

# Dave's GEN



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

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## February 2011

Christmas has come and gone and the depths of winter are now with us. Time to settle down with this copy of Dave's Gen, and catch up with what others have been up to.

A big thank you to all of you that sent Christmas cards & letters, and a bigger thank you to all who made donations, to enable me to keep Dave's Gen going for those who rely on a printed copy. Thank you all for your kind thoughts.

### At the White Swan

The Christmas meet up at the White Swan was held on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2010, which due to being contaminated by flu riddled family members, I couldn't attend. However, these are the ones who did:

Steve Pollin Vicky Pollin John Bloomfield Paul Quinn Ken Denny John Reynolds  
Dave Eyre Geoff Wigley Pete Cleaver Ted Nye Cliff Bourne Headley Warner John  
Neil John Rogers Roger Glover Mel Ellis Paul Chance Alan Williams  
Steve Dickens Lorraine Dickens Colin Fitzpatrick Phil Jones Graham Hill Roy  
Clarke Harry Vincent Sam Hawkins Dereck Crane Stan Mitchell Alan Medley  
Karl Easthorpe Brian Middlemass Dave McNeil Martin Waite Dave Hayes Peter  
Scott Kelvin Rawles Pauline Scanlon Joe Fielder Pete Donovan Peter Franklin  
Colin Bingham Joe Fielder Mike Bettenson, and maybe there also.. John Lavelle  
Bob Groves.

### Correspondence

Fred Petrie wrote:

Lack of space, (I'm trying to keep it to twelve pages), prevents me from including everything I've received, but will try to get it in the next issue.

Dear John,

First may I say how very sorry I was to hear of Dave's death, he was a very gentle person, I never heard him say a bad word about anyone or saw him lose his temper he was just a very nice person.

I am glad that you have undertaken to keep Dave's Gen going, it has kept the old members of the Test Section in touch over the years, I was shaken to see the picture of us all on a protest march, it was the only protest march I ever went on although I went out on strike for a day when I was THQ Welfare Section Chairman only to find next day that was the only WO on strike although they had all voted to go out.

Has anyone ever heard from Mike Finch he went to M O D. When he and Jimmy Warner and Andy Ellen were apprentices I lived in fear of my life, they were always wiring up my chair to a megger, or a charged up capacitor, they never did catch me out but it was a near thing.

All for now.  
Fred Petrie

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From Paul Reid:

Hello John

Many thanks for taking on the task of keeping Dave's Gen going. I'd be pleased to continue receiving it by e-mail please.

For your information (and you are welcome to use in the Gen if you wish), I joined the LTS in 1961 (part the Y2YC intake for that year, along with the likes of Roger Hoy, Mike Rogers, Dave Stanford, Mick Middleditch and Dave Wheeler (who left after several years to go into the entertainment business)). I didn't stay too long as I had met a girl from Birmingham and we decided to get married – but we couldn't afford a place to live in London! So I managed to get a transfer to Stone as an Instructor in 1966.

Whilst there I was successful in getting a Post Office scholarship to go to university (I'd got my City & Guilds "Full Tech" by then) and spent three years at Loughborough University, going in as a TO and leaving in 1973 as an EE. That led me to Martlesham, though I wasn't that keen, as I wanted to find a job in a Region. But that wasn't to be! So Martlesham it was, although I spent most of my time in buildings in Ipswich itself, and only two at the BT Labs. I got a further promotion to Head of Group (a grade equivalent to the old SEE – who I considered as "God" at Studd Street).

Towards the end of my time at Ipswich, I had a boss who was keen to move from his technical post into "Personnel" – and he wanted me to move with him. But that wasn't what I wanted. At that time the BT Standards Division was about to move from Old Street to Ipswich, and there were many unwilling movers. So I managed to join the standards work, which I intended to stay in for just a few months. However, I got the standards bug, helped by the considerable amount of foreign travel that was included!

In 1988, the European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI) was created in the south of France, and I got the task of advertising ETSI job vacancies and short-term placements within BT, by means of the Gazette. I was also responsible for staying in contact with the placements. Most were for two years but I noticed that several didn't return to BT! Then the opportunity arose for me to move to ETSI (in 1991) and I've been here ever since. The work included a lot more travel and has taken me to many fascinating places, including some that I'd probably never have got to otherwise, like Ankara, Jerusalem, Tehran and Hong Kong.

But now a lot of the fun has gone out of the job (for economic and management reasons) and I have decided that it's time to think seriously about retirement, so I've just set the wheels in motion with the intention of retiring at the end of next March. I have thoroughly enjoyed my career and have found each phase to have been a fantastic experience. It feels like I have had at least four different lifetimes. I'm convinced that there couldn't have been a better place to start such a career than the LTS, since it taught me so much. And of course they were a great bunch of guys!

I very rarely get to London, so I don't have the opportunity to get to the quarterly meetings in The Swan, but if any former colleagues find themselves in the Cannes/Nice area, I'd be delighted to meet up with them.

Best regards Paul Reid

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A couple of submissions from Mike Stanton:

Dear John,

I recently received my copy of Dave's GEN in Spain, and was sad to read of Dave's passing. I wrote the following letter to Dave in response to the FEB edition in which Dennis Isaacs had written of his past memories of the London Test Section, especially the passing of Ted Felstead, also other memorable moments serving as secretary and chairman of the POEU. I am a bit vague of when you served with me, maybe you can refresh my memory. (1986 - JT)

Obviously the letter was too late for Dave, may be you can use it. (*Reproduced below-JT*)

Regarding the three pictures, two of them were of POEU member having a summer stroll through the City of London or a march against the Government withholding part of our pay rise in the mid 60's.

The third picture of the MTE's bought back many memories working at Enfield Factory especially when a Coca Cola Bottling Factory opened next door, very useful in the summer.

I am glad you have decided to take up the pen to continue Dave's good work.

Good luck & best wishes Mike Stanton

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Dear Dave.

Just a note about Dennis Isaacs reminiscence in the FEB 2010 Dave's Gen. I largely enjoyed my time as Union Secretary, humbly following in the footsteps of Paddy Padina and his Branch Chairman George Bennett who were in charge when I first joined the London Test Section. However there were a few sad occasions that still I remember,

Ted Felstead, my Branch Chairman was one of those people who became a friend with all he came into contact with, his only vice was his heavy smoking which must have contributed to his death at such an early age. It was still a great shock and personal loss.

One of the functions of a Union Secretary was to take a cheque for £300 Union Death Benefit to the next of kin as soon as possible, this brought the tragedy of death very close to me, I had to do this function on three other occasions.

On a lighter note, some other points I remember well were having to sought out the Benefits due to our first Pregnant T O, also calling the first and only Mass Meeting of the Entire Branch in Islington Town Hall to discuss cut to staff , as you all know these cuts carried on till the Branch disappeared in the early 90's.

Best Wishes from Joan & Michael Stanton

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And from Karl Easthorpe:

Hi John,

I hope you and yours are keeping well and thanks for keeping Dave's Gen going after the very sad passing of Dave.

At this time I am happy to receive a copy of Dave's Gen by email or even just a reminder when a new version has been added to the web site.

I am hoping to make the drink on the 9<sup>th</sup> December at the White Swan so I will hopefully see some of the old faces then.

I have now completed my 40 years service in BT, the only pity is they withdrew the option to retire at 40 years service, so it looks like I could still be here when I am 65.

KRs Karl Easthorpe

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Hi John

Ossie here, just letting you know my E mail address. I'm not a very expert IT person (as you will find out in time)

I'd love you to send me a Dave's Gen, as and when.

I trust you are in good health (as you're a spring chicken compared with some of us) and enjoying life in the land of somebody's father.

I had part of my Ileum and ascending colon removed last year. This was because of Adhesions caused by my Cancer surgery in 1990. I think it is one of the things that can occur after any surgery.

The adhesions caused me to have periodic bouts of the runs and vomiting, which I've had for about 13 or so years. Endless investigations, and weird diets, (costing a fortune), all to no effect. The problem I now have is that they also removed the valve that controls the volume of matter passing into the large bowel. My bowel is unable to absorb all the liquid so I end up with the runs again. I manage this with Imodium and fibre gel, a cellulose product that absorbs water. Most of the time it's OK, but not always.

I've just re-read this ... and it sounds really uplifting.

Sorry to renew our association with a load of old tosh John

Look forward to hearing from you.

Keep well Ossie

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A note from Terry Clements:

John,

Many thanks for my copy of Dave's Gen and well done for taking on the continuation of the project, as if you did not have enough to do!

John, I am now not on the internet, so I would like to have a hard copy of any future Dave's Gens if that is O.K. and to this end am enclosing some stamps and a donation for other sundries, if you don't mind sending me a hard copy.

For many years I told Dave I would send him some copy re. Crayford Depot and of my exploits there but never got around to it. So as most of the news now is of operations, perhaps some old Q.A. operation reminisces may change the tone a bit. If I can remember them, I will try and get some copy to you, for the Gen.

Also again this year, I won't be able to come to the Christmas reunion at the White Swan, as Gill and I are off for a short break with our Active Retirement Club to Chatsworth House, to see it in all its' glory at Christmas. So will you please give my apologies to the lads and tell them that I am still alive, but now not 'kicking'.

Best wishes, Terry Clements

P.S. On the back page of the gen, is No.2 a very young Mel Ellis???

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From Andy Ellen:

Dear John

Congratulations on the 1st edition of 'Dave's Gen' under your editorship.  
I hope that in future you will be able to send my copies via e-mail.

Re the POEU day out, I believe it had taken place in the early 60's, although my memory is vague I think it was regarding a shortening of working hours, or possibly an emphasised need for more cash! It was certainly a one-day event involving the complete POEU membership and George Bennett did a good job in getting an almost 100% turnout.

Kind regards Andy Ellen

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An update from Roger Pye:

John

I had just received an e mail from a friend in France informing me of the death of a common acquaintance at 74, I went downstairs to pick up the Mail and there was Dave's Gen. What a shock to learn of Dave's death.

You obviously joined LTS after I moved on to Cable Test Section in 1962. Up till then Dave and I were virtually joined at the hip! We joined LTS in the tender care of Mr Turtle on the same day September 15<sup>th</sup> 1953. There were 12 of us in the year, the other 10 being Brian Bale, Lou Lynch, Alan Parker, John Barulis, Les Burgess Mick Cakebread ? Chambers, Colin Reader and Brian Shillham, Dave and I went on the same Youth A and B Courses.

We were called up in to REME together on September 15<sup>th</sup> 1953. We were both in the same platoon in C company at Basic Training and went on 3 Battalion at Arborfield to do our trade training. In March 1956 we were posted to 34 Base Workshops at Donnington in Shropshire. In the August we joined the 24<sup>th</sup> Mobile Workshop which was to accompany the invasion of Suez. Dave was physically sick over this but soon recovered. In December 56 the unit was disbanded and Dave and I finally went our own ways. I went to Mid Wales and David went to Feltham but then to Tidworth.

On our return to LTS we both went on the same TO in T – both opting for the transmission side of the things. In 1962 we were both invited to attend A.E. Promotion Boards but Dave turned it down. I was lucky, passed and was offered a post in Cable Test Section. As I had got married in December 1960 the new job gave me an opportunity to live outside London. We still ran across each other from time to time, even when the CTS work was seconded to the Regions I would avail myself of any excuse to pop into Studd Street.

I finally broke away from cable inspection in the early 70s going on to Transmission and Line Equipment until further promotion made me Operations Manager for Milton Keynes Cable Television.

(Interested to see Ian Boniface's involvement with Martlesham! ) In 1986 I got back into THQ on Network Support and Group QLO. I left under "Sovereign" in December 1990.

David and I shared interests outside GPO/BT. We were both avid Short Wave Listeners. I took my Radio Amateurs Exam whilst in the Army, becoming G8AAT in 1964 followed by the Morse Exam and G4IUH in 1979.

Transport of most kinds interested us from trains through to buses. I was so surprised that David never got into using a computer!

Most of my life revolves round the family, from a surprisingly sprightly mother now nearly 97 to a great granddaughter of 2.

My local Lions Club where I am a Charter Member of some 36 yrs, and our Bowls Club where I am President with a Club Secretary who was my boss in THQ and latterly Regional Engineer BT East!

Thank you for carrying on the good work.

Dave would be proud of you.

P.S.

I've since been to the website. Glad to see "Shorty Conroy" is still about. I had a surprise phone call last Christmas from Brian Bale and occasionally swap stories with Colin Reader out there in the tropics, but that seems to be all of our intake. Y2Ycs used to come in at 6 month intervals then. Ozzie Oswald was in the batch after us.

Would love to try and get down on Dec 9<sup>th</sup>. We are only 45 mins from Euston these days. How is it, other events overtake the things you really want to do?

Roger Pye

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Ted Bates e-mailed me:

Dear John

Thank you for sending me the latest Dave's Gen, though sadly with the news of Dave Fairhurst's passing. I was always grateful for the effort he put in sending out Dave's Gen with old fashioned printing and snail-mail. I am more than pleased that you are continuing his work but now using e-mail.

I wonder if you might produce an address book list when sending out e-mails so that we could all see who is still in circulation. I was an air cadet gliding instructor at West Malling before they closed the airfield, and later was too old. I regularly get news from colleagues in this way.

I joined the GPO in 1951 as Y2YC in Brighton Area and came to LTS as Open Competition AE in 1959. We spent 1963 on secondment in Mauritius, and I left QA Division to go to Canterbury Area in 1982. In 1989 I was fortunate to have been offered early retirement at age 54, and now boast 21+ years of BT pension. Last year my pension matched my final salary and I have now drawn nearly twice as much in pension as I did in total pay from GPO, PO Engineering and BT. I do recognise that I am one of life's fortunates in this regard.

We have two sons, Alan & Brian, who have blessed us with a granddaughter and four grandsons between them. Two of them were born on my birthday and one on their dad's birthday. Something to do with the probability of sharing birthdays which we used when demonstrating statistics touring the Regions preaching QA to exchange installation CoWs? Gerry Hitchman would remember.

I am still much involved with the RAF having been chairman of Aylesford & Malling Branch of the RAF Association (RAFA) since we set up this branch in 1995. In 15 years we have raised £132,000 for Wings Appeal, which provides welfare funds for RAF personnel and their families in time of need.

Last month we celebrated our Branch 15th anniversary with a formal dinner and attached is posh picture of how I look to-day (age75), receiving an appreciation certificate from Vice President of RAFA .

Thanks again for keeping up Dave's good work.

Regards to all. Ted Bates

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## Photo answers

Hi John

My money's on Mick Fancy, he was slim and athletic (10.2sec for one hundred yards) until he broke his leg, then he put on weight and stopped running.

Check with Alan Cannon he knew him quite well.

Dave Coles

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The question of who is the mystery person on the photo on the last page is either some tart or a very pouty looking Mel Ellis!

Also the photo of the march I think was around 1968 when there was a strike for more cash by GPO engineers down by the tower. I seem to remember being 'out', and 'spooks' Barker the AE being supportive by handing out ice lollies to some of the passing LTS marchers. (Or may have been earlier in the 60's, I'm having recall probs.) The Cat should be able to remember.

Pete Clever

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John

This may have been the occasion when POEU held their only strike - 19th July 1969.

In the picture I can recognise George Bennett, in the top picture, carrying a banner with Keith Rich just behind him. Alan Canon is the first person in that picture. Ron Kingston is pictured looking hard left (just to the left of the building behind him) Terry Clements is close behind him.

In the bottom picture John Knight is to the right of the policeman; Fred Petrie is in front of him (with his arm behind his back); Geof Wrigley is to the extreme left of the picture; and is that Les Burgess just to the right of the Dave Oliver in the centre of the picture?

There are several faces that I recognise but can't put a name to...

John Sutton

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From Ian Torrance:

## The Hardest Days

There have been numerous books written about the Battle of Britain, with accounts about the various fighter pilots and their actions from the many front line R A F stations in South East England. Some books have briefly referred to the hard working ground crews, whose daunting task was to repair and patch up damaged planes, refuel and re-arm in readiness for the pilots to take off on another sortie. Often during the 1940's Battle of Britain, some 5 sorties a day were carried out.

But I have just read an excellent book, entitled; “FINEST HOUR” by Tim Clayton and Phil Craig, in which it gives, not only the actions of the pilots, but also refers to the many other personnel working at the R A F and Naval bases in wartime, with particular stories about the support and ground staff, who hardly get a mention or recognition of their work.

The book relates to the WAAF plotters, the observers, medical staff and a host of other essential jobs that kept the cogs turning, and about the many civilians, many of whom. Were killed doing specific tasks.

When Biggin Hill, Tangmere, Martlesham, Manston and other stations were virtually destroyed by German bombers, the craters were often filled in by civilians; debris cleared, buildings and hangars on fire were dealt with in all the confusion, along with all essential communication systems being destroyed needing urgent attention. Without the ground staff it would have been difficult for the pilots and planes to get back into action.

One vital system in Flight Command was the RADAR and communication network and other gadgetry required to be working, and one such essential system needed was the Defence Teleprinter Network. Teleprinter lines relayed combat assessment reports, intelligence reports, orders and requirements for new planes and pilots and supplies. Without the telephone and teleprinter links to other stations and to HQ, they would be isolated and unable to function.

Field repairs at bombed RAF / Naval bases were the responsibility of the Post Office War Group Engineering Department. When cables, O/H and U/G cables were smashed up, the GPO Engineers would replace and re-route them. On August 18<sup>th</sup> 1940, when RAF Kenley was totally put out of action, the GPO staff laid miles of new telephone cable to the destinations needed and the engineers were working to restore lines even when the place was being bombed.

Links from the station to HQ at Uxbridge were necessary and the GPO engineers worked hard and long to maintain the service. Gangs of workmen filled in craters, cleared away damaged planes and equipment, dealing with un-exploded bombs, restoring essential services to get the station operational in hours.

An American reporter at the time wrote in the New York Herald Tribune “ Where did these people find the energy and resources to keep doing this time & time again?”

The book is compelling and a fascinating read, with its astonishing and moving stories of courage and survival during one of the great hinge points of our history.

Do get this book, it is most enjoyable.

Ian Torrance.

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## The Log Burner

By John Tythe

Those kind people in the Welsh Assembly gave us a £500 grant to get a new ‘A’ rated boiler, as ours was inefficient and the pilot light alone was costing £120 a year to run.

So, out went the old Baxi Bermuda back boiler and gas fire and the new boiler was located in the airing cupboard. That left a vacant space in the fire place. We decided to have a log burner installed, but on closer inspection I discovered that the fireplace was mostly false and the top just ended at the ceiling.

“Don’t worry” says I, we’ll swap the living and dining rooms around, and open up the fireplace in there. First things first though.

Moving the furniture was the easy part. We sat in the living room, getting used to being at the 'wrong end' of the house and it felt OK. Then came the suggestion that we remove the sliding interconnecting doors, and the partition wall that housed them,

A few hours later, the wall was gone and we liked the feel of the new large room that housed the living and dining rooms.

Then the question was asked, if the wall between the kitchen & dining room could be opened up. I didn't see why not, and so the demolition escalated. Down came that false fireplace, then the plasterboard came off the kitchen / dining room wall, and that is where I started to learn about Airey Houses, which are of non standard construction, and were built shortly after the Second World War under the Temporary Housing Programme 1944-49.

The house is built on a not very reinforced concrete frame, consisting of upright posts @ 18" intervals all around the perimeter of the house and a central-ish spine dividing the house side to side. On the top of these posts, open web galvanised steel joists, for the 1<sup>st</sup> floor, they span from the front to the back, and are supported by the central-ish spine. On top of these posts, the whole structure is repeated and the roof sits on that. The outer walls were originally made of concrete slab cladding, attached to the outer posts by copper wire, and the internal walls were plasterboard and asbestos sheets.

It has transpired that in these houses, all over the UK, the posts suffered from 'concrete cancer' and the steel pole core corroded away. Most Local authorities, who were the landlords for these houses, undertook a refurbishment programme, removing asbestos and the cladding and strengthening the structure with block construction between the posts and bolting 2" angle iron to the ends of the joists, which then rested on the blocks. An outer wall of brick was then erected.

Anyway, I had to remove 3 posts from the central spine and replace with a steel frame to support that part of 1<sup>st</sup> floor. I thought about doing it myself, but lugging all that steel about & cutting and welding was a bit too much for this poor old man of 60, so I drew up the plans and got a local company to fabricate and install it for me. That made life so much easier.

The two existing doorways were now redundant, so were removed and boarded over and of course all the walls needed plastering. But before that, the patio doors needed replacing, so French doors were installed and another set of French doors, to replace a window. The flooring was going to have to be replaced as well.

I got myself an account at Howdens, and ordered the new kitchen, but because the design was not standard, the worktops needed to be made to order and we decided on Corian, which is installed with effectively seamless joints.

The whole process of demolition & construction to installation took 5 months, working on it only at weekends, with 6 of those weekends being used up on holidays, how wasteful!

That £500 grant eventually cost me £14,000

Oh, and the log burner?

We decided we didn't want one after all!!!! (Well, not this year.)

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As announced in the previous issue, Dennis Isaacs's

## Times gone by

I came upon the LTSSAC web site rather late in life, a few passing references that were soon forgotten but finally I remembered to log on and have a proper look. Having left BT in 1994 at the tender age of 47 I have been living the life of Reilly and never realised just how much time had passed me by. It

must have taken ages before the realisation that I didn't have to go to work anymore finally hit me. Even now after over fifteen years out to pasture I can remember the final weeks vividly enough that I don't want to go back.

Although I enquired about leaving in 1992 it wasn't allowed, apparently I was essential then. Two years later and so many things had changed. The whole business was increasingly driven by numbers and one of those was the 'how many staff do we have here?' sort of number. I didn't expect to be asked to leave in '94 but some had resisted so the search went further down the list and I was the last one to be collared. In the final run-up to this auspicious date my appraisal had been changed without my knowing and my performance re-scored – lower. This in spite of the increasing amount of strictly commercial work I was taking on apart from being in-house QA consultant to lots of people.

To add insult to injury my early release interview was conducted by someone I had never worked for but when I found out about the double dealing I had the absolutely certain feeling that I didn't want to work for BT anymore. "Where do I sign I said" on being shown the papers. "You can't sign it yet I have to tell you about all this". "Well get on with it then I said I've had enough of this. Just give me the paper I have to sign and I'm out of here, I have had it with all this crap". The poor fellow did not know what to say, he usually had people holding him up against the wall screaming "what do you mean, you're letting me go? I don't want to go, I'm the best employee BT ever had" etc, etc.

I started to delegate work to others and prepared for my long wanted early retirement by taking plenty of three hour lunches. I seem to remember going home early a lot as well. Whoever it was dealing with the paperwork managed to get it wrong somewhere and technically I should not have gone until the third week into 1995 but that would have meant too many people on the books so I was given three weeks pay in lieu of notice so I could legally be drummed out of the premises on the last day of '94. The extra cash bought me a nice Rollei but if I had known my share holdings were going to plunge by fifty grand in six years time I would have kept the money... Wouldn't I?

I had one or two strange experiences during my pleasant six months under the eye of the unemployment people down at the job centre. The money they paid didn't pay half the bills but it was better than a kick up the arse. The thing was, they expected me to be applying for jobs, not just looking at the vacancies which I did every week when I walked past the job centre to the library. It didn't take long to look because I could not see much through the window. When I was called in for the inevitable interview and asked what job applications I had made I said, as innocently as I could, none, there have not been any suitable jobs advertised for someone of my obvious talent. This didn't go down at all well, the poor woman was horrified – this was all going to bounce back at her and make it look as if she wasn't doing her job properly. She suggested a training course to help me figure out what else there was that I could do out there. When I agreed you could have heard her sigh of relief in Mecca.

I duly turned up at the local DHSS training place in Romford the next week for a two day course on how to maximise my attractiveness in the jobs market. Two things happened on day one. First I had to wait outside until the place opened a far cry from being a trusted and valued BT servant. That really makes you feel as if you have come down in the world. Second, on the course were mostly people that had lost their jobs and simply had to find something else to pay the mortgage or feed the kids. Some of those really were worried about what the future held for them.

One of the people running the course happily announced that they had a computer programme that could help you work out what sort of jobs to apply for. This had me wondering, how many people need a computer to tell them what they are capable of? When the time came to put in details of my qualifications, training and experience the first thing it recommended for me was to apply for a job as a Research Chemist. Perhaps I should have mentioned that I failed O level chemistry. I think it was here that they said if you have an interest in photography how about doing an A level in that? OK, I said, I'll give that a go (as they paid the course fees) so off I went to the Havering College of Further Education for yet another eye opener.

As usual the course I was doing was held in an annexe far away from the nubile crumpet. There were a number of youngsters on the course though, all trying to up their A level count so they could continue skiving at uni. (Nobody writes the full word these days in case they can't spell it). With all my worldly experience the first thing I noticed was that the lecturer was a bit of a nonce. He also abused his position so he could make various out-of-order comments to the younger females in the class. At this

time I was having photographic work selected for various exhibitions and salons around the country and had exhibited abroad many years back. The idea that this grubby little toad could teach me anything worth knowing was way past a joke especially in a college darkroom that made the average Mumbai slum look like the Ritz. I did all my coursework in my darkroom at home so never knew what this fellow was saying to the young girls in the darkroom at the college. Apparently he seemed to be suggesting that they had no chance of passing but there was a guaranteed way of getting a good mark, all you had to do was go over to his place...

The new lecturer was actually much better and it meant that I didn't have to have a row with the head of department over the veiled threat from silly bo\*\*cks to have my exam entry withheld because he couldn't be sure that it was really me doing the work when I was doing it at home. Happy days then, nobody to argue with now. Perhaps I should go back.

A further misunderstanding with the DHSS led to me being put on another course, this time to learn how to become self employed. Seems the more people the DHSS can palm off onto courses of some sort the better it looks for them. This one was an even bigger joke, I knew that as soon as the dirty looking sod next to me expressed a desire to get into marketing. The only market he was likely to figure in was the farmers market – washing the cows. I came across someone there who could neither read or write. Something you hear about but in the world of BT something you never meet. Near the end of the course we had a short lecture from the local tax inspector. He explained about self assessment and peppered his diatribe with increasingly frequent comments about “If you don't do this, I will fine you”. “If you don't do that, I will fine you”. “If you are late submitting this, I will fine you”. I think you get the picture, a typical tax inspector, about as helpful as a dose of syphilis. I got fed up in the end and whilst everyone was listening politely, mainly because the usual man-in-the-street is frightened half to death of tax inspectors, I wasn't. PAYE all my life mate, you see my money before I do.

I had just been having a bit of grief from the Inland Revenue so I was in the mood for this fellow. I started off the wind-up session by asking him a simple question ‘how much help do you think you have just been to people hoping to start their own business when you have made no mention at all of what they can reasonably claim as allowances? Why is it that you can see no further than your snout which is stuck firmly in the trough of all that lovely income tax? After that I started to get wound up and laid into him nonstop for about five minutes. The room was in utter silence, I think some of those there expected to see the roof fall in. I finished up by telling him, quite politely considering how I felt, that both he and his colleague (who had remained silent throughout) were a complete waste of space. I made it known to the lady running the course that I hoped he would not be invited back. It all went a bit quiet, I guess I ruined the party.

As my six months on the dole wound up the DHSS lost interest in me and I was free to go back to being openly lazy. Employment wise anyway, I was doing a five mile run every morning as my Doc said I had to lose weight as my blood pressure had been found to be high. I lost nearly a stone and it made no bloody difference. The discovery of high blood pressure came about as a result of one of my routine (over thirty years) visits to St Marks the a\*\*e for a colitis inspection. I will not dwell on the details but a biopsy went wrong and severed a blood vessel which went into spasm and didn't relax until the afternoon by which time I was home and bleeding from you-know-where. I had a word with my Doc and he said if it doesn't stop by 8pm go to the hospital. Kind of like a self help NHS. I duly went and it seemed like I was playing in a kind of parallel scene to the one in ‘Airplane!’ when everyone on the plane was queuing up to slap a hysterical woman. I was laid out on a gurney in one of the A&E cubicles and a seemingly endless procession of healthcare professionals were coming in, gloved up, and sticking a finger up my bum and saying “oh yes! It is bleeding”. I was glad I went though as I had a pretty torrid time in the night by which time loads of blood had ended up in my bowel and I was in need of a transfusion. “We won't give you one though as you are still alive”. That comment reminded me of the time when, after a road accident, I was taken to the same hospital and the A&E doctor (he might have been a cleaner for all I knew) said “we don't need to X-ray you because you didn't scream enough when we took your bike gear off”. I couldn't raise my right arm for over six months after.

After I had recovered I was given three months free gym membership to train up and lose weight. All that did was get me addicted to the weights and I put on two stone. After about six years of this I got home one day and felt pretty horrible. A pain slowly crept up into my chest and I put it down to

heartburn as it was so slow in arriving. It got so bad though that I was almost screaming at it at one point to go away (or something less polite) and when it went I got on with my life. Back at the gym two days later although it never felt as good again. I went to the Doc a couple of months later and explained to him that I felt pretty low and after listening to my story he looked at me as if I was the world's biggest idiot and said next time you have a heart attack phone for an ambulance. Fair enough.

I had an interest in astronomy since I was a kid and I decided that as I was so impressed with one of the early Hubble space telescope pictures I would have a look into astrophotography. After all, I had thirty five years of terrestrial photography under my belt, how hard could it be? Very hard if you really want to know, the most technically challenging thing I have ever tried to do. Bar none. Six or seven years down the road and thirty plus grand worse off and I'm still improving. Slowly.

I started when I was still living at Hornchurch but the light pollution was becoming more and more of a bind. As I improved so the sky limitations became a real problem so I started looking for somewhere else to live away from all the lights that are left on needlessly all night, every night. One thing that didn't help was someone giving Havering Adult College my name in relation to teaching photography. I phoned the man just to be polite and ended up talking myself into a job that I didn't want. It delayed my move somewhat but I eventually ended up in a little village to the west of Harwich. I built an observatory in the garden and the whole thing overlooks farmland, the Walton backwaters and the North Sea. No buildings giving off heat of a night, no lights (yet!) and lovely cold air with minimum turbulence giving me a good chance of getting sharp pictures, at least when the clouds go away. I have a web site called [www.Dens-astropics.org.uk](http://www.Dens-astropics.org.uk) , have a look and be absolutely delighted.

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## **Lost & Found**

I had a call from Brian Knowles, who asked if I knew the whereabouts of Ken Finneymore. If anyone knows, then let me know & I'll pass on the info.

John Tythe

## **Deaths**

Sadly, I have news that two of our colleagues, are no longer with us.

### **Frank Kehoe**

I received a letter from Mrs Kehoe ,saying that Frank, had passed away in August 2009.

### **Brian Phillips**

I have received notifications that Brian passed away on 6th February 2011

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## **Winter Meeting 2011**

The first meeting in 2011, of the Studd Street meet up, will be on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> March, at the Wetherspoons pub, the White Swan, in Upper Street, which is about 100 Yards from Highbury and Islington Station.

They are open early for breakfast, so you can arrive then, and stay all day.

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

See you there!

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## **Save the Planet**

Production & distribution costs for October 2010 were £86.00, (plus a new printer, as my inkjet overheated & went 'bang' )

With more of you receiving it by email, costs can be kept to a minimum.

So, if you have an e-mail account, or access to one, and would like to have Dave's Gen by this method, just mail back to [davesgen@virginmedia.com](mailto: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.

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

My best regards to you all.

John Tythe