

Rising from the ashes

Royall opening heralds 'new era' for Hale & Co

BARONESS Jan Royall officially opened Hale & Co's new £1m heating, plumbing, kitchen and bathroom centre after the original building was gutted by fire in June 2009.

Leslie Hale, managing director of the well-known family owned timber and builders merchant based in Drybrook, welcomed the Baroness, contractors, suppliers and staff to the official opening.

He said: "When I surveyed the damage caused by the devastating fire in June of last year I could not have imagined that we would be here today to witness this opening.

"With great foresight, determination and perseverance shown not only by our staff but also by the architect, engineer, contractors and suppliers, we have made it and a new era for Hale & Co starts today."

Mr Hale said the recent bad weather means the interior of the building has not yet been completed.

But he said it is anticipated that the new ground floor

heating and plumbing centre, together with a Rayburn and woodburning stoves showroom will be up and running in early February and the upstairs kitchen and bathroom showroom, which is likely to be the largest in the area, should be fully open before Easter.

Once completed, Mr Hale said the existing kitchen and bathroom showroom in the shop will make way for an extended trade counter and shop self service area at the top of the site.

Ironically both Mr Hale and Baroness Royall were students at the Royal Forest of Dean Grammar School (now Royal Forest of Dean College) but three years apart and the Baroness recalls her parents had used Hale & Co in the past and so had she.

•The fire which started in the plumbing part of Hale's depot, swept through the building in the afternoon of June 5. At the height of the blaze more than 80 fire-fighters were tackling the fire and a pall of smoke was visible for miles. An inspection is understood to have concluded an electrical fault was the cause.



•Fire crews fighting to confine the flames back in 2009.



•Firefighters douse the smouldering depot buildings.



•Opening again. From left to right: General manager Peter Windows, Baroness Jan Royall, Leslie Hale, Antony Lowther, Keith Bell, assistant manager Mike Bennett and other staff members at the unveiling of the new building.