



POPPIES[®] POST

CLEANING SERVICE

ISSUE 2



From a back bedroom – to Downing Street and beyond!

Celebrating 40 years of Poppies' success

Making real progress

Our teams continue to shine

It's more than a job

Pam's not hanging up her duster yet

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TOP FRANCHISES

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'Our passion for your dreams'

Passionate about helping other ambitious professionals to achieve their dreams of business ownership, Chris Wootton has grand plans for the future as Poppies hits 40 this year.

He has ambitious plans to double the size of the Poppies franchise network in the next four years.

One thing's for sure, with an industry worth £4.7billion in the palms of its hands, Poppies is ready to take 2020 by storm.

He says: "We might be coming up to our 40th birthday and be the oldest cleaning franchise in the UK, but we're very much a modern, professional brand.

"Last year was all about re-energising the business and 2020 is going to be about further growing and developing Poppies. We're at the start of a really exciting journey."

Poppies now comprises a 22-strong network cleaning more than 6,000 homes every month across the UK. Its turnover is an impressive £5m.

Chris, who joined the company in 1996 when he bought his own franchise in West Lancashire, says: "I absolutely love this business.

"I worked closely with our founder, Sue Rorstad, for many years - she was my leader, my mentor and, later, my great friend until her untimely death in 2015.

"With the support and blessing of her family, I'm incredibly proud that we are opening the next chapter in the life of Poppies. Our plans are pretty much 'pedal to the metal' to recruit new franchisees."

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Welcome to YOUR Poppies Post

Hello and a very warm welcome to latest issue of your Poppies Post. In these pages we aim once again to share all the good news around the business and shine a light on what makes Poppies so special.

This year marks our 40th birthday and we've marked the landmark occasion with a look at the colourful history of Poppies and a fascinating interview with one of our longest serving staff members. We're also looking forward to the bright future that lies ahead.

Poppies is all about people and this is your publication as well. We want to hear from all members of the Poppies team and our customers.

Share your good news with us and join us in celebrating the growing Poppies family. You can get in touch with editor Ged Henderson by emailing ged@hendersonnewsandmedia.com. We look forward to hearing from you!



71 Burscough Street,
Ormskirk, Lancashire, L39 2EL
01297 560460
www.poppies.co.uk

Pam's not hanging up her duster just yet!

Poppies is more than a job to Pam Hall – it's a way of life. And she's delighted to be taking part in our 40th anniversary celebrations.



The 72-year-old, who has 15 grandchildren and great grandkids on the way, began working for Poppies in Durham back in May 1988 and she is still going strong.

She says: "Joining Poppies was the best thing I've ever done. It came at a difficult time in my life and it gave me my independence back; it gave me pride in myself and it has just been fantastic."

Pam, who lives in Durham City, may be one of Poppies longest-serving members of staff but she got her job almost by accident! It was a case of being in the right place at the right time.

She only went along to the Durham office to look after her young grandson while her daughter-in-law had an interview for a vacancy.

Pam says: "Elizabeth Richardson, who ran the business, came out after the interview and asked if I fancied a job as well.

"I said 'yes' and she interviewed me and I've enjoyed it from day one. All the management and staff at Poppies have been wonderful and for me it is not like going to work, it is like going home."

She also relishes her role as a Poppie. She says: "I go into people's homes and I'm part of their lives. I'm not just a cleaner coming through their front door.

"Over the years I've watched their children grow up and I'm now seeing the third generation of the family.

"It's the same with commercial clients. I've gone into

businesses and I've been treated as one of their members of staff. You build relationships."

Pam is still providing the Poppies service for her first permanent client – and she has no intention of hanging up her duster just yet. "It's been a massive part of my life and they're going to have to kick me out," she jokes.

And like all Poppies, Pam takes massive pride in her work and her role. "You go into people's homes and you treat it as if it is your own home," she says.

Pam, pictured here with Durham franchisee Nicola Marinan, says: "When I'm cleaning my own house, I give it 100 per cent and I do exactly the same when I'm in somebody else's house. It's all about standards."



From a back bedroom – to

As we celebrate 40 years of successful business we look back at the d



SUE Rorstad was a true pioneer and it was her vision that led to the creation of Poppies and started an incredible business journey that led her to the corridors of power and national prominence.

The business that was to become Poppies began life in 1980 when Sue, who was on maternity leave, realised that there was a shortage of properly managed domestic cleaning services who provided high quality services to customers and secure and fulfilling jobs for staff.

She began the venture on April Fools' Day in the back bedroom of her semi-detached home in Chester-le-Street in County Durham.

As the business grew Sue opened a new branch in Newcastle. She attended evening classes at Durham University Business School where one of the lecturers told her about franchising.

This inspired Sue to develop her business into a franchise operation in the mid-80s so that others could buy into and benefit from her successful business format. That makes us the oldest cleaning franchise in the UK.

As a female Northern entrepreneur Sue became quite a local celebrity and was one of a handful of business people invited to meet Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in Downing Street.

The very next day national newspapers printed the story of "Mrs T meeting Mrs Mopps".

That publicity led indirectly to a change of name for the business - which became the Poppies we all know today.

By calling staff Poppies - because they pop in and out - Sue hoped that people would soon prefer to ask for a Poppie rather than just a "cleaner".



Downing Street and beyond!

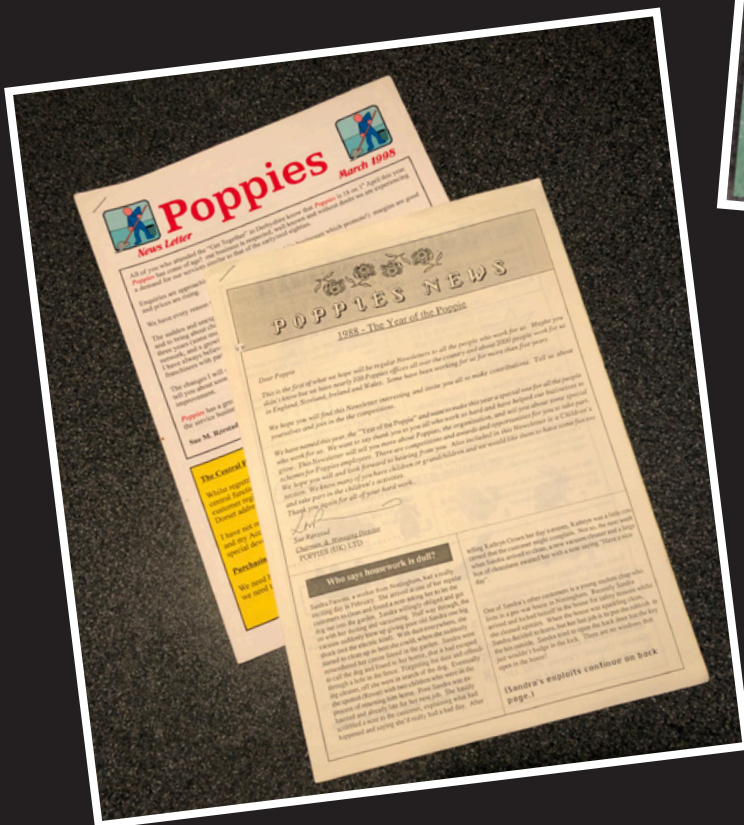
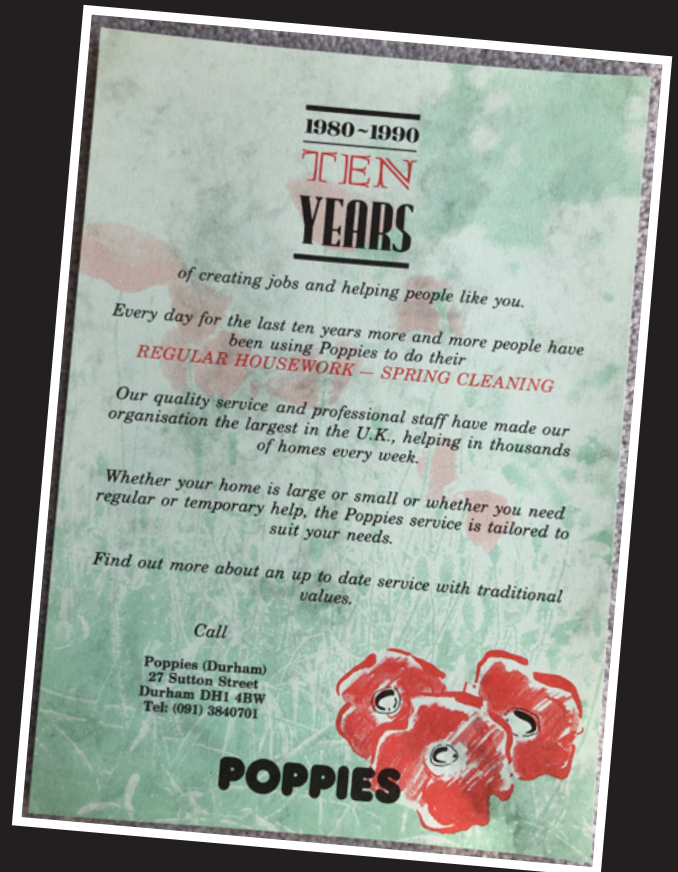
Distinguished history of Poppies and the work of its trailblazing founder

Sue also believed that a franchise was the best way forward for Poppies. To be successful each outlet needs someone to take responsibility for the staff and the service.

A woman of many achievements, for one thing she was a hot air balloon pilot, Sue was most pleased that through franchising Poppies was able to create hundreds of permanent, part-time and flexible jobs.

These jobs give mums with school-age children the chance to earn money and still meet their family commitments. This is a practical form of Work – Life balance.

Above all Sue wanted her business to recognise, respect and value its employees. She thought of Poppies as much more than “just cleaners” and believed in the need to reward people properly for their commitment as well as the jobs they do.



In 1994 Sue was recommended for an MBE by then Prime Minister John Major for “Services to Domiciliary Care”.

Always a Northerner at heart, she arranged for the award ceremony to take place in County Durham. The honour was presented to Sue by the Lord Lieutenant acting on behalf of the Queen.

Sadly, Sue Rorstad is no longer with us. After a long and brave fight against cancer, Sue passed away on New Year's Day 2015.

But her legacy remains strong. The first Poppies franchise was piloted in 1983, launched in 1984 and remains open.

And today our 22-strong franchise network cleans more than 6,000 homes in the UK every month across the length and breadth of the UK and boasts an impressive turnover of more than £5million.

So, here's to the next 40 years for a truly home-grown business, designed and built in the UK and committed to making a real difference for its customers and its staff.

POPPIES PROFILE:

NICOLA MARINAN Poppies of Durham

Ask Nicola Marinan about what it means to be a member of the growing Poppies organisation and she'll tell you simply: "It's like a family."

She took over the running of the Durham branch of the business in 2017 and hasn't looked back since – taking it on the next stage of its long and successful journey.

Launched in 1984, Poppies Durham was the UK's first ever franchised office of the UK's first ever cleaning franchise.

Nicola, who worked for almost 20 years with Durham Constabulary, honing the organisation, communication and process skills that now serve her so well, says: "It has been a big learning curve but I have loved every minute. I have an amazing team."

She adds: "Poppies is like a family; you have your immediate family - your franchise - then your extended family - other franchises - and the head of the family - the franchisor.

"As a new franchisee it has been lovely to have the support of all of them. Chris, the franchisor, has been amazing and came to spend some time with me when I first took over the business. If I have needed any advice or support, I know I can call him or any other franchise.

"I have met some lovely and interesting people during my time working at Poppies. It is an amazing feeling being able to provide such a high-quality service to people when they need it most.

"Poppies Durham services more than 250 clients on a regular basis, providing more than 1,600 cleaning hours every month and we also provide temporary, irregular or one-off services. I currently have 34 employees and am looking to grow that number during 2020."

Poppies Durham was started by Elizabeth Richardson, who became a well-known and respected member of the



Nicola and Durham founder Elizabeth

local business community. Nicola is proud to be continuing to build on her legacy.

She says: "My husband Jonathan has lived in the same village as Elizabeth since he was six months of age and she is a very good family friend. That's how I met her.

"Elizabeth and I were at a craft event together, when she was awaiting a knee replacement operation. She told me she was considering selling Poppies and that I had the attributes and qualities she was looking for to take over the business.

"I made a tongue in cheek comment that if she was selling Poppies then I would buy it. We met socially again after her operation and we had a serious conversation about it.

"Jonathan and I discussed this further and the more I learnt about the business, the more I was hooked.

"Everyone has taken me under their wings. I know how much they loved Elizabeth and it was daunting trying to fill such big shoes."

She adds: "I've thoroughly enjoyed meeting all the wonderful clients we work with and continuing Elizabeth's legacy. That's still my favourite part of the business to this day – the people you meet and the satisfaction you get from providing a great service."

"I don't just want to carry on the legacy of Poppies Durham. I want to build on it! My goal is to increase our monthly cleaning hours to over 2,000 a month.

"It's very ambitious but I think I can achieve it and that's the direction I want to take the business - ensuring repeat business is just as important as generating new customers.

"My vision to take my business to the next level is fully supported by new developments in the franchise. It's an exciting time for us."

Why I love Poppies

Heather Baker has been a satisfied client of Poppies Stockport since 2013. It's something of a family affair as we also look after her mum's home.



Our services work perfectly for Heather, whose business specialises in practical skills and interpersonal development for PAs, EAs and administrators.

Since 2014, Heather has been a Prince's Trust Business mentor. She is also the creator of the BakerWrite

speedwriting system and the author of four Amazon top ten selling books. Her job takes her across the world.

Heather has been married to Ian since August 1979 and they have two adult daughters, Ailsa and Erin.

She says: "We've got a great relationship with Emma Ryan and Poppies Stockport. It's a relationship that is built on trust.

"We came to Poppies because we just weren't getting what we wanted from our previous cleaners.

"It's been a great move and we've been really happy with their work. They follow up on things and we feel loved, which is how it should be.

"Poppies also provide a service for my mum, who is 92, and they really understand what she needs. They know she likes to see the same person and she's really happy with them as well."

Heather adds: "I travel the world and it's really nice to know that when I come back home everything will be clean and tidy."

To find out more about Heather's business visit www.bakerthompsonassoc.co.uk



Poppies on the podium

THE Poppies team is celebrating after being officially named as one of the top three cleaning franchises in the UK.

Poppies was ranked 43rd in the UK overall in the prestigious Elite Franchise Top 100 awards, which puts us in third place for the cleaning industry, and it's a title we will hold throughout 2020.

The Elite Franchise Top 100 recognises franchisors for the mentoring and ongoing support of their franchisees, their position in the marketplace, future plans and strategy for the business.

Judges rank the brands according to a broad range

of criteria, with all components of the franchise package facing detailed scrutiny.

Chris Wootton, who took ownership of the organisation in 2018, is thrilled that the brand has been recognised so soon after his takeover.

He says: "We're completely blown away to be part of the list this year - for Poppies to be within the top 50 from our first ever entry in incredible.

"To top it all off, to be named the third best cleaning franchise in the UK is a huge achievement.

"The success of the brand is truly a combined effort and I have to thank our network of 22 fantastic franchisees that have their own offices all over the UK.

"This title is a real testament to their dedication to the brand, to their staff

and to their clients."

Judges highlighted our dedication to our network, training and mentoring programmes, the introduction of new systems and innovative technologies, as well as the obvious potential for a business with real longevity.

Chris says: "The Elite Top 100 recognises quality and outstanding service. Both are things that we pride ourselves on which sit at the heart of everything we do.

"Nationwide, we have happy, loyal staff and delighted clients who come back to us time and again because we have a proven track record and really value our relationships with them. Without both, we'd have no business.

"The award will set us apart once again and will only help to strengthen those relationships."



Making real progress

ONE of Poppies' core aims is to create opportunity for its franchise holders and their staff.

Career progression is important to us as these latest set of promotions at Poppies Leeds highlight.

Sarah Lavery started working for the franchise 15 years ago as a part-time cleaner while she trained as a hairdresser.

A new home, two children, many services and sales meetings later, she has now been promoted to assistant general manager. Already a fantastic sales lead, Sarah will be undergoing financial training this year to drive Poppies forward into its bright future.

Kaye Woods started work as a cleaner four years ago. She has moved through the ranks to the role of acting supervisor and is now driving The People Department forward to deliver the best recruitment and team support the office has seen.

Kaye is completing HR training and developing her skills with Poppies as she steps into her brand-new role.

We wish both well and have no doubt they will continue to shine.

Seeing team members move up through the ranks is amazing, and shows our newest team members what can lie ahead for them if they also show the same dedication and passion.

Pictured here - Left to Right - are Sarah, Kaye and Wendy James, owner of Poppies Leeds.



The gift of giving

Poppies West Lancashire showed the true Christmas spirit, working with several local businesses to give a festive boost to two well-deserving causes.



The Ormskirk-based operation teamed up with MLS Independent Funeral Directors of Burscough to deliver gifts to The Liberty Centre, which provides support services for victims of domestic violence and Claire House Children's Hospice.

Carole Swanton, manager of Poppies, said: "This year we asked some of our commercial clients if they would be willing to forgo their Christmas gift from Poppies for a better cause.

"Just about everyone agreed - so in place of chocolates we were able to purchase much needed children's gifts which we

then passed to the charities in the name of our clients.

"We would like to thank all the businesses who have supported this initiative at Christmas. Liberty Centre and Claire House are two excellent charities."

Carole is pictured here getting in the festive spirit with Sally Hunter-Pimblett and Lisa Hunter-Walker of MLS Independent Funeral Directors.

Our thanks again to the local companies that got involved; Blackstar Handling Systems, IT Managed Services, J & K Confectionary, Lancashire Ford, Dams, Howdens, Cottage Dental, Bells Healthcare, Acumen Financial, MJ Electrical, County Crops and Yellow Product Design.