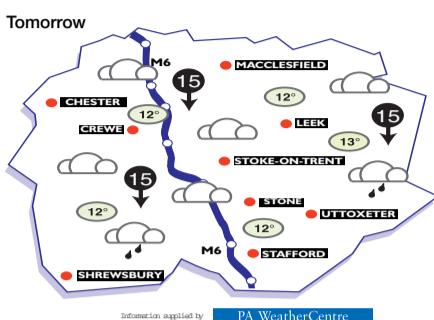


Info Desk

Weather



TONIGHT: A wet and unsettled night. There will be plenty of cloud with spells of showery rain. The showers will turn fairly heavy during the early hours, but will largely ease by dawn to leave it drier. Feeling quite chilly in moderate northerly winds. Low 3-6C (37-43F).

TOMORROW: It will be a mostly dry day, although there will be plenty of cloud persisting, thick enough at times to bring the odd spot of rain. Feeling rather cool. Moderate northerly winds, easing during the day. High 10-13C (50-55F).

Air Pollution: Rural: 4; Towns and Cities: 3; Roadside: 3. Low (1-3), Moderate (4-6), High (7-9), Very High (10).

Hours of Darkness: 8.39pm to 5.38am. Data supplied by the Science and Engineering Research Council.

Chemists

AUDLEY: Co-op, Church Street, 5.30-6.30pm. **CHEADLE:** Ratcliffe, High Street, 6-6.30pm. **CONGLETON:** Borough Pharmacy, Mill Street, 6-7pm. **CREWE:** Williams, Nantwich Road, 9-8pm. **ENDON:** McMullen, Station Road, 5.30-6.30pm. **GOLDENHILL:** Goldenhill Pharmacy, Anne Street, 5.30-6.30pm. **GREAT HAYWOOD:** Haywood, Trent Close, 5.30-6.30pm. **HARTSHILL:** Hartshill Pharmacy, Hartshill Road, 5.30-6pm. **NANTWICH:** Williams, High Street, 9am-5.30pm. **SHELTON:** Lloyds, Stoke Road, 9am-10pm. **STONE:** Birchill & Watson, High Street, 5.30-6.30pm. **TEAN:** Lawton, High Street, 5.30-6.30pm. **UTTOXETER:** Uttoxeter Pharmacy, Market Place, 5.30-6.30pm.

Shares

Prices at 3.30pm yesterday

PRIVATISATION	
Alliance & L	859.5 -2.5
Aviva	637 -2
Brad & B	309.25 -3.75
Brit Airways	267 -4.25
Br Energy	315.5 -1.25
BAA	595.5 -2
BG Grp	411 -5.75
BP	540.5 -6
BT Grp	201.75 -1.25
Corus Grp	53.75 -1.5
Base Grp	0.10 nc
Centrica	235.25 -2
HBOS	835 -0.5
Lloyd TSB	474.5 -0.5
MM02	121.75 -0.75
R Royce	253.5 +5.5
NatGrid	504.75 -0.75
Severn Trt	940 +5
Int Power	186.5 -1.75
Viridian	756 -7
LOCAL COMPANIES	
B'ford Ord	0.30 nc
Churchill	218 nc
CobraBioMan	53 +1
Cookson	40.5 +0.25
Dechra	208 nc
National Lottery	
Last night's Lotto Daily numbers were: 2, 7, 13, 17, 22, 24, 27.	

National Lottery

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Doulton factory was once biggest in the Potteries

Sad end of an era as Nile Street closes

BY DAVID ELKS

DEPUTY BUSINESS EDITOR

IN A career spanning 30 years, Len Bosworth has seen Royal Doulton slump from a world-class manufacturing powerhouse to a shadow of its former glory.

The 50-year-old looked back on changing times as dozens of workers clocked off for the last time at Royal Doulton's Nile Street plant.

While 80 staff, including Len, will stay on at Nile Street for the next few months for small-scale jobs, the number marks a sharp contrast to when the factory was the biggest in the city with 1,800 people on site.

Len joined Royal Doulton at 18 and worked at St Mary factory in Longton as a ware stripper, a job which involved removing plates from moulds, before becoming a flatware maker.

He said: "When I first started, and even up to 10 years ago, you thought there was a job for life at Royal Doulton.

"Alongside Wedgwood it was a world-renowned name that you thought would continue to produce goods forever.

"When I first started, you had whole families working there. There was a great spirit in those days, because people were close and friendships were made."

However, Len had his first taste of redundancy in 1983 when flatware production was shifted to Baddeley Green and instead he became an assembler.

He then relocated to Nile Street after his job was one of 1,200 to go in December 1998.

It was this second redundancy period that marked a watershed, both for Len, who has spent 32 years with Doulton, and for the company, which lurched into a terminal decline.

He said: "When I walked away from St Mary it was very emotional. You look behind you and know you're never going to go through the gates again.

"When I go through Longton I always look at the site even though it's been razed to the ground."

Over the past five turbulent years, Len was in a workforce which saw the mood of workers change from optimism at being in a world-renowned company to the gloom.

"It's demoralising when you see people going year after year," said Len. "You get to the point where you wait for the moment when the hammer is going to come down on you. You can only take so much before the spirit gets knocked out of you."

The pressures upon the company became apparent through the failing state of the fabric of the building.

Once Nile Street had state-of-the-art manufacturing facilities and a showroom where VIPs could examine historic pieces of Royal Doulton's priceless archive.

Now its ceilings let in rain and its archive was flogged off at auction to prop up losses of about £15 million a year.

Len, who has been works representative for the Ceramic and Allied Trades Union since 2002, said: "I can't speak for the time before I came to Nile Street, but it's true that the building has deteriorated.

"It's the problem with being loss-making, the company left repairs



CLOCKING OFF: Len Bosworth outside the factory Picture: Jon Bartholomew

that were not absolutely essential. If things had continued over the next few years then problems would have become a lot worse."

Despite the pressure, workers have remained committed to working even after Wayne Nutten rang the death knell on the factory in March last year.

This is partly because of the indefatigable spirit of the workforce, and partly due to a initiative which has helped workers learn essential skills of reading, writing and finding a new job.

Len, who helped deliver that programme, explained: "There are some people who had worked here for decades without any

training. Because of the support of Royal Doulton we have managed to get 200 people through training which has managed to find them new work outside the pottery industry such as in health."

Len will be staying on to represent the union while the last few workers remain at the historic factory, but admits he still will feel a pang when he finally leaves.

He said: "It won't be as emotional for me at Nile Street because it wasn't my factory, that was St Mary, but I can imagine there will be workers in years to come who will go past the factory and think back to happier times."

130 years of history lost forever

From Page 1

Barlaston factory. A further 20 decorating staff who had expected to finish this week have agreed to stay on another month.

Mainstream production of Royal Doulton wares started to shut down in the last week of March.

Since then, there has been a phased redundancy of workers at every stage of production.

While today will see the end of major production, 60 people have been kept on to continue production of prestige wares before they transfer to Wedgwood.

A spokesman for Royal Doulton said: "Although the bulk of workers are going today, we have asked 20 that were expected to leave to be retained. Over the past year it has been a difficult time, but I have been overwhelmed by the loyalty of staff right up to the end. You could have expected a rise in sickness, but that has not been the case."

Those set to remain at the factory next week will also be involved in clearing up the site before it formally shuts.

Royal Doulton first began producing wares at the Burslem plant, which was occupied by Pinder Bourne after the business was moved from Lambeth in 1877.

It then became a symbol of the growing empire, which at its height employed 7,000 people across 18 factories.

Garry Oakes, assistant general secretary of the Ceramic and Allied Trades Union, said: "When I came off the site a man came to deliver a bunch of flowers and the receptionist said she wouldn't be there after this week. It hit me because I've been dealing with people on the factory for 15 years and had never thought it would happen."

The end of Nile Street comes as Wedgwood's Barlaston factory begins production of certain undisclosed Royal Doulton and Minton patterns at its plant.

A spokesman said: "Production of some Royal Doulton and Minton patterns has begun as planned at the Barlaston factory of Wedgwood following the purchase of the company by Waterford Wedgwood."

The Sentinel has reported how this production will be joined by up to two million pieces of previously outsourced wares at its Barlaston factory while preparing to absorb the Doulton brands next month.

Parent company Waterford Wedgwood is already committed to taking on production of signature Royal Doulton and Minton brands, although it is understood to be looking at taking back certain lines which have been sent overseas.

It remains unclear whether ranges being considered include Royal Albert products made at Doulton's factory in Indonesia. The disclosure emerged in an interview with chief executive Redmond O'Donoghue.

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