

## Barry Wilson

Graeme Petersfield was an uneducated but genial man who, during the 1920s, worked as a toilet attendant in the then town of Leicester. He had been doing the job very well for a number of years and was asked one day by a superior if he minded painting the toilet, which, although not part of his official job, he agreed to do.

The paint, etc., was delivered and he duly went on to do the job very well indeed. On the final day, while tidying up the toilet, a man walked in and accidentally brushed against the wet paint. Angrily he tore a strip off poor Graeme and asked why he hadn't put up a sign saying 'WET PAINT', to which Graeme replied that he couldn't read or write and therefore was unable to do so.

Now the angry gent turned out to be a local councillor with considerable influence in the town. Consequently, Graeme was duly sacked from his job.

On walking home on the night he finally finished his job, he called in a newsagent's shop for his usual packet of Woodbines and was asked by the proprietor just why he was looking so downcast. After explaining his plight, the proprietor said he required a man to sell the local paper on Leicester Railway Station. The job didn't seem brilliant and paid commission only, but was obviously better than being out of work and so Graeme accepted.

During the next few years he worked long and unusual hours but found business getting better week by week. In the late 1930s, in response to demand, he started selling other papers and magazines, and then opened a kiosk outside the station, which I am sure was still there some twenty years ago.

Apart from being a hard worker and good business man, he was also a religious man. One day, after a discussion with the local vicar about starting a boys' club, Graeme agreed to finance the venture to the tune of #300.

Now the vicar, not wanting to miss the opportunity for a little publicity, suggested they get the local newspaper to do a short story with a picture of Graeme handing over a cheque. This idea pleased Graeme immensely, but the only snag was that although being fairly well off, he had never thought of having a bank account. This was soon remedied by the vicar, who talked Graeme into seeing his own bank manager.

On discovering just how much money Graeme had made over the years, despite his total lack of education, the bank manager exclaimed: 'Good God, Mr Petersfield, whatever would you have been had you been able to read and write?' Graeme thought for a while and then replied: 'A Toilet Attendant, I suppose.'