Spring 2017 ICL Pensioners' Newsletter

Bits & Bytes

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Editorial

The start of this year, 2017, fills me with foreboding. A new President in the USA, the start of Brexit, Putin, and Alternative Facts, what is the world going to be like in a year's time?

However, now that I have just reached my 81st year, and looking back on my life I'm sure that in 1939 many people had concerns about the future. I was too young to know anything about it, and as the war progressed the children in our village just accepted what was happening, without fearing about what might happen. We just didn't know what the consequences would be if the Germans had crossed the Channel. Having just watched the BBC4 programme on the rise of Hitler in the 1930s, I can see the parallels with a man with funny hair being followed by the masses!

We survived the war and I experienced a wonderful life, four years in the Royal Air Force followed by 35 years in the computer industry after I joined the British Tab in 1958. I would never have believed the technical advances that have happened since I retired in 1994. The GoPro camera that my family gave me for my birthday is an amazing piece of kit which I find impossible to understand. How 64Gbytes of data can be stored on a minute SD card is unbelievable. Comparing the Bryant Disk File of the 1960s with this is impossible to comprehend. Can somebody explain it?

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Old age and the alternative

Up until my mid-eighties, old age always seemed way ahead. Now, as I approach ninety, I've caught up. I can't think of many advantages of being old. It's comforting not having to compete or prove oneself. There's no pressure to "Keep up with the Jones's", as I've outlived them.

Of the few friends of my age surviving, most have difficulty in recalling the past, one or two look at me as if they aren't sure they know me. Perhaps I too am losing it and blanking people I've known for years! Remembering the answer isn't a problem, when one forgets the question too. With my yoga, though I don't improve physically, at least I'm holding my own. Getting my leg over is becoming a problem, perhaps I'll have to lower the saddle on my bike. I can't worry about my future as I haven't one. Obviously, I'm concerned about the world for my grandchildren, but they seem more mature than I was at their age and I came through a World War. I think it's time for a nap.

Dennis Goodwin.

Destiny, Fate or Coincidence?

On Friday 1 October 1971 I was in 1/2 Factory in Letchworth when a call came in from Belgium asking for assistance with a 2812 EDS 30 Controller. I went to Heathrow, picked up a ticket to Brussels and was met at the airport by the local engineering manager, who asked whether I wanted to eat in Brussels or Charleroi. This surprised me as I thought that the customer was in Brussels. The problem however was on a new 1903 installation at Cockerill, a steel producer in Charleroi. We had a very good dinner in the centre of Brussels and arrived on site at 23:30, where several local engineers were waiting. There was also a French engineer from Paris who had come with a formatted disk pack. Hubert Wattine spoke almost perfect English which was a great help, as my French is almost non-existent!

The problem was not a hardware fault, as I had been lead to believe, but an operating system set up issue. Neither of us had ever installed the basic system software on the 2812, so it was very steep learning curve, reading the manuals, and setting parameters that we didn't really understand. We worked all that night, all the next day and again most of the night, before we finally achieved success on the 4 October 1971 (remember the date!)

At that time, duty-free spirits were much cheaper than those purchased in a shop, so I always bought a bottle whenever I went overseas. We celebrated our success by drinking Johnny Walker straight from the bottle. Very memorable as it was the first, and only time, that I ever drank neat whiskey straight from the bottle.

Fast forward to 2009, 38 years later, when my wife and I were on holiday in Toulouse, sitting at a pavement café called "Meet the Meat". A gentleman was sitting alone one table to my right. I eventually turned to him and asked if he spoke English. He did. "What business are you in" was my first question. "IT" was the reply. I told him that had worked for BTM, ICT and ICL before the term "IT" had been coined. He said that he too had worked for ICT/ICL, initially in South Africa and then in France. I recounted the experience I had had in Charleroi in 1971 and asked if he knew Hubert as I hadn't any contact with him since that long weekend. No internet or emails then!

Jacques Morel, for that is his name, no longer worked for Fujitsu, but he had known Hubert and promised to send me his email address after he had contacted ex colleagues. When we returned home I received Hubert's email address, and sent him a short message asking if he was the engineer who had worked with me that weekend. He replied, "Yes", so I asked him to send me his telephone number, so that we could reminisce. He responded immediately, so I rang him and asked if he remembered the whiskey. "No, but I remember that your father in law was butler to Jim Joel who owned the Childwickbury Estate between St Albans and Harpenden" I was amazed that he remembered this but not the whiskey. He had had an exchange with a family in St Albans from the age of 14 and the father owned a jewellers and clock repair shop in St Albans. He had the contract to maintain all the timepieces in the mansion where my father-in-law was the butler. I suppose that over that weekend we had chatted about our families, but I couldn't remember his link with St Albans and Childwickbury.

Jacques and Hubert are now my Facebook friends and my wife and I have visited Betton in Brittany where Jacques lives. I speak to both ex engineers on the phone regularly and last year invited Hubert to come and stay with us in Goring so that he could come to the Stevenage Reunion that I organise each October. He travelled from Paris on Eurostar to St Pancras and then from Paddington to Goring & Streatley where I waited on the platform. An eight-car train pulled into the station and the doors opposite me opened and there was Hubert! Another coincidence?

On the 4th October 2016, exactly 45 years since we sorted out the Charleroi system, we were together at Stevenage when Hubert met John Webb who sat next to him on a 1904 course in 1967. This is what reunions are all about! It is also **Destiny**!

Adrian Turner

From Normandy to ICL South Africa

I was born in Normandy, 4 years after the end of WW II, in a small village, close to Falaise, William the Conqueror's birthplace.

Not far from my village, there was an air force base, and I could see training planes flying over the countryside, mainly T6 and T28. Aviation quickly became for me a passion.

At the age of 16, I decided to join the French air force, but as I was too young to enter a pilot school, the only opportunity was to join a technician school located at Saintes, close to La Rochelle, in the west of France. Good school indeed, but with of course a strong disciplinary side, maybe needed for the 250 fellows that entered that school in April 1966. About 750 youngsters, all voluntary, joined that school every year at that time, compared with 220 once a year now.

After 3 years, we were allowed to enter the second technical school, to be trained as an air force technician with a speciality in electronics, aircraft structure, engines, and so on.

After one year or so in Rochefort, we selected an air force base to spend the rest of our 7 years' contract.

For me, it was a radar station, in the east of France. I worked on radar equipment and computers, my speciality.

Choosing not to continue in the air force, I looked for a job and found an advert in a newspaper: South Africa was looking for technicians to work in a satellite tracking station close to Pretoria. Having phoned to my wife Dominique (we married in 72) to see if she would agree to go over there, I applied, and was lucky (good?) enough to be selected. Dominique and I left France in June 73, and discovered what was this country, so far from Europe, and that we didn't know at all: South Africa.

We left our country, as immigrants, the contract being with the National Institute of Telecommunications Research (NITR), a branch of the South African Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). It was planned since the beginning of the French station that after 10 years of being manned by French technicians coming from France, South Africa will take over the management, but still for the benefits of the French CNRS, our national "NASA".

In fact, I was the very first to arrive there to start this take over.

I worked as an operator in this French satellite Tracking Station, some 40 kilometres from Pretoria, then as a technician in charge of digital equipment. There I had the opportunity to work with many different nationalities: South Africans, English, Irish, Spanish, Portuguese, Belgians and French of course.

After 2 years, I wanted to do more technical job, and it was then that I joined ICL South Africa (Pty), in July 1975. I was trained as an associate computer engineer, in Pretoria, learning machines of the 1900's range, like card readers, and the new 2903! I worked with very nice people, managers and colleagues at different customer places in and around Pretoria, a very nice town, with a rich history, like the whole country.

After nine months or so, the technical manager of Northern Transvaal, told me that it was proposed that I should take the responsibility for the maintenance in Swaziland, as it had been mentioned from the beginning. I was to be on my own, helped by a Swazi, to take care of the sites spread over this small country. With only 40 kms. of tarred road, I had been told, which means that during the rainy season, you had to leave your car along muddy roads, in sugar cane areas, and continue by foot with your tools and spare parts in your arms. Well, not very appealing…On top of that, Dominique would not have the right to work there, meaning a loss of 30% of our income…Despite the arguments of my manager, like free inscription at the golf club, in Mbabane, I didn't accept this 2 years' tour. I apologized to the technician that was hoping to come back soon to Pretoria having done his part of the job by staying 2 years in Swaziland, as ICL Northern Transvaal was responsible for nearby countries like Botswana and Rhodesia (south Rhodesia at that time, now Zimbabwe).

My boss then decided to move me on big sites; it is there that I worked on System 4 equipment, still in Pretoria. Have you ever seen a computer room like that, compared with the 1900 sites I was used to? This equipment, soon after, was due to be replaced by what was called in 1976 "the New Range", machines that I saw only on stickers, because Dominique and I decided, after early 3 years far from our family, to go back to France. My boss, who was also responsible for that S4 site, tried to persuade me to stay, but we finally left this wonderful country in September 1976.

A few weeks before leaving Pretoria, I wrote to ICL France to see if it would be possible to get a job with them. The answer was not very encouraging: they said to contact them once in France, and they would see what it will be possible to do.

After an interview in Paris, they accepted me as a technician. It was near the end of September 1976, a few days before the merging with SBM, Singer Business Machines; a few days later and they wouldn't be able to recruit anybody!

To make it short, I was trained on 1904s, was sent to Chartres, 80kms from Paris, to work at a pension fund computer site, then trained on the famous "New Range", the 2960, as our customer was due to receive the first 2900's machine in France. It is in Chartres that was born our first child: Ursula.

Not even 2 years after my arrival in France, I was asked to take the responsibility of the maintenance of the second 2960 which was to arrive in France. That's how I arrived with Dominique and Ursula in Brittany, in Rennes…where we still live.

After several years on the hardware, my boss proposed me to become a system engineer, on 2900's VME. I spent 7 years or so as a system engineer, then, my main customer having decided, after nearly 30 years with ICL, to move to…IBM! For this migration, which was to spread on nearly 2 years, the customer chose a big computer services company: Cap Gemini. That company recruited me to take the responsibility of the system aspects and that of TPMS, the system connecting the saving bank agencies to the computer software, while the customer engineers were moving to their new IBM software. Everything went all right, and Cap Gemini accepted to train me as an IBM software engineer. I then worked on different big IBM banking sites in France, until I decided to retire in 2010.

While I was in Toulouse in 2009, I met an English couple, at the terrace of a restaurant called "Meet the Meat"! We started to discuss, and it happened that the gentlemen had also started in the Air Force, and on top of that, spent many years with a computer company: ICL! What a coincidence!!! That's how I met Adrian Turner and his wife Sara! Adrian told me about Bits and Bytes, that I hadn't heard of. Since then, we are still in contact.

As Adrian says "Do you believe in destiny?"

Jacques MOREL, from France.

Last Pensioner?

I joined Powers Samas on the Sales side just prior to the merger with Hollerith. At the time, I was just under 21 and was thus not permitted to join the Powers pension fund until my 21st birthday – which I duly did. Then came the merger and the new ICT had to decide whether to retain the two funds with their then existing terms and conditions or to create a new ICT fund. All employees were invited to vote on their preference. Thus, all the Powers employees from the London area were invited down to the old Powers factory in Croydon one evening to hear from the great and the good and to air their opinions on which option to choose.

Now I had done some research prior to the meeting into the state of the Powers fund and discovered that the fund had reserves of about £3M – a large sum in today's terms. I reckoned that if the Powers fund stayed on its own, with no new employees joining and the existing members progressively dying off, then I (as probably the youngest member) stood at least a sporting chance of being the last man standing – a classic Tontine situation. And I would inherit the balance of funds.

Alas I learned pretty soon that there is an exotic profession called an Actuary, which only attracts the brightest and most arcane thinkers in the Accountants profession, one of whose main functions is to manage the affairs of pension funds so that in a situation like mine the fund would be run down to produce a zero balance when everybody had died!

But what really dashed my hopes was the fact that, when put to the vote, the majority of the employees voted to transfer to the new fund!

You can only dream.

Hedley White

Eulogy for ICL

A small wake for ICL was held on the 19th of April 2002, but the organisers forgot to mention the fact on the friendsoficl website ! Instead of the planned crowd of 2000 in the Albert Hall, it ended up with about 80 crammed into a wine bar off Grosvenor Square. Most of the attendees were ex UK marketing and sales, with a few real people thrown in for flavour.

Hedley White generated the following eulogy:

"In the beginning were 2 tribes in the land of Britannia, the Samasites and the Hollerithites known to all as the round holers and the slotted holers. And many were the battles fought in their name as they hurled their engines of war against each other. But even as they ranged their batteries of Samastronics against the might of the 915 a new tribe had entered the battle from the west and the Indian Blanket Manufacturers swept all before them. Thus, it came about that the elders of the two tribes joined their forces to fight the new enemy and the new tribe was called ICT. And the engineers of ICT laboured mightily to produce a new battle weapon to fight the 360 and the new weapon was called the 1900 series. And the 1904 begat the 1904E and the 1904E begat the 1904A and the 1904A begat the 1904S: but even as the begetting was being begotten a new force appeared from the lands in the north and the tribe of English Electric Leo Marconi and all stations to Crewe (change for Kidsgrove) appeared, clad in their blue raiment and rained down their System 4 on the field of battle.

And many were the wars fought as the J operating system was pitted against the might of George 3. But the rulers of the kingdom of Britannia were sore troubled for they desired a strong indigenous computer manufacturer and they spake unto the elders of the two tribes and said " Get your act together lads or else" And thus in the year 1968 was born the tribe of ICL. But still all was not peace in the land as the elders of the two tribes and the sons of the elders and the sons of the sons of the elders fought for the top jobs even unto the lowliest Account Manager.

And there arrived a new prophet called the lord Cross who gathered together the troops and declared " I have seen a vision and the vision shall be called New Range and it will fire shells tipped with the deadly VME" And for a time the troops were puzzled as only the wisest of the sages in the kingdom were able to comprehend the mysteries of such wonders as the Orthogonal Instruction Set and Reverse Polish

Notation. And their puzzlement grew even greater as the acolyte of the lord Cross, No Brain Hero, devised new ceremonies and liturgies for the ICL tribe and declared that only if a salesman could walk around the ramparts of Hartree House 200 times while hauling the weight of a 750-page Blue Border would he be granted the keys to sell the mighty 2900 engine. But soon all was well and the rulers of the kingdom bought the 2900 by the score.

And one day a new prophet appeared unto the tribe and the lord Bonfield, for it was he, travelled to the east to the land of Fujitsu and returned bearing a shining cube for the family of Gorton to build into their engine of war. And the elders of Fujitsu liked the product so much they bought the company. But even as they laboured, new stars were arising in the firmament and the lord Bonfield declared " We will follow the new star called Unix". But even as he spake the barbarian hordes from Microsoft and Intel were sweeping all before them and the lord Bonfield spake again and said " There is no profit in shifting tin, we must change our battle strategy to Services Marketing".

But the Lord Bonfield moved on to a higher plane and the elders who were left began to worship a new god called Flotation. And the god Flotation promised the elders untold riches when they cashed in their share options. But alas the new god was a false god and soon his statue was toppled to the ground. And the elders of Fujitsu cried "Enough" and the name of ICL was consigned to that dark hall wherein lie the spirits of those names that have passed before such as Univac and Control Data and Burroughs and Digital and many more. And soon the voice of ICL was heard no more in the land save in strange gatherings of the faithful who met to break bread and drink wine and remember the glories of that once great name. Amen"

Overseas Assignment

As a schoolboy, I witnessed what seemed to me to be wizardry at ICL's West Gorton factory, during a visit arranged by our school's careers master.

So, in 1969 I applied for and was offered a job there. As an operator in the commissioning team under Eric Moores, we ran commissioning completion tests to 1904A and (water-cooled?) 1906A systems at the end of manufacture.

Then in 1974, as the launch of the 2900 series was being planned, a Customer Services team based at NEL01 (and later, KID01), charged with conducting customer acceptance trials, was looking to expand to cope with increased demand, and Barrie Waby was kind enough to offer me a position.

After systems training in Letchworth, and the trialling of some of the first 2900 systems in Bracknell and Swindon, I was asked in October 1975 to join a team doing acceptance trials of mainframes delivered to the European Space Operations Centre (ESOC), of the European Space Agency in Darmstadt, Germany.

The ESOC hardware was a system of twin 2980s, which ran the VME/ESA operating system – a customised VME/K, offered with early 2900 series models as a virtual machine environment based on function processors.

This was the ground-support system for the first geo-stationery meteorological survey satellite, Meteosat.

My time in Darmstadt was planned as six weeks for acceptance trialling on completion of the installation. But as it happened the experience and skills gained during that time on these new systems became beneficial to our project team's development and validation effort, and through a series of extensions to a formal "Overseas Assignment" I was there for three years, up to October 1978.

The initial ICL project manager was a gentleman American farmer from Iowa called Eldon Stevens. (This was at the time when a number of people joined ICL from Univac.) Following one of our weekly project reviews, Eldon asked me to explain the "Murphy's Law" I'd referred to during the meeting. And after I had spelled it out, he said, "Have you heard Stevens' Corollary?" "No," said I. "Murphy was an optimist!" said he.

One of the features of this project's life became a weekly Monday-evening visit to ten-pin bowling for a growing band. And Eldon often heard us reviewing our performance the following day. On many occasions, he said, "One of these days I'm gonna come and show you guys how to bowl." So often, in fact, that we came to understand it was just hot air. Until one day when he did. For context, after weekly play over six months, my average score had crept up from around 100 to 148. And I can tell you I was very pleased about this level of progress. Eldon claimed he had not picked up a ball for eighteen years on the night he came to 'show us'. He bowled five games, and averaged 199!

A couple of months before our Meteosat launch, a number of project colleagues received invitations into the Operations Control Centre for familiarisation, and to witness another satellite's launch. This was to put a geological survey satellite into orbit. In the control centre in Darmstadt, we heard radio coverage of the launch controller's dialogue from the launch site in Kourou, French Guiana. In that carefully trained radio voice, with all emotion intentionally removed.

Everything has remained deeply imprinted in memory because of the emotion invested in that moment, in that room:

"T minus 30 second: All systems' performance is nominal"

"T minus 10 seconds: All systems' performance is nominal"

"T plus 10 seconds: We have lift off"

"T plus 57 seconds: The satellite has been destroyed"

In the ensuing minutes, it became clear that the launch vehicle had begun to veer off course and, with the safety of people on the ground paramount, the "abort" decision had been taken. I saw people break down in tears as ten years' worth of work evaporated.

And prayed that the upcoming launch of our own satellite, Meteosat, would fair better. As indeed it did.

The weather forecast pictures shown us every day on TV, where the movement of cloud formations over a period of time can clearly be seen, only came into being as a result of the Meteosat programme and its later evolution.

Additionally, it's worth remarking on a couple of points relating to ICL's administration of the overseas assignments from that era.

It was recognised that the cost of living varied across different countries, and at the time the cost of living index for Germany, compared to the UK, was 186. This straight away meant that my pay under the

overseas assignment carried an 86% uplift on the UK salary.

PLUS the foreign exchange rates were reviewed periodically, and for the assignment terms at that time the exchange rate was set at £1 = 5.35DM. Whereas the live market rate at the start of my assignment was £1 = 3.1DM. This amounted to another uplift of 57% on top!

PLUS another of the assignment terms recognised that people ought not to be out of pocket in respect of the tax regime of the country in which the assignment was being worked. So any tax paid above what would have been paid in the UK on the UK pay, was refunded each year. Another bonus!

One oddity of this last arrangement was its circular nature. As the resulting tax refunds were themselves taxed, it was clear that in the third year, tax had been paid four times on some elements of my income - once as tax on original income, and three further times through tax on annual refunds!

But I wasn't complaining. The period of this assignment remains the only time in my life when I physically could not spend everything I was being paid. Which all turned out to the good, because as a young man, with a new and growing family, I was able on my return to the UK at the end of that assignment to put down a deposit on a house purchase, and then fill that house with the furniture that had been purchased to furnish a German apartment knowing it would eventually serve in the UK home too. And so achieved in those three years the purchasing power that I know my contemporaries were taking five or even ten years to accomplish.

Another of the many reasons to be cheerful arising from ICL times.

Post Script:

In reminiscing about my time in the late 60s, early 70s, at ICL's computer factory at West Gorton, Manchester, I recall that in the evenings, a shift tea was provided in the "Management Canteen", for those who worked shifts and wanted it. The commonly-held view was that lunch-time left overs were dished up.

This didn't worry me, because the food was enjoyable and terrific value. As an example:

Grilled rainbow trout, chips and salad: 1s 6d.

(One shilling and sixpence "old money" equates to 7½p!)

Andy Johnston
(MAN05, NEL01 and KID01.) Smallfield, Surrey.

Memory Loss?

I was at Bracknell, working into the evening on a 7905 Local Processor Link. It must have been the LPLS, connecting a 7905 to a System 4. It was also around the time that "New Range" was being tested. The System 4 we were connected to had developed a fault in a memory store module, and a replacement one had arrived that day, in a packing crate. So, we were watching with great interest as the engineers started opening the crate, using crowbars. Finally, the crate fell apart and inside was --- absolutely nothing!! Someone immediately said "this must be that virtual memory we've been hearing about!!!"

George Rowley

How things have changed

Who remembers this news headline a couple of years ago?

'UK skies closed, Airports shut, Government demands answers, Opposition parties saying …Get a grip.'

No, the world hadn't quite come to an end. What caused these earth-shattering headlines? A computer glitch we're told, one not seen before. Everyone on the news was wringing their hands in dismay. How could this be allowed to happen. Worse still, it's the second time this year they seemed fond of saying.

This had me casting my mind back to ICL mainframes of the 70's and 80's. Software bugs, hardware bugs, system crashes. A week without hitting some bug in a user program, in VME or in the hardware would have been more likely to cause raised eyebrows. Add to that hardware fails somewhere on the system and you needed engineers on site night and day. This was great news for me and many others who worked in FED, CED, CESO, Sector Support, or whatever the engineering group happened to be called that day. If those damn machines only broke twice a year, then I would have been broke too, and out of a job with thousands of others.

Let's consider the hardware and in fact just the CPU/OCP/processor or whatever you like to call the biggest box in the room in the 1974-84 era. I worked on 2970 and 2980 mainframes. They needed lots of hardware changes once out at customer sites. Most mods were to stop the CPU getting the wrong answer to a calculation without anyone noticing or in some cases stopping it from thinking it got the wrong answer when it hadn't. Hardware mods came out so frequently that we didn't have the time to keep popping into customer sites, asking for downtime and soldering on a few extra wires, so these hardware mods got grouped into big batches.

Along came a chain smoking team of wireman, all booked into hotels for the weekend. They often came from KID01 or MAN05…Brin Hardy, Seth Holt and many others whose names escape me. We in support kept testing the hardware they had modified and worrying in case we overran our weekend and the CPU wasn't ready for the customer to start his work again. These System Mod Level (SML's) updates as they were called were huge changes to the hardware and numbers like PCR2021 shows the scale of changes that were around. Don't misunderstand though. My friends at the time who worked for IBM had similar amounts of lovely overtime so ICL boxes were not radically different in reliability to those of our competitors. Now add in the VME bugs and program bugs and it's a wonder things didn't go pear shaped more frequently.

So, I come back to my opening remarks. The Swanwick NATS system for air traffic control has had two breaks in 12 months. That includes not just the CPU but all the essential hardware, operating system, user programs, comms, telephone links, and anything else that keeps a complex system working. We've come a long way in 35years and because hardware has grown so fast and reliable it now does things that humans can't do, like keep thousands of aircraft from bumping into each other. T cards that were once used to back up the I.T. for certain types of tasks are of no use. But whatever system is designed by humans can in my view hit an unexpected or unforeseen issue.

So remember in a few years' time when you are driving along and a complex I.T system is uploading to a satellite: your speed/ acceleration/type of road/distance covered and debiting your bank account

instead of you paying a fixed road tax & insurance once a year, just ponder how reliable that's got to be and how reliant we will be on computers for everything from pacemakers to shopping deliveries.
Oh, and you think I made the insurance scheme up? Two insurers at least are using this now on younger drivers to work out their monthly insurance premium and the car tax scheme I mentioned will be tested on lorries once all the Galileo satellites are in place.
(Thinks: will a 'system down' be a good thing for my bank balance or a bad thing?)
Vince Celano

Two weeks in Sri Lanka

Picture the scene. The pool waiter brings you your iced tea or Pimm's. You sip it whilst watching the sun go down and later, when you return to your room, the A/C is on, the sheets have been turned down and there is a chocolate on the pillow.

Or … you could do what Sue, Sue, Sue, Liz, Janet, Ali, Pip and I have done, volunteer with Child Action Lanka and spend a very worthwhile fortnight in interesting but beautiful conditions helping children from the poorest of backgrounds in one of the poorer countries in the commonwealth. And thoroughly enjoy it!

We were a motley team of 8 representing 4 churches and comprising of 2 nurses, 2 midwives, a vicar, 2 counsellors and a retired IT consultant. The 'Nurses' and 'counsellors' ran a variety of clinics where they checked on the health of mothers, their babies and toddlers; taught them games; held conversations in English so as to improve their language skills and also ran clinics for the children attending the CAL centres. These 'clinics' weren't just 'checks' the nurses also taught the mothers about hygiene, contraception and the need to feel good about themselves, as the mothers are key to a happy family life.

A couple of these clinics were in Kandy in what one might call a standard building. However, the team went to far flung places and often ran clinics in the outdoors. In these indoor and outdoor environments, the nurses checked the children's ears, eyes and throat and also did heart and chest (lungs & breathing) checks. My Sue was apprehensive as she hadn't held a stethoscope for years, why would she? This meant she was relying on God's strength and not hers. Under the watchful eye of Sue Kershaw (if in doubt the nurses were called Sue) she was well pleased one day to have picked up a heart murmur amongst other things.

They had one hiccough when in one place the children were visibly scared of them. It transpired that the only 'Europeans' they had seen previously had administered a full set of injections, hence the mistrust.

In Sri Lanka, the children aren't allowed to go to school if they haven't got shoes, uniform and a school bag - so CAL provide these for the poorest in society – they introduce uniforms early so as to create the feeling of belonging.

For the nurses, they knew what they were going to be doing as several of them had been before. In terms of computing and IT I really didn't have a clue (what to expect that is) so I took just about everything I could.

Many people contributed to making the trip a success. This included boxes of toothpaste, Guy and Sarah, Microsoft software, Gingy Jack, a fully portable training web site for use in the office and in the bus, Inspyder Software and GCFLearnFree. We also took a full set of tools for the maintenance of the many computers they now have.

As well as working in the Kandy Office assisting them with understanding and using the various Microsoft office products I spent a lot of my time on the Computer Bus. This is a converted single deck bus with its own generator and a laptop computer for every double seat.

There is also air conditioning and a big display screen to which I could connect my laptop. We would either drive to a school, in the bus, and park or pick up children from school and then motor to somewhere to park for the afternoon. For example, the edge of a lagoon off the Indian Ocean. Thus, we gave lessons in the most idyllic scenery imaginable. Marco Polo probably the greatest explorer the world has ever known said of Sri Lanka and its scenery that 'it is the closest to heaven on earth he has ever seen'. I agree!

CAL has been and is a success story.

For example, one lad whose mother lived on the streets has come all the way through the system and is now training to be a solicitor.

An aim of CAL is to break the cycle of poverty such that children can achieve their potential. It was great to be a minor part of this process even if it was only for two weeks.

We were constantly confronted by choices. For example, at night the mosquito net or the ceiling fan. We chose the fan! OK for me as Mosquitoes don't appear to like blood with Warfarin in it!

Travelling anywhere was a challenge especially if goods needed to be delivered with passengers. Kandy to any of the other CAL centres is several hours often on bumpy roads. On one journey the road was literally non-existent and the off-road switch on the 4by4 was definitely set to 'on'.

CAL have set up a database of children who they meet. In this database, they record height, weight and a few other things such that they can measure growth progress and more importantly flag up those individual children in need of specific attention. One lad for example needed physiotherapy, see later, but his mother felt she could earn more 'begging' if she had an effectively handicapped child. It's very difficult to break out of this cycle.

Showering in the garden in the cool of the evening under what was no more than a garden hose in a cubicle made of woven bamboo leaves with the stars as a ceiling. What can rival that? But at the end of the day we were both exhausted and satisfied. The children were very happy and yet had nothing. They were polite and welcoming, (as long as you had no vaccination needles), and generally the adults were grateful that we were paying such attention to the next generation.

CAL's current, or next, project is a 'Safe House', a refuge where mothers and children who are at risk can go to get away from abusive, often drunk, partners.

Can I end with one anecdote about this 'need' for volunteers? After our stay, at CAL in Kandy, Sue and I went to the coast for a 3-day break before flying home. We were waiting for the train one morning and struck up a conversation with two back packing ladies, mid-twenties, about what they and we had been doing. They said they'd love to do something

working with children in Sri Lanka but felt their skills were not in demand. They were Physiotherapists –one of the skills CAL is crying out for. We passed CAL's details on to them and their details onto CAL.

The mission statement for CAL talks about "changing the lives of the next generation of Sri Lankan children". They certainly do that and as a bonus the experience changes the lives of the volunteers as well.

If you haven't booked this year's holiday I can recommend an excellent tour guide in Sue Stafford. Talk to her, or us. You won't get Pimm's but you will get a sense of satisfaction that money can't buy.

Alan Beer alanbeer(at)talktalk.net

Editor's note: *Go to **"ICL Pensioners"** on Facebook to see photographs of this trip.*

Reunions

Reminiscing in Palladian Splendour

Every October since 2003 around 50 ex-ICL stalwarts, men and women, meet at the Richmond Golf Club to renew acquaintances and reminisce. Some play a friendly round of golf in the morning but many just come for lunch and, as they say, "The Craic". Initially the participants were mainly people who worked in sales and sales support roles but the event is open to anyone who worked for ICL at some point, though golfers are required to have at least some pretence of a handicap. The ICL flag is proudly flown from the Club's flagpole to welcome all.

The RGC clubhouse is a spectacular example of Palladian architecture and was built in 1720 for the 2nd Duke of Argyll. It is grade 1 listed and the dining room is one of the few "Cube" rooms in the UK.

The event is run by David Lovegrove who is happy to hear from new people who are interested in attending. Information will be sent out in the Spring.

To receive details about next year's event on October 19th 2017 please email him at:-

david.lovegrove(at)pactum.ltd.uk

Stevenage & Letchworth Old Boys (renamed Punch Card Reunion)

The annual reunion will take place on **Tuesday 3rd October 2017** at Stevenage Labs Cavendish Road SG1 2DY. 10:00-15:00

Please send £15 to **Adrian Turner, 5, Nun's Acre, Goring-on-Thames, RG8 9BE**. Cheques should be made payable to **Punch Card Reunion.**

There is no need to provide a SAE, as I will not be issuing tickets.

Payment can also be made via Internet Banking, ring me for the bank details.

Adrian Turner 01491 872012

The West Midlands ICL Pensioners

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

All welcome!

Newcastle Friday Club

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

Mike Green 0191 386 6787

ICL Central London

The next reunion will be on Wednesday **19 April 2017** at **The Shakespeare's Head, 64 Kingsway** from 12 noon. The pub is on the eastern side of Kingsway just south of Holborn tube station.

MOD MOB

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

Anyone who is retired or active and wishes to meet up with individuals who worked anywhere on MOD contracts or in the group is welcome. Lots of people worked in CHOTS as well as in the main MOD team and all are welcome, security clearance not required, just bring a smile. Email to **modmob(at)shedlandz.co.uk** for enquiries

Kidsgrove-Drawing-Office

The Annual reunion is held at the Bleeding Wolf, Scholar Green on the first Monday in December

brian(at)morrismail.co.uk

Liverpool Engineers

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

Bill Wood 0151 426 4025

Watford-Harrow- Feltham

Mike Ray 01895 230194

East Grinstead 81 Club

Gordon Franklin 01342 328479

East Midlands UB40s

Brian Skeldon 0115 9725119

ICL Midlands

Brian Trow 01785 257317

LEO Computers Society

John Andrews
GlobalLeoSociety@gmail.com

Surrey Engineers

Trevor Harding 01483 565144
trevor(at)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(at)yahoo.co.uk

OBITUARIES

I have received several detailed obituaries since the last edition. Rather than fill Bits & Bytes with obits I have sent them to Rod Brown who maintains the archive at **www.bitsandbytes.shedlandz.co.uk**

Those who have been remembered are Matt Farrell, Jim Moraghan, Dave Nickson and Bill Williams.

Life histories

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

We have worked alongside somebody for many years but when the question is asked "where were they born, educated, joined the company?" we suddenly discover that we hardly knew anything about them and their family background. This is especially true for those who never married and have no close relatives. Can I suggest that we should each write a potted CV giving these basic details so that when we die the eulogy given in the church or crematorium, and published on the Bits & Bytes website is factual.
Editor

Nortel Fund

BIR03	Trevor	**Instone**	09/03/17	86
	Alan G	**Lawrence**	11/02/17	88
	Alan R	**Walker**	10/08/17	91
	David R	**Watton**	29/01/17	91
BRA01	Walter	**May**	17/01/17	81
BRA06	Raymond G	**Bond**	09/12/16	87
CAM01	Sidney J	**Branch**	09/10/16	87
HOM99	Malcolm	**Macfarlane**	17/10/16	85
IRE02	Ernest J	**Woods**	14/10/16	87
KID01	Stanley	**Edwards**	16/09/16	85
	William J	**Fallon**	17/11/16	84
	Donald J	**Ralphs**	02/12/16	95
KID02	Sydney C	**Harper**	01/02/17	84
	Reginald	**Parker**	13/02/17	82
LET04	Albert E J	**Deller**	14/10/16	87
LET05	Donald	**Clark**	28/08/16	82
	Peter	**Rogers**	26/01/17	70
	Michael	**Sharman**	01/01/17	86
LON11	Sylvia W	**Didd**	14/12/16	77
	Andrew A	**Howard**	27/08/16	89
	Brian S	**Iverson**	09/12/16	81
LON12	Anna L	**Bauwens**	03/02/17	93
LON24	Denis V G	**Cole**	09/10/16	88
LON30	Kenneth E	**Hull**	16/12/16	91
	Roy H J	**Tennant**	09/01/17	90
LON31	Maurice	**Liston**	19/01/17	81
LON38	Roy A	**Kilby**	14/09/16	88
	Ian G L	**Moir**	23/10/16	87
MAN01	Elizabeth H	**Woodcock**	13/11/16	87
MAN12	Laurence R	**Edwards**	22/10/16	65
MAN13	Noel E	**Croucher**	06/02/17	83
NPT01	Anthony K	**Lake**	15/09/16	77
REA03	David B	**Mathers**	05/10/16	87
REA06	William G	**Draper**	14/01/17	76
REA08	Paul F	**Mason**	09/10/16	69
SLH01	Brian J	**Mantle**	02/02/17	81
SLH06	Reginald E	**Sheppard**	13/12/16	88
STE04	Lilian R	**Bigny**	16/01/17	84
	William A	**Compton**	24/11/16	86
	Kenneth W	**Marshall**	27/09/16	87
	Pamela E	**Stock**	08/03/17	87
STE10	Arthur W	**Powell**	21/12/16	78
TEL01	Lancelot	**Wise**	22/01/17	94
WAK01	Michael F	**Lynch**	02/01/17	89
WAK02	Harry	**Poole**	25/11/16	90
ZAM01	Ralph	**Morrison**	25/01/17	86
No Known Location				
	Ellis	**Boon**	15/12/16	80
	Margaret R	**Breen**	12/10/16	97
	James	**Burgess**	10/01/17	93
	James K	**Byrne**	22/08/16	85
	James H	**Cartwright**	03/12/16	92
	Charles R	**Claber**	22/11/16	95
	Frederick C	**Davis**	19/01/17	92
	Harold	**Ellor**	11/02/17	94
	Josephine	**Englebert**	28/09/16	91
	Ralph S	**Goodall**	02/12/16	94
	Gareth M	**Griffiths**	21/12/16	85
	Raymond D	**Griffiths**	21/12/16	71
	Joyce	**Hawkes**	17/10/16	87
	John B	**Healey**	09/01/17	81
	William F	**Heron**	04/01/17	77
	Ernest J	**Holgate**	28/08/16	82
	Arthur E	**Jones**	31/10/16	92
	Kenneth G	**Joslin**	23/10/16	92
	Kenneth W	**Lower**	28/10/16	93
	John	**McDonald**	10/12/16	85
	Dorothy R	**Murray**	14/12/16	89
	Arthur R	**Oakley**	30/11/16	83
	Frank	**Ogden**	05/09/16	87
	Peter H J	**Pittam**	25/12/16	91
	Bronislawa	**Rajfur**	15/09/16	91
	Granville	**Roberts**	27/08/16	93
	Gilbert S	**Selwyn**	15/02/17	92
	Phyllis	**Standeven**	20/02/17	90
	Kenneth H	**Staynor**	23/10/16	89
	Constance	**Sweeney**	22/01/17	89
	Jeffrey	**Vernum**	02/10/16	88
	Joseph J	**Verweij**	09/02/17	79
	Derek	**Wall**	22/09/16	84
	J A	**Watson**	04/03/17	90
	Eric W	**Watts**	06/02/17	86
	Fredrik D	**Whalley**	28/09/16	86
	Margaret	**Wilcox**	20/10/16	90
	Donald B	**Wilkinson**	08/10/16	85

Fujitsu Pensions Website

https://fujitsu.pensiondetails.co.uk
To access Bits & Bytes click on the link given on the very bottom of the home page.
Direct telephone line to Pensions Department: 01235 797788

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

Facebook

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

NEXT ISSUE

Copy for the Autumn 2017 issue must be submitted by 1 September 2017, but would be appreciated earlier.