Stella Woods assembles a recorder head. She commented: "Patience is a virtue on this job."

John Doyle uses a grinding machine which produces an ultra-fine surface.

Circuit design expert Alan Robson. It was his circuits that helped the company produce the first portable recorder, the 7000.

Robin Wilcox makes adjustments to the controls of the 7000 instrument recorder.

10 YEARS ON—AND GROWING

A 10th anniversary tribute to all the SE Labs people at Wells, Somerset

LOCATED in what is probably the most picturesque setting of any of EMI's electronics establishments, SE Labs (EMI) at Wells, Somerset, this year celebrates its 10th anniversary.

A division of the main company, which is based at Feltham, Middx, the Wells plant produces electronic equipment used in a range of scientific, industrial and medical applications.

Here are a few facts about SE Labs at Wells:

- **250 people work at the Wells establishment.**
- **Turnover has grown from £85,000 to £3-plus million at Wells in the last 10 years.**
- **Space employed at the main factory grew rapidly in the early 70s, from 10,000 to 17,000 square feet.**
- **In 1976 the division took over extra premises in Wells to house its development team.**

In this major feature EMI News tells the story of SE Labs at Wells — the business and the people who make it tick.

Story: Barbara Venn
Pictures: Dennis Baile

IT IS now ten years since SE Labs (EMI) of Feltham, Middlesex, formed an autonomous divisional organisation which moved to Wells, Somerset.

Those who work at Wells are not likely to 'beat the big drum' about their decade of achievement. But they have the satisfaction of knowing that under the leadership of Mike Perry, director and general manager at Wells, the company has grown even stronger.

SE Labs turnover at Wells has grown from £85,000 in its first year of operation to a planned £3-plus million this year — not bad for a small company with a staff of 250.

Fifty of these are in the engineering division, which includes a number of graduate and post-graduate engineers together with staff who have been involved in magnetic recording with EMI since 1946.

Magnetic recording heads play a very important part in the performance of an instrumentation recorder and SE Labs inherited all the pioneering work done in this field by EMI Electronics.

It is worth remembering that EMI was not only first with professional audio recorders after World War II but also produced at Wells one of the very first helical scan video recorders.

It was in 1968 that the Wells factory was set up as a separate entity — specialising in design and later manufacture of instrumentation tape recorders.

What is an instrumentation tape recorder? Someone at Wells described it as a very expensive and sophisticated electronic notebook. This, perhaps, is an over-simplification.

Briefly, if there is anything that needs to be measured and that measurement can be converted into electrical signals, it can be recorded on magnetic tape. Scientists and engineers require a tape recorder more sophisticated than the sort you would use for home recording and SE Labs produces machines that are ultra-sensitive and which can record up to 42 different measurements simultaneously on one tape.

There is no typical application for these machines. They have been used on flight trials of aircraft, recording the effects of waves and weather on oil rigs, and recording the punishment meted out to lorry suspension systems on African dirt roads.

The machines will store measurements such as temperature, pressure, vibration, tension — in fact, anything that needs to be, can be converted into an electrical signal, and can be recorded on magnetic tape.

The machines are versatile, too. The tapes can be played back at high speed or in slow motion — a sort of 'action replay'.

One of the first things general manager Mike Perry did when he moved to Wells was to set up a works committee for the staff, and for a while he was its chairman.

The purpose of the works committee is to discuss and resolve such matters as noise levels, vending machines, staff sales, toilet cleansing, car-parking and similar domestic items.

At the same time, it contributes to productivity by discussing improvements in work methods.

It does not get involved in negotiations about pay and conditions. That is for the

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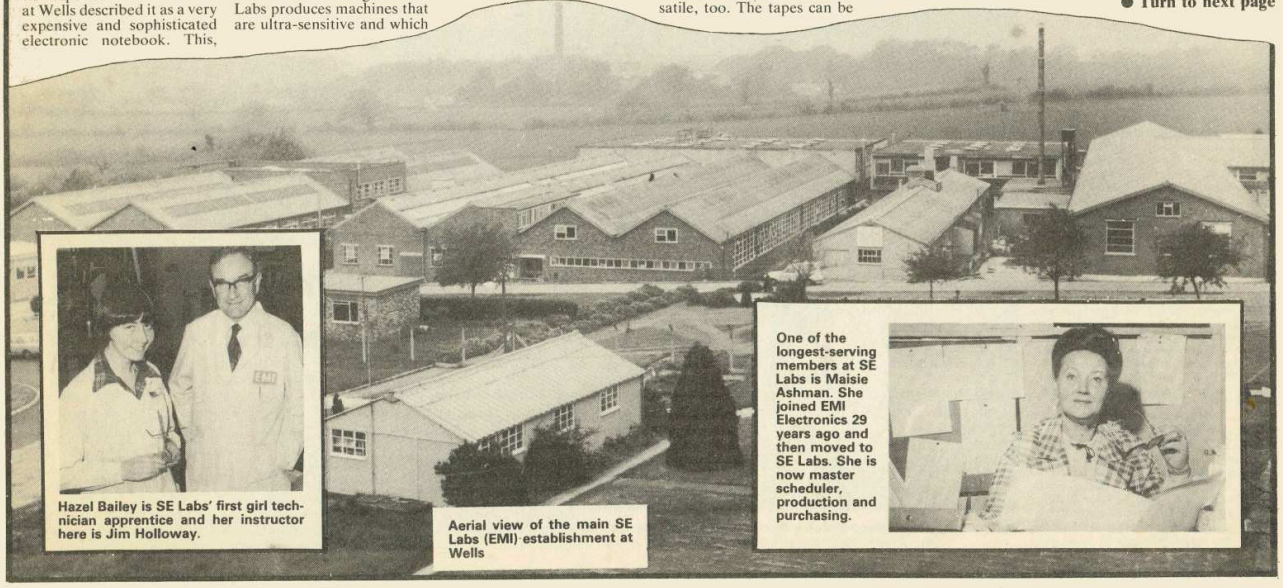

Aerial view of the main SE Labs (EMI) establishment at Wells

Hazel Bailey is SE Labs' first girl technician apprentice and her instructor here is Jim Holloway.

One of the longest-serving members at SE Labs is Maisie Ashman. She joined EMI Electronics 29 years ago and then moved to SE Labs. She is now master scheduler, production and purchasing.