

Bits & Bytes

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No 38

Editorial

I was beginning to think that this edition was going to be very slim as I haven't been getting any copy.

I think that since B&B hasn't been printed and posted many pensioners think that it is no longer being produced, and therefore believe that there is no need to contribute articles. I will continue to produce the newsletter online, despite all the trials and tribulations that have occurred over the past 18 months. I do need copy on a regular basis, and thank my regular reporters for contributing sufficient articles for this edition to be eight pages as usual.

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Life before ICT/ICL

National Service Midshipman

I joined the Royal Navy for National Service in August 1952, three weeks after leaving school.

We arrived, a very mixed lot, at Victoria Barracks in Southsea. It was said that the building had been condemned as unfit for human habitation in the 1930s, but had been brought back into use under pressure of the coming war in 1938. It was somewhat modified by the Luftwaffe in 1940. And we were still in it twelve years later. The basic conditions were accepted as more or less normal by those of us who had been to boarding school; the lads who joined straight from home found it more of a shock.

First parade : "Right, you lot ! Get fell in ! Three deep ! That's one behind the other, twice !"

Another memorable injunction from those earliest days : "Them as is keen gets fell in previous."

The Chief Petty Officer walked round the ranks with a few questions to each of us : "Where was you before this, lad ?" "At school, Sir". "Where at ?" "Glenalmond, Sir." "Where's that?" "Perthshire, Sir." "Oh." Then he moved on to my neighbour, Ian Colston. "Where was you before this, lad ?" "At school, Sir". "Where at ?" "Glenalmond, Sir." "What ! Same as 'im?" "Yessir". Great surprise. After Ian came Bob McQueen, the former Head Boy of the school who later signed on permanently and rose very successfully to Captain R.N.. Same questions, same replies. "What ! Same as them?" "Yessir". Astonishment.

First savage haircut, then two weeks of the most basic training, followed by three weeks waiting for the next selection board.. We did some gardening to keep

us busy. We also each did a stint as night sentry, which involved parading the perimeter of the barracks with an unloaded S.M.L.E. rifle and a tin hat. On the stretch of the wire beside the WRENS quarters there was the only hazard of the night : from the upper dormitory the WRENS would throw things, trying to score a "ping" by a hit on the tin hat. The nice ones were boiled sweets.

There was a distraction on September 6th. The Captain RN in command of HMS Vernon, the Navy's shore establishment responsible for mines and torpedoes, was the husband of my godmother, and an invitation arrived from him, asking if I would care to accompany him to the Farnborough Air Show. So that morning I turned up at the main gate of Vernon in my jolly Jack's square rig shore-going uniform, explaining to the suspicious officer of the guard that I had an appointment with Captain Lloyd. We drove to Farnborough in his car, thoroughly enjoyed the show, and were standing on Observation Hill when the DH 110 broke up in flight. It had been in a steep dive, pulled up very sharply - too sharply, as became apparent - the engines pulled out of the airframe, (which fluttered to the ground on the other side of the airfield), and continued in a low curve towards us. One of them landed in the crowd about thirty yards to our right front, killing twenty-nine people; the other fell short. I can still see that curving flight, and hear the shocking silence that followed their airborne roar.

We all three passed the selection procedure, and proceeded to four months of officer training. This took place aboard HMS Implacable, a WWII aircraft carrier with no aircraft aboard and converted into a training ship. This meant that some 2000 trainees lived and slept in the vast space that had been the upper aircraft hangar. As officer trainees we were denominated Upperyardmen, which entailed wearing a white band under the name tag on our uniform caps. This made it easy for the Jaunties to spot any symptoms of un-officerlike behaviour. We learned lots of technical stuff - ropework, boatwork, signalling, ship-handling, navigation - with dead reckoning, sextant, and star-sights, chartwork, together with professional subjects such as discipline, man-management, and table manners. Lieutenant Pendleton was a very good teacher. In signalling we had to master semaphore and morse code in both sound and lights. Every morning before breakfast there would be half an hour of morse flashed at us from a signal light on the flight deck until we had achieved a passable speed and accuracy.

(That knowledge of morse, if a little rusty, is still there. I've often thought that, on my mobile, a single

morse key with the relevant app to translate it into transmittable characters would be so much more efficient than the tiresome 'three taps on 3 for F', 'four taps on 7 for S' rigmorole. But perhaps it would be easier to get a modern mobile with a qwerty keyboard.)

For radar training we went for a week to HMS Harrier, a shore establishment on the Pembrokeshire coast, perched high on the cliffs overlooking the Irish Sea. There was tall wire round the outside of the base, but not so strong or so tall as the wire surrounding the WRENs' quarters in the centre. One evening there was a kerfuffle : one of the WRENs was missing at a late evening roll-call. Search parties were organised. After a time she and a very Able Seaman were found. In their search for privacy they had slid down a steep grassy slope to a handy ledge part way down the cliffs, but found it was too slippery to get back up. In the outcome, they didn't get into so much trouble as the Leading Seaman who found them, (and who probably knew all the time where they would be). Instead of organising ropes and helpers he went back to base and brought a couple of blankets which he threw down to them.

Shortly after we joined her at Portland, HMS Implacable set sail for Gibraltar. In those days the Navy wore white in summer or in hot climates. Gib in October counted as hot, so on the way out we all dhobied one set of whites and hung them in the drying space around the funnel. We hadn't been told that as we crossed a very calm Bay of Biscay the ship was going to do a full power trial. As she belted along at over thirty knots our class stood at the after round-down and watched the boiling wake and the trace of it running arrow-straight to the horizon. Later, when we retrieved our washing it was all scorched the colour of lightly toasted bread - the funnel hadn't been so hot for years. So we set to and dhobied the spare set.

From Gibraltar we went one day on a coach trip along the Spanish coast to Malaga. Only one memorable thing happened. Standing on the pavement of one Avenida we were aware of some excitement in the people around. Then a giant open Mercedes passed, with Generalissimo Franco in the middle of the back seat. But no clapping, no cheering; quiet respect perhaps, but definitely no enthusiasm at all.

Another day I spent on a stage hung over the port side painting part of the ship's hull. At 766 feet long and some 60 feet high this remains the biggest painting job I have ever tackled. Stringent warnings from the course Petty Officers about not leaving any 'curtains' (runs of excess paint) or 'holidays' (unpainted gaps). In order to wash down the area to be painted we carried on our stages small pots of petrol. Nevertheless, because we were technically outboard we were allowed to smoke as we worked.

Returning from Gib we paid a courtesy call to Lisbon. While there our class of Upperyardmen formed up in our best whites and marched to a cemetery somewhere on the western side of the city where we formed a ceremonial guard for a memorial service round the graves of some British officers buried there. Can't remember who they were or in which war they perished.

Returning to UK we repassed through the Bay of Biscay, which on this occasion acted in full accordance with its reputation. There was a ship's company

concert that evening, and twelve Royal Marines were needed to keep the piano on the stage. Even more impressive was the view forrard from the ship's library. This was a space just abaft the forecandle, an open area beneath the flight deck where the winches and other anchor gear lived. As the ship's bow plunged in the wild seas, the forrard openings filled with water which surged aft among the winches and hurled itself at the bulkhead from whose ports we watched fascinated.

Instead of returning to our normal base at Portland, on 31st October HMS Implacable entered dry dock in Devonport for a refit. The ship's company were removed to shore accommodation in the barracks, but all trainees had to remain on board. This started a period of considerably discomfort : we had no heating at all, and no washing or toilet facilities. For these we had to go ashore to an ablutions block about five minutes walk away. But it was only going to be for a few days, so would be tolerable.

Little did we know. In the evening of 16th November a fire broke out in the main galley on board. A huge deep fat fryer had been left switched on, and had dangerously overheated. In an attempt to cool it down some idiot tipped into it a bucketful of next's days spuds. The hot fat splashed over the rim, something ignited it, and away it went. The extractor fans were still running, so they drew the flames up into the ventilation trunking. And because the galley was almost underneath the island superstructure a vast amount of wiring was burnt through, cutting off all parts of the ship from the command nerve centre. The Plymouth Fire Brigade turned up very quickly and dealt with the blaze successfully. Our class manned a pair of hoses in the upper hangar, whose deck was buckling upwards in the heat and appeared likely to burst at one welded seam. Cooling it down also enabled us to deal appropriately with the neighbouring class of Boy Seamen who had been the bane of our lives.

The galley was quickly back into action, but re-connecting all the wiring was a job of several weeks. It was not until 9th January that we eventually left dry dock. It had been an uncomfortable time.

On Sunday 18th January there occurred the cutlass incident. Our class were Duty Class for the day, and it was my turn to be class leader. So at that morning's ceremony of Sunday Divisions on the flight deck, I, being still a rating, was equipped with a cutlass for the duration of the parade. We formed up right aft on the flight deck, with ship's Band immediately forrard of us, and behind them the massed ranks of all the other trainees and all the ship's company. The flight deck was therefore pretty full, and we were ranged on the very lip of the vast hole of the after aircraft lift. In fact, the toes of my boots must have been visible from the lift, which was down at the level of the wardroom. The Commodore chose to stand on the very edge of the lift, so that as it rose he appeared immediately in front of me, all gold braid and splendour. I have never, before or since, been so close to a senior officer. I than had to give the order for the salute. As it was a windy day, and I had to be heard, not only by my comrades immediately behind me but also by the Band behind them, I therefore yelled, in my loudest possible bellow: "Guard and Band ! General Salute - Present Arms !". The Commodore, all of four inches away from me, stood it well. But I had been horribly conscious that at the effective syllable 'Arms' I would

have to bring the hilt of my cutlass up to my lips in the movement of saluting, and I couldn't help thinking : "His nose or mine ? ". At the last moment I managed to sway backwards enough to make room for the blade to pass safely between us. Face still impassive, the Commodore moved off with his party, having quietly enjoyed his little joke.

Hamish Carmichael -To be continued

Life in ICT/ICL

1900 computer - 50 Years old

The Computer Conservation Society is trying to mark the 50th year of the 1900 series around late 2014.

They need input from anybody who worked on this remarkable series of British computer systems. Send all anecdotes, reminiscences, etc. to Rod Brown at www.bitsandbytes.shedlandz.co.uk via the mail facility on his site.

MEMORIES

I read Hamish Carmichael's article in Resurrection (the Bulletin of the Computer Conversation Society) Issue No 59 the on the Samastronic with great interest as the machine played a very significant role in my life!

Yes the technical description and assessment was in my view and memory entirely accurate, not least his comments on the Samastronic's reliability, or should I say unreliability

I would argue that for it's time the Sam. Tab was conceptually brilliant, the tragedy was, in my view, the design clearly showed the influence of the electro. mechanical designers rather than that of the then emerging electronic solutions.

So what was my personal involvement and interest? Well I joined Power Samas in its death throes just before the BTM merger, as a trainee service engineer. After initial training at the P S Aurelia Rd field eng training school on the range of PS machines and some customer site experience I was transferred to John Webb's Samastronic field service team and that for me changed everything

First, due to the reliability problems, my take home pay shot up due to the many hours overtime I had to put in trying to keep customers such as the BBC, Kodak and Sainsbury's Samastronics going. It was NO EASY TASK and most significantly the print heads attached to EMI's 1100 computer installed in EMI's HO at Manchester Square London. I was called there so often to fix print head problems, which I am pleased to say I usually did fairly quickly, this led to the then EMI's field engineering manager offering me a huge salary increase of £6 pw over my then £10pw to join his Emidec 1100 service team based in Hayes Middx. I felt guilty but I immediately signed on.

From then on I spent my working life servicing the many peripherals attached to EMI's 1100 and 2400 computers installed on customer sites. I have to say many of which in those early days were not much more reliable than the Samastronic so the overtime kept coming!

A major shock for me was when sitting in the 1100 engineers room at Sainsbury's Blackfriars waiting for my next call, the news came through that ICL, my re-named previous employers, had bought out the EMI computer division. So I, along with my EMI

colleagues, transferred to Letchworth to be part of ICL's Group 4 field engineering team.

From then on I was fortunate to progress up the ICL customer service organisation to fill a number of senior management positions all of which I enjoyed, particularly the association I had with so many dedicated computer people and very loyal ICL customers. In particular I would mention managing a world wide support operation, and integrating service organisations of companies which joined ICL to make the British computer company and last but not least managing the interface with the many customer user groups with the objective of maintaining their loyalty to the ICL brand often in difficult times, but all that is another long story.

So I will close by saying thank you Hamish for stirring memories and a big thank you to the Samastronic for the part it played in me enjoying a wonderful career in ICL Customer Service.

Alan Gillman

Heinz Nixdorf

I first met Heinz Nixdorf wearing his white dust coat, soldering iron and screwdriver in hand in 1960, while he was repairing one of his valve-operated calculators attached to a "Machines Bull" punched card counter sorter. Bull was the French punch card manufacturer and the sorter was part of their punched card installation at an Insurance Company office next door to ICT GmbH, in Düsseldorf head office where I worked as a Service Engineer on Hollerith equipment.

Heinz Nixdorf had, in the mid-fifties, founded a small company, "Labor fuer Impulsetechnik" in his historic home-town of Paderborn, in Westphalia, North Germany, in order to exploit his belief in applying new technologies to the production of small and medium office computers to replace the electro-mechanical machines of the time. His company had a modest beginning and took on the design and supply of "bolt on" electronic mini computers and calculators to existing mechanical bookkeeping machines of other manufacturers that were widely used, mainly in Germany, in commercial and administrative businesses.

A few years later I joined ICT Manufacturing Division H/Q in Stevenage as OEM Sales Engineer marketing ICT punched card equipment to other equipment manufacturers throughout the European area. One of my first potential customers I visited was to "Labor fuer Impulstechnik" in Paderborn as our OEM office had received many enquiries from book keeping machine manufacturers throughout Germany who wanted to have an ICT serial cardpunch attached to their machines in order to have the book keeping results of their calculations converted to punched cards. One of our OEM customer's, NCR Augsburg had successfully coupled their machine with our punch. Siemag, (Phillips)Eiserfeld. had also chosen our punches.

Being fluent in German, I had the pleasure of meeting Heinz Nixdorf's Brother in Law, "Seppel" Temme during my visit. He was the factory production manager and we got on famously together, In fact we became firm friends immediately. Over the many years since our first meeting, he and I have met socially. We have paid visits to each other's homes many times. On the first visit we discussed the

possibility of supplying Punch Card machines for connection to their mini computers. Sepple Temme took note of my sales pitch and we finished up in the bar across the road known as the "Computer Klaus". I discovered that Sepp liked a drink.

On my next visit a duty free bottle of Johnny Walker Black Label was proffered, not as a bribe, but in friendship. Sepp invited me home for dinner that night and I met his beautiful wife Marga, Heinz's sister, and their two girls, Uta and Elka, both still at school. I also met Frau Nixdorf Senior, Heinz's mother and grandma to the girls, a lovely lady. We all enjoyed a wonderful evening together and when the two children and grandma retired to bed, we all went down into Sepple's bar in the cellar and continued to drink. I flirted with Marga and she with me. Sepp ignored us and kept drinking, his favourite means of relaxation. They poured me into a taxi and the next morning with a hangover I met Sepp in the factory, he bright eyed and bushy tailed telling me that he had been there since 6.30 am that morning.

In the late sixties by now the company had expanded considerably and had become a major employer in Paderborn. The company changed its name to Nixdorf Computers AG and was publicly quoted on the German Stock Exchange with Heinz Nixdorf as chairman. They had designed and built a range of small computers with keyboard inputs and hard copy printers using solid state discrete component electronics, mounted in large book sized pluggable units, allowing non-technical staff to exchange the plug ins for factory replacements in the customers offices, returning the faulty units to the factory for repair. Nixdorf argued that with just three technicians at the factory performing the clever repair work, he could maintain hundreds of machines in the field with minimum of down time, a great sales gimmick. The business boomed.

I met Heinz Nixdorf again on a number of occasions during my regular sales visits to Germany, if only briefly, just to exchange pleasantries, but sales pitch to his staff and always offered a lunch either in their excellent canteen or if there were other "visitors" in the factory such as from Siemens,. Then we would be taken to a local restaurant for an excellent meal. Nixdorf were a wonderful company to their staff and visitors. It was very noticeable that the atmosphere throughout the company all stemmed from the way the chairmen wanted it to be run. They were selling large numbers of their mini machines, taking lots of business for themselves and selling many of their electronic calculator kits to be built into their potential competitors machines such as Anker Werke and Wanderer Werke, both old style electromechanical book keeping machine manufacturers of the many still existing at that time.

One day, on a sales visit to Wanderer Werke near Cologne, with my boss, Derrick Ellis, we were waiting to be seen in the reception, when Heinz Nixdorf walked in behind us into the reception area carrying a large briefcase. He spotted us immediately and politely enquired why we were there. We explained and then he told us that he was there to purchase the Wanderer Company. With the contents of his briefcase, which we took to be cash, plus what they owed his company for goods supplied and not paid for, he went ahead and bought them, there and then, lock, stock and barrel. After ten minutes he came back to reception where we were still waiting and told us that

Wanderer was now part of Nixdorf AG, apologised for our inconvenience and invited us to visit Paderborn in a few weeks' time to continue our "Wanderer" sales visit with him. Such excitement, and we were privileged to be there to witness the historic moment and to enjoy how superbly Heinz Nixdorf operated.

Nixdorf AG went from strength to strength, doubling its sales and company size every year. Sales and Service offices were opened in most European capitals and large towns including London. New and more efficient computers called the 820 series were introduced and development ventures into Point of Sale devices took place in Paderborn. An apprentice training school was set up in the factory and within a year I witnessed at least 50 young people of both sexes under training. All this activity was on the sole initiative of Heinz personally. He was very much in control of his business and was greatly respected by his staff and towns people in a wide area around Paderborn.

The existing factory was bursting at the seams and a new sales and development building was planned to be built in a quiet area of the town. In order to be independent Heinz formed his own construction service, working exclusively for Nixdorf AG. Within months, a modern four story gold screened, glass clad building with double escalators and service lifts to all floors existed and was quickly equipped with brand new office furniture and benches and other equipment to be used in the new development laboratories. The square main building was laid out with proper roads and hundreds of parking spaces for the staff. The basement had a large canteen and a huge kitchen producing first class meals for everyone. Heinz and his managers and staff, including guests, ate and sat together, all very cosmopolitan. Large single story production buildings surrounded the main block and the site was landscaped to include a large lake at the rear where the grass ran into the lake and where the staff could walk off their lunch. It was an idyllic place to work.

There was a very sad occurrence at this time when a small party of Nixdorf managers and technical staff were reported missing from a private charter flight on their way to America. They were lost somewhere over Greenland. Herr Nixdorf immediately organized an on-going airborne search of the route they took, but after many days searching without success, it was called off. There was great sympathy expressed, especially to Heinz, from the computer industry worldwide.

At last, my regular visits to Paderborn seemed to be worthwhile. They wanted to equip their latest computer with a punched card output option in their sales program, but being Nixdorf, the solution had to be radical. It had to be a serial punch, but ICL's standard punch was too slow for them so they chose a much faster machine that we had developed but never put into production. It was much more robustly built using a reciprocal cam operated mechanism and following their visit to Letchworth to see it operating, took one for development in their new labs and within weeks they made a suitable connection with our punch attached to their computer. Further negotiations took place, a delivery programme was established and a price set and ICL was rewarded with an order worth one million pounds. Heinz always awarded the company orders personally in a sort of ceremony in his company canteen. The various

suppliers representatives sat waiting at tables in groups with the Nixdorf project engineers and negotiators and Heinz and his team went to each group in turn handing out the purchase orders already prepared. He came eventually to our table, gave me his purchase order for one million pounds and complained that we were too expensive. One million was a substantial order in those days, the largest order value I ever took. Fantastic! I was awarded a bonus of £500 and a promise of another £500 when all the machines were delivered, which for a variety of reasons I never received. That's another story.

Shortly after we received the large Serial Punch order, Heinz Nixdorf paid a rare visit to ICL Stevenage Development Labs. After a quick walk around the 1900 and printer development area, he took me to one side and asked if he could see something of Stevenage New Town as he had seen enough to satisfy his computer interest that visit and was more interested in town development in other countries, that he wished to apply to his rapidly developing Paderborn. We took the car around the town and he was quite impressed, asking lots of questions that taxed my knowledge and my German. He was well known for working tirelessly with Town Planners and Developers in his hometown and had in the past years persuaded the German Government to approve and build a new Autobahn close to his town, connecting with the Dortmund/Kassel and Ruhr/Hanover Autobahn networks, thus putting Paderborn on the map. He was also the prime mover in developing the local airport into a major passenger and freight terminus. Paderborn is today an International Airport as a result of his efforts.

Heinz was very interested in motivating his staff to participate in all sporting activities. Thanks to his generosity, in 1983 he built the Ahorne Sport Park on the company land adjacent to the new by pass round the town, known as the Heinz-Nixdorf Ring. It was a huge covered sport hall surrounded by outdoor spaces for discus throwing etc. and a running track and it was also made available for members of the public to use. Company trainees and apprentices were given time off to partake in sport under the direction of a professional trainer during the working week.

The Nixdorf Point of Sale Terminal systems produced in Paderborn was now making record sales worldwide. Most of the British Supermarket stores were equipped with them. Tesco's, Morrison's and even Waitrose were among their customers. The total world sales must have run into tens of thousands. My local Waitrose used them with the Nixdorf logo clearly displayed on them until 2012. Production of our Serial Punches was handled in No.1/3factory, Letchworth by a team of "old timers" who were raised on Hollerith machines from the past and they were well pleased to think that they still had a place in the firm where they could exercise their skills. The production team and the factory manager, Harry Groom urged me to get more orders for the punches. He said he would even paint them all green if the customers wished it. I took Harry Groom and his QC manager Bob Rose out with me to visit Nixdorf where my friend Sepple Temme the Production Manager gave them both a superb factory tour. They were both highly impressed and we all went out for the evening "pubbing" together, courtesy of Nixdorf of course, to finish the day.

Heinz Nixdorf was an ardent Catholic Christian and supported the magnificent Paderborn cathedral in his philanthropic way. The centre of the town around the cathedral and the imperial palace is surprising and interesting, as are the nearby springs and ponds, the source of the river Pader, it's well worth a visit. Among his many community projects Heinz established was a superbly equipped workshop for physically and mentally handicapped young people from the community, where they received training to enable them to construct products, not for the computer industry but still using, electronics, for example, a control unit fitted to a contemporary electronic church organ. By using conventional organ stops on either side of the keyboard, converted to switches that were stored electronically in the control box as a program, set up before hand for each piece of music to be played. The organist needed only one key depression to change the stored stop settings during the playing of the piece. These units sold well and the young people building them were happily and usefully employed.

In 1985, Nixdorf AG with Heinz Nixdorf as its long standing Chairman of the Board had, from small beginnings, achieved the position of one of the world's leading computer groups. He had established manufacturing sites in seven locations in Germany and Berlin as well as in the USA, Ireland, Spain and Singapore employing 25,000 employees. Sales revenue amounted to something over DM 4 billion. Absolutely phenomenal!

His untimely death occurred at the age of 61 in 1986. The computer world was shattered at the news but no more so than his employees and the citizens of Paderborn and the surrounding areas. His close family, his widow Renata and their three sons were distraught. My friends Sepple, Marga and their children Uta and Elka were equally affected. He became a legend in his own lifetime and was very well respected by countless citizens in Paderborn as well as the German Nation. He would be sadly missed by everyone who had ever known him.

Nixdorf AG carried on with their business but things in the market place were changing very quickly as personal computers were entering the market and now available in quantity everywhere and it wasn't long before sales were effected. Four years after Heinz died his vast company was merged with the computer division of Siemens, being taken over entirely in 1992 and incorporated into Siemens AG by share transfer. Nixdorf AG no longer exists.

However, nothing was not allowed to be forgotten. A commemorative foundation was set up to form the Heinz Nixdorf Museums Forum, a unique museum dedicated to the historical development of information and communication technology. The museum is housed in what was the headquarters and development block in Fuestenallee and it now houses an incredible collection of equipment ranging from all sorts of telephones, hundreds of mobiles, early hand and electric bookkeeping machines, punched card machines (IBM. no ICT), large mainframe computers, as well as a large collection of Nixdorf machines from early ones to the final range. I was thrilled to see one of the ICL punches that I sold all those years ago attached to one of their largest office computers. It is claimed to be the world's biggest computer museum.

The Germans are particularly fascinated by the Bletchley Park wartime breaking of the Enigma codes.

The museum has a superb section entirely devoted to Alan Turing and the code cracking story. All four floors of the museum are full of interesting exhibits with lots of photo displays and descriptive plaques, unfortunately in the German language. However its well worth a visit and one should allow several hours to absorb everything that's on display. The old staff canteen is still working as a restaurant and it offers a range of hot food as well as snacks and drinks including alcohol. Unfortunately Paderborn is not on the main tourist routes but there are excellent hotels in the district. The town is a delight and the country around is also interesting. Thousands of British Army soldiers have served there, as it has been a British Army of the Rhine garrison since the Second World War. I am lucky that I can stay with my friends Gunther and Uta. Temme, daughter of the late Sepple and Marga Nixdorf, who like Heinz, I regret to say, are no longer with us.

I still have wonderful memories of that part of my time with ICT/ICL.

Peter Walker

Letters

CHEQUE MATE

Dame Fortune smiled on my wife recently. She was due some good luck after 65 years with me, and a cheque for £12 arrived, her winnings in a monthly draw. As her chequebook account pays no interest, she insisted it went into her Tesco Savings bank account, under the illusion this savings account pays a measurable interest rate. I calculate that at .007%.

I biked to Tesco's, queued up with the fussy folk returning dodgy goods, only to be told I must bring her Savings Cheque card. I biked home and back, rejoined the queue confronting a different indifferent cashier. This time I presented the card, the cheque and a statement showing her account number, only to be turned away as I wasn't the account holder and she had to sign her name and my forging of her signature wouldn't do.

I pointed out I was paying in £12, not drawing out her life savings. My threat to close her account and go to Sainsbury's, was countered by the advice she would have to visit personally, to close her account with a signature!

To score a point, I paid it into our joint bank account at HSBC and gave her the cash and a penny to represent her .007% interest.

When I first retired, HSBC recommended we put our savings account in my wife's name, as a non-tax payer. Now my wife finds it a drag going to the bank each time we need to transfer some cash to write a hefty cheque out, so we decided to change the savings account from my wife's name to our joint names. I called in to our local branch and was told they couldn't do it, as they were a service bank!

I explained that was what I wanted, some service. No, I had to go to town to get a form, but the branch would send it to Head Office, presumably that was their idea of service. I got the form, we both signed it and I returned it to the branch. It was rejected, as my wife's signature wasn't the same as it was 25 years ago when we opened the account!

Pointing out that neither of us were the same as we were 25 years ago, didn't cut any ice. I put the bike away and gave my wife a little treat of a drive to the

bank, where she had to convince them she was Mrs Goodwin and I wasn't a conman after her savings.

I've been with HSBC since they were Midland and I'm sure they mean well, but security only seems to apply to domestic account holders. Where was it in 2008, when internationally, between them, the banks let £2,700,000,000 slip through their fingers?

Dennis Goodwin

MAKING A MAYOR

I took the golden handshake in 1991; having reached the grand old age of 55, and let Fujitsu get on with re-profiling the company. Having spent all my working life in Ferranti/ICT/ICL the big question was what to do now, and what was I qualified to do. I started by planning a holiday to drive from UK to what was then Czechoslovakia, the wall having recently come down and this was a chance to see behind what was the Iron Curtain. This was the start of a relationship with Eastern Europe; we have now visited almost every country behind the old Iron Curtain, and three of them (Romania, Ukraine and Czech Republic) more than once.

I then tried IT consultancy, I did get some work but with some 550 having left ICL at the same time the market place was a bit crowded.

A neighbour, knowing I was politically on the left but with a dislike of socialism, suggested I joined the Liberal Democrats. It seemed an innocent move at the time, but it opened the way to a career lasting 22 years, and still going in my late seventies.

This leads to the message of this story, particularly to those who have just retired early. There is life after Fujitsu, often in unexpected quarters. Most of the opportunities are not well paid, and some not paid at all. You might think that your experience in IT is not relevant. In my case thirty years in Customer Service and surviving the backbiting and company politics put me in a strong position to cope with anything thrown at me across the council chamber.

I settled in as a minor foot soldier in a political party, delivering the odd leaflet, but not putting my head anywhere near the parapet. In late 1992 the party was looking for candidates to contest the County Council elections in 1993. I was asked to stand in Newbury Downlands, 75 sq. miles of true blue horse racing country to the north of Newbury. I was told there was no danger I would win, and I did not have to do anything.

In February 1993 the sitting Conservative MP for Newbury sadly died. That led to the 1993 Newbury By-Election. That event, with the enormous swing to the Liberal Democrats has gone down in history. What is not as well-known is the massive majorities achieved by eight of the nine Liberal Democrat County Council candidates, leading us to become the largest party on Berkshire County Council, just short of an absolute majority. We went in to coalition with Labour, and had to determine how we could divide the work between a large numbers of inexperienced politicians. I ended up with two jobs, Chairman of the IT Working Party (not a surprise) and Chairman of the Highways Committee covering the Western area of the county. Soon I was in negotiations with the Department of Transport, Contractors, objectors and local residents over the Newbury By-Pass, which took up much of my time for some four years. We used the opportunity to pedestrianize the centre of Newbury,

three days after the by-pass opened, and we conducted a speed limit review in every village in West Berkshire. Berkshire County Council was abolished in 1998, and we became Lib Dem controlled West Berkshire Council, but the highways work continued seamlessly.

By 2000 the by-pass was opened, Newbury pedestrianized, consistent speed limits in every village and more speed cameras than any comparable area it was time to think of the next step. My wife was about to retire from a senior position at an exclusive girls public school and we would have to vacate the cottage in the school grounds. We decided to move back to the North Staffordshire village we left in 1987 to come south; we had let the house rather than sell it. Fortunately our tenants were moving two days before we had to leave the cottage, and we were back in Staffordshire.

I intended to retire from politics, do gardening or something and sit back. I was known in the area, having chaired my parish Council some years before, and I was soon approached to get involved again. The District Council ward where we lived consisted of one rural village, ours, and two larger ex mining villages. The seat had been a strong Labour seat for years. Looking at recent results I saw the Labour vote declining over the years and ours increasing. Given a push using the campaign tactics I had learnt at Newbury this should be a winnable seat, and in 2002 it was, and I was back on a Council. For the first time I was on the backbenches, Newcastle under Lyme is a Labour stronghold. However that was not to last, partly through their own fault they lost overall control in 2006. They left some issues, including a very low 16% recycling figure and the second dirtiest streets in the West Midlands. I took a lead role in negotiating a coalition with the Conservatives, which I will argue worked better than the national one. I was given the Cabinet job of sorting out recycling and dirty streets. The second was relatively easy, you cannot clean streets with clapped out equipment. The Recycling took nearly five years to achieve over 50%. We achieved some firsts, including one of the first councils to recycle food waste into heat and electricity. Having attended two national award ceremonies to pick up first prize I decided to look for an easier job. I was elected to the chair of the local Health Scrutiny Committee, just as the Mid Staffordshire Hospital crisis was unfolding!

In 2012 Labour took back control, mainly due to events at Westminster. They accepted the Lib Dem nomination for me as Mayor. 2012-2013 was one of the most rewarding years of my life, as Mayor of the Loyal and Ancient Borough of Newcastle under Lyme, that however is another story. I am now on the backbenches, but there are still issues to fight. After the experiences further south this winter the council is still considering building on a flood plain, and there are always issues in my ward to keep me off the streets. As an ex-mayor I still represent the Borough on occasions, and this summer I am representing them in the Czech Republic (at my own expense), almost turned full circle since leaving ICL.

David Becket Ferranti/ICT/ICL
becket@phonecoop.coop

Reunions

Newcastle Friday Club

On the first Friday of each month Ex (and current) ICL/Fujitsu employees from the North East meet for a beer and bite at Wetherspoons Quayside Pub in Newcastle; we meet at 12:30, and any Ex ICL/Fujitsu people from the North East or who have had any contact with the North East are welcome.

Mike Green 0191 386 6787

ICL Central London

The next reunion will be on Wednesday **16 April 2014** at **The Shakespeare's Head, 64 Kingsway** from 12 noon. The pub is on the eastern side of Kingsway just south of Holborn tube station.

Bill Williams 020 7607 9408

256meteorahlhorn@gmail.com

Stevenage & Letchworth Old Boys (renamed Punch Card Reunion)

The annual reunion will take place on **Tuesday 7th October 2014** at Stevenage Labs STE04.

Please send £10 to Adrian Turner, 5, Nun's Acre, Goring-on-Thames, RG8 9BE. Cheques should be made payable to **Punch Card Reunion** and accompanied by a SAE.

Adrian Turner 01491 872012

MOD MOB

The next meeting of the MOD-MOB group is on **Friday 25th July 2014 at the Moon on the Mall** hostelry at 12:00 hrs. onwards.

Retired and active staff from the London and MOD UK unit have met up for about two years now, so we have now established ourselves as a sociable group of individuals. Anyone who is retired or active and wishes to meet up with individuals who worked anywhere on MOD contracts or in the group is welcome. Lots of people worked in CHOTS as well as in the main MOD team and all are welcome, security clearance not required, just bring a smile. Email to **modmob@shedlandz.co.uk** for enquiries

LEO Computers Society

On **Sunday 06 April 2014** there will be a reunion to celebrate the setting up of LEO Computers Ltd 60 years ago. It will be held at the historic Middle Temple Hall, London EC4Y 9AT. Contact John Andrews by email for more information.

John Andrews

GlobalLeoSociety@gmail.com

Kidsgrove-Drawing-Office

The Annual reunion is held at the Bleeding Wolf, Scholar Green on the first Monday in December
brian@morrismail.co.uk

Liverpool Engineers

We now meet about midday on the second Wednesday of every month at Wetherspoons, Great Charlotte Street near Lime Street Station.

George Lynn 01744 29984

Watford-Harrow- Feltham

Mike Ray 01895 230194

East Grinstead 81 Club

Gordon Franklin 01342 328479

East Midlands UB40s

Brian Skeldon 0115 9725119

ICL Double Majority Association

Giles Allen 01462 730052

ICL Midlands

Brian Trow 01785 257317

Surrey Engineers

Trevor Harding 01483 565144

trevor@harding14.plus.com

West Gorton Reunion

Eric W Watts 01457 875080

West Branch Engineers

Eric Reynolds has moved. No replacement notified.

West Kent Reunion

Ron Harding 01732 761076

ICL Old Buggas

Les Mowbray www.cuin.co.uk/oldbuggas/

ExICL Kidsgrove

Nick Edmonds 01270 585953

nick.edmonds@yahoo.co.uk

OBITUARIES

Nortel Fund

BIR03	Albert	Pickard	16/10/13	92
	George T	Randle	20/01/14	91
BRS06	George	Drysdale	19/10/13	88
	Kenneth	Hughes	21/10/13	63
EDI01	Ian R	Grierson	07/10/13	79
HOM99	John	Dickson	21/11/13	84
KID01	Ronald	Buckley	24/12/13	80
	Ann	Merry	23/01/14	73
	John G	Walker	14/02/14	76
LEE01	Patrick D	Gibbons	01/10/13	75
LET05	Clifford J	Gates	18/01/14	90
LON03	Graham	Whittington	08/12/13	61
LON11	Dolina B	Kaye	08/12/13	79
	David D	Keogh	29/12/13	86
	Walter G	Mercer	06/12/13	94
	Lillian E	Nicholls	21/09/13	88
	Reginald	Shore	09/11/13	86
LON30	C F	Hutson	18/01/14	87
	Peter R	Richer	14/09/13	85
MAN01	Herbert	Cobb	07/10/13	88
	Emily	Glasby	24/02/14	86
MAN05	Ben	Gunn	13/09/13	87
MAN07	John R	Parsonage	11/09/13	92
MAN12	George H	Johnson	10/01/14	68
	Nigel	Love	14/10/13	65
REA03	Geoffrey	Clarke	26/01/14	88
REA08	Gordon A	Riocreux	15/11/13	90
STE04	Frederick	Kemp	14/09/13	84
	Peter G	Sugden	08/12/13	70
	Allen	Clark	06/03/14	85
STE08	Beryl V	Maisey	08/11/13	86
WAK01	John T	Gale	08/10/13	82
WSR01	Albert E	Parish	13/01/14	94
	Philip M	Stafford	13/10/13	58
No Known Location	W J	Bannon	23/02/14	86

John	Bloor	10/01/14	76	
J A	Bradley	28/11/13	76	
Michael	Burgoyne	17/09/13	70	
J L	Campbell	27/09/13	90	
Margaret	Cochrane	17/01/14	89	
Frederick	Colclough	28/10/13	80	
Frank	Cullis	18/01/14	96	
I	Czinege	14/01/14	80	
Camillus	Delikhan	05/02/14	78	
Geoffrey	Elliott	16/11/13	84	
George R	Flint	13/09/13	93	
Kathleen	Gadsden	21/01/14	84	
Herbert	Gentle	09/09/13	92	
Joan H	Gregory	02/12/13	82	
John	Harris	13/01/14	73	
Jon A	Hatton- Smooker	31/01/14	81	
Roger	Houbert	17/11/13	87	
Eric G	Jones	21/12/13	84	
Cookham	Raymond	Kilroy	18/12/13	90
William	Kingsley	08/12/13	94	
Margaret	Lucas	10/12/13	84	
Arthur	Marment	25/09/13	94	
Norman	Meadowcroft	25/12/13	92	
J	Needham	04/09/13	92	
Edward E	Nutty	17/01/14	96	
Benjamin	Peel	13/12/13	85	
John W	Peters	14/10/13	92	
Edward W	Polyblank	27/09/13	98	
C	Rowbotham	12/09/13	83	
Walter	Ryder	10/09/13	95	
Joan	Sharp	08/09/13	97	
Joan	Shaw	04/09/13	87	
Neville H	Spearing	16/12/13	85	
Neil S	Stewart	21/09/13	84	
Elaine D	Taylor	09/10/13	81	
Peter	Taylor	01/01/14	88	
Derek J	Trump	22/11/13	87	
F	Ward	07/10/13	84	
Donovan	Woodland	18/10/13	83	
Beatrice	Wright	20/10/13	94	

ICL Fund

Limited information supplied by family and friends

BRA01	Pete	Lamb	-/10/12	70
	Roger	Ashbrook	11/02/14	71
LET03	Joe	Gardner	03/12/13	73
WSR01	Robin R	Seward	28/10/13	79

Bits & Bytes Online

The Spring and Autumn editions of B&B will be available in the last week of March and September each year. Please make a note in your diaries to access Rod Brown's Repository website for each edition at www.bitsandbytes.shedlandz.co.uk

NEXT ISSUE

Copy for the Autumn 2014 issue must be submitted by 1 September 2014, but would be appreciated earlier.

Now that B&B is not printed and distributed to pensioners the number of stories and anecdotes has dried up. If you want B&B to continue YOU must contribute something!