

Dave's GEN



A link for members of the former London Test Section,
who were based on Studd Street

October 2010

Editorial

It is with great sadness that I report the passing of Dave Fairhurst our long time editor of the Club GEN and Dave's GEN.

Dave passed away on the 11th April 2010, aged 73 years.

Dave was the first TO that I encountered on starting my TOiT course; on what was then Group 36. He had recently built, and had on display on his bench, a miniature set of transistor controlled traffic lights. They were ever present during his working life.

We will all miss you Dave, but won't forget you. Dave's GEN will always be the title of this newsletter.

John Tythe.

Remembering David

This is the letter written by Douglas (Dave's brother) that was read out during Dave's service.

Dear Dave.

Probably this is the first time that I have ever written to you personally and it saddens me greatly to have to do this.

I could write a potted history telling everyone what you got up to over the years, but that would take an age. I can already hear voices - "get on with it"! So I'm afraid it's only going to be a few highlights.

I know that at just aged three what was to become a significant milestone and influence for the rest of your life took place; that of the beginning of the Second World War. It was not until you were nearly nine did peace come again. Clearly those experiences of being in the house when a bomb fell close by; on another occasion your school at Chesterfield Road was hit and a teacher killed; the horrendous time being evacuated, all left an imprint on you of always being a cautious type.

Despite all that, life later in the prefab became a gentle interlude with visits to cousins Peg and Babs to watch their telly, day trips to Southend, and playing on the Green (now the A10 dual carriageway!)

The move to Roedean Avenue was to become your home for the next sixty years. You had gained entry to Latymer School and also 'did' your National Service. The Post Office (later BT) was to become your life and I know you were well respected there. Little do people know that you were not only a brilliant technician but were dabbling with computer electronics and computer logic well before many in this country had heard of the word computer. A testament of this is your passing with Distinction various Examinations. Your 'traffic lights' experiment is still well remembered! Similarly your circuit design for my model railway would today put Network Rail to shame!

Hobbies really took hold with your interests in trolleybuses, photography and short wave radio. Few can boast of being mentioned on radio stations such as Radio Australia and Radio Sweden.

You even won the Easter Competition run by Radio Netherlands. Family history, also took your attention and you have left a significant legacy with volumes of completed research. Similarly the thousands of photographs you took of everyday life and transport will, I'm sure, be of great interest to future generations. I remember travelling with you on the very first Victoria Line tube train; the trips out in the Land Rover, and, buying that printing machine!

In later years you took up the challenge of keeping in touch with past members of your BT Section and you producing "Dave's Gen", a Newsletter that has subsequently found its way onto the Internet and very much appreciated by all.

Finally, I must say a special Thank You, not only from myself but all the close family, for looking after mum for all those years.

Must dash - (always my famous words!) This time I have an excuse. I know that your niece Freya is waiting back at home and will be asking "when does the party start?" And, can she have some cake?!

Will always be in all our thoughts,

Doug.

PS: I must remember to wind back your bus destination blind as it's currently showing "DEPOT".

As the new editor of Dave's GEN, not many people yet have my contact details, so copy is a bit sparse at the moment. For those of you who have e-mail, you can send to davesgen@virginmedia.com or by post to my home address:

17 Parkstone Avenue
Old St. Mellons
Cardiff
CF3 5TY

Tel Home 02920 777 455 : Work 01443 878 878 : Mobile 07768 871 331

On with the correspondence:

Ian Boniface wrote:

Dear Dave,

It occurs to me that with the publication of the next Dave's Gen it will be 20 years since I retired from the London end of QA Division. This was after 42 years during which I was fortunate to meet and work with the most friendly and helpful people it is possible to know. When I reflect upon my career I realized that in the early days that applied to all staff and management.

Unfortunately this started to change when new management was brought in from Industry and we were told that the culture had to change. First we had to become as efficient as Industry and regard our subscribers as Customers. Like many others I wondered why we had to become less efficient and not to treat our customers as Subscribers who I had always understood were more than mere customers. By this time in my career I had spent a great deal of time at contractors works and knew that very few of them were as efficient as the Post Office Engineering Department even though, of course in any organisation there is room for improvement. Luckily for me the process of culture change did not become really unpleasant until the last few years of my career when personal contracts and the bonus culture started to be introduced. This led to people being less helpful, and more suspicious of their colleagues. How this helped to improve efficiency escaped me. This all made it very easy to accept early retirement without the sadness I had seen when colleagues had retired in earlier times.

While on the subject of change I count myself lucky to have developed health problems after the Labour Government had gone some way to repairing the damage done by their predecessors. Despite my advanced years and some serious health issues I could not have received better service from several branches of the NHS. Since having a heart attack in 2002 my GP has been keeping a regular check on me. This has involved among other things, blood tests. From one of these I was diagnosed with Leukaemia, I had no adverse symptoms, but I am now regularly checked by a blood specialist. Then last year another routine check caused me to be called urgently to see another specialist and after spending many happy days being scanned and having biopsies I was told that I have prostate cancer. I was relieved to be told that they would try medication rather than operate. This seems to be working but it also appears to be affecting the heart so another specialist and more tests. At the end of this series of tests the specialist spent some time explaining that I should have a pacemaker fitted but after discussing the procedure and checking my past medical history he decided

that it would be too risky. Since then I have noticed that it would have made many places out of bounds so I cannot say I am sorry.

I have found it very interesting watching the present political and media frenzy over recent months. It seems crazy to me blame Gordon Brown for the world banking crisis, the roots of which clearly lay in the 80s when everything was deregulated. Does anyone really believe that once that particular cat was let out of the bag a future government could reintroduce suitable controls. Can you imagine a reaction if they had tried.

It is amazing how short people's memories are but another issue which exercises in the media these days is the availability of broadband access. The general public would probably not be aware in this case but things could have been very different had the Thatcher government not been so determined to introduce competition into the telecoms market. Back in the early eighties I was nominated quality manager for a project developed at Martlesham called 'Switched star cable television'. This was to use optical fibre cable to the street with mini coaxial cable to the house. Don Ledwith and I were able to see the prototypes at Martlesham and did an assessment of the manufacturer who was to produce the field trial equipment. The plan was to update the National Network but the government decided to divide up the country and issue licences which restricted any company who wished to install cable television services to a particular area. The number of licences which the Post Office were able to obtain apparently made the system unviable. At about that time I had to visit a couple of Companies in the USA on other projects and was told at one of them that we were at least 10 years ahead of the rest of the world in the development of wide band services to the home. I do not know where they got their information from and I did not let on that I was involved in the project in case they tried to pump me on the subject.

Another issue which saddened me recently was a report issued by the employers' organisation which called for University students to pay the whole cost of their education. This at a time when they are constantly complaining that there are not enough people with the skills industry requires. I wonder why the Employers think they should be subsidized by the students.

We have now had a general election and during the run up the local Tory MP called to canvas our vote. I enjoyed the opportunity to tell him that he would not get my vote (not that in the Sevenoaks constituency it would make any difference). When he asked me why it gave me the opportunity to ask him why, when his party laid a foundation for the current crises by deregulating the banks anyone should trust him again. He showed his ignorance by responding that it was Gordon Brown and his American ally Bill Clinton who deregulated the banks and caused a problem. Unfortunately people seem to believe that.

KRs
Ian Boniface

Dave received an Air Letter from Harry Jenn a year ago. I love this technology, scan, copy, paste, edit. As Harry says, Dave should have done this, years ago.

Having put this issue to bed, I found that Dave had already printed an edited version of Harry's letter in the February 2010 issue, but as I'm short of copy, I'll re-print it in its entirety.

Dear Dave,

29th, Oct. '09. (Less than 2 months to Xmas).

I am so sorry I haven't written sooner, because as you can imagine, when one is retired there is so much to do, ~ coupled with the fact that the time seems to fly by.

Thank you for the 'Dave's Gen' it is greatly appreciated, it makes one feel 'very nostalgic' & also shows how, over the years how diverse our interests had become. It was a pity that you never "Kept up with the Jones", & became computer literate, as it would have saved you a lot of time & money in editing & postage, & electronic mailing is mighty quick & reliable.

Which reminds me, Ian Torrance gave a plausible explanation of why my Xmas cards & contribution never arrived if the paper money had a metallic strip through it, (it does), the Postal authorities my end would pick it out. You mentioned on the newsletter back page "Magnetic Therapy", made me smile. We also receive quite a lot of 'Quack Therapy over here for all sorts of medical problems: due to the black population & their culture. I would have thought you would have asked the question, has anyone either tried or know of anyone & how successful was it?

It is over a year since Betty died & I believe I mentioned that if she had stayed alive for one more week, we would have been married for 61 years. That is a long period for a partnership, which had many ups & downs, but more of happier memories. I was also in the same clinic at that time with Bronchial Pneumonia, but I also had fluid around the heart, making me very short of breath. They drained 7Kg. of fluid from me but I was sent home before Betty, 3 mornings later she suffered a severe heart attack..

You asked if I am still smoking. No. S.A. Telkom retired me at 65, (20 years ago), I went for an annual check-up with my G.P. who sent me for all the usual tests & the X-ray for my chest showed I had slight emphysema; his suggestion was to give up smoking altogether. I asked for medication & he said 'Use your will power'. For the next 6 months I was like a bear with a sore head. I have only weakened once, that was at the time Betty broke her femur 16 days before we were due to fly to Canada to see both of our families, 1 in Toronto & the other in Vancouver. She smelt my breath when I visited her & she gave me quite a telling off so I stopped again.

Now once again I have had to cancel my flight to see the families this year As I said at the beginning of my letter I have a respiratory problem & although the Specialist felt, when I visited him in Jan. that I was fit to fly to Canada, "but only in their Summer'. Even the 24-hour trip he wasn't at all worried. . On the strength of that I made a booking to go in July & Aug.(a month with each), flying by Delta from Jo'burg to Atlanta nonstop. It was the only Airline that was able to give me a shuttle flight to Toronto & return to Atlanta from Vancouver. He thought it would be advisable to have a pre-flight check-up a month before I was to go. So when I did go in June, I mentioned I was having a bit of a problem with my breathing when walking, my bowel problem, which he said was not the tablets I was on, & showed him the

Radiologist's report of the Barium Enema including all the other problems I've got). He could see I was very stressed out, checked my Blood Pressure & found it very high. After his recheck we started talking of the Insurer/Airlines medical exclusions, the flight wouldn't be a problem but he foresaw the possibility of a lot of trauma when leaving the 2 families after staying a month with each.& of course the Mexican 'flu had made its appearance by then. He revised my medication & he must have had a Crystal Ball as I got Bronchitis 12 days before I was due to fly, so I would have had to cancel, but as he had given me a letter the last sentence says it all," & I have advised Mr. Jenn to cancel his planned overseas trip as he is not fit to fly given his deterioration over the past 3 months.

I thought the contents were over explicit, but he must of thought to do that so that I would get a full refund from the Airline. The flight consultant said he was confident that Delta would, with, perhaps with a small sum for admin, costs. They have just refunded me 75% of the airfare. I am truly grateful that the families had visited us while Betty was alive. Except our eldest Grandson, he was due to have his 'Varsity exams & was unable till Jan. this year, but of course Betty had passed on by then. I have rambled on enough, so I'll just end with a last paragraph or two. I am still independent. I still drive my car, not for long journeys or at night, which is not safe anyway.

From all newspaper reports Britain is also experiencing lots of crime & belligerent teenagers, same as everywhere else. Our Unions are becoming very belligerent & demanding double figures % wage increases; even though they know there is a Recession & 'millions of unemployed', very selfish.

I still cook for myself, except Sundays when I use our dining Hall, gives me a rest from preparing, cooking & the washing up. It is quite a job shopping for one person.

When I was demobilised from the R.A.F. in Dec. 1946 as my parents lived across the road from Horace Lickerish, Group 7, who advised me to go for an interview for a post in the Test Section. When I started at the end of Jan. '47, my 1st. week I had to spend at home due to a lack of electricity & coal for the boilers in the basement at Studd Street. That happened to be one of the worst winters everyone had experienced for some time. And I can remember it also after spending 3 1/2 years in India & having insufficient clothing coupons for a warmer suit. The 'demob. suit' was not of much use. Fortunately I had not grown much nor put on weight. My Mother worked wonders on my 5/6 year-old suits. It was later in the August of that year Betty & I got Married & Princess Elizabeth & Prince Phillip also got married in the Nov. 50 years later we were invited to the Golden Wedding. Anniversary celebrations at the 'Buckingham Palace', although we were living in S.A. at that time.

Can anyone remember the mid-50's at Brimsdown, Grp. 40? (I think)? A Tech. iiB, an Irishman named 'Paddy' (?) (of course), whose job it was to keep Freddy Eva's office clean & the Test section. Make sure the teas were available at all times& return the tested or rejected 'Batches'. Why I ask is, I never really did thank him for his gift of a X-bred Chow puppy which he had brought in, As I was the only bloke living nearby & as I used to ride a man's bike that had a basket on front, I was 'induced' to quickly take the puppy home before Fred saw it. I 'raced' home & deposited him at the bottom of the stairs of our house. Called Betty, who had just got up & was getting

ready to go to work, in the "Cross". She had to take the day off to care for him. We had been married for 10 years with no hope of having children, but the puppy must have brought out the maternal feelings because later that year in October, our eldest daughter was born as a Birthday gift as it was my birthday month too.

The name of the puppy? Paddy of course.

My best regards to you & thank you once again for keeping in us touch.

Harry

And there's more:

In August 2010, I received some recent news from Harry:

I contracted Bronchitis 6 weeks ago & caught it in time, before it turned Bronchial-pneumonia, as had happened 2 years ago.

After a week of Anti-biotics & physio, I was slowly getting over it, when on the 18th.of July, 2 intruders got into my cottage & robbed me of a pretty large amount of cash, 2 Krugerands, (bought for R275 in 1976 & now will cost over R9, 000 to replace) my wife's jewellery, 3 watches, & a variety of commemorative coins to our two daughters & my cell phone & my flat screen Monitor was stolen

The P.C. & Silverware had been placed on the sofa near the door. I managed to get out of bed & press the Panic button on my bedroom phone, one thief returned from another room & caught me getting back to bed, guessed what I had done & quickly left, leaving the PC. & S.W. behind before the Security & police arrived.

In the mean time the Nursing staff arrived & took me just in my pyjamas & dressing gown to the 'sick bay' & gave me a blanket, hot sweetened tea & a tranquillizer. I left about 10 a.m.

Back at the cottage there was the contents of the wardrobes & drawers were strewn all over the place; but at least they did not harm me or my life.

The kids in Canada were shocked, but also grateful I had been spared.

Neighbours & many villagers have visited me & I've related the details which have been a form of Trauma counselling, but it is a long road to recovery.

Now I will have to pay a little more attention to my personal security.

I received this missive from Richard Skidmore aka Skids.

Just to let you know I have joined the ranks of the old codgers.

I have just come out of hospital after having what was a simple gall bladder operation, but of course not so simple, as the keyhole surgery did not work. So they opened me up.

So now it's major surgery, then after all that, they still want to sent you home the next day, which they did.

Of course I was back in again after five hours, as wound was bleeding quite a lot.

End of troubles, no, sent home. After two days of slowly getting worse, I was readmitted. It hurt too much to eat or drink anything, and even I knew this was not a good sign, also I could not lie down, so sat up for almost two days in a chair.

It was decided that I had a leak in my bile duct, so a stent was put in, via a robotic-arm, yes down the throat, to seal the hole, so that now hurts as well. Great!

However, all seems ok at the moment, besides all the pain. I did not know it would this much fun getting old.

Hope you and all our colleagues are well.

Kind regards

Richard Skidmore

From Roger Glover:

Just back from my Marine Radio course and Exam - it looks like I'll be able to legally use the radio on my narrow boat now - well, in a few weeks until my licence comes through.

I was always slightly concerned that the 'boys in blue' would be waiting for me when I moved from off the Thames to the inland waterways.

To go on the Thames it is now a requirement that any vessel (over 45ft) must be equipped with VHF radio. Well my boat is under 45ft so didn't need it, however it was equipped with VHF, the fact that no one on-board was licensed to operate it legally didn't seem to matter for me, or anyone else that I've spoken to, or to the authorities.

It'll give me a good feeling to be legal.

I'm sure you all know that Roger re-publishes Dave's Gen on line, but here's a reminder of where to look. www.ltssac.org



London Testing Branch of the POEU, on a day out!! When was that then??

The Editor's profile.

I suppose it's possible that there are some of you out there who did not encounter me in one way or another during my 25 years in the London Test Section. So, perhaps I'd better give a potted history my time there and after.

30th August 1966 was my start date. Shocked at my first week's wages as they were paid Friday to Thursday, and as I didn't start until the Tuesday after the August Bank Holiday, so only got 3 days pay!!! The things that stick in my mind!

1973 saw me bribed by the offer of tea & biscuits and a couple of hours off, to come along to the then IPOEE, Test Section Committee meeting. By the end of the meeting I was the new Visits Secretary. How did that happen?? I arranged visits, of a technical nature, for the 200 plus members in our section, for 10 or so, months of the year, which were typically attended by 12-15 people for each visit, peaking at full coach loads, for archaeological visits conducted by Jim Barfoot. I carried on in that role for many years.

This of course took time out of my working day, but the then Head of Group, Bob Nafzger, was happy as long as I didn't spend more than half the week doing so. A succession of apprentices did the rest of my work for me, and life was good!

My involvement in IPOEE, which changed to IBTE, TCN & ITP over the years, saw me reach the dizzy heights of London Secretary, and I continued serving on that committee until 2008, when the London Committee saw the end coming and decided to go it alone, doing what we had always done but under the new name of Inspire. A message board was set up, so there was an internet contact, and for a bit of devilment added BTE to the initial of Inspire. BTE is a variable, such as:

‘Inspire - Better Than Ever’ or, Inspire - Best Tell Everyone

Find us & join for free, on the internet here:

<http://inspirebte.yuku.com>

I’m sure that some of you have been to, seen places, or done things that you want to share. Inspire gives you the opportunity to do this, plus I can also put things in here for you.

I recently drove a steam locomotive on one of our visits to Mangapps railway museum. Great fun. Choo Choo!

For those who have internet connection, see more here:

<http://inspirebte.yuku.com/topic/466> and here for the Mangapps web site

<http://www.mangapps.co.uk/>.



Over the years, as people retired from the London Test Section, they left me various roles to take care of.

Stan Clark asked me to take over the POIS

Tim Healy asked me to take is place on the PO&CSSS, (Benenden) BTHQ Committee, which I went on to Chair.

Then in 1985, I became Secretary of the Testing Branch of the NCU (was POEU, now CWU), I spent three of the most exciting, enjoyable and stressful years of my time in the Test Section in that role. I miss that the most.

Also in 1985 I purchased the equipment & furniture from the Glove Test Room for £60, and set up Safeglove, which amazingly is now in its 25th year of testing rubber gloves.

Life for me is still much as it was in the LTS, except I don't have to get up at stupid o'clock to get to work, and every day has an extended lunch.

Is it tea time yet?

We don't like change, do we? 😊

Christmas Meeting 2010

The 2010, Studd Street Christmas meet up will be on Thursday 9th December, at the Wetherspoons pub the White Swan, in Upper Street, which is about 100 Yards from Highbury and Islington Station.

Reasonable food, cheap beer and plenty of room for us to circulate in.

See you there!

In the next issue:

The full version of Times Gone By, reminiscence's of Dennis Isaacs.

Dennis also has a web site <http://dens-astropics.org.uk> some amazing photographs of Nebulae & Galaxies.

If you don't have the internet at home, your local library will have computers that you can use on line for free, you may have to book though.

Mobile Telephone Exchange & some of our boys @ the Enfield Factory (Mid. 1960's)



Dave Fairhurst - Who is No. 2? Alan Portch – Roy Shaw – Les Roberts

Save the Planet

And also reduce our costs, wherever possible, I would like to send out Dave's Gen by e-mail.

So, if you have an e-mail account, and would like to have Dave's Gen by this method, just mail back to davesgen@virginmedia.com with your name, if it's not obvious who you are from the account name.

You may send in copy, and also update and make changes to addresses and telephone numbers, if you wish to, by sending to the same e-mail address.

Thanks for reading, please keep in touch, one way or another.

My best regards to you all.

John Tythe