

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Christian Brethren Review* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_christian-brethren-review.php

THE BROWN-PEARCE SURVEY

Roger Pearce

During 1982/83, Graham Brown, an experienced market-researcher who had already conducted two surveys of evangelistic activities and church life among the Brethren, and Roger Pearce, himself a resident FTW, made a survey of a number of FTWs known to them. Roger reports the findings and makes a personal assessment of the responses.

Introduction

This is a brief report of a survey conducted in 1982/83. Letters were sent to 50 men and two women understood to be engaged in various forms of ministry largely associated with a particular local church. Somewhat arbitrarily, this was defined in terms of three-quarters of his/her time.

A number of replies was received from those who did not feel that their role came into the area of this survey. Reasons given include the following:

I work in a limited area rather than in a single-church situation.

I am not a resident full-time worker in one assembly but engage in an itinerant ministry.

I have been instrumental in initiating the commencement of two new assemblies. I am connected closely with the second but I am not the resident worker. It is simply my base from which I work country-wide.

I do not give such a large proportion of my time to one church.

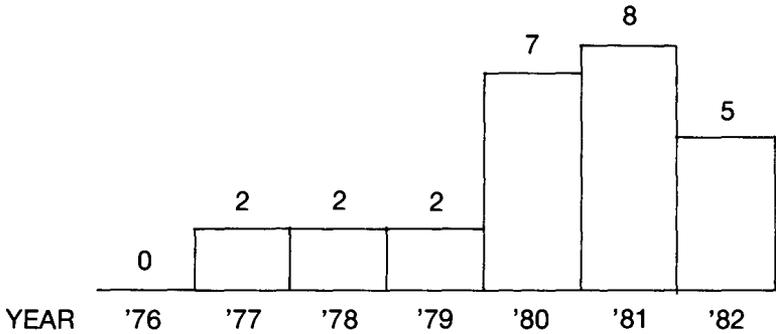
Completed questionnaires were received from 28 men and two women. They showed an interesting and anticipated variety which is not easy to summarize. Certain responses can be listed, but others indicate a greater variation of experience or attitude. I have tried to give a fair impression of this in the notes that follow. Finally, in a personal assessment I have attempted to suggest one or two important lessons that can be drawn from this exercise.

A copy of the letter sent to informants is included as an appendix.

Summary of Responses

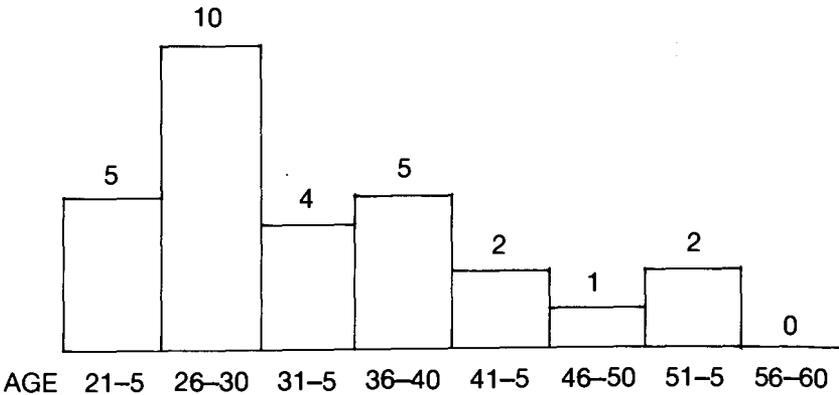
1 *When did these 30 FTWs begin their present appointments?*

1 had been appointed between 1966-70 and 3 between 1971-5.
Others:



26 were first time appointments in full-time work in a local church but 4 had been in similar work before.

2 *At what age did FTWs enter their first such appointment?*



3 *What was the FTW's previous employment or situation immediately before appointment?*

Missionary	5	UCCF travelling secretary	2
Evangelist	4	Full-time work	2
School teacher	4	Full-time in other church	1
Bible college student	3	Occupational therapist	1
Bank official	2	Youth & community worker	1
Retail trade	2	Solicitor	1
Family business	2		

4 *What is the family situation of the FTWs?*

Of the 30:

26 men are married 2 men are single 2 women are single

Of those married:

6 do not have children 20 have children 2½ on average!

5 *How many FTWs have a Brethren background?*

21 have a Brethren background 9 do not.

6 *Did the church have a FTW before?*

7 churches had a FTW before this appointment

7 *Where are the churches that have made such appointments?*

London	9	(7 suburban 2 town centre)
South East	4	(3 suburban 1 town centre)
South	3	(1 suburban 2 town centre)
South West	6	(3 suburban 2 town centre 1 village)
Wales	2	(1 suburban 1 town centre)
Midlands	—	
East Anglia	1	(1 suburban)
Lancs/NW	—	
Yorks/NE	—	
Scotland	1	(1 suburban)
Northern Ireland	1	(1 town centre)

(2 churches have more than 1 FTW)

8 *How big are the churches making such appointments?*

Over 100 members	9 churches
81-100 members	3 churches
61- 80 members	4 churches
41- 60 members	4 churches
21- 40 members	4 churches
Under 21 members	2 churches

(No reply from 1 church)

9 *Are these churches growing or decreasing?*

		<i>Average number baptised in 12 months</i>
Of the 9 with over 100	2 are increasing fast	12 *
	2 are increasing steadily	12.5
	5 are increasing slowly	8
Of the 3 with 81–100	2 are increasing slowly	5
	1 is decreasing slowly	5
Of the 4 with 61–80	4 are increasing slowly	9.5
Of the 4 with 41–60	1 is increasing fast	8
	1 is increasing slowly	6
	2 are decreasing slowly	0
Of the 4 with 21–40	2 are increasing slowly	2.5
	2 are decreasing slowly	1.5
Of the 2 under 21	1 is static	0
	1 is decreasing slowly	0

(*1 of the 2 increasing fast did not give the number of those baptised)

10 *How were the FTWs found by the churches?*

In most cases the FTWs were well known to the churches. 14 of the 30 were already members of the churches and many more were known through regular speaking engagements. 22 were definitely 'approached' by the church, many invitations growing naturally out of increased involvement in the work of the church or out of a growing sense of call over several years, although for one, the invitation came 'out of the blue'!

5 others said that the process towards appointment began with their own initiative. These include someone who clearly had to prompt some elders who had not been alive to the possibility, and another who offered himself to a co-ordinated city area advance and through this was appointed to a new fellowship.

11 *What 'agencies' helped in seeking a position?*

Only 8 definite responses were received to the question.

4 Bible College staff	4 via individuals already in full-time work
-----------------------	---

12 *How did churches go about making an appointment?*

There was great variety—from the natural progression of a member of the fellowship gradually taking on more until an appointment became a step in the process, to the conscious praying and planning where procedures for appointment had been anticipated.

Most had opportunity for considerable familiarisation in each direction. A good number had chatted with either the elders together, or a special delegation, and some who were not very well known had preached more than once to introduce them to members.

4 said that *one* elder had been 'the driving force' (or something similar), conducting most of the negotiations.

18 said that they had a time of discussion with the elders.

13 *Did the churches define the role of the FTW?*

4 churches supplied a written job description.

Many of the FTWs wanted to know how the church defined their role.

Most churches did not anticipate this need. 1 said 'they were very vague—a brother saw our role as "moving in and out among them" (whatever that might mean!)

12 said they had to take their own initiative in working this out and some of these felt this was not ideal. eg:

Although attempts were made to discuss this when lack of role definition did cause problems, nothing really satisfactory was ever produced.

I asked on several occasions for a job description but got none so submitted one of my own for comment.

I asked four times for a written job description but never received one.

They seemed unclear about what they wanted—or perhaps apprehensive about the reaction of others.

A good number, however, wrote of a trusting relationship, a process of working out a role with the elders, and of freedom to develop their role.

14 *How did the churches check the FTWs' suitability?*

As above, many were already well known to the churches—18 stated this.

8 had been questioned fairly fully at a special meeting with the elders.

Some were questioned widely on all beliefs, some had been asked about views on specific subjects such as ethical matters, marriage and divorce, charismatic issues, etc.

2 of these discussions had only taken place at the prompting of the FTW. 1 who was already well known thought it a possible mistake that he had not had a 'definite interview'.

We also asked FTWs if they had a chance to question the church. 1 thought 'that questions about the church were not expected!' Most knew the churches sufficiently well already. Others had a good chance to ask questions. 2, however, felt they had limited opportunity.

15 *What steps did churches take to prepare for an appointment?*

Much depended here on whether the church was simply strengthening

a role that was already being exercised by a church member who then became their FTW, or whether the church was consciously restructuring its pattern of ministry. The former seemed to require little preparation compared to the latter where a variety of procedures were listed:

4 churches had letters or papers prepared to outline proposals to their members.

A similar number asked members to give some idea of their expected financial commitment to support an appointment.

17 described a fairly long process of building unity and understanding for such a step which included some of the following:

A series of Bible studies about the principle, special church meetings, inviting representations to elders, discussion in groups, individual consultation, times of prayer, a vote of members on the principle, a vote of members about the individual being considered, etc.

16 *How are FTWs supported?*

Of the 30:

18 are on a fixed salary.

3 of these listed themselves as 'self-employed'.

8 said they were paid additional expenses eg: car costs, gas and electricity, visit home each year, help with rent, etc.

3 (including 2 of the 18 above) said they were paid a guaranteed minimum plus expenses from outside sources.

4 (including some of the above) have church-owned accommodation rent-free.

1 (of those with a fixed salary) has his mortgage paid.

3 (of those with a fixed salary) have a car supplied by the church.

Here are other individual responses from those not on a fixed salary:

My commitment was on a half-week basis. I was to give 50% of all my time. I was to look to the Lord to open doors to provide other remuneration.

I pay all my expenses from my investments.

The team with which I work provides a flat rent-free and the assembly provides financial backing for this. Remaining living expenses are from my own resources.

Agreed I look to the Lord for accommodation and finance and the church would do what they could. We have a council flat—finance comes from money given by church members specifically for our support, and support of our families and friends.

Individuals pay into a central fund on our behalf. From this (according to the amount regularly coming in), we draw a monthly allowance.

a. free gifts/expenses for preaching, etc. b. wife's part-time earnings.

We draw part of our living costs from overseas trips which we organise and the remainder is made up from gifts from many individuals/churches, etc. Church give £100 a month for rent etc and a collection 3 times a year. Other support comes from individuals and my wife's church (£50 a month).

In our discussion with the elders remuneration was never once raised. Only after we had taken up residence did we learn that the free will offering on one Sunday each month was to be given to us.

17 *Has the FTWs' role developed as envisaged?*

16 said a clear 'yes'.

But some of these, and others, 13 in all, said their role had widened. Several were more involved than expected in teaching and pastoral care. Some stressed their role in being catalysts for change, and particularly in planning ahead.

A few have taken a central teaching role which has changed the pattern of ministry. One, however, recognised that he needs a fuller teaching ministry to complement his pastoral role ('the pulpit must be seen as part of the pastoral role').

6 raised problems about lack of clarity in defining leadership responsibilities and lack of a review procedure to assess how things are going.

1 expressed dissatisfaction with the development of his role: 'our objectives are right and our methods are acceptable, but spiritual lethargy prevents many believers from getting involved'.

18 *What changes have FTWs tried to make?*

Most mentioned several items:

10 —the programme of Sunday services—many wanting to meet family needs (inside and outside the fellowship), some wanting an atmosphere which was not strange to outsiders, some wanting renewal in the breaking of bread services

9 —a greater involvement in caring in the community and a realistic evangelistic outreach

8 —a programme of consecutive Bible teaching

8 —the development of house groups

6 —more mobilisation of all the members' gifts, and for some, more stress on the charisma in the widest sense

4 —more clarity over leadership, more open government and stronger leadership

3 —more awareness of pastoral needs, the needs of young Christians, the ministry of women to be encouraged

19 *What are the top priorities of FTWs?*

Again, most mentioned several items which are not easy to summarise:

- 11 —caring evangelism in the local community: eg
 - ‘mobilising the whole membership for this’
 - ‘breaking down barriers around church’
 - ‘a new evangelistic thrust in our community’
 - ‘reaching whole families for the gospel’
 - ‘real conversion growth’
- 4 —building up the fellowship; ‘renewal and restoration’, ‘growth of fellowship’
- 4 —‘to be a catalyst’, ‘to initiate change’, to give ‘vision and direction’
- 4 —discipling new believers, personal work
- 3 —training and equipping: ‘motivating and training’
- 3 —Bible teaching
- 2 —young people’s work
- 1 —deepening spiritual life of leadership

20 *Do FTWs have any stated ‘position’ in the church and how are they related to the leadership?*

Of the 30:

17 are elders in their churches.

8 are referred to as ‘pastors’ (1 of whom is not an elder).

7 have other titles, eg: pastoral worker, church co-ordinator, evangelist, youth leader, pastoral co-ordinator, youth co-ordinator, community and pastoral worker.

11 have no title apart from elder (if they are elders).

4 are not elders but meet with the elders for the whole or part of their meeting.

21 *What advice would FTWs give to churches considering an appointment?*

These responses are set out under my own headings in logical order rather than according to the frequency they were mentioned. Many, of course, listed more than one point for consideration.

26 mentioned *making the role clear*. They wanted the church to give a lot of thought to why they needed help and discussing together what kind of person is required.

State clearly what you want him to do and what he is *not* being called to do. Test motives to see if members are looking for someone to do the work they are too lazy or scared to do.

Don’t make him an odd job man—the FTW is to help you move forward. Don’t look for a ‘pastor’ as the ‘answer’. He will be most use where the church is already on the right lines.

2 suggested asking a FTW from elsewhere to *analyse the needs* of the church.

19 mentioned *preparing the way*.

4 stressed that the elders need to be in accord and must lead by bringing clear and firm proposals to the church.

9 stressed the importance of prayer, particularly for a period of time after an initial discussion of the possibility.

12 stressed the need for full consultation with members providing a full and free flow of information and conversation between elders and members.

16 mentioned *finding the person*.

13 advised looking amongst those who have already been of service to the church especially in the membership.

5 suggested areas of possible supply and contact: Bible colleges, other churches, missionary contacts, national Christian organisations, Brethren communication channels, etc.

1 said 'Don't stereotype the man in advance.'

7 made suggestions for getting to know a candidate before appointment.

16 mentioned *Finance*.

Practical suggestions included:

- appoint 2 leaders to work out arrangements
- determine the extent of the church's financial commitment.

Suggestions about remuneration varied *between*:

- work out the arrangements with generosity
- make the negotiations realistic by taking advice from other FTWs and the man himself
- be ready to pay the average salary of leadership or membership
- base thinking on average church member expenditure: house purchase, mortgage costs, etc

and

- don't pay a regular wage! give him expenses and gifts
- weigh carefully the Müller principle and, if another arrangement is arrived at, make sure it involves as much faith

15 mentioned *the FTW and the church's development*.

- taking on a FTW will be felt to be a major change but it must be recognised that this is only the *start* of change
- the appointment must be tied in with a vision for church growth
- the FTW must have vision—a shepherd who goes nowhere is no good for the sheep
- allow the possibility of the FTW taking initiative on the methods of implementing the job description
- plan for regular evaluation of the FTW's work

4 mentioned *the church's attitude to the FTW*

- important to have a public recognition of his calling and appointment

respect the FTW—you are taking on a skilled person and should treat him/her accordingly
 pay him on time!
 ensure that you include wife and family in your consideration before and after the appointment

22 *What advice would you give to someone thinking of the possibility of becoming a full-time worker in a local church?*

20 mentioned *getting advice*.

seek advice from an experienced worker
 spend time with the elders of a church with a FTW and pump them re the whole arrangement
 every pastor needs a pastor, and someone who knows the church but is not a leader of it, is ideal
 link up with either a Baptist minister or a FTW

15 mentioned *the need for a job description*.

I recommend that the potential worker ask the church leaders what their aims and goals are as a church for the future, and what they feel a worker could achieve
 have a written job description

2 suggest observing, assessing and offering your own job description, 1 of these suggesting 'checking that you can bring the changes you see are needed without traditions hindering'.

Another suggests: 'listen to the elders about what *they* want. Compare your gifts to their needs and mutually agree on a job description'. One woman suggests asking the elders 'if she will meet opposition from those outside the leadership over her role, and asking them to indicate how they will support and advise her when this occurs'.

9 mentioned *financial and working arrangements*.

agree financial arrangements before accepting the job—too late to moan after
 financial details are always difficult but the tendency is for them to be ignored or left undiscussed which is unsatisfactory

2 suggest *getting advice from a Christian accountant*.

Other matters touched on: days off, holidays, outside engagements, etc

get the time-off situation sorted out

8 mentioned *provision for review*.

Comments here were related to supervision and support of the FTW and the extent to which the church was willing to see change. Some FTWs had obviously experienced a lack of opportunity to report to the elders and to the church, and a lack of readiness to review progress.

Establish what the channels of communication are to be: to whom is the

FTW directly answerable? What decision making and implementation authority will you have?

5 mentioned *knowing the church*.

They stressed the need to talk at length with the elders and to get to know them well.

You interview them!—why have you asked me? Are the church behind your approach? What do you see as your greatest need? Do you have any recent or specific problems?

Some spoke of the need to get the church's views on sensitive matters.

Find out how prepared the church is for change. If they are conservative in this area, he will have a great deal of frustration.

4 mentioned *freedom to exercise gifts*.

The particular difficulty that led to these comments seemed to be that those with a gift for teaching had been frustrated by going against the grain of an apparent Brethren antipathy to planned consecutive Bible teaching.

Many also, of course, stressed the importance of prayerfulness, conviction of call, and patience. And one said: 'Don't look to a Brethren assembly unless you have stamina, a brass-neck, tough skin, utter conviction as to your calling. Full-time ministry is tough in an assembly and could be much easier elsewhere.'

A personal assessment

The responses to the questionnaire show a variety of definitions of the role of a FTW. Some see the FTW as fulfilling a ministry *attached* to the local church, but with the church itself remaining much the same. This may be possible with a youth worker or children's evangelist. But this particular questionnaire was interested in churches which viewed the appointment of a FTW as an opportunity to regain some of the original Brethren hopes for flexibility and development according to the Spirit's guidance, for a freedom to be biblical rather than traditional. Where a church does not have this vision of the FTW as a catalyst for change there is bound to be some disappointment in taking on a FTW.

This questionnaire not only brought out some of the principles involved in the appointment of FTWs in any kind of church. It has pointed out some particular problems specific to the Brethren. This assessment is related to the latter.

Most FTWs have two important characteristics. The first comes from experience outside the Brethren sub-culture. FTWs who have worked overseas or in other Christian spheres have realised that many traditional Brethren church patterns are cultural rather than biblical and that the stereotyped pattern typical in the UK is not a biblical norm and has certainly been restricting renewal and growth in recent years. The second

comes from Bible college training (or even professional training in some cases) where they have learnt to think biblically about church structures and evangelistic outreach. They have a sense of mission which they find many churches lack. They have a real vision for freeing church life from a maintenance complex, which keeps a church calendar moving along rhythmically, and want to instill a sense of purpose, flexibility, growth and fruitfulness.

These attitudes cause many churches to feel threatened. This could be illustrated by an example familiar to many churches considering change. The elders suggest that a morning family service would be more realistic for attracting outsiders and propose moving their breaking of bread service to the evening. In some churches many people would find difficulty with that proposal. The reason would be discomfort along two possible lines:

1. a feeling that they are betraying a certain godly tradition;
2. a feeling that the adjustment would be too disturbing to their long-unchanged Sunday lifestyle.

Both reactions would be very common and very understandable. What leads to deep concern is that the average church member has never been helped to think biblically about such changes. On the first issue above, it would be realised that the New Testament gives no authority for a particular pattern, and on the second the need to sacrifice self-interest would be realised if a genuine evangelistic concern was present (as it was formerly with the timing of the 'gospel meeting'). What makes this relevant to the FTW question is that if a church has little experience of thinking biblically about structures and has either settled changes by expedience or has avoided such changes altogether, then the appointment of a FTW will bring difficult tensions.

This observation comes from my reading of an interesting paradox in the answers to those questions which sought the advice that FTWs would give to churches or to FTWs who are contemplating an appointment. Many responses stressed two apparently conflicting concerns. The first was an almost universal emphasis that churches must analyse their situation, determine their needs and state as precisely as possible what the role of the FTW should be. Some had in fact asked elderships for a written 'job description' but had not received one. A few had presented their own for discussion.

The second opinion, expressed almost as much as the first, was a recommendation that churches allow their FTW to develop his/her ministry and not to tie them to too-limited a role.

Now, on the face of it, FTWs could be accused of having their cake and eating it! On the one hand they want to be clear what their job is, and then

they say that the churches should not tie them to it! These responses however seem to say two clear things about our current church life.

First, why do so many FTWs stress the need for a clear job description? Isn't it because church leaders are not used to analysing their real situation? Many FTWs have found it difficult to elicit any clear idea as to what extent their roles would include teaching, pastoral care, administrative responsibilities etc. There is little doubt that many elderships have never discussed these issues. They have some understanding that there is a given Brethren norm but act as though it is unspiritual to define these New Testament ministries or to acknowledge the marked way in which the New Testament anticipates that the Holy Spirit will equip members of the church. What lies behind the FTWs' request for clarification seems to be a conviction that leaders need to be much more conscious of the Spirit's pledged intention to guide his church by particular gifts and ministries for which the church needs to seek particular guidance, rather than through a group of elders who tend to work at jobs by rota, who have little idea of any policy of pastoral care, and who actually shrink from any specific honest analysis of why they are seeing progress or decline.

Second, why do FTWs want their role to develop freely? Why do many wish to see an element of growth and change built into their ministry? Here the thinking of the church and the FTW may be dangerously at odds. The church may see the appointment of a FTW as a change of very significant proportions in itself. They imagine and hope that evangelism, attendance at services and spiritual life will all be measurably improved but that the structure of the church will not greatly change. They look for a halt to decline and a move forward in their accepted pattern of church life. The FTW on the other hand sees his coming as only the beginning of change. He will want to help members to see change not as a necessary evil to be indulged in infrequently but as a constant of a healthy church life.

Doesn't discussion about FTWs among the Brethren need to distinguish between two areas which need attention? The distinction has already been made in the second paragraph above. On the one hand there are the questions of procedure—training, recruiting, interviewing, defining the task, financial arrangements, varieties of ministry etc, faced by any denomination. On the other hand, there is the issue of flexibility and freedom in Brethren church life. This goes far beyond the appointment of FTWs. It explains the comment: 'Don't look for a "pastor" as the "answer". He will be most use where the church is already on the right lines.' The 'right lines' must start much further back than this questionnaire!

Appendix

49, Nathans Road,
Wembley,
Middx
HA0 3RZ

Subject: Survey of Full-time Resident Workers
in Christian Brethren Churches

Dear

The number of workers attached full-time to a particular Christian Brethren church has been growing rapidly over the past few years, and the numbers of churches expressing interest in the idea is also growing apace. For a while it has been felt that it would be beneficial as an aid to both workers and churches as well as those thinking of 'taking the plunge,' if more were known about the methods of making appointments, roles adopted and required, financial arrangements used etc.

This survey is the first stage of fieldwork for a wider project on the establishment of full-time worker ministries in our churches sponsored by the Christian Brethren Research Fellowship. By initiating such a survey we are not trying to predict a trend or apply pressure in a particular direction. It is an exercise to learn more of the Spirit's leading in the churches and to help each other share and test our methods so that we might be more effective in the Lord's service.

We are writing to you to ask for your cooperation with this survey. One of the most difficult questions to answer is exactly who is a 'full-time resident worker attached to a church'. For example does 'full-time' mean that 100% of his/her time and attention is given to the one church or if not at what stage does the volume of other activities such as preaching mean that the person is really an 'itinerant with a home base'. We have in the end quite arbitrarily decided that someone who devotes at least three quarters of his/her time to one church should qualify as a 'full-time resident worker'. Should you fall into this category we'd like you to complete the attached questionnaire. Of course an undertaking of this kind is full of difficult and potentially embarrassing questions. It is sometimes hard to understand what is meant by a question and at other times it is only too plain. We assure you of confidentiality, in that, although we have a list of people we have sent questionnaires to, by using a 'third party' reply system we shall not be able to identify any person on the list with any specific questionnaire received back nor shall we know who has replied (unless of course you wish to relinquish your confidentiality voluntarily).

We hope to get sufficient replies to publish the major findings in a suitable format. Since we wish to get the 'fieldwork' completed reasonably quickly, we'd be grateful if you could return the questionnaire by the end of the year.

If you have any queries about the project you can address them to us at the above address or contact us at the telephone numbers below our names.

When you have completed your questionnaire, it should be sealed in the envelope addressed to Derek Ellis.

Derek Ellis,
Ellis Marketing Research Ltd,
Queensborough House,
2, Claremont Road,
Surbiton,
Surrey.

Derek Ellis is a full-time market researcher who has agreed to act as a postbox for us. When he receives your envelope he will make a note of your name on his list. He will then send on your questionnaire to us for analysis. If you don't reply within two or three weeks you may get a reminder from Derek, but after that nothing.

But do please help us, because we believe that your experience can be of great value to others too. If too you can help us by giving us the names of people who would qualify for our survey we'd be grateful—just pop them in with the questionnaire.

Yours sincerely,

Graham Brown
01-904 7809

Roger Pearce
01-866 7697