

Bits & Bytes

No 14

Editorial

ICL people became part of Fujitsu Services and in a few cases Fujitsu Consulting on 1 April 2002. In the Obituaries Section of this edition a number of people say goodbye to ICL. Whether or not the ICL Pension Fund will be rebranded has yet to be declared. This Newsletter's Banner may be changed for the next edition!

The pensions department have informed me that they are considering discontinuing monthly pay slips for pensioners, except when there are changes. Nortel Pensioners do not have them and considerable savings will be made if ICL do likewise. If you have any concerns about this proposal please ring Sue Wiffen on 01753 604013.

John Dale has contacted me about work opportunities for retired people. He was unable to give me details of this commercially sensitive project, but if you are interested go to www.b452.co.uk

The next Punched Card/Stevenage Labs reunion will take place at Stevenage 01 October 2002. Keith Crook is to talk on his career from the mid 50s in EMI to ICL. "Mega-transition from Punched Cards to Electronic Computers". All are welcome. See **Reunions** for details.

I have just been informed of the deaths of two stalwarts of Letchworth Development Centre. George Roberts and John Stewart Smith. They will both be greatly missed, as they were leading lights in Specials at Number 3 Factory.

I've finally become a Real Pensioner! I never felt that I was a pensioner until 12 January 2002 when I became 65. The extra money paid directly into my bank account is appreciated, but having more tax taken from my ICL pension does not seem right!

Adrian Turner

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ICL Organisation

ICL Voluntary redundancy scheme

As part of its drive towards profitability, ICL announced on the 12 December 2001 a rationalisation programme across its UK workforce, which will see reductions of up to 1,500 jobs. This measure is being taken because of disappointing business results against the backdrop of adverse market conditions affecting the IT industry, as a whole.

As far as is possible, ICL wishes to achieve the necessary reductions through voluntary redundancy. Only if insufficient volunteers are forthcoming will the Company have recourse to selected redundancies. Under the Voluntary Redundancy Scheme, all applications will be considered but acceptance will be subject to the needs of the business.

ICL currently employs 17,700 people, of which 11,500 are UK-based. It designs, builds and operates IT systems & services in Europe, Middle East and Africa.

The reductions will apply across the Group in the UK and are expected to be complete by March 2002. All affected employees will be offered guidance and support. Consultation is already underway with representatives from ICL's UK Employee Consultative Forum.

New HR Director

Fiona Colquhoun has decided to leave ICL after four years as Group Human Resources Director. Her successor who has joined ICL is Roger Leek and took up his new position in November 2001.

ICL Scotland office

ICL Scotland officially opened its new Glasgow office at Braehead Business Park on 28 September 2001 in a ceremony attended by Wendy Alexander MSP, minister for enterprise and lifelong learning.

ICL Good News

£4 million Yorkshire Electricity contract

ICL announced 12 Nov 2001 that it has won an extension to its contract with Yorkshire Electricity to supply its billing service systems. The contract will be worth £4 million over the next two years.

The outsourcing contract sees ICL delivering all billing and processing, via its Salford data centre. ICL will manage key business functions such as customer information, billing systems, financial systems and a helpdesk for Yorkshire Electricity IT staff. The helpdesk is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Omnitel Vodafone buy ICL

It was announced 5 Nov 2001 that ICL has successfully implemented its Prospero interconnect settlement system in 12 weeks at Italy-based Omnitel Vodafone, the second largest mobile service provider

in Europe. The contract valued at 4.6 billion Italian Lire (c£1.5 million) includes consultancy, implementation on SUN platform, systems integration and support. It is the largest interconnect product order secured by a software vendor in the European mobile sector to date. The new system manages Omnitel's GSM interconnect traffic in Italy with its interconnect partners, expected to be over 200 by June 2002.

As part of the Vodafone group, which owns the largest network in the world, Omnitel is currently launching a series of innovative pan-European mobile services, for example, offering a single tariff for roaming calls made abroad using the Vodafone networks, and allowing subscribers to use answer phone and call centre services from abroad without dialing the international prefix. The solution that ICL has delivered processes 20 million SMS records and 50 million voice CDRs a day.

Before implementing Prospero, Omnitel used one system to manage both its interconnect and retail billing requirements. With a rapid growth rate of 43% and increased complexity of its services and interconnect traffic, Omnitel needed a specialist interconnect settlement system. It chose Prospero from ICL for its proven interconnect track record within the Vodafone group - Proximus in Belgium, Libertel in Holland, Vodafone in Australia.

Lancashire C C Procurement

ICL is delivering an online procurement system to Lancashire Purchasing Agency, which will allow the Agency to deliver its services to Lancashire County Council electronically. The project will enable more than 1,000 employees to order from a range of 17,000 products, from stationery to furniture.

The contract will see the e-procurement system delivered to Lancashire County Council employees over the next three years. It utilises a secure online purchasing system based on Conecx, ICL's browser-based e-purchasing system. It will replace the paper catalogue and purchase order system currently used by council employees, cutting costs and saving time.

The Lancashire Purchasing Agency chose ICL as supplier because the Conecx system demonstrated improved efficiency of the procurement process, as well as increased profitability through reduction of procurement costs. The Agency is now able to help the council to meet UK targets set by the government for online service provision in the Modernising Government white paper.

The Conecx system allows selected users to buy items using a purchase card, with 'spending limits' varying according to responsibility and privilege of user. Through the system, purchase orders do not need to be raised for each transaction, saving both time and money. Users can check the status of their orders online at any time and set up order profiles for items they purchase regularly, in a fully password protected and secure system.

Life before ICL

Taking Flight

Flying out on a recent holiday with my wife, I was idly musing over life, as one does and thinking how lucky I am. I had an interesting start to working life, a varied and generally happy and satisfying 39 years

career from BTM to ICL and now retirement. However, it almost went in an entirely different direction.

We can all think back to key points in our lives. At the age of 18, I applied and was accepted for training in the RAF as an Air Radar Fitter, which led me to BTM and a career in computer service, but that decision came after a bitter disappointment.

I had gone on a five days assessment at RAF Hornchurch with about 250 hopefuls, wanting to be RAF pilots. Five days of medical, physical, mental, educational, aptitude and initiative tests, interviews, role-playing, debates, discussions on current affairs and checks for leadership. Each day about 50 were sent home. At least I got through to the final 50 or so, but still got the disappointing letter. I had had very high hopes.

I had had a similar 3 days assessment at RAF Northern Command, York as a sixteen years old ATC cadet. I was one of five, out of fifty, awarded a Flying Scholarship to learn to fly to Private Pilot standard at a private flying club.

After the recent holiday, I re-read my flying logbook and course notes. I received my provisional flying licence soon after my seventeenth birthday, with instructions to report for weekend instruction at Yeadon airfield – now Leeds/Bradford International Airport. There were four of us starting at the same time. Our instructor was a Captain Bruce, an ex-Fleet Air Arm pilot and we were to fly in Tiger Moths – beautiful, open, tandem cockpit, aerobatic biplanes. No radio and communication with the instructor via a speaking tube. Our instructor asked a few questions, quickly established that we knew nothing about flying and not ridden anything more complicated than a bicycle and then took each of us for a 15 minutes familiarisation flight, just to see what the plane could do. He seemed to do a roll as soon as he was off the ground and then simply threw the plane all over the sky. On landing I was really shaky, but pleased that I had not thrown up.

After a mere 7 hours of circuits and bumps, turns, stalls and spins, I took the rear seat and went for my first solo. I can still remember the mixture of thrill and apprehension and the strange feeling that the instructor was still with me. The single circuit was supposed to take 10 or 15 minutes. However, I got a fright as a Spitfire from RAF Church Fenton joined the circuit and I did three long circuits. Bruce said welcome back and thought he would have to send someone to get me.

I flew at Yeadon from October to January. It is located on a ridge of high ground and was notorious for winter ground mist and sudden falls in cloud base. One day I went up for a short navigational flight when the cloud base dropped and shrouded the airfield. I came down with the cloud, found the Guisley-Yeadon road and followed it at 50ft, turned in at the main gate, flew over and between two hangers and thankfully landed in the mist. At 18 hours we were transferred to Sherbourne in Emlet. I travelled easily each day to Yeadon, even on Sunday – one bus to Leeds and a second to the airfield gate. Sherbourne involved a 1 mile walk, bus to Wakefield, short walk, bus to Pontefract, bus to Sherbourne and a 4 mile walk to the airfield, around the perimeter. I soon learned to find a transit bed for Saturday nights at RAF Church Fenton – a mere 9-mile walk, if I didn't get a lift.

The University Air Squadron flew Chipmunks and there were several private and club planes. We had three Tiger Moths and we were allowed to help the engineer. The day I arrived, I was fixed up with helmet, goggles and a flying suit, which had brown stains down the front. I learnt later that the previous user, another cadet, had ended his flying by bouncing off the top of a bus, stalling and crashing into a ditch. He was lucky to survive, so from then on I regarded my flying suit as lucky. When about to taxi out and take off, you go through a routine of checks, one of which is to check revs with each of the two magnetos in turn – at about 1600rpm if I remember right. One of my cadet colleagues went through his checks, took off, did a very quick circuit and came back commenting that he had to maintain unusually high revs to maintain height. He had clipped two inches off each end of the wooden propeller on a water tower on take off. No one could work out how he had done it and survived. The club secretary occasionally took me with him for navigational experience on trips in the club Proctor – a very noisy beast. The first time, to Wolverhampton, I ended up over the wrong airfield, only 4 miles out! There, I met other cadets who were flying Miles Magisters - small, single engine, low wing monoplanes. I sat in one and I think it was at that moment that I really felt that I wanted to be a RAF pilot. The most memorable moment for me was on my final test flight from Sherbourne to Washington (now Newcastle Airport), then to Brough and back to Sherbourne. On the way up to Washington I approached a large cloud, shaped like a pair of spectacles. Suddenly, I was lifted up about 500ft, over the bridge part, as though by some giant hand – a weird and incredible experience. Then it was final flight and paper tests and 3 weeks before my eighteenth birthday I was a qualified private pilot - an unforgettable experience for which I have always been grateful.

Alan Wray Watford

Life in ICL

A Drink after 45 Years

On leaving school in August 1955, I joined Power Samas. My starting wage was 1s 3d per hour for a 44 hour week, which amounted to £2 15s per week. I served an apprenticeship for five years, with one day a week release to study for an HNC in electrical engineering. I represented Power Samas at Football (scored 4 goals in one match playing centre forward) and also played Cricket for Powers (best score 76 not out). I was also Chess Champion one year and also played Golf for ICL.

I was one of the founder members of ICL LEGS (London Engineering Golf Society), formed around 1975 and I am still Treasurer today. Every year we go for a week's Golf Tour and the year 2002 will be our 25th tour. I am at present planning this tour and 15 of us will be travelling to Spain next June to celebrate our Silver Anniversary.

In my early days with Powers I enjoyed two pleasurable experiences. The first was when they sent me on an Outward Bound course to the Lake District for one month. The second was with another apprentice, when we were assigned the job of rowing up and down the river Thames, hunting for a missing boat owned by the company.

On completion of my apprenticeship in 1960, I was assigned with three other people to design the manufacture of all the parts to build the first five 558 computers called the FCC (ferrite core computer) at Whyteleafe Research centre in Surrey. When this project was successfully completed I moved into the FCC Assembly department at Croydon, where I was a trouble-shooter on the FCC's as they were assembled and tested. It was here I met a girl whose job was to run tests on the FCC's. Her name was Mavis and she later became my wife. She can still be seen out shopping, with her shopping list on a 40-column card!

I then became a Field Engineer working on a wide variety of equipment, in various parts of London. Finally I moved to the Ministry of Defence (MOD) in 1971 where I helped maintain various mainframe computers and then PC's Servers and Printers, etc. I also covered a large number of military sites throughout the South East of England.

Perhaps the most satisfying achievement with ICL, outside of work, started in 1987 from a very sad event. In 1986 a member of ICL LEGS won our most prestigious golf event "Player of the Year", while terminally ill with cancer. He died in 1987, when only in his forties and left a widow and two young girls. A fellow golfer from MOD (who is now Head of CHOTS Service Management in London) and I formed a Charity organisation which we named MODICL, a joint venture between MOD and ICL. We raised £1000, which we presented to the widow, to be spent on the two young girls.

We continued this charity by holding a special "charity golf day" every year until the year 2000. Each year we looked for deserving cases normally for children, who were associated with employees of MOD or ICL. Over the 14 years we raised over £23,000, thanks to the generosity of MOD and ICL golfers, together with the sponsorship of numerous companies. We presented our proceeds to a wide range of deserving causes, far too many to record here. In 1997 for example, we gave £1000 to Rebecca Pithouse (4-year-old autistic girl). The same year we gave £1,000 to Charlie Jones (brain damage at birth).

Also that year we purchased a wheelchair for £1,200 and delivered it on Christmas Eve to Catriona Murray (cerebral palsy).

At the age of 62 I requested early retirement, which was reluctantly agreed, and I retired on 30th March 2001.

Since then I have had time to reflect on what the 45 years of service was worth - surely a meal would not have been too much to ask? All that my immediate Manager could offer was a drink in the local Pub, which I declined as I considered this to be an insult. My Service Manager did not even think it was worth seeing me or even sending me a "Thank you" for my services. I only saw him once in over five years working for him. This was on my Double Majority when he bought me a drink in a Pub and I repaid him by buying him one. Although I became a Double Majority member in August 1997, my Manager never informed me that I was entitled to attend their AGM's or Dinners. I have since rectified this myself. I never even received an offer to attend the course "Planning the Next Phase of Your Life", which I believe is a standard offer to all leaving personnel.

On leaving ICL on 30th March 2001, having joined on 29th August 1955. I believe I may well have been the longest serving ICL employee at that time.

Surely it was worth more than just a drink in a pub?
Arthur Thurgood

Life after ICL

Redevelopment of LON11

I have at last got around to responding to your request for 'bits' from non-engineers by doing a little research on my old stomping ground.

ICL employees and ex-employees who worked in Putney and have passed across Putney Bridge recently will have noticed that the old ICL House and its annexe in Brewhouse Street are in the process of redevelopment. Most of the top five floors of ICL House (including my old offices on the 11th floor) have gone. Like me, they may wonder what is going on and be interested in what I have learnt from the Wandsworth Central Library, some research on the Internet and a visit to the site sales office now open at 212-214 Putney Bridge Road.

On 19 June 2001 the Planning Committee of Wandsworth Council finally approved proposals for the redevelopment of ICL House, Putney, and the adjoining Brewhouse Street site which included the "Annexe" to ICL House. This followed two public enquiries in 1999 after which the Secretary of State turned down the proposals for the Brewhouse Street site in December 1999 but approved the proposals relating to ICL House in May 2000. Revised proposals for the Brewhouse Street site were approved by Wandsworth Council in July 2000, but the developers then modified their plans for both sites (including adding two floors to the ICL House building), and it was these modified plans which were approved last June. Even then, more than 40 conditions were attached to the approval of the two proposals.

The developers of both sites (now renamed Putney Wharf) are St. George, part of the Berkeley Group of property developers. The approved plans for ICL House include a 12-storey 'prow extension' on the river end of the tower, a part one-storey / part three-storey extension on the High Street side, and the addition of two extra floors with the top five floors raked back from a terrace on the eleventh floor and an illuminated obscure glazed cap to the top of the lift shaft. The upper floors of the tower are being converted into 67 flats; there is to be a restaurant of 612 sq.m. on the ground floor and 1272 sq.m. of office space on all three floors of the new annexe on the High Street side and the first floor of the tower, and basement parking for 41 cars.

The approved plans for the Brewhouse Street site involve the demolition of all buildings on the site except the 'Isherwood Building' with its tower and the creation of 5 three-storey houses fronting on to Deodar Road, 75 flats in buildings ranging in height from two to six storeys, 118 sq.m. of retail floorspace fronting Brewhouse Street, 1372 sq.m. of restaurant floorspace, 1156 sq.m. of offices, and basement parking for 171 cars (to cater in part for the shortfall of spaces under the ICL House building for the flats there). The redeveloped site is to include a riverside walkway and a pedestrian link via public squares between Brewhouse Street and Deodar Road.

At the time of writing (early December 2001) 999-year leases of two- and three-bedroom flats on the second to fifth floors of the old ICL House are being advertised for sale as "superb tower apartments all

with stunning river views" at prices ranging from £419,950 to £769,950.

Tony Paton Walsh ex LON11

Retirement Activity

Visit the Dumps of Guatemala City

One day in 2000 when my wife, Cristall, and I were "counting our blessings", we saw a short TV programme about a charity called "Toybox" with UK offices in Amersham Bucks.

A young man was telling about the plight of street children in Guatemala City. He himself had been rescued from street life and its problems in this country. With his wife, he was so moved at the sight of young children living on the streets, sniffing glue and other drugs, that they took two children into their home in Guatemala City, after playing football with them. Their names are Duncan and Jenni Dyason.

The very next day we were at a Baptist Church in Stevenage. There was a visiting speaker and to our surprise it was Duncan Dyason. We were very moved by what he had to say, and began to support the charity in a small way, and to receive newsletters.

The "Toybox" charity is known as "El Castillo" (the Castle) in Guatemala, and the work has grown considerably since it began in 1995.

The budget has grown from £20,000 to £700,000; a staff of about 40 in Guatemala; a day centre, a hostel, 4 homes for 40 children, about 600 receiving some schooling, and many being contacted in high-risk areas of the city. Despite this growth, there is a small, family atmosphere to the work, which all those involved wish to cherish. The homes are 'family' units, not institutions, and the vision is not just for rescue, but also for Christian education and vocation. Many of the older children want to be educated and follow careers that will influence their country for good.

Apparently some of them expressed a desire to meet people from England who helped them, so small visits have been arranged, for 2 to 8 folk to visit Guatemala and see the work, as well as a bit of 'tourism' to get the feel of the country.

Christall and I were able to go in April 2001; our guide was Jose Guzman, one of the staff of 'El Castillo'. He's a kind of PR man for them, obviously much loved and known by the children and many other people living in dreadful conditions in parts of the city.

We were given some 'tourism', staying in the old city of Antigua, considered much safer and more comfortable for us than Guatemala City, where crime and violence is prevalent. For example, the charity has had two nearly new minibuses stolen at gunpoint, in one case threatening the life of a child. When we needed to visit a bank the armed security presence was daunting, and I was not allowed to take my walking stick inside!

Other excursions included a trip on a lake surrounded by dormant volcanoes; along one shore hot springs bubbled up, which the locals put to good use as a 'laundrette'. We visited an area of Maya history, ruined temples and small pyramids; a coffee museum; a small town famous for hand weaving of the colourful cloths of the region. I can speak no Spanish, but by sign language we had a great conversation with a man 'up from the country, and admired his 2 foot long machete, held in a handsome leather scabbard.

We visited, and were obviously welcome at shanty homes built on or near the city dump, and saw people waiting for the rubbish trucks to arrive, before looking for anything salvageable. These 'homes' were no more than a corrugated iron and cardboard shack about 3 metres square for a family of about 7 or 8 children. We met one father who was pleased to have rescued a load of empty paint tins, which he could clean and sell.

Despite the poverty and the conditions they are a proud people. We met a mother who insisted on changing all her baby's clothes before allowing Christall to hold her.

From squalor to hope as we visited the day centre and played with children who are learning to play, to the small hostel, known as the Tower, as they progressed to the family style homes, for boys, girls and unmarried mums with their children.

Except for one couple all the house parents and staff are local Guatemalans - this is part of the vision of El Castillo - Toybox. The quality of the homes and the care impressed us - so good to see that our donations are well used, and the minimum spent on administration.

In many ways it was quite a tough experience, but rewarding too. Very much something to make us think deeper about, especially in our comfortable retirement situation.

Feeling that 5,000 miles was a long way to go for just one week, we came back via the eastern United States, spending a week in New York, a day in Boston, and 10 days in the Cape Ann area. For our tastes these were just the right proportions. One of the best days was a visit to a delightful little coastal village called Manchester-by-the-Sea!

We stayed for 7 days in a bed & breakfast in a little coastal town called Gloucester. We have always liked the way that Americans do B & B - it's like being family. "Help yourself from the fridge. Make coffee when you wish.... etc". At breakfast all guests eat together, usually with the hosts, so conversation is great.

With whale watching trips, visits to quilt museums, and just relaxing on the balcony deck of our hosts' home, watching the activity in the bay, the time passed all too quickly. It was especially good to be staying in a locality where the hosts said "Come and go just as you please - we have no need to lock up the house here!"

This was our third trip to the USA and Canada - we do find that we like 'small town' America; must be something to do with our generation!

Dave Clarke ex Letchworth Training School

Diamond Wedding

Frank Piggott rang me to tell of the wonderful achievement he and his wife will realise on 4 April 2002 when they celebrate their Diamond Wedding. They were married in Dulwich in 1942 while Frank was in the RAF. He reckons that Vera was the "Best Bargain of his life". They had two daughters and now have three grandchildren.

In 1943 he went to Bletchley Park and then RAF Stanmore where he continued until the end of the war working on the Bombes. He then went to RAF West Drayton at the time that Heathrow was being set up as the New London Airport.

He was demobbed at the end of 1946, and joined the British Tabulating Machine Company on 7

January 1947. He retired at the age of 60 in 1981 and now lives in Bexhill.

LETTERS

PENSIONS COMMUNICATIONS.

Over the past year I have had a continuous dialogue with our pension reps. and Bob Coe regarding pension issues. During this time I have learned a lot about the ICL pension situation. One of the things, which strike me, is that at the moment pensioners have no knowledge of subjects that are being raised and discussed at the consultative and trustee meetings. In addition to this I am not clear how pensioners get input into the Pensions Policy Committee. (This is the committee who decide our annual pension increases).

The 'pensions update' gives a good overview of the state of the pension fund, but it doesn't give pensioner specific information. There has been mention of a pensioner's association and a pensioner's magazine, but I believe that the logistics and the cost probably make these non-starters. My personal view is that communications would be improved considerably if a brief summary of pensioner relevant issues could be published in Bits and Bytes and if the minutes of the consultative committee meetings were made available on a web site.

At this time it is too late to influence this years pension increase (we will already know what it is before this is published, we may get a surprise!!) and I realise the difficulties of pension funds in general and obviously ICL will be no different, but two issues which I believe should be given serious consideration by the PPC are as follows:-

The Government has already recognised that pension increases linked to the current calculated inflation rate are not sufficient to give an equitable increase to pensioners. In April 2001 the Government actually increased pensions by £5 (7.4%), with an above inflation increase to come in April 2002. Should our PPC be considering a similar percentage increase?

The other item, which I think is worth some consideration, would be the raising of the guaranteed increase. This has been raised to 5% (or inflation if it is lower) for contributions after 1997. This is of course of little or no consequence to existing pensioners. When inflation increases, as no doubt it will at some time, this will be of great concern.

It must be remembered that all of the ICL pensioners made a considerable contribution to the company during their working life and they should not be forgotten.

Last, but certainly not least, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Adrian and thank him for all his hard work and dedication in publishing B & B, his considerable efforts don't go unnoticed.

Ray Dowson

Computer Mementoes

I retired from ICL just over a year ago. Since then, in an effort to avoid becoming over involved in gardening, DIY and domestic duties, I have become a freelance lecturer to schools and colleges on the subject of 'The History of Computing'.

I find that the student's interest is captured and maintained best if I use some 'props'. So far I have collected a range of PC components, a few diskettes and tapes, an EDS80, a dead OPD, a type 1/9 Card Punch that just about works, 2 x 80 column and 4 x 40 column punched cards.

I would like to enhance my collection to make it more comprehensive. I am prepared to consider most things but I only have limited storage space (this side of a divorce!).

The sorts of things that come to mind are: -

Computer components from the mainframe era,

Punched card machine components,

Punched card items such as plug boards and plugs,

Hand punch in good working condition,

Power-Samas connection box (a small one!),

Punched cards themselves (anything from used and interpreted to stock, blanks) particularly the more unusual ones, e.g. 65, 38 and 21 column cards,

Media, e.g. paper tape, Kimble (?) tags, magnetic tape, etc.

Sales literature relating to punched card, 1004, 1301, 1500 & 1900 systems,

As I would like to avoid accumulating items that I cannot use or duplicate items I would appreciate a telephone call or email before anything is sent to me. If there are items that are unsuitable for posting I would be prepared to come and collect them.

Does anyone have anything that they would like to see go to a good home and be used rather than get thrown out or permanently confined to the loft or garage?

Philip J. Sugden

Telephone: 020 8357 9524 or 020 8866 9588

Email: philip.sugden@iclway.co.uk

Reunions

ICL Central London Group

The next get together will be on Wednesday 17 July 2002 at **The Flying Horse** at **52 Wilson Street**, from 12 noon. The pub is east of Finsbury Square.

John Doo 01245 259862

ICL Midlands Group

The annual meeting will be on Friday 26 April 2002 from 7pm at The Black Horse, Leamore, Walsall. B4210 at the junction of Bloxwich Road and Harden Road. Please look up engineers that are not able to come under their own steam but would love to attend. If you have problems with transport give me a ring

Brian Trow 01785 257317 or brians@iclway.co.uk

Punch Card & Stevenage Labs Reunion Group

The next reunion will be on **Tuesday 01 October 2002 at Stevenage 04**. The speaker will be **Keith Crook** who used to work in the Stevenage Labs and in LDC. Tickets for this event will cost **£10** to include tea/coffee and a buffet lunch. Send a cheque made payable to **Punch Card Reunion Group** with a **Stamped Self Addressed envelope** to me at **5, Nun's Acre Goring-on-Thames RG8 9BE**.

Adrian Turner 01491 872012

Copthall House Newcastle Staffs

Bob Green 01782 657763

East Grinstead 81 Club

Gordon Franklin 01342 328479

East Midlands UB40s

Brian Skeldon 0115 9725119

ICL Double Majority Club

Roy Newbury 01763 852241

Leo Computers Society

Geoff Parry 01628 770129

Letchworth Group

Dennis Evans 01462 811273

Liverpool Engineers

George Lynn 01744 29984

Oxford Region

Ken Jones 01865 340388

STE04 Office and Retail Systems

Derek Tourell 020 8386 9465

Tin Hut Reunion Group

Olaf Chedzoy 01278 741 269

West Gorton Reunion

Eric W Watts 01457 875080

Watford-Harrow- Feltham Group

Mike Ray 020 8635 5010

West Branch Engineers

Eric Reynolds 01452 712047

West Kent Engineers

Ron Harding 01732 761076

The Walthamstow Mob

Derek Windsor 01992 522761

Obituary for ICL

When ICL was formed in 1968 one of the earliest interpretations offered for the new acronym was "It Can't Last". (Stand up the boy who said that! it originated in IBM.) And now, thirty-three years later, the name is indeed coming to an end. But that in itself is no great pity. Many of us who served in ICL in its heyday have felt that the spirit of the company itself has been dying for the last few years, and that the organisation, which once represented the sum total of the native British computer industry, has been allowed to dwindle into a pathetic shell.

I find a common feeling among many former colleagues who have retired or been redundancy or have just got fed up and left of their own accord. Better to be away from it, with our proud memories intact, than to stay propping up the remains. What a heritage it was - Hollerith, Powers, Ferranti, Elliott, LEO, English Electric, EMI and all the others. We all brought into ICL our own pride and our own loyalties, yet these melded into a common pride that was greater than them all, and we all became glad to be known as ICL people. Nevertheless after years of joint service you could still often tell from which tradition someone derived. The last embers of the rivalry between Hollerith and Powers may now at last have cooled, but it was only a little earlier this year, after a committee meeting - nothing at all to do with ICL - that a friend and I agreed "that was rather an English Electric occasion" and both knew at once what we meant. Think of the techniques we pioneered - multi-programming, store protection, paging, virtual storage, to name but a few - typically years ahead of the Americans. And technical innovation was an abiding strength: think of DAP, the first practical parallel processor, and CAFS, for so long my speciality (and hobby-horse).

It's still probably too soon to write the full story of the 2900 and its successors, and VME - the operating system that started off pretty disastrously but grew into the best the world has seen. Nowadays, when "operating system" seems to mean a pile of incompetent junk scrambled together by

nincompoops, an inviting playground for the world's hackers, with "security" about as resilient as cold rice pudding, we know, indeed we know, that we knew better. And behind the world's curtains VME still does a fair share of the world's work

Having fought shy of management responsibility all my life, I'm not the one to judge or criticise the managers who have presided over the company's decline, but there's one general point that I do feel qualified to make. The company's strong periods have been when among those at the helm there has been a strong technical understanding of the industry, and an engineer's awareness of the challenges and opportunities. You can't run a computer company with a combination of marketeers and planners and accountants.

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

Hamish Carmichael

The end of ICL

I am not nostalgic. I don't seem to be so sad at the passing of the name as some others - perhaps because I went through the demise of the BTM and ICT names (not to mention Dataskil and many other "components").

There is much more to the experience of a company than the name. Perhaps the Ferranti man had it right at the move of Ferranti into ICT when he phoned up Putney from West Gorton about the sign on the building and said "I have an I and a T, can you send me a C. (Apply to Peter Hall for a more exact and elegant rendering of this story). I also have to put myself in the position of all those people who were absorbed into ICL and its antecedents who saw their company names disappear - from Powers Samas to Ferranti, GEC Computers (twice) Elliot Automation to Leo to EE Computers to Nokia, Drico, Singer, Datchecker and many others. In so far as I was involved I tried to encourage them to see it as progress. The same applies now with "ICL".

So, it's nostalgic for those who like nostalgia. For me it is the experience and the people rather than the name that I remember. Those are worth remembering, as is the trajectory of the industry. Perhaps above all it is the industry, which must be unique - never becoming mature and always re-inventing itself. Anyway, although ICT stood for "I'm Confused Too" and ICL for "I'm Confused Less" the difference was not all that great.

Michael Forrest Henley-on-Thames

What's In a Name?

In 1989 I wrote the "official" history of ICL. The book had the rather ponderous title *ICL: A Business and Technical History*, chosen not for the love of the ICL name, but to ensure it would be easy find in a library catalogue. (A few years previously, a famous history of IBM had been called *Big Blue*—cute, but it was very hard to locate in a library search.) With the passing of the ICL name, I suppose my book will now be hard to find too.

ICL veterans might be surprised that "ICL" does not strictly stand for anything. When it was first used in 1968, of course, it stood for International Computers Limited, but in 1977 the firm became ICL Limited, and 1981 ICL plc; those three letters had simply become a trade-name with no formal meaning. This

has happened to quite a few companies—for example, one of ICL's rivals, NCR, lost its connection with the National Cash Register name many years ago.

While today we might feel a wisp of nostalgia for the passing of the ICL brand, it has only existed for a little over a third of the company's history. The roots of the company go back to 1904, when a tiny firm "The Tabulator" was formed in London to sell and service the punched card machines of The Tabulating Machine Company of New York, a smallish firm founded by the system's inventor, Herman Hollerith. By 1907 it looked as though the punched-card business might be viable and so the company was reorganised as the British Tabulating Machine Company. I discovered that for firms of this period the word British in the name was often a clue that it was the offshoot of an American company of the same name (British Westinghouse, British Thomson-Houston, etc.) The British Tabulating Machine Company was at first abbreviated to BTMC and later to BTM; but in Letchworth where its manufacturing plant was located from the 1920s, it was simply known as "The Tab." In New York, the Tabulating Machine Company remained plain TMC until 1924, when it changed its name to IBM!

BTM trundled along, not very effectively, for about 40 years until 1949, when IBM first began to compete with it in Britain and the Commonwealth. It was the post-war competition from the Americans that stimulated the numerous consolidations that resulted in ICL. The first merger came in 1959, when BTM combined with its punched-card rival, Powers-Samas, to become ICT—International Computers Limited. This was a slightly presumptuous name, because BTM had sold only a couple of dozen of computers and Powers-Samas none at all; it was an aspiration for the future. To cut a long story short (about 50 pages of my book, in fact), ICT progressively absorbed the computer divisions of GEC, EMI and Ferranti. In a similar series of consolidations, the computer division of English Electric absorbed Marconi and Leo Computers.

By 1964 there were just two British mainframe computer companies—ICT and English Electric Computers. After a three-year long series of negotiations starting in 1965, the two firms were finally coaxed into a merger by the Labour industry minister Tony Benn, then known as Anthony Wedgwood Benn. The result, in 1968, was International Computers Limited, Britain's "national champion" computer manufacturer. It was a heady moment for the company. Born in Harold Wilson's famous "white heat of the scientific revolution", it enjoyed terrific Government support for a couple of years. A change of Government in 1970, and Ted Heath's famous lame duck policy, meant that the ICL name later got an undeserved reputation for being bankrolled by the State. Featherbedded it was not, however, and it had two financial crises—in the early 1970s and again a decade later. After some horrendous job losses and factory closures in the early 1980s ICL eventually got back on track, only to be taken over by STC in 1985—and with it another change of name, to STC-ICL, although the name ICL was retained in the market place. During the 1980s, ICL built up a strong relationship with Fujitsu, which supplied semiconductors for its mainframes, and in November 1990 ICL was sold off to become Fujitsu-ICL. Now of course, even that last vestige of the ICL

name has been dropped. Does it matter? Not to everyone. When I interviewed old-timers for my book in the mid-1980s, they thought that ICL was a bit of Johnny-come-lately, compared with the ancestor companies: BTM, Power-Samas, and the old Acc & Tab of Croydon. Those were names *they* felt nostalgic about!

There is a temptation to mourn the passing not just of the name, but what ICL stood for—the mainspring of the British computer industry. But that world has gone, just as surely as that of the UK motor industry. If there was a failure in vision, then it is not that of the present generation running ICL. If one wanted to lay the “blame” for the demise of ICL, one would have to look to the stewards of the company in the 1970s; in my opinion, however, the causes of ICL’s demise were largely external, what Macmillan called “Events, dear boy, events!” ICL has always been about people—not buildings or plant—and the new generation goes on, managing its heritage, good and bad, in the best way it knows how. It is a different world, different to the 1980s, which was different again to the 1960s or the 1940s; and we would be wise not to second-guess what only the people in the driving seat can see. It would not surprise me to see the ICL name surface and resurface in the market place—one of those venerable brands like HMV or RCA—that carry on, regardless of who owns the company.

Martin Campbell-Kelly Warwick University

ICL/Nortel Fund

Taken from the autumn & winter 2001 editions of the Nortel "Newslink"

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------|------------|----------|----|
| Bracknell | Christopher | M | 01/08/01 | 81 |
| | Sammels | Alfred J | 21/05/01 | 93 |
| Cambridge | Cornish | Brian M | 02/11/01 | 67 |
| | Knight | Norman P | 27/10/01 | 90 |
| Croydon | Bryant-Jefferies | Philip | 23/07/01 | 69 |
| | Collins | Geoffrey J | 18/06/01 | 78 |
| | Rowe | Alfred J | 18/05/01 | 90 |
| Dukinfield | McLean | R | 30/10/01 | 64 |
| Edinburgh | McEwan | D | 24/02/01 | 66 |
| Glasgow | Young | Alexander | 07/04/01 | 94 |
| Gloucester | Gyte | Harry | 14/08/01 | 69 |
| Kent | Taylor | R | 02/03/01 | 70 |
| | Whiting | AE | 06/07/01 | 79 |
| Kidsgrove | Boon | William | 10/10/01 | 73 |
| | Bird | Eric C | 27/05/01 | 84 |
| | Williams | John P | 10/06/01 | 67 |
| Leeds | Stringer | Emily | 03/07/01 | 62 |
| Letchworth | Albon | Bernard A | 28/05/01 | 83 |
| | Croft | Herbert A | 27/05/01 | 91 |
| | Davey | William F | 09/04/01 | 86 |
| | Fountain | Kenneth G | 12/06/01 | 75 |
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| | Galley | Sylvia | 12/05/01 | 79 |
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| | Osborn | Donald B | 12/02/01 | 78 |
| | Parker | Leonard G | 26/05/01 | 81 |
| | Preston | Alexander | 04/10/01 | 81 |
| | Smith | Caroline E | 17/06/01 | 72 |
| | Williams | V J | 14/06/01 | 74 |
| Liverpool | Robinson | Chris. A | 29/08/01 | 82 |
| Luton | Bain | Alexander | 02/08/01 | 88 |
| | Smith | Edna M | 17/11/01 | 73 |

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|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------|----------|----|
| Manchester | Oakes | Frederick | 24/07/01 | 81 |
| Norwich | Halliday | Norman V | 15/10/01 | 77 |
| Nottingham | Nathan | Charles H | 20/08/01 | 84 |
| Park Mill | Mills | Rose M | 07/03/01 | 69 |
| Putney | Gerstl | C | 01/07/91 | 85 |
| | Gottschalk | Kurt | 24/08/01 | 85 |
| | Kennedy | Helen | 08/08/01 | 81 |
| S'hampton | Clamp | E A | 01/08/01 | 91 |
| | Fry | Ernest | 27/07/01 | 83 |
| | Popplewell | David | 30/04/01 | 78 |
| Stevenage | Blackman | Owen F | 08/10/01 | 81 |
| | Devon | Edward | 16/02/01 | 73 |
| | Goch | George B | 13/08/01 | 72 |
| Wakefield | Catterall | R | 20/08/01 | 80 |
| W.Gorton | Clifford | Ernie | 15/11/01 | 73 |
| | Hannant | Ruth | 03/03/01 | 90 |
| | Jackson | Alec | 09/10/01 | 66 |
| | Winterbotom | Victor | 16/06/01 | 79 |
| Winsford | Watkiss-Thomas | David G | 09/06/01 | 87 |
| Unknown | Cade | Margaret | 06/08/01 | 85 |

ICL Fund

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|--------------|-------------------|------------|----------|----|
| BRA01 | Gorely | Anthony S | 18/11/01 | 60 |
| DUN01 | Walker | Charles H | 18/01/02 | 70 |
| ENF01 | Greenhouse | Hazel A | 03/10/01 | 60 |
| FEL01 | Johnson | Michael C | 22/02/02 | 67 |
| KID01 | Gillies | Robert K | 23/09/01 | 62 |
| LON33 | Bird | John G | 27/11/01 | 58 |
| MAN05 | Ashcombe | Anthony P | 23/02/02 | 49 |
| REA21 | Lewington | Adrian G | 04/12/01 | 43 |
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| STE04 | Hunt | Stephen M | 21/02/02 | 57 |
| | Sprague | Gilbert J | 24/02/02 | 66 |
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| WSR01 | Nicholson | Michael B | 17/01/02 | 64 |
| | MacDonald | Kenneth | 13/03/02 | 65 |

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NEXT ISSUE

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