

David Dennis

Field Operations Manager – Hammersmith Trunk Sewers

I joined Thames Water in Dec 1997 as a press operator and have not looked back. I was 21 years old and was scratching around doing various driving jobs and even worked for radio rentals for a period retuning their TV's and VCR's to the new channel Five prior to launch.

On finishing this job I looked around for some opportunities and saw an advert in my local paper for a press operator at Beckton STW in the new incinerator. I recognised Thames Water immediately and new where the works were as I have lived in Beckton for most of my life and often smelt it, I had to apply.

I was successful and was amongst the first employees to operate the new incinerator. This was a new process following the dumping of raw sludge at sea this now had to be incinerated. This was not the most glamorous roles but very interesting as I never knew what happened to our waste. I read the company magazine about other areas of the business and new that this was the career for me.

I applied for a role for a Tech 1 on the day works team on the process works. This was a role which I was outside in all weathers and up to my elbows in raw sludge most of the time. I think my record was 4 showers in one day! This team was full of characters and which everyone had a nickname. It was hard work at times but thoroughly enjoyed it. From lifting pumps out to unblock them to setting up temporary pumps and what seems

miles of pipe work. Lifting submersibles from large task and allot of hosing and cleaning.

A shift workers role came up down the road at Riverside STW, I was interested in going back to shift work and thought this would be a great opportunity to learn more. I was offered the job and was soon working in the control room at Riverside monitoring and operating the site. Here there were some very experienced guys with over 40 years' service. There were and still are some very colourful characters and most were very contentious and proud of their job and what they done. I think this rubbed off on me.

After two years I felt I needed a new challenge and wanted to do something different. I asked my line manager about management and what would I need etc. He said you don't need anything in particular you just need to go for it and learn as you go...

Getting offered my first manager's job in Trunk Sewers was a massive personal achievement given that the only jobs I had were operators and technician jobs. This was not an easy job and was a huge learning curve for me. I did have an advantage as I knew the area very well as I grew up in Newham and played on the Greenway (NOS) as a child.

Looking back I enjoyed the challenge though at time it was hard. The team were very experienced with 30-40 years of service per person and they had seen substantial changes during their time. This was by far the most interesting job. Going underground in London is amazing, the history and engineering; it really does make you



proud to be a part of it. Taking visitors out; including being involved with sewer week and filming of various programs. I was also one of the singing sewer men where we do a video as part of the bin it don't block it campaign.

I was part of Team Thames during the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic games was a highlight. It was great to be involved with the project; Going onto the Olympic park getting involved with various issues which we had to resolve quickly and without disruption. One sticks in my mind in the Olympic village where workers in the outdoor eatery decided to dispose of their waste fat into a gulley which unfortunately was connected to the Olympic park wetlands. It didn't leave too much of a mess and was cleaned up cleaned swiftly.

I'm now currently working in West London as a Field operations manager for Trunk Sewer. I have managed all three Trunk Sewer teams and have experience in all three areas and possibly one of the very few managers who have walked through most of the large intercepting sewers.

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