

Bits & Bytes

<http://www.bitsandbytes.org.uk>

No 47

Editorial

This year is like an express train! No sooner as each year arrives the clock speeds up and it will soon be Christmas! There has been correspondence in past editions on this phenomenon and as I get older realise that I can do nothing about it.

However I have started a Timeline for my life so that I can be sure of when things of note occurred in my life. It was triggered when I went to a funeral in my birthplace when I was able to remember in great detail events in my first 17 years, but I have lived in Goring for half of my life and cannot be exact on what happened when.

The National Museum of Computing at Bletchley is celebrating the 50th birthday of ICL which was formed on 9th July 1968, with an exhibition in November.

The official history of ICL by Martin Campbell-Kelly suggests that the merger of ICT and English Electric was not favoured by many in ICT and one commentator suggested in 1973 *"the British computer industry is very little better today than it would have been if the government had left it alone"*. Arthur Humphreys said of the merger *"the largest range of incompatible computers in the world"*.

Hamish Carmichael wrote an obituary for ICL when Fujitsu decided to drop the name in 2002 and it was published in Bits & Bytes.

"When ICL was formed in 1968 one of the earliest interpretations offered for the new acronym was "It Can't Last".

"So farewell ICL. It Couldn't Last - but it was good while it lasted".

Adrian Turner

5 Nun's Acre, Goring-on-Thames, RG8 9BE

01491 872012

Email Address: [bitsandbytes \(at\) clara.co.uk](mailto:bitsandbytes(at)clara.co.uk)

50Years since ICL was formed

The National Museum of Computing is in the process of putting together an evening of celebration surrounding the 50th anniversary of the forming of ICL, followed by a temporary exhibition in our new temporary exhibition gallery lasting for 6 months. We are looking for input from members of the ICL community at all levels, be it accounts of day to day inner workings of the company, opinion pieces on individual machines or even odd quirks and comical memories. All are welcome and would be gladly received to be included in the gallery with full credit

to authors. If you are interested in taking part in this or the evening event that will be taking place on

Friday 16th November please contact the museums event manager at martin.chesse@tnmoc.org.

Working flat out in the early '80's

In the early '80's it was still common for customers with lots of kit to have engineers on site 24 x 7. They did all the regular maintenance and fixed any faults they could. However, the night shift could be quite boring.

An example of this came home to me when I got a call from Irish Jim in Worldwide Control to go to Sainsbury's in Blackfriars, London at some unearthly hour. One of their two 2972 range processors were down.

I parked up and went in and somebody directed me to where the engineer would be. It was a bigish room but appeared empty. A walk round the computer room revealed no sign of an engineer so I went back to the room where he was supposed to be. Suddenly, I noticed that across the other side of this large room a tile from the false floor was starting to move of its own accord. I was about to leg it out of there, when a head appeared and then the rest of a somewhat sleepy engineer arose from under the floor, complete with cushion/sleeping bag or something to make him comfortable. I always wondered what working flat out meant

Vince Celano

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Our rich English language is all very well, but some of the odd names are quite confusing. Once on my way to Stevenage I was flagged down by a hitchhiker who wanted to go to "Tunnel" I queried the name. It seemed he meant TONWELL, which I passed through regularly. Locally there's RUNWELL, but nobody calls it RUNNEL!

Understandably, the old families have their idiosyncrasies but as I seldom mix with the gentry, the following examples hardly affect me.

The Belvoir family insist it's BEEVER and the Wemyss say WEEMS and the Cholmondely's conveniently say CHUMLY. The exotically name Buddy Featherstonehaugh was a British jazz musician in the 60's. I don't recall hearing his name on the wireless, as it turns out to be spoken as FANSHAW. No wonder I could never find his records! In those days the Queen Mum was associated with Glamis Castle. If I had been invited, I wouldn't have found it as it's known as GLARMS. I know the

university towns live in a closed world, but MAUDLIN for Magdalene and KEYS for Caius are unworldly. You may recall Earl Spencer's family seat is Althorpe, but why should they call it ALLTRUP? Could the daft pronunciation be to catch the peasants out?

Place names can also be a nightmare. Alnwick, in the North East is ANNICK and in Scotland, Hawick is HOICK. Cornwall's Mousehole rejoices as MOUSLE, with Fowey called FOY and Frome, in Somerset, is FROOM.

In the Midlands, Leominster comes out as LEMSTER and similarly Towcester gets domestic as TOASTER. You don't have to commit all this to memory, unless intending to visit some of these delightful spots, then, for once, this might have some practical use when asking for directions.

Has anyone any others to add to the confusion?

Dennis Goodwin

Another Engineer's Story

I just found 'Bits and Bytes' and have to say that it is quite fascinating with all the diverse history of ICL. I worked there myself between 1974 and 1983 mostly as a 2980 engineer based at the EEC Project in Luxembourg. I would be happy to tell some stories if anyone was interested. Funnily enough I worked for a while alongside Paul Burbidge at Bracknell, who featured in your latest newsletter. I retired a couple of years ago having spent time working for a selection of US computer companies (HP, DEC, Wang, Sun, Oracle) since then.

I have a pension query and wondered if there is anyone in your group who might be able to help me. When I left my last stint at ICL in Wakefield I had a 2 year UK pension contribution, having worked previously for ICL France. I have talked to Nortel and they tell me that this pension was transferred out to "scottpen trust" in 1983. I imagine this is an abbreviation for some Scottish pension provider, but Nortel say they have no records and can't help further. Also tried Fujitsu but got no further. Seems a shame to abandon even a small pension. I imagine there is someone out there that could answer this and wonder if you can point me.

Keep up the good work, I will definitely become a regular reader now. Let me know if you want any ICL engineer stories...I can mainly remember the funny stuff that happened e.g. blowing things up!

Graham Scattergood

The Launch of the 1900 Series – Sept 1964

The ICT 1900 Computer Series was launched world-wide on 29 September 1964. The launch consisted of a presentation in all major cities and countries where ICT traded. At the time ICT had subsidiary companies in 15 countries.

The launch consisted of an introduction by a Director/Country manager, followed by a presentation, using overhead Vu graph slides, extolling the virtues of this new range of computers. The presentation was supported by some 24 large plywood display panels summarising the features and benefits of the range. These were displayed in the area where customers/prospects could view them whilst having coffee before and a buffet lunch after the formal proceedings.

The launch was an undoubted success and established ICT as a serious supplier in the fast-developing world computer industry.

In 1964 I was the Computer Executive for Finance Region based in the City of London. Computer Executives were the first computer specialists to be transferred out from the centre of the company into the Sales Regions.

In August 1964, I was seconded from The City into Putney Bridge House, the HQ of the UK sales organisation, in order to prepare the material for the forthcoming 1900 Series launch. Graham Morris from Education and Training was also seconded into Putney. On arrival we were briefed by Cliff Oldham, Deputy Director for UKSO, and who was responsible for the world-wide launch. On a large whiteboard in his office was an Organisation Chart showing who had to do what, by when, to prepare for the launch. It was headed by a Launch Steering Committee with 6/7 names. As Cliff briefed the two of us he put a large red pen through the Steering Committee and wrote "Committee of One: CBO"! Graham and I were most impressed and immediately became fans of Cliff Oldham!

The first thing that Morris and Morrish had to do was to learn something about the 1900 Series, so we took ourselves off to the ICT Stevenage factory to attend a 1900 Programming course. There we met Dr Raymond (Dickie) Bird, Steve Hare and others who had been involved in the development of the 1900. We must have been keen as I see from my diary that one night we didn't get to bed until 5am!

Cliff Oldham had hired a young man called Tony Jay to advise ICT on the content and style of the launch material. This was the same Tony Jay who went on to write the scripts for "Yes Minister" and "Yes Prime Minister". He scripted 38 TV episodes through the period 1979-1988. Margaret Thatcher was a great fan of both programmes and reputedly said they were not comedies but documentaries! Sir Anthony Jay died on the 21 August 2016 after an extremely successful career.

Tony Jay knew nothing of computers when he first met Graham and I, so asked us to write the script for the main launch presentation, describing the technical features/advantages of this new computer range. Graham Morris wrote an excellent essay which was comprehensive, flowed brilliantly and read beautifully. Tony thanked hm, took it away and returned next day with a completely rewritten script! His version was hard work to read, clumsy in its style with awful punctuation! At one point he started three consecutive sentences with the words "And another thing.....". However, when spoken it sounded really great and quickly became the basis of our presentation script.

Lesson One from Tony Jay was when writing a script be quite clear whether it will be "read" or "heard" by your audience, because the style to be adopted is totally different!

Tony's talent again came to the fore when we were preparing the overhead slides and the display panels. One of the innovative features of the 1900 was "Multi-Programming" which enabled a number of programs to be run in parallel. Tony obtained an aerial photograph of dozens of parallel separate railway tracks at Clapham Junction in order to illustrate the concept of multi-programming.

Lesson Two from Tony was a picture, or a diagram, is far more easily understood than a lot of words: "A picture is worth a thousand words".

The last piece of advice Tony Jay offered to Graham and I was that if we ever had to give an after-dinner speech, the best thing you can do is to open with a joke; it breaks the ice, gets the audience on your side, gives you confidence, etc. Unfortunately, the worse possible thing you can do is to start with a joke which falls flat! Clearly a high-risk strategy. Lesson Three!

Numerous launch rehearsals were held, many of which were used to educate ICT staff around the world, about the 1900.

The day before the launch separate presentations were given to The Pres and to Consulting Firms. Then on the 29th September 1964 the launch took place across twenty different countries.

The UK Finance Region launch, for City Institutions, was held at the Carlton Tower Hotel, just off Sloane Street. It was hosted by the ICT Chairman Sir Edward Playfair, with myself giving the main presentation. It seemed to go very well, and certainly generated a lot of interest.

It had been a great privilege for me to work with Tony Jay for two months and to contribute to the whole launch programme. Especially as, when the dust had settled, I was able to spirit away the Twenty Four Finance Region display panels and use them to board my loft in my new house in Epsom!

The week after the launch the annual Business Efficiency Exhibition was held at Olympia. Most impressively ICT had a large stand containing two 1900 computers on display – another busy week with plenty of interested visitors!

Within six weeks of the launch orders for over one hundred 1900 computers (30 from Overseas) worth some £13.5 million had been taken. The 1900 Series, with a range from the 1901 to the 1906 became the backbone of the company for many years to come.

Pat Morrish

The Bombe arrives at TNMOC

After more than ten hours of tense work, the Turing-Welchman Bombe arrived safely at The National Museum of Computing on Bletchley Park at the end of April. With air lifts, wheel changes and extremely tight squeezes, the reconstruction of the extraordinary Enigma code-breaking machine edged its way into its new gallery, that is now open to the public.

The move was made possible thanks to the generous contributions of more than 500 individuals and organisations who donated more than £50,000 in a four-week Crowdfunder appeal ending in March to keep the Bombe on the Bletchley Park Estate.

TNMOC Trustee Keven Murrell who was present on moving day to lend a hand described the tension of the operation: “To transport a one-tonne machine with delicate moving parts over flower beds, up steps and ramps and through the narrowest of gaps and around the tightest of turns was an astonishing feat. Even removing the door frame to the new gallery wasn’t enough to squeeze the Bombe into its new location – last minute judicious handywork was required to create an extra half-a-centimetre of space! As darkness fell, the Bombe finally reached its new home – and not one person dropped the Bombe.”

The move was accomplished by the Bombe team volunteers led by John Harper, a resident TNMOC

team led by Jacqui Garrad, and a highly experienced team of removal experts from Flegg Transport.

On behalf of everyone at TNMOC, Andrew Herbert, chair of trustees, said, “It is a real thrill to know that so many people have contributed to the success of the move – from the generosity of the general public to the expertise of the reconstructors. It is a heartfelt tribute from today’s generations to the codebreakers and digital pioneers of the past.”

The Turing-Welchman Bombe was the electro-mechanical device designed by Alan Turing and Gordon Welchman, based on a Polish concept, to automate the deciphering of Enigma-encrypted messages during the Second World War. They were built by the British Tabulating Machine company at Letchworth in Hertfordshire. After years of work, a team led by John Harper finished the reconstruction of this machine in 2007.

The reconstructed Bombe is now located very close to the existing world-famous rebuild of Colossus that helped break the Lorenz cipher of German High Command during the Second World War. Together these two displays explore the ingenuity and inventiveness of the Second World War codebreakers - and the beginnings of our digital world.

The new Bombe Gallery was officially opened on Saturday 23 June 2018 when the gallery refurbishment was completed.

Death on the Doorstep and The Drivers’ Revolt

My duties in Southern Support included a share of international assignments, wherever the mainframes had been installed, so I found myself in India in the 1970s, visiting both Bombay and Delhi.

OCRs vs The Drivers

One of the technical problems our Indian banking customer was experiencing was the repeated failure of the Optical Document Reader to process cheques. The banks had difficulty only with cheques, which was puzzling. On investigation, the equipment passed all its diagnostic tests, but failed regularly when reading client cheques, in particular salary cheques on payday. However, as often in that part of the world, the problem wasn’t technical, but cultural. Every manager in India then had his own driver, and on payday, the managers would send the drivers to the bank to pay in the cheques and bring back cash. Before the new technology was used, this was a 3 to 4 hour process involving queueing 3 times, and the drivers considered it to be their day out, playing cards, smoking, talking and generally having a good get-together. When this was brutally short-circuited by our new technology, they started to wrinkle, smudge, deface and tear the cheques to do everything possible to slow down the process again! Result: a showdown with the drivers, happy banks - disgruntled drivers.

Dead on Arrival

Whilst I was there, the ICL country manager told me a cautionary tale about his first day in the job. He was met at the doorstep of ICL India on his first day and introduced to the whole team. On entering the building, he had to step over a bundle of rags, which turned out to be a vagrant asleep on the cool marble of the entrance. As he was expecting to welcome some key customers, he asked security to give the fellow some rupees and move him on. The security guard

came back to tell him the man was actually dead, and it would require quite a few more rupees to dispose of his remains humanely and quickly. Some weeks later, over a dinner at the local embassy get-together, he was chatting with a new country manager from another organisation, only to be told the exact same story! The died-in-the-wool locals then told him it was a well-known way of making a few rupees - the security guards would "buy" a suitable corpse and plant it where it had to be removed quickly, then pocket the profit.

Bulgarian Adventures - July 1974 - The job as part of my Southern Support duties, I had my share of overseas support too, and one day I was informed that I was going behind the Iron Curtain for a week or two, to install a 1904A remote access site from the university in a palace in Sofia, Bulgaria. We all suspected it was Russia who was paying and using the system, but ours not to reason why etc!

The Fixer Mike Cox had to go on ahead with a boot full of scotch in his Rover, to bribe the Intourist people each day so we could stay in our hotel, on the main square in Sofia. If you didn't do that, and tourists arrived, you'd come back in the evening to find your bags packed and your reservation cancelled. Mike was an old hand though and a genuine Mr Fixit.

The Palace

The site itself was a beautiful miniature palace in the city with exquisite mouldings and frescoes on the ceilings and lovely marble tiles and parquet floors throughout the floors. The Bulgarian technicians however cut cable channels through the beautiful floors and hacked away many of the ceiling and wall mouldings to install PSUs, modems and so forth - it was at the height of the Cold War, so anti-royal sentiments were high, and the elegance of the old royal residence was an easy target. All the time armed guards were within yards of our team.

The Loos

The arrangements for on-site ablutions were hair-raising. There were only 2 unisex loos, which didn't have any paper after 9-30am, couldn't flush paper (waste bins next to pedestal) and constant long queues outside. We quickly adapted our digestive systems to maximise our hotel time!

Turkish Invasion - Balkans Closed

The trickiest part of the installation was the comms however. What should have been a straightforward system software problem to analyse and patch, was not so easy after all. Turkey invaded Cyprus a couple of days after we arrived, which meant that all communications were closed down immediately, and I couldn't even call Bracknell or West Gorton, let alone have them send me a patch for the operating system. I had to book a call at the hotel, and then hours later be there when the operator offered to try it for me. I did as much as I could, working out my own patches, but all the system dumps/printouts were in the Cyrillic alphabet, so I had to give myself a crash course on site - got it working eventually with DIY patches - happy days.

World War III

Half way through the stay there, I was woken at 2am by the sounds of crashing, engines, shouting and it sounded as though every recycling truck in the city had come into the main square to empty every bin there as loudly as possible! When I looked out of the window, I had the awful feeling that World War III

had started (a real possibility in those days) because the square was full of soldiers, tanks, artillery, and rocket launchers, all weaving around to get into some kind of formation. By this time all the hotel guests were alarmed but the hotel manager assured us there was nothing to worry about - they were practising for the imminent Communist Day Parade but didn't want anyone to see their mistakes, so they did it at night (which of course had the opposite effect and displayed their paranoia to all there). They did it again the next night, and the day before the parade all the war widows came into the square at 5am to wash and clean every square inch - apparently this was a condition of getting their pensions.

Evening Socialising

In the evenings though, things improved a lot - as a condition of working there we had to change lots of western currency into Levs, and there were no shops to spend it, so we ate well at a lovely restaurant set in a Roman-style amphitheatre, with the tables on the tiers around a stage with a great orchestra/band each evening. Times were hard in Bulgaria, so we got the best attention. Music requests (when understood) were happily taken and the waiters scrambled to get us on their best tables when we arrived. The first thing they put on the table was a "Pliska" and a Chopska salad. The Pliska was 2/3 of a tumbler of local brandy with water to top it up, the Chopska was just big cubes of cucumber and goats cheese. The food and wine were excellent after a hard day at the palace. Some evenings we were invited to the embassy evenings - 2 nights stood out for me - the Pizza night at the American embassy was terrific, and a darts night at the British Embassy. As everyone had so many Levs they couldn't spend, the Brits had a charity fund-raiser, so you could pay Leves to enter and offload them that way. It was the only darts game I've seen where the finalists were trying to lose! You couldn't take Levs out of the country and didn't want a suitcase full of them at the end of the tour. The hotel food in the evenings was generally awful - lots of cold cabbage done in various ways - until a tour bus of American Widows arrived, nicknamed as "The Matrons", who kicked up a huge fuss about the food, and browbeat the manager into providing hot breakfasts and edible dinners with drinkable wines and cocktails sadly they only stayed 2 nights but wow - they knew how to party and we certainly missed them!

Praise where it's Due

I had nothing but admiration for the Can-Do spirit of the ICL staff in the region - everything was 10-times more difficult behind the Iron Curtain. For example, when I needed some allan keys for the printer, they had all "disappeared" (as many of our highly prized everyday tools did) so one of the team did a quick cross-border trip to get more. They were not just engineers but project managers, linguists, tour-guides, security advisors and diplomats too. What a great team of guys!

Steve Harbour

PLAYING THE RACE CARD

Fifty years ago, I was resident engineer on a 1500 at Barclay Unicorn. One Friday I was asked to stand by on the Saturday for an interesting event. BBC Grandstand wanted to broadcast a computerised

Grand National, probably as ITV had pinched the show.

Normally, I'd have the machine room to myself for daily maintenance till 9am but on this Saturday, I'd hardly started cleaning tape heads and the place was filling up with BBC engineers trying, like me to get things working and curious Unicorn senior staff getting in the way. The usually scruffy operators had put suits on hoping to be on TV and were setting up the console to run #RACE, the programme that simulated the event. A field of famous winners and riders of the past represented the field, with variable conditions for the "going" and a random number generated to make it unpredictable and create different results.

Conversation dropped when Peter O'Sullivan arrived. He was quite pleasant and didn't act the "star" but asked pertinent questions about the programme and the machine. He did a run-through following the race in real time on the printout of the Anelex printer and seemed satisfied. I was asked if I could get both 4-deck clusters of tapes running. I pointed out they wouldn't be needed, but they wanted them running for effect. I ran a tape test programme which was fine until the BBC lighting guy switched on blinding Klieg-type lights which reflected off the shiny tapes and gave a false "End of tape signal" causing all 8 decks to rewind, so we scrubbed the close-up of the "calculating brain" represented by the chattering tapes.

A path was cleared for a camera operator with a hand-held camera sitting on a card trolley to be wheeled up and down the computer room shooting bits of action of the console lights flashing, busy tape decks and only the hands of the immaculate suited operator loading cards and printer paper. Around race time everything had been tested. Even so I was relieved when the director and commentator asked if I could run one of the already printed test runs through the printer and they'd film it as if it was printing, in case my computer played up. I acted indignant, but it was live, and I didn't want to be filmed trying to fix the machine under more than the usual pressure!

Peter O'Sullivan cleared his throat, gripped his mike, sat on a stool at the printer and on cue the operator pushed "go" I started a paper feeding routine and they were off! The commentator did a really professional job, describing who was on which famous National winner as they approached the first fence. He paced his delivery with the chuntering sprocket fed paper and as the race progressed, his voice rose, and I was genuinely carried along with the drama. By the time they reached the post I really believed he didn't know the result, he was so impressive.

We moved next door to the pub to celebrate and I don't think I ever saw the broadcast as it was before VCR, but I'd had a buffet lunch, mixed with interesting technical people, had a couple of free drinks and a day's overtime pay at week-end rate!

Dennis Goodwin

All that handy stuff I should have thrown away

Now I am long retired I do have the occasional spare moment between collecting/returning grandchildren and doing jobs that I am told need doing. In one of those moments the other day I had a rummage. Amongst a couple of majority club ties I

came across a few of those car rear window stickers that ICL used to produce. Shame to see them unused. I pondered sticking them on our car to get people talking about me. Like 'has he lost it' etc.

Do these rings a bell?

**"2900 YOUR FUTURE SYSTEM"
and "FUJITSU ICL" and**

"Simpli ci y! ICL that's IT"

And

"ICL System Service. Service with Pride"

I never was sure about the third one as an advert. That's exactly as it's written.

Those of a curious mind who read carefully are probably wondering why I still have two majority club ties. I think one was left over from giving them out. However, the Double majority tie is a really awful. red and grey thing and I am unlikely to ever wear it so am wondering if wearing the two 21yr ties counts as a 42-year club tie.

Another item that's come in handy 40 years later is the half box of 80 column cards. Such good shopping lists. I did put them on eBay for 50p but no takers. Pity, as 500 cards at 50p each could have bought me another SSD superfast disk drive of capacity equal to 17,000 of those EDS30 disk drives!! Further about disk drives below.

Do you remember the dumps that VME spat out when it didn't like having to run 4x32 VME for well over 12hours without a crash? Once much sought after by SSC people like Martin Burger, Andy Stone and many others, it has steadily shrunk from a standard 15" pile of paper down to about 6" over the years. Indeed, the VME dump is one of the first things my grandchildren ask for when they come to visit. They are all young crackers but not yet dump crackers. However, they do seem to need large amounts of paper to draw on. I do take care they don't waste it just because there is a big pile of paper. Good training. Also, I have preserved the error log section which was the only few pages I regularly looked at in my hardware days before I got a slot of system time to run the LEV3A test program. (It was a 'program' then but it may be called an 'app' now.)

Yet another thing that has come in so useful over the years are the bright orange plastic cups that protected the spindle on each of the 108 CDC EDS 30MB disk drives that arrived at RAF Hendon in 1971. Great for cleaning small paint brushes. The plastic cups that STE04 machines spat out in the 1990's with free coffee or cocoa, both tasting the same, were absolute rubbish for brush cleaning. They either cracked in first use or, as I soon discovered the hard way, the brush cleaner melted them which really made a mess. Not fit for use. The ten orange cups I took home from RAF Hendon are built to last, quarter inch thick, and look great 47 years later.

Vince Celano

Royal Air Force to Fujitsu

Having spent some 14 years in the Royal Air Force – I joined as an apprentice armament fitter at The Number One School of Technical Training RAF Halton in May 1957 - I then joined ICL in early 1971 – during the selection process in Upper Richmond Road I was told my electronics was rubbish but my logic was amazing (one of the terrible twins). First

slot was then ICL Letchworth as a 1900 engineer – Dick Cromwell, Graham Barwick and Peter Arnold are names that just sprang into my calcified brain. After a short period getting to know that the large spaces filled with blue boxes were computer rooms and the boxes were the said computer all at British Rail Peterborough I then went for a 6 month jaunt to the training school in Letchworth. On the first day I discovered that the class I had joined were mainly from the RAF - Air Radar and electronics and radio seemed to be the main trades they had been culled from so they were somewhat surprised when I was asked what I had been doing responded - Armourer! Basic trade skills were related to metal bashing. I think they thought the selectors must have had an off day. We were to be taught using the latest technology – a cardboard cut-out of a 1904 E – backed u by a real 1904 A Wow!. So when emerging from the training school one of the most memorable items I learned was that Salad cream and chips makes a wonderful combination!

So I had heard all about the 1904 E, Type 5 (I think) tape decks, an Elliot paper tape reader and punch and a card reader 1915(?) the one that looked like a piece of agricultural engineering with the cards sedately being carried diagonally across the front from the bottom to the top – can't remember why. And delight of delight the 2001 card reader which allegedly had been designed by a blind man who had never been told how to make a machine read cards and his design had essentially one moving part – an actuator card picker – and it could read 2000 cards a minute – wow now this was what I called engineering. Huge vacuum pump and London bus headlights and that was that. Just before wrapping up, Graham Barwick came and saw me and asked if I would join the shift the next week on call out as part of a team of three with Maurice Raymond, the supervisor who went to Aus. shortly after I joined – so ever the adventurous one, I said yes.

02.30 the phone rang CESO computer room at Stevenage was on the line and desperately needed their “1920 card punch fixed as it was busily punching all the holes on an 80 column card and the payroll couldn't be completed”.

Now most of that sentence made no sense but being new I thought best go and have a look – after all I had been being trained for 6 months something must have stuck. On arrival I asked if they could point out the offending machine in what seemed a vast hall of boxes. So there I was in front of a 1920 card Punch and all the cards in the output hopper were punched like a good colander. Next problem how on earth do I get in the box to see what is going on. Off I trot to see the operator to see if he has any ideas – long story short, I lifted the cover he said and like a pack of cards all the covers fell off in one fell swoop! Call to supervisor – “Scroll roll has broken it's dogs” he said. Ah ha says I, more new terminology, learning all the time. The night wore on and the books came out but the day shift arrived before I had located the scroll roll or even its dogs and within 20 minutes Jim Preston and others had the engineers pay roll chugging out on the printer.

Many more roles came along and none of them was ever boring, met a huge bunch of good guys even one named Mike Guy who went to Canada.

Problem management, Spares supply and LSO Reading and outsourcing the companies printing, Product supply (interesting times with MLNF and his team) Networking and the telephone directory, converted from being a DICK when it became a pejorative term to Richard, Travelled through Africa during my “Spares” days – Finland when I was accosted by PLB who said “what are you doing here?” – “learning from Nokia data” I said smart as a whip because his edict was that we ICL-ers were not to infect this wizard company who seemed to do everything with the minimum of staff. Working with the Japanese in Tokyo was also a joy and I made a lifelong friend and we still keep in touch. But then came a move which just wasn't right so in 1996 I decided pastures new were calling and joined Nortel thanks to Bob Swindle.

So Cogent, a part of Nortel, (what ever happened to STC?) in Harlow became my next billet. There I spent 2 years ensuring that the RAF had wide area networking (LDCN has just come to mind) on every site around the world – apparently to host some South African logistics system that could tell controllers how many eggs pilots had for breakfast and other interesting facts, needless to say the system which apparently worked well in South Africa, didn't quite meet the needs of the MOD, so IBM were “developing” it. Our task was to get accelerated deployment of the hardware and the security, rolled out to all RAF bases, just in case IBM ever got the system working. Interesting times. At the same time the MOD was going through a rationalisation and cost reduction exercise, so as soon as we had completed a site, the MOD shortly thereafter closed it, or so it appeared. Then Nortel was beginning to have problems, the role I had taken had almost ended to I became redundant which was lovely. Seriously – honestly best thing that happened.

So here we are 1998 – 57 years old and I tell my wife I am taking my pensions and finding something else to do – yes she said “You are!”

Financial services beckoned. Met a guy at The University Arms in Cambridge and he said there was a role they were trying to fill, for an Executive Interviewer. After cutting though all the new language it was a market research interviewer they wanted, who would talk to financial, fund, pension and investment managers about the products and service they used from their banks. A Company, Greenwich Associates, in upstate New York were in the business of selling reports to banks about their client's use of the banks products. So I started a new adventure interviewing Financial executives from then until 2011 all over East Anglia and in the City Of London. Executive interviewers in those days, would all meet up every couple of years in the USA and I was actually in NY during June 2001 but didn't go up the Twin Towers or The Empire State building because the weather was so terrible. A fascinating experience with a whole new language to absorb and now forgotten and again a bunch of very interesting people – when saying how interesting I had found a

particular interview the interviewee said he had never been called interesting before – he was an accountant at heart!

Having settled at last in the West Cambridgeshire area since 1992 we joined a local Church at which was someone who seemed familiar. During an earlier life when I had been in and around STE 04 a good deal, a short energetic character crossed my path Norman Chappell – I think he was a 2904(?) engineer. He had moved on in the late 1970's to a computer company in the Rickmansworth area which seemed at the time to be poaching a number of engineers from ICL. It turned out Norman was an active member of St Mary's Eaton Socon and has been for a number of years but sadly died on 22nd June and his funeral was on 18th July at Bedford Crematorium at 11.30. As you mentioned elsewhere we do not get to know all the detailed history of our friends and acquaintances until too late.

I started out to ensure Norman's passing was recorded but ended up sorting out my CV for my funeral – hope you found it moderately interesting and please edit and use as you will.

Keep up the good work – it's great to see the continuity in what is now a fragile and fractured environment with little if any feeling that posterity will be well served but perhaps the new use of technology will serve us better than this social media luddite can conceive?

Richard (Nee Dick) de Fraine

Steve Jobs' last words

He died a billionaire at 56yrs of Pancreatic Cancer and here are his last words on the sick bed:

"I reached the pinnacle of success in the business world. In others' eyes my life is an epitome of success.

However, aside from work, I have little joy. In the end, wealth is only a fact of life that I am accustomed to.

At this moment, lying on the sick bed and recalling my whole life, I realize that all the recognition and wealth that I took so much pride in, have paled and become meaningless in the face of impending death.

You can employ someone to drive the car for you, make money for you but you cannot have someone to bear the sickness for you.

Material things lost can be found. But there is one thing that can never be found when it is lost – "Life".

When a person goes into the operating room, he will realize that there is one book that he has yet to finish reading – "Book of Healthy Life".

Whichever stage in life we are at right now, with time, we will face the day when the curtain comes down.

Treasure Love for your family, love for your spouse, love for your friends...

Treat yourself well. Cherish others.

As we grow older, and hence wiser, we slowly realize that wearing a \$300 or \$30 watch - they both tell the same time...

Whether we carry a \$300 or \$30 wallet/handbag - the amount of money inside is the same;

Whether we drive a \$150,000 car or a \$30,000 car, the road and distance is the same, and we get to the same destination.

Whether we drink a bottle of \$300 or \$10 wine - the hangover is the same;

Whether the house we live in is 300 or 3000 sq ft - loneliness is the same.

You will realize, your true inner happiness does not come from the material things of this world.

Whether you fly first or economy class, if the plane goes down - you go down with it...

Therefore.. I hope you realize, when you have mates, buddies and old friends, brothers and sisters, who you chat with, laugh with, talk with, have sing songs with, talk about north-south-east-west or heaven and earth, ... That is true happiness!!

Five Undeniable Facts of Life

1. Don't educate your children to be rich. Educate them to be Happy. So when they grow up they will know the value of things, not the price.

2. Best awarded words in London ... "Eat your food as your medicines. Otherwise you have to eat medicines as your food."

3. The One who loves you will never leave you for another because even if there are 100 reasons to give up he or she will find one reason to hold on.

4. There is a big difference between a human being and being human. Only a few really understand it.

5. You are loved when you are born. You will be loved when you die. In between, You have to manage!

NOTE: If you just want to Walk Fast, Walk Alone! But if you want to Walk Far, Walk Together!

Reunions

Old timers Stevenage (New)

We always meet on the last Thursday of the month [Except no meeting in December] @ 12:00 in The Standing Order in Stevenage OLD town [JD Weatherspoons]

Dave Badminton email [davebad\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:davebad(at)gmail.com) or [davebad\(at\)blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:davebad(at)blueyonder.co.uk)

Phone 01245 259301

The West Midlands ICL Pensioners

Meet for lunch, beer and a chin wag, bi-monthly on First Tuesday of the month, usually at The Square Peg, Corporation Street, Birmingham, B4 6PH from 12 noon. (Attendees are usually former Customer Services MF Engineers, POS, Key Edit, etc., from BIR03, BIR04 and 'guest visits' from NOT02).

All welcome!

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 **17 October 2018** 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.

MOD MOB

Retired and active staff from the London and MOD UK unit has met up for a number of years now, so we have now established ourselves as a sociable group of individuals. The date of the next meeting will be posted on Rod Brown's B&B Repository website.

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\(at\)shedlandz.co.uk](mailto:modmob(at)shedlandz.co.uk) for enquiries.

Kidsgrove-Drawing-Office

The Annual reunion is held at the Bleeding Wolf, Scholar Green on the first Monday in December
[brian\(at\)morrismail.co.uk](mailto:brian(at)morrismail.co.uk)

Liverpool Engineers

We now meet about midday on the second Wednesday of every month at Weatherspoon's, Great Charlotte Street near Lime Street Station.
Bill Wood 0151 426 4025

East Midlands UB40s

Brian Skeldon 0115 9725119

LEO Computers Society

John Andrews
GlobalLeoSociety@gmail.com

Surrey Engineers

Trevor Harding 01483 565144
[trevor\(at\)harding14.plus.com](mailto:trevor(at)harding14.plus.com)

West Kent Reunion

Ron Harding 01732 761076
Rod?

ICL Old Buggas

Les Mowbray

ExICL Kidsgrove

Nick Edmonds 01270 585953
[nick.edmonds\(at\)yahoo.co.uk](mailto:nick.edmonds(at)yahoo.co.uk)

OBITUARIES

When you are gone

Recent deaths have highlighted a problem for people who want to write an obituary for an ex-colleague.

We have worked alongside somebody for many years but when the question is asked "where they were born, educated, joined the company?" we suddenly discover that we hardly knew anything about them

and their family background. This is especially true for those who never married and have no close relatives. Can I suggest that we should each write a potted CV giving these basic details so that when we die the eulogy given in the church or crematorium and published on the Bits & Bytes website is factual.

You should also produce a list of friends and ex colleagues with their phone numbers and/or email addresses so that they can be informed of your death.

Editor

Funeral Details

The Bits & Bytes website now publishes funeral arrangements and are published quickly to enable friends and colleagues to attend. Longer obituaries can be sent to the webmaster and will be published separately.

Yet Another ICL Anthology

Just before Hamish Carmichael died, he asked me if I would finish the 3rd anthology ("yet another ICL anthology") in conjunction with his widow Kathy. He had amassed a sizable collection of stories but there was still some way to go. So, I am writing to as many people as I can to see if they have any further amusing or preferably, wicked, anecdotes. Spread the word as far as you can and send contributions to dik@leatherdale.net. It is unlikely that it will ever appear as a "proper" book, but it will end up on the Bits & Bytes website, next to its two predecessors
Dik Leatherdale

Fujitsu Pensions Website

<https://fujitsu.pensiondetails.co.uk>

To access Bits & Bytes click on the link given on the very bottom of the home page.

**Direct telephone line to Pensions Department:
020 394 93492**

ICL Fund Pensioners

Membership at 31 March 2018

Pensioners 7,898

Deferred pensioners 8,394

Dependant pensioners 1,128

Total 17,420

Bits & Bytes Archive

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 the website on a regular basis.

**www.bitsandbytes.shedlandz.co.uk or
www.bitsandbytes.org.uk**

Facebook

I know that many people think that Facebook is only for the young, but it is a good medium for posting pictures of old computers and old people! Search for **Facebook ICL Pensioners** and post pictures that you have of the past.

NEXT ISSUE

Copy for the Spring 2019 issue must be submitted by 1 February 2019 but would be appreciated earlier.

