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Following the article on RAF West Kirby in our last issue, Ann Hughes of Pensby sent the magazine to her friends Raymond and Ruth Nealon who now live in Braunschweig, Germany and received the following reply...

Dearest Ann, Thank you for the magazine you sent us. You are one of the very few people we correspond with in the UK now and it is lovely to get mail from you, usually with a pleasant surprise enclosed. It must be getting on for nearly 20 years since you first wrote to us.

The article on West Kirby brought back a whole load of memories. It was a bit of a change for all those lads from civvy street away from home for the first time and being introduced to the harsh discipline of service life.

I arrived there a brand-new 18-year-old Drill Instructor in September 1946. It was drill and spit and polish, morning noon and night. I spent a fortune on cough sweets and throat pastilles because all orders were delivered at the top of our voices.

The winter of 1946-47 was the worst for over a hundred years. Each hut held 30 men and had two stoves. Our coke ration for a day was set at two buckets and only lasted a couple of hours in the evening. The Station Hospital was full of sick men and then suddenly in December we were all sent home and told we would be called back when wanted. We stayed at home for two months and then were called back. I was only back a couple of months and suddenly was sent to hospital for three weeks with scarlet fever and then on three weeks' sick leave. I am sure my dear old Grandad was beginning to think I was a deserter. I returned to my training duties until I had a heated exchange of words with a Sergeant and punched him on the nose. Fortunately he hit me first, so it did not end in a military prison. I was allocated other duties and sent to work at the hospital. I had thoughts of bedpans and such like dirty jobs – instead I was stuffed into a smart white jacket with a black bow tie and a blue waistcoat. It seemed I was now butler and general dogsbody to a lady in charge of 22 nurses of the Queen Alexandra's Royal Air Force Nursing Corp, who all held officers rank.

It was an enjoyable and very educational time. I was posted away from West Kirby in 1948 to RAF Kirkham near to my hometown of Blackpool. I liked West Kirby and that area. The young ladies were a classy lot, but the lads were not as friendly!



Mark Bruton

Inspired Bathrooms & Kitchens expands with new contracts business

Having established an enviable reputation across the North West of England for quality, durability, attention to detail and customer care, Inspired Bathrooms & Kitchens has launched a new business to serve property developers and builders both locally and further afield.

With a strong presence in Heswall, Chester and Prenton, Inspired continues to grow its thriving retail operation, and founder and Managing Director Mike Lloyd believes this is a solid base on which he can build and diversify.

Mike says: "Last year we opened a flagship showroom in Heswall, and it's performing as well as I could have hoped. But if I've learnt one thing since launching the company in 2007 it's that you can't stand still, and developing a contracts side to the business makes sense.

"At the same time, it would be unwise to compromise in any way, so the new company, IBK Contracts, is a standalone business with its own team and goals, but underpinned by the same Inspired values that have always stood us in good stead."

IBK Contracts is headed by 48-year-old Mark Bruton. He has 20 years' experience of the industry, 16 of them in contracts. Over the next 18 months he intends to fashion the company into a serious player, both locally and nationally.

"Construction in some parts of the country has slowed," he explains, "but in Wirral and Liverpool there's still plenty of activity. I believe Inspired's unique selling point is our ability to do everything, from design right through to the finishing touch, including any building work or decoration that needs to be done. Our clients will have one point of contact and, if we are engaged to install as well as supply, all work will be done by Inspired tradespeople who'll always be available. I believe we can offer a first-class service and deliver quality at the right price.

"Inspired likes to work with the best, like German manufacturer, Pronorm, whose kitchens really are the zenith of great design and durability. Our bathroom suppliers include the excellent Laufen and Hansgrohe.

"In time we will reach out to places like Manchester, and even to the London market. We are genuinely expert at what we do, and even though it will take a little time to raise our profile, get on tendering lists and win the confidence of great clients, I'm sure we'll succeed, win friends, employ more people and boost the local economy into the bargain."

Mike Lloyd adds: "Like many things in business, starting a new venture is a risk and, even though there's a bit of uncertainty in the air at the moment, when it comes to trying to grow I decided there's no time like the present. We're really looking forward to working with builders, developers and architects and making things happen."