

Bits & Bytes

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No 39

Editorial

I accessed 4oD to see the Channel 4 programme broadcast on 30 March 2014 titled "Dambuster's Great Escape" about the sinking of the Tirpitz. Regular readers may remember Frank Tilley's story published in B&B No 28 Spring 2009, when he told the story as a flight engineer on a Lancaster of 617 Squadron that was on that successful mission. Frank was interviewed on this Channel 4 programme.

Last Autumn's edition of B&B carried Dave Becket's story of his career in Local Government ending up as Mayor of Newcastle-under-Lyme. I know another ex-engineer, Peter Beard, who became Mayor of Reading after he retired. Can anybody contribute names of ex-ICL staff that went on to make a name for themselves after ICT/ICL?

Now that you are reading this edition can you please inform all your ex colleagues that Bits & Bytes has not finished. Many people I meet think that it is no longer produced because they don't get it through the post. It will continue on www.bitsandbytes.shedlandz.co.uk every March and September.

However in the absence of copy I have to think very carefully about its future. Please submit copy or I will feel that Bits & Bytes has run its course and I will finish it!

Adrian Turner

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Life before ICT/ICL

Earthy Matters.

Continuing my story of life before ICL, in B&B No 37, at the Mining Research Establishment, this is of an odd event that occurred in the early '60s: it is still a little mysterious even now.

Before the advent of large scale machinery a favoured way of winning coal in the less gassy pits was by blasting. A series of holes were bored in the coal face, an explosive charge inserted in each and the whole series of shots wired together electrically. After suitable warning had been given to clear the vicinity, the Shotfirer made contact and the face was brought down by the subsequent explosion. After waiting for the dust to clear, all you had then to do was to break up the larger lumps and shovel it all into tubs or onto the conveyor belt. The Shotfirer was a highly responsible and respected member of the team. If a charge did not go off he had the unenviable task of

finding out why, and of course, no one wanted one to go off prematurely.

The North East of England was not only the birthplace of steam railways (pace Richard Trevithick) but also a pioneer of heavy electric traction. There were extensive marshalling yards for all the heavy industry and shunting used powerful electric locos. Of course, everything was earthed as necessary. Every pit had an Earth Point with a water-loving shrub growing on it. If the shrub wilted you proceeded to water the Earth Point to ensure good contact. (Incidentally, I discovered the Earth Point of my local Tesco's the other day, but it didn't have a shrub over it).

One day at M.R.E. there was gathered a little huddle of senior staff; they spoke quietly together so that lowly forms of life such as me could not hear them. For a young chap this was all the more reason to listen as hard as he decently could. All I could discern was 'transients; premature detonation' and other vaguely alarming expressions. No one knew what was going on and it was deemed essential that 'certain people' in the Industry should be kept in ignorance of the whole affair. Ultimately it was decided to despatch me to the pit at South Shields with a twelve channel recorder to take some measurements. (As an aside, the coalface at South Shields extended out some miles under the sea and in the Good Old Days, the pitmen, for such we must call them in the N.E., were not paid for their journey to and from it: which partly explains their attitude to Authority). However, I was under dry land for this and it was somewhat ridiculous in that, so confidential was the matter, I was not allowed to know what it was I was supposed to be measuring! To be fair, with hindsight, perhaps nobody knew. So I set off without much of an idea of what was to be done (perhaps good training for a future career in I.T.?). At the same time it was obviously something serious, so I decided to measure everything I could possibly think of, over and over again. The Recorder used light-sensitive paper and I had several reels and all the paraphernalia for developing and fixing. A pit makes quite a good darkroom except there is no red light, so everything had to be done by touch and timing (and kept dust-free, which was more or less achieved by putting everything in a bag elasticated at the wrists).

The resulting traces would never win a Photography Monthly award but they clearly showed incredible peaks and troughs of current and voltage thousands of feet underground. Now, unbeknownst to me, someone else was up above arranging for the huge electric locos to commence hauling heavy trains of wagons at

different times and under various loads. A comparison was required. About 80% of my readings were necessarily irrelevant; after all, I was clueless (and I see many old colleagues nodding now) but enough was left to show a correlation between what was happening above and the spikes below. If only we'd known what was being looked for we could have done much better. However, enough was there to show that, contrary to general belief, a significant electric field could be detected thousands of feet underground, earthing or no earthing. Could these have set off shot cartridges?

So what was it that triggered off this investigation? No one was saying, and it took me a long time to work out what it was all about: I knew nothing of the characteristics needed to fire the cartridges. Nothing was ever published about the findings, and now my boss, and probably those few other people in the know, have passed on. The findings were, though, of some interest from the point of view of physics and I believe that as a result, the shots were modified as to electric ignition characteristics, and the loco drivers were instructed to alter their style of starting heavy loads from a halt, for that was when the truly heavy currents, and hence penetrating fields, were formed.

Was anyone killed as a result of premature firing? I rather doubt it, since it is unlikely (though far from impossible) that it could have been hushed up. Could then a disaster have occurred with great loss of life? On the face of it, there seems to me every possibility. So who was that far-seeing person who had the intuition that this could happen? We shall probably never know.

Whether or not the actions outlined above were successful or not I do not know, but we must assume so, for nothing more was ever heard of this subsequently.

So next time, when the young people bring you their physics homework, remember: Earth is always the point of zero potential. Isn't it?

Varos Shahbazian, Harrow

Life in ICT/ICL

ICL Training Centre, Letchworth,

Although it's been a considerable age since I worked at ICL, I recently came across this Pensioners newsletter. I have very fond memories of a friendly, helpful and polite world that was ICL at Ickneild Way in Letchworth. It was at a time when I was a young and inexperienced member of the teaching team there in the late 1970's.

I was very fortunate enough to be accepted into the company in 1976, when I moved up to Hertfordshire, from the country depths of Somerset where I had served my apprenticeship as an Instrument Technician at the nuclear power stations at Hinkley Point. It was a massive step change, to be in a world of air conditioned computer suites and classrooms rather than being in a noisy, hot, steamy and often contaminated world of nuclear power generation. I had just prior to applying to ICL, been working as an Instrument Engineer teaching apprentices but the growing lack of interest and discipline in the young ones of the period made me jump at the chance to teach committed engineers in ICL who for whatever reason, wanted or needed to learn for their own careers. It was a pleasure to be with individuals who wanted to be there, or so they said!

I was taken on to teach the hardware, it's maintenance and fault finding on the then 'New Range' systems that were entering service, from about the mid 70s, and was totally overwhelmed in my first week to meet such a beast as a 2966 mainframe, very very daunting.

From my misty memory I recall I had about 6 weeks to get to grips with understanding and being ready to teach the peripheral controllers, store and processor units (SAC, SMAC and OCP from recollection). Somehow I managed to get to grips with the task, but no doubt to those engineers on my early courses, I must have appeared very 'green' as although all very 'new' and 'shiny' to me, they had seen it all before, in the 1900 series mainframes.

I spent a very enjoyable couple of years at Letchworth before a family bereavement made me feel the urgent need to move myself and my young family to be nearer my home of Somerset. Very luckily ICL and my superiors at the time, Richard Baker and Bill Fitton, pulled out all the stops to make the move possible. I moved to Winfrith in Dorset where a large 2976 or 2980 (I forget which) was being commissioned; so went back to engineering albeit without getting my hands so dirty as I had when working in the electricity generation industry.

On leaving Letchworth and with courses planned, I vaguely remember running a last few from hotels on the M4 corridor around Swindon, using airtime overnight for hands on training at places such as WH Smith and House of Fraser. The latter were not too impressed after one evening of using their system for training. I had left a backplane fault on the system, resulting in their engineers not finding it and so couldn't bring up their system the next morning.

My days with ICL, ended in the spring of 1980, when an opportunity to further my career came in the guise of Barclays Bank, who had their International operations in Poole Dorset. Despite being an IBM operation, the lure of a cheap mortgage proved irresistible and so a further move was made, apologies to anyone who felt I was being disloyal, it was purely financial!

I started with Barclays International, as a lowly assistant systems analyst. I was only able to make the move from hardware to software and systems based on my time with ICL. A further career retraining followed which I survived and subsequently travelled the world.

I will however, always be very grateful for my time with ICL and the many individuals who really helped me when I needed it. I know a number of them still live in the North Hertfordshire and South Bedfordshire areas and I wish them all well. For any that may remember him, I still see another ex ICL engineer who is now my closest friend, a one David Tabb. He now runs a sizeable marquee business in Poole in Dorset. For those who might remember is still as 'confident' as ever..... We intend to make a trip later this year to the National Computing Museum in the grounds of Bletchley Park, near Milton Keynes to see the ICL 2966 (I think that's the one) which is there as a memory to the past. If anyone has not been, it's well worth a visit for a nostalgic look at how things were before 'everyone' knew about computers as they do today..... or thinks they do.

Steven Walker

**ICL Training Centre, Letchworth, 1977 - 1979.
01202 871561**

Life after ICL

Since leaving ICL in 1976 – briefly!

I first joined ICL as a Student Apprentice in 1962 at the Letchworth Training Centre; went through university and the summer placement periods around Letchworth and Stevenage and, on graduating, joined the Processor Development Group at Stevenage specifically working on 1901 and 1901A. It was a fantastic group of people to work with. There was a natural enthusiasm that motivated all of us as we worked through the design phase; commissioned that important first prototype; ironed out any bugs; convinced the CESO engineers that we'd got it right!! (Sorry, Adrian, couldn't resist that one!); finalised the design data; handed it over into production and supported the market launch. In the early 70s, I was approached about joining the Personnel function and did so on a trial basis. That led to a permanent appointment and after a couple of years I became the Personnel Manager for the Stevenage labs. The main task was recruitment, and more recruitment, to try to keep up with the incessant demand in the early 70's for skilled labour against the continuous flow of development programs that were being undertaken.

Then came that decision to move the labs from Stevenage to West Gorton and I was then given the task of handling the Personnel aspects of the Stevenage end of that transfer. Anyone there at the time will still, I'm sure, have their own personal recollections. It was a very difficult time for all of us, even for those who knew from the outset that they were being offered a post elsewhere. I won't dwell on that phase any further, except to say that when I finally left Stevenage at the end of 1976, it was a pretty bleak place. Everyone had gone; the equipment had gone; even the rubbish had gone. Whole areas were totally empty and there was an eerie echo around the place. I didn't return to STE04 until the Stevenage & Letchworth Old Boys Reunion there in October 2013.

In the meantime.....

I joined ITT. It was a very different, very fast moving world, not just because it was American managed but it was also in consumer electronics with everything being driven by market demand. One of ITT's mantras at the time was "if this isn't contributing directly to the bottom line, why are we bothering with it?" Everything was driven by the accounts and the balance sheet, even to the extent that each divisional Chief Accountant reported directly to his accounting boss further up the organisation with only functional reporting to the divisional Managing Director. That kept the MDs on their toes! It brought home to me that Stevenage had been rather "sheltered" from the outside world! My time involved a period in ITT's HQ in New York and with a sister Company in southern Germany which underlined still further the commercial realities of life. This period provided the commercial basis that served me very well through the rest of my career.

I later joined Smiths Industries, a diverse group of engineering manufacturing Companies in their marine operation, Kelvin Hughes Ltd.

Kelvin Hughes has an extraordinary history with continuous commercial activities stretching right back into the early 1700's. The Hughes family were watch and chronometer makers and had an impressive customer list including Captain Cook and Captain

Bligh of the Bounty. William Thompson, later Lord Kelvin, was a Scottish instrument maker involved with compasses, depth sounders and, in the mid 1800's, laid the first trans-Atlantic cable. Both their instrument making businesses continued in keen competition over many years until one night, during the blitz in 1941, when both companies had their City of London offices bombed. The following morning the companies talked about a merger which came about early in 1942. I suspect that hadn't been Mr Hitler's intention that night but it certainly did the companies a favour!

The Company specialises in producing marine navigational systems for both naval and commercial customers worldwide as well as providing a full navigational chart supply and management business. We also supplied a range of navigational electronics for the leisure and small workboat market. Technical advance was, inevitably, a particularly key factor in maintaining a competitive market position. We were very early with raster scan radars, and with ARPA radar that is required by marine legislation on all vessels above 500 tons. ARPAs can identify up to 100 separate targets; calculate their relative courses and speeds; identify those that are heading closest to your own course; identify the closest point of approach and the time to that position and sound specific warnings if any other target is on a collision course or would come within some pre-specified range of your own vessel.

Back in the pre GPS days, electronic navigators were decidedly primitive. In northern Europe the Decca system was popular in certain marine sectors, especially with the fishing industry. In North America, the Loran-C system was in operation. Both were land based radio beacon systems where signals could be picked up by specific receivers which could then calculate your own position. In collaboration with Navstar, we were in the forefront of the development and marketing of the early marine GPS navigators. Initially, these really caught on with the leisure market, while many professional mariners had their doubts about this new-fangled technology. I recollect the scramble of customers at an Earls Court London Boat Show one year when we first launched a small boat GPS. The market did calm down eventually and the professional operators became convinced.

The supply of marine paper chart outfits, and the related update services, were also a key part of our business. Once again, through marine legislation, ship operators are required to maintain up to date chart data on their vessels at all times. In the days of just paper charts, the corrections were distributed in tracing paper form so that ship operators could mark up their corrections manually. With current day electronic charts, the correction process is via a satellite or internet link direct with the ship's chart database.

Over more recent years, the progressive integration of radar data, chart data and navigation data into a single integrated electronic system has been a vitally significant development. Many of the larger ships these days will install an Integrated Bridge with all the prime equipment and sensors fully integrated. So a current day main ships radar can combine the radar data overlaid with the navigation chart data, in exactly the same visible form as the paper chart data, and overlaid with data from the navigator showing the ships planned track and waypoints. None of this

changes, in any way, the ultimate responsibility that the Captain has for the safe navigation of the vessel. He (or she) has an incredible array of information available but it is down to the Captain to interpret that data and make the necessary navigation decisions.

Technical progress continues to be vital today. More recently Kelvin Hughes has developed the world's only entirely digital navigation and surveillance radars – no magnetron and no microwave. This provides much superior target discrimination performance and virtually eliminates sea clutter effects. The design is fully protected by world patents and our competitors cannot produce their own version. Completely new, and very significant, markets are opening up around the world as a result.

My role over the latter part of my career was heading up the Commercial activities of the business where over 90% of the business was export. We operated through six subsidiary overseas companies and through a network of agents across the world and these were supported by direct visits ourselves focusing on their activities on main equipment supply and the subsequent product support.

The travel requirement was immense and any initial novelty wore off quite quickly into a resigned disillusion about airports, airlines and hotels and the multiple excuses they use! The advantage, occasionally, was that I was able to extend visits to some of the more interesting places and have a couple of days appreciating “the view”. Tokyo in springtime is quite wonderful; Lagos, at any time, isn't!! Fortunately, Tokyo was a regular port of call. The Japanese shipyards had a dominant position in world shipbuilding in the late 1980s and we were one of the few companies regularly exporting UK manufactured electronics into Japan at that time. Admittedly, this was due to foreign owners specifying our equipment on their new ships being built in the Japanese yards, but this was still one in the eye for our direct Japanese competitors!

The Japanese had an excellent work ethic; you could have a detailed, unrecorded, discussion with any of them and pick up the same conversation weeks later at exactly the same point and understanding. They also had a great respect for each other with much bowing to each other whenever they met. I've even seen them bowing to each other during phone conversations!

We had an excellent Japanese agent and I got to know him and his family very well. He worked extremely hard and delivered results; he also played very hard and, over the years, I spent quite a few evenings with him in the bars and restaurants in central Tokyo. However much he drank in the evening always seemed to have absolutely no effect whatever on him the following morning! I also spent several weekends at a holiday house in the Hokone National Park on the slopes of Mount Fuji – an absolutely beautiful place away from the incessant bustle of central Tokyo. A classic Japanese style house, paper walls inside the house, a single straw mattress on the floor and an enormous bathroom with the hot water coming directly from the volcano's hot springs.

The Japanese progressively lost their unique trading position as, particularly, South Korea and China became truly competitive world operators. The South Korean Hyundai shipyard is just mind bending,

stretching for nearly four miles along the coast at Ulsan; still the largest shipyard in the world. It has the capability of delivering around 45 large ships a year which requires modules for at least 25 or so being in build at any one time. The logistics of building and bringing together the vast array of individual modules for so many ships, to cost and to time is truly immense. If any supplier screws up on their deliveries into the yard they probably wouldn't be a supplier for very much longer.

While we were trading directly with customers in around 80 countries worldwide, our Russian business was of particular note as we were very active in the country well before the end of the Cold War. Soviet Russia had significant deep sea commercial fleets operating internationally and to do so, they needed navigation electronics on board that met International Maritime Organisation (IMO) requirements. Soviet domestic product failed to meet those requirements so their deep sea fleets had to be fitted with overseas product to support their international trading activities. Over some years, we had already built up direct relationships with the key shipping companies, especially those operating out of Leningrad, Odessa, Novorossiysk and Vladivostok. We also had direct working relationships with the appropriate ministries in Moscow, especially, the Ministry of Merchant Marine and the Ministry of Overseas Trade. Seemingly hours were spent in ministry conference rooms in seemingly endless meetings. While there were usually two or three of us, there could well be twenty or more on the other side of the table. We would know who four or five of them were, from introductions or previous meetings, but we never got to know who all the others were. Meetings tended to alternate between having the windows open, to allow volumes of their cigarette smoke to escape, to having the windows closed to keep out the freezing temperatures outside! But all this was the only way of building business with the system at that time so we stuck with it and it worked. I was told before I first went to Soviet Russia that all the building blocks for doing business were all there but they tended to be “different shape from usual” and may not be immediately recognised for what they were. Being patient and gradually working up your own personal and Company credibility was a vital factor to developing our business. This was all during the Cold War period when there were very few westerners on Russian streets. While we were regarded with some curiosity I have no doubt whatever that the KGB were watching.

Staying in Moscow for several days was an experience. In the mid 80's, there was little choice but to use the Hotel Ukraina, a vast edifice which seemed to have miles of corridors and millions of doors and hardly any of what you would normally expect by way of customer service. The rooms were grim and uncomfortable; items on the restaurant menu were almost always “off” and substitutes tended to be in the form of a mysterious soup, mainly based on vegetables. But this was luxury compared to some of the Intourist hotels in other cities across Soviet Russia.

In later years, post the ending of the Cold War, western hotel operators were quick to take up opportunities in Russia. As part of this we switched to the new Hotel Aerostar, which was an entirely French owned and run hotel with all the normal hotel

consumables being shipped in from France daily. The facilities and restaurants were excellent, but at a price! We soon had Russian colleagues hinting that something we were discussing probably needed to continue over dinner!

One of the most extraordinary prospects arose, in the late 80's. At a regular meeting with the Overseas Trade Ministry, after we had dealt with the agenda matters, we were asked if we would be prepared to consider entering into a joint venture agreement with the largest of the Russian commercial radar manufacturers. They wouldn't have asked a question like that without pretty exhaustive consideration of the issues beforehand. So we welcomed the approach and decided to enter the negotiation stage for setting up a joint venture. It was fairly obvious that part of the Russian shopping list was a short cut to technology transfer. We didn't actually have too much of a problem with that provided we had control over which technologies and there was an equivalent trade off somewhere in the arrangement. Identifying the quid pro quo list was a key priority over the period ahead so that, as far as possible, we could make an objective commercial decision on the matter. The negotiations took many months and sometimes in minute detail. The most difficult item was the provision of a hard currency financial contribution from then Soviet Government in parallel with our own financial provision. There was a significant initial funding requirement to set up an appropriate manufacturing facility to western standards within part of our partner Company facility. We got there finally with all the pieces in place and signed the main joint venture agreements in 1989. We were back and forth quite frequently during this phase and were even provided with open visas (a rare commodity I was told). Six of the partner company staff, who were to become the key staff in the joint venture, spent four months in the UK on a detailed training and familiarisation program. For most, it was their first trip outside Russia and quite a revelation for them. They were all extremely competent and had little problem picking up the technicalities of the equipment that were due to be manufactured in Russia and the production processes involved.

Up to this point, the whole process of setting up this joint venture had essentially been an act of faith. At that time there was very little actual experience anywhere on the Soviets operating joint ventures with western partners. Having such a competent technical capability within the venture gave us reassurance that this might actually work. Towards the end of their period in the UK, we went through the final agreement on the equipment list for setting up the entire venture factory facility and the procurement of all that from this end. The joint venture engineers were a key part of that process and oversaw the equipment being shipped from our warehouse to the partner company in Rostov-on-Don down by the Black Sea. They then returned home to receive, unpack and install all the factory installation. On our next visit there, the place was a hive of activity with the main installations well ahead of schedule. There were detailed problems to resolve inevitably but the previously empty factory space was starting to look very impressive. It had already attracted a lot of Russian attention apparently. I was told there wasn't any other factory anywhere in Russia with such facilities, especially an assembly and test area fully

equipped for anti-static handling. Shortly afterwards the first shipment of radar kits were shipped to them to start the main manufacturing process. This stretched the partner company still further as part of the agreement involved a range of piece parts and assemblies being manufactured and supplied by them. That all worked pretty well also and the first production units were soon ready for shipment to customers.

In the first year of operation, over 100 ship sets went through the joint venture process and onto a long list of Russian customer ships. And this was in addition to us continuing direct business from the UK with several of the largest Russian ship operators. This was way beyond anybody's most optimistic forecasts. All the partners were very pleased with the way the business was developing and we started applying our thoughts to growing the business further.

However at the same time, significant changes were starting to take place at Soviet Government level. Gorbechev had already introduced his Perestroika policy aimed specifically at accelerating economic and social progress which resulted in market economy principles being adopted across the country. When Gorbechev became Soviet President he introduced his Glasnost policy which gave the Soviet people far greater freedoms than had been possible previously. While all of this was well overdue in Russia, it caused massive economic and social upheaval which subsequently contributed to the breakup of the Soviet Union.

As far as the Joint Venture was concerned, the single central ministry customer for product was gone and our partners had to learn, very quickly, about marketing and profit. They thought that marketing was having a vodka, or two, with a friend from a shipping company and they had no concept whatever of profit. We wheeled our own marketing people and accountants in to conduct our own briefings so that the venture could restructure its activities to focus on, to capitalise on, and to compete within the new business environment. While they understood the changing situation, their biggest problems were getting used to making their own business decisions and taking responsibility for them. Neither had been required under the old centralised Soviet system – they had just been required to conform to the central plan. But they soon got the idea and the business resumed its activities and growth.

That Joint Venture still operates today, although, in reality it is probably the great grandson of the original business due to different stages of development both in products and other agreements with other western partners. While marine navigational radar remains a key product line, surveillance radar, aimed specifically at border control, has become a new business in itself. The Russian government continues to take border control extremely seriously as a result of thousands of miles of their borders now being in elsewhere following the breakup of the Soviet Union.

From our point of view the Joint Venture worked and worked well. It delivered better business results than we had required; it consolidated our existing position with the established Russian deep sea operators; it consolidated our working relationships direct with the Soviet/Russian ministries throughout the latter part of the Cold War and subsequently.

And it also provided a proven business model which we have since used in India and China.

I retired from a thoroughly enjoyable, though challenging, role some years ago. While I continued a number of consulting and business activities subsequently, these were always intended to be about "winding down gradually" over a period of time. I have virtually dropped all of them these days, but the phone does still occasionally ring with a "do you have a few days to spare to help us with....." kind of message! While that is somewhat reassuring, I don't allow it to interrupt the more serious business of making the most of retirement.

Geoff Smith

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Letters

MAKING TRACKS

One morning recently, I was out cycling when a thought struck me; I hadn't anything for Adrian for the next Bytes & Bytes. I thought I'd do a piece on biking as a way of keeping fit in retirement. The next thing that struck me was a car, that couldn't wait for the lights to change on a crossing and decided to cut left round the approaching corner. I had little choice but to turn with him and was forced into the curb and came off, landing heavily on top of the bike. The passenger got out and explained the sun was in their eyes. I didn't regard this as an apology and said so. He retreated, insisting it wasn't his fault. The driver remained behind the wheel, a car behind him honked and they shot off. I extricated myself from the bike frame and gingerly got up. I'd cut my shin on the pedals and a bruise, as bright as the offending sun, rose on my knee. I straightened my handlebars and deciding not to go for a spin.

Shaken up, I realized how lucky I'd been.

Irresponsibly, I've never worn a helmet, never feeling the need for one, never having been involved in an accident. At 88, I seem to heal slowly and a month later I'm having second thoughts about recommending cycling for health reasons, at least on the highway.

The roads are no longer safe. Many younger motorists have never been cyclists and consequently don't notice them. Equally, some bikers flout the rules of the road. Admittedly, these are generalizations but if I stuck to facts it wouldn't help my argument!

Most cycle lanes are parking lanes for delivery vans; they are not maintained and are more of an assault course than a track. Cycling on main roads is hairy, but it's difficult to get anywhere without using them. Even if the money was there for separate cycle routes, I'm not sure there are enough potential bikers to justify the cost or could there be hundreds of nervous cyclists waiting for bike-only highways to be built? I checked the local demographics. The average age in our borough is around 40. Pensioners make up fewer than 20% and we over-80's a mere 2%. If the council follows the dictum, "The greatest good for the greatest number", there's not much chance of getting a separate cycling track!

From the latest Bits & Bytes, calculating the average age for going to that great computer room in the sky is 84, I'm thinking by the time the council get round to considering the idea of cycle tracks, I'll be lucky to be campaigning for separate wheel chair highways!

Dennis Goodwin

Reunions

Newcastle Friday Club

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

Mike Green 0191 386 6787

ICL Central London

The next reunion will be on Wednesday **15 October 2014** at **The Shakespeare's Head, 64 Kingsway** from 12 noon. The pub is on the eastern side of Kingsway just south of Holborn tube station.

Bill Williams 020 7607 9408

256meteorahlhorn@gmail.com

Stevenage & Letchworth Old Boys (renamed Punch Card Reunion)

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

Geoff Smith will give a talk entitled "World Shipping – well, some of it anyway"

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

Adrian Turner 01491 872012

MOD MOB

Retired and active staff from the London and MOD UK unit have 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@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@morrismail.co.uk

Watford-Harrow- Feltham

Mike Ray 01895 230194

East Grinstead 81 Club

Gordon Franklin 01342 328479

East Midlands UB40s

Brian Skeldon 0115 9725119

ICL Double Majority Association

Giles Allen 07951 937124 gilesaallen@aol.com

ICL Midlands

Brian Trow 01785 257317

LEO Computers Society

John Andrews

GlobalLeoSociety@gmail.com

Liverpool Engineers

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

George Lynn 01744 29984

Surrey Engineers

Trevor Harding 01483 565144

trevor@harding14.plus.com

West Gorton Reunion

Eric W Watts 01457 875080

West Branch Engineers

Eric Reynolds has moved. No replacement notified.

West Kent Reunion

Ron Harding 01732 761076

ICL Old Buggas

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

ExICL Kidsgrove

Nick Edmonds 01270 585953

nick.edmonds@yahoo.co.uk

OBITUARIES

Nortel Fund

BIR03	Brian J	Simmons	16/05/14	86
	Sydney M	Fisher	27/03/14	90
	S J	Bishop	21/06/14	90
BRA01	Beryl M	Merritt	13/06/14	76
BRA02	Alan J	Kendall	06/09/14	85
BRS06	Francis R	Roberts	07/04/14	82
CRE01	D L	Billington	26/06/14	89
ELS01	Allen F	Clark	06/03/14	66
FEL01	Sydney J	Parsons	13/05/14	92
	Alfred J	Pettit	22/07/14	96
	John	Ceeney	18/07/14	67
HOC01	Arnold I	Robinson	15/04/14	92
KID01	Doris M	Booth	23/03/14	87
	Harry	Wright	20/05/14	93
	Mary E	Baddeley	18/08/14	88
	Tony	Sadler	28/05/14	88
	Lily	Richardson	28/08/14	83
	Mary E	Shepherd	29/04/14	93
	Margaret A	Foulkes	24/06/14	84
LET01	Terence N	Pearce	28/07/14	87
LET04	John H	Fabris	13/06/14	96
LET05	Gwendoline	Willatts	21/08/14	90
	Mavis G	Judd	15/04/14	85
	Geoffrey	Cooling	30/05/14	89
	Ralph C	Kitchener	27/08/14	95
	John David	Swift	28/07/14	87
LET06	Harry J	Lambert	13/03/14	80
LON11	Dennis	Wicks	17/08/14	80
LON14	Alfred W	Ford	17/03/14	89
LON24	Peter	Hardman	01/05/14	90
	Roy F	Silver	04/07/14	79
	Thomas J	Hillier	03/07/14	92
LON30	Dennis H	Rodway	06/05/14	91
LUT01	Deirdre D	Woodcock	30/03/14	87
	William T	Cliff	05/04/14	93
MAN01	Arthur	Underhill	28/02/14	92
MAN05	A	Hasan	24/05/14	88
STE04	K A	Brown	09/03/14	75
	Brian E	Walker	05/06/14	87
	Gerald	Gearing	07/06/14	84
TAP01	James K	Lessey	04/05/14	78
Unknown				
Location	P G	Watts	16/08/14	93
	John	Blinston	27/08/14	91
	Peter M	Ruhemann	03/06/14	81
	Bert	Pettit	10/08/14	90
	J M	Anderson	26/08/14	78

Edith	Scott	01/04/14	78
Dennis	Ball	03/07/14	69
Malcolm J	Murphy	06/04/14	86
John	Parker	12/05/14	80
Elizabeth S	Kay	31/05/14	87
Jeanne V	Canty	07/03/14	98
C W	Bullock	01/05/14	98
Doris V	Smith	29/03/14	75
Mary T	Corry	09/07/14	93
Leonard R	Brackstone	22/07/14	77
William E	Riley	11/07/14	78
James	Cordner	09/07/14	84
T	Astles	16/04/14	85
Frederick A	Lawton	27/02/14	76
Raymond G	Lawrence	20/04/14	86
Walter J	Lilley	14/05/14	89
Cyril F	Wootten	18/05/14	77
Ronald D	Ginn	04/03/14	89
Michael J	Corrall	18/08/14	91
Charles W	Munnery	25/08/14	70
David W	Skinner	02/06/14	84
Dennis	Harold	05/04/14	84
William	Owens	26/04/14	82
John P	Smith	13/06/14	80
G H	Walker	30/08/14	80
Cecil W	Keating	31/03/14	81
J W	Williamson	02/04/14	84
Joseph D	Nicholls	03/06/14	85
Kenneth C	Fraser	04/09/14	76
George M	Bragger	24/04/14	82
Jack	Redpath	19/03/14	75

ICL Fund

Limited information supplied by friends and family

LET03	Joe	Gardner	03/12/13	73
KID01	Ian D	MacArthur	13/02/14	79

Brian John Simmons

16th November 1936 - 16th May 2014

Brian died unexpectedly on 16th May 2014 after arranging a reunion with colleagues and friends only a week earlier. He was full of humour and energy reminiscing about times past and planning a golf match for the following weekend.

Brian was well liked and much respected amongst his many friends and colleagues. He could always be relied on and was competent and conscientious in all aspects his work.

He started his career after leaving the RAF with ICT as a trainee computer engineer on 1900 series computers eventually working in the Birmingham area. He worked at West Midland Gas Board as an engineer then Supervisor and in the 70's as a Engineering Manager for Large Systems in Customer Engineering Services.

Brian left ICL in the 80's to join Ericsson as a Service Manager. He was there for a couple of years until

Ericsson was taken over by ICL, enabling his return to the company as a Senior Project Manager. Back in the ICL, then later Fujitsu fold, he continued managing a successful team of project managers until his retirement in November 2001.

Joe Gardner

03 Feb 1940 – 03 Dec 2013

Joseph was born in Blackburn, Lancashire. He was extremely proud of his roots even though he lived “down south” for most of his life.

His first few years were spent in Blackburn with his elder brother, living with their aunt and cousin, whilst their parents were in the Belgian Congo as missionaries. On their parents return, after the end of the war, they gained a little sister.

The family lived in Rishton, near Blackburn, until 1952 when they moved to Belfast. After leaving school in 1955 Joseph began an apprenticeship as a mechanical engineer at the age of 15½ with a company then called British Tabulating Machines, which became International Computers & Tabulators, then ICL. He worked in Castlereagh, Whyteleafe, Letchworth and Stevenage. Although he started his working life as an engineer, Joseph became involved in developing computer systems as early as the 1960s and latterly as part of Network Systems. This became a serious hobby, too.

Joseph met his wife in the early 1960s. He moved to Stevenage in 1964 and married there a couple of years later. Two daughters completed the family.

Joseph took early retirement in 2002 after 46½ years’ service. At this time the ICL Double Majority Association, for employees who had completed 42 years’ service, was in a state of change with the demise of the ICL name, which then became Fujitsu Services. The company database was also changing and Joseph, as a committee member, volunteered to be the secretary of the DMA. Needless to say, his dedication to the task surpassed all expectations and, for his successor, it will not be an enviable task. He himself became a member of the association in 1997.

Joseph had a life-long interest in music. He enjoyed works by many of the great classical composers, but also some early jazz. He and his brother always shared their discoveries, even when they were much older. Joseph taught himself to play several musical instruments, including recorders, clarinet and oboe. His sister learned to play the piano and they enjoyed duetting. In his youth Joseph played clarinet in a band in Belfast and later played the oboe in an orchestra in Stevenage.

In recent years, as well as keeping himself busy with the DMA, Joseph also joined the Labour Party and helped out the local branch, often walking miles to deliver leaflets.

Joseph had an unusual sense of humour that often left us bewildered. At a gathering, he was usually the last to leave, but this time he has left far too early. He will be remembered and missed by many.

Eulogy at Joe’s funeral. His family always knew him as Joseph, but in BTM/ICT/ICL we all knew him as Joe. Editor

Ian MacArthur

I discovered very recently that Ian MacArthur passed away earlier this year. Ian spent much of his working life at ICL. Ian was a Design Engineer at

Ferranti Computer Dept West Gorton from August 1959 to 1969 as the company became ICT and then ICL. From 1969 to 1992 Ian worked on Small System Development primarily VDUs and Terminals. He was mainly at Kidsgrove working on (and managing) the design of DRS systems and their terminals, latterly with a heavy involvement in Safety, Health and Ergonomics.

After leaving ICL, Ian was Technical Director at Link Level Systems Ltd., a company formed close to Kidsgrove which employed many of the former VDU development team from ICL. They continued to have strong analogue design skills (somewhat unusual in this digital age) and continued to have close links with ICL/Fujitsu both commercially and personally. Link Level Systems merged with MBS computers to become Link Level Services in 2003 (now concentrating more on maintenance, repairs and support). Ian still had a part time engineering role with the company, even though he was now a long way past the normal retirement age. Indeed, I was told that he went into work the day before he died.

Ian was a man of great integrity, prepared to “speak out” when necessary, but always sticking to the facts and he commanded the respect of his peers and his staff.

Brian Morris

brian@morrismail.co.uk

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.

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

NEXT ISSUE

Copy for the Spring 2015 issue must be submitted by 1 February 2015, but would be appreciated earlier.

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

Due to the ICL Pension department ceasing to print and distribute Bits & Bytes, most people now only see it via the Internet.

Those of us who spend time to contribute would find it useful to know how many people read it. Is it worth the effort? Could you help me judge whether it’s worth continuing to produce Bits & Bytes by sending an email to **Bitcount@outlook.com** with the Subject word “yes”, without the quotes, if you would like me to continue. Optionally add some text to give us a clue who you are. Your email address will not be passed on in any way.

Adrian Turner: Editor Bits & Bytes