.

As we have just acquired our 4th Bathroom Centre you could say that there is a little wishful thinking here on my part and you would be right!!

It is certainly not an ideal time to be expanding but inevitably tough times create opportunities and our Chesterfield acquisition fits very well into the strategic plan we have for both our Plumbing and our Bathroom Centres.

Grantham, which we opened, at the beginning of the year continues to strengthen and our 7 days opening there is certainly bringing added value to local customers.

Inevitably our growth is helping our buying power and we continue to improve our competitive situation to the benefit of our customers which in turn is helping us to improve our market share across the East Midlands.

As you can imagine, it has been a very busy six months for all of our Directors who have been heavily involved in the Grantham set-up and opening and the Spital acquisition but our managers and staff have shown their quality and they have really stepped up to the plate to keep our daily business moving forward.

I would like to thank them publicly here for their sterling efforts and also you for your continued support as we strive to improve the business for all of our customers.

Tony Hogg