

# BENCHPRESS

**BENCHMARK SCAFFOLDING LTD**



*Setting the Standards*

**RCAPITAL**

## **RCapital Major Investment in Benchmark Scaffolding Ltd**

By now most of you will already have read the letter that I sent to you on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2011 explaining the recent changes relating to our Company. On 21<sup>st</sup> July 2011 RCapital committed to a significant cash investment in Benchmark Scaffolding Ltd and, in so doing, they acquired a majority shareholding in the business. I am pleased to confirm that, apart from giving us the necessary financial muscle to take this Company forward to reach its full potential, little else will change. The new owners have asked me, and for that matter everyone else, to stay on and continue doing exactly what we have done for the past 16 years or so – delivering excellent standards of scaffolding working on the largest and most technically demanding projects in the country. I am happy and proud to be given the chance to continue serving you all as Managing Director and am sure that I can count on the ongoing loyalty and commitment in the years to come that I have enjoyed in the past. RCapital are a very large and financially secure organisation who own, or part own, many diverse businesses some of which are in our own Construction Industry. Cross fertilization opportunities exist here, but the new financial stability that will follow this cash injection will surely enable us to consolidate our position and push on to greater heights in the future. (Please pardon the pun).



There will, of course, be some minor changes such as the fact that your wages will be paid from a Barclays bank account instead of a Natwest account. Also, Matt Swan, who has 25 years' experience in construction, and Steve Hinchliff who has over 20 years' experience within the financial industry, will both be joining the Board with immediate effect. RCapital are very impressed with our brand and reputation and the overriding message is: its business as usual - but perhaps even better.

During the coming few weeks you will no doubt hear and read things regarding RCapital's investment in Benchmark and this is not surprising since we are now a major player in our industry. However, should any of you wish to speak to me, or indeed any of our management team, please feel free to call and we will be happy to speak to you regarding the situation.

In closing I would like to say again how much Berney and I have appreciated your efforts, and especially loyalty, over the years and long may it continue. This situation is a natural progression for the business and, as we move forward to the next chapter, the opposition had better watch out.

Regards

**Rob West—Managing Director**

# Olympic site in Stratford

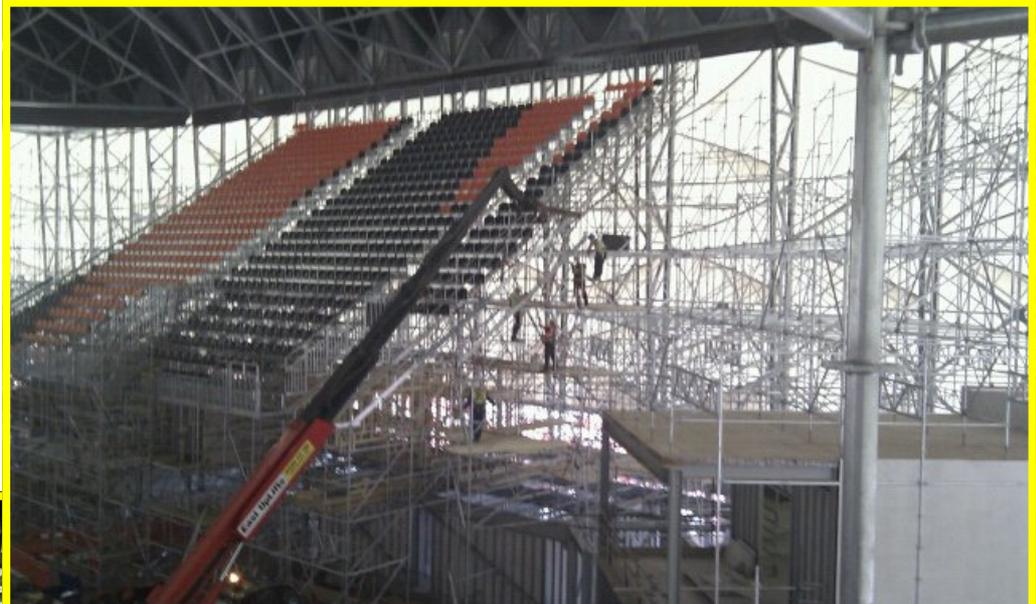
Through our continued efforts at the Olympic site in Stratford, last year in July we began a new project at the basketball arena. Benchmark erected the arena on behalf of a company called Slick Seating Systems who specialize in permanent and temporary stadia and seating arenas.

The arena is a temporary building and is to be dismantled after the Olympic games have taken place. Originally this was to be a 12 week project but it wasn't long before we realized it could take much longer. The arena itself is the biggest ever temporary seating arena to be built consisting of 12,000 seats, and is also the biggest project Slick have ever undertaken. It was erected using a Layher system scaffold as well as tube and fitting...A large part of the arena was built using cherry pickers as well as the traditional scaffold methods used today.

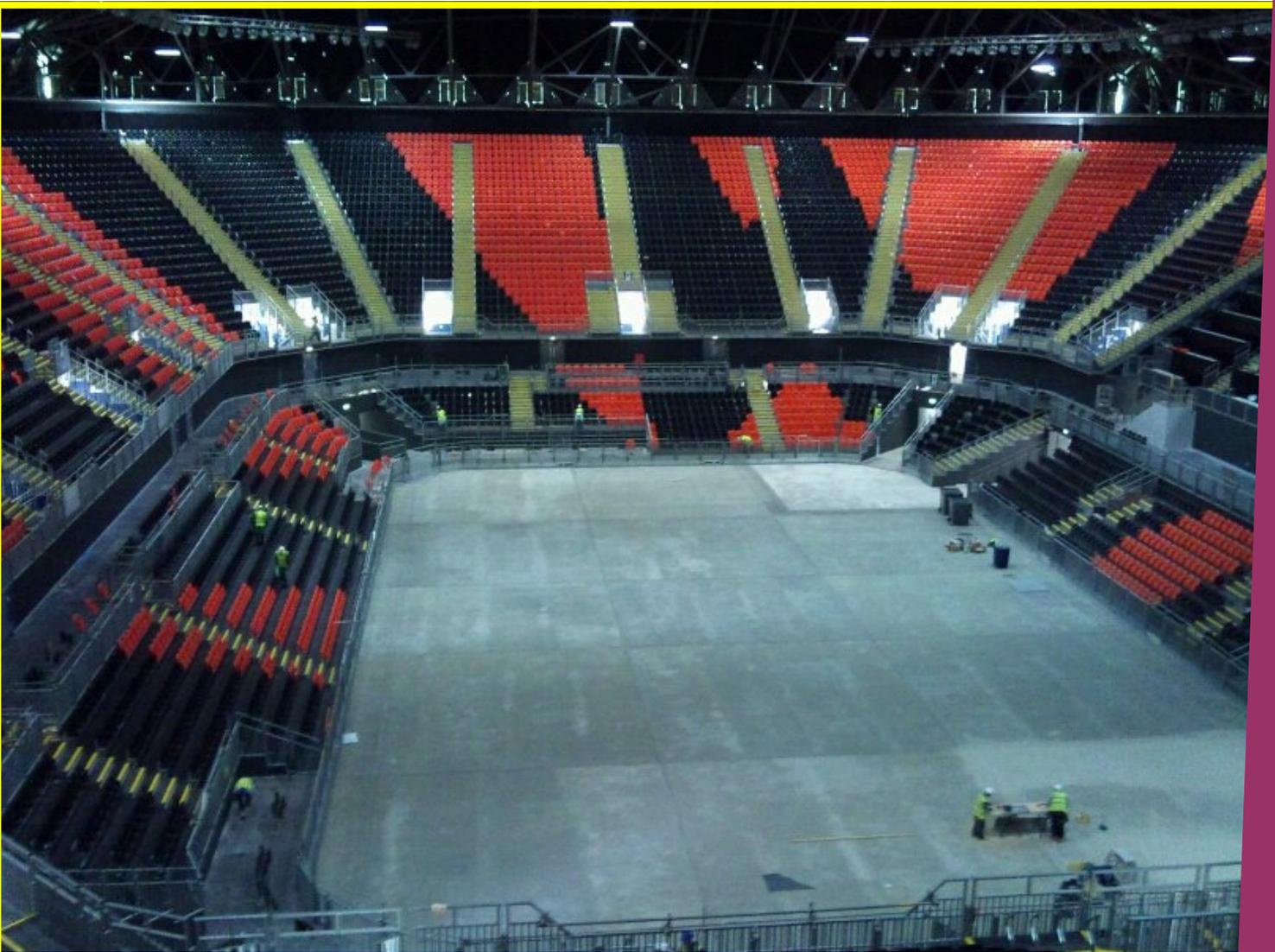
Benchmark played a very large part in helping the ongoing design of the project. We not only erected the scaffold but also added Slicks own components which made up the seating, access walkways, staircases, fire exits and other additions to complete the finished structure. After months of hard work, long days, weekend work and lots of patience we finally finished in May this year. I'm sure it's a project that everyone involved will feel proud to have worked on, and will not forget for a long time.

We would like to thank everyone who worked on this project for their continued efforts, dedication and professionalism throughout. A special mention to Professor Graham Parker for literally making Slick re-design the whole project under his supervision. We would also like to thank Ray Lowe and Dan Endean for having to find solutions to the constant design problems identified by themselves and Graham, and also for having to put up with Grahams mothering!!!! We were constantly praised by the main contractor for our safe system of work and also the contribution towards solving the many problems which arose throughout the project.

**Bill Humphries—Site Manager  
London Region**



# *From beginning to near completion*





**P**lease spare a few moments' thoughts...

... for Tomasz Baranowski who, at the time of going to print, is dangerously ill in hospital.

Tomasz was born in Poland in 1987 and arrived in the UK with his family, as a teenager. We first met Tomasz when our work started in the Athletes' Village, part of the Olympic project. At that time, he was working as a traffic marshal for a logistics company, but constantly asked our guys if there was a vacancy for a trainee scaffolder in Benchmark.

So, in June last year, we brought him into our team, accompanied by a shining reference from his previous employer. Tomasz immediately fell in with the Company's culture and became a very popular figure among all who worked with him. He is hard working and reliable; nothing is too much trouble for Tomasz and he always has a pleasant and positive outlook on life.

A couple of months ago, during the bank holiday of 28<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> May, Tomasz was looking forward to enjoying an organised Polish social event. Unfortunately, this was cancelled and he passed the evening in a pub with his friends. On leaving the bar in the late evening, Tomasz was set upon by an unknown assailant who robbed him of his mobile phone. He had stabbed Tomasz through the heart and left him to die on the pavement. By an incredible turn of fate, one of the first people to stumble upon the scene was a surgeon who, using all his skills, performed a primitive operation and kept Tomasz alive until the ambulance arrived and sped him to Paddington Hospital. Tomasz survived and is, thankfully, out of Intensive Care, but is under constant observation and will remain so for the weeks to come. Many of our employees have spent countless of their hours by Tomasz' bedside; offering comfort and reassurance, and willing him to make a recovery.

Dave Isbell and Darren Redgrave instigated a collection for Tomasz among his colleagues and others in the Village who knew him. The moving response was a tribute to the high esteem in which Tomasz is held.

We have received a touching card from Tomasz' sister, Marte, who thanks everyone for their valued support .

**thank  
you**  
\* so very very much

Dear All ,

I would like to thank everyone in Benchmark for all the help and kindness you have shown my family and me since my brother Tomasz's hospitalisation.

It is a very difficult time for us, as you are obviously aware, but the understanding you have shown us and the assistance you have given us has been incredible and very much appreciated!

Thank you on behalf of Tomasz and all our family.

Thank you for being so generous and thoughtful.

Marte Baranowska  
with family

**Graham Pope—Director & General Manager**



It is that time of year again for gardening season. Gardening is like any other physical activity and it involves a tremendous amount of muscular exertion

# The Do's & Don'ts of gardening

and because there is so much bending involved, it is especially strenuous on the back and legs. Here are a few tips to make this season a little bit easier on you.

## Dos and Don'ts

1. It is very important before you start with any activity to properly warm up. This can be done with light movement to loosen your muscles and increase your flexibility. Muscles and ligaments are less likely to become injured if they are warm before exertion. Gentle stretching exercises are recommended before and after any strenuous work activity.
2. Avoid prolonged bent over postures especially while standing when performing ground level activities such as weeding. Get down closer to the task by kneeling or sitting on the ground or a gardening bench, rather than bending and twisting from the waist. When weeding get down on all fours or kneel.
3. When lifting heavy loads or shovelling proper lifting technique should be followed. Rise up by straightening your legs at the knees, not by lifting your torso at the waist. Let your legs do the work and not your lower back. If the load is too heavy don't overexert yourself get help from somebody else to share the load!
4. Make sure to wear proper clothing and shoes. Your feet should be protected with supportive shoes for digging and cover your toes when using trimmers and mowers. Children should always be at a safe distance when using tools as flying objects can seriously damage unprotected eyes. Always make sure you wear the appropriate sunscreen for the conditions or better still cover up.
5. Lift dirt and plants by letting your arms, legs and thighs carry the load: bend and straighten at the knees instead of the back and hips. Lift the load close to the body's torso and center of gravity, and handle smaller, more manageable loads at a time.

William Wood—SHE Advisor/Contracts Manager  
Northern Region

## PUZZLE TIME

### Dingbats Quiz

Can you solve the phases below  
Turn to the back page for the answers

1 HARM iiii	2 T lip O lip E	3 GGE GEG GGE	4 PePPermint
5 LORRY IT	6 HELL 3-1 HEAVEN	7 CLOUD TH	8 Fairy, wolf & duckling
9 E CUSE IT IT IT IT	10 WAY PUBLIC	11 PAT THE	12 T M A U H S W T



# *Observations from an Apiarist.*

## *Some personal notes on setting out and erecting site stairs.*

In the not too distant past, before the widespread use of system stairs (Haki, Layher etc.), all site access stairs were formed from tube fittings and the ubiquitous well battered wooden stairs threads.

Covering everything from general site and office access to Fire Escapes, they can range to any and every possible size and with the adaptability of tube & fittings they are often still instructed for the corners and areas, where the modern fixed systems cannot be made to fit.

All these stairs follow a basic formula and as with any scaffolding, need to be sound, practical and fit for purpose, to provide in this case a safe means of access & egress.

Always starting with the height to reach (or the **rise**), in this case the platform (or landing) as shown:

1) Erect the four standard tower, ensuring the lay & direction of the boards matches the threads and that the width of the tower can contain the width of the treads plus the two **stringers** (the diagonal tubes that carry the treads). Also, as these stairs are often erected for the long duration, ensure they are adequately footed with sole boards, base plates and on the firm level foundations we often hear about!

2) As we now have the rise or height to reach, (in this case 2 metres), we can next work out the number of treads and most importantly the position of the first step, which will give us the length of the stringer tubes to carry these steps.

As a normal step rise is approximately 200mm. we should where possible keep to this measure as this is what our feet subconsciously expect to meet. For those of us who don't live in bungalows check this one out at home. This can & will obviously vary slightly (clearly dependant on the height to access and the horizontal space for the treads), but the often encountered 225mm. riser will give a steeper staircase and with wet & muddy site conditions this will impede on safety.

3) Dividing our 2 metres by 200mm. gives us 10 **risers** (the vertical distance between each step) and with (always) one less going than rise (discounting the top landing) 9 **goings** or treads @ 225mm., measured from the edge or nose of the first board on our landing gives us 2025mm. to the nose of the first step.

4) Now we know where the first step **must** sit, this gives us a stringer length. Where the ends of the stringers sit on the ground, again a sole board is good practise, and placing the first treads, will give a fitting measure to mark out the stringer for the remaining treads.

Alternatively a 200mm. measure down from the last nose will always give the next step.

**Note: This fitting to fitting measure is clearly directly related to the going and riser measures for this staircase. There is no universal fitting spacing for stair cases; they are all quite individual.**

5) **Again, all risers and goings should now be absolutely equal and level** with the front of each step directly above the rear of the step below. If these spacing are not correct then often the treads start to creep under each other, which in turn will (dangerously) reduce the going, especially for somebody coming down this flight.

6) The handrails can then be erected, either directly off the standards with swivels, not ideal as I have seen them catch & snatch fingers or preferred, clipped off butts via doubles to the standards, which is beneficial if there are continuous flights i.e. the handrail will always continue from the same level and matching the treads. Then, just plenty of bolt and tube caps.

7) This formula is always the same; the riser should always be as close to 200mm as possible. If the landing height was 1.5 metres then this would give 7 steps at 214mm or 8 at 187.5mm, with a corresponding staircase (front step nosing) length of 1.350 metres or 1.575 metres.

Any queries to Mel at the Hanwell office and To Be Continued.





# Bob, Graham and the team at Benchmark.

We would like to share some very good news.

We are extremely proud to announce that Studio East Dining was awarded a Yellow Pencil at the prestigious D&AD awards last night for outstanding achievement in Spatial Design.

Together with the Architects Review International Emerging Architect of the Year award, "Top-ten buildings of the year 2010" in the Observer and NY Times, it is surely now one of the most awarded building projects in London for 2010-2011. We have recorded over 100 international print articles and there are over 7,000 blogs and references to the project online. This is further reflected in the fact that we are still getting enquiries to publish the project from all over the world 12 months on from completion of the project.

Thank you again to everyone involved in making this project so successful. We are immensely proud of it and pleased that it has generated so much recognition for all involved.

Here's to the next one!

--  
best,  
Lewis

For and on behalf of  
Carmody Groarke.



# The Amazing Mr Meacock



Tony Meacock has been working at the Athletes Village for some time and during his time there; he has been (at the last count) presented with 15 ODA pin badges for his recognised safe working practices. He has won the GallifordTry plot monthly supervisors safety award, the Lend Lease, Athletes Village award and the ODA/HSE supervisors safety award, together with 2 trips around the Olympic Park courtesy of the ODA, and a camera! Not to mention the numerous times he has won the Benchmark monthly safety award!

This is a remarkable record and is recognised as a great achievement for raising the bar and working safely.

**Well done Tony**

**Peter Booth—Safety Manager**

## SAFETY AWARDS

### March

**Will Wood** won the Northern award. Whilst on Owston Primary School he saw that there was a potential of debris falling into an area where school children pass, and suggested to the Main Contractor that monarflex should be fitted to the scaffold to prevent possible injury, to which the MC agreed.

**Barry Page (Q3)** won the London award for seeing that a 32amp junction box had been placed directly next to a water tap with the potential of a serious electric shock. He informed the Main Contractor who then separated the two items.

### April

**John Barton** wins the Northern award. On the Bardsley Construction site in Blackburn (after the window openings had be fitted with 4x2 timbers as fall prevention) he noticed that the scaffold platforms were erected at different levels making the timbers ineffective. This resulted in scaffold guardrails being fitted at the correct level.

**Charlie Tivers** won the London award whilst on the Cafe Royal site in London, for noticing that a wall within the working area was in poor condition and in danger of collapsing. He notified his manager who in turn informed the PC.

### May

**Antonio Folegnani** won the Northern award on the Multibuild site in Lincoln, for identifying that others had removed inside boards from the working platform creating a potential risk of falls. He then ensured that they were replaced and the PC was informed.

**Tony Meacock** won the London award on the Athletes Village. Tony, over a short period of time received 15 Olympic Safety Badges, a trip round the village with the client, won the Galliford Try individual monthly safety award and also a camera and £100 M&S vouchers for his continued safe working practices.

### June

**Wayne O'Loughlin** won the Northern award on the Carillion site in Halifax, for alternative use of an existing component used to enable floor & roof edge protection handrails to be erected faster, safer and securely.

**Paul Murray (Union Chapel)** won the London award. After a man had a heart attack on the top lift of the scaffold and the Fire Brigade rescue ladder could not reach, Paul and his team immediately dismantled a section of the scaffold to enable the unwell person to be lowered safely to the rescue ladder.

Our **mission** is to not only "Set the Standards" but to progressively and continuously raise them across all aspects of our business.

Our **vision** is to be the scaffolding contractor of choice to our customers and employer of choice to our people.

# Baby Joy

After months of trying for a little family of our own, my fiancée Laura & I finally fell pregnant! A few weeks passed, went to the 8 week scan everything was OK, the egg had latched onto the womb wall properly & Laura was told the usual, no smoking drinking etc... The next scan, however, came as a surprise, usual stuff, everything was fine, and the Midwife said "They're both fine, good heart beats"

I thought, "Ahh good, Laura & the baby is fine". Then it clicked...

"Both of them?" I said frowning

"Yes" Came the reply "you're having twins"

"Oh s\*\*t!" I said. So off we walked to the car clutching what can only be described as a rubbish black & white photo of 2 Mini Eggs pleased as punch, smiling from ear to ear.

That was January, as of now, we've hit the 30 week mark. After our last scan (29 weeks) we had the scan, but couldn't see much as they're growing "above average" the midwife said. So she zoomed in on their chubby little faces which made our day.

So, Laura sees the local midwife & the Hospital midwife every 2 weeks, now last week came another surprise. Due to her current size & how uncomfortable she is, she told her to aim for 32 weeks! So, a few weeks to go & I'll become a dad (Gulp!)

Thank goodness Laura threw a baby shower the other week, we received lots of gifts, the usual, nappies, bibs, baby grows & the un-usual, weird pot things, electrical appliances. I thought they went through about 3 nappies a day, apparently not, try about 18 each, x 2!!!!

So in a few weeks I'll be the proudest dad in the world, check out future Benchpress to see what make we had (Boy/girl).

The other slightly low key note is that I have Iron Maiden Tickets in July, just my luck Laura is due then!! Does anyone know if the staff at Hallam FM Arena knows how to deliver twins!?

Mark Knitter—Estimator/Surveyor  
Northern Region



Laura at 29 weeks





**Multibuild Ltd**

**Double Tree Hotel  
Lincoln**



If you've recently had a new addition to your family,  
or a birthday coming up  
send us a photo to the Barnsley office  
and we'll make sure we show them in the next edition  
or you could email us

[barnsley@benchmarkscaffolding.com](mailto:barnsley@benchmarkscaffolding.com)

## Man collapses at the top of a 170ft high church spire

The fire ladder shown in the picture did not reach the top of the scaffold so 3 of our scaffolders Paul Murray, Marc Fernandez and Gary O'Brian worked with the emergency services by safely dismantling part of the scaffold, enabling the man to be rescued.

Peter Booth—Safety Manager



On a recent visit to the Athletes Village Boris Johnson, Mayor of London was pleased to meet and congratulate Vince Hale, one of our scaffolders helping to build the Athletes Village Polyclinic. Vince replied, "On yer bike, Boris!"

Keith Slight—Commercial Director

### Answers to the Dingbats Quiz

- 1—Harmonise,
- 2—Tiptoe through the tulips,
- 3—Scrambled eggs,
- 4—Three piece suite,
- 5—It fell of the back of a lorry,
- 6—Paradise lost,
- 7—Thundercloud,
- 8—The good the bad & the ugly,
- 9—No excuse for it,
- 10—Public right of way,
- 11—Pat on the back
- 12—What goes up must come down

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