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Raising a glass to long-lived career

IT'S the end of an era for a Basingstoke firm today as its longest-serving employee retires after a career spanning nearly four decades.

Product and marketing co-ordinator John Chappell has clearly enjoyed his 37-year career at Western House, which supplies glassware to the retail trade.

Based at the Western House office and distribution centre, in Armstrong Road, Basingstoke, he has played a crucial part in the success of the business, which sells nearly five million glasses a year.

Mr Chappell said: "I joined the company in 1972 as an area sales manager covering the south-east. Back then the company was called Western Glass and was based in Dockhead, just south of Tower Bridge in London.

"Then in 1974 when the business moved to Basingstoke I moved with it - until today. I was the only one left who moved from London to Basingstoke.

"We had a very good reception from local traders like Timothy Whites & Taylors, which was then owned by Boots, who gave us great big window displays to promote us as a local company."

Over the years, Mr Chappell has seen the company develop and grow, moving to supplying glassware brands such as Luigi Bormioli and Western House's own brands such as 24 Crystal and Laguna Art Glass to the mid-level market



and national retailers such as John Lewis, Debenhams and Habitat.

"It's been a good company to work for, and there's a very friendly atmosphere here. Although I have been here for 37 years, there are other staff who've been with us for 25 to 30 years," said Mr Chappell, who feels the business is like a family.

He added: "What's made working for Western House special for me is that I've been able to take opportunities to take on different jobs, from being an office-based sales manager to being on the road - where at one stage I was virtually

covering the whole country - to moving to sales and marketing."

Western House owner and chief executive Gordon South, who joined the company in 1978 as a supplies manager and who purchased the firm in 2002, said he and the team would miss Mr Chappell.

Mr South said: "John has been with us for so many years that it will be quite different without him. We'll miss his lively sense of humour and his vast experience. Guys like him in some ways are irreplaceable, because they have so much experience."

● **John Chappell (right), is retiring after 37 years working at Western Glass. He is pictured with Chief Executive Gordon South**
Pic by Andrew McCargow