

Canary Wharf a jewel in the TCP crown

As our Area Supervisor Amanda Waller will be the first to admit, she has a wonderful place to work. Based in Canary Wharf, she has seen the area transform from the old, run-down docklands to one of London's most dynamic areas of economic development.

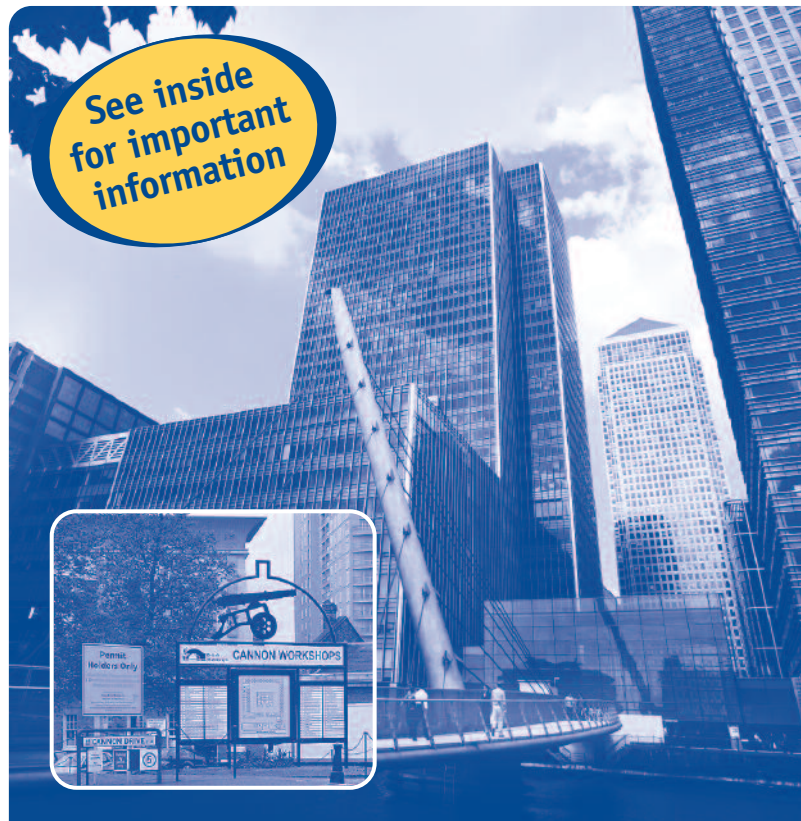
Amanda has eight sites around the Isle of Dogs and Canary Wharf, which range across the spectrum of the prosperity scale.

The Isle of Dogs is largely residential and is populated by real East Enders who remember the island as it used to be, when most of the men and women worked on the docks. In its heyday, Docklands was associated with many well known industries, including chain and cable suppliers to the Admiralty, McDougalls Flour and Duckham's, as well as oil, rum sugar and tea. Goods came into the docks from all over the world, but during the 60s and 70s advances in technology gradually rendered the facilities obsolete.

With traditional trades gone, new and alternative uses had to be found to fill the vacuum. So in the 1970s the process began to make Docklands what it is today.

The pioneering schemes were: Asda Millwall (one of Amanda's sites), the New Billingsgate Fish Market at North Quay, West India Dock (another of Amanda's sites), and Quayside Industrial Estate which, along with Cannon Workshops (also one of Amanda's sites), provided the first start-up business premises on the island.

In 1981 the re-development started with the 80,000 sq ft Asda store, including a children's play area, petrol station and parking for over 600 cars, bringing much needed jobs to the area. In 1987 the agreements were signed for the development of the 1.1 million sq mtr development of Canary Wharf and the opening of London City Airport. In 1990 the first Canary Wharf Tower was completed at One Canada Square, soaring 243 metres into the air and until recently was the tallest skyscraper



The Canary Wharf skyline and car park (inset)

in Europe. The tower was intended to be 50 stories higher, but had to be reduced to allow the planes to land at City Airport. In 2002 the Canary Wharf skyline was enhanced by the HSBC Tower at 42 stories and the City Group Tower at 43 stories.

In 1996 the IRA planted a half-tonne bomb in a small lorry 80 yards from South Quay Station on the Docklands Light Railway, causing over £85 million of pounds worth of damage and an end to their ceasefire. Since then security has become a huge issue within the area.

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New technological developments continue to impact the parking industry and the recent Parkex Exhibition underlined this.

Some technologies though, such as Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) Systems, have been around for a while, now best known perhaps as the system used to implement the London Congestion charge. We use it at Central Middlesex Hospital car park, where it is linked to the barrier system to allow easy access for staff permit holders.

Over the past 12-18 months it has been used increasingly to operate car parks which have a time limited management requirement such as a two-hour maximum stay. Cameras are positioned at the entrance and exit to record vehicle entry/exit times and owners of those vehicles overstaying the advertised time allowed will receive a Penalty Notice through the post, some time after the event.

Some have embraced this technology; Tesco for example have introduced it at a large number of their store car parks. Others, in the retail sector in particular, do not like the 'big brother' feel of this system.

The legality of issuing tickets through the post, on private land, whilst not having been tested through the courts, does appear to have received at least tacit approval from the DVLA and the BPA, judging from some of the detail in the recently published Code of Practice.

The jury is still out on ANPR being used in this fashion. There is no doubt that the public along with a number of MPs are vehemently against it. However, the equipment and technology is getting better and cheaper and the operational costs are much less.

As a company we are monitoring the developments in ANPR and its usage. However, our ethos remains that car parking is 'retail', and success is built on outstanding customer care and service. I don't see this changing, whatever technological advancements come along.



Bernie

Parkex 2007

We had a large deputation of Managers who went to the annual Parkex Exhibition at Birmingham between 17 and 19th April. It was a perfect opportunity to catch up on the latest technology and new innovations in the world of car parks.

Alan McNaughton and Elaine Montgomery from Head office made firm friends with a robot who gave out sweets and talked to passers by. By all accounts this metal man was a thoroughly 'nice chap'.



It was a huge area to cover and Elaine admitted that by the end of the day her feet were killing her – but the champagne and chocolate freebies did help kill the pain!

Dave Meads was impressed by the advances in the Pay and Display Machines. He said, "Technology has advanced so far that these machines can do almost everything except count the cash and make a cuppa for the attendants." If the machines develop further to complete these tasks, Dave wants a share of the royalties!

As a result of our trip to Parkex we are doing a 'walkie talkie' trial, so keep an eye on this space for future developments.

Adam Bowles - star of stage, screen and radio!

Trainee Supervisor Adam Bowles has been making his mark again.

On 19th March, Adam featured on the Radio 2 'Popmaster Quiz', scoring a respectable 21 points on the Beatles' albums. Unfortunately his opponent scored 24 points. (George Alexander was listening and got them ALL right - sorry Adam!)

As featured in our March issue, Adam is a singer of renown and has appeared on our company Marshall's training DVD. So, he's now a star of stage, screen and radio. TV awaits. How about 'Pop Idol', Adam?

George to the rescue

At Head Office we received the following letter from a grateful user of the Matalan Car Park at Longton, Mr William McCall.

"I would like to thank you for employing the most polite and considerate attendant at Longton Car Park.

Mr George Allcock witnessed a car colliding with mine while parking. He took photos of the offending car and the damage to mine. Without people like this the offenders would get off scot free. I would like to thank him and hope that you will do this for me."

It is very nice to get letters like this commending our staff in a world which is too easy to criticise. Thank you very much, Mr McCall and well done, George. You are a star!

British Parking Association Code of Practice & Approved Operators Scheme

by David Edmeads

At Parkex 2007, the British Parking Association (BPA) launched Part Two of their Code of Practice (CoP), which all members who



issue parking tickets on private property must sign up to and comply with in order to continue with BPA membership. TCP is a member and, therefore, is bound by the rules and directives of the Association.

The Code of Practice has been introduced to self regulate the parking industry and promote best practice across the parking sector. For too long less scrupulous operators have been involved in practices which have tarnished the parking industry's reputation, and the CoP is seen as a big step in the right direction to address this issue and sort out the good guys from the bad guys.

In addition to the Code of Practice, the BPA are to introduce an Approved Operators Scheme (AOS) within the next few months, which is aimed at operators, such as Town and City Parking Limited, who access registered keepers details via an electronic link to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency at Swansea. The scheme will ensure that those using DVLA information can prove due cause and are acting legally and responsibly with the data provided.

We welcome the introduction of the CoP and the AOS within our industry. They are long overdue and can only be a force for good for all honest parking operators throughout the UK.

Seven-year-old raises £340 for Children in Need

Martinakaye Manthorpe, the seven-year-old daughter of Sarah Manthorpe, our attendant at the Broad Centre, Sutton in Ashfield, was a very busy little girl up to and including Christmas. Raising money for Children in Need, she took part in a sponsored bicycle ride, auctioned items she had collected local shops and dressed up to collect money. Her grand total was approximately £340.

However, this wasn't enough for Martinakaye. Just before Christmas she asked our Area Supervisor, Alan Calko, if she could go to work in the car park with her Mum, Sarah. Sarah was Santa and Martinakaye was Santa's little helper. They handed out about £40 worth of sweets to the local children.

A smile goes a long way and shows that not all car park attendants are tyrants just out to ticket vehicles. Keep it up, girls. You are both doing a great job!

Red Nose Day antics

Asda Spennymoor

Our man at Asda Spennymoor, David Farms, joined in the fun with Asda colleagues on Red Nose Day and threatened to put a ticket on the GSM's posh Beamer. (He didn't though as it was a charity day and he values his job!)



Asda colleagues were allowed to wear red shirts for the day (for a contribution to the funds). David was given the job of selling 30 raffle tickets at £1 each in 5 minutes, which he achieved in the nick of time (some salesman!). He later had his head shaved - and not just the red bit. (Mind you, an Asda colleague agreed to have his chest shaved - slightly more painful!) In the evening he worked as a greeter and told jokes in exchange for donations.

Asda had set themselves a target of £800, which was easily exceeded. What a busy day! Well done, Asda and well done, David.



The Broad Centre, Sutton in Ashfield

Our attendant Sarah Manthorpe spent Red Nose Day 'incognito' with a red nose, red ears and dyed red hair. However, the disguise didn't fool too many people because she was still busy and recognised as our

Attendant. She was assisted by her daughter Martinakaye and got many a smile, which was her prime aim. We certainly had a smile at your photo.

Sarah also dressed up as a bunny girl at Easter, complete with bunny ears and a bobtail, and gave out sweets to children. (No, chaps, she still had her Hi-Vis on and the tail was attached to the coat!) She loves to make people smile and do silly things just for the fun of it. Keep on making us and the customers smile, Sarah.

Asda Gold Star for Joyce

Our attendant at Asda Beckton, Joyce Ali, has been awarded an Asda Gold Star as a thank you for all the hard work she has done for the store and for outstanding customer service. She will receive her award at a lunch with the store management. Well done, Joyce and thank you for all of your hard work.

George's allotment

by George Alexander

I have been asked by your editor to do a gardening article for the magazine as I am famous for my allotment.



My allotment is one of over 80 on the site in Perth, which is unusual in that the allotments are situated on an island in the middle of the River Tay. Also on the island is the 18-hole King James VI golf course, established in 1897 and (for the golfers amongst you) designed by Tom Morris, a four times winner of the open in the 1860s.

The only access to the island is by a footpath next to the Perth to Aberdeen Railway, the bridge of which spans the river. As you will know from our March issue, the river flooded this year and both the allotments and golf course were under four feet of water for several weeks.

The soil is sandy, so drains well and we were all digging and manuring busily at the end of April. For the first time, I tried to grow my vegetables from seed and was successful with all but the tomatoes. It has been quite cool here so far this year, and all of the plants are under fleece to encourage them to grow and to keep the ever persistent birds off.

In the past I have not had much luck with cabbages and other brassicas, but this year I have taken advice from an elderly gardener next to me.

I am also a member of the Golf Club, so that is where I am off to now. I will give you an update soon – hopefully with photographic proof of a good crop of veggies!

Do any of you gardeners out there have any tips or advice for us less experienced horticulturalists? Do you have any gardening questions for George? Just write to Head Office or contact your editor by e-mail gireland@townandcityparking.co.uk

Award for Dalbadhur

Dalbadhur Rai, our outstanding attendant at Asda Ashford, came to the rescue when a customer inadvertently locked her two-year-old child inside her car, along with the keys. He and other Asda staff successfully released the child and the lady was so pleased she put Dalbadhur forward for an award.

He was treated to lunch and a presentation of a certificate for 'Fantastic Team Work' by Asda Management, and an award from us for being an outstanding attendant. Not only was the lady grateful for the release of her child, but TCP are also pleased to have one of our special attendants at Ashford.

Wordsearch competition

Solve the Wordsearch find which word in our list is **NOT** included in the wordsearch. Send the missing word to Gladys Ireland at Head Office or e-mail your answer to gireland@townandcityparking.co.uk. The winners will be 3 entered in the prize draw and the winner will receive £50 of M&S vouchers. You can't win if you don't enter so go on have a go!

G D R U S S E N I P P A
 H Y X N B Y D A S U N G
 L A S S E I I U G N I L
 L E K R O N S E S T B L
 D U F D S E A S I D E I
 I U E C T O U R S G V N
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BEACHBALL
 PARAGLIDING
 BEACHTOWEL
 PLANE
 BIKINI
 SANDCASTLES
 BOAT
 SEA
 CRUISING
 SEASHELLS
 DANCE

SEASIDE
 DIVING
 SHADES
 FAIRGROUND
 SIGHTSEING
 FUN
 SNORKELLING
 HAPPINESS
 SUNGLASSES
 HOLIDAY REP
 SUNSHINE

HOTEL
 SUNTAN
 ICECREAM
 SWIMSUIT
 JETSKI
 TOURS
 NIGHTCLUB
 TRIPS
 PALMTREES

March 2007 Crossword Competition winner

The answer to the Crossword Competition in the March issue was **SPRINGTIME**. Thank you to those who entered, but I was a bit disappointed with the response. Out of nearly 500 colleagues, we only had 7 entries. Come on, you all!

The winner of the £50 was David Edmeads, our Penalties Manager at Head Office. The draw was made by Annemarie Fourie, our Team Leader in the Business Support Unit.

Take Your Child to Work Day

Perth and Kinross Council in Scotland have an initiative designed to give pupils aged 10-14 an insight to what it is to be in the workplace, and to explore the different aspects of adults' working lives. It is not a day off school but an educational visit designed to broaden the pupils' horizons.

On 26th April we enjoyed the company of our Business Development Manager's son, Marc, as he accompanied his dad to work. During his day as a TCP colleague, Marc helped with permits, worked on a project to go into this Newsletter (the Easter Bonnet competition article) and generally kept his dad in order.

When asked how he enjoyed his day he said, "It was great, but don't you drink a lot of coffee and eat a lot of cake?" That was only because everyone was spoiling him. Yes really! He even got a payslip at the end of it all. Thank you for all of your help, Marc.

TCP Howler

Errant ducks!

The Manager at Sainsbury's store at Pinner asked if we would kindly reimburse the £20 she had paid when getting a ticket for staying 14 minutes over the time allowed. She had been delayed as she had been assisting the community police. She was helping them round up some errant ducks! We saw the funny side and reimbursed her forthwith.

British Waterways – a change of scene

by Joe Lynch

As reported in our March edition, TCP has won a contract with British Waterways to patrol their car parks at five sites: Gloucester Docks, Bridge-water, Saul Junction, Fretherne and Purton.



Our roving attendant there is Joe Lynch, who writes, "After working for 18 months for TCP at ASDA Gloucester, I knew it would be nice to get out and about, but didn't realise how nice until I got the chance to work on the canal sites. It is now a pleasure to go to work and you would be amazed at the variety of boats. They are all different and each has its own identity."

The canals are a great day out. There is plenty to see, you can go fishing, there are some beautiful walks and it is so relaxing! Joe looks forward to seeing you.

Stroke - could you recognise it?

If someone had collapsed with a stroke in your car park would you know what to do?

Stroke is a medical emergency. If you know the warning signs you can perhaps save someone from serious brain damage and reduce the recovery time for victims.

The signs to be aware of are:

Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg especially on one side of the body.

Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding

Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes

Sudden trouble walking, dizziness loss of balance or co-ordination

Sudden severe headache with no known cause

The symptoms of a stroke are sometimes difficult to identify. Failure to recognise them can make the difference between the victim being very seriously handicapped or the possibility of making a full recovery.

Here are 3 easy steps to assist in recognising if someone who has collapsed, or even what may appear to be an insignificant fall, could be the victim of a stroke.

S - Ask the individual to SMILE.

**T - Ask the person to TALK.
A simple sentence such as
'It is sunny out today'.**

**R - Ask the person to
RAISE BOTH ARMS.**

Another indication of Stroke is if the victim puts out their tongue and the tongue goes to one side or the other or is 'crooked'.

If the smile is crooked, if the sentence is not coherent or if the victim cannot raise both arms equally, the chances may be that the victim has had a stroke and an ambulance should be called immediately. Advise the emergency contact and the paramedics of the symptoms.

Employees of the month

February 2007

These are our 'Employees of the Month' for February, otherwise known as the 'Misses February'. They are Naheele Rashid and Kreshna Kaur, better known to their Supervisor, Amanda Waller as 'Billy and Toni'. They are our attendants at Sainsbury's Chadwell Heath, and as they job share they have been nominated by Amanda as a 'double act'.



In her nomination Amanda said, "I have picked these two together as they job share and they are both always there if and when I need them to cover for other sites while others are off sick." She adds, "The drinks are on them."

March 2007

Our 'Employee of the Month' for March is Don Guiver from Asda Llanelli, nominated by Richard Holland, his Supervisor. Don has been working for TCP for five years, works exceptionally hard and goes that extra mile to keep the customers happy. He not only works in the car park, but helps out in the store and usually manages to fix his won machines when the need arises. He usually finds his own marshalls, which helps Richard a lot, particularly during the run up to Christmas. Don is great with the children and customers that use his car park, and is generally a great chap. Thank you, Don. This award is well deserved.



April 2007

Our 'Employee of the Month' for April is Kingstone Zvarevashe, our attendant at Asda Fratton. He was nominated by Mick Hansford and his Area Manager who said of the ex-police chief from Zimbabwe, "Kingstone always goes that extra yard for the customer and helps them with their shopping, and on one occasion helped a lady change her wheel." Kingstone has been with TCP for five years and is reliable, trustworthy and an all round nice guy. Well done, Kingstone, and thank you for all your hard work!

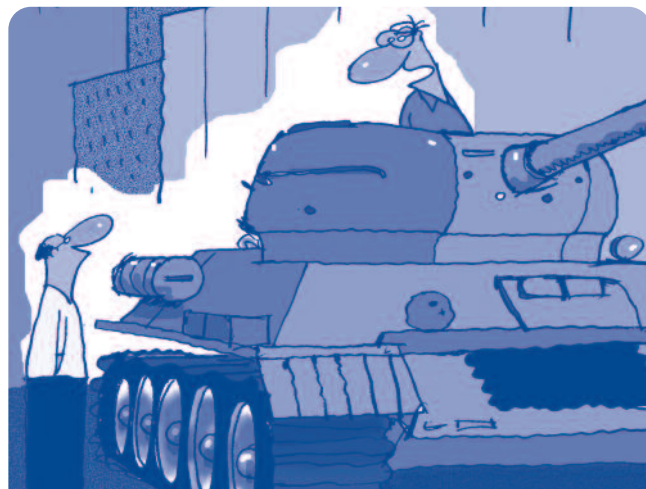


ASDA milk loses its bottle

There was an eco-friendly message as two cute calves graced the car park at ASDA Lowestoft on May 14th.

The calves were being displayed as part of a promotion to introduce a new concept in biodegradable packaging for milk. Plastic milk bottle cause problems on landfill sites, not only because they are non-biodegradable, but also because they do not compress.

Unfortunately, our attendant Stephen Lacey does not work on a Monday, so he missed it all. At least he didn't have to clean up afterwards!



"It's slow, costly and big, but no one's parked in my spot or cut me off on the highway since I started driving it."

Praise for Edinburgh team

In Edinburgh we patrol over 70 sites, To cover the large area are four roving attendants, John Scullion, Michael Imrie, Bill Crosby and our new lad Ronnie Reid, supervised by their Area Supervisor Peter Munro.

They patrol day after day and, because they do not have set sites on a regular basis, are not often recognised for the excellent job they do. We usually get to know if there is a problem on any of the sites. However, Peter Munro was recently approached by several residents of Northumberland Street, Edinburgh, who asked him to say thank you to his chaps for the marvellous job they do in patrolling the sites with friendliness and efficiency. The residents can see a definite improvement in parking conditions.

Thank you to our chaps in Edinburgh for doing a great job, and thank you to the residents of Northumberland Street for letting us know.

Another of Peter's chaps, Jimmy Messer, has had yet another 'thank you' from the residents and users at Kittleyards in Edinburgh, where he makes sure that the car park is clean and well maintained. Thank you to **ALL** the lads for doing a great job!

Notice Board

Obituaries

Sadly we have had a few deaths within the company and we would like to offer our sincere condolences to the families concerned.

Mr Marston Edward Manthorpe (60) known to us all as 'Ted', died suddenly in his sleep on 16th March 2007. Ted was our mobile attendant for the East Midlands and had been with the company since September 2001. He enjoyed tinkering with cars, camping, DIY and spending time with his family. We would like to offer his wife Kay and his family our sincere condolences.

Mr Percy Howard (71) our attendant at The Food Centre Multi Storey Car Park, Milton Keynes, died suddenly at work on Sunday 25th March 2007. Percy had worked for TCP since November 2001 and was always ready to help out when needed. He would not normally have been working on a Sunday, but he was helping out because someone else was sick. He was very well respected both by TCP and all at Milton Keynes and will be difficult to replace. We would like pass on to his widow Maureen, and his family, our sincere condolences.

Mr Tim Sanger-Stevens (60) our attendant at Asda Waterlooville, died suddenly at his home at Waterlooville of a heart attack in April. Tim transferred to TCP in June 2006 after two years with NCP. He was born in Poole, Dorset and his funeral was held at Poole Crematorium on 18th April. Many Asda colleagues attended TCP was represented by John Baverstock. Tim will be missed by both Asda and TCP at Waterlooville and we would like to pass on to his daughter and sister Bridgid our sincere condolences.

Retirement

Graeme Crow our attendant at Asda Nuneaton, retired on 28th April after 5 years with TCP. He was 65 on the 27th but decided to finish the week. He is going to enjoy his retirement doing all those things that he has not had time to do while working. He loves his garden and he and his wife Christine are looking forward to being able to go out on more day trips and see more of the country. Christine has also got plenty of decorating for him to be getting on with and he will wonder how he ever had time to work! Graeme and Christine had their share of tragedy when they lost their daughter Helen at the age of 30, but look forward to being able to spend more time with their other daughter Rachel and their grandchildren, Helen's twin girls, Charlotte and Megan. Graeme says that he has been very happy with TCP. We will miss him, but wish him a very long and happy retirement.

Promotions

Wallace Meech has been promoted from Attendant at ASDA Hartlepool to Mobile Attendant for the North East of England, where he will be helping out Area Manager Bob Sutton. Congratulations, Wallace!

Alison Nichol currently the Appeals Adjudicator at Head Office, is to be promoted to Assistant Manager of the Penalties Department. Congratulations, Alison!

New Starters

Anne Marie Fourie started on 19th February as team leader for the newly formed Business Support Unit at Head Office, Perth. Anne Marie is from South Africa and has a wide range of experience both there and over the five years that she has been in the UK. We look forward to her staying for a lot longer - TCP is now truly international!

Iain Scott is our new Accountant who started on 19th March. He is the long awaited replacement for Mike Appleby who retired in October. Iain hails from Edinburgh and has now returned home to Scotland after spending most of his time in Newbury in Berkshire, where he qualified. He now lives with his wife Carolyn and two-year-old daughter Beth in Scone (pronounced Scoone, for the uninitiated), in lovely Perthshire.

Iain spent many years working for Vodafone and worked for Andrew Lloyd Webber for some time in the beautiful rural surroundings of his residence. Iain says that he is looking forward to the challenges of his new job. Welcome to the TCP 'family' Iain. We hope you are very happy with us.

Katie McAleese started in our Accounts Department on 30th April and will be in control of the Purchase Ledger. She lives with her fiancé, two children aged five and two and their Staffordshire Bull Terrier, Molly. Katie has returned to Perth after seven years in the 'wilds' of Inverness, having now returned to the bosom of her family. When she gets time, Katie enjoys catching up with friends and camping. Her ambition is to walk the 95 miles of the West Highland Way. Watch this space. Welcome to the TCP family, Katie!

Jackie Young joined us as Area Manager in the South East, reporting to Dave Darling. She will be a 'roving' Area Manager travelling around the area and helping out wherever required. Welcome to TCP and we hope you will enjoy working with the great people in the South East.

£75 to Introduce a Friend

Why not help us and earn £75 at the same time? We have vacancies for parking attendants and marshalls throughout the UK. If you can introduce a friend to assist our recruitment campaign, we will award you £75 (£25 on commencement of employment and a further £50 after three-month probationary period). With Christmas coming up this is a good opportunity to earn a little extra and help us too. If you have anyone that you would like to introduce, just contact your Area Supervisor, or Elaine at HR in Perth on 01738 440933 or 07795 061558.

Wanted: reporters from around the UK

We are a nationwide company and, so that no area feels left out of the Newsletter, we are hoping to find a Roving Reporter who will be willing, for the fun of the exercise, to keep an ear to the ground and eye out to find out what is going on in your region. You don't need to write up the articles, just let your editor know what is going on. Please help us out. It is a big country and there is so much going on that could be of interest to our colleagues. To apply, just get in touch with Glad on 01738 440933 or e-mail: gireland@townandcityparking.co.uk.

Wanted: favourite recipes

Are you a wannabe chef? Do you have any favourite recipes that you would like to share with us? Send them to Glad at Head Office, your erstwhile editor, and we will publish them so that we can all have a go.

What do you think?

If you have any suggestions to make our Newsletter more of an event to look forward to, contact me call at head office, or e-mail me at gireland@townandcityparking.co.uk.

Easter Bonnet Competition



Marc McNaughton,
aged 10
Hannah Carnegie,
aged 2
Maisie Waller,
aged 9
Aimie Waller,
aged 7
Martinakaye
Manthorpe, aged 7

Above are the entrants to the Easter Bonnet Competition and each entry was sent a Cadbury's Crème Egg. As you will no doubt agree, all of the efforts were very good indeed and it was a very difficult decision for our judges to make. However, there must be a winner and that is Martinakaye Manthorpe. She will shortly receive the large Easter Egg. Congratulations!

Well done to you all and thank you for your entries!

Meet the team

Our 'Meet the Team' member for this issue is our special Receptionist, Marion Aitken. If you have had occasion to ring Head Office you will have spoken to Marion, who is the 'Face of TCP' - the first person that visitors meet or callers to speak to. Over the years she has taken a lot of verbal abuse from disgruntled ticket recipients, but somehow she still manages to smile and always has a cheerful word for everyone.



Having been with TCP since March 2002, Marion is one of the longer serving members of the 'team' and has seen many changes as the company has grown.

Marion says that her interests are going the theatre, walking and, of course, a tippie or three after a hard week at the office! (Bacardi and coke with a slice of orange and ice if anyone out there is buying!)

If you have occasion to ring head office you will now be able to put a face to that lovely soft Scottish accent.

Too modest Tracey

Tracey Hedges, our attendant at Asda Livingstone, received an accolade from Asda in September, but was so shy about telling us all that she kept it quiet. It took her Area Supervisor, Peter Munro, to tell us here at Head Office of her achievement. The award was for outstanding customer service and, as TCP stands for service, we are proud of her.

Computer tips from the PC Doctor

No 5. Digi-cams

Digi-cams! What a minefield!

My advice is, don't buy one just because it's cheap and looks nice, as most will disappoint. These are the things I look for:-

1. One made by a good camera maker – they're experienced at making lenses – the bit that's so important! Only consider buying models made by good camera makers such as Canon, Nikon, Olympus, Pentax, Minolta and Fujica – these all make good lenses which is key to a good camera.
2. Don't be fooled by talk of getting as many pixels as possible. Between 2 and 5 mega pixels is perfectly OK, provided you have a good lens. More pixels only produce bigger photos. 2.1 Mega pixels will produce a quality photo at 10 x 8 inches.
3. Ignore any cameras with only digital zoom – you need optical zoom, not digital! Ignore the claims for digital zoom – it's totally useless. Optical zoom is what matters.
4. All digi-cams eat batteries because of the LCD display, so get one that has rechargeable batteries, such as lithium Ion types AND that can be charged by plugging in the cable to the camera, i.e. no need to remove the battery to recharge. If you buy one that uses NiCds, these won't last very long at all. Replace them with NiMH cells rated at 2000mAH or higher – they will last much longer although costing more.
5. **DON'T** use the software that comes with your digi-cam, instead buy a 'card reader' for less than £10. Plug this into your USB slot on the PC, then remove the card from your digi-cam and put this into the card reader for instant access to all your photos. This means that you don't run down the camera's battery and it is far quicker.

If you are thinking of buying a digi-cam – try these sites for information to help you make a good choice and avoid disappointment.

<http://www.7dayshop.com>

www.7dayshop.com – excellent prices for digi-cams, cards, card readers and batteries

<http://www.digitaldepot.co.uk>

www.digitaldepot.co.uk

<http://www.internetcamerasdirect.co.uk>

www.internetcamerasdirect.co.uk

<http://www.bestcameras.co.uk>

www.bestcameras.co.uk

<http://www.pcdirect.co.uk>

www.pcdirect.co.uk

<http://www.beststuff.co.uk>

www.beststuff.co.uk

<http://www.pcindex.co.uk>

www.pcindex.co.uk

<http://www.pricewatch.co.uk>

www.pricewatch.co.uk

You should find some good prices with these, compared to high street shop prices.