

Dave's GEN

Titled in the memory of the late Dave Fairhurst, our former editor & compiler



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

Re-published & more on www.ltssac.org

Photos & more on <http://inspirebte.yuku.com/forums/65/LTSSAC>

October 2013

Are you there??

I have been mailing out 70 or so copies of each issue of Dave's Gen, (DG) and I've wondered how many actually get to the intended recipients. People move house, and we are all getting older, so inevitably one by one, we will stop collecting our pensions. So, to try to get an up to date mailing list, I put a note on the back of the envelopes of the previous mailed out issue, asking for the recipient to 'Sign on' by getting back to me by phone, text, or post, and added a return to sender address, so that I could get an idea of who was still getting their copy DG.

I had 'unknown' returns from Paul Mathew, C R Walker, and Sam Coleman, who appear to no longer reside at their last known address, so unless I hear otherwise, I will remove them from the mail list.

Since February the following have been in touch: Walter Keen, Dave Walton, Derek Crane, Mike Bettenson, Mike Rogers, Bill Sargeant, Mike Bettenson, John Sutton, Terry Griffiths, Les King, Derek Oswald and Arthur Monk. Thanks lads.

I had a long conversation with Bill Sargeant, who will be 99 years old in November. You will be glad to hear that he is well.

If everyone receiving this paper copy could confirm its receipt, it would be helpful. All contact information is on page 12. Many thanks.

Meets @ the White Swan & the Greyhound

There were the usual meets during the year, in the main, attended by the usual suspects.



From Jim Cross

John

I found these gems when scanning our family pictures.

The match report was written by John Knights son Robert, who must have been about 12-13 at the time. It relates to a match, the TO's played against DOE at the Eltham ground in 1982.

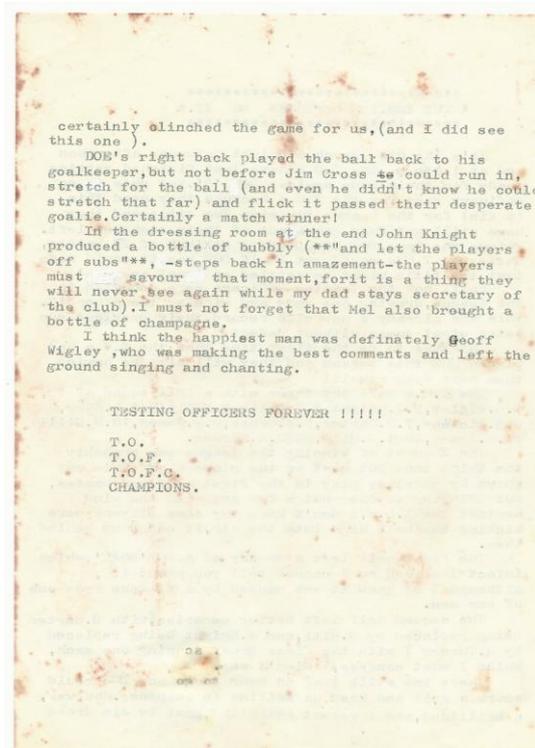
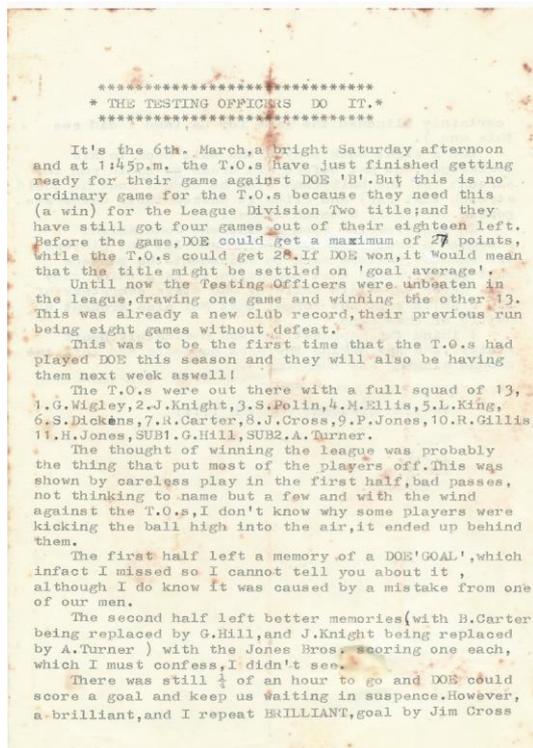
The TO's needed to win the game to win the Division 2 championship. Needless to say we won 3-1. Hope it might be of interest for readers of the Gen.

The pictures, I think were from 1981 (according to Ted Felsted's placard). It was a fun game between the TO's and QA division at the Eltham ground. Again hope these might be of interest to the readers of the Gen.

If anybody needs copies I can email them to anybody.

Regards

Jim Cross



John Tythe's preamble to the next submission from John Sutton.

I received an email saying it was from John Sutton, but instantly new it was a scam. I tried emailing him back via a known email address, but his whole account had been compromised.

This is what I received and the subsequent reply. None of it was true. The ' \$', bad grammar & punctuation are always a giveaway

*"Hello,
Am in a critical situation here and am so confused . Please i need your urgent help , get back to me as soon as you read this mail.
Thanks,
John"*

I then got this:

"Thanks for getting back to me, i really did not want to disturb you with this but I had no one else to turn to. I'm in Rome Italy to see my cousin who lives there. He's critically ill and needs family support. He was diagnosed with (Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia) =a type of Blood Cancer in 2005 and had been undergoing treatment since. The chemotherapy treatment was going fine until last week when the doctor noticed that the disease has relapsed and the only way he can survive is by undergoing a BMT (Bone Marrow Transplantation).

My sister whose marrow matched his has agreed to be the donor and he shall be undergoing the transplant soon at the Antwerp Medical Center Hospital Rome . The estimate for the transplant is \$6,550. I have already spent approx. \$3,900 towards his treatment. Since the amount is huge, I request you to lend out a helping hand and support me with a loan of \$2,650. Since I don't know your financial status at the moment, any kind of help whatsoever will be deeply appreciated. Your help and support will give him a chance to live a normal life once again. There is nothing called small help, when the heart giving it, is big. Any amount will be accepted with gratitude and paid back after the surgery. Please let me know how much you can loan me so that I'll provide you with the details to get the Your help and support will give him a chance to live a normal life once again. There is nothing called small help, when the heart giving it, is big. Any amount will be accepted with gratitude and paid back after the surgery. Please let me know how much you can loan me so that I'll provide you with the details to get the money sent to me and I will pay back as soon as I return. I will check my email every 30 minutes for your reply.

God Bless"

Anyway, I'll let John carry on from here.

From John Sutton

John's Jottings

On the night of Tuesday / Wednesday 17 / 18th September at 2.17 am hackers sent a scam email to everyone on my contacts list (495 addresses) using my Hotmail address which BT provided for me but which I had never used. The first email they sent was clever in that whilst it stated that I was in distress, it never asked for any financial support - this only appeared if an addressee responded to the original email.

My first inkling that anything was amiss was at two minutes past six when I received a text message on our house phone which caused it to beep twice and the screen to light up, the combination of which woke me - it was from my daughter (an early bird)

who had heard from a concerned cousin in Australia (this is the same daughter who woke us at 5.30 am one morning to let us know that Princess Diana had been killed (source a friend in Australia)). The phone then rang again just after 7. 30 am and continues to do so at the time of writing 48 hours later as contacts get on line. I was grateful to everyone who rang - just in case...

My first action was to run a couple of scans with different software on my laptop - without result - it was clean. I then contacted BT, since the scammers had deleted all my emails and my contacts list, and after more than an hour, they had restored normal working to my email account (having immediately changed my password - after the horse had bolted of course - I should have done it long ago since it was easy meat for a scammer to hack) with the promise that they should be able to restore both emails and contacts. The emails returned the next day and I spent an uneasy twenty four hours until Friday morning when the contacts list was restored. I had visions of trying to type in all my contacts - let alone having to obtain them all - it's a catch twenty two situation - I needed the email addresses to type them in, but I couldn't readily obtain them without the email address to start with!

Regarding passwords, advice is not to write them down. However, if they are used from your pc which remains at home, the only problem would be if a burglar found them, and they are not what he's looking for. So my lesson from all this is that I will make my passwords complicated (upper and lower case letters; numbers; special characters - the lot) but write them down somewhere to hand.

John Sutton.

Also from John Sutton (in response to February's DG)

John

Many thanks. The photos seem to be a lot of OLD men! However, I did recognise them.

Kind regards

John S

Hi John

You can stop sending (posting) the gen to me as I can read it on the web.

I used to get sporadic emails from Chris Pettit which stopped about a year ago. I've sent him an email and had no reply and his phone just rings so I don't know what's happened to him

I'm 70 next year – don't time fly!

Hope all is well with you.

Regards

Mike (Rogers)

From Les King

John

Still living at same address, but please send all future club news to email address.

Retired from Anovo Bilton Way June 2011, leaving Peter Keys as the only surviving original member of LTS at Anovo - I believe they're now in some difficulty with renewal of contracts from Alcatel, who manage all the BT legacy contracts - talk of possible redundancies.

I am still very active walking, cycling, badminton, sports club and allotment. Also travel a lot particularly to Australia/New Zealand where both my sons are now living and working.

In club news you mention your work number - still working at what - electrical safety? You must be nearing retirement age. *(My response. - Yes, still testing Gloves. Retirement due in 2 years, although I have late starts and very long weekends often. So semi retired already)*

Best Wishes

Les King

From Derek Brown

Dear John - many thanks for the update to the passing of Frances Carder. Frances really was one of the good ones despite her eccentricities! Will we never forget the time she ran over and killed a hedgehog while mowing her lawn, and then cooked and ate it.

I printed a copy of the update and sent it to Alma Blyde who knew and was close to Frances for over 20 years. Alma noticed the announcement of the passing of Muriel Parr and thought she might have worked in LMS during the 1950's as her name seemed familiar. Is this something that can be checked please?

Light snow has fallen here most of the day. This winter has gone on far too long and I just want to see the end of it.

All for now. Take care.

Derek Brown

From Graham Medlycott

Jim Cross passed onto me the latest Dave's Gen. Good to see the photos. Now living in Reading a bit closer to the smoke. Still working as a sourcing specialist (posh for buyer) with the Nationwide Building Society in Swindon, so those of you who have accounts and savings with Nationwide it's in my good hands!!

From Alan Williams

Working people frequently ask retired people what they do to make their days interesting.

Well, for example, the other day the wife and I went into town and went into a shop. We were only in there for about 5 minutes and when we came out, there was a Parking Warden writing out a parking ticket.

We went up to him and I said, 'Come on man, how about giving a senior citizen a break?' He ignored us and continued writing the ticket. I called him a Dumb ass.

He glared at me and started writing another ticket for having worn tyres.

So Mary called him a Dick head. He finished the second ticket and put it on the windscreen with the first. Then he started writing a third ticket. This went on for about 15 minutes. The more we abused him, the more tickets he wrote.

Just then our bus arrived and we got on it and went home.

We try to have a little fun each day now that we're retired. It's important at our age!

From Mike Bettenson

Hello John

Just responding to your request attached to "Daves Gen". Thanks for keeping it going.

I am very well and so is my family but I am sorry to report that my brother (Derek) died a few months ago.

I thought I had informed you of this earlier but I have not seen any reference to it in the Gen.

Latest project: Building an outhouse over a second world war Anderson shelter, in my garden, where I hope to house pond filter equipment for a Koi pond that I am constructing. "No rest for the wicked".

Best wishes to all.

Mike Bettenson

Fred Petrie sent in this nice poem.

Written by: Valarie Waite, Derbyshire, England.

*The computer swallowed grandma.
Yes, honestly it's true!
She pressed 'control and 'enter'
And disappeared from view.
It devoured her completely!
The thought just makes me squirm.
She must have caught a virus
Or been eaten by a worm.
I've searched through the recycle bin
And files of every kind;
I've even used the Internet,
But nothing did I find.
In desperation, I asked Jeeves
My searches to refine.
The reply from him was negative,
Not a thing was found 'online.'
So, if inside your 'Inbox,'
My Grandma you should see,
Please 'Copy, Scan' and 'Paste' her
And send her back to me.*

This is a tribute to all the Grandmas and Grandpas who have been fearless and learned to use the Computer. They are the greatest!!

From Terry Griffiths

Dear John,

Many thanks for the copy of the gen. I left the test section in 1958 and joined the radio branch. I've been retired now for 23 years, I keep expecting BT to send me a cyanide pill to reduce the pension bill.

Thank you for producing Daves Gen, it must take up a lot of your time, please email it to me next time.

Best wishes from Terry Griffiths

This edition's web page article comes once again comes from my Biker friend Dave Hucker. If in the last edition, you enjoyed his visit to Zambia, here's another closer to home, where Dave visits Applecross, on Scotland's rocky north western coast.
<http://www.technobeat.com/Applecross/Applecross1.html>

Many thanks to Dave, for giving permission for me to publish his writings here.

Also by Dave Hucker - From the Edwardian to the Avant Garde.

February 27th 1911 is the day the Electric Cinema opened on the site of a former timber yard at 191 Portobello Road. The Notting Hill Electric Cinema Theatre was pioneering the new phenomena of Kinematography. Films had been shown in the area but as one - off shows at halls and exhibitions and as added attractions at music halls, such as the Shepherds Bush Empire where the young W.C.Fields once appeared. But in those days of highly inflammable nitrate based film stock, questions arose about the safety of audiences. The first permanent custom built cinema in Kensington was the Picture Palace on Kensington High Street, which opened in 1909 and closed in 1944.

So, on the premises of W.J. Horseman's Timber Yard, building of the Electric began in November 1910. At this time Charlie Chaplin was still serving in Fred Kano's Army and "Birth Of A Nation" was still a notion in D.W.Griffith's head. Cinemas were moving into a new era, no longer part of an exhibition, circus or music hall. But with a specially constructed building where films would be a fully-fledged entertainment.

Designed by Gerald Seymour Valentin, The Electric Cinema conformed to the highest contemporary standards. Safety features including an enclosed projection room with a large skylight contraption above the projectors that meant if there was a fire soldered fuses in cables would break and the windows would drop open to ventilate the smoke. It had fire escapes, raked permanent seating and a large screen which was a flat plaster surface on the wall, painted white and enclosed in a moulded proscenium arch. The shell of the building was brick, faced at the front with white glazed terra cotta. A cantilevered iron frame supported the slate roof and a barrel-vaulted ceiling with fireproof plaster moulding, each panel outlined with a decorative frieze and painted ribbands. The fake proscenium brought the focal point of the design to the front enclosing the square (ratio 1:1.33) screen. Sound was not a concern at that time so the design did not bother with any acoustical necessities, unlike the music halls, before the days of amplification where the clarity of natural sound was important.

There was only one projector as films were generally no longer than 10 minutes. Only with the development of longer films was it necessary to use two projectors so that changeovers

from reel to reel were possible.

Electricity was still a novelty in this period and Portobello Road was proud of its recent conversion. So it was only natural that the first film venue should be called the Electric Cinema. This was the popular name for a building showing the latest films.

In fact there were 3 Electric Cinemas in Kensington. One was in Drayton Gardens – it opened in 1911 in a converted Church hall, later renamed The Paris Pullman. The Marlon Brando film *The Wild One* was a staple Saturday late night for them for years because it was banned at the time. It is now demolished. Another was in Notting Hill Gate – which showed “News Reels and Popular Cinema” it was renamed The Classic, and now is the Gate. The Electric in Portobello Road opened with a film of Sir Henry Tree’s performance as Henry VIII filmed at His Majesty’s Theatre. Electric Cinemas marked the point when films were shown exclusively in cinemas.

The original Electric Portobello Road had 600 seats – the congestion in the foyer and toilets must have been unimaginable! The design of purpose built cinemas was still at an embryonic stage and only later were large foyers, auditoriums, toilets and the idea of comfort built to accommodate the huge audiences. Going to the cinema was the major source of entertainment and information for most of the population.

In 1911 Valentin could not have foreseen the new picture palaces and the dizzy heights of design that cinemas would attain. In eight years the Electric was already out of date – moving pictures were no longer just a novelty but had achieved a greater sophistication and attracted a mass audience. In an attempt to match up to this new image, where the cinemas were given emotion stirring names like The Majestic, The Galaxy, The Capital, The Dominion and so on, in 1919 the Electric became The Imperial. But it still operated as a local cinema with a classic repertory programme of three different double bills a week: Sunday, Monday to Wednesday, and Thursday to Saturday. In common with the many other cinemas throughout Britain it formed the backbone of the flourishing British Film Industry.

When the cinema first opened, admission cost 3d which included a bun and an orange. In 1946 just after the war when people were going out again and the best tickets were 1/9d, the Imperial was attracting weekly admissions of 3-4000 people (giving it a weekly take £100 - £150) but that was the highpoint. In the 50’s admissions declined dramatically and the fabric of the building began to deteriorate. The local audience dwindled, especially with the post war opening of the swanky new Odeon in Westbourne Grove. The Imperial was forced to stick to the tried and tested formula of three changes a week but showing not only third and fourth but thousand run films. The restrictive practices of the industries ‘barring’ system meant the big chains creamed off the new film business for themselves and left the breadcrumbs to independents. The distributors also tightened their belts and demanded that an independent cinema book a film for a minimum of 6 days at a minimum price, to maximise the distributors’ profit at the expense of the exhibitor. The old repertory cinemas were effectively destroyed by the industry that had grown on the back of them.

But the Imperial was lucky, it survived by supplying a place to sleep after the pubs shut in the afternoon. It was cheap and on the screen flashed a never-ending supply of Audie Murphy westerns and George Raft gangster flicks. A clause in the lease stipulated the building was always to remain in use as a cinema and could not be let as a bingo hall, converted to a supermarket or some other use. Mr Hyams the owner also had a soft spot for it, as it was his first cinema and so he was not interested in selling. It eventually only passed on to different owners after his death.

By 1950 the cinema’s fate had been sealed. The Kensington directory described it as the

“lesser known Imperial which can offer some unique specimens of the Western variety, dear to the hearts of the younger residents of the area and ‘out of circuit’ bookings of current films”.

The other local cinema The Royalty, on the corner of Ladbroke Grove and Lancaster Road, turned to Bingo. The Imperial – the building, now rather dilapidated and universally known among locals as the ‘bughole’ limped into the 60’s. The Imperial was not unique, places like the now demolished Tolmer Cinema in Tolmer Square off Euston Road was another fleapit on a grand scale. This was the kind old cinema where young film critics such as David Thompson and Phillip French went to see films they were too young to see on their original release and films that you could not see anywhere else - it was low rent cinema city.

But as someone once observed ‘the times they are a changing’.

The old guard of film distributors were being invaded by younger and more passionate movers and shakers straight out of university film clubs, they had been exposed to a vast number of foreign language and specialist films. But there were no screens for their exhibition as there was no repertory outlet attuned to the times. The National Film Theatre under the guiding hand of Richard Roud had broken new ground as far as it could, but a totally new generation of film fans had been staggering up the steps at Waterloo to take on the Napoleons of the largely moribund British Film Industry. By the end of the 60’s a lot of films were sitting on distributors shelves, because of limited box office appeal, refusal by the censor or cost of getting a BBFC certificate.

This coincided with North Kensington becoming the hippy/freak centre – the Haight Ashbury of London.

An enterprising local called John McWilliams hired the cheap and run down Imperial for Saturday late night shows catering for the hippies and showing “Alternative Cinema”. He called it the Electric Cinema Club. He wanted to show Eisenstein’s Battleship Potemkin but it was only on 16mm so a young man from the distributors and a graduate of those university cinema clubs, brought along a 16mm projector to show the film on. That was Peter Howden who went on to run and programme the Electric. By 1969 The Imperial was at an all time low, the heating was virtually non-existent, if you sat on the wrong seat – it was benches then – the whole row would collapse. When it rained half of the cinema had to be roped off. The projection was erratic and the interval music came from a 78rpm record player. The Electric Cinema Club expanded to Friday and Saturday and by 1970 was taking as much money on its late night weekend shows as the Imperial was taking all week. So on December 13th 1970 the Electric Cinema Club went full time and took over the Imperial. The few old clientele had been impervious to all the changes but a new audience was prepared to brave the elements and position – Portobello Road was well off the beaten track in those days and the area still very run down.

£1000 was borrowed to get going and putting in some heating. The first film shown was Luis Bunuel’s black comedy “The Criminal Life Of Archibaldo De La Cruz” A bewildering array of films followed from Flash Gordon serials to foreign language classic’s all rubbing shoulders with Roger Corman, Jean Genet, Kenneth Anger and a cast of Hollywood

thousands. An innovation came with all-night shows of Sci-Fi, Hitchcock and music movies. A new sound system and projectors were put in – little used and bought from Winston Churchill’s private screening room at Chartwell.

It was with much irony that the Electric showed many films on these projectors from English director Michael Powell who Churchill had hated, including “The Life And Death Of Colonel

Blimp” and “Peeping Tom” (These projectors were eventually donated to the Cinema Museum). The seating was also replaced and carpets fitted.

The building may have been run down but it was essentially unaltered from its original appearance. The standard renovations of most cinemas in the 50’s had been by-passed, and the proscenium arch remained despite the advent of widescreen and cinemascope ratios. (Mainly because it would have involved spending money.) There was still gas secondary lighting as well.

In 1972 a preservation order had been placed on the whole block containing the Electric to stop demolition for a supermarket. A cinema with a similar design to the Electric but then being used as a warehouse was described by an architectural expert as typical of buildings now “rarer than Roman Villas in Britain”

A large-scale refurbishment costing £50,000 happened in the late 70’s – paid for by Richard a son of the inventor of Letraset, with new Cinemeccania projectors, (the same as in the NFT) and a modern sound system with a speaker that sat behind the screen rather than the ungainly box that sat to one side before. Brand new art deco looking seats were installed along with a new carpet.

Compared to the grandeur of cinemas that followed Valentin’s design, the Electric is a well-preserved example of simple Edwardian baroque architecture, and was at that time the oldest surviving custom built cinema in England. It also had never closed its doors.

The Electric Cinema has had a very colourful history, it was stoned by locals in the First World War because the manager was German born and was believed to be signalling to Zeppelins from the roof. At one time it had a manager who also ran a glue factory and would allegedly accept a jar of cod heads as price of admission.

It was claimed that mass-murder John Christie was a projectionist at the Electric but there is no proof of this. If he was a part time projectionist it might have been at the Royalty, which was closer to Rillington Place. It is known he was a doorman at a cinema in Hammersmith. The projectionist from the 1940’s to the 70’s was a Polish wireless operator whose ship had been sunk in the Thames Estuary – he was only ever known as Chief.

In the 80’s a number of owners came and went and unfortunately The Electric closed down much to the despair of us fans.

Eventually it was rescued and is now part of the Soho House group who have integrated it into the private members club and restaurant next door. After a recent refurbishment it has a row of loungers/beds forming the front row. The hippies would have loved them.

I worked at the Electric in its heyday during the 70’s. I started off as assistant manager to Peter Howden. Eventually I also designed the printed programmes, repainted the interior and looked after the building and equipment, repairing projectors, unblocking the toilets etc.

I originally wrote this history for the Electrics 70th Birthday. I have revised it slightly.

Dave Hucker. February 2013

No longer with us.

Derek Bettenson

I heard from Derek's brother Michael that Derek passed away in October 2012, after several years of poor health.

Norman Cutmore

I received an email from Norman's daughter, Jane Fallas, reproduced here:

Dear Mr Tythe

It is with great sadness that I write to tell you that Norman Cutmore (my father) died on 19th May 2012 following a stroke. I am happy for you to include this information in your next edition of Dave's Gen as I am sure there are still people receiving it who remember him. He was 82 and leaves Mum and myself and 4 wonderful grandchildren, Elizabeth, Stuart and Victoria (my triplets aged 22) and Lauren, my late sister's child who is 18 and about to enter university.

The children were a joy to him and he was a wonderful husband, father and grandfather and he is missed greatly.

Many thanks.

Jane Fallas

December meeting 2013

The date of the Christmas meet up will be on Thursday 12th December, 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. They have reasonable food, cheap beer and plenty of room for us to circulate in. See you there!

Contact

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 with your email address & 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.

Alternatively: My home address is:

17 Parkstone Avenue, Old St. Mellons, Cardiff CF3 5TY Tel. 029 20 777 455

Work: 01443 878 878, although following tradition, I'm still quite often, not at my bench!

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

My best regards to you all.

John Tythe