Editorial

Being the editor of this publication keeps me busy during the year but has its compensations, namely when people contact me out of the blue, and we can exchange news and reminisces. Such a day was today when I had a phone call from Peter Bradley in New South Wales to check that I had received his letter. I had - see the letters section. He told me that he often phoned John Sherlock in Hitchin, whose telephone number I didn't have. I was then able to phone John who I hadn't seen for many years. He is now 93. He interviewed me for my first job in FEHQ Luton in 1958 – 47 years ago! We both agreed that we were lucky to have been involved in the computer industry in those days rather than now. We knew how the hardware worked, and could fix faults by replacing components. Does anybody know how computer hardware works now?

The launch of the ICL pensioners' website appears to have been a success since it was announced in the middle of last year.

At the beginning of March, 2,566 people had registered as members, and over 1100 had opted for the electronic version of Bits & Bytes.

As I have noted on many occasions it will only thrive if **YOU** contribute to it. Considering that this publication is sent to more than 5,500 addresses I get very few people sending me copy. I still get the odd report that Bits & Bytes doesn't contain any articles of interest to non-engineers, so they don't read it, so please produce something that will interest others!

I went on holiday in September 2004, to Vence in the South of France, where I met Roger Hubert for the first time. Many pensioners I'm sure will know the name, as I did, and some I'm sure have fond memories of working for him.

He is a real Anglophile, buying his English paper every day from the local shop. He ought to be, as his mother was English and he was born in Redditch! My wife and I stayed in an apartment organised by Roger and his wife, in Vence, where they live, so we were able to visit them and go out for meals, when we were able to talk about his life and his career in IBM, the French Resistance, The Tab, ICT and ICL.

We had a wonderful holiday except for a nasty experience just two days before we came back home. We were going to the Matisse Chapel in Vence when two modern day highwaymen on a motorbike stole my wife's handbag, as we were about to park. It was a very professional theft as six cars were robbed in the space of one hour in similar circumstances on the open road between Nice Airport and Vence.

Please all learn from this episode. All hire cars from the major hire companies in France have a 76 plate and all the cars targeted were hire cars. Lock your doors when in the car. I never have in the past, but I do now. Unfortunately the hire car companies do not appear to be interested in warning customers of the danger of these robbers.

I was described in my early career as a Field Engineer, and I could never really understand why.

I now work part time for Green Thumb Lawn Treatments as a Lawn Consultant, so I suppose I'm now a Real Field Engineer – full circle!

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Fujitsu Services Good News
ATLAS Consortium for the Ministry of Defence

The ATLAS Consortium welcomed the announcement 2 March, 2005 by Lord Bach, Minister for Defence Procurement, that it has been selected as Preferred Bidder for the UK Ministry of Defence's (MoD) Defence Information Infrastructure (Future) project.

The ATLAS Consortium comprises EDS as lead contractor, tier 1 partner Fujitsu Services and key sub-contractors General Dynamics, EADS Defence and Security Systems and LogicaCMG.

The announcement of preferred bidder is for Increment 1 of the DII (F) project, which has a total contract value in the region of £2.3 billion. Further increments of work are expected to follow in due course, following MoD evaluation of Increment 1.

Graham Lay, Managing Director of EDS Defence and the Senior Responsible Industry Executive for the ATLAS Consortium, said: "We are proud to have been selected as preferred bidder for DII (F), which is one of the most demanding and exciting single IT infrastructure projects ever undertaken anywhere in the world, and look forward to working with the MoD to make DII a success.

"The MoD's decision to select the EDS-led ATLAS Consortium vindicates our decision to bring together a team that offers low risk, cashable benefits and

assured delivery. The breadth and depth of our resources, capability and our commitment to the UK industrial base has enabled us to develop the best solution on challenging issues such as security, system performance, enabling Network Enabled Capability and deployed systems.

"The ATLAS Consortium would like to thank the MoD's DII Integrated Project Team (IPT), and all those involved in the project, for the enormous amount of effort which has gone into conducting a fair, rigorous, and professional procurement."

The DII (F) project will replace numerous individual information systems throughout the MoD with a single, more efficient information infrastructure. It will also enable many of the defence efficiency measures under the Defence Change Programme to be achieved. These include Network Enabled Capability – the ability to improve the capability of the armed forces through a single network of information - announced in the Defence White Paper.

DII (F) will achieve this by extending into the operational arena, interfacing with battlespace systems and improving shared information between headquarters, battlefield support and the front line. DII (F) will allow greater interoperability between the MoD and its allies, allowing significantly more effective operational support than currently available.

Fujitsu Sees Strong Worldwide Growth In Demand For Interstage Suite

Fujitsu Software Corporation announced on 26 October 2004 strong growth in demand for its Interstage® Suite, one of the worlds broadest lines of application infrastructure software products. In the first half of Fujitsu's fiscal year 2004, sales increased by 15 percent over the same period last year as customers and partners worldwide made Interstage Suite products their solution of choice to design, develop and manage their customised, mission-critical applications.

Global companies and leading government agencies around the world are adopting the Interstage Suite and choosing Fujitsu as their trusted worldwide provider. Among these enterprises are new customers, including Loughborough University, Ministerio de Administraciones Públicas, UK Post Office and Target Group, as well as current customers, such as École de technologie supérieure and iJET Travel Risk Management, who have continued or expanded their Interstage product implementations.

Contributing to customer demand in 2004 has been the growing availability of partner-enabled solutions to address companies' critical business requirements and increasing industry recognition of Fujitsu's proven technology.

In the first half of 2004, Fujitsu Software Corporation expanded the delivery of best-in-class solutions based on Interstage technology through partnerships with Achievo, EcomNets, IDX Systems Corporation, Quadrant, SSA Global, Servantis and Sogeti USA LLC. Fujitsu and Servantis are working to develop and co-market best-in-class solutions for the healthcare industry, including automated claims processing and integration of the complex networks of systems that link payers, providers, and other healthcare organisations. Quadrant Risk Management International is working with Fujitsu as

part of the development of its BSquared solution for international risk management and Basel II total solutions.

IT solutions available through the Fujitsu partnerships complement the broad range of applications and services being delivered by Fujitsu Software Corporation's internal partners, including Fujitsu Australia, Fujitsu Consulting Mexico, Fujitsu España, Fujitsu Hong Kong and Fujitsu Services.

"Today, it is no longer just about the technology. Companies must leverage business and IT service providers who can address the business problems that the CFO faces, as well as identifying, implementing, and potentially even operating some amount of existing and new IT investments," said Stan LePeak, research director for the META Group. "For application infrastructure providers, successfully delivering on these enterprise demands will depend on established partnerships with consultants and solutions providers who can link business insight to technology expertise and best practices."

Fujitsu also has received a number of acknowledgements in the first half of 2004 for the company's leadership in driving industry standards and delivering technology that impacts business.

Fujitsu Software Corporation was named to the KMWorld 2004 list of "100 Companies that Matter in Knowledge Management." Hugh McKellar, editor-in-chief of KMWorld, noted that the company "has made significant investments in technology to harness shared knowledge and optimise processes at a human level, enabling companies to maximise their business productivity and achieve a truly collaborative enterprise using the Fujitsu Interstage Suite."

Keith Swenson, chief architect at Fujitsu Software Corporation was named the 2004 recipient of the prestigious Marvin L. Manheim Award. Presented the Workflow Management Coalition (WfMC), the Manheim Award recognises outstanding contributions to the field of workflow including Swenson's role in driving standards as the chair of the OASIS Asynchronous Service Access Protocol (ASAP) Technical Committee, lead author of ASAP, and the chairman of the WfMC Wf-XML Working Group.

The WfMC also invited Fujitsu Software Corporation to participate in a live demonstration of real-world process interoperability at the Brainstorm Group Business Process Management Conference, June 23, 2004. The demonstration included support of the ASAP standard on Fujitsu's award-winning Interstage Business Process Manager engine.

"Growing demand for our Interstage products in 2004 reflects the priority that global enterprises are placing on proven solutions that directly deliver on their business needs," Robert Sepanloo, senior vice president of Interstage at Fujitsu Software Corporation. "Today, companies worldwide are turning to Fujitsu for optimised business solutions based on Interstage best-in-class infrastructure software and the seasoned expertise of our global network of solutions and service providers."

Fujitsu gives mid-sized retailers a platform to compete with their larger rivals

Fujitsu Services has now introduced iRetail – an integrated portfolio of in-store and head office solutions that specifically addresses the needs of mid-

sized retailers including sophisticated EPoS, Stock Management, Customer Relations Management, Web Management and Chip and PIN.

iRetail is available for a monthly service charge with no up-front capital investment required, starting from £100 per month per point-of-sale which includes a fully functional EPoS configuration.

Fujitsu provides a one-stop shop for iRetail and manages the IT complexity behind delivery and support is on hand seven days a week. The retailer needs no IT skills either in-store or at head office to exploit the services and no investment in IT infrastructure to run them.

With iRetail, Fujitsu brings business best practice in retail to all without the need for expensive customisation and costly software updates. Retailers using the service can automatically and instantly benefit from any enhancements made to iRetail. Once connected to iRetail, all can benefit from a growing portfolio of value-added services such as loyalty schemes and electronic gift vouchers.

iRetail is pre-accredited for Chip and PIN. There is no need for either separate bank-owned terminal or the often lengthy and complicated accreditation process required for other integrated EPOS and payments systems.

Fujitsu has brought together a number of best in class specialist companies in retail and payments systems to deliver iRetail, so the retailer doesn't have to. These include Cybertill, Comms XL, STS, BOX Technologies, Ingenico, Cyntergy and Iona Business Systems.

Alan Coulter, director of marketing – retail, Fujitsu Services says, "Smaller retailers are often been left behind as larger competitors with bigger budgets and extensive IT teams invest in ever more sophisticated systems. This has widened the gap between large and small, meaning big businesses reap larger profits and function more efficiently. Our iRetail offering has been developed to shift that balance and give mid-sized retailers the chance to compete on a level playing with their larger rivals".

Fujitsu hosts faith group consultation to discuss ID card implementation issues

Fujitsu Services, in association with the Faith Community Consultation Consortium (FCCC) led by the Hindu Forum of Britain sponsored and hosted four workshops on the Government-proposed identity cards programme. Members from eight major faith groups participated in these regional consultations organised in an informal environment, to openly share views and discuss areas of concerns on the introduction of identity cards.

All views and concerns the Government may face on the issue of identity cards, including recording and reading of biometric data as well as verification of information held on the National Identity Register, will be presented as a formal written response to the Home Office, who provided input to the workshop material. The response will be launched as a public document at the House of Commons on 14 March 2005.

Home Office minister for citizenship, Des Browne said, "The identity cards scheme will provide a 'gold standard' to protect everyone's identity and ensure that people can access the public services to which they are entitled. I welcome the contribution of these workshops to our ongoing programme of research and dialogue with community organisations. We want to build an inclusive scheme that will give all British citizens confidence and security in proving and protecting their identity."

Harmander Singh, principal advisor to Sikhs in England welcomed the open manner in which the government has supported the faith community initiative on identity cards and added, "Having already declared our support for the initiative, we are delighted that all faith communities adopted this positive approach which will surely encourage the government to discuss other matters with us in the future."

The consultations took place in London on 18 January, Birmingham 20 January, Leicester 31 January and Manchester 1 February.

Life in ICL
View of Problem solving in the 1980's.

By the end of the 1970's the writing was on the wall for the demise of the traditional support engineer travelling to the site to investigate the problem. Just as the "resident" site engineer had all but disappeared in the previous decade.

The 1980'saw the move away from large mainframes to distributed systems using PC's and the like, supported from a remote "service centre". The systems had become much more reliable, and had changed physically such that it was easy to replace complete units if faulty, and detailed fault investigation was no longer required. Skill levels required in the Service Centres were only sufficient to identify the faulty unit, which could then be changed out locally. There was no longer a requirement within C.S. for the fault finding skills of the unit specialist.

There were however, a few problems that could not be resolved by replacing "Boxes". A typical example would be a design fault that is only evident when the user has a particular software combination. Another is if the boxes come from different suppliers, it is necessary to not only identify the faulty box, but also to be able to tell the supplier fairly accurately what the box is doing wrong. It would seem that every manufacturer's equipment is OK until proved otherwise, which is very difficult to do when no detailed technical information is available. As a Company, we had to be able to resolve ALL the faults our customers get, not just 99% of them. The ultimate responsibility for product support rested with the Design Authority, but as much of the equipment sold was no longer designed in-house, that support could seem rather remote. Obviously some new techniques were required. This is where the "Magic Box" or Logic Analyser comes in.

It was 1979(I think) when the first, rather primitive, Logic Analyser appeared from Hewlett-Packard. Many ordinary household items now contained embedded microprocessors, and the Logic Analyser had been designed as a tool to help the microprocessor software development. I remember one being demonstrated at Stevenage, and being advised to go and have a close look. It seemed obvious to me that some of the facilities it offered, though very primitive, could be used to advantage for the location of "difficult

faults", particularly those of an intermittent nature. A unit was hired, and starting from square one, we had a few significant successes resolving some long standing problems. Capital spend was justified (don't ask how!!!) and a unit purchased. Looking back now, I am still surprised how successful we were using it. It's maximum data capture rate was 10 MHz, and it had 64 words of fast(!) data capture memory. Added to this it weighed over 60 lbs, not including the ancillary items needed!

We used the Analyser in ways never originally intended, such that HP could see a broader market for their product, and were very receptive to our feedback on facilities we could use. Very soon, a new model appeared with many of our requirements addressed, which allowed the scope of our problem investigations to be extended, and feedback increased. At one point, an H-P team of three designers came over from the US, and spent some days with us discussing our requirements, and the additional facilities they were considering. The product (the HP1652B) was a fine instrument, and allowed many otherwise unfixable problems to be resolved by Customer Services. Links with other Analyser manufacturers were established, but the H-P link was more productive.

The analyser inputs are high impedance, so do not affect the operation of the system under test. An investigation can often require the connection of up to 80 or more of these monitor leads, and requires an exact understanding of how the part of the system works, and how to recognise the failing condition. I found an advantage in carefully documenting every investigation I did, as part of the learning process. This proved very useful on those occasions where, although the fault was different, the place to collect the information was the same. As in many microprocessor based units. Since retiring, I have kept most of my historical fault investigations library in tact. It is from this library that the Problem Solving examples are taken. The investigations cover most of the equipment types installed during the 1980's.

How long have you been working on the DRS200?

The date was June 1987, the Customer, Konsum in Vienna. The problem was an intermittent hang up on the comms link between the DRS200 and the customer's IBM mainframe.

As usual, the problem had been evident for some time, and numerous unsuccessful attempts to fix it had been made by the Design Authority. Eventually it went onto "Red Alert" and I was asked whether we would be able to help with a logic analyser. A test hook-up at Stevenage showed that it was possible, and an analyser was shipped out to Vienna. The schedule was for me to arrive first, and get the analyser set-up. A microcode expert would then come from the Design Authority to look at any evidence that I could obtain.

I remember being met at Vienna airport by the local engineering manager. After the formal exchange of greetings, he asked the usual first question "How long have you been working on the DRS200?" I will always remember the look of dismay on his face when I replied, "this is actually the first time I have investigated a problem on the DRS200". His expression said "after all the duff fixes, they send us an engineer who has never worked on the equipment before!!!" My assessment was that the problem

required the tracing of an 8086 microprocessor code, for which the analyser was particularly well suited, and to a large extent was independent of the equipment type. But he wasn't to know that.

The problem did indeed turn out to be a fault in the microcode. As characters are sent or received on the comms line, a count word is decremented and when equal to zero the transfer stops. The analyser was able to identify a set of conditions which caused the microcode to erroneously clear the count word just before the transfer was started. The first decrement gave a transfer count of hex FFFF, which is rather a long transfer at 9600 bauds, and caused the link to appear to hang-up. A simple microcode change by the software man fixed the problem.

"Ignore previous telex…"

The date was September 1985, the Customer, Auckland City Council in New Zealand. The problem was on a 2900 series mainframe, where the VME Operating System was getting corrupted. It was on "Red Alert", and there was an urgent need to have a resolution. The Customer was about to order a major upgrade to a 3900 series. If the problem was not resolved, he would go to "open tender" for the upgrade, and we could easily lose the business.

The problem was a random single word corruption within VME. The disadvantage with this type of corruption is that one is not aware that it has happened until that piece of information is used, maybe minutes, hours or even days later. The problem had been ongoing for some time, and a lot of work had been done locally analysing dumps etc. Whilst some common denominators had been identified, they were no nearer to a resolution.

In the UK, we had recently put into service a new generation of analysers, which included many of the facilities we had requested. There were two models, allowing a choice of data capture methods. To investigate a problem with a logic analyser, it is first necessary to decide how to use the facilities available, and hence which instrument to use. The more complex the problem, the more difficult this becomes. The A.C.C. problem required a lot of thought, and was one of the cases where I had a notepad and pencil at my bedside at night. I would go to sleep with all the information running round in my head, and would wake up having worked out the method to use. The pad was to make notes before I fell asleep again.

The analyser model was selected and one was shipped out from the UK, as they were not available in NZ. Straight to work after the long flight, the analyser was connected into the mainframe (all 65 plus connections). The first day five cases of corruption were captured, even though only one VME fail was experienced. From the sequence of store accesses captured, the local software support guy did a fine job in identifying the microcode sequence being obeyed as part of the EDS alternate track code. This was confirmed by the UK, and all the detailed information telexed to them overnight. The next morning we had received two telexes in reply. The first said "… the code is OK … has not been altered …". All our faces fell! The second telex started "Ignore previous telex ….have discovered an error in the microcode …." And included a patch to correct the error. Smiles all round! The patch was installed, and the analyser used to verify that the code was now functioning correctly.

Just three days from arrival to resolution, should have pleased even the most pessimistic. As usual, I had to stay on a few days, and noticed a distinct trend to play down the success from the use of the analyser. Had it been made to look too easy? All the decisions and hours of preparation work were not visible locally, just someone appears with a "magic box", and the problem is fixed. Happy to say, the Customer went on to order a large 3900 series upgrade.

Sometime later, in 1986, I was fortunate to receive a gold "Excellence Award". The presentation was made in Switzerland at the annual "Atlas Club" gathering. Whilst there, one of the daytime excursions was to a vineyard, where a wine tasting was held. In true Swiss fashion, one had to pay for each glass. Talking to the person opposite, it emerged that he was a salesman from Auckland, and that the sale of the upgrade to A.C.C. had effectively provided his invitation to the "Atlas Club". He stood me a glass of wine – to coin a phrase, "cheap at half the price!"

The Case of the Missing "I".

The date was August 1984, the Customer Racal Defence at Chessington, the system 2958 mainframe feeding ML83 printers via DRS, the problem, missing characters in the print output.

On my initial visit to the site, to show the problem, the Customer picked up a deck of printed, wide, continuous stationery, which must have been an inch thick. He then proceeded to flip through the pages at a fast rate, until he stopped suddenly and stabs his finger about half way down the page and triumphantly announces that here was an "I" missing just there. What could one do but nod in agreement, and think of needles in haystacks!

Our first task was to identify in which box the elusive "I" was getting lost. This was no easy task and was done by monitoring the data as it arrived at the printer on the RS232 interface. The ML83 was a well established printer, so we were quite surprised when the traces showed that the"I" had actually arrived at the printer correctly. The ML83 has an embedded microprocessor to run its control program. After taking a few traces it was obvious that we needed a copy of the control program source code, but manufacturers are generally reluctant to release such code. We sent our findings from the traces we had taken to OKI in Japan, and a copy of the source code (in English) arrived by return. Our credentials, as shown by the traces, were obviously acceptable.

It was then possible to identify the set of conditions where the "I" was lost. The basic problem arose because the printer could print 132 characters per line, but there were only 128 bytes of RAM on the microprocessor chip. The control program had to cope with printing in both directions, and the elusive "I" was lost when changing direction with a full line buffer. Our findings, plus a recommended change to the control program were sent to Japan, and an updated ROM cured the problem.

The combination of conditions which caused this problem were extremely complex, and although we now knew what they were, we were never able to reproduce the fault on our own equipment. The total elapsed time for the investigation was just over 3 months, which included writing a disassembler in Basic for the embedded microprocessor. I will never look on them as "simple printers" again!

These three accounts are just examples of the type of problem which requires something more than box

replacement. One tends to remember particular problems that have given a high level of satisfaction when resolved. Such an example would be one case where the "evidence" was a much photocopied printed cheque. It seemed completely normal until one realised that the amount in words was different to the amount in figures. Quite a challenge, for which considerable pleasure was derived, when the cause was identified and corrected. The archive contains many other examples, with many types of unit. One thing I can say is that my job in ICL was never dull, always interesting, and full of variety. Computing with ICL in the 1980's provided for me the opportunity to do the sort of work I really enjoyed, and get paid for it.

Brian Parker Royston

The Cobbler's Children

There is a saying which goes "The cobbler's children are the only unshod kids in the street", meaning that whatever somebody does for a living will not be done at home.

I came to ICT, from Ferranti. One lunchtime, while still with Ferranti I went for lunch with my manager to the café round the corner. While at lunch he started a mild grumble about the way the company was doing things. A popular lunchtime activity for most people.

His complaint was that he was shortly to be put in charge of a new demonstration computer for Ferranti and the Tape Decks delivered with it would be pre-production models inferior to the ones which would eventually be supplied to our customers. Another manager who had joined us quoted the Cobbler's Children saying. I had not heard it before but thought it fitted the situation very well. We finished our lunch, returned to work and I forgot all about it

Several years later I was to find out that this proverb fitted a lot of other companies as well.

Ferranti's Computer department had been taken over by ICT and I was involved in installing the then new 1900 range in London. One of the first machines that we had to install was on the mezzanine floor of an office block. This meant that the computer, the only very heavy piece of kit that had to be installed in that office block, had to be installed in the only part of the building which did not have direct access from a lift and whose windows were not accessible by crane. The whole thing had to be manhandled up several steps. The company we were delivering to was a firm of Civil Engineers famous for designing buildings.

This was closely followed by a delivery to a customer who put the motor alternator set in a room whose door had to be jammed open to stop the alternator overheating. The customer was an Electricity generating board who you would have thought would know a little about where to put alternators.

The best one of all though was a firm who had their computer delivered to their head office in London but the actual factory was in the Midlands somewhere. This meant that it was not obvious what their business was. We soon got a clue though. The air conditioning broke down several times during commissioning and many times in the first few months of running and yes you've guessed it. Their factory in the Midlands produced Air conditioning equipment.

I cannot go without mentioning ICT, or it might have been ICL by then. I had problem at a site which

could only be cured by fitting a replacement part which had to come from Letchworth. The customer needed to run an important job that evening so it was urgent. I would have to drive to Letchworth but could not get there until after the Stores had closed. The store man said that on his way home he would leave the part for me to collect at one of ICT's own computer installations nearby.

When I collected the part I noticed that a Tabulator was banging away in the corner and enquired what it was that we still used such an antiquated bit of kit for. "Oh that's doing the payroll was the answer". Again I thought of the Cobbler's Children

Ken Rowcliffe 147720 (or is that my Army Number?)

Life after ICL
COURTESY CAR

One Sunday recently, I was cycling on a local suburban road. Ahead, the gap narrowed where cars were parked opposite each other. I pedalled through, but was forced to stop by an approaching BMW in a hurry. As he swept past, I made a "don't mind me-you must be really important" gesture. He stopped suddenly as if to demonstrate his ABS braking.

He was mouthing a stream of invective before his automatic window glided down. I was a "stupid old fart" and should "go away and reproduce myself" (in so many words) and ought to be on" the*%?#+*$ pavement"!

As he accelerated away, I belatedly thought of a number of witty retorts, but I don't think wit has any affect on young men in BMW's.

A bit shaken by his bile, I wondered if he hated all old men or just old cycling men. Did his father ride a bike? How much of a hurry must one be in to cut up a vulnerable cyclist? Why stop to vent one's spleen on the old fool if one is in such a hurry?

There seems to be an aggressive air about youth. It's apparent in numerous TV adverts.

With the right deodorant, lager or mobile phone you too can be "Jack-the-lad" and to Hell with anybody else.

TV has convinced the young they are all that matters. Style, image and the right brand are all that's needed. The advertising business needs them as a market, for they have the spending power, not the pensioner!

In a recent article in a media magazine, a boss of TV's Channel 4 was defending the station against criticism that it had "dumbed down" and was too commercial, tasteless and youth obsessed.

His defence was to attack the critics as grumpy old men who were obviously of the "bring back the birch and National Service" brigade.

Suggesting that a channel devoted to "Big Brother", makeover and cosmetic surgery programmes only upsets Colonel Blimp types is silly. It ended "the old critics were railing against the unstoppable tide of modernity and the democratisation of taste through TV, and if Channel 4 cleaned its act up it would sink in the ratings war to digital TV" Clearly; all that matters are the ratings!

The aggression in the article, attacking critics as being old and consequently senile, impotent and only interested in stuff like opera, was puerile. It concluded that "Big Brother" is the most popular programme in Channel 4's history, thus proving their scheduling is right and anyway "it's only television" and not that important!

I mention the article as it put the blame on the elderly as being out of touch and redundant.

To be fair, I tried to recall my attitude towards my seniors. At 28, I remember an "old" engineer reaching 40. I thought of him as a bit past it, but I never thought of him as surplus to requirements and needing to be "put down"

Going to London these days, I'm aware of the pace and pushiness of everybody. I was probably like that 40 years ago. I don't recall noticing old people, let alone treading on any to get a seat on the train!

Just when I thought about rebelling against society I was called up. When I came out, four years later, I couldn't afford to rebel on the salary Powers-Samas paid me, so I conformed!

In those days, holding doors open usually got an acknowledgement and people did let others off the tube before boarding. It was no big deal and done instinctively.

Society does seem to have changed, in that manners aren't important any more. The old days of deference and "knowing ones place" were hypocritical, yet today's offensive, in-your-face directness lacks any charm. Somewhere between the rushing-around rudeness of youth and the fumbling formality of old age there ought to be a place for a civility and courtesy that is acceptable to all.

I'll always hold the door of the pub open for everyone to go in first, especially as it means I won't have to buy the first round!

Dennis Goodwin
dennis@goodwin43.freeserve co.uk

Letters
Plastab

Having passed the 80 mark on 7 February I felt constrained to get cracking on some historic detail. Plastab was a joint venture between ICI Billingham and The British Tabulating Machine Company.

The project started in the Letchworth factory and moved to Stevenage in 1955. Company directors associated with the project were Messrs Chastell and Parker. The designer was Billy Boy Davis, who was a very bright and likeable toff and somewhat eccentric (in the nicest way). The Project Manager was Geoff Taylor and I was the sort of Production Team Leader. John Sherlock was the FEHQ Manager participating in the final production and subsequent installation phase, with John Buckle and Don Rogers.

The objective of the equipment was to load a defined weight of materials into containers within a specified tolerance, and record the amount.

The method was to place the container on a weighing machine and when the machine settled to equilibrium this zeroed the counter and commenced the filling. When the weight of material reached the predetermined amount the filling was stopped. When the machine settled to equilibrium again, the weight was checked to ensure that it was within tolerance and printed out.

The initial equipment was for ICI and used to fill bags with plastic chips. The biggest installation was at Millbrook Southampton for Calor Gas. The final installation was at Arthur Berton in London where

they accurately weighed the amount of material in sanitary towels.

At the conclusion of the project John Sherlock invited me to join FEHQ in Luton where I worked on the HEC 1200 followed by the 1201, 1202 and then the 1300.

PS. At some later date I may tell you a few yarns from my days as a Boy Telegraphist in the Royal Navy for 14 years from February 1941 to December 1954.

Peter Bradley New South Wales Australia

Reunions

Punch Card & Stevenage Labs Reunion Group

The speaker at the 2005 reunion, on the first Tuesday in October, the 4th, will be Dave Clarke the well known instructor from the Letchworth Training School. The title of his talk will be **"From DP to IT: 34 years of interesting machines and much more interesting people"**

Tickets for this reunion are available from **Adrian Turner** at the address on page 1. Please send cheque for £10, with a **SAE** for return of ticket, which will pay for tea/coffee and buffet lunch. **All pensioners are welcome.**
Adrian Turner *01491 872012*

ICL Australia

Albert Cook can be contacted via email at **albertcook@optusnet.com.au**

ICL Central London Group

The next reunion will be on Wednesday 20 April 2005 at **The Flying Horse** at **52 Wilson Street**, from 12 noon. The pub is east of Finsbury Square.
John Doo 01245 259862

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 Club
Roy Newbury 01763 852241

ICL Midlands Group
Brian Trow 01785 257317

Leo Computers Society
Geoff Parry 01628 770129

Letchworth Group
Dennis Evans 01462 811273

Liverpool Engineers
George Lynn 01744 29984

Oxford Region

A reunion took place at The Chequers Burcot on 4 February 2005 when 19 people attended. This was the first meeting for some time and it was agreed that we should meet on a regular basis for a chat over a lunchtime meal. It is hoped that there will be meeting at the end of October. Contact me for details.
Ken Jones 01865 340388
kenwynjones@aol.com

STE04 Office and Retail Systems
Derek Tourell 020 8386 9465

Surrey Engineers
Trevor Harding 01483 565144

Tin Hut Reunion Group
Olaf Chedzoy 01278 741 269

West Gorton Reunion

Eric W Watts 01457 875080
Watford-Harrow- Feltham Group
Mike Ray 01895 230194
West Branch Engineers
Eric Reynolds 01452 712047
West Kent Reunion Group
Ron Harding 01732 *761076*
The Walthamstow Mob
Derek Windsor 01992 522761

OBITUARIES
ICL/Nortel Fund

Taken from the Autumn& Winter 2004 editions of the Nortel "Newslink"

Birmingh'm	**Eley**	John L	13/09/04	76
	Lane	Albert E	30/09/04	81
	Procter	Thomas	19/06/04	72
	Whitehouse	Robert J	30/08/04	83
Bracknell	**Hull**	Nancy G	07/09/04	78
	Moss	Ronald	24/05/04	57
	Murch	Robert A	19/05/04	76
Bristol	**Hall**	David E	30/09/04	76
Croydon	**Ashton**	Raymond	04/08/04	79
	Taylor	Frederick	20/08/04	89
Duckinfield	**Sykes**	James	22/05/04	78
Elstree	**Leonard**	John M	24/06/04	73
Exeter	**Thomas**	Frank E	30/05/04	78
Feltham	**Ford**	Frank F	29/03/04	74
	Hollis	Albert F	08/10/04	83
Glasgow	**Clark**	Thomas	27/10/04	80
Hollerith	**Browne**	Ormonde	25/05/04	82
	Godbold	Clifford S	16/06/04	79
Kidsgrove	**Beckett**	Bernadette	03/05/04	70
	Bor	Frank	19/10/04	77
	Cartwright	George W	08/06/04	92
	Garner	Mary E	13/08/04	81
	Isom	George F	30/05/04	73
	Jones	Cora	10/10/04	75
	Morrey	Reginald	30/09/04	78
	Mullock	Frederick	04/09/04	82
	Sherrat	Eric	28/06/04	72
	Smyth	Edna	29/10/04	80
Letchworth	**Briggs**	Brenda	19/09/04	72
	Berry	Leslie B	13/06/04	78
	Chance	Doris M	13/06/04	81
	Clark	Edith Flora	26/04/04	82
	Corrigan	Agnes	23/10/04	84
	Dellar	Marshall	27/09/04	80
	Di Folco	Antonio	18/07/04	77
	Duddridge	Jack	28/08/04	95
	Eskins	Roy M	02/06/04	73
	Finney	Jack	23/07/04	75
	Greatorex	James A	05/08/04	89
	Griffiths	Frances M	14/07/04	72
	Hankey	David	14/08/04	66
	Hollingworth	Kenneth	23/05/04	85
	MacLeod	Elizabeth	16/05/04	85
	Mansell	George W	09/06/04	84
	Marsden	Winifred J	08/08/04	81
	Millard	Horace T	09/07/04	88
	Muir	David M	25/06/04	82
	Page	Maurice G	23/06/04	73
	Powell	Peter R	10/10/04	77
	Sandy	William N	22/04/04	91
	Soderberg	Sybil E A	09/05/04	83
	Winn	Geoffrey E	18/06/04	79

LON30	Hayward	Norman A	15/05/04	76
London	Dartnell	Edith M	07/06/04	75
	Ivens	Michael	04/11/04	77
	Johnson	Colin	01/08/04	72
	Kondrat	Anthony	22/06/04	83
	Russell	Harold W	03/05/04	81
	Sourbutts	Leonard G	30/06/04	80
	Smith	Patricia R	17/09/04	74
	Wakerley	Robert J	23/05/04	83
	Walford	Peter	23/06/04	69
	Wiggins	Allan B	17/07/04	90
Manchester	Dalgleish	Stanley	27/05/04	76
	Petts	Frank B	26/10/04	81
Newcastle	Hutton	Peter	30/09/04	74
N. Zealand	Haslam	Robin	19/05/04	70
Norwich	Christie	James	13/10/04	79
	Page	Kenneth W	18/10/04	82
Powers	Astin	Eric	14/06/04	81
	Dean	Charles E	29/05/04	86
	Flint	Stanley H	06/05/04	88
	Paul	Charles W	04/10/04	86
	Wells	Maurice H	09/07/04	87
Putney	Bing	Marjorie A	10/10/04	99
	Farrell	Margaret D	26/07/04	89
	Salvage	Emily K	31/05/04	87
Radlett	O'Hare	Michael D	13/05/04	85
Reading	Gray	Ronald H	12/09/04	87
S'hampton	Gates	Lindsay H	30/08/04	83
	Gosden	Roy E	30/06/04	66
	Prince	Kenneth G	18/06/04	77
	Yorke	Edward	02/10/04	85
Stevenage	Auld	John M	26/09/04	78
	Dunn	Gladys V	07/09/04	84
	Field	Peter V	07/06/04	76
	Redmond	Rodney T	15/10/04	70
	Sawyer	Tom E	24/09/04	85
Taunton	Gale	George W	12/08/04	79
W. Gorton	Edmundson	Harold	04/07/04	84
	Lloyd	John	25/05/04	84
	Shallcross	James	23/08/04	90
Winsford	Came	William R	17/05/04	72
	Bethel	William	13/09/04	79
	Cumberbatch	John H	14/10/04	88
	Ford	Arnold N	13/10/04	73
	Jenkins	George	28/08/04	64
	Montford	Griffith E	26/09/04	70
	Staley	Margaret	31/08/04	67
	Townsend	Derek S	18/03/04	74
	Wynn	Irene	05/05/04	80

ICL Fund

Includes people who died in service

BIR03	Hyslop	George R	01/01/05	55
BRA01	Anderton-Brown	John	20/12/04	64
BSN01	Docherty	Kenneth J	29/10/04	61
HOM99	Jones	Marrilyn	10/10/04	57
	Ley	David J	27/10/04	57
KID01	Harrison	Joseph	14/01/05	73
LON11	Dennison	Alison M	19/11/04	74
LON91	Fowler	Ian	31/12/04	55
MAN05	Batty	Michael	27/01/05	64
	Lloyd	Paul D	04/12/04	65
	Sharma	Om P	28/12/04	67
MAN12	Harris	Susan G	10/09/04	50
	Maguire	John J	27/09/04	67

REA21	Reeves	Chris G	07/02/05	72
STE04	Hayhurst	Michael K	19/12/04	70
STE09	Renaud	Wayne D	01/01/05	45
WIN01	Jenkins	David E	26/09/04	68
WSR01	Chana	Balbir S	29/10/04	72

PENSIONER REPS

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Pensioners' Website

The website which was fully launched in July 2004 can be found at **http://uk.fujitsu.com/pensioner**.

The open area can be accessed by anybody but only ICL Fund pensioners and deferred pensioners can get into the members area, after they have registered.

You can then provide a mini CV to identify yourself to old colleagues, change address details, send emails to other pensioners via an email relay system, and opt to have Bits & Bytes sent electronically.

Immediate news can be distributed quickly rather than wait for the publication of this magazine, so you should look at the website on a regular basis so that you keep up to date.

The official History of ICL by Martin Campbell-Kelly, published in 1989, is available again. Negotiations are in progress for a special price for pensioners. Look at the website, where details will be given when it is finalised. If you are not on the Internet contact the editor of Bits & Bytes.

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**

NEXT ISSUE

Copy for the Autumn 2005 issue must be submitted by 1 September 2005, but would be appreciated earlier.