



Michael Godber – financial director of Beatson Clark plc, is seen looking at the UK Retail Price Index for the past five years.

VIDEOTEX

MAINTAINS THE PERSONAL TOUCH

Where would the handcream be without the tube; the medicine without the bottle; the make-up without the compact? Probably all over the bathroom floor.

Everybody needs bottles, but few of us realise how much. Because containers are anonymous, branded only by the product they contain, we never think where they come from.

Many of the familiar bottles on the bathroom shelf originate from one company; Beatson Clark, a family firm established in Rotherham in 1751 and the UK's leading supplier of glass containers to the pharmaceutical industry.

Although Beatson Clark plc is now part of an international group which employs more than 1100 and had a turnover of £34 million in 1985, it's still firmly established in Yorkshire.

One of the two glass factories is in Rotherham, within sight of the company headquarters, the other is in nearby Barnsley.

The company has subsidiaries in Holland and Australia and is a major exporter of pharmaceutical

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containers to 120 countries around the world. The most recent addition to the group is Unit Moulders Limited, who are principally engaged in the manufacture of plastic injection moulded items. The acquisition

of the new company is part of the group's plan to diversify its product range to include moulded plastic and other types of container.

Beatson Clark balances this development strategy with a strong commitment to customer service in the best traditions of the family business. But, the company is far from old-fashioned and believes that investment in the most modern technology for both manufacture and administration is the way to stay ahead of the rest.

According to Ralph Schofield, information services manager, by next summer both the Rotherham and Barnsley factories will have a fully integrated production facility which he describes as 'the most advanced in Europe'.

Not to be outdone, the head office installed a ROCC 870 videotex system to help management keep track of production, sales and customer service as the company grows.

"In 1971 we replaced the hand ledgers with an NCR mainframe," said Ralph Schofield. "Since then we've

Beatson Clark factory in Rotherham.



Ralph Schofield – information services manager is seen with Lynn Sidebottom – marketing assistant of Beatson Clark plc, about to access marketing statistics on dispensing bottle sales.



been working from reports generated by the mainframe, but I could see this becoming a problem as production increased and the organisational structure became more complex."

"Senior management and marketing staff need immediate access to up-to-date detailed information on production and sales. A report is unwieldy, difficult to interpret and out of date the minute it's printed," Schofield added.

"Apart from the problem of system security we also realised that adding extra terminals would affect the response time of the mainframe – which is absolutely vital to our business," said Schofield.

Since the company was already using microcomputers in some departments, Ralph Schofield first considered micro-based systems. These were rejected as expensive and impractical.

"Videotex seemed to be the ideal solution," he added. "I see it as a working tool – a real timesaver for the busy executive, a relief from the normal mass of paper," he added.

Having decided on videotex as the medium, Schofield needed to choose a supplier.

With so many companies in the marketplace why did he choose ROCC?

**“... ROCC ...
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service.”**

“As experts in our field, we wanted to work with a company experienced in videotex – we can't afford to make mistakes. ROCC was prepared to be flexible; we spent hours discussing exactly what we wanted to see on the screen and ROCC went away and wrote the program. They have given us an excellent support service and we'll continue to work closely with them to modify the system as our needs develop.”

Beatson Clark installed a ROCC 870 system with 14 terminals in July 1986 and the

system has been in operation since September.

The ROCC videotex system now provides senior management and the marketing department with a detailed breakdown of price movements, customer records, production trends and sales throughout the 120 countries that buy Beatson Clark products.

“The system provides a broad overview and the user then makes choices from the main menu to build up as detailed a picture as he or she requires,” said Schofield.

“Users can also build their own customer files to suit their own particular reference needs.”

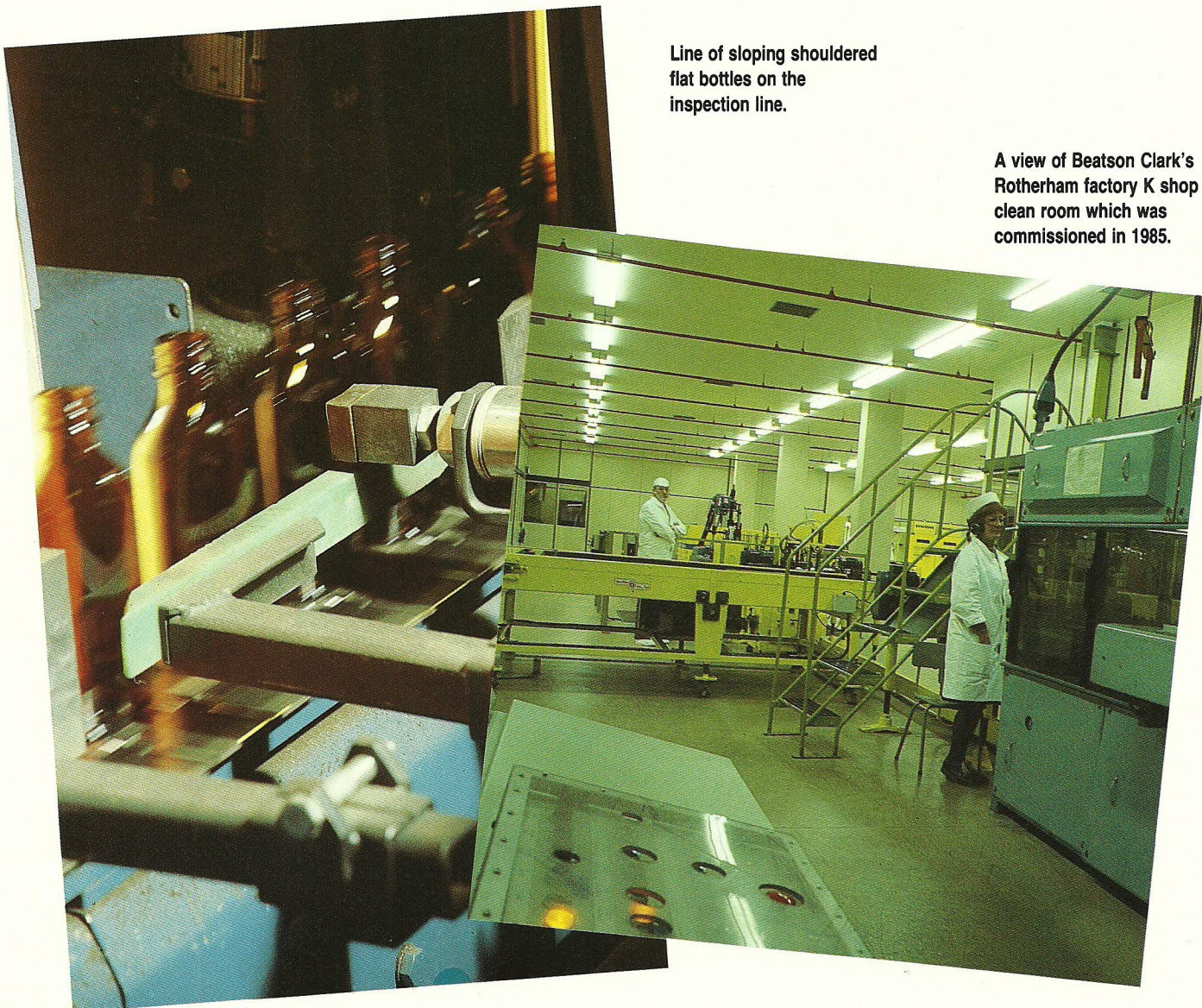
The board of directors also use the system to access financial data and budget forecasts and then compare them to existing sales and production figures. Ralph Schofield uses his ROCC

Teleputer as a management tool to plan the workload of his 20 data processing staff and to schedule projects and allocate equipment. “The ROCC system also includes the flight times to Amsterdam for the chairman who makes frequent visits to our Dutch subsidiary,” said Schofield. “You can't get much more user-friendly than that!”

Ralph Schofield is excited by the potential of videotex and has ambitious plans in mind.

“Another advantage of the ROCC system is that it's easily upgraded. Eventually, I'd like to see all our field reps with a terminal at home and perhaps even extend the network to our major customers.”

Contrary to the image of computer technology, videotex now provides Beatson Clark with a way to maintain the personal contact with their customers that has been a feature of the company for 200 years.



**Line of sloping shouldered
flat bottles on the
inspection line.**

**A view of Beatson Clark's
Rotherham factory K shop
clean room which was
commissioned in 1985.**