

# Bits & Bytes

No 28

## Editorial

I suppose that in an ever changing world we are going to lose links with our past, but I was very sad to see that the Babbage Suite at STE04 is now Room 214. The Hollerith Suite is now Room 213. History doesn't seem to have any place in the present computer industry. The renaming doesn't conjure up any picture at all, other than Room 101 where Paul Merton consigns things to a bin!

I have just returned from a holiday in Florida when I was able, thanks to the internet, to have a reunion with one of the RCA engineers who I last saw 43 years ago! Luckily Bruce Smith remained in Palm Beach Gardens after the demise of RCA in about 1970, so I was able to locate him. I have moved to two new addresses in the UK in that time and I think that it would be impossible for somebody to find me who only knew my address in Hitchin. Bruce was a very impressive engineer who was the only man I met in RCA who could admit that he didn't know the answer to my question, write it down, and came back to me with trustworthy information. He now continues to be very busy working as a volunteer with the American Red Cross. I really enjoyed meeting him and seeing the RCA building that I visited in 1964 and 1965.

I was lucky enough to go to Cape Canaveral in 1965, before man landed on the moon, and before Disney started the Orlando Tourist rush. It has changed in 43 years and I'm glad I live in England!

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## Fujitsu Services News

### Fujitsu recognised with top Oracle User Group awards

Fujitsu Services was a winner at the recent Oracle User Group Partner of the Year Awards. Fujitsu, who has been an Oracle implementation partner for 15 years and has over 2,000 global Oracle professionals, picked up the award for the UK Oracle User Group (UKOUG) Public Sector Partner of the Year and was runner up in the UKOUG Shared Services Partner of the Year and the UKOUG Middleware Partner of the Year categories.

The award winners were voted for by the Oracle community and recognise Partners that the communities believe has best supported Oracle users throughout the past 12 months. These inaugural

awards recognise and reward the value that Partners bring to Oracle users.

Ronan Miles, chairman of the UKOUG comments, "Formally recognising the value that Oracle Partners bring to the Oracle eco-system throughout the UK and Ireland has been an objective of mine for some time now. With over 1,000 customer votes cast, the winners of the first ever Partner of the Year Awards should feel very proud that their customers have chosen to publicly recognise the value they deliver."

Petri Imberg, director, application services, Fujitsu Services: "Fujitsu values its partnership with Oracle very highly. We are seeing extremely successful results with clients where we have implemented Oracle solutions and Oracle is a healthy component of our application services offering."

At Reading Borough Council who has invested in Oracle's Hyperion Planning Plus to meet local government requirements for devolved budgeting and central planning, Fujitsu Services implemented the software as part of a managed service. Julie Cave, finance systems manager at Reading Borough Council was with Fujitsu at the awards ceremony: "Oracle Hyperion Planning Plus generates substantial time savings at every stage of the budgeting process and enables us to deliver timely, accurate medium and long-term budget forecasts without the need for additional resources and without changing our existing processes or organisational structure."

Andy Seferta, head of European Oracle practice, Fujitsu Services: "We pride ourselves in working with our customers through long-term relationships and are thrilled that these awards provide recognition of our customer successes as we continue to grow our Oracle business in Fujitsu."

### ATOC awards Fujitsu £13m contract

Fujitsu Services has secured a contract renewal with ATOC, the Association of Train Operating Companies, to continue running and maintaining RJIS – the Rail Journey Information Service. RJIS is a critical IT system which is essential to all 22 ATOC members, the National Rail Enquiry Service, two on-line retailers and nearly 500 other retailers of rail tickets. It provides the timetables, fares, route planning, ticketing and transaction services needed to buy rail tickets and complete travel enquiry requests; without it no one would be able to buy a train ticket.

This five year, £13 million deal, will see Fujitsu refresh and update the hardware and applications technology used by RJIS. Fujitsu was responsible for the initial development of RJIS in the 1990s when it

implemented a complete applications business solution which brought a series of ATOC's legacy systems onto one single integrated platform.

On average, Fujitsu helps RJIS plan 80,000 rail journeys and respond to 820,000 enquiry requests each day. It stores many millions of fares and processes 1 million transactions daily. It also manages over 300 million possible fare combinations, and supports around 1,600 ticket vending machines at stations across the UK.

As a result of massive growth in on-line purchases (25% year-on-year) there is a much greater demand for vending-style machines used for ticket collection following on-line purchases. In response to this, Fujitsu will be managing the RJIS database to ensure there is capacity to meet the growing demand for ticket vending machine services. By improving the database for these machines Fujitsu expects a greater uptake among RJIS users. This shift will also make Ticket-on-Departure machines more cost-effective for smaller stations to operate, which will be beneficial to both the train operating companies, and most importantly the customer.

## Life before BTM

### RAF 617 Squadron

The Tirpitz was the largest battleship of any nation in World War Two. At displacement of 42900 tons and 824 feet in length, it was the pride of the German Navy and was said to be unsinkable because of it having two armour plated hulls. It was launched in November 1940 and in the four years it was at sea most of the larger ships in the British Royal Navy were occupied shadowing her around the North Sea. Eight unsuccessful attempts were made to sink her by torpedo boats, Fleet Air Arm and Midget Submarines with severe loss of personnel.

One submarine attack cost 118 lives.

In September 1944, the Tirpitz was anchored in Alten fiord on the northern tip of Norway and out of range of aircraft from Britain. Thirty six aircraft from 617 & 9 Squadrons flew to Archangel, Russia, where the aerodrome was very hard to locate and owing to planes running low on fuel, nine aircraft landed on boggy ground and did not take part in the operation to Alten and back to Archangel. Because of 8/10 cloud bombing runs were nearly impossible and the smoke screen prevented any hits from being recorded.

After the war it was learnt that one hit was made on the ship's bow and this necessitated the Tirpitz to return to Germany for repairs. The Tirpitz was shifted 200 miles south to Tromso Fiord and was now in range from Scotland.

On the 29th October air craft from 617 & 9 Squadrons attacked but again 9/10 cloud obscured the ship and no damage was recorded.

Each aircraft carried one Armour-piercing bomb the Tallboy, 20feet 10 inches long and 3 feet 6 inches in diameter. These bombs designed by Dr. Barnes Wallace, had in a previous raid, pierced 24 feet of reinforced concrete to burst inside the U boat pens at Brest.

The aircraft were Lancasters, fitted with special Merlin 24 engines with paddle bladed propellers and the planes carried a crew of six.

To save weight, both front and mid-upper turrets were taken out, and the armour plate behind the pilot

was also removed. To increase the range, an extra fuel tank from a Wellington Bomber was fitted into the fuselage, providing some 200 gallons.

Now for my own recollections of the operation on Sunday 12th November, 1944.

We briefed at Woodhall Spa, for 3 hours on the Wednesday afternoon and again on the Friday and were given the unwelcome news - the Germans had moved two squadrons of fighters to the Tromso area stationed at Bardafoss.

On Saturday we flew to our forward base in Scotland. The flying time was 2 hours.

Saturday night we were briefed for 2 hours, travelled by road to Milltown, our take-off air strip which headed straight out to sea terminating at the cliff edge.

It was a freezing cold night and the aircraft wings had to be defrosted before they could take off, which was at 0300 hrs Sunday.

The Lancaster was now 10,000lb over weight and as we hurtled off the end of the runway our Pilot F/O Arthur Joplin held the aircraft steady very low over the sea. After turning out over the Moray Firth we set course north east for the Norwegian sea flying at 1000 feet keeping below the German Radar. We saw the Shetland Islands pass by on our left.

Our radar navigating system 'G' box did not extend beyond the Shetlands so from then on our navigator Basil Fish used Dead Reckoning taking astro-shots and obtaining wind direction by the rear gunner sighting his turret on flame floats dropped by myself.

When we reached 64 degrees north we turned eastwards towards the Norwegian Coast at low level. We crossed the coast climbing rapidly to clear the mountains and flew over the Swedish border, we then turned north and keeping on the Swedish side of the border proceeded to our assembly point, a narrow lake about 100 miles SE of Tromso.

All 18 aircraft of 617 sqn. were now circling and at the firing of the very cartridges from Wing Commander Willie Tait's aircraft, set off for the attack.

617 aircraft were equipped with the S.A.B.S. (stabilised automatic bomb sight) which while very accurate required the aircraft to fly straight and level for several minutes for the sight to calculate the various factors after which the bomb was automatically released.

As we approached Tromso we came over the mountains at our bombing height of 15200 feet. The view was fantastic; it was a perfect sunny morning in a clear blue sky.

We could see the Tirpitz 30 miles ahead and started our bombing run.

The trio of Pilot, Bomb Aimer and Flight Engineer now work as a team keeping the speed 180 knots, direction and height constant.

We saw no sign of any fighters but received a very warm welcome as the anti aircraft guns from the Tirpitz and support ships opened up and very quickly were putting up a curtain of Flak. The AA shell bursts were just ahead of us and gradually getting closer. After some seven minutes our bomb released and I watched as the tallboy headed for the ship. There appeared to be several hits and near misses on the Tirpitz.

After taking the aiming point photographs I closed the bomb doors and we dived away to 1000 feet to commence the return journey.

At 1000 feet I reset the engines to cruising revs & boost. The port outer engine was not responding to the throttle and remained at Plus 7 boost. I calculated we should feather the port inner and use the port outer at plus 7 to trim the aircraft as close as possible to normal.

After 6 hours I did not think we had enough fuel to reach the mainland and our pilot agreed to land at the Shetlands where there was a small landing strip at the Coastal Command base.

Receiving permission to land, we restarted the port inner and feathered the delinquent port outer. Joppy made a perfect landing on three engines after an initial attempt when we overshot.

While the aircraft was taking on fuel I borrowed a ladder, removed the engine cowling of the Port Outer and made a temporary repair to the throttle linkage of the engine.

After some very welcome coffee and sandwiches, the personnel at the base told us that the Tirpitz was reported as capsized.

We then took off and headed directly to our home airfield at Woodhall Spa.

The Minister Sir Archibald Sinclair came to congratulate us and we were given 36hrs leave.

#### **Footnote**

617 Squadron only accepted veteran crews who had already completed operations with other squadrons.

However in 1944 two crews were accepted straight out of training, one of which was ours and it was a great honour to serve with the famous Dam Busters.

Our career ended with our ninth operation when we crashed in thick fog returning damaged from a raid on Politz near Stettin.

**Frank Tilley**

## **Figures at Work**

Recently, delving through loads of accumulated junk, I came upon an Alleyne's Grammar School Stevenage magazine dated Summer 1955, within which was an account of the activities of its Scientific Society written by the secretary A G Self.

"On 28<sup>th</sup> February 1955 Mr Carden, from the British Tabulating Machine Company came to address the society. During the afternoon, a film entitled "Figures at Work" was shown to the whole school. This described the punch card-card system of mechanical accounting. Leaflets containing a sample card and an explanation of its use were distributed.

At the Society's meeting afterwards Mr Carden gave us a fascinating account of the construction and operation of electronic computers.(sic) These, as distinct from calculators, can be made to perform different operations depending on the results of an initial calculation. Especially interesting were the use of valves to count on the binary notation, and the storage of impulses on a magnetic drum. Among the uses of computers are working out enormous wage bills, cracking secret codes, and calculating the perfect bid at bridge. At the close a hearty vote of thanks was proposed to the speaker for his absorbing and expert treatment of a little understood subject."

Does anyone remember this Mr. Carden of BTM I wonder? I had not long been at the school at the time, and must have missed the film as I have no recollection of ever seeing it, let alone receiving the leaflet and card. I did eventually go on a school visit to

local ICT premises, but that would have been around 1960. I eventually joined ICL in 1965.

**Roy Candler ex Field Engineer (retired 2008)**

## **Life in ICL & before**

### **ICL Rhodesia**

The recent death of a dear ICL friend – Bill Woodstock – coupled with the Editor's request for material for future issues has prompted me to mention what at the time was the 'unmentionable'.

This was the activity of ICL in Rhodesia during the time of international sanctions and immediately before the change of government to that which now exists.

I joined ICL as a lecturer at Bradenham Manor, near High Wycombe. After some overseas service in Pakistan back in 1965, I felt my feet itching. I contacted dear Bill W who had left ICL and had a pub in Marrandellas, Rhodesia, to seek his advice on an overseas location to live and work. He readily responded and approached the MD of ICL in Salisbury, Rhodesia. The result was a rather clandestine meeting in Paris with John and the offer of a trip to Salisbury to see what Rhodesia was like and if I would be suitable for the post of Business Marketing man. A job offer ensued and in mid-1975 I found myself, with my wife and young daughter, on a South Africa Airways 747 en route for Johannesburg then an Air Rhodesia flight to Salisbury.

I fell in love with the country from the time I arrived. My sincere regard lasted to the day I left some five years later. ICL (Central Africa Proprietary) Ltd., at that time was a thriving organisation staffed by happy and contented people of all nationalities and colours. Besides selling and installing hardware and software of all types (where did it come from? Don't ask) it had a bureau operation using coupled 1900 Series mainframes which ran practically twenty four hours a day very profitably serving the needs of the many commercial and governmental organisations in Rhodesia. The Operations manager of the bureau was Paul d'Olivier, the Bureau Manager was Tony Schibler, Engineering & Installation was under the skilful management of Al Heffer, Sales & Marketing was organised by John Tulley with Tony Eldridge the main salesman. John Jeffreys as MD very ably managed the overall company. The other board members were local businessmen of some repute. A total staff of about two hundred souls. I like to feel that I fitted in well and enjoyed my work. Tony Schibler relinquished his job after a time and I took it on. As time went by, I took over Sales and Marketing from John Tulley and finished up as General Manager on a promise from John J of his job when he took a then planned early retirement.

Times were good. The country that "wouldn't last a week under sanctions" had survived for a great number of years with each year being more successful than each of all previous years. The population consisted of indigenous Africans and white immigrants that had either come to the country during WW2 and returned after the end of hostilities, had come before or during the period of sanctions, or had been resident for several generations. Within ICL, we had our fair share of ex-RAF personnel who had trained in Rhodesia as navigators and pilots and

our special pride was Tony Eldridge (DSC) who was a Royal Navy hero in the field of pocket submarines. All worked harmoniously and Rhodesia was known as 'the breadbasket of Central Africa' for supplying food to its own population and surrounding states. Links with South Africa were very strong and the support from that country and others – at every level – was sufficient to make sure that Rhodesians wanted for nothing. The lifestyle was superb, the pay was generous, supplements to which were a Family Trip to UK each year, a Holiday Bonus of one month's pay, good company cars, very generous expense accounts, Housing Supplements, etc., etc. I often used to say that when sitting on the edge of the pool at my house in Mount Pleasant (a district of Salisbury), sipping my Sunday morning drink, reading last week's Sunday Telegraph which arrived regularly, catching the delightful smell of roast beef and Yorkshire pudding – the speciality of Elias, the cook - basking in the sunshine, I would say "I can't stand much more of this.....Elias, another G&T please, my friend!" In Salisbury there were excellent hotels, restaurants, theatres (with stars such as Norman Wisdom, Jimmy Edwards, Eric Sykes and Charlie Williams regularly heading the bill), night-clubs, large stores and shops of every description set amidst large parks – it was known as The Garden City. . Outside were the bush, game parks (Wankie in particular – near Bulawayo), beautiful plains and mountains and, of course, the world famous Victoria Falls. Most people had a boat or access to one on Lake McElwain a few miles away.

However, the terrorist situation was worsening and the young men, black and white, were becoming somewhat disenchanted with the hazards which seemed to get more frequent as the need for call-up took its toll - sometimes a continuously repeated cycle of two weeks in the bush and two weeks back at work. Politically, there was a great deal of work being done to accommodate the needs of everyone both in and out of the country but the efforts of experienced and very skilful black and white leaders working with Ian Smith amounted to something that the extremists were determined to avoid. This was a peaceful solution to any problems and the continuation of the country's perfect lifestyle that many people of all backgrounds had worked so hard to attain. When my term of exemption from military commitment expired and it was obvious that the end of the country as we knew it was fast approaching I and my family left our dear Rhodesia with memories that will never fade. ICL in UK were kind enough to offer me the country managership of Iraq.

When so-called 'independence' came many of the ICL personnel chose South Africa where all did well. A few came back to UK. But to have known Rhodesia was something that, wherever we went, has stayed with us and been remembered with pride as one of the most enjoyable times of our lives.

**Fred Peach**

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## Letters & e-mails

### First Names- Please

*My question about the use of first names has produced a number of replies. Editor*

"The editorial in B&BNo27 has prompted me to pound my Fujitsu keyboard!"

Although on paper I'm in the retired age group, I have to admit that there's not too much wrong with my long term memory and I believe that it was Geoffrey Cross who introduced the use of first names across the company.

As a conference organiser I had the privilege of working with Geoff Cross on many occasions. He said "call me Geoff" but I couldn't. I had never addressed anyone senior to myself within my place of work by his or her first name. So, quite simply I didn't call him anything – and I got away with it! The trick was to smile and let him speak first, and also have some 'dice' readily available when he arrived at a conference venue. Telephoning was easy because I always spoke to his secretary.

The first director I ever addressed by his first name was Ed Mack. He was eating some nasturtium flowers picked straight from a flower bed at Hedsor Park. How can anybody eating such a delicacy straight from the plant possibly be called Mr Mack?

The arrival of Rob Wilmot and Peter Bonfield made the change to the use of first names much easier for common mortals- everybody did it and they were comfortably addressed as Rob and Peter.

Incidentally, in 2008, I don't think that professional footballers earning millions of pounds yet call their bosses by their first names.

A memory test for you. Does anyone remember the "Three Day Week?" Directors locked their Jaguars away and drove Minis, and when it was all over Geoff Cross gave everybody a bottle of Queen Anne whisky – I've still got my bottle – unopened!

Does anyone remember me? I can be contacted at holmdale@talktalk.net

**Nora Hall**

"Your question about first names being used in the work place reminded me of my days at Ferguson-Pailin Ltd, part of Associated Electrical Industries. On my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday in 1960 the Design Office Manager ceased to address me as "Brierley" and I became "Mr Brierley". Because he recognised me as a bit of a rebel, I can still remember him almost chocking on the word "Mr".

From there I moved to a small, old fashioned, engineering company where the owner's son had to be addressed as "Mr John". I could never understand a word he said because of the plum in his mouth. I didn't last long.

How refreshing it was to move to Ferranti West Gorton, the young vibrant computer industry, where everybody was on first name terms.

**David Brierley.**

**Tim Goldingham** says that in the BTM Bristol office in the 50s the manager Joe Kendrick was always known as "Master"!

Regarding first names, perhaps it depends where you were within ICL. I joined in April 1977 reporting to Brian O'Heron and Ed Mack at Bracknell and as far as I am concerned it was always quite normal then and ever since to address the boss by his first name. Maybe that dates from the Geoff Cross era.

However, we did have a network of secretaries in those days and it was quite usual to receive a call on behalf of a senior manager in a remote location. Shortly after Rob joined, very early one morning, I answered an unattended phone somewhere in our

open plan office and was greeted with "Hello, this is Rob Wilmot, who is that?" followed by a direct order to do some small task or other. That certainly cut through some established formalities.

**Bob Pennell**

## Meal allowances

Having just got home after an enjoyable lunch, instead of sleeping as I normally would, I have enough Dutch courage to write to you. What spurred me into action was that you stated that you got seven and sixpence meal allowance. Meal allowances in my time went from two shillings to two shillings and sixpence for every two hours or part of.

At the end of the Second World War the government informed the company it was to stop leasing IBM equipment to save dollars (or so I believe), therefore the company would have to make its own machines.

*Editors note. I think it was more to do with US anti-trust legislation.*

It was to inform staff on this that Cecil Mead travelled the country, and I attended his meeting at Wolverhampton. He also stated that the Provident Fund would be replaced by a Pension Scheme. During this meeting I was asked by my friend George Latham to play my Farting Instrument (metal washer, two elastic bands and a bent wire) which I duly did and Cecil Mead thanked me for the "Fitting reply to all he had said".

During "Any Questions?" he was told of our lowly meal allowance, and he replied "I will get it raised to 2 shillings and sixpence. This happened almost immediately. What management! No personnel or accounts people in MSD in those days.

The end of the meal allowances came when the Government, ever looking for more revenue, enquired "what sort of strange beast do you employ that needs feeding to the value of 2/6d every two hours between 6pm and 9am?"

During my many years which started with BTM when Charlie Luther took me on and Cyril Prescott was Head of Training, part of which would be repairs to Tickle Knight's motorbike, and the push starting of same so that he our Model 20 Punch Instructor could get home. I never thought that TIME SPENT WITHIN as work. Not to say that sometimes when alone in the early hours of the morning by a machine that I hadn't been able fix. I would not have "Sold my soul" ( I don't think I did, I know I didn't sign any paper). However at this low point, usually/hopefully an inspiration would come to my rescue and low and behold I had the machine working correctly again so. Like the good shepherd I could leave that place rejoicing.

If this sounds all religious there was nothing about drinking with great characters in this art, like Jim Irvine, Sid Miller, Jack Constable, Joe Kendrick (known in the Bristol Office as "The Master", John Owen of Derby, the ladies man of whom it was said had two of his lady friends pregnant at the same time!

I recall 10 or more engineers after a regional meeting in Birmingham and a visit to the pub, missing their transport home, (very few company cars then), sleeping on the lounge floor of Bob Flockhart's bungalow. Bob was a South African who went home soon after the war.

**Tommy Cox**

## No cocktails please - we're British

Adrian's reference to myself and Arthur Humphreys in the October 2008 edition reminded me of an incident during the introduction of the Univac 1004 into the ICT Product Range.

We were invited to send a working party to the Univac R&D centre in Whitpain Pennsylvania. This turned out to be myself, for all aspects of Sales Technical Support, Peter Porter similarly for Field Engineering and Derek Ellis- an all round nice guy -as leader and administrator.

On arrival in New York we were taken to the Westbury Hotel on Madison Avenue. The next morning after breakfast we were summoned to see Arthur Humphreys in his suite, for a briefing before setting off to Whitpain. At the end of the briefing he gave us this piece of advice. "You are bound to be wined and dined at some time, and you know what these Americans are like with their cocktails. Don't get involved with them - stick to beer. Keep a clear head at all times". So armed we set off.

We spent a couple of days with the technical people, 'played' with the machine and did some plugging and debugging etc. Then sure enough we were invited for a meal with several of them. They took us to a local hostelry or it may have been their Executive Dining room - I cannot now remember. We were shown into a private dining room with a long table and Pete, I and Derek sat next to each other. A waitress came in and asked if we wanted a pre-dinner drink and sure enough one by one the Univac guys ordered a variety of cocktails. Then she got to us and in turn we each ordered a beer. As the waitress turned away with the order Derek asked "have you any draught?" "Honey - she said - the only draught we gets in here is what comes through the windas".

Arthur would have been proud of us!

PS I do not appear on the Internet but I would be delighted to hear from anyone who knew me and would like a chat. I must say that as an ICL/Nortel pensioner finding out about Bits & Bytes has really lifted me and that my 38 years with Powers Samas, ICT, and ICL was not a dream!

**Dave Plummer Cornwall 01822 832180**

## David Caminer

I was sad to note in "Bits and Bytes" Obituaries that David Caminer died back in June 2008. He was the very first person I worked for on joining ICL in 1971 and I found him a very difficult man. It was a total culture shock for me after working for a charming and laid back group of Psychiatrists at St. George's Hospital, London, but the increase of £500 in my annual salary made the change a necessity after separating from my husband and with three young sons all still at school.

He came across as a brooding man with a habit of dictating memos into the open window with jets on their way to Heathrow screaming overhead and while jingling coins in his pocket. This made it hard for me to follow what he was saying, especially since everything seemed to include a large amount of letters and numerals, e.g. VME/B, UKAEA and addresses were LON11, LON13 etc. and we worked in S&TS and were writing to colleagues in GPCD, LCD etc. I got into the habit of doing everything in draft. David was Chairman of a monthly Divisional Directors Meeting and was responsible for preparation and distribution

of the minutes which had to be given top priority. While one meeting was taking place I returned from lunch to find on my desk a £10 note and message which read "Get over to the shop, buy a dozen tins of coke and bring them to the Boardroom real fast" signed by Brian O'Heron.

After three months I decided I'd had enough of this humourless man and transferred to International Division where I worked for Les Robinson who, like DTC, walked with a limp but there the similarity ended.

It was not until many years later, when I worked for Mike Forrest, that I came across DTC again because at that time he reported to Mike. He came into the office and appeared genuinely pleased to see me. He perched on a table and enquired what I had been doing since leaving him and on another occasion, discussed my hairdo which had been an experiment at a Putney hairdresser and was a complete mess.

The last time I saw him was at his house in Sheen where he and his wife gave a lunch party for the Department and which was most enjoyable. I came to the conclusion that he was, after all, a very charming man and maybe I hadn't handled him properly at the start, but I wasn't self assured enough at the beginning to have done things differently. He was not an easy introduction to ICL, that's for sure.

**Sheila Mulligan**

## **George Powell**

You mentioned George Powell in the B & B No.27 which prompted me into writing this E-mail.

George and I joined the British Tabulating Machine Co. in July 1958 as production engineers at the Stevenage No.5 Factory, then managed by Jack Savill. We had come from similar backgrounds, he from the Royal Signal Corps and I from the RAF and we were both trained to service radio and radar equipment. We had both just completed tours of duty in Germany so we had plenty in common to discuss and we formed a close friendship, both purchasing properties in Old Hale Way in Hitchin.

We began our careers on the shop floor testing 1200 Series Computers, but after a year we accepted positions as instructors in the Field Engineering Department, managed by Stan Glassborow and based in the same factory. Later, when the 1300 Series was introduced, we were transferred to the Engineering Training Centre at Letchworth.

George was a friendly, generous person always happy to help others solve their problems. He and his wife had three children and adopted another girl. He was a good organiser and was active on the social scene, often acting as an M.C

He was also a raconteur and I recall one story relating to his Army Service in Kenya at the time of the Mau Mau Uprising, around 1952, when some of the native tribesmen formed this secret society and launched a terrorist campaign to expel from Kenya, all Whites and the Kikuyu natives friendly to Europeans. Before the end of the hostilities in 1956 over 10,000 people had been killed and many of the native villages had been destroyed. The terrorists set up their camps in dense jungle areas and proved extremely difficult to locate and destroy. George, a Warrant Officer, was instrumental in achieving peace by a clever deception. He knew that the natives, including the terrorists were keen to own a transistor

radio, as a form of entertainment so he modified one so that it transmitted a signal whenever it was switched on and arranged with a friendly native to sell the radio to a known terrorist. Later an aircraft, fitted with direction finding equipment, was despatched to scan the jungle area for the signal and, having pinpointed its location, directed a bomb to the target. The operation was a great success and a key leader of the terrorist organisation was killed, together with many of his cohorts. This was a turning point in the campaign and for his efforts George was awarded an MBE.

George was keen to travel and with this in mind he transferred to the HQ Field Support Group in Letchworth and was active in the Eastern European scene. I later immigrated to Australia and we lost touch with one another, but I was told that he married again, this time to a Polish girl.

If you wish to include this account in the next newsletter please feel free to edit it as you see fit. I have no objection to you quoting my E-mail address. I noticed in B&B 2007 Obituary List for Stevenage, that a George J Powell had passed on aged 93, which I believe to be he.

**Jack Nicholson jackgnholson@optusnet.com.au**

## **KEEPING IT UP FOR NINETY MINUTES**

Recently, my daughter persuaded me to attend a performance by someone generally regarded as the most famous stand-up comedian of the variety stage. Fifteen years ago we'd seen him and then we were still aching with laughter at his act after midnight. I won't name him, as we all get old, but he's now in his eighties and he's losing it. His reputation had preceded him and the silver-haired audience were warm and affection flowed up onto the stage when he appeared. It all went downhill after that.

I'm sure he still holds an incredible store of jokes, but he struggled to recall them and frequently fluffed the punch line. He meandered and skilfully made light of his inability to keep the act flowing. In the past, he hit you with a new joke and his timing was so good, the follow up of a string of familiar old gags kept you laughing.

Now there were pauses whilst he got his breath and recalled the next gag in a routine he's used for sixty years. Notoriously, his act goes on for four or five hours. After an hour or so, he was blaming the audience for their slow response to his material and the professional warmth he enjoys was slipping. Fortunately, we had aisle seats and after ninety minutes we slipped out, quite depressed as to why he keeps performing. I'll be charitable and put it down to him having an off day or more likely my diminishing concentration.

I've noticed ninety minutes is about my limit. Any two-hour film is beyond me. I read voraciously, but never for more than an hour or so at a session. I sleep in shifts of around an hour and a half, interspersed with bathroom visits of fortunately, just a few minutes.

Each day I either bike or walk for pleasure and exercise. Again, ninety minutes is my limit!

Physically I may tire, but even after a rest and I settle down to my daily Sudoku and crossword, I find if they're tough, I need a break after about ninety minutes.

It isn't boredom, for on a journey I find the strain of

driving dictates a break after this familiar number of minutes.

Despite the scintillating conversations at our reunions, after an hour and a half I'm ready to tear myself away and head home, ignoring the pleas of my audience to stay!

I expect it's an age thing, for twenty-five years ago at ICL; I could go on working (and talking) all night. At the "pictures" the programmes would last well over two hours and dances three or four hours. No problem then! It isn't that I have more important things to do, the chores round the house get done (after a fashion) but I conveniently lose interest in them after the ninety minutes limit of my biological clock.

Does anybody else find this, or is it just me?

**Dennis Goodwin**

dennis@dennisgoodwin.wanadoo.co.uk

## Reunions

### ICL Central London

The next reunion will be on Wednesday 15 April 2009 at **The Flying Horse** at **52 Wilson Street**, from 12 noon. The pub is east of Finsbury Square.

**Bill Williams 020 7607 9408**

### Stevenage & Letchworth Old Boys (renamed Punch Card Reunion)

The annual reunion will take place on Tuesday 6 October 2009 at Stevenage Labs STE04 when the speaker will be George Rowley, who was a designer at LDC No3 Factory Letchworth. 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**

### Oxford Engineers

**Ken Jones 01865 340388**

kenwynjones@aol.com

### ICL Australia

ian.pearson5@bigpond.com

### Copthall House Newcastle Staffs

**Bob Green 01782 615290**

### East Grinstead 81 Club

**Gordon Franklin 01342 328479**

### East Midlands UB40s

**Brian Skeldon 0115 9725119**

### ICL Double Majority Association

**Joseph Gardner 01438 362806**

### ICL Midlands

**Brian Trow 01785 257317**

### Leo Computers Society

**Geoff Parry 01628 770129**

### Letchworth

**Dennis Evans 01462 811273**

### Liverpool Engineers

**George Lynn 01744 29984**

### Surrey Engineers

**Trevor Harding 01483 565144**

trevor.harding@iclway.co.uk

### Tin Hut Reunion

**Olaf Chedzoy 01278 741 269**

### West Gorton Reunion

**Eric W Watts 01457 875080**

### Watford-Harrow- Feltham

**Mike Ray 01895 230194**

### West Branch Engineers

**Eric Reynolds 01452 712047**

### 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

### ICL/Nortel Fund

BIR03	Selwyn	Ernest G	11/02/09	86	
BRA01	Colyer	Alfred G	05/11/08	82	
	Sullivan	Doir B	12/10/08	85	
	Warne	John P	25/09/08	66	
BRA05	Gavagan	Hildegard	26/10/08	72	
Dukinfield	Brook	Joyce	10/11/08	82	
EDI04	Hardie	Frederick	23/01/09	82	
Euston	Thomas	Alan W	28/09/08	67	
Exeter	Heal	Joyce	10/10/08	86	
FEHQ	Howkins	Peter J	12/09/08	86	
FEL01	Roberts	Peter C	18/02/09	82	
	Wessell	William A	01/01/09	88	
HOC01	Blain	David E J	18/02/09	85	
	Dale	Susan	10/11/08	65	
Holborn KID01	Layzell	John D	07/09/08	94	
	Buckley	Ronald F	16/10/08	82	
	O'Neil	Lawrence	29/09/08	64	
	Sherratt	Albert A	31/10/08	89	
	Swierzy	G	04/03/09	83	
	Walker	Bernard E	21/02/09	84	
	Walker	Brian	21/12/08	75	
LET01	Hughes	J P	28/12/08	83	
LET05	Whitbread	May F	10/09/08	77	
	Aylott	Trevor L	20/11/08	78	
	Child	Charles W	27/11/08	88	
	Dixon	Robert G	08/02/09	76	
	Dunham	John W	13/01/09	83	
	Harrison	R E	15/12/08	80	
	McMullen	Peter R	25/12/08	81	
	Oakes	Malcolm J	18/01/09	71	
	Rose	Robert G	27/10/08	83	
	LET06	Eden	Ray	16/11/08	81
	Letchworth	Robinson	Helen M	25/12/08	60
		Bevan	Doreen A	17/11/08	73
LON01	Goddard	Clara E	15/10/08	93	
	Ginn	Arthur G	02/10/08	87	
LON11	Priest	David W	06/11/08	86	
LON15	Sheldrick	Sidney B	28/11/08	96	
	Fraser	Rhoda P	10/11/08	61	
LON24	Jennings	B	02/10/08	90	
	Ellis	John D	18/10/08	84	
LON30	Wheeler	Roland D	27/09/08	75	
LON31	Moore	R D	15/02/09	72	
Maidenhead MAN01	Ball	Leslie G	05/01/09	76	
	Collier	Charles	29/10/08	81	
MAN05	Cope	Edna M	07/12/08	83	
	Whitnall	Derek L	11/09/08	81	
	Ashcroft	Margaret	26/10/08	78	
	Bhojani	Natwarlal	21/02/09	77	
	Blackman	William G	26/10/08	86	
	Clayton	K	27/09/08	76	
	Rolls	Mary V	17/09/08	85	

NEL01	Kelleher	John R	19/10/08	88
SLH01	Sheehan	Mary E	19/11/08	85
STE04	Carr	Basil H W	19/11/08	84
	Ellis	John A	04/11/08	88
	Knapp	James E	02/12/08	83
	Mitchell	Helen	08/12/08	77
	Orme	Madge E	26/01/09	77
Unknown	Banks	D	01/01/09	78
	Barnabas	Joseph	14/02/09	72
	Birchmore	Ruth	25/11/08	70
	Dempsey	Cecil C	13/02/09	84
	Garmory	Elizabeth	09/12/08	86
	Hancock	Charles	26/01/09	83
	Hefford	Margaret	14/01/09	79
	Henderson	A E	29/12/08	93
	Hennessey	Sidney R	30/01/09	83
	Hoskins	Irene	05/03/09	88
	Jenkins	S B	28/12/08	92
	King	G J	13/11/08	85
	Ladbrooke	M G	01/02/09	92
	Longstaff	William E	20/02/09	90
	Mangan	Harry	29/09/08	78
	Mayo	Rachel	29/12/08	86
	Mennell	George	14/11/08	81
	Millington	R	14/01/09	84
	Pickard	Richard H	20/01/09	68
	Poke	Donald E	19/01/09	87
	Radley	Khorshed	15/12/08	72
	Rolfe	Nina A	26/02/09	86
	Rowland	W	24/12/08	82
	Saville	E	11/01/09	92
	Sullivan	Patrick	12/02/09	85
	Temple	H	09/11/08	90
	Timperley	Arthur	27/12/08	87
	Watmough	Winifred	05/12/08	81
	Wells	Robert	12/12/08	85
	Whitehurst	William	09/02/09	69
	Wilson	John D	12/09/08	87
	Wotton	Harry G	24/10/08	88
Winsford	Birchell	Arthur	24/11/08	65
	Cleveland	Cyril	16/10/08	85
	Kay	Thomas	29/09/08	78
	Todd	Ernest A	14/11/08	82
	White	Kathleen	25/12/08	75

## ICL Fund

Includes people who died in service

ABR01	Frazer	Ian B	01/12/08	69
BRA01	Arnold	Ronald	08/02/09	72
	Bullen	David J	17/01/09	61
	Lloyd	Pauline A	15/10/08	59
	MacKillop	Robert C	19/09/08	78
BRS06	Henderson	Malcolm A	19/02/09	67
	Pratt	Desmond B	15/02/09	72
BSN01	*Newcombe	Kevin C	13/02/08	67
EXE04	Connolly	John	23/02/09	71
FEL01	Scammerton	Terry	03/09/08	75
HOM99	Billam	Douglas	15/10/08	78
	Scampion	Graham J	26/09/08	64
	Wild	Michael J	22/11/08	54
IRE02	Dalzell	John H	10/02/09	56
KID01	Bossons	Doreen	09/03/09	71
	Taylor	Frederick M	20/11/08	72
LSA01	Atkinson	Donald G	05/03/09	70
MAN01	Caldwell	Mary E	16/10/08	72
	Holmes	Kenneth E	14/12/08	60
MAN05	Watson	James H	21/02/09	71
	Wharton	Leonard	13/09/08	64
MAN12	Boland	Martin	18/01/09	78

MAN13	Duncan	John A	25/12/08	70
MAN33	Clough	Raymond	23/12/08	67
	Black	Paul	20/09/08	45
	Fineberg	Alan	13/09/08	60
	Smyth	Charles E	22/11/08	55
REA24	Beamish	John	01/01/09	62
	Gower	June C	17/11/08	62
SLH06	Cohen	Leonard C	27/01/09	65
SOU06	*Peters	Bryan	01/01/08	71
STE04	Emery	Ralph	05/12/08	77
	Gray	Ian D	05/12/08	77
	Houldsworth	Jack	01/11/08	76
	Mait	Lorraine J	28/01/09	52
	Palmer	Michael J	26/12/08	73
	Wee	Stephen K	28/12/08	52
STE09	Butcher	Ian F	09/01/09	77
	Crane	Dennis R	23/12/08	71
WAR08	Masters	Alan David	14/09/08	56
WIN01	Mitchell	John L	09/09/08	65
WSR01	Gilbey	Kenneth E	11/12/08	68

\* Apologies: Kevin Newcombe and Bryan Peters omitted from the Spring 2008 edition

## PENSIONERS' REPS

The reps can be contacted by phone or by email via the ICL Pensioners' website.

**Colin Marshall**  
01538 371618

**Dik Leatherdale**  
020 8977 5893

**Hilary Robinson**  
01270 882818

**Alan Thomson**  
01344 422993

### Pensioners' Directory

Tony Riley maintains the directory for those pensioners who are on the Internet and want their email address and career details published.

His email address is: [tonyriley@europe.com](mailto:tonyriley@europe.com)

### Pensioners' Website

The website for ICL Group pensioners is <http://uk.fujitsu.com/pensioner>

Bits & Bytes is also published on this website and all previous issues are available.

### NEXT ISSUE

Copy for the **Autumn 2009** issue must be submitted by **1 September 2009**, but would be appreciated earlier.

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