

60 NOT OUT

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER



ACES

CONTENTS

Volume 7, Issue 1, Spring 2002	4	Volume 14, Issue 3, Autumn 2009	67
Volume 7, Issue 2, Summer 2002	5	Volume 14, Issue 4, Winter 2009/10	69
Volume 7, Issue 3, Autumn 2002	6	Volume 15, Issue 1, Spring 2010	72
Volume 7, Issue 4, Winter 2002/03	8	Volume 15, Issue 2, Summer 2010	73
Volume 8, Issue 1, Spring 2003	10	Volume 15, Issue 3, Autumn 2010	75
Volume 8, Issue 2, Summer 2003	11	Volume 15, Issue 4, Winter 2010/11	77
Volume 8, Issue 3, Autumn 2003	13	Volume 16, Issue 1, Spring 2011	79
Volume 8, Issue 4, Winter 2003/04	16	Volume 16, Issue 2, Summer 2011	81
Volume 9, Issue 1, Spring 2004	18	Volume 16, Issue 3, Autumn 2011	82
Volume 9, Issue 2, Summer 2004	20	Volume 16, Issue 4, Winter 2011/12	84
Volume 9, Issue 3, Autumn 2004	23	Volume 17, Issue 1, Spring 2012	85
Volume 9, Issue 4, Winter 2004/05	26	Volume 17, Issue 2, Summer 2012	87
Volume 10, Issue 1, Spring 2005	27	Volume 17, Issue 3, Autumn 2012	89
Volume 10, Issue 2, Summer 2005	29	Volume 17, Issue 4, Winter 2012/13	91
Volume 10, Issue 3, Autumn 2005	32	Volume 18, Issue 1, Spring 2013	92
Volume 10, Issue 4, Winter 2005/06	34	Volume 18, Issue 2, Summer 2013	95
Volume 11, Issue 1, Spring 2006	36	Volume 18, Issue 3, Autumn 2013	96
Volume 11, Issue 2, Summer 2006	38	Volume 18, Issue 4, Winter 2013/14	97
Volume 11, Issue 3, Autumn 2006	41	Volume 19, Issue 1, Spring 2014	98
Volume 11, Issue 4, Winter 2006/07	43	Volume 19, Issue 2, Summer 2014	100
Volume 12, Issue 1, Spring 2007	46	Volume 19, Issue 3, Autumn 2014	102
Volume 12, Issue 2, Summer 2007	48	Volume 19, Issue 4, Winter 20	105
Volume 12, Issue 3, Autumn 2007	50	Volume 20, Issue 1, Spring 2015	106
Volume 12, Issue 4, Winter 2007/08	51	Volume 20, Issue 2, Summer 2015	108
Volume 13, Issue 1, Spring 2008	53	Volume 20, Issue 3, Autumn 2015	109
Volume 13, Issue 2, Summer 2008	56	Volume 20, Issue 4, Winter 2015/16	110
Volume 13, Issue 3, Autumn 2008	58	Volume 21, Issue 1, Spring 2016	111
Volume 13, Issue 4, Winter 2008/09	61	Volume 21, Issue 2, Summer 2016	112
Volume 14, Issue 1, Spring 2009	63	Volume 21, Issue 3, Autumn 2016	113
Volume 14, Issue 2, Summer 2009	65	Volume 21, Issue 4, Winter 2016/17	114

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER

INTRODUCTION

My first Suffolk Scribbler piece was published in the Spring 2002 edition of *The Terrier*; nearly 15 years ago. Actually, had it been left to me, it would have been my first *Almost Yesterday's Man* piece but, as luck would have it, wiser counsels prevailed. The wisest of the lot was Colin Bradford, then Editor of *The Terrier*, who was insistent that I should write under the name of the Suffolk Scribbler and who wrote the following introduction to my inaugural piece:

The Editor is delighted to be able to introduce to *Terrier* readers a humble, yet outstandingly adequate, successor to our much loved erstwhile columnist, *Yesterday's Man*. This is the first of what we hope will be a popular and long-running column by the Suffolk Scribbler.

New readers will need to know that "*Yesterday's Man*" was in fact Richard Miller, formerly the Norfolk County Estates supremo. In 2002 he had decided to give up writing his column "after 35 years of hard work."

Colin's introduction was quite far-sighted in predicting a "long-running column" as we are already at 15 years and still counting. And I think we can already begin to make some judgements about popularity. In contrast to *Yesterday's Man*, where according to the YM writer not a single member of ACES ever mentioned the column to him so he was never really sure that anyone actually read it. Every time I go to a national conference or similar function someone will take the opportunity to seek me out and then tell me that they always check out the back pages of *The Terrier* first.

And it was this point that first gave birth to the concept of publishing all the Suffolk Scribbler pieces under one cover. With the true enthusiast taking an early look at the whole column it could be argued that individual items within the piece could, potentially, be overlooked.

Consequently, after the publication of 60 pieces, totalling over 105,000 words, the project to combine all published



Suffolk Scribblers in a commemorative booklet was proposed jointly by William Marshall, a humble nobody from Suffolk, and the current Editor of *The Terrier*, Betty Albon. ACES Eastern Branch has provided generous funding to help pay for a professionally produced PDF document with the intention of then forwarding a copy of this to every member.

I did hear it said that when it was known that I was going to write a regular, somewhat light-hearted column, some ACES members laughed. Well, they're not laughing now!

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER

VOLUME 7, ISSUE 1, SPRING 2002

The Editor [Colin Bradford] is delighted to be able to introduce to Terrier readers a humble, yet outstandingly adequate, successor to our much-loved erstwhile columnist, Yesterday's Man. This is the first of what we hope will be a popular and long-running column by the Suffolk Scribbler.

I thought the auditions queue for Yesterday's Man (YM) would have gone right round the block but no, just a guest column from Malcolm (MacAskill), with a nice picture to cut out and frame. Mine has pride of place on the mantelpiece. It keeps the kids away from the fire.

The last issue was full of references to Cardiff and, by coincidence, I was there only the week before the AGM with that Diamond Fenland Geezer, the real YM. It was the occasion of the last STEPS Seminar of all time and County Hall Cardiff was the last stop on YM's Farewell Tour. Although his Betty'n Bert Roadshow went like clockwork at Cambridge and Walsall, it nearly fell at the last hurdle. Adrian (James) was introducing Betty's pre-lunch spot while I was doing a last minute sound check on the laptop. As Adrian got to "and here she is..." we both looked up and she had disappeared! Someone muttered, "Bl**dy hell, she's b****red off", but all was well. She was actually scrabbling round on the floor recovering the contents of an up-turned briefcase. So Cardiff was saved and did not miss out on its share of GN11 Update, the Valuation of Social Housing, or Betty's brilliant demonstration of the "Australian Position".

YM's organisational skill will be sadly missed. Come back YM, your profession needs you.

While at Cardiff I never saw The Castle or The Aluminium Stadium but the Cardiff County Hall area showed signs of huge capital investment. There will be an impressive Master Plan somewhere, probably with people and vehicles stenciled in. Pity that on the ground there were no people and few vehicles moving about. The whole area looked strangely devoid of humanity.

So where is this column going? I've no idea. I'll give it a go and see what happens.

A more important question is "Where is ACES going?" I sometimes wonder if a RICS (of which more later) type makeover is needed. ACES expertise and influence centres on the provision of estates services in local government. Peters and Waterman were The Management Gurus of the 80s. One of their principles was "Stick to the knitting". So why does ACES want to extend membership to groups of people who DON'T provide estates services in local government while insisting, Canute-like, that those who DO provide estates services to local government, but are NOT directly employed by local government, are excluded. Seems perverse to me.

ACES Council in January now ran through the now traditional "I hate the RICS" exchange of anecdotes. I am sure they are all true. And the most damning criticism of all is surely the failure to reply to members' correspondence. Could I offer two comments? As someone now outside local government I know that the RICS is not the only organisation to demonstrate institutional failure to answer letters. And secondly it seems pointless to repeatedly share these thoughts between ourselves meeting after meeting. Let's do something. Anything would be better than nothing.

Did they say that?

I am their leader; I must follow them.
Bonar Law.

Graveyards are full of indispensable men. Charles de Gaulle.

If anyone feels the urge, let me know.
The President at ACES Council 22.01.02.

Welder's spot

I had intended to close the column with a humorous story but have been much taken up with the shenanigans at the DTLR, current at the time of going to

press. That anyone finds it remarkable that politicians might, on occasion, tell less than the whole truth, is beyond me. Or that civil servants might do likewise. And to get excited about the fact that spin doctors lie seems surely to miss the point. One of the suggested remedies to prevent all this is to make aspirant spin doctors take, and presumably pass, the civil service exams before being able to take up employment. In this way only the right people would be let in ie no riff-raff. Like the titled senior mandarin who announced, with great erudition and sangfroid, when events took a turn for the worse –

"We're all f*****. I'm f*****. You're f*****. The whole department's f*****. It's been the biggest cock-up ever and we're all completely f*****." Really?

Ps - Is there anyone there?

The only complaint I ever heard YM make about ACES was that throughout all the 35 years of writing his column he was never sure that anyone actually read it. So feel free to comment via the Editor "if you feel the urge." I promise not to use the standard response to letters of complaint allegedly used by some MPs ie "Dear Sir, Today I received an abusive letter from some crackpot who signed your name. I thought you ought to know about it as you may wish to take action to stop it."

Worcester and Caernarfon

So, Worcester has come and gone since the last issue and what an excellent conference it was. Every presentation was spot on and the organisation immaculate. It looked a lovely town too and I was sorry I wasn't able to stay longer. The after-dinner comedian, the self styled "former Chief Executive of Dudley", knew every local government joke that's ever been told and kept most of us busy jotting down the best ones. Personally I thought an after-dinner comedian was a masterstroke; much better than the all-day comedians most organisers seem to lay on. The only fly in the ointment was The Peartree, a lovely friendly place, but it was a long, long way away. Malcolm (Williams) was kind enough to give me a lift back on Friday afternoon and he took the opportunity to drive by Shire Hall that looked like an up-market Xanadu.

While on the subject of conferences I hear a whisper that Colin (Bradford), who brings forth the conference presentations in printed form, has acquired a young, live-wire assistant editor and so the production of conference papers will be speeded up. We shall see. If he's as good as he's cracked up to be, by Troon, the edited version should be out before the presentations are actually made.

By the way, going back to Caernarfon, the opening fragment from one of one of the sessions has fallen into my hands. Can anyone remember who said this?

"Thanks very much Alun (Jones) and to everyone. As he says I have been to ACES for a few years now and I am starting to feel quite at home here, which is a little worrying! I am also a little bit nervous because I have just been given a very heavy battery pack to attach to my loosely elasticated trousers. If you see my pants at any stage, give me a shout will you!"

And no, it wasn't Keith Jones.

*** *ast*r*sk* ***

One of the perils of this sort of column is that topical incidents at the time of writing

may be totally forgotten by the time The Terrier thuds onto the doormat, as was probably the case with the DTLR asterisks piece. (And here, I'm trying to avoid the temptation of mentioning that both Byers and the DTLR have now gone). But I did want to reproduce, in written form, the Roy Keane resignation speech that, by all accounts, would be ideal for the "early retirement" speech you will all have to make one day. Unfortunately, the speech was not reproduced in my Sunday paper, as it was in many others. I think the printer had run out of asterisks.

The Estates Gazette

The Estates Gazette has been an ever-present icon in my professional life. I entered the profession long ago and although the vellum version with illuminated capital letters had just been phased out I well remember the foolscap model printed on quality glossy paper. My first office had hundreds of old copies lying around so I was able to read up on the previous ten years while getting acquainted with the present. Before the old copies were finally scrapped I extracted all reports on compensation claims and eventually amassed a magnificent collection, unfortunately long since lost. New readers may be astonished to realise that in the old days there were a number of compensation cases reported EVERY week!

To me, the Estates Gazette has always been a guiding light and an example of accuracy and continuity.

I like the wall calendar that came free with the journal each year. Year after year I pinned the new one on my office wall over the top of the old one and when I finally left, the calendars were about one eighth of an inch thick. Currently I have a copy of the 2002 on the wall of the office in my home. But tragedy struck when I was trying to arrange a July meeting over the phone. "OK then I'll meet you on Monday the ninth of July" I said. "No you won't" said my colleague, "It's Monday the eighth, you must be looking at the wrong year". After no end of confusion the answer dawned. The EG wall calendar was faulty. Not to put

too fine a point on it; it was wrong!

Do you remember, "Thirty days hath September, April, June and November?" Well in EG 2002 June has thirty-one days and so an additional day is introduced. Then, to make things worse, the EG July starts on Sunday, not Monday like everyone else. Accordingly, July ends a day earlier than everyone else. The good news is that the EG, and the world, are back together again on Thursday first of August.

Has it been destroyed my faith in the accuracy of this eminent journal? Not really. I always thought June was too short anyway.

The RICS

Clearly my comments last time struck home. At the last Council meeting it was clear that peace had broken out. ACES was wined and dined by the RICS on the previous evening and the RICS was anxious to assure ACES that it was "pushing at an open door."

Ps Is there anyone there?

My *cri de coeur* in the last issue did produce a few replies. Many thanks. The phrase reminds me a little of the story about the Building Surveyor doing an external roof survey on a block of flats when he lost his footing on the ridge. He slid down the slates, went over the edge and just managed to get hold of the guttering. So there he was suspended over a big drop and completely unable to haul himself back. What to do? There was no one about. Time to seek help. "Is there anyone there?" he shouted. No answer. His strength was going quickly. Desperately he shouted again "Is there anyone there?" There was a peal of thunder and a flash of light and a deep booming voice said, "What is it my son?" "I'm going to fall off here any minute and die" the man screamed. "Trust me," boomed the voice, "just let go and you will float gently to earth." There was a long silence and the man thought this through. Then "Is there anyone **ELSE** there?" he shouted.

Is there anyone else there?

Sheffield 1

What a splendid conference! Great city, great venue, great presentations, brilliant organisation. Who could ask for anything more? Well, after hours, we got the Oughtibridge Brass Band, an auctioneer direct from central casting and back at Halifax Hall an Austin Powers look-a-like competition. Well done Jill (Bungay); and John (Bungay) who had prepared a set of printed travel directions for every possible eventuality. It was a record-breaking conference too. I do not ever recall the weather being warm enough for the Council meeting to be held al fresco. However the most disappointing sight of the event was Malcolm Dawes struggling down the stairs to his limousine with a very heavy case probably containing at least 50 unsold framed Sheffield prints. An enterprising marketing idea Malcolm but you should realise that mugs are few and far between at an ACES Conference.

Sheffield 2

Not many people know this but I actually started my professional career in this city. I was plucked out of the Sheffield dole queue, (shades of The Full Monty) and offered a professional trainee place by Sheffield Corporation, as it was known then. Not, unfortunately, by Jill Bungay's mentor, DJBD George, with those rather posh people upstairs, but by the Building Surveyor in the City Engineer's department, altogether far more basic and down to earth.

The Building Surveyor's office approved plans under Building Byelaws and inspected works in progress. The Building Surveyor was a chartered surveyor but most other staff were not and his Grand Design was to fully professionalise his staff, over time hence the new professional traineeships. And so it was that when Terry and I were appointed the existing staff were not too welcoming and were not prepared to give us anything to do, other than making the morning tea. And yet it was in these unpromising surroundings that I was taught two important lessons in professional conduct.

An organisation chart is necessary to follow this story (below).

In 1963 the Building Surveyor's Office was a small part of a very big City Engineer's Department. There were 2 Assistant Building Surveyors; one for plans, one for inspections. The Inspectors' office was split geographically into north and south and each Area supported a senior Building Inspector, 6 Building Inspectors and A Lad.

Terry and I, brand new trainees, were put in the Building Inspectors' Office. The daily routine was that all the Inspectors came into the office first thing, sorted out paperwork, drank tea and then went out until about 4. The Trainees (Lads) made the tea on alternate days and then were expected to leave the office and not return until late afternoon. But we were given no work to do.

On this particular day I was in the office in the afternoon waiting for the Inspectors to return. Terry had popped out to do something but had not washed the morning teacups and said he would do it on his return, in a few minutes' time.

Enter Colin (a Building Inspector), not in a good mood. "What's these bloody teacups still doing here?" he said to me,

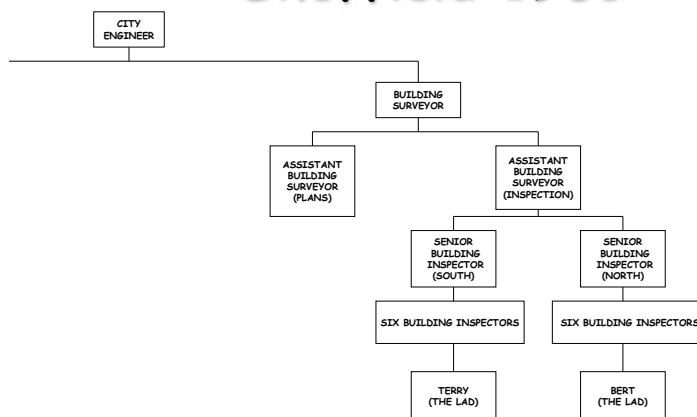
"Get them washed up – NOW". "Sorry Colin," I said, "It's not my day today but Terry just said he will do it in a minute." Colin said, "Are you refusing to do what I tell you?" When I confirmed that I was he said. "Then I will have to report you to Aubrey when he comes in." **LESSON 1 A professional must stand by what he believes to be right, however unpopular.**

Enter Aubrey (the Senior Building Inspector). I liked him a lot. He was put in the picture and said, "As a favour to me would you just wash those teacups?" I explained the unfairness of the situation to Aubrey and said I was very sorry but I would not. Aubrey then said, "Are you refusing to do what I tell you?" "Yes" I confirmed. "Then I will have to report you to Tommy when he comes in." Tommy was the Superintendent Building Inspector in charge of the 2 teams.

By the way, in the midst of all this Terry had returned, innocently picked up the tray and the offending teacups. Colin spotted this and ordered him to put them back and leave them alone.

Enter Tommy (the aforesaid Superintendent Building Inspector). Aubrey put him in the picture. After a similar dialogue eventually Tommy asked, "Are you refusing to do what you are told?" When I said yes, he said "Then I have no alternative but to report you to Mr. Stenton."

Sheffield 1963



Mr. Stenton was the Assistant Building Surveyor (Plans) and the de facto deputy. He was always in the office. I was sent for. Mr. Stenton went through a somewhat foreshortened dialogue. He said, "Are you going to wash up those teacups?" When I said "No" he said "Then I must report this to The Building Surveyor." After a short time the Building Surveyor sent for me too. He said, "Are you going to wash up those teacups?" When I said, "No" he said, "Then go back and sit at your desk."

This I did and I have to say that by now I was wishing that I could play the game all over again but in a different way. As I sat at my desk wondering what was going to happen I failed to notice that most of the staff seemed to have found something to do close by. The phone on my desk then began to ring in a loud and continuous tone, quite different to the usual one. I took no notice but one of the Inspectors helpfully advised, "I think that's for you."

I picked it up. "Hello" I said. A booming voice came on the line. I thought it was God. It was. "This is the City Engineer here" the voice announced, "Are you going to wash up those teacups?" I thought through the alternatives and, after a few second's delay said, "Yes." He put the phone down. ***LESSON 2 A professional must stand by what he believes to be right, however unpopular, until it becomes obvious that the steamroller is going to run right over you.***

There was an audible sigh of relief in the room as I stood up, packed the cups on the tray and walked over to the kitchen and pushed through the door. It closed behind me and as I began to put the tray down the door opened again. Every Building Inspector, except Colin, came in.

"Put that stuff down," I was told, "We'll do the washing up; that was the best show we've had in years."

Woolacombe revisited or remember you saw it first at an ACES conference

I do not watch much athletics as all that bulging Lycra inflames my inferiority complex. But many of you probably spent a lot of time in front of the telly earlier

this year watching the Commonwealth Games and admiring the splendid new Games Stadium. Do you remember the presentation of Gerry Hughes of GVA Grimley and Nicola Jansco of Urban Strategies Inc. on Urban Regeneration "How to make urban design add value"? One of their illustrations was East Manchester "probably the biggest regeneration project of its kind." The flagship element of the regeneration was said to be "the new 48,000-seat stadium for the Commonwealth Games. After the Games are over it will to be occupied by Manchester City, the football team." All this has come to pass and ACES was given a sneak preview. Unfortunately Gerry got one thing wrong. He went on to say, "As someone once said, "Great scheme, crap team". Well thanks to the managerial abilities of the former European Footballer of the Year (twice) Sir Kevin Keegan, "Wee Kevin", Manchester City has hit the big time. Now in the Premiership "The City" is eighth in the table, played 4, won 2, 6 points in total. Always remember the golden rule for presentations. Never make a flippant, off the cuff, derogatory remark about a football team; unless it's Arsenal.

The Grumman Avenger

A number of people have complained to me about the lack of aeronautical notes in this column. So here goes.

There were more than 30 operational airfields in Suffolk in World War II and my local one does its best to maintain the historical connection. There is still a small grass runway and the control tower and a number of flying events are organised each year. A few months ago I managed to attend my first event, a "fly-in". The day was marred by a thunderstorm, with heavy rain, which hovered over the airfield for about 2 hours.

The Grumman Avenger is a mid-wing monoplane US Navy World War II carrier-based torpedo bomber. It carried a crew of three. It weighs more than 15,000 lbs, could carry a 2,000 lb bomb load and has a 1,700 HP 14 cylinder air-cooled radial supercharged engine. One parked up against the spectator fence. It was big, blue and beautiful but looked far too big to land on a WWII carrier, but it did. The pilot was in residence about 16 feet above ground. It looked as though

he was sat in the front of the upper deck of a double decker bus. He began to fire up the engine hoping that the heavy rain would at least ease before he started his display.

There were already spectators lining the spectator fence, regulars by the look of it. They were all sat on deck chairs, protected by giant golf umbrellas, and wore baseball caps, shades and aeroplane badges. They were nice and dry. The rain was thudding down on my ex-army waterproof and the hood was well and truly up. I stood behind the regulars but still very close to the Grumman Avenger.

The pilot now had the engine running nice and smooth. The plane was parked at stylish 45 degrees to the fence and behind it the wash from the big propeller along the wet grass was impressive. I wondered how the pilot would manoeuvre the plane out in the absence of the tugs used in "Airline". Ah yes he had his parking brakes full on. Obviously he would rev up a bit, ease off the left wheel brake, swivel around the braked right wheel and then move off when pointing away from the spectator area.

And this he proceeded to do. Mind you I thought it would get a bit breezy when the full effect of that propeller wash came right over us. So I tightened up the hood of my waterproof, put my hands over my ears and closed my eyes and mouth; even though the experts in front of me seemed totally unconcerned. The slipstream, as the plane rotated in front of us impressively warm, wet and very powerful. As it died away I opened my eyes to see in front of me a row of totally wrecked golf umbrellas and some very startled spectators without baseball caps and shades, as these were, by now, spread over the field about 100 yards behind me.

The Avenger went unconcerned about its business and put in a good flying display despite the weather. The regulars went home. I think I'll go again.

I enjoyed the TOMORROW'S MAN pieces in the last issue, too much if truth be told, but was much intrigued by his opening sentence "It seems like only yesterday that the last issue of The Terrier came through the letter box." Same here, if I might say so. Except that for me it was in fact really almost yesterday. Lately it seems that whatever aspect of ACES business I get involved in something similar to the Bramhall Triangle begins to operate and I am struck off the mailing list.

The Grumman Avenger revisited

Having received favourable comments on this topic here is a little more.

From time to time I meet my brother Peter, in Letchworth, obviously. Last time, just for a change, we decided to meet at Duxford Airfield, which is, as you will all know, part of the Imperial War Museum and a world renowned heritage complex. The occasion was some National Bus Rally and Peter was going anyway so I agreed to meet him there. On the day, having got an impression of the average bus enthusiast, I wandered about hoping not to meet anyone who actually knew me and as it happened I didn't, including Peter, as we failed to make contact. The point of this somewhat lengthy preamble is to emphasise, I think, that I am not, nor have I ever been, a member of any bus enthusiast organisation.

The newest building at Duxford is the American Air Museum, a superlative example of a modern and vast exhibition hall that you, as property people, should all make a point of trying to see. I made a beeline for it and what should I see suspended on wires just inside the entrance but a Grumman Avenger in World War II Pacific Theatre livery. What a coincidence! It was only a few days after my visit to Rougham as reported last time! But there is more. In front of the American Air Museum was a temporary grandstand and other bits and pieces which I thought no more about, until, that is, the following

week when there was some film from Duxford on the local TV news. It was a Rededication Ceremony attended by Prince Charles and President Bush (the original one, not George W). Guess what the opening shot was? Correct it was the Grumman Avenger followed by a close up of the writing on the side of its cockpit, which I had failed to spot on my visit. This was "Captain George Bush". He flew this type of aircraft during his war service in the Pacific. In his speech he made the point that he had actually completed 3 more carrier take-offs than landings during his service and so had a much closer acquaintance with the Pacific Ocean than most.

So much for Duxford, but the wheel of coincidence continued to turn as, only a few days later, an interested observer could have spotted Yesterday's Man and the Suffolk Scribbler wandering round Rougham Airfield together on its last flying day of 2002. I may explain why next time; or then again, I may not.

The Estates Gazette strikes again

After my complicated piece on the Estates Gazette calendar back in July the joke is on me. Our Autumn Branch meeting was on Friday 8 November. All I was trying to do was arrange, over the phone, a meeting close to that and it was proving to be very complicated. Was I losing my grip? I couldn't seem to get the days right. Then I realised. My trusty EG Calendar is also faulty in the November area. That month starts, erroneously, with Thursday the first and never really recovers thereafter. Hopefully it's back on track with Sunday first December. If not, my turkey may get stuffed a day early.

Anyway I hope it is not too early, or too late, to wish you all the compliments, or is it complements, of the season.

Air conditioning

I enjoy Ian Nisbet's conference notes, now a welcome regular feature of The Terrier. His statement "The sight of a

chartered surveyor actually breaking sweat while working" referring to Simon Riggall reminded me of a similar event I was involved in some years ago.

In 30 years my previous employer only built one office building and made a right mess of it. It won architectural awards of course but was a very poor working environment. And it would have helped had it been cleaned before staff moved in. By cleaned I mean removing the inch or so of builder's rubble that covered all the floors. Shoving this to one side so the removers could put the desk down somehow seemed less than adequate.

There were no openable windows as the building was air-conditioned. Usually this worked well except that some de-humidifying units, located behind the suspended ceiling, did not have overflow pipes for the copious amounts of water these units are designed to generate. There was one over my desk and as the temperature went up eventually it overflowed onto the desk. It was then time to call Graham. He stood on the desk, took out some ceiling panels, and drained the water into a bucket. It was usually best to keep out of the way while this was being done. Throughout the process Graham kept up a merry chatter except on the occasion when he missed the bucket and shot about 3 gallons of water all over my papers and files. Apart from a few dabs with his grubby hanky he said not a word and went away about his business.

But that wasn't the time sweat broke out. There was a conference room on the ground floor where, among other things, property committee meetings took place. This was the summer meeting, mid June, and it was very hot that day. In those days I used to wear a lovely thick woollen 3-piece office suit in a steely blue with a pin stripe of the type sported by the aforesaid Simon Riggall. I was the bees' knees. The meeting format was that others did their papers first then I was on after about an hour for the remaining hour or two. The meeting started at

10.30 in the morning and as I went into the room it was obvious that the air-handling equipment had failed. It was already hot and steamy, not the usual atmosphere for a property committee.

I sat there and gently sautéed for about an hour then got up to do my stuff. It is surprising how much the temperature of a close room increases when filled with 10 officers, about 15 members and a lot of hot air. Our practice was to stand and briefly paraphrase each paper before discussion and, hopefully, approval.

The maximum temperature recorded that day, in the room, was about 115 Fahrenheit. As I stood there, wet through, looking at the papers and gently paraphrasing, first of all the sweat began to drip off the end of my nose and onto the papers and then, as I really warmed up, it began to drip off both eyebrows too. Eventually the accumulated sweat on my papers began to make the ink run but, fortunately, I managed to finish before the papers finally dissolved. What a day.

Professional update

Sorry to introduce a professional tone into this distinguished journal but even before the ink is dry on the Sheffield Conference Papers (before it's even wet actually), things are on the move in the private sector.

Auction musical chairs. All those at Sheffield will remember Felix Rigg the auctioneer and jazz pianist. He and his colleague Simon Riggall gave an interesting presentation on "The use of auctions for property disposals" on behalf of their employers Colliers CRE. Well according to the Estates Gazette 09.11.02 Felix has moved on. Apparently John Barnett and Jonathan Ross (no not that JR) recently left the major auction house Harman Healey (HH), after 30 years' joint service, to form their own company called, after a lot of burning of the midnight oil no doubt, Barnett Ross. This left a bit of a gap at HH and Felix left Colliers CRE and moved to HH on 28 October and took the rostrum for the first time as HH principal auctioneer at a major sale 2 days later.

Landflex. And do you remember that

interesting joint presentation on "Real estate partnerships" by Land Securities Trillium and Nabarro Nathanson? Also in the same Estates Gazette (09.11.02) there is an informative piece by Land Securities on the new LandFlex system jointly produced with Nabarro Nathanson. This was hinted at during the Sheffield presentation. Apparently "Land Securities has undertaken a complete review of its approach to providing property solutions and recognises the need to offer its tenants (from now on, its customers) a choice of solutions. At the heart of this new approach lies LandFlex." "From now on, in designated buildings, LandSec will be offering customers a choice of lease structures, space configuration and service levels along with certainty of costs." The practices developed by Land Securities Trillium for its portfolio are clearly spreading to the wider commercial world.

Finally a word on the fire business

Recently I have taken to reading The Telegraph on Saturdays and in the 16 November issue came across this excellent letter from Dr Roger Peberdy, of Droitwich Spa, Worcestershire under the heading "Fired by example of NHS management". It offers an alternative solution to the current fire service dispute in terms that most of you will all recognise. I commend the letter to you. It's worth reading.

"Why can't we have a national fire service run on the lines of the NHS?

Green Goddess fire appliances (generic, cheap and cost-effective) could be stationed in each town, manned by idealistic public sector workers willing to work long hours for low pay, together with firemen recruited from abroad who speak only basic English and are trained in entirely different methods.

These crews would usually need to be supplemented by firemen supplied at considerable expense by private agencies, to make sure that each appliance at least looks as if it has a minimal crew aboard it when called out, even though agency firemen would not be expected to know the area, the rest

of the crew, where anything was in the fire station, or how that particular model of fire engine worked.

The national fire service would operate on a strictly limited overall budget, set by central government but allocated locally by local primary fire trusts consisting of committees of full-time firemen attending meetings in their spare time, retired accountants, local politicians and lay people. Their main function would be to explain to people whose houses had burnt down why they had been unable to allocate more of the budget to that particular aspect of the service because of the pressure on them to reach the target set for rescuing stranded cats from trees.

Naturally, a large number of skilled line managers, executive officers, senior executive officers, liaison officers, quality control consultants and media relations officers would be needed to convince us all that the national fire service was working better each year and was the envy of the world.

Alongside the national fire service, insurance companies could be encouraged to provide alternative private sector fire cover. They would take over all the fancy, expensive state-of-the-art fire engines and equipment and provide an additional service to those who were prepared to pay large premiums. Privately insured people would enjoy such advantages as choice of colour of fire engine to be sent, whether to have foam or water sprayed on the flames, and free tea, coffee and a biscuit while waiting for the fire to be put out."

One of the problems in putting together a column of this nature is that hot topics at the time of writing become yesterday's mashed potatoes when seen in cold print. So far I cannot see a way round this but as I have a number of such unused pieces on file they will inevitably be recycled in some way or other in future columns. Will you be able to spot them? Meanwhile.....

Asylum seekers

Unable, or incapable, or unwilling, to deal in any way efficiently with "asylum seekers" the Home Office has been looking around for a softer target. And it thought it had found it out here in the East. It identified a British grandmother living near Felixstowe. All her family, children and grandchildren live close by. Her mother, who may have been a GI bride, brought her back to England after the marriage in America failed. She was then aged 2. That was 50 years ago and she has lived here ever since. She has no family, friends, connections or memories of America.

After her mother died the Home Office informed her that she was American, had no right to live in the UK and should "go back" to America as soon as possible. On being challenged the Home Office relented and said if you can prove that you have lived here continuously for 15 years you can stay. It then, over many months rejected every piece of documentary evidence produced, driving the grandmother to the brink of a nervous breakdown before finally giving the lady 4 days to leave the UK.

At this point she interested the local TV in her story and this appeared on the local news. The immediate Home Office response AFTER the broadcast was made was to say that there had clearly been some mistake, the lady was clearly British and there was absolutely no question of her having to leave the country.

And as ever no names, no pack drill.

ACES Council, a trendsetter?

At Sheffield, for the first time ever,

the Council meeting was held out of doors. OK, it was early September. There was little wind, a clear blue sky and a temperature in the mid seventies. But it's catching on. Norwich City Football club has now, again for the first time ever, held its AGM out of doors. It makes a lot of sense. The Club has 6,000 shareholders all of whom can, potentially, attend. And after all Carrow Road is a perfectly acceptable venue so why spend good money hiring somewhere else. In fact 300 attended despite the intense competition of Eastenders. All went well and business was dealt with calmly and briskly. The only slight downside was that on Tuesday 8 January 9, 2003 the temperature at 7 pm, the starting time of the meeting, was 2 degrees centigrade BELOW zero. Delia pronounced the event "huge fun".

Louis Armstrong (or oh no, not Sheffield again)

If you've read the Sheffield papers yet you will remember the Sheffield City Centre Regeneration piece by Alison Nimmo and Carolyn Kenny. The City Hall was featured. "We are trying to find creative ways to unlock the value of The City Hall ... to regenerate it and the surrounding streets, and develop these into a new square." I wish them well.

45 years ago, when I was a regular patron the City Hall was a top concert venue. The building is circular in plan with a big open stage area capable of taking the biggest orchestra. Behind this is a tiered bank of seats, a bit like the Albert Hall, capable of seating massed choirs, so that, for example, Handel's Messiah could be staged comfortably, as it often was. If these seats were not needed for the performance they were made available cheaply to customers and provided an uncomfortable, unusual, but if you got there early enough, exciting viewpoint. Performers accessed the stage area up a flight of stairs that emerged centre stage level with the front row of stage seats. The exit was guarded on both sides by large lions, which stared sombrely out at the audience.

At school we had an enthusiastic jazz club and band. The time came when we felt old enough to go and see our jazz heroes at live concerts. There was plenty of public transport and venues. The first band I saw was Chris Barber and his Jazz Band at, in fact, the Gaumont Doncaster. I could give you the line up now but will forgo that pleasure. Doncaster was a little far afield but fortuitously, at about that time, the Musician's Union lifted its ban on American live music and The City Hall became a principal venue on the visiting jazz stars' circuit.

Perversely the first jazz band I saw at Sheffield was Humphrey Lyttleton and his Band. After that I saw every touring American jazz star. Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Earl Hines, Eddie Condon, Kid Ory, Big Bill Broonzy, MJQ, Jazz at the Philharmonic, Dave Brubeck and so on. Magical names, most of which are utterly confusing my spell checker, so I'll leave it there, except for one more; the great Satchmo himself.

When we heard he was coming we booked early, and on the night, got there early. I was on stage, on the front row, next to the right hand lion. I can't remember the supporting band at all but the tension built as they went through their set. After the interval the All Stars came on stage one by one and then Satchmo was announced. He came out on to the stage and stood in between the lions saluting the crowd with arms outstretched one hand clutching his trademark white handkerchief and the other the golden trumpet. His roar of greeting was drowned by the roar of the crowd. He was about six foot in front of me and I could see him, or at least his back, clearly. Although a musical giant he was in reality quite small. He had obviously been briefed on the customers on the stage and didn't want to ignore us. He took a couple of steps to the right and turned round to face us. He was right in front of me. He looked me in the eye, smiled, and with outstretched arms again roared his greeting straight at me. I don't think I stopped smiling for weeks.

Rejuvenating jazz, it's official

Yesterday I went to the Theatre Royal in Bury St Edmunds for an evening of great British jazz by the Great British Jazz Band, a touring group of British jazz legends. After a highly enjoyable evening of very loud joyous music I went home feeling much rejuvenated. With one exception, every member of the Band was much older than me!

The Grumman Avenger

I've been taken to task about the sexist nature of some of my material; particularly the aforesaid aeroplane. "Why is there nothing for the ladies?" etc. So, as I know little about spot welding, or the scrap metal trade, how about gardening?

Gardening notes 1

I am a fair weather gardener. All things being equal in the summer I am seldom inside; in the winter I seldom venture out. Lately I have not really wanted to do too much outside and not just because of the inclement weather.

The extensive gardens of Scribbler Towers were dug over and ready for winter by mid-November. All permanent compost heaps were full and battened down and the temporary heap was now only being topped up with kitchen

waste. The temporary heap is circular and made from green plastic slats that interlock together. The slats have holes about an inch and a half in diameter to allow the heap to breathe but unfortunately the lid has disappeared so the stuff inside is far too wet. So I popped half a fence panel on the top to keep the wet out and left it.

A week later I was out again clearing away the dying vegetation around the compost heaps. While I was bent over pulling out weeds on one side of the temporary heap something caught my eye and on turning my head I saw the biggest rat I had ever seen about 6 inches away from the end of my nose. "Aaaaarrgh*!!##!" I screamed, moving at the same time, very rapidly, to the other side of the garden.

I regained my composure after a minute or two and walked down the path so I could see the rat again while keeping a safe distance. It was still there. Half out of one the holes in the slats and poised to clear off, but, as I had disturbed it, it was lying doggo waiting for me to go no doubt. It was big, very big; I could see the glint in its black eye and the wind ruffling its surprisingly thick fur. I actually hate rats and it was at this point I lost my presence of mind.

From about 15 yards away I hurled half a house brick at it and was bang on

target. The rat rotated round in the hole and then resumed its earlier position. On closer inspection the rodent turned out to be deceased and had been for a week so. I had trapped it in the bin with the fence panel (it had been rummaging around in there when I put the panel on!) and it had tried to squeeze out through the hole and had got stuck fast. Mind you even though it had been dead for a week it still had the power to scare the sh*t out of me!

And finally, the Defence Dental Agency (DDA)

Although now "retired" I like to keep my finger on the pulse of the jobs' market, after all who knows? Recently I saw a job advertised by an outfit I had never heard of before, the Defence Dental Agency, part of the Ministry of Defence. The DDA, so the blurb tells us, is based in Buckinghamshire and is responsible for the timely provision of trained dental personnel throughout the Armed Forces to meet operational requirements in peace and times of conflict. It employs some 1,000 staff worldwide and has an annual budget of £42m. That's a lot of teeth. The DDA was looking for a new Chief Executive. It didn't say if there was a nice uniform but the advert sported a real snazzy logo. I'll bet the DDA's motto is "Who drills, fills".

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER

VOLUME 8, ISSUE 2, SUMMER 2003

End of season football results

Quality amusing football stories are few and far between. Perhaps humour was forced out when all the millions flowed in. By the sound of it we are likely to spend all summer listening to reports as to who's going where and for how much. No wonder many fans suffer from real depression between mid May and September due to the lack of football. Perhaps they worry, like I do, about whether the top players still get their £50,000 a week during their summer holidays? So to make up for this, I have saved up a number of footballing stories that might just amuse.

And remember that the 2004 Presidential Meeting may now take place at Upton Park, so make sure you pack your boots just in case the first team is one short.

1. Harrogate Railway

Remember the good cup run of the team Harrogate Railway last season? Or as one wag unkindly put it "Harrogate is served by Arriva Trains so the club ought to be renamed Harrogate Replacement Bus Service." Their cup run came to end on 8 December 2002 when the team was "soundly thrashed" by Bristol City. But an amusing incident occurred in

the previous round when Harrogate got through, thanks to the opposition goalkeeper.

I forget the exact details but I think our team was leading by one goal when one of its forwards went down injured in the centre circle. The ref immediately stopped the game to allow treatment. When that was sorted the ref called a member of each team to the centre circle to tell them he was going to restart the game by a bounce up and he suggested that the opposition player should punt the ball down to the Harrogate goalie and the game could restart properly from there. All agreed.

The ball was bounced. The opposition player lazily punted the ball downfield. His boot made the best connection with the ball that he had ever made, with the result that it flew like an Exocet Missile into the net.

Pandemonium ensued. Intense discussions between the players and the ref took place in the centre circle. In due course an acceptably Corinthian solution emerged. Harrogate would restart the game as normal, pass the ball back to a nominated player who would then dribble the ball through to the opposition goal, unopposed, and score, thus restoring the status quo.

It worked like a dream, almost! The Harrogate forward dribbled through as agreed, until he reached a full back in the opposition penalty area. This particular player had failed to grasp the essential elements of the agreement. Perhaps he had not listened, or just disagreed with the solution or perhaps he didn't do Latin; whatever he tackled the forward and dispossessed him of the ball.

The crowd fell silent, the ref was in despair, and all the players froze, except one, the opposition goalie. Like a greyhound from the trap he raced from his goal line, tackled his full back, some say too violently, turned, and booted the ball into his own goal. All was well.

2. Goalies again

If you think David Seaman had a bad season, spare a thought for James Leggat of Mansfield. After one game James gently tapped a goalpost to get mud off his boots and was promptly knocked out when the crossbar fell on his head. A reminder that goalkeeping is a dangerous business.

Just ask Bernie Marsh. He was once in goal for Balcombe Reserves in the Mid-Sussex League, and towards the end of the game, he was back-peddalling, Seaman-style, to save a long-range lob. He never made it though as he failed to spot a Ford Sierra moving through the six-yard box. A spectator who was blocked in had decided to take a short cut home.

3. Black (and white) humour

England manager Sven-Goran Eriksson was approached by a Newcastle fan with a waspish sense of humour when returning from the Champions League match against Internazionale. As Eriksson queued for his flight, a member of the Toon Army rushed up to him. "I've terrible news for you, Mr Eriksson," he said. "Has the war started?" asked Eriksson, "No. Worse. You've been linked with the Sunderland manager's job!"

4. Mum's the word

Birmingham City has come up with a novel idea for Mother's Day. Advertising a "day she will never forget" for £26.95 lucky mum will get a guided tour of the St Andrews dressing rooms and dugouts, a picture taken by the club photographer, a special gift, a chance to win VIP tickets to a Birmingham home game, and a special appearance by Beau Brummie, the club's mascot. (I am not making this up).

5. Celtic

The heart goes out to Celtic fans. After a season of great promise they end up with nothing. We Ipswich fans know how you feel. The enthusiasm of Celtic fans is legendary. Before the UEFA Cup final against Porto in Seville it was estimated that 50,000 supporters would travel to Spain, most without tickets, but all content to soak up the atmosphere and follow the game on big screens in the city's squares. Reportedly the fans have caused little trouble, over the years, in their travels across Europe though it is said that not all return either promptly or sometimes not at all, as this well-known story about Celtic's famous match in Lisbon 36 years ago illustrates.

In the early hours of the Thursday morning following Celtic's historic 2-1 victory, a coach-load of supporters was travelling home through the Portuguese countryside when the headlights picked out a kilted figure, who had obviously supped copiously of Vinho Verde, weaving his inebriated way along the roadside. Drawing to a halt, they asked the lonely foot soldier where he lived. "Glasgae" came the slurred reply, and he promptly passed out. Hauling him

aboard, our hero slept through France, the ferry crossing to Dover, and the long drive north until the party reached the outskirts of Glasgow. Searching his sporran (In my opinion an act of supreme courage in any circumstances. Ed) they found his address and duly delivered their new friend, by now grinning inanely, but still incoherent, to his front door.

The lady of the house, resplendent in dressing gown and hair-rollers, answered their enthusiastic knocking and the following conversation ensued.

"Is this your son?"

"Aye, I'm sorry to say he is that."

"Well, you'll be glad to know we've brought him home safe and sound."

"Well that's bloody marvellous; he's supposed to be on honeymoon in the Algarve."

6. Record sending off

A footballer, Lee Todd, claims the world record for incurring a red card, in his case 2 seconds into a match. Apparently the ref blew the whistle for the kick-off and Todd, standing close by, said "F**K me; that's loud!" The ref ordered him off for using foul and abusive language.

Alison Nimmo CEO Sheffield 1

Alison was first presentation on at the Sheffield ACES Conference and obviously made a big impact. Within 9 months she is on the front page of RICS BUSINESS. Now you can read all about how Alison is leading the regeneration of Sheffield in both ASSET SHEFFIELD – 02 and RICS BUSINESS. But remember, you saw Alison first at an ACES Conference.

The RICS

Now that peace has broken out with The Institution I think that we (you) in local government should review whether our participation in RICS affairs is as enthusiastic as it could be.

For example out in the East the redoubtable Geoffrey Dyball FRICS,

Breton Chartered Surveyors, goes to infinite trouble to organise the Annual Lionheart Challenge. This is a sponsored walk with the aim of raising funds for Lionheart. Geoffrey locates a suitable venue, surveys an achievable route, produces maps, identifies refreshment opportunities along the way, checks out the quality of beers on offer and does all the promotional work. On the day his partner, Nicole, drives the support vehicle and provides bottled water, Lion bars and essential moral support for enthusiastic participants.

The walk takes place every September and Geoffrey is now finalising plans for the Seventh Annual event. Shamefully I have only participated in two, the fourth and the sixth. I only managed the post-lunch half of the fourth walk based on Sheringham Norfolk, but last year I completed the whole 11 miles around Thorpeness and Aldeburgh but only thanks to the support of a professional walking team, that dynamic duo, The Albons.

Why am I telling you all this? Well to quote from the organiser's usual witty post-walk report in the RICS East of England Newsletter, "Twenty six intrepid

walkers together with a baby and several clogs (sic) gathered at the Thorpeness Beach Café at 10 am but the idea of a prompt 10.15 start was sabotaged by the discovery that the café did a class act in bacon baps." (Actually the bacon and egg baps were better.)

I never did discover the identity of the walkers in clogs but out of the total, from memory, only 3 walkers worked in local government, although to be fair they brought with them a husband, a wife, a baby and a large, unruly, yellow dog. Oh and there was a grey haired elderly gent who in one of his more lucid moments thought that he might have once been employed in local government.

In arguing our case with the RICS for more local government recognition we were not reluctant to indicate the "great numbers" of chartered surveyors who work in local government. Exactly, but where were they all when the bacon baps were being distributed at the start of the walk? Still reading? Well the stop press news is that the seventh walk will be in the Framlingham/Earl Soham area, very handy for many East Anglian chartered surveyors, and will take place

on Saturday 6 September 2003; put it in your diary now!

And finally

This is a little story I came across some time ago. It goes like this.

One day a little blind rabbit was hopping home when he bumped into a little blind toad. The toad touched the rabbit with its front leg and said: "You've got nice soft fur; you've got nice twitchy whiskers; you've got long floppy ears. You must be a little bunny rabbit."

The little bunny rabbit put out a paw and said: "You're very, very cold; you are extremely slimy; you've got a very big mouth. You must be a Land Agent."

I really don't understand why some people find this funny.

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER

VOLUME 8, ISSUE 3, AUTUMN 2003

Troon 'n Portsmouth

So Troon has come and gone and again another triumph for Malcolm (MacAskill). The President of the RICS impressed me. After all he came all the way from Hong Kong (allegedly) and then used a quote from a Scribbler column so he obviously must have great taste and discernment. He proved to be a really approachable and straightforward man, who deserves our trust and support. Better still he joined the usual convivial Troon Thursday evening in the bar, until the wee small hours, as indeed did I. But, unlike Troon 99, I can remember most of both Thursday evening and the Friday morning presentations. Next year's conference organisers will have a very hard job to surpass Troon and Portsmouth. Not only were both conferences very successful but also the weather at both was sublime.

Doing the Lionheart walk

I mentioned in the last column the RICS "Eastern" Annual Lionheart Challenge organised, as ever, by Geoffrey Dyball FRICS, Breton Chartered Surveyors. The seventh walk duly took place on Saturday 6 September in the Framlingham/Earl Soham area. The good news was that the turnout was up from 26 to 34 this time and even better, Yesterdays Man joined me in the gentle 10-mile stroll. We were able to keep up with the professionals, ie the Albons, until about 2 miles from home at which time the rear view of Betty sadly disappeared over the horizon. This was bad news as the Albons were map reading. YM and I only have about 80 years' surveying experience between us so we immediately took a wrong turn and set off in exactly the wrong direction. The presence of a few more East Anglian chartered surveyors, perhaps some of

that "great number" working in local government, might have helped to keep us on the right track.

Words

The accurate use and understanding of words is important in business and elsewhere. Misunderstandings can prove to be very expensive, just ask British Rail.

BR had problems with windscreens when the new high-speed trains were being developed. Windscreens were not a BR speciality. Steam trains didn't have them and the powerful and fast Deltics only had, probably deliberately, small windscreens. But a 125 mph plus train needs something special to withstand say random birdstrike.

As trial and error development only produced failed windscreens BR looked

around for someone who could advise them on development and testing. And they found that the USA aerospace authorities were only too pleased to share their testing methods.

"We use chickens to test our windshields," they said. "Our test rig is a rigid stationary test bed into which we fix a windshield and a special cannon we have developed, which we can supply to you. All we do is fire the chickens into the screen. A variable charge produces variable speeds and we just observe the results." "Good god, you don't use live chickens do you?" "On no," they replied "we buy 'em oven ready from the supermarket and keep a stock in the freezer for extended testing programmes."

Brilliant. BR acquired and set up its test rig, stocked up the freezer and worked out a comprehensive development and testing programme. At first every windscreen failed and despite constantly upgrading the screens they continued to fail. The boffins checked and rechecked but in the end went back cap in hand to the USA for advice.

After prolonged exchanges of information and intense discussions no progress at all was made until an innocent American expert asked rather diffidently "But you are defrosting the chickens first, aren't you?"

Bad language

I am old enough to remember when any use of strong language in polite society was, like spitting on the upper deck of a double decker bus, prohibited. Now it seems that anything goes; well almost.

A long time ago I was junior engineer on a large redevelopment site in Sheffield. The site was so big that it had a proper canteen with separate executive and site workers dining rooms. Same food, by the way, but the executives were served while the workers helped themselves. The kitchen workers were all ladies and treated as such. The canteen culture was that strong language was simply not used; even though out on site it was, and with great gusto.

Then came the fateful day. At one table

a well-known story was being recalled and at the end most responded with cries of "Oh no!" or groans. But one man, a mild-mannered Geordie trade foreman, absent-mindedly used the 'F' word, not violently but quietly, in the context of "Que sera sera," or "Oh I say how jolly unfortunate".

Although the dining area was noisy everyone heard, including the kitchen ladies. There was instant silence. It was like a scene from a HM Bateman cartoon. Everyone stared at the poor unfortunate. I can see him now. At that moment he would have welcomed death. After a few seconds he got up and slunk out. The Site Agent stood up and offered the kitchen staff his profound apologies and those of the firm and everyone present. The eating of lunch resumed in almost complete and uncomfortable silence.

After a month of self-imposed exile the man entered the canteen just before lunch was served. In total silence he approached the kitchen counter and, after being kept waiting for a minute or so, the kitchen staff assembled and he delivered a humble and grovelling apology and asked if he could return. The supervisor gave her assent and he sat down.

Goodness how things have changed forty years on. At first sight bad language is now used by all seemingly without restriction but bad language culture is far more complicated than that.

On the streets, in public transport, in the playground (?) and on the sports field bad language seems de rigueur. Often I am surprised when I see who is using it and sometimes wonder if that user has any idea of its meaning. Mere self-preservation is normally sufficient to make its hearing acceptable, or at least tolerable, but there are still occasions when the use of bad language is absolutely unacceptable and some situations where its use is beneficial and surprisingly successful.

For example I remember the after-dinner speaker at Portsmouth somewhat differently to that reported in the last issue of *The Terrier*. Fine chap though he undoubtedly was his humorous material was not going too well, on my

table at any rate, and so, mistakenly, he decided to force the pace by using the 'F' word quite gratuitously, and just for shock effect, in the context of a rather unsavoury story. The effect in my vicinity was a total turnoff and I think he completely lost most of his audience there and then; a classic major misjudgement. It might have been acceptable at a late night rugby stag do after a dozen or so pints but not acceptable for a polite, middle of the road, mixed ACES audience.

Strangely enough a week later I was at the Theatre Royal Bury St Edmunds listening to Pete McCarthy doing his author's talk to a packed even more middle class and middle aged audience than Portsmouth. His finale was to read from his latest book an extract in which he meets, in a pub in Ireland, a character who once worked in a travelling circus. Essentially this piece reports the monologue delivered by this man on his experiences. It involves the multiple use of the 'F' word and in the final sentence an even more unacceptable word that I cannot bring myself to quote the initial of in this prestigious journal. The audience, without exception, was rolling in the aisles and I still cannot read that bit of the book out loud, even to myself. Why the different reaction?

Well I think there were a number of reasons. First the speaker spent a lot of time finding out what his audience was like and gently leading them on. He did not need to use shock tactics. Second his material was genuinely funny and he was a non-threatening, likeable and pleasant man. Third we, the audience, were volunteers who had paid to go in and could just walk out. And finally and most importantly he was reading out "quotes" and this seemed to make a lot of difference.

Strangely enough the over-use of bad language seems to debase it. It should be kept in reserve for really stressful occasions. But there are always those traumatic situations where, as Dennis Norden once put it "Mere obscenities are not enough."

My hols

Personally I swear by flaming June as

the ideal time for a holiday. And so in the second week of June I left Scribbler Towers behind, in the safe custody of the staff, and in the hope that the new wing would be completed and ready for use on my return, and set off for France with motorcaravan and bike. Both ferry crossings were smooth, and trouble free, and the weather every day was glorious; except for one. On that day it was cloudy so I worked out a round trip taking in two adjoining villages and "got on my bike". After a pleasant ride I had a beer at the first village and bought a custard flan at the bakers. Interestingly enough this village had two bakers, two cafes and about half a dozen other shops; the next village also had two bakers, but just one café and a mini supermarket. Any way, tucking my pastry away safely in the back pocket of my rucksack I left for the next village. On the way I saw a sign indicating some interesting ruins across the fields so not wanting to miss a cultural experience I chained the bike to the fence and off I went. The ruins were across a small field, and at the top of a hill up a very steep footpath. Having seen enough and set off back down hill without a care in the world until I completely turned my ankle on a protruding root.

Fortunately I went down like a stone and didn't have time to put out my arm in order to break it. But I did think my right ankle was broken; I crashed down onto my left knee and then turned over once or twice as I rolled down the steep path. I didn't rush to get up. But I was worried. I was about 500 yards from the bike, 5 miles from the motorcaravan and 550 miles from home! I did get to the bike, found I could still peddle and along the way adrenalin took over and I forgot all about the ankle. I stopped for another beer in the second village and eventually reached "home" where I sat, read and took it easy for a couple of hours without moving. Big mistake! When I did try to move I couldn't move the ankle or put any weight on it at all. I do carry a walking stick at all times in case the back goes so I gingerly hobbled down to the site office for advice and assistance. The owner loaned me his icepack straight from the fridge to be applied externally, and prescribed Calvados, to be applied internally. Both were helpful. I really couldn't walk very well the following

morning but during the day I could feel it getting better all the time. This was just as well as I was due to leave the following day. I got home OK. So take care when walking footpaths but if you do turn an ankle, don't try to ignore it.

Oh and by the way, the custard flan escaped the adventure completely unscathed, until, that is, I ate it.

Grumman reunited

12 months ago I first became acquainted with the Grumman Avenger. And now I was on my way back to see it again. It was my local airfield's annual big day. The full entrance fee is £7. Last year, as I approached the entrance, the young Air-Cadet undiplomatically sang out "Another old-age pensioner; £4". This year the charm offensive paid off. I pulled up alongside and slowly wound down the window. "Are you a 4 or a 7?" I was asked confidentially. "I'm a 4!" I replied with some pleasure, "and I'll have a programme".

The Grumman was there again complete with pilot, Tony Haig-Thomas. There was to be a flying display in the afternoon. Tony, a slightly over-weight sixty year old, by the look of it, (who isn't?), was struggling into his overalls. He then started to "clamber aboard"; not an easy task. It involved using inset foot and hand holds to get a knee onto the wing trailing edge and then a climb up on to the wing itself. There isn't a door, just a slightly extended window which the pilot has to sort of swing through. When the time came for the display Tony sang out "Clear" before revving the motor up, even though there was no one standing about, and he cranked up the plane's extremely powerful motor.

Sadly, though I had my camera ready, there were no umbrellas or anything to be devastated and off he went to do a very powerful and it has to be said, ponderous, flying display. See you next year!

More jobs, see Feb 2003

After the piece about the Defence Dental Agency I have come across two more interesting jobs. First Manchester City Council was advertising for a "Head of Crime and Disorder" which set me

thinking that Manchester probably had enough of that without needing someone to organise it until I re read it and got the message. And in the Bury Free Press (that is the Bury St Edmunds Free Press) 3 weeks ago I clipped out the following advert, from situations vacant, which I reproduce here verbatim "£5,000 Welcome Bonus. Royal Navy Submarine chefs and operators. Full training on full pay given. Call XXXX for more information." Am I missing something?

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER *VOLUME 8, ISSUE 4, WINTER 2003/4*

The AGM

Sadly not even Kylie, or Beyonce, whoever he is, or even a free lunch could tempt me up to Edinburgh for the AGM. It was merely shortage of time that kept me away. I did want to say a Presidential goodbye to Malcolm I (MacAskill), and an equally Presidential hello to Malcolm II (Dawes). Hopefully I will get to Upton Park in 2004, regarded in these parts as a local derby, and I must remember to take my boots as I might get a run out with the first team if it's one short. You have a hard act to follow Malcolm II, best of luck.

And then it will be Nottingham and Richard (Allen). Although my father was born in that city and I lived fairly close by for 25 years, I have only visited once. I attended a conference at a city centre hotel; though precisely what the conference was about I can no longer remember. But I do recall that the hotel was being used a film set and its parking was in a next door public multi-storey. As I left my car in its tender care I saw that police, IN PAIRS, patrolled it. Goodbye car!

And then it will be young Betty Albon's turn in 2006, about time too. Hopefully the venue will be the same as last time so I should be able to manage the 10-minute journey.

Selfridges

I did find time in October for a few days away in Warwick, a fine town I have visited on a number of occasions. There was once a good bookshop on Jury Street but as that has now closed I thought I might look further afield using my Senior Citizen's Rail Card (I lied about my age). The station is about 25 minutes' walk and first I had an enjoyable day in Leamington for the princely sum of £0.75 return. So I thought I would try further afield and remembering that the property journals had been full of the new Selfridges store for most of the year I spent a day looking round the Bull Ring in Birmingham, having spent £2.75 on a return rail ticket. The train actually stops

next door to Selfridges and the biggest city centre shopping centre I've ever seen. For a country boy like me the size, quality and complexity of the shops was almost overwhelming. By coincidence there is a good article on Birmingham's "The Regeneration Game" with a fine aerial photo of the Selfridges end of the city centre that puts the whole area into context. I did venture into Selfridges and internally it is as spectacular as the exterior. The shopping experience too is superior. Eventually, down in the basement food hall, I purchased a Gloucester Old Spot pork pie, a crab quiche and some olives "Would you like to try some first sir?"

On the way out I passed some security staff attending, very professionally, to a lady who had fainted. I think someone must have told her the price of the pork pies.

Sorry!

Shortly before I "retired" I took out a fixed rate mortgage and almost at once interest rates fell to their lowest rate for nearly a century. A little later I invested most of my retirement capital in income-producing stock exchange based investments. And almost at once the bottom fell out of the market. Recently I decided to buy myself out of the fixed rate mortgage and take out a "tracker" based on market interest rates. It cost an arm and a leg but would stack up, eventually. I got my letter from the building society confirming that the new arrangements were in place on the day that the Bank of England increased interest rates for the first time in years. So blame me.

Wallace and Grommit

The high spot of my social calendar is the annual lunch of the provisional wing of the SCC Retired Chief Officers Association. It is usually a well attended function, after all there a lot of former Suffolk chief officers about.

Not having worn a suit, or a tie, since 2002 I got up early to sort out the

wardrobe. Which suit should I wear? The best? Second best? What about the work suit? Could I wear one of the less formal suits? No wonder I have so little room in the wardrobe with all this redundant stuff in it. I chose the second best, carefully pressed the trousers and jacket. Now for the major difficulty, choosing the shirt.

After 18 months of gym work 3 times a week I know I cannot do up the collar on most of my shirts but fortunately I did find one that almost fitted, and put on the tie. This was beginning to look quite smart although I was already feeling a bit dizzy due to oxygen starvation. Then the phone rang disrupting matters. After dealing with that I finished dressing and then set off to the Ipswich venue, a private members' club in the town centre. The journey went well and the park 'n ride bus set off as soon as I got on.

I have to admit that after 3 years I felt good wearing a suit again; smart, professional and comfortable. The lunch was highly enjoyable, a super meal and another good turnout including a former Chief Executive, 2 County Surveyors and a Director of Planning and Transportation, a County Solicitor, Chief Probation Officer, 2 County Fire Officers, 2 County Treasurers, a County Planning Officer, a Chief Constable, a County Architect, a County Librarian and oh yes, a County Land Agent and Valuer. A remarkable collection of titles, most of which have now passed into history.

Back on the park 'n ride bus, the arrival of which I thought was a touch tardy, but no matter, I settled back in my seat and began to muse on the day's excitement. Then I looked down.

Oh my god! I was wearing the wrong trousers!

The second best suit jacket does not quite match the work suit trousers. At the park 'n ride I scuttled off to the car and straight home. Planned visits to B&Q and Tescos would have to wait; I can't go there dressed like this.

Doctor, the Reverend, Ian Paisley

Ian Paisley, so it is said, was delivering one of his scorching sermons.

"In the hell that awaits the sinner," he roared, "there will be a-weeping and a-wailing and a-gnashing of teeth." An old man in the front row was impressed, scared and a little puzzled. "Dr. Paisley" he mumbled through his ancient gums, "what if you have nae teeth?"

The great man paused for only a second. "Teeth," he thundered, "will be provided".

Dr. Paisley's public image is that of an uncompromising, obstinate, intolerant, hard-line politician. Not the sort of man you would want to share a pot of Earl Grey with. And yet some time ago, a friend, with religious inclinations, took the trouble to go to his church in Belfast to see what it was all about at first hand. He reported back that Dr. Paisley was the most charismatic preacher he had ever heard.

So when I had my opportunity to meet him I did not know what to expect.

In the days, long, long ago when there were extensive programmes of compulsory acquisition work, usually for highway purposes, it so happened that in my authority one of our road schemes brought about the demolition of one of Dr. Paisley's churches; a clear-cut equivalent reinstatement situation. Compensation principles and the building of a replacement church were resolved without too much difficulty. Then the great man let it be known that there were "one or two loose ends" and he wished to conclude the negotiations personally when he was next in Suffolk.

Now this was at the height of "The Troubles" and arranging a meeting was not altogether straightforward. A date and time of 2pm were fixed and later "a civil servant" telephoned me. "Where exactly will the meeting take place?" he asked. "It could take place in my own room," I replied, thinking a matter of status could be involved. "What sort of room is it?" he said and when I mentioned ground floor with windows along 2 sides he made it clear that was

totally out of the question. "Is there an internal room with no windows?" "Yes," I said, "then that's the one." Other than that I was not expecting to attend the meeting personally.

So I forgot all about it until lunchtime on the day of the meeting. Usually I took a lunchtime walk and left the building and walked off down the road as usual. After a few steps a black Granada cruised past only to do a flashy 3-point turn further on cruise back. There were 4 snappily dressed young men in it with short haircuts. It would have blended in more with a flashing neon sign saying "SPECIAL BRANCH" on the roof. "Christ", I thought, "This is the day Ian Paisley is due." Trying not to draw any attention I hotfooted it back to the office.

After a hurried briefing my valuer said he wanted me to attend and do the talking but he had no idea what the problem was. Those of you who have done compulsory acquisition work will know exactly what I thought. It was common practice for all owners and agents to pull any trick in the book to increase compensation. Those with member contacts or even minor celebrity status were by far the worst.

Just before 2pm one of the Granada Four introduced himself and then began to lurk just inside the entrance to the building. We were told to sit in the meeting room. At precisely 2 pm more black Granadas arrived and the Ian Paisley party was conducted in. He sat on the opposite side of the table flanked by 2 vicars and a minder. Dr. Paisley was affable but the others were unsmiling and watchful. It was soon clear that I was completely wrong about Mr Paisley. He was one of the most courteous and professional negotiators I ever dealt with, and a real gent.

First he made it clear that he had come to conclude negotiations with me, and no one else. He added that he was very grateful with how the whole business had been dealt with, very satisfied with the new church and looking forward to an official opening ceremony. But there were a few minor matters that he hoped we could help with. "Such as?" I asked. "Well first of all most of my congregation are elderly and will need help to attend

services in the new location. My church," he confided, "has built many more churches in recent years than anyone so we know a little bit about this. And what we need is another minibus. A second hand one will suffice costing probably about £3,000. Could the authority fund this?" He stopped.

My turn. Taking a deep breath I said, "Before agreeing to that I would prefer to hear the full list of additional minor matters." He smiled, and leaning forward touched my arm lightly. "A very professional approach," he commended, "I can see you've done this sort of thing before Mr Scribbler" Without further ado he went through all his additional claims and in no time at all we did a deal, and he, and his party were soon on their way.

About 10 years later, at a loose end following a foreshortened RICS meeting, I was nosing around a second-hand bookshop in Charing Cross Road when I realised that a fellow browser was Dr Paisley. He was looking through some dusty ecclesiastical tomes. Should I go across and introduced myself? To do so would mean going across the room and tapping him on the shoulder. Checking out the others in the room I couldn't spot which were the minders so thought it best to leave well alone and be on my way.

Music, music, music

A wonderful evening listening to a Glenn Miller tribute band reminded me of a visit to the Manchester Free Trade Hall in, I would estimate, 1959, to see Thelonius Monk, an innovative American modern jazz pianist. I had just gone up to Manchester University and had booked the cheapest ticket for the first house performance. At 6 o'clock I popped into the pub next door for a quick pint. The drink was a bit rushed and I put my empty glass on the bar and turned round to see Dave South coming in. "Wonder Boy Dave" was the headlines in the Sunday papers when he entered his first major cycling championship as a 16 year old and won every prize in sight. We had been at school together. "Fancy a pint," I said having established that we were both going to the same place, "there's just time!" That second pint was hard work and a visit to the little boy's

room was needed. When I got back Dave had got another couple of pints in. "We'll have to rush I said."

Our seats were in the upper, upper circle and unreserved. After going up many floors we reached the topmost level just as the doors closed. There were 2 seats left right in the middle of the block and edging past about 25 disgruntled, already-in-place punters was terrifying. The tier of seats was like the north face of the Eiger and in looking down I got

terrific vertigo and wondered what the penalty was for cascading 3 pints of second hand beer over the posh people in the front stalls. About half an hour into the concert we were, putting the matter delicately, beginning to feel the pressure and were looking forward, keenly, to the interval. The warm-up band finished its set and we thought we were saved; but no. Thelonus was to do a set before the interval. We just did not have the bottle to push our way out so gritting our teeth tried to enjoy

the music. I have to say my recollections of the pianist are what a tedious long-winded artist he is! Eventually the interval was announced and we were off like greyhounds from the traps, pushing our way out without a thought for anyone.

Outside, in the curved corridor, we found that there were NO GENTS!! And the same on the next floor, and the next. Finally, to our great relief, we found what we were looking for. We didn't go back.

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER *VOLUME 9, ISSUE 1, SPRING 2004*

Schadenfreude

Let me make my position clear. I have listened to the Today BBC radio programme since the days of Jack de Manio. No start to the day is complete without it; but....

Over the years the programme evolved from a whimsical magazine with incorrect time checks into a hard-edged political show staffed by hard-nosed, experienced journalists. More recently the tone changed to sneering condescension with a barely concealed political agenda. Not a party political, by the way. All politicians were treated with equal contempt. The message seemed to be "what a wonderful country this could be if it were to be managed like Today and the BBC."

For me the beginning of the end came when the programme was extended and an additional slot from 6am to 7pm had to be filled. As there was precious little additional material available the time was usually filled by pointless pieces where interviewers interviewed interviewers and constantly trailed what was coming up after 7 o'clock ie when the real show started. In my mind's eye I could always see a notice stuck on the studio door "This programme is closed for staff training and will reopen after the 7 o'clock news."

The end came for me when comment on the Countryside March was pointedly excluded from the next programme on

the grounds that it was not important enough. Even so it was important enough to feature strongly in a print journalism piece published a few days later by someone then associated with Today. If "the news" could be manipulated that casually and without any apparent management controls, what else was going on? I ceased to be a regular listener but would be the first to admit I have been unable to find a satisfying substitute.

So, when I was snowed in on the day of the Hutton Report, I switched on the news in the early afternoon and inadvertently got caught up in the whole business. And I have to confess that in watching the BBC HQ's revolving front door I was unable to resist experiencing a modest amount of malicious pleasure at another's discomfort. To misquote Oscar Wilde in "The Importance of Being Earnest" to lose the Chairman of Governors may be regarded as a misfortune but to lose the Director General as well looks like carelessness."

And didn't you find it fascinating that, on the day, the BBC itself was unable to respond to the media until it was too late, unable to put up anyone for face-to-face interview and had no facilities for the press to operate from. When responses began to flow, usually from ex-staff, the word 'balance' suddenly came back into use and most complained bitterly that as the BBC had been criticised then the other parties

should have been criticised too! Then of course, like most of the media, they blamed the ref.

Why am I telling you all this?

Well first another Oscar Wilde quote from the same source "On an occasion of this kind it becomes more than a moral duty to speak one's mind. It becomes a pleasure".

And second there are some important lessons for "surveyors in local government".

Here you have a big, fat, complacent organisation beginning to believe in its own immortality and immunity from criticism. (I am still talking about the BBC.) It made a mistake but refused to address it properly and in the end paid the price. There are 3 important points to reflect on.

1. Complaints Procedure. I'll wager the BBC has a copper-bottomed, all-singing, all-dancing, complaints procedure that has been the subject of countless hours of in-house seminars and is printed in full colour on glossy paper. The same probably applies to your organisation. Unfortunately the complaint in question was not properly investigated, as "Campbell was a serial complainer so we didn't deal with it as rigorously as we should." Your organisation probably has serial complainers

too. The BBC is institutionally anti-complainist. It has programmes where complainers can air their grievances but the poor presenter Roger Bolton, in advocating listeners' complaints, is constantly put up against a never-ending production line of highly articulate well-spoken apparatchik whose remit is always to deny everything, then question the intelligence of the complainant and if really pressed tell them to switch off (at least I think it was switch).

2. Gavyn and Greg. The Chairman and the DG had important disciplinary, regulatory and above all for the DG, Editor-in-Chief functions. The publicity insists that both were well liked by all the staff, know universally as Gavyn and Greg and were both regarded as "one of the boys" not afraid to muck in etc. Mmmmm.
3. Cough. No one is perfect. Mistakes happen. I always took the line that if I had erred, and was unable to sort it out before management found out, then when challenged I just admitted it. Almost invariably I found that investigators were unable to deal with this.

Be warned.

Ps The only good luck story to emerge so far is that the former Deputy D-G, who had only been in post for a fortnight, was then appointed Acting D-G. I hope he is successful. The most fatuous story to emerge also deals with the same issue. To avoid accusations of bias the top posts are to be advertised and written applications will be required. This will ensure appointments are beyond criticism. Yeah, yeah.

Pps Tucked away on page 8 of the Telegraph of Saturday 28 February were a couple of paragraphs announcing that headhunters had been appointed "to speed up" the search for the 2 top jobs. The closing date for written applications for the post of Chairman was 27 February. Presumably the successful applicants didn't put in written applications.

Property people

Having said that I need to draw your attention to the plethora of property and property type programmes currently showing on TV both daytime TV and prime time. There are 2 programmes to look out for. Both have been strongly featured in the Estates Gazette. One is daytime; the other BBC 2 prime time.

Having come down with a cold I was at home. I put the fire and telly on and sat there with a hot drink gently dozing off until "HOMES UNDER THE HAMMER" came on. I began to feel better straight away. Apparently it is "the hottest daytime hit of 2003" and plans are afoot for a new series. The format is simple and the two presenters Lucy Alexander and Martin Roberts are knowledgeable, likeable and keen to put over the facts, rather than get in the way of them. Both profess to be "developers" and seem to know property, even though Martin, like everyone else in the world, except me, does not know what "back-to-back" houses are. The programme follows 3 properties at auction with a preliminary view of each property, the drama of the auction room, a chat with the purchaser and another look at each property 2 or 3 months down the line. There are opportunities for "suits" to appear at intervals to give professional opinions. Presumably there is no fee involved but dress code is strict. Estate agents, letting agents, planning experts wear suits and ties; for "developers", architects, and others suits are optional but no ties are allowed. A new series is planned. Remember to set the video.

And then there was "PROPERTY PEOPLE" shown on primetime BBC 2. It's a "fly-on-the-wall" documentary. The opening scene was the interior of estate agents Greene and Co, in north London. A sharp suited, commission only, negotiator sits at a small, cluttered desk. He is Richard Blanks. He slams down the phone and holds his head in his hands. He then looks up and speaks to no one in particular the opening lines of first part of this 6-part series. "We were supposed to exchange on something. They've had five f***ing weeks to deal with this and now they're dealing with it the day before we're f***ing due to exchange.

I can't be arsed with it any more. I'm happy for the f***er to pull out and sell it to someone who won't f***ing give me all this s**t." He then exits via the office front door for (another) cigarette.

I was instantly hooked. I watched most of the 6 hours. It was a bit patchy. Greene and Co were very brave to allow the cameras in, warts and all. The Estates Gazette, in its second leader on 7 February thought it contributed to the "public understanding of the business". The National Association of Estate Agents did not seem too impressed and did not think there "was as much effing and blinding in most estate agencies". The RICS spokesman was definitely against and thought the programme reinforced the image of what people thinks property is about. And "one of the major problems is that 'these people' are not chartered surveyors." Is it me, or does that sound just a teensy-weensy bit pompous? Since when has it been correct to refer to non-chartered surveyors in the property business as "these people"?

The gentle art of negotiation

Forty years ago, when I started on the Railway, status was important. The workers worked in open plan. Not 21st century open-plan but a big un-partitioned area into which were crammed as many desks as possible. This is where the workers and team leaders were. Management was down the corridor in individual office furnished strictly in accordance with status and the rulebook.

Tom, from whom I was to receive my first lesson in negotiation, had his own office. Or at least he did until someone read the small print in the rulebook. Apparently his grade entitled him to a separate area, but not an enclosed office; a carpet, but not a fitted wall-to-wall carpet; and a grey sheet metal wardrobe. So someone, somewhere, decided to put matters right and so one morning the workmen arrived.

Tom was told to stop work and his desk, chair, filing cabinet, wardrobe and visitor's chair were moved out into the corridor. The fitted carpet was ripped out and destroyed in the process. One

panel of partitioning, about a yard in length, was taken out and taken away. This changed the space from an enclosed office to a "separate area". The workmen then replaced the fitted carpet with "a carpet" that actually was of better quality and measured 9ft by 12 ft, exactly the same size as the room, no, sorry, the separate area. The furniture was then put back. "Oh," said Tom, "could you put the wardrobe just there", ie in the gap created by the lost partition. Honour was satisfied all round; though at great expense.

But back to the gentle art of negotiation. The Railway had office and storage premises at Covent Garden, then a flower market, and an incredibly congested and very Dickensian area. These were gradually closing down and being sold off. It was known that in the long term the flower market would close. I was dealing with the sale of a building in Henrietta Street and there was to be a negotiation with a well-known firm of surveyors that specialised in the restoration of quality buildings. Tom felt he should lead the negotiations. Off we went to their Mayfair offices.

We were well received and conducted to a well-furnished office to meet the Mayfair agent. He was sat behind what looked like the sort of desk that Sotheby's might auction next week. Tom got the best chair in front of the

desk. I got what looked like an incredibly valuable gold bentwood chair.

I had done a valuation based on comparables. For the sake of argument we were looking for £50,000. The usual pleasantries were exchanged and discussion went back and forth while the Mayfair agent and Tom jockeyed for position about who would open the batting. After some lengthy exchanges the Mayfair agent said he would suggest a figure. Phew! I relaxed and sat back in my chair; and its back separated from the remainder of the chair. I nearly fell off. Had I broken a valuable antique or was it just part of the negotiating game? Keep calm.

The agent spoke. "We were thinking in terms of offering £100,000 for the property. Tom rocked back in his chair looking as though he had just been struck across the back of the neck with a sock full of wet sand. "Oh no," I thought, "The back of his chair will come off too!"

"I...I" he stuttered. I should say at this juncture that Tom was a leading light in the Railway Operatic and Dramatic Society (The Broads). His footlights experience now came good. "I...I have to say," said Tom "that we were not thinking in terms of a figure anything like that", looking at me as though he was contemplating doing something pretty violent with my Parry's Valuation Tables.

Now the Mayfair agent looked uncomfortable. "Terribly sorry," he muttered thinking we were cutting edge valuers, "were you thinking of about £150,000 perhaps?" "No," hissed Tom.

We settled at £175,000 and Tom didn't speak to me all the way back to Kings Cross.

Attention Eastern Branch members (or anyone wanting a nice day out in Suffolk)

Not long now to the Annual RICS Lionheart Charity Walk. It's usually the first Saturday in September. Get in training now! Although we usually like to tell the RICS how many chartered surveyors work in local government most are inexplicably absent when it comes to the Lionheart Walk. A route is being prepared by the Albons this year although overall arrangements will still be in the very capable hands of Geoffrey Dyball FRICS, of Breton Chartered Surveyors. The walk will probably start from Wyken Vineyard and take in the delights of Langham, Badwell Ash, Walsham-Le-Willows and Stanton. A test walk by an elderly chartered surveyor has proved successful (ie he survived) despite severely inclement weather conditions. So come on you reluctant surveyors. Pencil the date in your diary and come along. Enjoy!

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER *VOLUME 9, ISSUE 2, SUMMER 2004*

More on the gentle art of negotiation

Rereading last issue's column reminded me that there are productive ways to get things done and unproductive ways. Here are two examples; which is which?

Case Study 1. My first team leader on the railway was David Lawrence who went on to become a Director of the British Rail Board. He was one of the few people who fully utilised his allocation of free tickets. Without exception he left London, always by train, late afternoon on Friday to return in the early hours of Monday morning. He had an unlimited

supply of friends in far away places. The team dealt "commercial" management. We were very busy. As junior valuer I dealt mainly with the very trivial transactions, lots and lots of them. The most menial of these were garden extensions for house owners adjoining the railway line. It was all standard letter stuff with standard terms and conditions; take it or leave it.

One day my phone rings. A man with a very posh voice said, "I am a partner with (what was then a major firm of chartered surveyors). I am also a past President of The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors". We then established that I

was dealing with this garden extension and that I had quoted terms to his client. "It is this matter that I wish to discuss." And then he continued in what I took to be a friendly tone, "Are you a member of the Royal Institution?" I said I was. "How are you getting on with your exams?" he asked. I told him I was taking the finals and thought was a nice man to take the trouble to ask.

"Oh in that case" he continued, "I cannot possibly speak with you on this matter, I demand to speak to your manager, provided he is a chartered surveyor." Being young and impressionable I put my hand over the mouthpiece

and explained the situation to David Lawrence who sat at the adjoining desk. "Put him through" he said. David then explained to this very important personage that although he did not normally deal with such minor matters as this personally he would do his best to help. He was then asked some trivial question and said, "Just one moment please". Looking directly at me and without moving the phone away he then said, "This character wants to know (whatever it was); what should I say?" I offered a suggestion that must have also been quite audible down the line and David duly repeated it. This farce went on for a few more utterly trivial and inconsequential questions until eventually the important person agreed to accept the quoted terms.

David Lawrence has my eternal gratitude for dealing with the matter in this way. It was a great lesson in how to deal with this sort of situation and one I have always tried to follow, not always successfully, in later years.

Case Study 2. The phone rings again. A pleasant lady said "Oh is that Mr ****, I've got Jack Cohen of Tescos on the line; he wants a word."

I knew what he wanted. At that time Tescos was making a major investment in what may have been its first computer. The proposed computer building was too big for the firm's railway side site at Cheshunt and a modest strip of railway land was needed to accommodate the overflow. No problems there but to release any operational land needed the approval of about a dozen operating departments; and, crucially, their signature on the same bit of paper. That took an age. Moreso if someone halfway down the list lost it and we had to start again. So essentially all we were waiting for was this bit of paper, the formal approval, and then we were home and dry. But Tescos wouldn't be able to, or want to appreciate that, would they?

"Is that OK?" prompted the caller. "Yes," I said hopefully, there was an ominous silence and a few clicks. "Mr ****, how nice to speak to you," said the great man, "How are you?" I hesitated. I wasn't used to being spoken to in this way.

"I'm very well thank you," I volunteered cautiously. "And the wife? Are you married?" "Yes, she's well too." I began to wonder what he really wanted. "Any children?" he continued. "Two", I said giving names and ages. "Lovely day," he continued, "have you had your holidays yet?" I hadn't but told him I was off to somewhere, I forget where, in a couple of weeks. "Look," he said, "I know my surveyor has explained how important getting hold of this land is to Tescos. But I just wanted to emphasise that it really is important. If price is a problem, and I know how you surveyors like to negotiate, talk to me." I explained the problem was just administrative. "Right" he said, "I hope you didn't mind my getting involved. Could I ask you to do what you can to hurry things along please? I'll ring again when you are back from your holiday. Goodbye."

A month later the phone rings again. A pleasant lady said "Oh is that Mr ****, I've got Jack Cohen of Tescos on the line; he wants a word." "Mr ****, how nice to speak to you again," said the great man, "How are you?" And then he went on to ask about my holiday, he mentioned the location, and then he asked about the wife and kids, all by name. "How are you getting on with the land?" he asked finally. I told him and explained the progress made. "Good," he said, "keep up the pressure. I'll ring again at the end of the month. Goodbye." The matter soon concluded and he never did ring again. Two things impressed me. He didn't bully; in those days most of our callers just couldn't resist it. And he had made notes of the social chit-chat (or his secretary had) and he used them again.

The question is which file became "lost" and which was dealt with?

L'assemblee de L'Equipe de la Direction du Normandie

The scene is Normandy 1943. The Chief Executive of the Normandy Council has called a meeting of his Management Team. All are present. The Chief Executive speaks:

"Eh bien messieurs. Les temps n'est pas tres jolie. Les sale Boches (turns to one side and spits; there is a slight delay as his secretary turns to a clean page in

her notebook) are bleeding us white. They have ruined our tourist trade, mined and fenced off all the beaches, are taking all our cider and Camembert, and gratuitously ignoring all parking restrictions in Caen and Bayeux. Worse still they are now building massive, ugly, concrete bunkers all over the place, making Normandy look like a hideous futuristic vision of a 1960s English market town. What we need is some bleu ciel thinking. Any suggestions?"

The Director of Tourism and Leisure is the first to respond.

"Regarder," he begins, "what we must do is persuade the Allies to route the coming invasion across our Normandy beaches. This would mean that for months before the whole of our coastal area and communications would be subject to heavy bombing. Then the biggest fleet ever assembled would mount the invasion first by subjecting all our coastal towns and particularly their beaches and promenades to the heaviest shelling imaginable prior to landing four armies across them. These would then fight virtually house to house right across the region. Hundreds of thousands of our countrymen would die in the process. Once the fighting armies were clear the whole area would be used to supply the fighting and thousands of heavy lorries would pound our remaining infrastructure to dust and keep everyone awake until the end of the war. If we can get the Allies to do this, monsieur, then the future of our region would be assured as a major centre of tourism long into the 21 century. C'est cal!"

"Merde!" muttered the Chief Executive. And then more loudly, "Does anyone have a sensible suggestion?"

Richard Todd

Richard Todd is a film star now enjoying a long and well-earned retirement. On screen he gave many totally convincing portrayals of a British Army officer and gentleman. This is just as well because in reality he was an officer and gentleman.

One of his best performances was in the film "The Longest Day". In this he played Major John Howard in the

segment dealing with the capture of Pegasus Bridge. By way of reminder on 6 June 1944 Allied armies were to land in Normandy between Ouistreham, at the estuary of the Orne River, in the east and the foot of the Cotentin peninsula in the west. It was imperative to defend the left flank of the invasion area and this comprised the Orne River and the parallel sea-going ship canal up to Caen. A key point was what is now called Pegasus Bridge. One of the actions planned for the early hours of 6 June, before the main force hit the beaches, was to take the Bridge by a “coup de main” operation involving landing a small force by glider almost on the bridge itself.

Major Howard was in the leading glider with a small detachment from the 2nd Ox and Bucks. There were about half a dozen gliders altogether and in one was Lieutenant H J “Tod” Sweeney who we will meet again later. The pilot of Howard’s glider was Staff Sergeant Jim Wallwork of the Glider Pilot Regiment. His co-pilot was Staff Sergeant John Ainsworth. The plan was to cast off from the tug over the coast and glide in to the bridge via a series of timed doglegs following compass bearings. This was in the early hours of the 6th. The lead glider landed within feet of the bridge; Major Howard and his detachment deplaned, did their stuff, captured the bridge and the rest, as they say, is history.

In a recent interview Richard Todd confirmed the film action was “pretty accurate although the film soldiers acted with considerably more panache, as there were no bullets flying around”.

Strangely enough Richard was actually on the bridge that night. As Captain Richard Todd, a paratrooper of the 1st Airborne Division he parachuted into the area landing at 0040 hours half a mile from the bridge. The paratroopers’ job was to reinforce the defenders of the captured bridge. In one of those unforgettable army moments Todd met another officer on the bridge at some point during the fighting. “Oh hello,” said Richard, “I am Captain Richard Todd, everybody calls me Sweeney.” “Oh hello,” came the reply, “I’m Lieutenant Sweeney, everybody calls me Tod.”

They didn’t put that in the film. After all, who would believe it?

More end of season football

A few years ago I used to be one of the few partners dragged along to some Ladies Annual Dinner, the purpose of which now escapes me. On the second occasion I was directed to sit next to Phillip, “you can talk to each other.” Little did they know that Phillip was a Geordie, and we had met before as he was a former tenant. He knew a lot about football, and so he should. His younger brother Bobby was in the game and at that time working in Portugal; or was it Barcelona?

I didn’t know a lot about the current game but we reminisced about the good old days and for a few years this was most welcome as we only talked quietly and didn’t get in the way. Alas it couldn’t continue as the ladies eventually realised that we were enjoying ourselves and thereafter we were sat at opposite ends of the table.

This train of thought was sparked off by a few lines in a recent Hugh McIlvanney (the doyen of sports writers) in his Sunday Times column. He was talking about the repertoire of functional clichés with which the old-style football editions of Saturday evening newspapers handled those awkward episodes on the field when a major fight broke out, ie “Tempers became frayed and punches appeared to be thrown”. Only those present would know different.

All old-time football memories are viewed through rose coloured spectacles and so are mine. When I was young football was a game to be played all winter giving way to cricket in the summer. In those days it really was “To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven”; and no floodlights either. Sometimes we would also watch a local match and on special occasions we travelled to Hillsborough in Sheffield. The games I remember best were a series of midweek floodlit matches when Norwich had a good cup run and played a number of semi finals. This must have been in the early 50s. I was 10.

Travel was with a local bus company. Their coaches were the pre-war models where the driver had his own cab that extended only over half the front of the vehicle. However they had been upgraded with a modern flat front but the driver’s space was still accessed separately and the other half of this front space was filled by the engine with the old bonnet still in place but with a rug over it now it was inside. I was allowed to travel “up front”, lounging on this rug. There was a pretty cavalier attitude to health and safety in those days.

I can still remember being fascinated by the floodlights, the vivid emerald green pitch and the constant sparkling in the crowd opposite as never ending fags were lit. And yes I was passed over the heads of the crowd and allowed to sit on a little wall at the front.

Kids were allowed on the pitch for “shooting in” at half time, unthinkable today, and always a drunk would come on and try to join in, only to keep falling flat on his back much to the huge enjoyment of the crowd. But I can’t remember chanting, obscenities, vast numbers of police/stewards, spitting, or any trouble. Players played, and spectators spectated.

Where are we today? The players earn in a week more than twice as much as the majority of supporters earn in a year. This must create a vast gulf between the game and its support. The game reacts by behaving badly both on and off the field and now supporters must be heartened to read that top players and managers have found a method to, as the papers say, “evade” tax liability. I wonder if the players realise, or care, what most people must think. Not only does it mean that we all have to pay a bit more tax to help out those on £30,000 to £40,000 a week but the Inland Revenue gets so pissed off with people getting away with big bucks that it puts many small scale self-employed people through the mincer to make up for it.

But do I misjudge the character of football and its fans? Watching Millwall versus Tranmere Rovers on 7 March in a cup tie, (that’s about the height of it without Sky), I couldn’t fail to spot this advertising material behind one

of the goals at The New Den. It was three very big separate placards that read "KICK IT OUT", then on the next "MILLWALL AGAINST RACISM" and finally "LIONS HAVE PRIDE – NOT PREJUDICE." Well, Millwall fans have certainly gone up-market since Ipswich suffered their infamous cup-tie at The Den years ago. There were not many Jane Austen fans there that day.

Finally I am again indebted to the

Sunday Times "Football Shorts" column for this gem "Witton hit by unlucky streak." Witton Albion captain, Brian Pritchard, was sent off during the Unibond Cheshire Senior Cup final for tripping up a stalker. The game descended into chaos as Pritchard, a police officer, spotted the naked interloper and apprehended him. The referee deemed Pritchard's actions to be violent conduct, sent him off and, in his absence, 10-man Witton

lost 2-1 after extra-time. "Brian's so upset, he's distraught," said Witton club secretary Phil Chadwick. "This stalker was running around for several seconds. Pritchard is a serving police officer and a police officer is never off duty." Asked whether it would become common practice to send off a player for attempting to maintain order, the Football Association said, "That's a very good question."

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER

VOLUME 9, ISSUE 3, AUTUMN 2004

The Academy of Football

First just a quick word about the Presidential Conference. As it will be covered extensively elsewhere I don't want to upstage the official reporter who, after all, already has a difficult enough job to match the erudite, literate and humorous Bowness Report by the Junior Vice President in the last issue.

The Conference itself was excellent as was the location at the aforesaid Academy of Football. The Quality Hotel that forms part of the stadium appeared to be run exclusively by the football club and demonstrated the benefits of superb team spirit and the intensive and creative multiple use of property; a real practical lesson for ACES members.

Off duty a backstage tour of the ground discovered that the changing rooms, for example, were disappointingly Spartan and smelly. More like a 1950s secondary school than the work place of many multi-millionaires. But I only wish that my lawn looked half as good as the pitch. And that my mower was as quiet, and started as well, as groundsman Dougie's.

The hotel bedrooms doubled as corporate boxes and offered a marvellous view of the pitch and the ground generally. Almost enough to rekindle a more practical interest in football but.....

Elsewhere the mean spirit of football rolls on. After more than half a century of loyal service to the game Sir Bobby Robson is dismissed by his club without a word of thanks or condolence from

management or fans. Still it's a comfort to know that local government has managed to export some HR practices.

However fans were far more vocal when local boy made good Michael Owen was on the verge of leaving Liverpool. The kindest comments were "traitor." A thought surely shared by team-mates Dudek, Henchoz, Hyypia, Smicer, Diaio, Hamann, Baros, Cisse, Pongolier for example and manager Benitez.

Who is the fourth man?

"THE statue" is near the Hotel. Turn left and walk down to the next road junction. It's on the other side of the junction and approached via a fairly lethal traffic light-controlled pedestrian crossing.

Incidentally before I left my home village for the "east end" I was warned that I would be afraid to walk the streets. Not so. And that everyone in the Upton Park area wore shell suits and trainers. Again not so, it's slightly less than 75%.

THE statue of course is of Bobby Moore. There is a group of 4 larger-than-life World Cup winning players set on a circular dais looking back to Upton Park. From left to right the 4 participants are Martin (10 years ahead of his time) Peters, Jeff (they think it's all over) Hurst, yer actual Bobby Moore, and then someone else. But who is it? A group of local kids were playing, in a very nice way, on the statue, using it as a climbing frame really, and so we asked, "Who is the fourth man?" "Alan Shearer," came the confident reply. On no it isn't, but does anyone know?

Global warming: or is it just hot air?

When I was at school the story was that as the sun was gradually cooling eventually earth would become too cold to support life. This was a somewhat frightening scenario for a youngster who didn't quite understand the condition "over a geological timescale". I just hoped we would get Christmas over with before we all snuffed it. Now, of course, the story is reversed and it's overheating that will do for us. There does seem to be an inescapable logic in this, a bit like the dangers of smoking, that cannot be ignored. It's a good story; so why exaggerate?

I remember when global warming was invented back in the early 70s. It was predicted that deserts would advance northwards with higher temperatures and dramatically reduced rainfall. John Selwyn Gummer, as he then was, predicted the direst of consequences that the climate of East Anglia would within 25 years become like the Dordogne. I couldn't see the problem in that. What a lot of holiday travelling it would save.

And then, blow me, the following winter we had the heaviest snowfall ever. In East Anglia, where we had hardly seen snow for many years, we woke up one morning to find an overnight fall of about 3 feet. "So what about global warming then?" we all asked. "Exactly," said the experts, "Global warming of course means heavy snowfall!"

This was followed by a couple of dry

mild winters and dry cold springs. Clearly less rainfall inevitably produced reduced water table and some smaller rivers drying up. This really is global warming said the experts.

Eventually we experience a few years' heavy rainfall. Water tables and rivers were replenished. This really is global warming said the experts. But this is really what "average" means so there's no need to attribute it to global warming. The hot summer of 2003 was attributed to global warming. This is the hottest summer for a century so this really is global warming said the experts. What happened to the start of global warming in 1903 then? And the heavy rain in August this year was really caused by global warming too said the experts.

I for one would feel more comfortable if the experts would stop treating us like idiots. Who knows, we might understand as well. Just tell us the truth and stop saying that the North Sea will soon stretch all the way down to Romford. I can hear the station announcement already. "We apologise for the late running of the 0800 Norwich to Liverpool Street. This is caused by the wrong sort of North Sea on the line."

Health and safety at work

I had gone to Haverhill to inspect an empty factory. Before leaving we agreed it was unnecessary for me, as a mere consultant, to comply with the official H&S procedure. There was only one front door Chubb key supplied and although the lock was tricky I got in easily. And Haverhill being Haverhill I locked the door behind me, just in case. When I came to leave I found it wouldn't open.

Health and safety is a tricky subject particularly when it impacts on inspections undertaken by the lone surveyor. The nice part of our job is the freedom to come and go as you please when out and about and it is an irksome burden to have to "ring in" when the day (or the early part of the afternoon) is done. It does tend to give the game away sometimes. When I started in the profession, on the railway in London, bizarrely we had access to a chauffeur-driven Austin Princess for site inspections. Pete the chauffeur was

very accommodating and was happy to drop you off in the cab road at Liverpool Street in mid-afternoon in complete confidence. "Don't worry", he used to say, "I won't say anything. Anyway they all do it. I dropped so-and-so off at 3 yesterday", etc etc.

What made my predicament at Haverhill worse was the coincidence of recent events. The official H&S procedure here is for surveyors to leave an estimated time of return on a white board. If this is exceeded then the surveyor is contacted via mobile phone that office procedures require should always be switched on. The day before my Haverhill trip Richard's board entry said, "return at 11 am," but the time came and went. Adjoining the office is a small spinney that forms part of an ideal 15-minute midday stroll. Without a thought I went out at noon but was unable to come back through the spinney as access was denied by the police, "We've found a body."

Back in the office it was soon established that Richard's mobile was switched off. As the time of no return stretched out to 2 then 3 hours inevitably the mind began to make unwanted connections. Files were researched and numbers rung. The surveyor's movements were tracked but he seemed to have disappeared. Might he have gone home? Should his wife be called? "Has he come home? Only he's disappeared and a body has been found next door?" No, this was not an option, yet.

Just then he strolled back into the office. He'd had a bad day, fallen behind schedule and as the mobile never seemed to stop ringing he switched it off while buying sandwiches and didn't put it back on again! What a lot of anguish that caused. He had his bottom well and truly smacked.

Not that any of this was much of a comfort to me. My phone was about 20 feet away, carefully locked up in the car on the other side of a solid wall. The office didn't have my mobile number anyway. What to do? There were no accessible windows. The door was wired safety glass. Adjoining units were metalworking and I would be hard pressed to make more noise than them.

I decided the best option was NOT to panic and to prowling round the unit a couple of times to assess options.

I remembered similar occasions back in my railway days. There was the big white chief who wanted to inspect land on the other side of the tunnels just off the end of the Kings Cross platforms. He loftily declined the proffered assistance of a Lookout Man and marched off. "Give him half an hour," the Assistant Station Master told the Lookout Man, "then go and fish him out." This was in the age of steam and there were numerous traffic movements in and out of the platform. Although the tunnels are short the big white chief soon became completely disorientated by the noise and the smoke and the steam that he took refuge in one of the little alcoves built into the side of the tunnel and wouldn't come out. When he was finally rescued he didn't look so big and he certainly wasn't white any more.

Back at my incarceration I took comfort from the notion that there is always a way. On my second trip round the internal perimeter of the unit I was reassessing the sliding loading bay doors, firmly padlocked on the inside, when I noticed a silvery glint mostly obscured by one of the sliding doors. Crouching down this proved to be a padlock key. Better still it was THE padlock key. And in one bound, well about half a dozen while I coaxed the doors open, I was free.

What a laugh we all had when I got back to the office. Tragedy averted often provokes laughter. When a lone railway surveyor went off to inspect some original railway riverside warehousing potential disaster wasn't far away. I think the warehousing was an original mid 19th Century river-to-railway transfer warehousing with parts over the river and parts over the railway line. The surveyor, a bigish man, went through the floor, just saving himself from going right through by jamming his elbows on either side of the hole. But he was well and truly stuck. He was not strong enough to lever himself out. And this was in the days before H&S procedures, white boards and mobile phones. He couldn't see what was under him and stretching his toes down as far as

possible failed to make contact with anything. But he could here the river rushing by and passing trains seemed awfully close. After a couple of hours shouting he did attract the attention of a repair gang who came to his rescue. Even so it took then a good 10 minutes to prise the now terrified, and exhausted surveyor out. Then they all fell about. There was a very solid looking floor underneath about an inch below the surveyor's outstretched toes.

You know!!

This anonymous note was in the Church magazine. I reproduce it without comment.

YOU KNOW YOU'RE LIVING IN 2000 WHEN...

1. You accidentally enter your pass-word on the microwave
2. You haven't played solitaire with real cards for years
3. You have a list of 15 phone numbers to reach your family of three
4. You email your mate who works at the next desk
5. Your reason for not staying in touch with friends is that they do not have email addresses
6. When you go home after a long day at work you still answer the phone in a business manner
7. When you make phone calls from home, you accidentally dial "9" to get an outside line
8. You've sat at the same desk for four years but have worked for three different companies
9. You learn about your redundancy on the news
10. Your boss doesn't have the ability to do your job
11. Contractors outnumber permanent staff and are more likely to get long-service awards

12. You were nodding and smiling while you read this
13. As you read this list, you think about forwarding it to your "friends"
14. You got this e-mail from a friend that never talks to you anymore, except to send you jokes
15. You were too busy to notice that there was no number 9
16. You actually looked back to check there was no number 9
17. And now you are laughing at your own stupidity...

Waiting for the Grumman Avenger....

My local airfield's big flying weekend is in August and this year it was preceded by two weeks' continuous torrential rain. As I was too busy to go anyway, I had written it off, but when Sunday's forecast promised a clear, hot day I decided to watch the comings and goings and the upper part of any flying displays from the safety of my garden. Who knows? I might even catch a glimpse of the Grumman Avenger.

The day dawned clear and hot and eventually I managed to get out with deck chair, for comfort, and the papers I was working on, for effect, and settled down to enjoy the fun. There were plenty of civilian light aircraft and gliders about and in due course a Spitfire arrived and put in a superb display much of which I could see and all of which I could hear. I stood up for a better view and was transfixed. At the end of the display, still in a state of transfixation, I sat down again. On a wasp.

The sting was very painful but luckily I had a companion on hand to apply the "After Bite" (registered trademark). The instructions are to "rub appliance on affected area" which is all very well but, for the lone surveyor, that would have been difficult, even with a set of mirrors and detailed guidance from an experienced contortionist. Numerous applications were needed to keep the pain down and their frequency

finally began to test the patience of my companion provoking the final comment of "what a lot of fuss about such a little prick." Isn't it strange how pain makes such pointed value judgements so deeply hurtful?

Later on in the afternoon a P51 Mustang gave a display that rivalled the Spitfire's and I was able to focus on this and notice how much harsher the Mustang engine noise was and how the whine of the supercharger was quite separate and often louder than the unsilenced engine. I was again transfixed and at the end of the display sat down again, having checked for wasps, carefully taking some of my weight off the sting by resting an elbow on the edge of the patio table.

Unfortunately I failed to notice the wasp there and it inserted its sting firmly into my left elbow. I think it was at this point that I lost my presence of mind and it's probably better now to draw a veil over the rest of the proceedings.

Suffice it to say that many colleagues and former staff have long held the opinion that Scribbler does not know his arse from his elbow.

Well, he does now.

Who is the fourth man - revisited

The post office vans were stacked up around the village green waiting to get up my drive to deliver the multitudinous responses to the question I posed in the last issue ie "Who is the fourth man?" I would like to thank all those who took the time to ... But what the hell, as ever, response was there none. In fact I found the answer in 30 seconds on the West Ham United, sponsored by "Balti chicken Pies" made in Warwick, website. The answer is Ray Wilson, "the Everton defender."

The first man was of course Robert Frederick Chelsea Moore. Bobby Moore, as we lesser mortals know him was, according to the Sunday Times, the epitome of charm, sophistication and courtly old-school manners. And I agree with that. But bizarrely he was hated, apparently, north of the border, where the Hampden Park fans used to sing rude songs about him in those far-off days when we used to have Home Internationals.

I cannot for the life of me imagine why as he never put a foot wrong in the whole of his career; except once.

Parky told this story about him years ago on his chat show. It concerns the days of Showbiz Eleven football when mixed teams of professional footballers and celebrities turned out at weekends to play football for charity. Parky was playing in a team with, among others, Booby Moore and Jimmy Tarbuck. Bear with me. I know this sounds improbable but it was a long time ago.

On the opposing side was an experienced old pro defender renowned for his no-nonsense approach ie he kicked any opposing forward who got near him into row Z. Luckily I cannot remember his name. Bobby's instructions to his inside right Parky were simple. Look when I get the ball you start running. If I raise my left arm I'll curl the ball past him on his left and you run in from the right. If I raise my right arm then vice versa.

This worked a treat according to Parky and numerous shots on goal resulted but after 15 minutes of this Parky was on his knees with exhaustion and the hard man defender was in a murderous mood. For some reason he tried to take it out on Jimmy Tarbuck and at every opportunity, whether the ball was near or not, he put in some murderous tackles on Jimmy. He was obviously a man ahead of his time. But Bobby took exception to this and explained to the guy that this was a charity match and everyone had a career to resume the following day, but to no avail. The tackles continued.

Opinions then vary but 10 minutes later on a majestic up-field run with the ball Bobby got near to the defender, everyone swears not closer than 6 feet, as he swept by with the ball. But, looking back, the defender was flat out on the deck and after hasty treatment was stretchered off the field straight to hospital. Such is the power of legend.

Bobby and the 1812 from Sheffield

I too have a Bobby Moore story. In the 60s I was not interested in football. It is said that everyone can remember the World Cup Final, 1966 of course, but I can't. In those days I worked in London but still had connections in Sheffield and one Saturday I returned to be Best Man at a friend's wedding. After the wedding they were to spend the night in London prior to jetting off to Majorca and it transpired that the 3 of us would be travelling down to London on the same train. So it seemed churlish to not offer to pay for a dinner on the way down and then to drop them off at their hotel.

Unbeknown to me West Ham had played Sheffield Wednesday that Saturday so both the West Ham team and their supporters would be travelling down to London on the same early evening train too. So we shared the dining car with Bobby and the team and a steady file of supporters walking endlessly from one end of the train to the other in order to admire the table manners of their idols.

The elderly Eastern European émigré waiter was extremely irritated by this constant procession but only lost his composure once. He was serving vegetables as we rattled over some very bumpy track work. At full stretch over our table a sudden lurch caused him to discharge a full serving spoon full of peas into my friend's new wife's lap.

He gave a deep sigh and recovering his composure, turned to me. He said "Peas sir?" "Yes please," I responded. "Inside or outside the plate?" he enquired.

Ps Just after finishing scribbling the above I noticed in the Radio Times that 25 years ago to the day Les Dawson's sketch show The Dawson Watch was starting a second series and on the subject of crime. One of his stories was, "At the age of 15, I appeared in court charged with stealing a meat pie from British Rail. The Judge found me guilty but insane. My defence was that the meat pie followed me home."

Business news

So much for football. What about some business news? It is said that boardroom manoeuvring can be just as intricate and complex as a Premier League match anyway.

Now I do not know much about the business world or company law, nor am I really very interested, but I did read with some incredulity the goings on at the annual meeting of a very successful plc with football connections. Presumably the Board voted to become a public company in order to make more money and knowing that they would become liable to the full force of company law. Why then the reluctance to follow the rules? After all if the team was losing to inferior opposition the manager wouldn't want to go out in the second half and change or ignore the rules. Would he?

When the Florida based tycoon, "The Leprechaun", comes along with proposals to make even more money then it was inevitable that the

toys would start coming out of the pram. Perhaps the customers should consider more carefully who got them into this position.

And one other thing. Becoming a public company means that business news reporters as well as sports reporters begin to take an interest. And the former can ask more searching questions such as how can a company director, who is also the company's legal adviser, represent a member of staff who is already in dispute with the Governing Body and who therefore might potentially have problems fulfilling his contract with the company?

Why chief executives fail

This is a recently published book by David Dotlich and Peter Cairo. It sounds a good read. Can't wait to get to the end. The authors make the simple point that the success or failure of most leaders is dependent upon how well they work with others AND how well they understand themselves. The main 11 derailers are:

1. ARROGANCE - you're right and everybody else is wrong
2. MELODRAMA - you want to be the centre of attention
3. VOLATILITY - your mood swings create business swings
4. EXCESSIVE CAUTION - the next decision may be your first

5. HABITUAL DISTRUST - you focus on the negatives
6. ALOOFNESS - you disengage and disconnect
7. MISCHIEVOUSNESS - rules are made to be broken
8. ECCENTRICITY - it's fun to be different for the sake of it
9. PASSIVE RESISTANCE - your silence is misinterpreted as agreement
10. PERFECTIONISM - get the little things right even if the big things go wrong
11. EAGERNESS TO PLEASE - being popular matters most.

Is this beginning to ring any bells?

And finally

Just read the Consultant's Secretary's email "Please can you let me have articles by MONDAY 29 November so that we can get the next edition out by Xmas" everything went black; a complete hard disc failure. Easy for those in employment to deal with; just pick up the phone. A bit more complicated otherwise. But apart from continuing email problems I think I've got away with it.

I have long cultivated a "Bah-humbug" impression of Christmas and associated festivities but 2 events last year put things in perspective.

First I had a dream so vivid that I woke up convinced I had missed Christmas altogether and then realised that the only thing I had missed was listening to Christmas Carols. Not Christmas pop records but the real "Away in a Manger" experience. I think I had been thinking about when Grandpa was taken into hospital in early December a few years ago and within a couple of days he was so disorientated that he was convinced it was January. And I had also been using a Book of Carols extensively for music practice. Perhaps the purpose of dreams is to clarify thought.

Second I hate the fake jollifications of New Year. This could be due to the fact that for many years I not only had to see in the New Year at the Slaughtermen's new year bash at the bacon factory about 40 miles away but I was nominated driver. Let me tell you that sitting there from 7pm to 1am New Years Day without a drink is tedious, still the regular fights were good. But last year I had a stroke of luck. I settled down in front of the telly and tuned into whatever seemed to be the least offensive programming to see me through to 2004. I still miss The White Heather Club by the way. At least the participants seemed to be enjoying themselves. But back to 2003, I think I had just finished my small dry sherry when I blinked, opened my eyes, and realised it was 2.30am. Oh happy day!

Nonetheless if indeed you are reading this before Christmas may I wish you a Happy Christmas and all the best for 2005; or 2006 if this issue is delayed.

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER

VOLUME 10, ISSUE 1, SPRING 2005

Au revoir Monsieur Frites

Hopefully, as they say, by the time this is published I will have booked my annual holiday to France, an activity that has produced more than one idea for this column. France is superb for a holiday with a difference but I have no interest in living there permanently, unlike many others, according to daytime television. For one thing I'm not sure I could cope with French supermarkets.

Don't get me wrong. They are usually excellent places with more space, choice and quality than the average British offering but all seem to demonstrate the same fault, checkout queues. The British, allegedly like queues. It is a national characteristic. The French are said to detest queuing and will do anything to avoid it. Except in supermarkets.

No matter what time of day it is every available checkout will have 5 or 6

people standing in line. And don't be fooled as you walk round the supermarket if shoppers seem few and far between, they will all be lurking at the checkout when your time comes. And no one ever complains about the tardiness or incompetence of the shopper in front or the till operator.

The last time I shopped over there I picked the shortest line and ended up behind a Ken Doran look-alike, which

won't help many of you. (Ken was an elected councillor, Chairman of the County Farms Committee and a real gentleman; a rare combination indeed.) The man in front was a distinguished looking 55ish year old trying hard to give the impression that he wasn't really in the queue. He stood at an angle of 45 degrees to the others and gazed longingly into an imaginary far distant horizon. He was extremely well dressed with highly polished Gucci loafers; cavalry twill trousers with knife-edge creases, Tattersall check shirt, cravat and a burgundy leather jacket. His hair was grey and well trimmed as was his moustache. After studying his turnout for a time I suddenly realised I was in the express checkout, 9 items only, and started furiously counting the items in my trolley accordingly.

My friend in front turned his head towards me a fraction and his eyes turned slowly away from the imaginary far distant horizon and looked down at my trolley. He thought for a moment then lifted his gaze to catch my eye. Then he raised his arm a little, extended his hand with palm downwards and fingers stretched out and almost imperceptibly rocked it from side to side. At the same time he turned his lips down slightly and raised his left eyebrow about 2 millimetres.

I may not be fluent in French but there was no doubting his meaning; "F**k the 9 items only and stay where you are."

In contrast I do like the superb professionalism to be found in French restaurants. I arrived in Honfleur on a very hot market day. Most restaurants in that town are around the dockside area and all have extensive semi-permanent awnings. On market day most of the free space is taken up with stalls so it all gets very crowded. I had promised myself a nice lunch so was looking for somewhere suitable. I soon got to know the form. The menu at the entrance could be studied in depth and no one would appear to notice. But take half a step inside and you were taken over by a well-oiled machine. Within a minute you were seated where you wanted to be and a menu appeared. The courses then materialised effortlessly and a slight nod produced the bill. The staff did not stand

around talking to each other and clearly the concept of "service" is not thought of as demeaning.

Later, on a visit to Pegasus Bridge I could not get into the café because of the crowds and cycled back to the frites stall by the roundabout. I was just beaten to the counter by a group of 6 English bikers trying to order, without success, some refreshment. They all wanted something different and the patron was getting more and more confused; until I stepped in. My elderly "O level" French soon sorted things out and I spent a pleasant lunch in the sunshine at the same table exchanging views on the relative performances of their excessively powerful Japanese bikes and my old and rather battered mountain bike.

None of us were drinking alcohol by the way perhaps as the French are starting to take a harder line on drinking and driving. To reinforce this an anti-drink driving poster has been produced with the words "L'Alcool tue lentement"; ie Alcohol kills slowly. It seems that one was recently defaced with the words "On s'en fout, on n'est pas pressé", or, in other words "We don't give a damn, we're in no hurry."

Cheers.

Corrected quotes

Bill Shankly famously asserted that the second best team in Liverpool was Liverpool Reserves and "Some people believe football is a matter of life and death. I'm very disappointed with that attitude. I can assure you it is much, much more important than that." However he did correct the story that he took his new wife to see Rochdale play on their wedding day. "That is not true", he said, "It was her birthday, because there was no way I'd have got married in the football season. And it wasn't Rochdale, it was Rochdale Reserves."

Jose Mourinho in his Porto days, after being treated to a new goal celebration after a ManU goal in a European match said "It won't seem like such a novelty when he does it next year."

Donald Rumsfeld the US Defence secretary has a way with words; non-

sporting words obviously. In the world of satire it passes for humour to just mention his name, or any recent American President or the current British Prime Minister and hyped-up audiences, pre-prepared like Pavlov's dogs, fall about riotously. When Donald issued his famous homily on problem solving it even made, and was duly ridiculed, on the main evening news. Remember? "There are known knowns: the things we know we know. There are known unknowns ie we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns: the ones we don't know we don't know." This came up as Alan Coren's question on radio's The News Quiz. Even before he started his answer the audience were in hysterics. As he launched into his piece they were beside themselves. Then he stopped abruptly and was brave enough to say that having read the lines out loud he had suddenly seen what it meant and confessed it was rather perceptive. Everyone went quiet; this wasn't in the script.

The expert witness

The scene is the High Court. A bewigged lawyer is cross-examining a pathologist witness. Evidence turns on whether the victim was dead before the autopsy began.

"Are you sure that Mr X was dead before you began your detailed autopsy?"

"Yes."

"Did you check his pulse before you began?"

"No."

"Did you check for signs of breathing?"

"No."

"Did you check for blood pressure?"

"No."

"But surely you did check for signs of brain activity?"

"No."

"But do you not agree that this would have been a wise precaution?"

"No. By then his brain had been in a jar on my desk for the previous 2 months."

"But nonetheless would you be prepared to concede that even so the victim could still have been alive?"

"Well I suppose so. He could have been alive and well and practicing law at a very high level somewhere."

Back to the BBC

It is understandable that a correspondent, sitting on his bed, in his jimjams, at 6 o'clock in the morning, might get a word or two wrong in a live interview. Although, to be fair, it is less understandable that his management, right to the very top, seemed at the time, and still seem, unprepared to admit it. However, as a confirmed BBC watcher, I detect a new trend. This is a cavalier approach to defining quantities whether it's tens, hundreds, thousands or more or whether the quantity expressed is pounds sterling, euros or dollars.

Two such uncorrected howlers uttered in the same programme recently were as follows.

In a scene setting piece emphasising the heavy cost of the trial for the local community it was said that "Policing the Michael Jackson Trial is likely to cost £4,000 a day."

And in a sports news piece "Steven Gerrard is in secret negotiations with Chelsea about a transfer which could bring his weekly salary up to £120 million."

Luvvly jubbly.

Nostalgia ain't what it used to be

BBC7, the nostalgia digital radio channel, is currently rerunning some old Children's Hour programmes, discontinued in 1964. I tuned in and by chance happened across an episode of Toytown, one in which, as the plot

explained, Larry the Lamb and Dennis the Dachshund went out after dark hunting for fairies. I then listened with growing alarm to the following dialogue. I quote verbatim.

Out on patrol Ernest the Policeman spots Larry out on his own. "What are you doing out at this time me lad?" he said in his thick lugubrious voice.

"Oh dear Mr Ernest, Sir," said Larry in his thinly disguised terribly spiffing BBC voice, "You gave me quite a start. I thought you were a fairy."

Luckily this sort of thing went right over my head when I listened in the 40s. I switched off hurriedly in case I learned something distasteful about Mr Grouser.

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER *VOLUME 10, ISSUE 2, SUMMER 2005*

Bonjour Monsieur Frites

On my way from Brittany this year I took a detour across the First World War areas that I had never visited before. It is now impossible, almost, to believe that such an horrendous conflict took place here as restoration is total but a glance at a large-scale map reveals the real story. In the Arras/Cambrai area there is a cemetery of some sort on virtually every crossroads and all are maintained in pristine condition.

After I had seen enough I set off for Calais and home in the late morning in sombre mood. Having seen any number of roadside "Frites" notices over the past few days, without any opportunity to visit, I was beginning to think my luck was out this year. But then, on coming round a roundabout, I did an emergency stop and just managed to pull into a magnificent picnic site with tourist information, picnic table and a magnificent "Frites" stall. At last!

This one, however, had unusual vending arrangements. Normal practice is to

choose a tray of the appropriate size eg small, medium or large, and le patron will normally demonstrate these if you cannot manage the language. Not so this one. He merely took the order and carried on attending to his fryer. Eventually he put a large square of pristine greaseproof paper on the counter (I hope our Consultant Secretary is taking notes) and then placed on this the biggest tray I have ever seen which he proceeded to fill to overflowing – and then added an additional gigantic scoop of frites for good measure. It was about 4 big helpings altogether I reckon.

Needless to say, and try as I might, I couldn't finish them but didn't need any more to eat in France nor for the best part of the following day.

I know a better place to eat

Terry Miles, the fire officer, was a wonderful man. He was never at a loss for a word on social occasions, an essential attribute for his trade. Fire officers spend most of their time visiting their many small teams dotted around

the county in order to convince them of their part in the bigger organisation. He eventually retired at 50, on a huge pension, looking like a slightly overweight schoolboy.

At the county we had an annual Chairmans' Reception held in a different location each time. This particular year was the turn of Bury St Edmunds, then foreign territory to me. It was held in The Athenaeum, "an historically and architecturally outstanding Grade 1 listed building on Angel Hill, in the historic heart of the town, containing a beautiful ballroom in the style of Robert Adam with stucco decoration, a pillared alcove, a double staircase and a now blocked-off minstrel gallery. On the roof of the building is a 19th century dome containing a fully fitted observatory. Inside, the reading room and lounge command impressive views of Angel Hill," as I was to write some years later.

Despite the grand surroundings, the Reception, and the opportunity to meet the great and good of Bury St Edmunds, was not going well. The food

was meagre and the guests seemed diminished by the building. After half an hour I noticed Terry quietly wandering round the beautiful ballroom in the style of Robert Adam (the ballroom that is, not Terry) and briefly whispering in a few carefully selected ears. Finally he came to me. "I know a better place to eat," he said. "A few of us are off in a minute." "Are you on?" I nodded in agreement. "Slip out quietly and we meet up in the car park. It's not far."

Our destination was in fact his new fire station about half a mile away. He had warned his duty watch by mobile phone that a party of 12 was on the way. Could they provide refreshments? They could. There were great mounds of cheese sandwiches awaiting our arrival. They were made up from thick cut slices of white bread liberally spread with real butter. The filling was about half an inch depth of grated salty cheddar. Not the sort of fare I was used to in those health conscious days. They were absolutely magnificent! We soon polished them off and reluctantly made our separate ways home.

24 hours later I was in the Intensive Coronary Care Unit of the local hospital, just a stone's throw away from the fire station, having had a heart attack. A coincidence really but Terry always claimed he was the man who put me in Intensive Care.

Fire

There was a piece in my Sunday paper the other week all about how to make a fire. I suppose open fires are becoming fashionable but many people now have not had the requisite training or experience. Until recently I have always lived in a house with a fire so know all about them.

In the house I was brought up in there was always an open fire burning in the living room. The kitchen, a separate room with sink and gas ring, was unheated, except on Monday when the boiler was lit. The "front" room, with a piano, was also unheated and indeed never used except for funerals. So the living room was used for many purposes, and heating was essential particularly as "the range" heated water

and an oven too. We got through a lot of coal each month as the fire was never allowed to die, and if it did it was relit as a matter of urgency. Just a final thought. Each bedroom had a tiny little fireplace. Anyone who was ill, and confined to bed, got very worried if that fire was lit.

Later on the first house I bought, a little bungalow, had a "Parkray" in the lounge, an early woodburner I suppose, that burned anthracite rather than logs. The Parkray drove the central heating system and hot water. The Parkray was difficult to fire up, keep alight and keep clean. It was kept alight round the clock in winter. Mine performed very effectively except when the wind was in a particular direction and when this happened the water in the hot tank began to boil!

Through the seventies and eighties I owned houses with open fires that were never used and when about ten years ago I had the opportunity to buy a new house I opted for a real traditional fireplace; the only one on the estate. This was in use from day 1 and was a real delight until the second winter.

Arriving home early one very cold winter's afternoon I immediately got the fire going. By now I had dried and seasoned logs and I soon had a merry blaze going. To rev it up further I used the newspaper trick to increase the draught and hence the urgency of the fire and this worked very well; too well. What I thought was the enticing sound of a fire burning well was in reality the chimney on fire.

A few weeks earlier I had noticed a chimney fire in the adjoining street. Showers of sparks belched out and cascaded down the roof. After a few minutes the fire station siren sounded and within five minutes the fire engine was on its way. It arrived with the sirens blaring and the blue lights flashing. Ladders were put up against the front of the house and then I saw a fireman on the roof ridge dragging a hose behind him. To tackle the blaze he stuck the hose in the chimney and signalled for the water to be turned on. White steamed plumed out of the chimney for a long time thereafter. The mess inside the house must have been indescribable.

I wanted to avoid that if possible. So, using a shovel, I carried out all the blazing logs one by one and dumped them in the garden. Even so the chimney was still on fire. So I blocked up the airway to the flue with wet carpets, still no good. And anyway didn't I recall from Mackay's Building Construction that the main and unseen danger was that timbers adjoining the chimney were likely to catch fire?

Accordingly I rang the local police station (not by 999) and tried to negotiate. I wanted a fire engine but not the siren or lights or the man on the roof with the hosepipe on the basis that the fire was out but it would be nice to have the roof checked out. "Not possible chief," he said, "fire only turn out on a 999, but I'll tell you what." "What?" "I'll have a word direct with fire and relay your requirements, I'm sure they'll play ball. Then you ring 999 in the usual way and we've cracked it." "OK," I said, gave it a couple of minutes and set matters in train.

I heard the fire station siren go off and could here the engine coming through the town and up the hill. No sirens. Magic. At the top of the cul-de-sac the blue light was switched on. "Minimum requirements Guv," said the officer later. The engine was very noisy. The blue lights washed over and over my neighbours' houses. The engine dwarfed the Close. The crew pounded up my front path as I pounded down towards them. "All right, guv, the police have had a word, we know the score. We'll just check everything out."

Back in the hall, which always seemed such a big space, about 6 firemen in boots, waterproofs and helmets buzzed about efficiently and seemed to fill up the whole space. I kept out of the way as much as possible for a couple of minutes then diffidently asked the officer if, it wouldn't be too disruptive, whether tea and biscuits would be in order.

"Sir," he replied, "the crew and me have just been discussing this. We thought you'd never ask."

New tricks

Many years ago I spent quite a time visiting my brother who was seriously ill

in hospital. For a lot of the time he was out of it, doped up to the eyes while Mother Nature did her stuff so I had the opportunity to make a detailed study of his "get well soon cards" pinned over the bed.

I was haunted by one card in particular.

The picture on the card was of a circus big top showing the ring and the crowd from a very high perspective somewhere near the roof. In the foreground of the picture is the "high wire". There is a dog on the high wire standing on its back feet juggling brightly coloured balls with both hands and whirling hoop-las around one leg while balancing on the wire with the other. The dog looks apprehensive.

The text on the card reads as follows.

"High above the crowd Rex desperately tried to remain focussed. But still he couldn't shake off one nagging thought. He was an old dog – and this was a new trick."

I became convinced that was true and yet practical experience of having to learn "new tricks" has shown me that it is not. So much so that I now find it difficult to remember what the old tricks were that I spent 30 years performing.

Partnership Note No. 471

Perhaps it was meeting old chums that reminded me of my involvement in an almost historic first attempt at "partnering" back in the 70s. In reality it was an innovative land deal with a partnership flavour.

The authority owned and operated a library situated in an historic listed building, in the centre of an historic Suffolk market town. As a library it was difficult to operate and should have been the hub of a rural mobile service but access and parking were impossible. Prospects of redevelopment were nil. Get the picture?

The authority also owned a surplus police station about 200 yards away, out of the town centre. Might this relocate the library? Criteria were drawn up but in-house architects could not make the restricted site work.

So with a detailed specification I put together a proposal for the market to consider. We wanted a developer to design and build a new library, to our specification, within an agreed timescale, offer us a wad of money, wait for us to move from the town centre to the new building; whereupon the town centre building would transfer to the developer.

Through working with the private sector the authority would get a nice new library and cash to set it up. And the developer would get a splendid town centre building for shop conversion. As a by-product the new library would change town-centre pedestrian flows and help improve its new immediate locality. Had we not been so naive we could have wrung a lot of publicity out of this "innovative regeneration partnership".

A developer with the expertise to make the site work, and enough cash, came along. They saw the future in partnering and hoped it would lead to better things. I hope they were not too disappointed; we were both about 20 years before our time.

They had reservations. They knew there would be a long process of decision-making involving design, regulatory approvals and building work ahead and doubted if the authority could make decisions quick enough. Accordingly they had set up special arrangements for urgent Board meetings and would be able to turn decisions round in 10 days. I said I thought we could match that but hadn't the heart to tell them that I had total authority to make all necessary decisions. That out of the way, the project got under way, detailed designs were produced and agreed and building work started. Monthly site meetings were held unless urgent action was required. The whole process was an exciting and amazing experience.

I attended all site meetings with an Assistant County Librarian. The developer fielded a Director, area management and senior site personnel. The Assistant County Librarian and I attended every site meeting. But interestingly over the period of the project ALL the developer's representatives changed with the originals either moving up or moving out.

The high spot of the monthly site meetings dealt with the issue of the tiles. The developer wanted to show his appreciation by providing some free site art. It had been mentioned before and consultations ensued prior to the formal offer. The Director said "We want to show our appreciation by providing a fresco of ethnic tiles covering all the wall of the main stair well. The tiles will come from South Africa." Dead silence. "Oh, the tiles are made by black South Africans in a factory owned by black South Africans." Dead silence. "Well?" said the Director. "Sorry" said the librarian, "you cannot do that." Jaws dropped all round the table. "Why?" "Whoever produces them, the tiles are South African and having discussed it the staff say that if the tiles go in they will not operate the building." Dead silence. Then the Site Agent spoke up, "Well what's the problem then?" he said, "send them down the road," "What!" said the librarian. "Send them down the road", he repeated, "sack them", he explained, thinking he had not been understood. "Just sack them and bring in people who will operate the building."

I can't remember what was said next but this was the point at which the irreconcilability of the two cultures became crystal clear and both sides went away without really understanding the problems of the other.

By way of anti-climax I then tried to get some publicity for the project. In those days the internal processes were not easy. I had to prepare a draft for some corporate bozo who, despite knowing nothing about PR, property, libraries or the media, translated my words into passive tense corporateese, deleted all property references and then proudly told me he could get it published in a local government free sheet.

Ladies' soccer

I found myself watching some international ladies' soccer at the end of last season and it proved to be an enlightening experience. On the field there was no shortage of skill, stamina, creativity and effort. At one time girls couldn't kick a ball properly; when did that change?

Off the field the noise of the crowd was higher pitched than the Premier

League but there was no shortage of enthusiasm. Better still there was a complete absence of the usual threatening element, those "fans" whom Parky named "lumpen tosspots" before he formally vowed never to watch football again.

Unfortunately I do not think ladies' soccer will ever catch on as some of the vital and essential elements of the game were missing completely.

For example the ladies seemed unable or unwilling to spit copiously onto the pitch at least once every minute. Or void their nostrils similarly.

There were no dodgy tackles. By

which I mean where one player loses the ball in a tackle and then acts out being pole-axed in a display of histrionics that would even look ludicrous in an afternoon matinee performance of a Ben Travers farce on a wet weekday in Worksop.

And there were no heart rending appeals for throw-ins as both players shout "Our ball ref" no matter how obvious the outcome.

Members of the same team were reluctant to fight each other – or anyone else for that matter.

And finally when a decision was lost, or a bad shot made, or a toe was stubbed

no player deemed it essential to run half the length of the pitch in order to hurl close range obscenities and spittle into the ref's face.

Come on Ladies! Play the game.

And finally

On 22 July 2005 I drove home past a field already harvested and ploughed having already watched (some of) one of the first competitive games of the 2005/2006 football season.

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER *VOLUME 10, ISSUE 3, AUTUMN 2005*

Out of the closet

When The Terrier Volume 10 Issue 2 arrived I turned as usual to the back pages and was astonished to find my photograph on page 44! When I took on this role the Editor assured me that my anonymity would be preserved and I have often gone the extra mile to avoid putting in those revealing details that give the game away. But now the secret is out. And trust the Editor to have such a compromising photograph ready to hand. Occasionally I do have a small

sherry before dinner but I don't want that published far and wide.

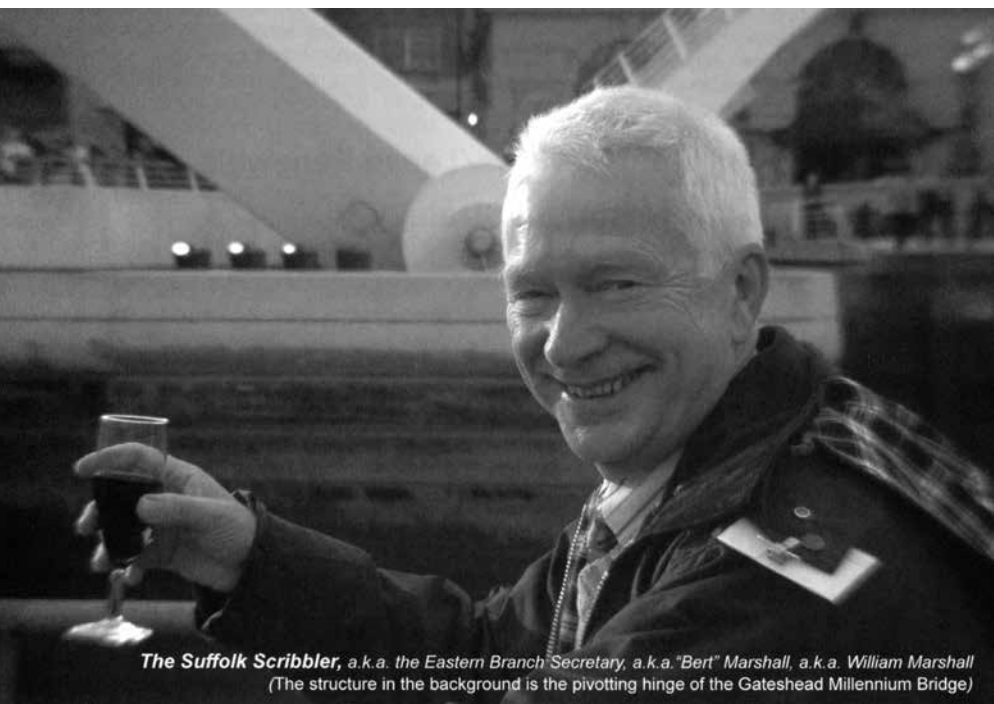
The word anonymity reminds me about the assurances If Price gave when I joined up with his FM Benchmarking Group at Sheffield Hallam University. "No one will ever be able to identify individual items of information so in submitting your detailed figures you can be as frank as possible. We will make it clear whether the source of the data is a county, district or unitary authority." Six months on, sitting in a seminar room up

in Sheffield to share the first analysis I kicked off with, "These are an interesting set of figures submitted by a county authority where the responsible officer is the County Land Agent and Valuer." Thanks If.

Anyway perhaps it's good that the secret is out because at Nottingham quite a few people came up to talk about the Scribbler Column.

ACES and the RICS

It is difficult to believe now but just over 3 years ago relations between ACES and the RICS were at an all time low. Well, to be frank, they were non-existent. One ACES President failed to get even an acknowledgement to his letters to our revered Institution. In June 2002 I wrote in this column "...At the last Council meeting it was clear that peace had broken out. ACES was wined and dined by the RICS on the previous evening and the RICS was anxious to assure ACES that it was pushing at an open door." Since then the relationship has improved immeasurably and many RICS potentates have attended our meetings in order to demonstrate this. The latest, at Nottingham, was the current RICS President Steve Williams FRICS. What a nice man! He was approachable. He listened. And above all remembered. We had a long chat while examining the Binns Organ during which he elicited most of my



*The Suffolk Scribbler, a.k.a. the Eastern Branch Secretary, a.k.a. "Bert" Marshall, a.k.a. William Marshall
(The structure in the background is the pivoting hinge of the Gateshead Millennium Bridge)*

professional background. On the following morning we were both lurking outside the Conference Room waiting for the OGM to finish and not only did he remember our discussion but he fed back my career highlights to me as reinforcement.

Nottingham

All the usual suspects were present, along with many new faces. The conference was very well attended. I went up by train again and although Central Trains are not as spectacular as the GNER the trip with its innumerable connections could not be faulted. I almost decided to go by car but the fuel situation put me off. Why people think that an effective protest against high fuel prices is made by queuing round the block to buy a little bit more beats me.

Traveling across East Anglia by train is a bit like time travel in reverse. It's All Our Yesterdays and our answer to York's Jorvic Centre. Ely, March (where the British Rail Website recommended making a change), Stamford, Oakham, Melton Mowbray etc; it's beginning to sound like Flanders and Swann isn't it. Eventually the train reached Leicester (as ever one stop short of Nuneaton) where a connection on some swish new Midland Main Line completed the journey.

Nottingham itself looked fine through the heavy rain. Like all the city locations ACES visits it is described as "vibrant and multi-cultural". I was impressed to find there were trams and that Ostrich Burgers were already being fried in the main square at 9 o'clock in the morning. I don't suppose you can get more vibrant and multi-cultural than that.

A super venue, and a super conference.

Terrier publication dates

It was John Mortimer, the famous writer, who said that one of the interesting features of getting old was the impression that breakfasts seemed to come round more quickly all the time. At the age of eighty he had the feeling that he was eating breakfast every 15 minutes.

The day before setting off for Nottingham I was told that the deadline for the next Terrier was in 5 days time. Terrier deadlines, like John Mortimer's breakfast seem to be getting more frequent all the time. It only seems a few weeks since I did the last piece. According to my computer it is. The last piece was sent in early August. What's going on?

The Lionheart walk

It is said that there are 6,000 chartered surveyors resident in Eastern Region. And yet every September, when the RICS "Eastern" Annual Lionheart Challenge charity walk takes place, where are they? The event was organised, as ever, by Geoffrey Dyball FRICS, Breton Chartered Surveyors. This time the location was the Alton Water/Tattingstone area. About 30 people turned up; not all, it has to be said, chartered surveyors. Some are getting on a bit now or carrying injuries including the professionals, ie the Albons. Where are the rest, the other 5,980 approximately? A good proportion of these will be young and active and well able to do a gentle 12-mile walk. "Ask not what the RICS can do for you. Ask what you can do for the RICS."

There was a moment of excitement before the start. After most of the regulars had arrived another car drew up and out got young Gerald Gora and wife dressed in sports gear. Unfortunately they were just off for their usual Saturday morning run but nonetheless wished us well. Even more sadly the café, said to open at 10am, remained obstinately close until the party moved off at about 10.30. I, and many others, had been banking on a breakfast to see us through to the lunch break, but no such luck. Special pleading however produced, for me only it has to be said, a nice piece of organic carrot cake supplied on a paper serviette and with a plastic fork.

By the time the purchase was complete I was about 400 yards behind the group and it was difficult to make up the ground while genteelly eating the precariously balanced carrot cake with the aforesaid plastic fork.

Roger the builder

I know that after the last 3 times each time I have said "Never again!" But here we go again. I've had the builders in one more time. With a germ of an idea in mind I eventually called in Mike the Architect to come up with a solution as try as I might I couldn't. He could and did. The proposal was brilliant and a solution I could never have discovered without professional help. The plot began to take on its own momentum.

Then along came Mark the Kitchen Designer. Again an ideal and exciting solution began to emerge and I was well and truly hooked – again.

Believe me I tried to do the whole thing professionally. With final plans to hand I went out to 3 builders for a price for the building work. Having selected the lowest priced tender I gave the go-ahead by a Letter of Intent. I was sub-editing the Newcastle papers at the time, in particular the one by Robert Langley, Partner, of Watson Burton LLP. Remember? He said that those with a classical education who have read Dickens "The Pickwick Papers" would remember the character "the fat boy of Peckham." He described himself as "the fat boy of Watson Burton" and in the immortal words of Dickens, "I wants to make your flesh creep". He went on to say he was a construction litigator but unlike an ordinary doctor who sees healthy people he was a pathologist who only sees the dead bodies. His firm advice was do not send Letters of Intent and never ever issue Letters of Variation.

Nonetheless I did a Letter of Intent and followed it up swiftly with more than one variation.

So far no problems. Roger the builder is a one-man band. He does the excavations, drains, foundations, brickwork, roof and tiling, plastering, joinery and floor laying. His friend Clive does electrics. Peter, Mark's man, does the kitchen fitting out. I will do the decorating and teas and coffees. There have been no problems, but I haven't had final accounts yet, and I have to say all have been real gents and no trouble but I will be glad to see the back of them and get back to normal.

Cardiff Annual Meeting

And so to Cardiff for the AM. Struggling to reach the place via the slow train and the driving rain the day had all the hallmarks of a disaster. However the palatial splendour of Cardiff City Hall and the pleasant company soon put paid to that. I had gone, of course, to see Betty inaugurated. And not without some fear and trepidation as a couple of weeks before I had heard talk that Betty was having a new crown made and hoped it would be ready for the AM! Personally I felt that would have been a mistake as her old crown is perfectly serviceable but then I realised, belatedly, that the overheard discussion was about dental work.

All in all the day went well. The lunch and speeches were excellent. The only downside was that due to complications I need not go into here ex-President Richard (Allen) handed me the ACES lectern to convey safely back to Suffolk. The said lectern folds up into a purpose-made shiny aluminium attaché case rather like the one the guy who carries the nuclear trigger when George W is on walkabout. Or possibly it might contain a million pounds' worth of new notes or narcotics. It also weighs a ton. All I had to do was carry it down to Cardiff station, get as far as Bristol, then walk 2 miles, in the dark, through the back streets of Bristol and thence to my vehicle. No problem.

When I finally reached safety I realised that I had just completed my third visit to Cardiff again without really seeing any of it or testing out its bookshops.

Rural affairs

I think it was the County Farms tenant on the radio that got me started. He was 70 and had had a tenancy for 40 odd years, couldn't afford to retire and so was having a good old moan about the system. He wanted to let the holding to his son so he wouldn't have to move. But he couldn't. So when he retired the holding would be sold. Yes he had been offered the opportunity to buy

the holding at a price of many hundreds of thousands of pounds but when he took possession in the 70s the farm was worth about £7,500 so after all the rent he had paid the offered price was "ridiculous". Not a word of thanks about the opportunity to run his own farm for forty years. He made it sound like forty years in the Gulag.

Strangely enough it reminded me initially about the Great County Farms Scrutiny I was involved in some years ago. When my turn for a grilling came, on about the third day, the first question I was asked was along the lines "Clearly all most County Farms tenants can expect is a lifetime of hard, poorly rewarded work. Don't you feel that it is morally questionable for you to grant them tenancies in such circumstances?" I was somewhat taken aback by this line of questioning but in my long and rambling response, as was expected of me as a Chief Officer, I mentioned that in over thirty years' service that was the first time anyone had raised a moral issue and in any event my conscience was somewhat assuaged by the fact that the queue of potential new tenants went right round the block.

And then under the headline "House prices threaten rural areas" RICS Business weighs in with a piece on the report of the Commission for Rural Communities (CRC) on The State of the Countryside 2005. This report showed that, apparently, "while the average rural household income is higher than in many urban areas, low wages and a high cost of living create disparities in wealth, poor access to housing and declining services in even the most affluent areas." I have to say I see no logic at all in any of that key statement of the report. Further comment from the CRC asserted that if the gap between house prices and incomes continues to grow "There is a real likelihood that some communities will change irrevocably." In what way I wondered. Well the piece provided the answer as further questions. "Then who will take on local jobs? Who will be providing and using local services." The answer to this conundrum is simple;

government has established an inquiry to find "a solution" and Mr Prescott wants to force councils to release land for cheap housing.

Of course the CRC's report provoked more comment on the farming programme. Two hill farmers had identical stories. The new subsidy arrangements meant their enterprises were effectively bankrupt and so both farms had little "existing use" value. But "lifestyle" house purchasers were offering vast sums of money and both now ex farmers were bemoaning their fate and that yet another farming opportunity would be lost. Again not a word of thanks about their good fortune in providing for themselves a well supported-financially retirement. One with much venom did not have a good word to say for his "lifestyle purchaser"; the other, being Welsh did not have a good word to say for his "English lifestyle purchaser".

Now we know how "House prices threaten rural areas".

I know I won't be popular for saying this but despite the obvious fact that lifestyle or second home purchasers outbid locals for the most desirable property in an attractive area the sellers are or at least initially were locals making a quick profit at the ultimate expense of their neighbours. Why should government step in to stop that happening? More importantly how?

Rural affairs ps

One of the above quotes is from RICS Business (RB) September 2005. Just so we know what I am talking about the magazine RB is the successor to The Chartered Surveyor Monthly (CSM) or as a letter writer to that noble publication put it "Up here we call it the Chartered Firelighter." Be warned, I made the mistake of reading that out in front of the kids who forever after referred to the magazine as The Chartered Firelighter.

Spookily, having read the September issue, and drafted out the above piece

for this column, I have been struck off the RB mailing list. When the time comes I feel sure our valued Institution will not have lost my bank account and direct debit details but getting back on the RB mailing list is proving difficult.

Receiving the RB is one of the few tangible benefits of membership. Well that's not quite correct. There is another one, a combined benefit of both RICS and ACES membership. And that is being introduced to the current RICS President at the ACES Presidential Conference. The usual format is that the President offers his hand and says, "Hello, I'm [?????????]" and I'm President of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors." To which I respond, while retaining a grip on the hand, and adopting a serious expression, "Are you sure?"

But back to the RB, I've emailed the RICS via the website and I'm told this has been forwarded to the circulation department in Siberia or somewhere but to no avail.

Any suggestions? By the way have I missed anything?

Tribute to Trevor

Many readers will not know about the great Reorganisation of 1974. It was an event of cataclysmic proportions. The Reorganisation changed the pattern of local government substantially. In Suffolk, before 1974 there were 2 separate county councils in Suffolk, East Suffolk County Council and West Suffolk County Council. There were at least a dozen second tier authorities and 2 or possibly 4 separate police forces. The intention was to end up with one county council, 4 second tier authorities and a single police force. It was also intended to round off geographical areas in order to facilitate the better delivery of services. The "consultation" period took about 4 years during which the politicians took the opportunity to cut out most really sensible elements in a series of squalid political deals.

Of course the effect of this time-consuming and radical process on staff morale was immense. For a couple of decades after 1974, in Suffolk, individuals were always referred to as

"Oh he's an East Suffolk Man" – or "West" – or "Woman" as the case may be.

I was an East Suffolk man. Trevor was a West Suffolk man. An alien shipped into the new HQ in Ipswich all the way from Bury St Edmunds. He was an engineer and among other things had just completed a major road scheme in the aforesaid far away Bury St Edmunds.

He was also a very, very nice man. The new HQ was a tower block and the usual way to meet staff from other departments was in the lift. It seemed that no matter how early you got into the office on the way up in the lift to the sixth floor the door would always open at the engineer's floor and there would be Trevor. He was very short. I don't recall him as a fat man but he resembled Mr Five-by-five. He always looked as if he had been working for hours. I never saw him with a jacket but always in greenish tweedy trousers that appeared to fit snugly under his armpits and were supported by industrial strength braces. As the doors opened there would be a huge smile of recognition and his usual opening gambit of "Hello boy. I'm just on me way up to see you."

On one of these occasions he asked me to go with him on a site visit to his Bury St Edmunds road scheme to meet an eminent surveyor from the town. A link road from the new (then) A14 by-pass to the town centre had been built close to the existing flank wall of a house and the eminent surveyor wanted to discuss the damage that had been caused to his client's property.

The 3 of us stood looking at the wall, a nice piece of extensive 100-year-old brickwork. The surveyor pointed out a large crack in the wall and said, "My client asserts that this damage was caused by the building of the road."

"It does look pretty serious," said Trevor and we all looked at, and commented on the extent and width of the crack and traced its zig-zag route up and across the wall. The surveyor seemed much encouraged by all this. "Did you happen to check the condition of the wall before we started work?" Trevor asked in all innocence.

The surveyor, now much emboldened, said yes he did, "but only cursorily". However his long experience of these matters and his detailed inspection of the current condition left no doubt in his mind that the crack was caused by the works.

"And you remember that the wall was OK before the works?" asked Trevor again. "Yes." "Did you, by any chance, happen to take photographs?" asked Trevor. "No." said the eminent surveyor. "Well I did," said Trevor, produced a huge wallet of snaps from his overcoat pocket. "Oh and look at that, there's the crack exactly as it is now."

"I must get some further instructions from my client," said the surveyor as he left the scene at a rate of knots. Trevor looked at me and smiled. We never heard from the eminent surveyor again.

Sadly, some months later Trevor was killed in a car smash on the A14 at a point close to the link road he had built.

A chartered surveyor?

In Cardiff the man from the Chartered Surveyors Training Trust mentioned that the majority of surveyors these days qualified at university and so, when the time came, were not fully aware of the world of work. In contrast the conversation at dinner in Nottingham centred on the varying experiences of the previous generation of surveyors the majority of whom set out to be something other than surveyors. That includes me. We all arrived in our first surveyor's office fully aware of the world of work but a little light on surveying techniques.

Actually I did go to university. After a conventional education, albeit fast tracked, (I was always a year ahead of my time; was it ever thus?) I won a good scholarship and went off to read for, inexplicably, a civil engineering degree. During the first year I found out a little about civil engineering; schools then provided no "careers" advice, and came to the conclusion that I hated it. Also the work we covered seemed to have little, if anything, to do with engineering so there was little to engage my interest.

I still dream about the first year exams. Well it's my recurring nightmare actually. As I went into the examination halls I had a feeling that I might have been a little light on the preparation side. I read carefully through the first paper. It would have made more sense written in Mongolian hieroglyphics. Had I come into the wrong exam? There was nothing in any question that I remotely recognised or understood. The only input I could make was to write my name on the answer paper, albeit with difficulty. Worse still the invigilator would not let anyone leave (and thankfully I was not alone) until half an hour had elapsed. I passed the time reading the first 6 pages of the Manchester Guardian. Eventually I was released. I tried another couple of exams with the same result then left for the summer vac.

When my results arrived they were not good. I was invited back to discuss it but the options were unattractive and the authorities were so off-hand that after one preliminary chat I never went back.

I returned home fearing an adverse reaction from my parents who had sacrificed so much to get me to the position that I so cavalierly threw aside but they were very supportive. My father said, "I'm glad tha not going back; I don't think tha would have lasted another 12

months." Clearly I didn't do much work but I remember the Union building and living on Watneys Draft Red Barrel, pork pies and HP Sauce and, inexplicably, joining the Manchester University Mountaineering Society. Happy days.

Back home, having rejected the high life, and two thirds of a County scholarship, I needed an occupation commensurate with my position. I began as a navvy working on building a high school in the village I was born in. Here I learned more about civil engineering in a year than most graduates learn in a lifetime and eventually rose to the dizzy heights of scaffolder's mate.

After a year or so I moved to the big city and worked on the building of the new electric arc furnaces for British Steel at Templeborough Rolling Mills. (Irony of ironies this is now a theme park). Here the pay was better, basic hours were 8 till 8 Monday to Friday, 8 till 4 Saturday and Sunday and all the overtime you wanted. Occasionally I used to ask for an hour off to go for a haircut. I was paid, very well, in cash, with no opportunity to bank it. Eventually I went off for a 2-month motorcar tour of Europe during which time the job slowed and my cards were posted home.

I "signed on" at what we then called "the unemployment exchange" in

Rotherham to receive the princely sum of 14 shillings and nine pence a week in benefit, slightly less than my bus fares. Once the benefit was sorted out personal details were taken so the staff could assess future employment prospects, if any. Having queued up with the other labourers for some time (not quite like The Full Monty) I got to the counter. "Trade?" I was asked. "Concrete finisher," I replied, for thus it was. "Any qualifications?" sneered the clerk. This was my Rubicon and I recognised it as such. I could keep quiet and say no, as was expected or what? After a slight hesitation I said "Yes, 5 A levels and 3 O levels." The clerk flushed angrily and spluttered, "Out," he said, "and round the corner. You lot sign on at the Professional and Technical Register."

Here they were much keener on writing things down and from then on I was kept busy attending interviews at least 3 times a week. What with that and signing on twice a week I was well out of pocket. Eventually I arrived at Sheffield City Hall where a man called FD Entwistle FRICS said to me "Have you ever thought of becoming a chartered surveyor?"

I hadn't a clue what he meant but somehow knew that my quest was over and a new and much more rewarding journey was about to begin.

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER

VOLUME 11, ISSUE 1, SPRING 2006

St Edmund

On 3 December 2005 the Estates Gazette reported "Being cursed by a group of locals is not unusual for property developers. Typically this involves strongly worded letters, a spot of heckling at a council meeting or, at most, a few mildly offensive placards. But one developer can now claim it has been cursed in the ancient way. On 20 November Centros Miller was officially condemned with a 1,000 year old curse by the Knights of St Edmund, a shadowy group who claim to be responsible for the demise from syphilis of Henry VIII in 1547."

By way of explanation it should be mentioned that St Edmund should be the patron saint of England. Although

short-listed, he lost out to the foreign pretender from Turkey. But what has been forgotten amid all the recent publicity is that St Edmund is in fact the Patron Saint of Town Centre Car Parking; hence the current activities of that stalwart band of noblemen, The Knights of St Edmund.

It can't have been much fun being a 9th century Anglo Saxon King of East Anglia. Then the monarch was head of the army. So is the current monarch but Edmund had to be very much a practical "hands-on" leader. And the job entailed spending a lot of time in the suit of armour while riding a warlike charger around East Anglia looking for uprisings to quell or invaders to vanquish.

Clearly a dangerous occupation beset with immense practical difficulties. You try moving an army and attendant baggage train up and down the narrow, twisty, inadequate, unsurfaced lanes of East Anglia. And imagine trying to get the cellophane off those packets of service station sandwiches while wearing chain mail gloves. It must have been a nightmare.

The ultimate irony was on getting back to base in Bury St Edmunds (not called that then of course, too demotivating) and being unable to park in the town centre as all the town centre space was taken up by the newly built cattle market, a controversial development that had produced earnest protests of

distinguished local residents who said the new cattle market made the town look the same as everywhere else. So it is easy to understand why the Knights formed their secret society in favour of town centre car parking.

And what successes they have seen. They saw off Henry VIII in 1539. He died, of syphilis, only 9 years after the spell was cast. Mind you from what I read about Henry he could well bear much of the blame for his own demise anyway. And later the cattle market was forced to shut down during the great foot and mouth outbreak in the 1990s. When will medical science reveal that foot and mouth is a bovine form of syphilis? Will the Knights reveal their involvement?

Now Centros Miller is in their sights. Will the curse of this noble band of brothers, The Knights of St Edmund, do their stuff again? We shall see. Oh, hang on there goes the dinner gong. I wonder what's on the menu? I can't go down to the dining room. They've confiscated my tie, belt and shoelaces and I have to wait for the nurse to bring me the bib and plastic cutlery.

What's the difference between a surveyor and an architect?

Do you remember the Watson Burton presentation at Newcastle, "Culture and Heritage – The Legal Angle?" And the second half presented by Robert Langley, the self-styled "fat boy of Watson Burton"? (an allusion to Dickens "The Pickwick Papers" and "the fat boy of Peckham" therein and in his immortal words "I wants to make your flesh creep".) Well Robert's intention was to make our flesh creep and he did so telling us of the scary story of the Scottish Parliament project.

He contrasted the construction of two recent, impressive national buildings, the Welsh Assembly and Scottish Parliament buildings. (Strangely I don't think he used the word "iconic"). Chosen procurement routes were construction management (Welsh Assembly initially) and management contracting (Scottish Parliament). Both were controversial.

The Scottish Parliament suffered thousands of design changes and

ended up seriously over budget. The practical effect of management contracting is that nobody is ultimately finally in control. You have designers, the management contractor and all the works package sub-contractors and everyone is bound together by promises; for example, I promise to give you the drawings on time, I promise to read the drawings and check them on time, I promise to help you read the drawings and check them on time and give you my comments on time, etc. Soon everybody is saying I kept my promises but you did not. When people break their obligations, you sue them. If an employee fails to perform ultimately you sack them. If a contractor fails to perform you sue him and he sues you back. This is the story of the Scottish Parliament.

But did you see the Stirling Prize programme on television? Many "iconic" projects were in the frame. The Scottish Parliament won. After the announcement even the architects present seemed embarrassed and proceeded, one after the other, to eulogise the good features of the building.

Why surveyors think a ten times over budget job is bad but architects think that a ten times over budget job is a good thing I cannot imagine.

The London whale

I couldn't bear to watch the prolonged death throes of the London whale. When I switched on Sky News on the first evening and heard the expert explain what traumas the poor thing was going through and the inevitable sad conclusion I decided to watch the spectacle no longer. Now it's all over the numerous experts are unable to explain either why the whale was in the Thames – and thousands of miles off course – or why it died. But all agreed that whales are, as a species, highly intelligent creatures. So isn't everybody missing the obvious explanation?

Pods of whales arrive where they shouldn't be and one is detached to die spectacularly on a busy beach or up a strange river. I think they are drawing our attention to the way we are ruining their environment and deliberately

or casually killing them off in great numbers. Shouldn't we, as an even more intelligent species, take the hint?

The last resort

Felixstowe is an Edwardian seaside resort on Suffolk's east coast. It's not the most easterly resort as Lowestoft claims that distinction but it is now dwarfed by the container port that claims many UK and European records for containers handled. The town is not without historical connections. Mrs. Simpson, then the future wife of the Prince of Wales (and later Edward the 8th), established the necessary residential qualification by living in the town prior to her divorce hearing in Ipswich.

Situated at the end of the A14 Felixstowe could properly claim the title of "The Last Resort". When I revisited the town recently I did see in a bookshop a genuine Felixstowe coat of arms with that motto added.

My visit coincided with 2 major announcements. The first was the completion of a garden commemorating the 50s floods. The second was – another – major development of docks. The floods were a terrible catastrophe. On the night of Jan 31/Feb 1 1953 strong winds drove a tidal surge down the North Sea. At Felixstowe hundreds were rendered homeless and 40 people were killed. When I began to work in the town in the early 70s there was a published road scheme that produced a regular flow of Blight Notices on houses in the former flooded area. The agents all pointed out the tidemark, about 7 feet above ground level, and really did their best to show the property to best advantage. Most affected properties were away from the sea front but this did not stop Bill, the local agent, advertising "sea views". Having completed the usual joint inspection I asked "Where's the sea view then?" Bill beckoned me to follow him. We climbed up to a sort of attic conversion where there was a lavatory with a dormer window looking east. Bill solemnly opened the door. "Put the seat down," he commanded, "and stand on it." I did as I was asked. "What do you see?" he asked. "The sea," I replied. Bill smirked and we moved on.

The purpose of the road scheme by the way was to extend the trunk road through the town itself and then to the docks. It would have been a disaster. The docks have always generated a lot of traffic. Mainly nose to tail fast moving HGVs. When the Counties Branch came down to Felixstowe for its Spring Meeting in 1993 it was interesting to see the ashen faces of the delegates as they arrived. Most had never seen so many lorries before.

Parking

Overhearing the phrase "She is parking in my space" in a recent conversation about parking at the office brought to mind events that happened over 20 years ago now. Clearly, nothing changes.

In those far, far off days, before I became responsible for office space allocation, I was asked if I would be prepared to move my staff to another location. Let me put you in the picture. We were in a new, "architect designed", prize winning, open plan, office building close to the centre of the campus. Of course most people hated working in the place, but none more than me. So when the question was asked I said yes, but drove a hard bargain.

The space I was to vacate would be the key to a whole series of moves of much more important services than mine. The space I would move into was much older, worn out and further away from the corridors of power. Ideal really.

The terms agreed were simple. The space we were moving to would be cleaned, refurbished and decorated before we moved in. All aspects of the removal were to be handled by professional removers, not by my staff. New desks and chairs were to be provided for all and not out of my budget. And I wanted 3 allocated car spaces at the new building, one for me and one for my 2 most senior professionals. This final condition was the most contentious as there were no other allocated spaces over there but the other occupant of the building, the Treasurer and the treasury were consulted and agreed.

The building I should mention was surrounded on 3 sides by public highways and on the 4th by a private access road along one side of which were about 15 marked car parking space, 3 of which, the end 3, were mine.

The move itself went like a dream and at 08.30 on the first Monday morning I drove in to find my space occupied by another car, obviously belonging to one of the faces now gazing down at me from the first floor. At 08.25 on the following day I drove in to find my space occupied by the same car. The same row of faces gazed down at me from above obviously enjoying the spectacle. By Friday I arrived at 08.10 with the same result.

I complained to the Treasurer who said he would have a word. I don't know what word it was but it was singularly

ineffective and by the middle of next week I was getting in at 8.00 but without result. The row of faces was getting smaller though. Clearly they were feeling the pace. On Friday I complained to the Treasurer again and he said he would instruct his staff not to use the space. I said I would be in extra early next Monday and would take direct action if my space was occupied.

On that day I bowled up at 07.45 to find the car again in my space. The full row of faces was gazing down. Clearly a special effort had been made, as my plans were known in advance.

As the disputed space was at the end of the line I could not block it in without parking on the public highway. Accordingly I drove up very close and got out to take a look. Our bumpers matched exactly. I was driving a Granada estate at the time, (the Mark II, best car I have ever owned). I got back in and gently nuzzled up to the back of the offending car and pushed it out into the road.

I could even hear the apoplectic screams from above while still inside my car and by the time I got out a horde of demented female treasury staff disgorged from the building threatening me with the direst of consequences. I smiled beatifically and said nothing. They had lost and I had discovered it was infinitely better, traffic-wise, to arrive at the office early.

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER

VOLUME 11, ISSUE 2, SUMMER 2006

DVLA press release – not another bldy initiative**

The following press release appeared recently. "In order to assist other motorists to identify potentially dangerous drivers it is now compulsory for anyone with either a lower than average IQ and a lower than average driving ability to display a warning flag. The warning flag is to be a red cross on a white background and must be attached to the top of at least one door of the vehicle." Sounds like a good idea to me but I suppose, as usual, by the time this

is printed the initiative will have been phased out.

The World Cup

Trying to avoid the inevitable build up as far as possible I didn't switch on the first England match until 5 minutes before kick off. As soon as the match started I realised I couldn't stand another John Motson commentary so tried the digital TV alternative. That was a "kid's commentary" and so far too intellectual for someone brought up on a diet of "Motty". So I had the bright

idea of putting on Radio Five Live, a process that took about 2 minutes. As I turned the TV sound off I saw Beckham standing hands on hips waiting to take that free kick while at the same time the radio broadcast a big cheer and the commentator shouted "He's scored". Then, on TV, Beckham took the kick and guess what, he scored! I'd forgotten radio sound is appreciably in front of digital TV sound and so spoiled the only bright spot of the match.

Alan Brazil

Alan Brazil was a stalwart of the Ipswich team in the late 70s and 80s and a Scottish International. He now works for the radio station talksport and is even better at talking than he was at football. Truth to tell he is a much bigger man now than he was in his playing days.

He may, or may not, have appeared in that infamous film "Escape to Victory" with Pele, Bobby Moore, Sly Stallone and other football luminaries but he recalled, on his radio programme, interviewing Pele about his World Cup exploits. To put the great man at his ease Alan opened the discussion by saying "Of course I've played in the World Cup too." On hearing this apparently Pele took a long, careful look at his portly interviewer and considered the matter very carefully. "That must have been at least 3 or 4 stones ago," he suggested.

Will the real Boris please stand up?

For most of us football is a game we see on the small screen involving players with high technical skill and superlative personal fitness. It looks dead easy. But it isn't.

The last time I played on a full-size pitch was in an inter-office tournament when I was in my mid twenties. This was after a lay off of about 5 years and any technical skill and fitness had long since gone. I remember we kicked off and I ambled goalwards as the ball was worked down the other side of the field. I got halfway to the penalty area and had to stop. After about 60 seconds I'd had it and can remember no more.

So, in early May, I watched Old Liverpool play Old Everton, the Marina Dalglish Charity match, in aid of a special cancer unit. All the old stars were there. All a bit heavier round the midriff, short of hair and about a foot short of pace. Some were heavier than others but it was nice to see, and 33,000 spectators were there too.

Later on the same evening it was the England v Germany Charity match in aid of the Bobby Moore Fund and the Red Cross. It was billed as a "fun" event

with ex-players (not 1966) and showbiz stars. Boris Becker had recorded a trailer that was a masterpiece of bad sportsmanship and poor taste. But the joke was he didn't appear on the night. The Germans had about 14 players only one of whom was not a professional; England had 40 participants listed mainly non-footballers and the game plan was to give everybody 10 minutes. The result was a foregone, and as we say unimportant, conclusion. That is to say England lost. The highlight of the game came at the end.

The MP Boris Johnson came on for the last 10 minutes. He was clearly unfit and had not played the game before. His plan was to keep on the move as, if he stopped, he was unlikely to get mobile again. The German Maurizio Gaudino, one of their fit professionals got the ball and Boris was standing about 20 yards away and began to lumber over to challenge him. Time for some fun thought Gaudino as he put one foot on the ball and waited for Boris. He was obviously planning to side step Boris and watch him go charging past. Who says the Germans have no sense of humour?

Unfortunately as Maurizio sidestepped to his left Boris caught his toe in the turf and was catapulted forward head down and to his right with the result that his head, backed now by a fast moving 16 to 17 stones of body weight, cannoned spectacularly into the "gentleman's area" of his opponent. Poor old Gaudino was pole axed – Goodnight Vienna! This produced the biggest cheer of the evening and, despite their exhaustion Boris's teammates ran from all corners of the field to offer their hearty congratulations.

Well you didn't ask for seven

Adam's Trevorva Barns presentation [ACES AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE] at the Bath Conference was both highly professional and very interesting. Having done similar projects 20 or so years ago it is interesting to note the contrasting attitudes and objectives. Then the only objective set by members was the generation of capital receipts, and "property" was charged with their achievement. This allowed all other

services and departments to adopt the moral high ground and oppose the sale of the council's "crown jewels" and the generation of capital receipts. This didn't prevent them, mind you, from fighting like cat and dog in order to grab the biggest share for their own spending.

The homestead I have in mind became available when the then tenant was carried out feet first. This was the only way tenancies came to an end in those days. Some of the land went to enhance an adjoining holding; some went to the parish council to reinforce the village recreation area leaving the rest, comprising a farmhouse, an old barn and 2 or 3 acres available for disposal.

The planners adopted the lead role in opposing sales of redundant assets. They had been difficult on previous occasions and were to be so here. The farmhouse and some land were clearly residential. The old barn could be converted into 2 residential units so this just left the balance of the land to be dealt with.

After 6 months of argument my staff told me the best they could do was 3 units on the remaining land so we eventually received an outline planning consent and went to auction. We did rather well. On the day of the sale however the purchaser submitted an application for 7 units and received consent at the very next planning meeting.

This was too much. Time to have a showdown with the planners. I outlined the problem to my opposite number i.e. we were told consent for 3 units was available whereas at the same time you were discussing consent for 7 units with a potential purchaser. Why didn't we get consent for 7?

"Well, you didn't ask for 7 did you?"

The irritant

The man at Bath said that the good strategic manager is an irritant, will not make friends but will gain respect. As one of the few former Management Team Chief Officers still in ACES I have so far kept silent on the current glass ceiling debate in general but the above comment struck a chord with me.

From my day one in local government I recognised that being an irritant was the way to get on and I no doubt irritated the hell out of a succession of immediate managers. The principle benefit of this policy, for the irritator, was job enrichment, though it did gradually dawn on me that the irritated manager tended to become unsettled and move on earlier than expected leaving behind a vacuum to be filled.

So having got my feet under the table I said, "What's this file, Brian?" "Oh that's the teachers' houses file. A general rent review is years overdue. We haven't got the resources to deal with it and anyway Education wouldn't be happy." "Would you like me to do it Brian?" "OK, go on then."

I spent a pleasant week or so, apart from the wintry weather, inspecting the 30 or 40 houses in the portfolio and indeed soon found the rents were woefully out of date. Most of the tenants proved to be retired teachers who had stayed on in "their" house and had been forgotten about by the Education Service. The condition of most houses was deplorable and there wasn't one of them I could have imagined living in myself.

Having come up with a list of revision proposals the fun and games began. The Education Service was not happy. It didn't want the attention and didn't want to explain the lack of recent reviews and the poor maintenance. Also they were reluctant to ask the current teacher tenants to pay a proper rent as the low rent was in effect a salary supplement. Nevertheless the report went ahead thanks to the strong attitude of my chief and I was ordered to appear at an afternoon Education Committee to explain the report and presumably take the blame for anything going.

Before telling you what happened let me explain a bit about the background. The personality of the Chief Education Officer was such that he was allowed to run all education committees single-handed. The elected member chairman was allowed to introduce the meeting but thereafter the CEO chaired it. The Chairman and other members spoke only if invited by the CEO.

First of all the CEO announced that he needed to reorder business and because of other urgent matters the Teachers' Houses Rents paper would have to be dealt with as the last item on the Agenda. So I sat there from 2.15pm until after 6 before I was asked to speak. When the time came I got about 2 minutes and was then cut off by a tirade from the CEO who asserted the paper was unnecessary, wrong in principle in that review was not legally possible, and in any event all the rents were incorrectly and incompetently assessed. He instructed the committee to reject it out of hand. Looking distinctly nervous they just approved it and began heading for the door. To their fast disappearing backs of the members the CEO hurled his final insult.

"Just because you have approved the County Land Agent and Valuer's paper it doesn't mean to say he's right."

The irritant: the sequel

Some years later I had to present a bit of a "dodgy" paper to the same committee in the same room but under a new and different regime. For the only time I connived with the Committee Clerk to have the paper put last on the agenda on the basis that Members would be packing their briefcases and heading for the door as my paper was announced.

It was working out exactly as planned and as my paper was announced members were already packing and heading out to beat the rush hour traffic. Exactly on cue there was a huge clap of thunder and instant torrential rain. They all sat down again and the Chairman said, "Well let's have a good look at this last paper. I think we've got at least another 20 minutes to deal with this."

Miss, there's a man on my glass ceiling

Glass ceiling's were in vogue at Bath and I managed to get this covert snap of a man abusing someone's glass ceiling.

What are the chances of that happening?

A long, long time ago, in what now seems a land far, far away Betty and



I, when working for different but neighbouring authorities, employed a "joint professional trainee"; the first in line being Matt. Of course he has long since moved on into the private sector and a successful professional career.

Earlier this year, 7 years after saying goodbye to Matt, I had taken a few days' break in York and on this particular day was driving from there to Harrogate via Thirsk and Wetherby. The day was going well. Thirsk, I find, is always a difficult place to park a motor caravan but his time, for a change, I had managed it with ease. After a stroll round and a coffee I moved on to Wetherby where parking is never a problem; but I spoke too soon.

Wetherby's car park is close to the main through road. It is a terraced affair leading up to the bus station adjoining the market square. It is a very large car park. But I had chosen a difficult day and the wrong time as there wasn't a space to be had. After 2 tours I did squeeze myself into a very tight space but an elderly couple appeared immediately and were unable to get into their car so I moved off.

By this time Harrogate was beginning to look more and more inviting and I decided one more look and then on my way. Stood behind his car, a flash motor, taking off his jacket to hang in the back was Matt! He was gazing down the line at my approaching vehicle until he realised that it was indeed, I. "Are you intending to leave that space, Matt," I asked, "If so then it's mine." We had a pleasant chat and then he was on his way and I was successfully parked.

Help the Aged

I should have known better. Having organised 2 ACES conferences already to volunteer a third time was reckless, to say the least. But I did and, about 12 months' ago, became the President's Little Helper. By the time the conference arrived I realised how much intensive detailed work is involved and so, 6 years too late, telephoned my PA of that time, Hilary, and renewed my thanks for all the work she did in 2000.

The conference went well and so having been on duty since late Wednesday afternoon I was ready for home by Friday lunch. As a reward I was relieved of the burden of the Legendary ACES Lectern but asked to deal with the Books for Africa. And there were a lot of them; many thanks to all who took the trouble to sort some out and bring them to the venue.

So after the hordes departed for the Greene King Brewery I brought the car round to the Athenaeum door and loaded up. About 15 trips were sufficient. Then off to rendezvous with NPS in the Ramada car park where Jeff Clarke had 2 big boxes of bound Estates Gazettes in his car. Fortunately he was strong enough to put them in mine.

By 4 o'clock all the stuff, except the bound Estates Gazettes, were cluttering up my hall matching well the 3 boxes of unbound Estates Gazettes I already had and the large box of my own redundant textbooks. The only downside was that I had pulled a muscle in my back during the unloading so it was time for a sit down.

Almost as soon as I put my feet up the phone rang. I got up to answer it. "Hello it's Help the Aged here." Fantastic I thought. It's payback time at last! I wonder what's on offer, roof space lagging, cheaper electricity? "Hello, we wondered if you had ever thought of distributing our charity envelopes to all the houses in Church Road and then collecting them up when filled with cash?" Frankly I hadn't. Church Road

is more than half a mile long. A never-ending task in addition to all the other never ending tasks I have. I declined with thanks.

Given the back problem I made sure I had an easy weekend so I could have an early look at the weeks of unattended work at the office. I did make it on Monday, had a good sort out and got home about 4 pm the back having eased slightly. Unfortunately I had forgotten all about the 2 loads of logs I had ordered and these were now filling the drive with rain in the offing. Clearly I had a busy evening ahead. Where are Help the Aged when you need them?

The map man

By accident I caught a repeat of the episode of Nicholas Crane's "Map Man" programme where he explained how the first Ordnance Survey triangulation survey was conducted. What a physically and mentally arduous exercise it must have been.

The programme was full of interesting practical points. The "trig points" had first to be established preferably on hard-to-reach mountaintops. The original survey party carried a carefully specified load of sand, cement and ballast (in order to build the trig point first) in addition to the polished brass jumbo size theodolite in a purpose-built polished mahogany carrying case and all the other surveying accoutrements. I remember using a theodolite in my early days. It was heavy and awkward to carry. Significantly the word is not in the Microsoft lexicon.

In addition, because of the distances involved in the original triangulation, most of the theodolite work was done at night but presumably the concrete for the trig points was mixed and poured before the sun went down. Nicholas talked to Ian McManus an ex Ordnance survey surveyor and they reminisced about the old times. Ian described "The Triangulation Handbook" as their "Bible" that specified every action, such as, for example, that every angle measurement had to be repeated 32

times for complete accuracy. "I knew the Handbook by heart," asserted Ian. "What commandment do you remember best?" asked Nicholas. This was "Thou shalt not fiddle the results."

That's strange. On my first job, holding the staff on the first survey and levelling of a vast future marshalling yard I was taken aside by both client and contractor and requested that "If at all possible, and given half the chance, thou shalt fiddle the results."

Bungs

Following on from the above I was not offered a bung. No slimline briefcase full of £50 pound notes was produced or even referred to as a possibility. In fact the possibility of a "consideration", to use the word we are probably more familiar with, was not mentioned.

To my eternal regret I have never yet been offered a bung in over 30 years. I must look far too honest to make it worthwhile mentioning the possibility – or too gormless.

I did once accept hospitality from a developer after an initial site meeting to set in progress an already agreed and documented development. The developer said, "This is my treat. Order whatever you want." "I'll have a coffee and a sausage roll," I replied. "Make that a king size sausage roll," the developer declared magnanimously. I declared this in the Hospitality Register and we never repeated the exercise.

A few months later we discussed "Hospitality" at Management Team and I thought guiltily about the king size sausage roll and was thankful I had declared it. One colleague mentioned he had recently enjoyed a "Champagne day out at the races" courtesy of a local and frequently used contractor but he didn't think it worth mentioning in The Register! It was a good day out he recalled, chauffeur driven car, good food, unlimited champagne etc, oh, and do you know, talk about luck, they didn't tell me but they had bought me

a raffle ticket and I've won a 2 week all expenses paid holiday in Acapulco. I'm off next week.

The Grumman Avenger - nearly

I went down to my local air show a few weeks ago but this time I had to do without the company of both the Grumman Avenger and Yesterday's Man. It was a typical high summer's day, warm but with regular and very heavy rainstorms.

Early on I did spot a Spitfire and a P51 Mustang parked up against the spectator line and spent quite a time lurking in the vicinity, camera at the ready, waiting for them to be fired up – and the Mustang has a hefty 4 blade propeller that looks very effective. However each time one of them was about to start up the commentator issued a firm warning to the crowd about the heavy propeller backwash. He must have been reading my column!

After the third heavy squall of rain I made my way to the big refreshment marquee. Inside were the usual teas, coffees, cakes and sandwiches and musical group. Although there was no sound outside the marquee inside the sound level was indescribable! There was a long queue for service and the only way to communicate with the staff was by pointing or sign language; yelling down someone's ear was really completely ineffective. I eventually got a piece of cake then found a seat in the quietest part of the place, ie not in direct line with the amplifiers and had a look at the group.

It consisted of 3 fat middle-aged guitar-playing guys. The amplifiers were massive and the sound level out front was on the far side of clinically dangerous. They were playing standard country and western and early rock and roll numbers and were the best and most laid back and swinging group I had heard for many years. Appearances can be deceptive.

Eventually I saw the B25 arriving and had to leave and go back outside to carry on with the air show.

Tour de France

Luckily I got away on my annual French Holiday before the Presidential Conference season started. As usual I strapped the bike on the back of the camper, just in case. This time I went via Dover/Dunkirk at less than half the usual cost. Also I had decided to revisit a site down in the Dordogne that I had last used 10 years ago and so picked up the new motorway south of Rouen that went as far as Tours. This was about a 2-hour run of new road where, for the first 15 minutes, I did not see another vehicle. How come it's possible to build such infrastructure in France? And we can't?

The Dordogne site is at the head of a long valley so it's uphill all the way there and downhill all the way out. One afternoon I felt an exploratory bike ride was in order but after about an hour it was clear that a thunderstorm was approaching so I set off back. I remembered the long uphill approach from 10 years ago and could see an old barn about a third of the way up from which I had to walk last time. I sailed past this and reached the top with many gears to spare. The long sessions in the gym are paying off at last.

10 days later I was on the north Brittany coast at St. Cast le Gildo, a pleasant seaside resort where the town is separated from the harbour by a rocky promontory. So, when cycling or walking from the town to the harbour, it is necessary to ride up a very steep and twisty hill through the town and then down the other side to the harbour.

The uphill stretch is almost too steep to walk but emboldened by my Dordogne experience I felt I could cycle all the way up and as it was very quiet it was worth a try. The first few yards were very steep and I began to regret my decision just as I encountered a party of about a 100 French walkers coming down to meet me. They were on holiday and as the build-up to the Tour de France has started I was manna from heaven!

"Allez, allez, allez," they all began shouting coming out into the road waving wildly. "Courage mon brave; allez, allez." And so it went on, as I slowly

passed this long crocodile of interested spectators. I was determined not to stop even though I could hardly pedal for laughing but I did decide to deck the first one to try emptying a bottle of water over me.

I did get the top and freewheeled down to the harbour. After a long rest I walked out up the hill.

Bury St Edmunds revisited

Did you notice the Editor's little competition in the last issue which I thought rather rudely interrupted the best piece in the whole magazine (see extracted page from Volume 11 Issue 2). As I have the list of delegates who booked a place on the trip I feel it would be unfair to enter the competition (but would be prepared to do a deal with anyone who is) but I have a few helpful comments.

First of all the Tour of the Great Abbey was conducted by Brother Josselyn De Brackelond. He is the man in the monk's habit and pilgrimage sandals to the right of the picture. Regrettably he is now retired and so was unable to repeat the experience in 2006.

52

ACES PLAQUES

Branch Secretaries may like to note that we have recently refurnished our stock of ACES plaques. Contact me for supplies: my address is at the back of The Tanager.

For those with an interest in such matters, the Latin text at the bottom of this plaque reads "Donus publicus pro bene publico" or "Managing public property for the public good".

BURY ST EDMUNDS REVISITED

All this talk of the Presidential meeting in Bury St Edmunds this year has reminded me of the last time ACES visited Suffolk in 2005. The photograph below shows a very earnest bunch of ACES members and partners listening intently to the stories from a local actor advised dressed as a monk. Faces identified so far include:

- Charles Coats
- Jill Rungby
- Julian Rensyer
- Jon Ginn
- Betty Albon
- Philippe and Andrew Day
- Malcolm Dawes
- John Morris
- Marcus Perry
- William Marshall
- Tony Shiner
- Henry Shiner
- Alan Jacobs

- Glen Reeves-Fowles
- Malcolm Marshall
- Brian Reeves-Fowles.

Can you help to identify any more of the faces? There will be a modest prize for the most complete list of correct names sent to the Editor.

Colin Bradford
Editor



THE TANGIER - SUMMER 2006



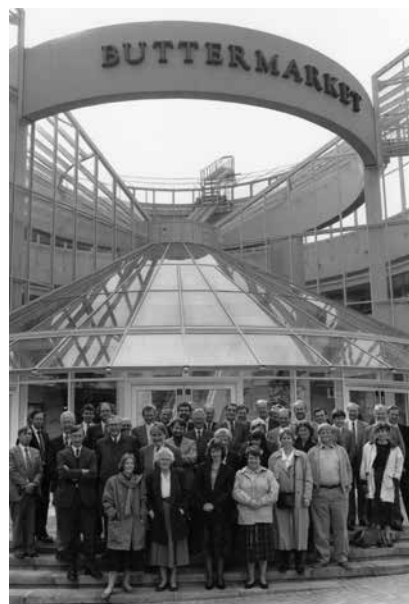
The Editor identifies 16 people and as neither Malcolm Dawes nor Julian Stanyer is on my attendance list, belated invoices are now in the post. Then I think the girl hiding behind the shades next to the lady in blue is Bess Martin. And I believe that Yesterdays Man is peering over the shoulder of the man with the shades. My friend and ex PA Hilary (see above) is behind and to the left of the man in the mauve shirt.

Felixstowe revisited

Here is another competition for you again full of Eastern promise.

This is a photograph taken at the Local Authority Valuers Association Counties Branch Spring Meeting held in Felixstowe on 21, 22 and 23 April 1993. The occasion is a visit to the then new Buttermarket development in Ipswich. I have a number of questions for you.

1. Which 5 people pictured were at Bury St Edmunds in 2006?
2. Remembering the centenary of CLAVA is approaching how many current/former County Land Agent and Valuers can you see; and name them?



3. According to a recent comment in the Estates Gazette what price did the Buttermarket development recently sell for?
4. How many past/present/future Presidents of our association can you see?
5. Who did I share an office with in my first professional job and where is that person in the photograph?

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER

VOLUME 11, ISSUE 4, WINTER 2006/7

The Annual Meeting

I know the Telegraph usually has its finger on the pulse and is quick off the mark but this headline from, as you can see, 8 December 2006 is a little unfair.

After all the AM, and the election of Ian, only took place on 3 December – 5 days before! We will miss Betty of course but Ian has all the hallmarks of being a good President. He has obviously already thought through the perils of the Presidency, the first one being lugging round the incredibly heavy lectern for the next 12 months. Ian, with admirable far-sightedness, had brought down his Butler – or it could have been his Gillie – to carry the lectern back to his estates in the North East. What style!

Come on Telegraph; give the boy a chance!

Neil Armstrong

The launch of Sputnik 1 on 4 October 1957 inaugurated the start of the “space race” and panic in America where it had long been assumed that they had the best German rocket scientists. But it has also produced a most fruitful source of quotable quotes. For example Lyndon Johnson remarked that America

would soon launch its own satellite that undoubtedly would have more chrome trim than Sputnik 1 and twin speed windshield wipers!

President Kennedy pledged that America would, by the end of the decade (the 60s) land a man on the moon. Occasionally his speech is rerun on TV where he makes the pledge and

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2006

One longs for the days when Betty ruled the roost

says something like “this program will deliver the largest payroll into space – I’m sorry that should be payload – still I suppose it will also be the biggest payroll too.”

The man on the moon pledge was achieved and, on 21 July 1969. This produced the most famous quote of all as the US astronaut Neil Armstrong stepped onto the surface of the moon, “That’s one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.” Of course recently the scientists have “established” that he actually said, “That’s one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind.” This is more grammatically correct.

What the scientist failed to spot were the words he muttered quietly as he stepped off the surface of the moon a few days later. These were, “Best of luck Mr Klotsky.” The meaning was explained on a late-night chat show a few years ago.

Neil Armstrong was brought up in a suburban town in Ohio, in an area favoured by Polish immigrants. The next-door neighbours of his parents’ house were the Klotskys. In his early teens Neil and his friend spent most of their free time practicing pitching baseballs to each other and, one hot summer in the early evening, the ball once again went over the fence into the Klotskys’ garden. Rather than bother Mr Klotsky again Neil decided to hop over the fence and retrieve it himself.

As he was searching for the ball he heard the unmistakeable sounds of sex coming from the Klotskys’ open bedroom window. Presently there was a silence and he heard a man’s voice mumble something. This was followed by a loud feminine shriek, a loud slap and the inimitable sound of Mrs Klotsky’s voice saying, “Mr Klotsky. How dare you suggest that? That little boy next door will have to walk on the moon first before I do that to you!”

Das ist uncool

Donner und blitzen! I have to say I felt a touch of schadenfreude when I read in the Telegraph that “Now the Germans are desperately trying to defend their tongue against a modern English

invasion,” and “Germany’s conservative parliamentary president aims to win constitutional protection for the German language.” Quite right too; fortunately our language is devoid of any foreign intrusions whatsoever.

I suppose back in the thirties, after the anchluss between Germany and Austria, when the German Wermacht, at the behest of their fuehrer, rampaged across Europe with their panzers and Volkswagens following up the blitzkrieg things might have been different. Had they been successful our language would have been peppered with German words and we would be suffering the same problems that they are now experiencing, and probably eating weiner schnitzel and sauerkraut, drinking liebfraumilch and wearing ersatz leder hosen into the bargain.

What a fate we were spared! Let’s hope some doppelganger doesn’t start another war to stop the invasion of English words otherwise it will be vorsprung durch technik all over again.

Dennis Healey

This reminds me of a story about Dennis Healey that didn’t get into his autobiography but was mentioned in the radio programme about it. He came out of the Second World War as Major Dennis Healey and has always travelled a bit pursuing his political career and his hobby of photography.

As a politician his short temper was well known and he held a number of high positions of state. As Foreign Secretary he was being briefed on some topic in the presence of both his Permanent Secretary (the senior civil servant, new to Dennis) and his Political Secretary when the phrase “coup d’etat” was used. The Permanent Secretary then leant forward and in a confidential whisper said, “That means the enforced removal of a Head of State, Minister.”

The Political Secretary knew the signs and moved out of the firing line. As the Foreign Secretary’s face went from pink to red then purple he berated the hapless civil servant for 2 minutes in fluent German, then a minute in fluent French, then a further minute

in adequate Russian and then in passable Spanish as his fury was spent whereupon he turned to his Permanent Secretary with a cherubic smile and said in his best music hall Yorkshire accent, “Now then. What did them funny sounding foreign words you was trying to explain to me mean again?”

Shenfield One

Years ago I worked in London and lived in Little Clacton near the coast. This meant a dreaded daily commute, in my case from Thorpe-Le-Soken to Liverpool Street. To get to the office by 9am I had to catch a train at about 6.20. I hated every minute of it. But the ordeal was made just bearable as I had a free first class season ticket.

I usually travelled back on the 6.10pm with a colleague surveyor Alan. There were usually Alan and I and four pairs of pin stripe trousers and 4 Evening Standards in the compartment. This was corridor train days; no sound system or central locking.

One evening we set off as usual but came to a sudden stop after about 25 minutes. Nothing happened for nearly an hour. No one spoke. No trains were moving on any of the 4 tracks. The Evening Standards barely twitched. It was eerily quiet. Alan bit into a large green apple.

At about a quarter to eight there was the unmistakable sound of a door opening and a crunch as feet hit the ballast. Travellers were beginning to abandon ship! Casually I strolled into the corridor and slid down a window and peered out. The lights on the curved platforms of Shenfield station were just visible in the distance as were stationary trains at every signal between the station and us. The station platforms appeared to be deserted. I went back to my seat and sat down. I may have uttered a semi audible sigh.

Just this side of nine o’clock the train moved, got as far as Shenfield and stopped. “All change!”

The station announcements suggested that all the overhead wires east of Shenfield were down. No trains would move in the foreseeable future. A

coach service had been laid on to take passengers east. "Proceed to the station forecourt where coaches are waiting." We went down the stairs to the subway to cross the tracks to get to the front of the station. We got close to the ramp leading up to the forecourt and stopped. The subway was full of closely packed people going nowhere. The maths was easy. We were about the fifth train. Say at 500 passengers per train there were 2,500 people in front of us. At 40 per coach we should get the 63rd coach. And new passengers were pressing in behind us at the rate of about 1,000 every 5 minutes. It was becoming extremely claustrophobic.

We were squashed forward to the right angle turn at the bottom of the ramp and Alan and I were pressed up against a couple of doors with the notice "Emergency doors; press bar to open." After some discussion we decided this was verging on an emergency so we crashed the bar and the doors opened to reveal the edge of the forecourt with a coach immediately in front of us, the fifth and last in the line. We swept on board and ordered the driver to leave. Reluctantly he did. What happened to the other thousands of waiting passengers we neither knew nor cared?

The driver arrived at a station short of Colchester and stopped at the top of the station approach road. He said he had to drop us here and return to Shenfield. We were getting wise by now. The station looked quiet. I volunteered to go and have a look provided no one got off the coach and Alan and the other passengers ensured the driver waited for me to come back.

The station was deserted. I searched it thoroughly and found a couple of platform staff cowering in an office. "We haven't seen a train since 3 o'clock guv," said one. "We don't expect any trains here today but we believe they are still running from Colchester to the coast."

It took some threats to persuade the driver to go to Colchester where trains were indeed running. We arrived at Thorpe-Le-Soken at 2am over 6 hours late. I had a lie-in and caught the 8.20am back to Liverpool Street. Alan

had caught the 7.20. George, another colleague, who got back after us, caught the 6.20 as usual.

Football stories

Bungs Continued - The Bungs Saga is still rumbling on and developing a life of its own. Lord Stevens delivered his initial findings to the Premier League clubs in early October and beforehand the clubs' spin-doctors went into hyper drive. "Plans to give Lord Stevens to complete his inquiry face opposition from a handful of Premier League clubs," said the headlines. "A number of chairmen believe prolonging the inquiry could do harm to the image of the competition." It's an interesting insight into the thinking of Premiership top management that establishing the truth is damaging but whether or not some people have their fingers in the till seems to be relatively unimportant. The killer comment from "one sceptical club source" related to the projected cost of completing the inquiry. The cost so far has been £600,000 and could cost another £400,000 to complete. "We just can't write a blank cheque for this," the sceptical club source was keen to tell us. Really? In Premiership terms £400,000 is only a couple fairly measly bungs; the cost of employing Wayne for a couple of weeks or 2 days' payroll for even a pretty average club.

Goalkeepers - In the good old days of football goalies were always oddballs and even when continental and international players were beginning to come to play in the UK the perceived wisdom was always at least the best teams would only ever employ English goalkeepers – the best in the world. Then suddenly they all disappeared to be replaced by highly professional players from Europe, Australia, and even The States. In that infamous match where Chelsea lost both their world-class goalkeepers to injury a name from the past emerged – John Burridge. Alan Shearer remarked that in his after-life as a goalkeeping coach John's favourite maxim, when talking to outfield players was, "Look, the goalkeeper's always expecting to get injured; so don't disappoint him."

Is this an extract from a Noel Coward Operetta? - You had to be there when Kolo beat Bolo. It was only because Momo was injured and out. Had Momo been there instead of Bolo then Kolo might not have won out. But what would be the outcome if Bobo was up against Kolo, or Bolo, or even Momo. We may never know.

Sir Alf - I think I might treat myself to the new biography of Sir Alf. He was an interesting character but with one major flaw for the establishment toffs – he was a winner. He took Ipswich Town from the arid wastes of the old League Division (South) to the then equivalent of the Premiership title in less than 7 years and of course there was the Jules Rimet trophy. I saw him in Debenhams Ipswich once long after his enforced retirement. He was on the down escalator, with 2 heavy bags of shopping and wife, as I passed by on the up escalator. He looked as miserable as sin. He had an adversarial and uncomfortable relationship with the press. On arriving at Prestwick Airport once for the annual England/Scotland international fixture that used to arouse intense passion, until it was discontinued, he was greeted by a native scribe with the words "Welcome to Scotland, Sir Alf." His immortal response? "You must be f***ing joking."

Felixstowe revisited again

Two Terriers ago, Volume II Issue 3, there was a photograph from the Local Authority Valuers Association Counties Branch Spring Meeting held in Felixstowe in 1993; 5 questions were posed. Now I know all you out there desperately need to know the answers so here they are, with a reminder of the question first.

1. [Which 5 people pictured were at Bury St Edmunds – 06.] Tim Foster and Sue, William Marshall, Kenwyn Brown
2. [Remembering the centenary of CLAVA is approaching how many then current/former County Land Agent and Valuers can you see; and name them?] The answer is two and a half. There is Henry Cave, the distinguished looking gent in the second row with long hair and grey beard; he was the next to the last County Land Agent and Valuer of all. The last CLAV of all is William Marshall, the young-looking chap in front of and to the left of Charles Coates (see also 4 below). Younger members may not recall that originally every county's estates officer carried this title, hence the founding of the County Land Agent and Valuers Association a century ago. Every county, that is, except Cornwall which had a County Valuer and a County Land Agent. The smiling face of Mark Trinder, the Cornwall County Land Agent can be seen on the extreme right of the picture between Eddie Turner and Alun Jones (see also 4 below)
3. [What price did the Buttermarket development recently sell for, as reported in the Estates Gazette recently?] I can't remember
4. [How many past/present/future Presidents of our association can you see?] There are 3 and these are Eddie Turner 1992/93, Charles Coates 1998/99 and Alun Jones 2000/01

5. [Who did I share an office with in my first professional job and where is that person in the photograph?] This is the tiebreaker! I shared an office with Brian Garrett who is on the back row and is the half face peering over Kenwyn's right shoulder.

Finally here is an important note for future question setters. Write down the answers as you pose the questions. What was very clear at the time may not be so 6 months down the line.

The local press

As you well know it is the duty of the local press to give ample space to anyone with a story knocking local government, no matter how interesting or uninteresting, or whether truthful – or not. So it's amusing to note down, sometimes, the incredibly naïve comment that finds its way into print. (Note for self. I really must get out more).

1. The local press has been campaigning to "oust St George" and invites readers to "join our bid to reinstate patron saint" i.e. St Edmund. On 26 September last year another article began breathlessly "He was an East Anglian king, the former patron saint of England and historians now believe he met his end near his namesake town of Bury St Edmunds." Well; what sort of coincidence is that!
2. Prince Harry, and some army chums, stopped off at an A11 Little Chef, on the way to – or from – battle training to have "an all-day breakfast". Needless to say this was only published because a worker at the café spilled the beans to the local paper, not literally I hope. The piece was a selection of banal quotes from the lady in question ending with "She told how the jaws of some of the other customers dropped with astonishment when Prince Harry got up to visit the lavatory." Send for the Poet Lauriat to record this incredible event!

The Stirling Prize revisited

Do you remember this time last year I mentioned the Stirling Prize fiasco? "But did you see the Stirling Prize programme on television? Many "iconic" projects were in the frame. The Scottish Parliament won. After the announcement even the architects present seemed embarrassed and proceeded, one after the other, to eulogise the good features of the building."

What stuck in my throat was the unspoken implication that running ten times over budget on a percentage fee job was not necessarily a bad thing. So, to redress the balance somewhat, in the Telegraph of 28 March this year under the heading "Total ban for spurs fan who "hit" Lampard" it was reported that "the drunken youth" "was banned from every football ground in the country." The man in question "a trainee architect" "said he was deeply sorry for a moment of madness".

Hull

On a lighter note this is, verbatim, a story told at the end of a presentation at the recent Presidential Conference in Bury St Edmunds; not, I hasten to add, by our beloved Immediate Past President, who is, as it happens, a strong swimmer but has never been, so far as I am aware, to Hull.

"But the story goes about the couple who met at a cocktail party and it was love at first sight. And as these things go, after about three weeks of whirlwind courtship, they discussed the possibility of marriage. They were both slightly apprehensive because they did not really know anything about each other but decided mutually that it would be quite exciting to get married because they were deeply in love and to find out about themselves as the marriage progressed. Now that was fine and dandy. Anyway they were on their honeymoon at a very smart hotel and lying around the pool when the husband decided that he would go for a

bit of a swim to cool down. He climbed up the tower on the 10 metre diving board, dived off, did a triple forward somersault, two half twists, full pike position, entered the water, barely a ripple, swam to the side in one stroke, pulled himself out like Adonis, shook himself, came and lay down. His wife said, "I didn't know you could do that. That's fantastic. Where did you learn that?" He said, "Well that's one thing you don't know about me and this is what is exciting". He said, "I was British diving champion for 10 years in a row. I won a gold medal at the World Games". She said, "That's brilliant. That's fantastic". So she got up and decided to cool down as well. She dived in the pool, forged up and down like a speedboat, did 150 lengths with tumble turns – the whole lot, pulled herself out at the end, came back, lay down again hardly even panting, hardly out of breath. He said, "That's fantastic. Where did you learn to swim like that? Were you in the Olympics team as well? She said, "No actually I was a prostitute in Hull and I worked both sides of the river".

President, on that less than edifying note I propose to end my talk there."

Silverstone 1963

My first visit to a racing circuit was to Cadwell Park in June 1963, the nearest circuit to South Yorkshire, to watch motorcycles. Next, and I cannot remember now why, my elder brother offered me a chance to watch the British Grand prix at Silverstone on 20 July 1963, and a lift in his car.

I have been there since of course, but only for Grand Prix practice days, as I cannot afford to take out a second mortgage in order to buy a ticket. There are big differences.

In 1963 we set off at about midnight and drove across country, no motorways, to find the circuit. We ended up in a very narrow lane, at about 4am, at the end of a queue of other cars. This was the way into the circuit. Other cars pulled up behind. All was quiet until just before 6 o'clock when fans began to get ready for the opening of the circuit gates.

We parked at the first corner after the

start and finish line; and I mean at the corner. There was a narrow grass strip bordering the track, a 4-foot high chain link fence with spectator cars park about 10 yards from that. In present day terms we parked in the middle of the gravel trap. And today Silverstone looks like the setting for a chain link fence manufacturer's annual convention.

The day warmed up quickly but it was a long morning with a few practice runs, demonstrations and early races. Interestingly I have some good photographs of these, taken with a standard lens, and clearly was able to lean on the aforesaid chain link while taking them. It was a different situation at the start of the main race though as my photographs show a crowd 2 or 3 deep at the fence, with some at the back standing on small stools for better visibility!

Unfortunately it was here that my memories dry up because due to lack of sleep and the heat I sat in the car for a few minutes and then slept soundly through the whole of the race with the comforting background noise of Grand Prix cars changing down about 4 gears to get through the corner; very restful. I know Jim Clark won as I have photographs of the drive past with the car being paraded on the back of a lorry with the driver and laurel leaves, Colin Chapman and a piper.

The other day, by chance, I came across a book called Grand Prix! A race-by-race account Formula 1 Racing 1950 to 1965, and bought it. Under the heading XVIth British Grand Prix (weather warm and sunny) it shows that J Clark (Lotus-Climax) won, J Surtees (Ferrari) was second and third was G Hill (BRM). I had to wait 24 years to find that out! I see that Jack Brabham, Dan Gurney, Bruce McClaren, and many other giants of the sport were also there; and Mike Hailwood also in a Lotus-Climax.

Which reminds me of the time I stood next to Mike for half an hour in the Snetterton paddock while he warmed up his Honda 6 cylinder 250 cc racing motorbike, but that's another story.....

Obituaries

Two recent events caught my eye.

Boris Yeltsin was a brave man who changed the course of world politics forever. He was not afraid do the unexpected. For instance once he was too drunk to get OFF the plane in Dublin whereas most people are too drunk to get ON. I still have a cutting of his visit to his friend John Major at Chequers. After 36 hours of talks John Major suggested a stroll and the 2 leaders, their wives and presumably a phalanx of security men and the like sallied forth. They ended up near the Bernard Arms Aylesbury and John suggested they popped in. At this the Russian president's eyes lit up and he spoke the only English words of his visit "gins and tonics, gins and tonics". Unfortunately the pub was closed. A hefty Russian security man hammered on the door and shouted "Open up! It's the President of Russia". "And this is the Kaiser," responded the landlord from inside. Luckily the misunderstanding was resolved.

And the recent death of Bobby Pickett who wrote the one-hit wonder Monster Mash that caught on in a flash. It has a cracking opening line "I was working in the lab late one night when my eyes beheld an eerie sight." Had he been a surveyor it would have been "an eerie site" but that would have ruined the rest of the song.

Meeting The Beatles

In the late 60s I was "on the railway" working out from Kings Cross to the north and east. The area I worked included a number of Hertfordshire towns including Ware. There was an empty goods shed in the station yard. Built solidly in brick in the 1860s it was massive with a vast uninterrupted internal space with wrought iron columns and all the period features. A bit of a pain then but probably "highly sought after" now. It was also in remarkably good condition.

Some time before Christmas 1968 I received a number of intriguing phone calls from someone purporting to represent Apple and The Beatles. Eventually it was established that

these calls were genuine. In summary The Beatles were planning another TV Special and were looking for a unique building in which to film it. They had been told about the Ware goods shed and was it available etc. Yes. OK John and Paul would like to see it was this possible. Yes. The only snag was that the only day they had available was Boxing Day. Could I be available? Certainly.

I was living over in Bishops Stortford at the time and could borrow a car for the trip over. I remembered to take the keys home with me and Boxing Day dawned clear and bright with a vicious frost. Just in case of trouble on the road I set off early and arrived at the goods yard about 15 minutes early. After about 5 minutes a scruffy looking individual wandered across the yard and tapped on the car window.

"Are you from Estates and Rating?

He enquired, for this is what we were known as.

"Yes."

"You here to meet The Beatles?

"Yes."

"Well hard luck mate they're not coming."

"Who says?"

"Their man phoned me at the Station House. Said they went over to Amsterdam Christmas Eve and now have got better things to do than meet you and look over that pig sty."

And so my chance of fame and fortune was gone.

Later, and just before I left the

organisation, I put the place on the market To Let. I used the correct rate per square foot but we had no takers; too expensive. A few days before my departure I realised I had used the wrong scale and the area in my rental calculation (and hence the rent) was twice what it should be. I didn't tell anyone.

Even more spookily a few days ago, having already written this piece, I was dozing off in front of the telly during the local news programme, as one does, when I heard mention of some sort of fracas at a Night Club in Ware and looked up and could swear the Night Club was the Goods Shed in question. So I said to my companion, "Look at that! Did I ever tell you I nearly met The Beatles?" "Everyone in here has nearly met The Beatles, love," she replied, "Are you sure you're still taking your medication?"

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER

VOLUME 12, ISSUE 2, SUMMER 2007

Victoria

Who said Victoria has no sense of humour?

When, after a fashion shoot she was asked whether she might prefer Gordon or Dave as a future leader of the country, her agent flew into a rage. "Now that really is below the belt. Victoria, you don't have to answer that!"

But she was undeterred. She asked, "Do you mean which one of them I would rather sleep with? But before clarification was given she asked, "Is instant death an option?"

Le Tour

I am a big fan of the Tour de France and have watched it on TV for about 30 years. This year "le grand depart" is from London but I'm not sure if I will spectate again.

The event has a 103-year history and many riders have been disqualified throughout that period initially for rule infringements but more recently for drug taking.

Even Maurice Garin, the winner of the inaugural race in 1903, was disqualified for the minor infringement of taking the train for some of the more difficult stages. Another contestant, disqualified in one of the earlier races, could be regarded as hard done by. On a long Alpine stage his forks broke and needed re-welding. He carried his bike to the summit and then down the next village. There he woke up the village smithy and persuaded him to open up his forge and relight the furnace. A cycling fan himself the smithy said he would be proud to weld the defective forks himself. Aware of the rules the rider refused third party help as it was against the rules. He did the job himself and rode down the mountain, in the dark, to the start of the next stage. When the Tour Officials learned of this epic adventure they were rightly proud of the contestant and the integrity of the event but the rider was ultimately disqualified when it was revealed he had allowed the smith's lad to work the furnace bellows.

I have many vivid memories of the Tour. The victory of the soft-spoken Irishman Stephen Roche in 1987 and the lightweight Marco Pantani dancing

round the heavyweight Jan Ullrich who always returned from the close season a stone or two overweight. The Tashkent Terror, Djamilidine Abdoujaparov, demonstrating his fearless approach to a head down final stage sprint by tripping over a barrier support at 45 mph. Bjarne Riis, the 1996 winner breaking the opposition in the Alps by stretching his 3 key opponents in an uphill sprint breakaway and then sitting up and moving aside to let them through. They thought he was finished but he looked across at the third opponent as he pulled along side, smiled broadly and began his sprinting again. He gave each the same treatment before disappearing into the distance and eventually victory.

Pre war I think the stimulant of choice was cognac. After the war it was amphetamines but, as Fausto Coppi the 1952 victor said, "Only when it was necessary." From the mid 1980s doping became far more prevalent by methods that seem more relevant to the laboratory of Frankenstein than a supreme sporting occasion.

So I am no longer sure whether I am watching an excellent athletic

performance or the relative successes of a bunch of industrial chemists. Hence I am not sure if I will watch or not.

To ensure a smooth start perhaps the Tour Officials should keep a careful eye on the Eurostar for errant cyclists and ensure that all village smithies between London and Canterbury are firmly closed for the day.

The Lions Of Lisbon

On 25 May 1967 Celtic won the European Cup by beating Inter Milan 2 – 1 in the final in Lisbon. The final pre-match words of Manager Jock Stein to his team ought to be memorised and adapted by all with managerial responsibilities.

"If you're ever going to win the European Cup then this is the day and this is the place. But we don't just want to win this cup; we want to do it playing good football – to make neutrals glad we've won it, glad to remember how we won it."

Robert Philip of The Daily Telegraph records a more down to earth memory of the day. These are the recorded words of Jimmy Johnson, "Wee Jinky."

"Big Jock always said we'd win but to be honest I thought we'd get a right gubbin'.

I can see them yet standing alongside us in the tunnel waiting to go out on the pitch; Facchetti, Domenghini, Mazzola, Cappellini, all six footers wi' Ambre Solaire suntans, Colgate smiles and slicked back hair. Each and every wan o' them looked like yon film star Cesar Romero. They even smelt beautiful."

"And there's us midgets. Ah've got nae teeth, Bobby Lennox has'nae any either, and old Ronnie Simpson's got the full monty, nae teeth top and bottom. The Italians are starin' doon at us and we're grinnin' back up at 'em wi' our great gumsy grins. We must have looked like something oot o' the circus."

Must have been some match.

More frozen birds

Remember British Rails' problems in using frozen chickens to test

windcreens? Well, here we go again. Yellville, a town in Arkansas, celebrates its annual Turkey Trot Festival each October. The highlight occurs with the dropping of a live turkey from the roof of the Marion County Courthouse and the challenge is to catch it. Apparently given optimum conditions wild turkeys can glide for considerable distances.

But the American psyche demands continuous improvement, "The build a better mousetrap" philosophy and so the focus of the festival was changed from one bird from the courthouse to the dropping of a number of large birds from a plane flying low over the town.

It seemed impossible to improve this until one year animal activists decided that frozen birds would be a kinder option. You're way ahead of me aren't you?

Yes, no one had reckoned on the damage a frozen oven-ready turkey could do to the roof of a modern car, (they should have consulted ACES members) and so last year the Festival reverted to feathered friends.

Boxing

I just happened to tune into "Best Ever Fights Live" on ITV4 and saw Jim Rosenthal and Barry McGuigan run through some of the most memorable recent fights. It was most enjoyable. Tyson versus Spinks demonstrated Tyson's power. Spinks, the technically superb and superior boxer was clearly terrified of his opponent's reputation and lost heavily.

Jim mentioned that at about this time Jimmy Greaves and gone to the States to record a programme with, and to spar with, Iron Mike. At this point Barry rocked back on his heels with delight. It was an unusual idea, he conceded, but Tyson even then was becoming an unpredictable man even to spar with.

"They must have had a man stationed outside the ring with a kalashnikov during filming just in case he lost it," he mused. I think he meant Tyson – not Jim.

Brian Sewell

I don't often use other people's

quotes but for Mr Sewell I will make an exception. He is on TV from time to time and I remember him doing a programme on The Guildhall just before we were due to pay our annual visit there for the ACES AGM. He was explaining that respected artists were asked to record what might have been the City Corporation's Annual Dinner. These paintings were he explained the equivalent of yearly news photographs. All were very big and solidly framed. He explained the artistic features of each and then asked if we could detect any similarities between them. Well," he said, "they are all absolutely awful!" Ten out of ten for honesty anyway.

He also did a TV series about the Pilgrim's Route to Lourdes, a well-constructed, witty and interesting "road" series, until, that is, he reached Lourdes. Here he confessed he was losing his religious faith and felt unable to participate in the usual ceremonies. He was just finishing doing his piece to camera when he was buttonholed by a small group of elderly ladies from Merseyside. He explained what he was doing and finally one of the ladies asked if he was coming with them to say a prayer. He then repeated his concerns about his loss of faith. One of the ladies then reduced him to tears by putting her hand on his arm and saying, "Well don't worry, we'll say one for you."

His quote was about a "double act" from the northeast. The ones who, some raving publicist tried to convince us a few years ago, were "The new Morecambe and Wise." Mr Sewell said quite a lot about then in an item in the Radio Times and concluded by saying, "A and D are the most loathsome little twits ever to have made dim-witted provincial mediocrity the vehicle of millionaire success."

He may say that - but I couldn't possibly comment.

Turbines 'n pasties

At ACES meetings valuers are still asking for comparative information on how to assess wind turbine licence fees and the like. Here in the east the Crown Commissioners have the offshore wind farms' market sewn up except coastal

authorities might get a look in when dealing with the electricity cables connecting the turbines to the Grid.

Nice try ACES members for doing your bit to keep the wind turbine myth intact but you do not fool me. I accept the new factor of global warming although when I was at school the geography and physics teachers spent a lot of time frightening us by drawing attention to the fact that the sun was inevitably cooling and "you're all gonna

freeze to death!" Nonetheless I accept too the need to develop "renewables," sustainable forms of energy generation.

But as I say you are not fooling me. The turbines are just a sham to demonstrate something is being done. I know for a fact that the electricity cables connecting the turbines to the Grid are there to just drive the propellers around. Looks good doesn't it!

And what is it about all these Cornish

pasties that have sprung up in every English town and shopping mall. And all the motorways seem to be full of Cornish pasty lorries fanning out across England. Is something sinister afoot? Is a secret Cornish army being infiltrated into our midst? I think we should be told. These events began at about the same time Brian Reeve-Fowkes retired, and he has been very quiet since then (too busy perhaps?) but that may just be a coincidence.

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER

VOLUME 12, ISSUE 3, AUTUMN 2007

Le Tour

Well of course I watched it, from the pre-Grand Depart introductions to the Champs Elysees! The London end was masterminded by – if that's not too strong a word – our friend Ken who figured prominently in the pre-Grand Depart introduction of the teams in Trafalgar Square on Saturday evening. And there he was again waving the teams off on Sunday (and waiving the Congestion Charge and wearing the same shirt as yesterday as the ITV4 commentator unkindly remarked).

The TV pictures, mainly helicopter shots, were produced by the well practiced French TV Crew and the run down to Canterbury made me realise what an exquisitely beautiful place Kent is. I suspect one of the reasons I watch the event anyway is for the excellent helicopter views of French chateaux, churches, villages and wildlife. The views of Kent were just as good – if not better.

It soon became apparent that many of the usual competitors were not present including one of my favourites Mario Chippolini. Chippo is an Italian with film star looks. Wee Jimmy (see last issue) would have liked him. He was a big man and usually managed to pull off an early stage victory thanks to his fearless sprinting finish. In recent years he never completed the race and as soon as the road began to go uphill he was away home on the TGV. I suppose we are unlikely to see him again.

Hopefully the actions of the race

authorities this year in trying to eliminate doping will continue and a clean race is delivered before the sponsors disappear.

Four events stick in my mind.

1. David Millar, hoping for a win in the second time trial, was dogged by mechanical problems. Time trial bikes have a solid rear wheel with a lightweight tyre fixed on with glue. It was unfortunate when his rear tyre came off the disc within sight of the start. For the same thing to happen to the replacement wheel after 400 yards looked like carelessness. David despatched the faulty wheel far across the adjoining field. "I thought you looked a little bit angry at that point," ventured an intrepid lady reporter. "Oh did I?" replied David with a slight touch of irony.

2. The regular Tour reporter Phil Liggett is becoming a worthy successor to Murray Walker.

3. The eventual winner of the race usually emerges in the mountain stages; the uphill bits not the downhill. The scariest sections are near each summit before the crowds are contained behind barriers. Here the vast crowds, getting bigger every year, seem to overwhelm the road and the leading riders behind a couple of police motorbikes seem to have to force a route through which then closes up behind them. Very claustrophobic. When the crowds are slightly less dense individual spectators like to run alongside the

riders shouting "encouragement" into their ears, throwing water over them and just generally being an absolute bloody nuisance. Such spectators are invariably Spanish, overweight, topless and inebriated. They wear cheap football shorts and flip-flops. They are dangerous.

This year such an event was being filmed from a low flying helicopter ahead of the leading group. We saw a typical looney rumble into unsteady action. He was in great danger of either a massive coronary or falling over and bringing down the group. Then we could see about 50 yards ahead a well-dressed spectator standing peacefully by the roadside. He looked as though he could handle himself. He could. As the looney closed in he stepped casually into his path and stopped him dead with a perfect, well-timed, stiff-arm tackle. It was high too. He would have been red carded under any rugby code and I doubt if he would have played for the rest of the season. The looney must have thought he'd run into a brick wall. I hope he had his video on at home.

4. And finally a last word on doping. In August, after yet another blood test, I was told that the analysis registered an unusually high count of red blood cells. "Oh really," I said, "I did lend it to this Danish bloke for his French cycling holiday and he's just brought it back unexpectedly early."

The Scribbler has been unwell

In early August, after a series of ever

more complicated tests extending over a 4-month period I was finally admitted to hospital and awaited an encounter with Mr Pitt, the Consultant. Sadly he didn't look much like James Robertson-Justice but was reassuringly young and so more likely to remember his days at medical school.

He did very well though. Had a Consultant Surveyor made the initial incision he would have used a ruler and taken more care with the spacing of the 30 heavy duty paper clips holding me together. It'll be a sensation when I take my top off on the beach at St-Tropez next year.

Mr Pitt estimated 4 to 6 weeks' recovery time. This instantly ruled out Morpeth.

I cannot remember the last ACES conference I missed. At the time of writing 6 weeks is beginning to look like an underestimate.

I drafted the above "Le Tour" in hospital while waiting for the surgeon to arrive but subsequently events have seemed to be slightly devoid of humour except for the following football story.

European Championship football

England had 2 "must win to qualify" matches in September and after the success against Israel I decided to watch England v Russia on TV. I tired of the banal TV commentary and so switched to Radio 5 Live for the second half. After

a few minutes the commentator broke into his commentary on the England match with the words "And now over to Roddy Forsyth in Paris who has some news." (There were many other qualifying matches being played at the same time including France v Scotland in Paris. All the experts had gone for a French victory; now read on.)

Roddy responded immediately, in a state of some excitement, with, "I want you to listen very carefully. I will say this only once. Here in Paris the score is France 0, **SCOTLAND 1!**"

Great news; and that was the final score.

NORMAL SERVICE WILL BE RESUMED IN THE NEXT ISSUE.

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER VOLUME 12, ISSUE 4, WINTER 2007/8

Thinking of Morpeth

I had to miss Morpeth but the President was kind enough to keep me in touch and there were excellent reports from Andrew Wild and young Willie Martin in The Terrier. I was much taken by the photograph of Woodhorn on the front cover, according to Andrew, "The intriguing roofscape is intended to reflect the profile of underground coal cutting machinery.

Back in 1959 I was lucky enough to get a summer job at the local coalmine. The NCB did not normally do this but the Training Officer knew my father and strings were pulled. As I was a regular employee I had to join the union. I must be the only ex-NUM Fellow of the RICS around.

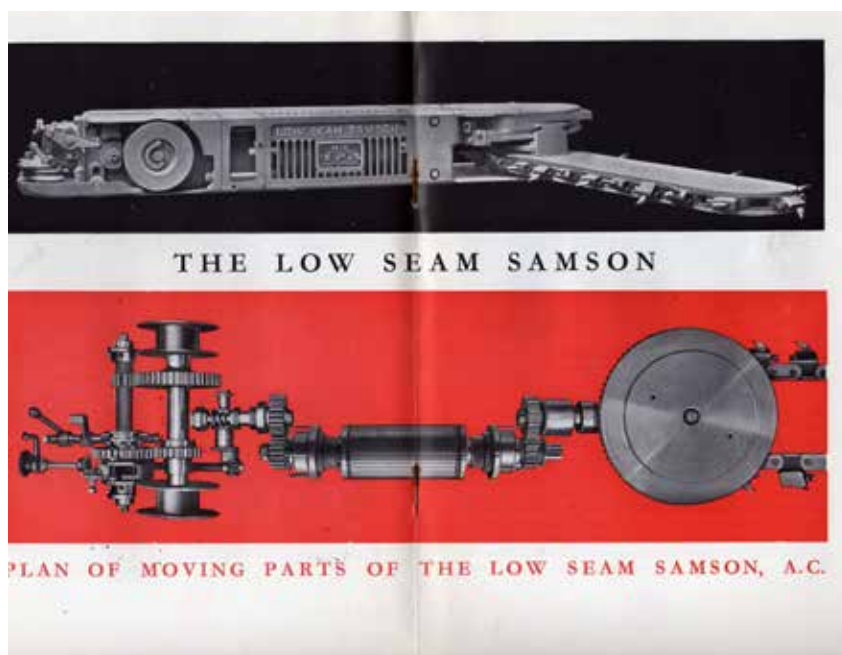
Even more luckily I was put to work with Les Bilton whose job was the repair and maintenance of the aforesaid underground coal cutting machinery. Les worked in the surface workshop. He had 2 claims to fame. He was in his mid-forties, married, with a family of about 10 children to feed. He married before the war and already had a biggish family before going into the Navy as a deep-sea diver. After 6 years away he returned and started again! His other claim to fame was he was the only fitter in the workshops to have a key to a storeroom

close by where he kept his supply of replacement parts. We adjourned there twice a day so Les could have a fag and a sit down as neither was permitted elsewhere. The only downside was that big flasks of some ammonia-based substance were stored in there too and the fumes made me cough and my eyes water for hours afterwards. Les seemed immune, probably thanks to his deep-sea diver experiences.

We worked on low seam Samson chain coalcutters made by Mavor and

Coulson, head office and works at 47 Broad Street Glasgow.

The machines were solidly built and driven by air turbine motors. It was 8 foot long, 12 inches high and 2 foot wide and weighed 4,000 lbs; that's nearly 2 tons. The coalcutters shown at Morpeth actually cut out the coal and in some case loaded it onto the conveyor. In this pit the seams were too narrow for that and the low seam Samson was used for "gobbin aht" ie a 4-inch deep slot about 6 foot deep was cut into the



base of the seam so that when the shot firers got to work all the seam was able to break away ready for loading. The conveyor was moved up and miners loaded the coal with shovels. This produced, as Arthur often said, "The cheapest deep-mined coal in the world." What he neglected to say was that Australian open cast coal could have been flown in by Concord, first class, and still be cheaper.

The machines seldom got as far as a routine service as there would be some minor fault underground, an inspection panel would be removed and a half a hundredweight of nutty slack would fall into the mechanism. They would be brought out of the pit and we would find them in the workshop. Everything about them was robust. Big nuts and bolts held the inspection plates on. They always needed coaxing with a 14lb hammer. The working parts were well protected with a profusion of ball bearing races. These took an hour or so of energetic hammer work to get them off the shaft. It took a week to refurbish one machine but it was a pleasure to see them going back to work looking pristine with a nice lick of paint.

Woodhorn is now firmly on my visits list.

AMDP@INLOGOV

In my day you knew you had a firm grip on the management ladder when the powers-that-be put your name forward for an Advanced Management Development Programme (AMDP) at the Institute of Local Government Studies (INLOGOV) at the University of Birmingham. When my name first came up I was Deputy County Land Agent and Valuer and after a number of interviews I was pencilled in for 1984. Unfortunately both my parents then died shortly before I was due to attend and I asked if I could be excused. Reluctantly INLOGOV agreed but I rather think I was marked down as LMF (lacking moral fibre).

I was slipped onto the next year's course and this was hardly less convenient as by then I had just moved into a new built house (and busily engaged in digging all the bricks out of the back garden) and was only a few weeks into my newly appointed Chief Officer role and just

getting to grips with it. However, in the circumstances, reluctantly, I thought I ought to go so had to set up an effective system of office delegation immediately.

The course was based at what was once the Cadbury mansion on the southern edge of Birmingham. It lasted 6 weeks from early February 1985 to mid March. Remarkably the temperature was below freezing for most of time, a most unusual circumstance that would now be taken as proof positive of global warming.

Up to that time INLOGOV boasted that all participants in its long residential course finally went home at least a stone heavier but luckily for me there was a change of policy and the first 2 days were devoted to diet, healthy eating and the benefits of regular exercise! As one lady nutritionist put it, "The middle-aged overweight executive who takes no exercise is likely to either die before retirement age or suffer in later life from a number of tiresome and uncomfortable medical conditions." I woke up at 4am the following morning with the sudden realisation, "Crikey, she means me."

The only other events of note in the first week were that overnight my car, along with many others, was opened up and everything portable stolen. On Friday we spent the morning at the University ready for a quick getaway after lunch and my car was broken into and again emptied. I arrived home eventually with just the clothes I stood up in and was uncertain whether to return on Sunday night.

But I did and things improved. I bought some trainers and went cross-country running every afternoon. We played football at lunch times. On returning to work I found everything had gone swimmingly in my absence and I upset the Chief Executive at my first Monday morning Management Team. There's nothing to this advanced management lark.

Encore Le Tour De France

I wrote about Le Tour again in the last Terrier, it's just below the big photo of an early session of Village People on the Woolwich Ferry, and I promise to not mention it again perhaps until next

autumn. I mentioned that "Hopefully the actions of the race authorities this year in trying to eliminate doping will continue and a clean race is delivered before the sponsors disappear." More revelations about doping have appeared since then and already a major sponsor Deutsche Telekom has pulled out.

Wee Jinky - again

The perceptive among you would have been watching the "Rebus" episode "Knots and Crosses" on Friday 7 December. The stories are set in Edinburgh and the production values of the series are just about as good as Morse. But instead of being filmed in golden Oxford light Rebus is deliberately dark and gloomy and Ken Stott plays Rebus with frightening intensity.

The observant amongst you would also have noticed that in the last reel, when Rebus is questioning a suspect in a bar, he is punched across the room and hits the opposite wall with his shoulder breaking the glass of a framed cartoon drawing of, yes you've guessed it, Wee Jinky in exactly the same pose as the photograph 62 of the summer edition! Where will he turn up next?

High drama in Nantes

In the aftermath of the early departure of Wales from the RUGBY WORLD CUP the Telegraph reported, "The dismissal of (Gareth) Jenkins was inevitable after an afternoon of high drama in Nantes."

Some years ago I was in Nantes and was personally involved in an afternoon of even higher drama.

At one time I used to motorcaravan holiday "en famille" and for many years drove down to Biarritz to stay on a rather splendid site overlooking the Atlantic just to the south of that town. It was a long drive and the favoured route back was Bordeaux, Nantes, Rennes and on to either St-Malo or Le Havre.

During those years I got to know Nantes "peripherally"; it looked to be an elegant place. The 2-lane ring road round the town had a mixture of junction formats. Either there was a normal slip road that required a deliberate turn to exit or the

whole of the inner lane became the slip road with the bypass reduced to one lane for the duration of the junction. I never discovered how to predict which was which and so one day unexpectedly swept off the main road and down into mega retail development in the form of a covered shopping mall with many individual shops leading to a hypermarket that sold everything. The car parking area was massive. It proved to be an excellent place to stock up on essentials before reaching the ferry and having made a note of the junction I used it for a number of years. I remember the last time well.

Fifteen years ago credit cards did not always work properly and so I usually carried a wedge of local currency to avoid embarrassment. As we were on the way home the wedge was hidden in the vehicle and so we strolled round

the hypermarket without it. We arrived at the checkout with an extremely well filled trolley. None of our credit cards would do the business. The queue behind began to get restive; as did the checkout operator. An armed security guard began to hover. Somehow we managed to explain that that we did have the readies in our vehicle and I would go and get them. This was accepted but only if I left the goods and my then wife as security.

It was a good 10-minute walk to the vehicle and then back to checkout and I didn't hurry. As I walked back down the mall I could see all the way into the front of the hypermarket and noticed that the full trolley and my then wife had been moved out of the checkout area and into a position of shame in the open concourse adjoining and was now closely attended by 2 armed guards

presumably in case she opted to leg it with the full trolley.

All 3 spotted me some way off and began to watch me, with; it has to be said, mounting irritation, as I sauntered back to the store. I resisted the mischievous temptation to window shop!

As I got closer the guards began to nervously fiddle with the guns in their holsters. I kept a straight face as I walked up to them. Just as my wife took in a deep breath in order to scream, "Well, have you got it?" I pre-empted this by saying, "Where did you say the money was hidden?"

It was a toss-up as to which of the three would have killed me first had I not said, "Only kidding," and produced the wedge. It was a quiet drive home.

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER

VOLUME 13, ISSUE 1, SPRING 2008

Birmingham

Having unavoidably missed Morpeth I had set Birmingham as a milestone on my road to recovery – and I got there. It was an excellent conference and for me it was a pleasure to renew old acquaintances and meet new friends. I travelled up by train, a 4-hour trip on a small but crowded cross-country service, and by the end of the journey I was beginning to lose the will to live. To avoid this going back I cut the final 2 presentations in order to catch the 12.24 from New Street. This offered better prospects for a quieter, less stressful trip.

Unfortunately one carriage was fully booked out and occupied by a large party of grey haired OAPs on the way to Stansted thus leaving only one carriage for the usual complement of ordinary travellers and other Stansted-bound holidaymakers. Accordingly the return journey was far noisier and more stressful than the previous day's but I made it.

I think I'll drive to Basildon.

Weeley interesting

The Weeley Festival of Progressive Music that took place in late August 1971 was one of the first open air pop festivals and set a trend still followed today. The village of Weeley is in Essex, situated on the A133 Colchester to Clacton road. There is a railway station, the next stop being Thorpe-le-Soken and then either Walton or Clacton. There is also good road access to Harwich and the continental ferries.

The festival was organised by 30-year olds Vic Speck and Peter Gibbs on behalf of Clacton Round Table. The objective was to raise "a considerable amount of money for charity" and "to put this area on the map."

The festival site was a couple of farmer's fields adjoining the railway line and easily accessible from the station. I didn't go but lived about a mile and half away so heard every bass guitar note played.

The programme, a self-assembly job from the local newspaper is a fascinating piece of rock history.

The headliners were The Faces and King Crimson. I'm sure I had seen The Faces playing in the Two Puddings at Stratford, E15. We couldn't get a drink, as it was impossible to fight a way through to the bar, but the music was so intense that it resonated through the entire body. I soon had to make my excuses and leave. Among the many "next to headliners" were Greaseband, who had just parted company with Joe Cocker, Mungo Jerry, Edgar Broughton, who did all my conveyancing work when I moved house 10 years later and Van Der Graaf Generator. Two years later I remember standing behind a studious young man with rimless glasses at Stowmarket station booking office who produced a Van Der Graaf Generator chequebook to pay for his ticket to London.

Tucked away in the small print of the supporting acts is "Status Quo". There is a colour photograph inside which, on close inspection, could be the sons, or possibly grandsons of the current members of "Status" as we aficionados always call them.

The Festival ended mid-morning on

Sunday 29 August and then everything went quiet. Although the sound of a bass guitar carried very well it was rather monotonous and impossible to tell what was being played except during the early hours of Sunday morning during the set of Arthur Brown Kingdom Come. I reckon the "God of Hellfire" must have played Fire half a dozen times. Oh, how we sang along.

Once the music stopped the continental contingent set off on foot along Harwich Road, which is where I lived. Most were dressed in ex military gear with backpacks, bedrolls and the like. There were a lot of them. For about 3 hours it looked like Napoleon's Retreat from Moscow.

Derek Dooley

Derek Dooley died on 5 March 2008 aged 78. He was "an iconic figure" in Sheffield. He was made a Freeman of the City of Sheffield in 1993 and held an honorary doctorate from Sheffield Hallam University. During his working life he was variously employed in a number of local businesses and was, at times, Manager of Sheffield Wednesday Football Club and later Commercial Manager and later Chairman of Sheffield United Football Club at a time when you could owe your allegiance to either one club or the other but definitely not both.

He was also, of course, the fearless Owls centre forward who scored 62 goals in 61 matches for Wednesday until, tragically, he broke his leg at the age of 23, and then following medical complications his leg had to be amputated.

Although I was a United supporter no one could but fail to be aware of the 6ft 3in tall red haired ungainly footballer with a permanent grin on his face and it is a tribute to his resilience that having lost his livelihood he went on to further successes with a complete lack of bitterness or self-pity.

One sentence in his obituary struck a chord. "It was on 14 February 1953, at Deepdale, that Dooley broke his right leg in two places in a collision with Preston North End's goalkeeper George Thompson."

George lived 4 houses away from where I was brought up. His father was a carpenter and had reputedly played in goal for Southampton. He had 2 brothers, Des and Kenny. Kenny was the same age as me and was a childhood pal; Des and George were about 10 years older.

Alongside the Thompson's house was an unmade track providing future access to undeveloped back land and I remember that Des and George were always out there practicing their football skills; one in goal and the other "shooting in" with constant arguments about "it's my turn to be in goal."

Remarkably they used a well-patched "casey", practically unheard of at the time, and they spent a lot of time repairing punctures and the like. I remember once, being at a loose end, I loitered behind the goal retrieving over the bar shots until, venturing too close I took a fierce shot on the legs. They were big teenagers and I was about 5 or 6. It hurt like hell and I had nightmares about that for years afterwards.

My other main memory is the intensity of their practice. They were always there and carried on and on until Mrs Thompson, from the kitchen, shouted them in for a meal. They always ignored this; whereupon Mrs T would emerge from the kitchen, encroach on the field of play, and cuff both of them soundly round the ears with cogent advice on how to conduct themselves next time.

Des went on to play for Burnley at the same time that George was with Preston, both teams then being in the real First Division.

Schooldays

I am told I first went to school at 3 years old. There was a nursery class attached to the village infants school. I remember having a fight with Derek Madison on the school steps early on but my two main memories are greaseproof paper and beds. We all had to bring sandwiches for lunch and these were wrapped in greaseproof paper although where our parents found that from in the last year of the war I do not know. Our names were written on the paper

and the package was handed in on arrival in the morning.

At midday the sandwiches were handed out and we ate them probably with a bottle of milk. We were then lined up in the hall and one by one were issued with a small camp bed. These were lined up in rows and we all went to sleep until three then we went home. Happy days!

At 4 years of age we entered the infants school proper, headmaster Mr Miller who was also Head of the junior school both establishments being in the same buildings and to all intents and purposes indistinguishable to an outside observer. I used to love morning assembly with a hymn, a bible reading, a prayer and a pep talk from the Head. I remember I often used to do the bible reading though why and how I managed it I cannot recall. Perhaps I was the only one who could read?

Mr Cottingham took the top class and its sole purpose was to get us through the 11 plus. We spent a lot of time doing old exam questions but it was not all hard work. In the afternoons Mr C used to read to us from King Solomon's Mines or It's Never Too Late To Mend by Charles Read, a tale about prisons and punishments in the 18th century. I cannot imagine why this was deemed suitable for impressionable 11 year olds.

Mr Cottingham would be unsuitable teacher material today. He had a short temper and didn't suffer fools gladly; and most pupils are from time to time, foolish. One would have to go up to the front of the class to have written work marked. As in a Giles cartoon he had a big desk set on a high dais. Standing on tiptoe we would diffidently slide our work on to his desk. If there was the slightest error he would sweep the book off his desk and across the room with a muttered "Cretin!" leaving you with the problem of finding the error, correcting it and redoing the whole traumatic process again.

But thanks to Mr C all who were expected to pass got through and all the successful ones and their parents were duly grateful to him, albeit posthumously, as he died before we took the exam. Perhaps his illness,

whatever it was, was the reason behind his strange behaviour.

Moving on from being a small fish in a small pond to being a small fish in a gigantic pond must have been difficult. Maltby Grammar School was a 2-storey building, surmounted by a big clock, and built on top of an embankment overlooking the main A631 road. No easy walk from home this time but a half hour coach ride.

After a chaotic morning assembly in a massive hall with what seemed thousands of other pupils we reached our form classroom and our new form teacher Mrs Monteith. I remember it well. It was a bright sunny room now containing about 40 new kids, 6 being old friends from the village school and the rest total strangers.

Mrs M went slowly through the register of names checking backgrounds and asking one or two personal questions to put the new boys, and girls, at ease. One listened with interest as the process unfolded. Then came my turn.

"William Hubert Marshall?"

"Present Miss."

"Now William; are you called William – or Bill? Or Hubert – or Bert?"

I sensed this was an important turning point. I felt the hand of history on my shoulder. For 11 years I had always been called Hubert. Time for a change I thought.

"I am always called Bert, Miss," I replied.

"Since when have you been called Bert?" asked Jennifer Snow half an hour later. We had been chums since nursery school. "Since about half an hour ago," I replied with a new-found confidence and assurance that was really rather pleasant.

There is one fascinating footnote. My mother, who came from a poor background (financially), had attended grammar school in the 1930s at a time when boys from financially challenged backgrounds rarely did and girls never did. She attended Woodhouse Grammar

School, in the catchment area to the south. Her first form teacher was a young Mrs Monteith.

Motorbikes

Having secured my first professional job of Junior Building Surveyor I had to focus on finding out all there was to know about the RICS exams. As luck would have it the new Sheffield College of Science and Technology had a surveying faculty and as I had the prospect of day release we were home and dry – nearly.

My home was a village 20 miles away from the city centre. There was an hourly bus service. This was inconvenient and expensive. I worked out that I could afford to buy a new motor cycle on HP and tax, insure and run it for less than the cost of weekly bus fares.

And so I walked over to Dan Bradbury (Motor Cycles) Ltd in London Road to see what was on offer. My elder brother had a good old British-made Francis Barnett 250 cc 2-stroke that was big, heavy and took about 15 minutes to kick start into life each morning. I didn't want that sort of experience and so was immediately beguiled by the new Japanese models that had just come in as well as their very reasonable prices.

I selected a 50cc model, the one that looked like a genuine motorcycle and not the scooter-like version that became more popular later. The deposit, tax, insurance, number plates (149 FWA), petrol and oil came to £29.12.6. A "space age" crash helmet cost £4. In addition I had to pay £3.13.1 every month for the next 30 months. As I already had a provisional licence I said I would pick the machine up late on Wednesday afternoon.

My brother came along on his FB to assist and guide me home. The man at the shop asked if I had ever driven one before, I said no! "Well" he said, "that's the throttle, that's the brake pedal, that's the gear change pedal, best of luck." I strapped on my helmet and was gone.

London Road was a busy street and it was now rush hour so the first few miles were an absolute nightmare. Apart

from the crash helmet I had no PSE at all so by the time I got home I was both frozen and frightened. My first purchase of petrol was one gallon, all the tank would take, cost a halfpenny short of 5 bob ie just under 25p in decimal money. In the first month, March 1963 I did 547 miles, achieved over 88 mpg at a cost of 5p per mile and yes it was cheaper than the bus. Over the year the average mpg was 120!

As time went on I acquired new waterproof over-trousers and coat for £2.60, goggles for £1 and a "racing fairing" for the bike for just under £15, mail order. In February 1964 I took and passed my driving test, cost £1. I also re-taxed the bike for 12 months for £1 and renewed the fully comprehensive insurance for the princely sum of £2.40. Later on in June 1964 I bought a new Belstaff Trialmaster waterproof suit for £10.50.

Unlike the Francis Barnett my bike was smaller, lighter and started first time every time and helped me get mobile and off public transport which in those days was everyone's objective. Prices now look incredibly cheap but in the context of those days had to be budgeted for very carefully.

I hope these days new riders are not allowed take away their purchases without proper (any) instruction. The accepted practice then was lethal but having got away with it once I was soon anxious to shorten the odds again by trading up to something more powerful. More later.

More footy

Having thought about going back to SKY for the past 20 years or so I have finally done it only to find that the stories of wall-to-wall Premiership football are rather overblown. I have to confess that so far I have only watched a whole match on one or two occasions. Nowadays I find it difficult to separate my Agbonlahors from my Abedeyors and I always remember Kenwyne Brown, who plays for Sunderland, as being much smaller when I knew him.

The beautiful game is now completely spoiled for me by two irritating traits. First the deliberate infringers of the

rules by players who are so arrogant that they believe holding both arms aloft with open palms shown to the referee will convince him that they did not in fact just kick that opponent into row Z. And second those who feign injury in order to ramp up the punishment for possible offenders.

Watching the referee in a recent European Cup match despatch Marco Materazzi for an early bath due to

persistent foul play reminded me of the only honest incident I witnessed in the last World Cup. It was towards the end of the last game France would play before being eliminated. Zinedine Zidane and Marco Materazzi were walking back from the Italian penalty area in deep and earnest conversation. Suddenly Zizou turned to face his opponent and gave him a full strength head butt right in the chest. He did not try to pretend to the referee that he had not done it

or that his action was justified. He took his red card like a man and left the field without argument. True sportsmanship. Marco meanwhile went down like a sack of spuds as if he had been poleaxed as, indeed, he had been. No thrashing about on the ground for him to show the referee how badly hurt he was. Again, what a refreshing change, what true sportsmanship.

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER *VOLUME 13, ISSUE 2, SUMMER 2008*

Oh no! Not Le Tour again

I wasn't sure if I was well enough for my annual French tour this year but having received an offer I couldn't refuse, I made a late booking. A few days before leaving I realised that Le Tour 2008 was due to start before my return but thought no more about it.

In retrospect I planned in too much for the first day. Having got used to a short working day followed by a lie down in the late afternoon and an evening doing nothing I thought I was ready for a bit more. So I was up at 3am on a Sunday morning to catch a 7am Dover ferry and then on to Ypres followed by visits to a nearby WW1 Museum and the Tyne Cot Cemetery. This proved to be an emotional experience. The advised route for visitors is around the outside of the cemetery, through a recently opened museum where a (very long) tape deals with "The Naming of the Dead" and then into the cemetery itself with a long uphill walk towards the memorial buildings at the crest of the hill.

The tape was very moving but it was even more poignant to realise that many of the thousands of immaculate gravestones only bore the inscription "A soldier known only to God". And then half way up the hill the emotional stakes were raised to breaking point. A piper, dressed as a WW1 Scottish soldier, appeared at the top and began to play. Shortly thereafter I hurried out into the car park. By the time I had pulled myself together a military brass band could be heard coming up the approach road.

The atmosphere then lightened somewhat as the brass band came around the corner. It was a Belgian cycle-mounted brass band with a very professional repertoire. The "rhythm section" were on tandems but the "brass section" used ordinary bicycles. The played a few military marches stationary but then remounted and rode away playing a rather jaunty march.

As it was now mid-afternoon and I was beginning to wilt from the heat, the early start and the high emotion I began to drive cross-country to a pre-booked campsite about 30 miles inland from Calais. All went well until with one village left to go through I was brought to an abrupt halt at a T-junction by a man in a black jacket with "Securite" emblazoned on the back and backed up by a gun toting gendarme. Further progress left, my direction, or right was not allowed. I had no idea what was happening. Just my luck to run into a non-English speaking security man and gendarme in the middle of rural France.

After some time there was a burst of activity. A racing cyclist in yellow closely followed by another in "King Of the Mountains" polka dots sped by from left to right followed by a pack of similarly Lycra garbed competitors and a number of brightly coloured cars with spare bikes on the top. Was it a cycle race? Had I stumbled across Le Tour by accident? A few stragglers brought up the rear and then all was quiet. Were we ready to move off?

Time dragged on. It was very hot and there was a very strong, and hot, wind.

And then there was a burst of further activity. A group of racing quad bikes appeared from the left and turned down our bit of the T-junction. All quiet again for what seemed like an eternity when further movement of more cyclists and vehicles became discernable on the left. Was it the rest of the field? Was it another race? No; it looked as though it was the same lot as before. Oh no, it must be the second lap!

The familiar pattern of quiet, quad bikes, quiet and cyclists was repeated another twice (I think) when suddenly the officials at the head of the queue began to wave everybody on – but only to the right. By this time I was just glad to be on the move and expert map reading meant the original route was soon regained.

A week later, west of St Malo, I was toying with the idea of delaying my journey to Cherbourg to Monday rather than the planned Sunday when I happened to fall into conversation with an English cycling fan over to watch the Brittany stages of Le Tour. "Great," he said, "If you travel east-west on Monday you will come across the St Malo stage going north-south that day. You will be bound to see it as all roads in the area are closed off to facilitate the passage of the pre-race advertising caravan, about 2 hours, followed by the actual race that probably takes up a further 4 hours. And of course the roads are not always opened up straightaway....."

But by this time I was not listening. I had already decided to leave on the Sunday.

Le Veritable Tour

At the time of writing the actual Tour is halfway over and there are two matters I cannot resist mentioning. Uniquely a British rider (Isle of Man) has already won 4 stages and drug cheats continue to be identified.

The British rider Mark Cavendish has pulled off 4 sprint finish wins thanks to both his own innate ability and the excellent support of his colleagues in Team Columbia.

And why do the drug cheats continue to chance it? Is it the long hours of contact with the hard saddle that causes a numbing effect on the brain? Listening to the live commentary in 2 cases it was remarked "Rider X has turned in an unbelievable performance today." And so, when the test tubes had done their work, we all know why.

The feeling on Le Tour is that next year, in addition to the regular dope tests, all participants ought to be asked to take an intelligence test too before being allowed to compete.

The inside story of the transmogrification of the County Land Agent and Valuers Association to the Counties Branch on the occasion of the CLAVA centenary

When CLAVA was founded in 1908 every County Property Officer was called County Land Agent and Valuer hence the association's full title of County Land Agent and Valuers' Association. Looking back through the list of former Presidents in "Per Annum" I see 4 Captains, a Major and a Lieut Col TG Ellis MBE TD from Norfolk who was President from 1939 to 1944. It was that sort of Association. And Col CR Bennett TD DL of Cambridgeshire, who was President in 1928 was President again in 1953, as Lieut Col CR Bennett TD DL, but still at Cambridgeshire.

I knew, vaguely, the 1970 President DJD (Dennis) Shepherd of West Suffolk. We met once or twice in the run up to the Grand Reorganisation of 1974 and I inherited, and got to know well,

all his properties and files. The 1980 President was AL (Tony) Bennett of Buckinghamshire who reappears a few paragraphs below. The next president was Hamish Anderson of Suffolk (my boss) who was succeeded by Eric Vessey from neighbouring Norfolk. In the following year, 1983, the tone of the organisation increased markedly when a young Kenwyn Brown of Cheshire became President.

I was so keen to join CLAVA that my application for membership was approved on 27 November 1984 just before I became County Land Agent and Valuer at Suffolk County Council on 1 April 1985. The then Secretary of CLAVA was Brian Garrett. I shared an office with Brian for a year after joining East Suffolk County Council as a humble Valuer on 18 May 1970. Happy days. Of those present at that fateful meeting only Tim Foster is still around. He has a lot to answer for.

Way back in 1984, there were still four County Land Agent and Valuers in post, Chris Rowley in Cumbria, John Cook in Durham, Henry Cave at Powis and me. Of course, as ever different, Cornwall had both a County Land Agent and a County Valuer in separate departments.

Full of anticipation, I arrived at my first meeting at the Lords Hill Hotel, Shrewsbury, on Wednesday 5 June 1985. Meetings then took two days, there was no professional presentation content, but we did talk a lot about milk quota. Strolling nervously into the bar that evening, as a complete new boy, I was warmly welcomed by Tony Bennett of Buckinghamshire, whom I had never met before, with the words "You must be the new member from Suffolk".

At the meeting my first impression was that most of the members seemed very old, very confident, very articulate and very affluent. I cannot believe that new members see us older members in the same light today. On the agenda were membership applications from the young Alun Jones of Gwynedd who later became ACES President in 2000/2001 and the not quite so young Dick Miller from Norfolk who was ACES President in 1988/89.

Missing out on autumn at Shanklin on the Isle of Wight I did attend my first

AGM on 9 December 1985 at the ACC offices. The timing and location were, I suspect, fixed so as to be ideal for a spot of early Christmas shopping.

The election of John Cook as President in 1986 meant that the spring meeting took place at the Royal County Hotel, Durham. Also in 1986 a special meeting was also held to discuss the establishment of a single new Association of Valuers and Estates Surveyors employed in Local Government. This was carried by a large majority even though it would mean the imminent dissolution of CLAVA. Woodhall Spa Lincolnshire was the venue in the autumn and Trevor Hopkins, the Lincolnshire Director of Property Services, hosted the meeting. (By coincidence Knight Frank advertised the hotel for sale in the Estates Gazette of 10 May 2008.)

The last meeting of CLAVA took place; somewhat appropriately, at the then County Hall, London on 27 November 1986 and the last item on the Agenda was the formal dissolution of the County Land Agents and Valuers Association. There was much wailing and gnashing of teeth even though it had been agreed that CLAVA would continue, thinly disguised as the County Branch of the new Association called Local Authority Valuers Association ie LAVA.

To digress for a moment, and if memory serves me right, the Hon. Treasurer of CLAVA was Harvey Cox, the Land Agent at Somerset and he volunteered to be the first Hon Treasurer of LAVA but for only one year as he planned to retire and move to warmer climes. I should say the silver tongued Harvey Cox because he identified me as a potential Hon. Treasurer and he invested 6 months of earnest pleading before persuading me to take over the role. We met in the neutral territory of Chieveley Services on the M4 where Harvey handed over 2 boxes of account books and records and, gentleman that he was, bought me lunch. He left smiling and headed off to Somerset, retirement and an island paradise. It took me about 6 years before I realised why he was smiling but by then I had supped deep from the poisoned chalice he had handed me.

The first meeting of the County Branch of the Local Authority Valuers Association, LAVA, took place at the Swan's Nest Hotel, Stratford Upon Avon, on 7 & 8 April 1987. There we were asked to approve an application for associate membership from a nice young chap called Charles Coates of Gloucestershire. I often wonder what happened to him.

The long and winding road then continued to Taunton where we shared the hotel with the New Zealand cricket team, Llandridnod Wells, where it rained heavily for three days, and Chelmsford where Charles Coates presented a paper on Smallholdings Policy Review. We next met at the Hotel St Michael's in Falmouth, next at RICS headquarters, followed by Chichester and York where we shared the hotel with the Australian Rugby League team. The minutes allege that I presented a paper on property management but I don't remember anything about it.

At about this time, early 1990, Henry Cave of Powys, the penultimate County Land Agent and Valuer, made the very good point that as more than one county was involved in the branch it ought to be called the Counties Branch rather than the County Branch. Why had nobody thought of this before?

So on to Cardiff, then the famous Midland Hotel, Morecambe, followed by, somewhat shamefacedly, a return to the Hotel St Michael's Falmouth. In autumn 1991 the Branch went international and met at Llanrug, Caernarfon, followed by Shanklin, Isle of Wight and Newcastle-upon-Tyne. I was elected Branch Chairman for 1992/93 and this meant that the next spring meeting would be in Felixstowe, Suffolk.

On and on we went to Upton St Leonards, Gloucester, Aylesbury, Bournemouth, York, Torquay, and Oundle in October 1996. The Branch had gone its own way for 10 years and it was too good to last. The first of the new combined National and Counties Branch meetings was at Harrogate in the spring of 1997 followed by meetings at Shaftesbury, Chester, Mortonhamsted, Troon, Salisbury and more. The successors of CLAVA needed stamina.

Form me this fascinating journey hit the buffers shortly after the Counties Branch met at Bury St Edmunds as part of the superlatively organised and very well received Suffolk 2000 National Conference and my, by now, somewhat tenuous link with CLAVA, via the Counties Branch, came to an end at

that time. One by one the other three County Land Agent and Valuers of 1984, Chris Rowley in Cumbria, John Cook in Durham and Henry Cave at Powys had been restructured out of existence or had retired, leaving just me as the last County Land Agent and Valuer of all time until the axe fell on me too on the last day of December 2000.

Many people, over the years, have suggested that the Counties Branch, and particularly its predecessor CLAVA, was little more than a very comfortable gentlemen's social and travel club. This is, of course, absolutely correct and I have to say that I have enjoyed every minute of my fifteen-year journey around the nicest parts of England, Wales and Scotland.

Along the way, of course, some serious business has been done and I have always found that meetings are very time consuming, stressful and need a high level of intellectual input.

But then again, if you believe that you'll believe anything.

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER VOLUME 13, ISSUE 3, AUTUMN 2008

Secret nuclear bunker

The highlight of Jim's (Ross) Basildon Conference social schedule was a visit to the secret nuclear bunker. What words to conjure with! I didn't go to see this cold war relic but off hand I would imagine it took hundreds of tons of steel and thousands of cubic yards of concrete to build and so, even though it was underground, it must have been awfully difficult to keep it a secret. Perhaps a lot of service men walked around shaking small quantities of ready mixed concrete down their trouser legs, as in the Great Escape, in order to put everyone of the scent.

Suffolk's nuclear bunker was not so secret. It was in the basement of a hideous 60s Courts/office complex. There was a serious design defect. All

the utilities inputs, eg water and gas mains, and soil pipe outputs went through the basement affixed to the ceiling. Imagine what the outcome of a nuclear strike within a 100-mile radius would have been and the effect on the occupants.

On the other hand an innocuous "oil terminal" with road and rail connections was "secret." In 60s parlance "secret" meant, "known only to the Russians". It was the focus of a top-secret network of underground aviation fuel pipelines serving all nearby airbases and only came to light when affected by a road improvement scheme.

A few years ago, in the event of the balloon going up or in this case the nuclear missiles raining down, it was my duty to go to the bunker for the

duration. We had a practice down there now and again. It was always a hideously claustrophobic and depressing experience to be cooped up, even for a few hours, with other local government officers and representatives of the uniformed and/or armed services. The latter were always identical young men in their thirties all with short haircuts and kitted out in blazer and flannels and shiny black shoes. They all spoke the same, knew each other and were completely interchangeable. Only the fire service stood out as resembling ordinary human beings.

It soon became clear that the civil defence role to be practised was based on the assumption that the nearest nuclear explosion had taken place more than 100 miles away, a fanciful assumption as there were about half a

dozen active operational air bases, British and American, within about 20 miles.

At one of the early sessions a young army officer explained my role to me in clipped terms.

He said, "Estates?" "Yes." "Given our scenario it is probable that thousands of refugees will leave the fringes of the devastated areas looking for safety. It is your role to billet them in the undamaged houses in this area." "How will I do that?" "You and your staff will knock on people's doors and tell the occupants that under the emergency powers invested in you that they have to take in say six refugees." "Will we be accompanied by armed soldiers?" "No need for that." "Will we be issued with sub machine guns?" "No." "Then we will be wasting our time."

At this point I think my card was marked possibly as a communist and potential fifth columnist.

My come-uppance was delivered at the next practice session where we had a new "scenario" and "role play." I was sat in the Controller's chair and so was in effect the supreme decision-maker authority for the emergency. The new scenario was that a number of big nuclear missiles had hit London and Essex and Suffolk had already absorbed thousands of refugees from the fringes of the devastated area. The latest news was that 50,000 starving and ill refugees were walking up the A12 from London and to accept any more in Suffolk would lead to a breakdown in law and order and general starvation. The practiced plan has swung into action. This was to deploy armed service personnel and hold these refugees at the Suffolk border.

In the role play the role of the aforementioned identical young men from the various services was to pass on received radio messages from units out in the field and to extract decisions from the civilian controller. They were very, very good.

Over quite a period of time ever more alarming messages were coming in at more and more frequent intervals. Decisions were demanded from the

Controller but the liaison men always had options to suggest. On reflection the scenario was to lead the controller on very small step by very small step to the final big one. The messages came in relentlessly.

"We're having difficulty in holding the line."

"There are another 25,000 coming up just behind. All are starving many are seriously injured."

"They have been pillaging as they come up the A12 and treating very badly anyone who gets in their way."

"There are a number of known troublemakers and many may be armed."

"They are beginning to outflank the roadblock and are organising a massed rush of our troops with armed people firing from the shelter of the crowd."

"We are beginning to take casualties and are in imminent danger of being overwhelmed."

We moved carefully to the required conclusion.

"What are your orders Controller?" said one of the identical young men.

"What are the options?"

"There are none now other than to open fire; will you give the order Controller?"

"Yes."

"What?"

"Open fire."

End of role-play. That was the required outcome. The identical young men from the various services looked at me with slightly raised eyebrows and the ghost of a smile. I never went again.

Credit Crunch

The acres of news-space on the current financial crisis surpassing even that devoted to the latest episode of the Newcastle Pantomime. Among those acres I have only seen one cogent

explanation of the problem.

Recently The Telegraph published a large photograph of John Bird and John Fortune together with the following simple explanation in large typeface under the heading "Super-finance according to Bird and Fortune." You can almost hear John Bird speaking the words.

"Imagine, if you can, an unemployed black man sitting on a crumbling porch somewhere in Alabama in his string vest and a chap comes along and says would you like to buy this house before it falls down and why don't you let me lend you the money?"

Then this mortgage is bought by a bank and packaged together on Wall Street with a lot of other similar debts. Somehow this package of dodgy debts stops being a package of dodgy debts and starts being what we call a structured investment vehicle.

I buy it and then I will ring up somebody in Tokyo and say look I've got this package do you want to but it? And they say what's in it? And I say I haven't got the faintest idea and they say how much do you want for it? And I say a hundred million dollars and the say fine and that's it.

That's the market."

British Rail

British Rail is regularly slagged off at ACES Conferences as being very tardy in concluding arrangements. It's time someone spoke up in defence; but first, let's get the British Rail joke out of the way.

"Before I began to work for British Railways, as it was then known, I had some very minor business to transact with my opposite number, the railway surveyor, about a very minor land issue at an out of the way rural railway station. I thought we could have settled the issue over the phone but my railway surveyor opposite number thought a site meeting was necessary. "We'll come by train," he said, and will arrive at the station at 10.35." At 10.35 I was on the platform and the train drew to a halt. I

expected the surveyor and possibly a junior to get off but a vast throng spilled out onto the platform. Panic! Will I miss them in the crowd but there he was waving. "I thought I might miss you with all these people about and ruin the meeting," I explained. He looked round expansively. "This is the meeting," he explained."

BR was into health and safety long before the issue hit the rest of the world. One of the worst crimes an employee could commit was to delay or endanger traffic. This was treated very seriously. For example putting a pipe or cable under the railway had to be dealt with very carefully and as part of the Railway Estates Team I soon gained a lot of experience in this.

Agreeing the easement was easy but doing the work was more problematic and here I came across a real character. He was a genuine Eastender and controlled all the engineering aspects of pipes or cables crossing the railway. I don't think he was an engineer nor highly placed organisationally but he knew all there was to know about his subject and had supreme and unchallengeable authority over all engineering aspects. The people I negotiated easements with went very pale when I told them who would be involved.

He always demanded a "site meeting" to mark the handover from surveying to engineering. In addition to an intimate knowledge of his railway empire he had an extensive knowledge of the best and most appropriate dining facilities convenient to any railway location and so we inevitably met the "Grantee", their surveyor and their works contractor for lunch at the best hotel nearest the site "just in case we need to have a look at the location". The venue was subject to my colleague's approval; the event was at the expense of the Grantee.

If the occasion went well the work on site proceeded smoothly. Or vice versa. He could facilitate access to the track or restrict it to say a 2-hour "possession" at 2am on a Sunday morning or deny it altogether and there was no right of appeal.

Nothing tardy there then but other

surveying issues required extensive paperwork that hence carried an in-built penalty of delay. For example there were about 13 autonomous operational departments each of which had to be consulted and agree that an area of land was surplus to operational requirements. This process could take a long time. Then each had to sign the same Declaration Form, a pro forma piece of paper confirming that the land was surplus ie all 13 had to sign the same piece of paper. This could take even longer. If a department didn't want to sign or lost the form the whole process had to start again.

Internal office procedures were similarly complex and time consuming. The process of getting matters approved or signed was as follows. The file with a typed report pinned to the front describing what was wanted had to be sent up the chain of command and down again. This was done by pinning a clean sheet of lined foolscap over the typed report and writing on that the name of your manager and say the words "Licence to Assign for signature please" with your name and the date. This package was then placed in your own out tray to be conveyed to the addressee by the Office Messenger Service. The manager would inscribe a similar message with his name and date and send it on to his manager, and so on. There were about 6 links in the chain. On a famous occasion I sent along a Licence to Assign which got to the top whereupon the actual signatory asked, "should this not be signed over a sixpenny stamp" and sent it back down the chain again with a lot of "Should its?" as it came back step by step. I wrote "No" and sent it back up the chain again. It was then signed and eventually returned to me.

I am sure procedures have improved substantially since those days.

Going private

Travelling back from the North West a few days ago, on a weekday, I had resolved to try the M6 TOLL even though I knew it would cost me an arm and a leg. In the event it cost me an arm and two legs as a small motorcaravan with one person is classified, under the operator's "Fair Pricing" policy, in the

same category as a van, or a small lorry, or a coach.

Even so I knew it was the right decision as travelling down the M6 news reports were coming through about a large-scale breakdown of law and order in Birmingham due to the reopening of an electrical goods superstore. Apparently the enticement of 10% off play stations has caused massive civil disorder leading to mass brawling and a complete blocking of the M6 as punters unable to access the car parks were abandoning their vehicles and running, panic stricken, to the aforesaid superstore.

This news softened, somewhat, the anticipated blow of the £9 toll as I began my glorious, peaceful, and unstressed way along this new road. The new road with its smooth clean surface and very little traffic made it feel just like travelling along a French Autoroute. Perhaps the operator ought to market it a "Le French Experience" to increase traffic and tolls? Strangely there was an access to Services after a few miles, an opportunity for a quality continental dining experience surely.

After an all too short pleasurable driving experience reality began to intrude as the real M6 hove into view on the left and for about a mile 3 lanes of heavy traffic could be seen hammering along to an eventual "Motorways Merge" situation. Such was the seductive quality of the M6 Toll experience I felt like shouting "No! Don't let them back. We've gone private – and we like it."

The captain goes down with his ship

As a relatively new chief officer I took the view that I had to be one of the first in the office and one of the last to leave. And if there was something nasty to do then I would not ask a member of staff to do it if I was not prepared to do it.

It was my second winter in office and heavy snow was forecast. I took the precaution of taking the train from Stowmarket as in those pre-Ipswich By Pass days Felixstowe-bound lorries could not manage the hills on the inner bypass and within a few hours were jammed across all radial routes making it impossible for any traffic to get into or out of the town. Car commuters were then faced with hours of delay and a probable 2-mile trek through the snow to finally reach the office.

It was easier to walk in from Ipswich train station.

The forecasters were correct and by mid morning heavy snow began to fall. There was little wind and an even depth of snow began to build up rapidly. Just before lunch I began to wander round the office suggesting that anyone with a difficult journey ought to leave now. Not everyone disappeared instantly but by 2 o'clock I went round the office round ordering the remaining staff to leave at once.

I felt I had to be the last out so didn't get away until about three.

Walking across to the station was a real pleasure in the snow. There was little traffic and I assumed everybody had already gone. When I got to the station I asked the man on the ticket barrier whether the trains from London were running OK. "How do we know?" came the reply, "We haven't seen one since mid-morning."

I must have looked disappointed as I began to think this meant the Captain was really going down with his ship so he asked where I was going.

"Stowmarket," I replied. "In that case you're in luck. There's a diesel unit in the bay platform and the driver lives at Bury St Edmunds and he's hoping to take it there. Better hurry as he will be away as soon as he gets the signal."

I duly hurried and there was indeed a diesel unit in the bay with lights on, engine running and a few hardy passengers on board. There were a couple of railwaymen in earnest conversation near the semaphore signal that controlled train access in and out of the platform.

"Are we ready to go?" I asked. "Well," said the driver, "I'm getting the 'right-a-way' but the signal's not registering contact because of the snow so I can't get the green lights to cross the main line. We're stuck." "There's only one thing for it," said the guard, a man who looked as though he had been around for some time, and he walked up to the recalcitrant signal, the only remaining semaphore in the whole station, and jumped up and swung on it with both arms, Bruce Grobelaar fashion.

This generated the correct electrical contact and a string of green lights suddenly appeared marking our route out of the station. "Let's go before they change their mind," said the driver as we all piled aboard.

The journey to Stowmarket was uneventful and as we pulled into the station it looked just like a scene from Dr Zhivago and I half expected Omar Sharif to appear any minute. Home at last, well nearly. I gave my thanks to the driver and stepped off into about 6 inches of snow. I could hear road traffic was moving, albeit slowly, and I calculated I would be home in 10 minutes.

On turning into the car park I was confronted by about 100 identical mounds of snow and the odd bare patch where a traveller had recently driven away. It took 20 minutes to find my car and before too long I was opening my own front door and being greeted by the wife and 2 kids.

"We didn't think you were going to make it," they said as I stood there trying to prise my Wellingtons off. Unfortunately I got cramp as one was half off and I collapsed on the door mat screaming in agony just like some overweight middle aged executive who had over-exerted himself in the snow would, while having a major heart attack.

How they all laughed.

The Whitsuntide Suit

In the 40s and 50s the years rolled by with regular seasonal similarity. There were fewer distractions; there were no fresh strawberries at Christmas.

For example there would be snow before Christmas and then we all sang carols and heard the Christmas Story all over again. The festive dinner could, possibly, be something exotic like roast pork with seasonal vegetables and Christmas pudding. Presents would comprise an orange, some Brazil nuts and walnuts, shiny pennies and a share in a Cadbury's Selection Box. There was snow and football until Easter followed by no snow and cricket until autumn. At Easter we sang, "There is a green hill faraway" and other Easter hymns at Sunday School and heard the Easter Story all over again.

Easter was a landmark because after it was over it was time to buy the Whitsuntide Suit.

In those days the Sunday Suit was only worn, as it happens, on Sunday. The Whitsuntide Suit, worn for the first time on Whit Sunday, then became the Sunday Suit and the Old Sunday Suit became merely ordinary clothing to be worn at school, unless school uniform was prescribed, holidays, or for going out but definitely not for playing in. The predecessor to the Old Sunday Suit was used for playing in and was probably much mended or might have been handed down by an older brother. Of course "Leisure Wear" had not yet been invented.

The Sunday Suit might be seen, in retrospect, as a needless, and scarcely used, extravagance for those far off hard-pressed days, but not so. On Sunday there was the morning Sunday School and a shorter afternoon Sunday School followed by "The Sunday Walk," all with suit. The Walk was a year round "nice day" ritual. As a minimum it required the wearing of the Sunday Suit, polished shoes, which father would see to, well brushed hair, mother's task, and of course caps would be worn. It was no rural leisure ramble but a 2 to 3-hour walk, staying together, down lanes and across well-worn field paths with the essential objective of staying clean and not damaging the Sunday Suit. If we were lucky on the way back father would stop off at the off-licence and buy a bottle of lemonade and packets of crisps. We had to wait outside, as children were not allowed to enter such dens of iniquity. Other than that the Sunday Suit was kept "for best" and could possibly be worn on non-Sunday important occasions such as the funeral or marriage of a very close relative.

So after Easter the Whitsuntide Suit had to be purchased and this required a trip to the nearest town where you could find a "Children's Outfitters" that specialised in ready-made suits for children. If it was still presentable the Old Sunday Suit could be worn. If not the Sunday Suit was pressed into service as it was not done to enter the "Children's Outfitters" looking scruffy. This shopping trip, for us three brothers, required the presence of both mother and father. Once purchased the suit was put away until Whitsuntide Sunday.

This ritual was strictly observed for the Sunday Suit with short trousers. When long trousers came in, at the age of 12, 13 or thereabouts, it became increasingly difficult for parents to hold the line. I think I was a year at grammar school before I progressed to a long trouser Sunday Suit then at the age of 14 or 15 came an important right of passage. My father took me, alone, to Montague Burton's to order my first made-to-measure "Sunday Suit".

He made it clear before we went in that I could have whatever styling I wanted but this was to be my last parentally

funded Sunday Suit so make the most of it!

We were greeted by a Captain Peacock look-alike who conducted us along the floor and handed us over to the spitting image of Mr Grainger complete with tape worn round the neck like a doctor's stethoscope.

"What's the little chap want?" asked Mr Grainger of my father. "A new Sunday Suit," said my father, "and he's to choose."

Mr G then riffled through his swatches of samples pointing out nice greys or subdued checks. Not for me though I thought selecting the most electric blue material he had. "Are we sure this is right?" he asked of my father. "It's up to him." Came the firm reply.

We then moved on to the pattern book and Mr Grainger tried to guide me into a nice 2 button single breasted or, just possibly, the slightly more racy 3 button single breasted. He steeled himself for fear I would ask for a double-breasted jacket, but I didn't. "I'd like a single button style please." "Are we sure this is right?" he asked of my father. "It's up to him." Came the firm reply.

He then took a few measurements now fearing the worst.

"How long for the jacket?" I pointed firmly to knee length and he again appealed to my father and got the same response. "And could I have just 2 pockets, either side, sort of slanting upwards, not level, and no top pocket?" He wrote all this down with gritted teeth.

Mr Grainger now took a few more measurements for the trousers. "Zip or button fly?" he asked. "Zip, please," I replied confidently. He almost crossed himself and made one last desperate plea to my father but again without success. He then stood there trying to get out his last question and knowing what was coming. After doing an excellent impression of a goldfish for a minute or two he managed to say, "Turn-ups?" "No thanks." "Width at the bottom of the leg?" "14 inches please."

"It'll be ready in 3 weeks," he said as he went off to lie down.

The disciplinary hearing

I watched the film "I'm All Right Jack" the other day. That's the one where Fred Kite, the factory shop steward, is played by Peter Sellers. When it got to the point where Fred Kite is asked by the factory owner to agree to the dismissal of a useless employee he replies, "I'm sorry sir but we cannot accept incompetence as a ground for dismissal."

Many years ago, when I was Deputy Chief Officer, the Chief pursued disciplinary proceedings against a member of staff accused of falsifying a travel claim and professional incompetence. I had not been involved but when there was to be an Appeal the Chief asked me to attend and "watch his back". I didn't know what he meant.

The Chairman of the Personnel Committee chaired the Appeal and the Union Branch Secretary represented the appellant member of staff. The Personnel Officer and the Chief represented Management – or so I thought.

In the event the only person to be asked questions was the Chief and it seemed to me that the Chairman, the Branch Secretary and the Personnel Officer all felt they were representing the Appellant. The tone was set by the opening remarks of the Chairman, which was, "Well he paid the money back, so what's the problem?"

After about half an hour of this rubbish the Appeal was upheld and the member of staff was reinstated. On the way out I quietly asked the Personnel Officer what was going on. In true Fred Kite style he replied, "Look, we cannot accept dishonesty and incompetence as a ground for dismissing a professional officer. After all where would it end? We would all be vulnerable."

A bridge too far

I sometimes wonder why the BBC ruins some quite reasonable programmes through erroneous corporate decision-making.

Having spent some time trying to work out why Louis Armstrong was repeatedly

referred to as "The King of Swing" I eventually realised the broadcast was part of a BBC2 "strand" called "Swing." Clearly no one involved in dreaming that up had any idea of what the music known as "Swing" was, or what the jazz expression "swing" means or indeed who Satchmo was.

Similarly I did watch, as a former railway man, some of the BBC2 "strand" on railways in the Beeching era. To tie the whole thing together the BBC has obviously made a corporate decision that not only was the Beeching Report wrong but the closure of many beloved branch lines was solely the personal responsibility of Dr. Richard Beeching. Interestingly the BBC kindly absolved Ernest Marples, the then government,, and the many millions of taxpayers that both resented having to prop up the railway system financially and never ever used the railway anyway, from any responsibility whatsoever.

But the Corporation went one step too far in the following introduction to one of the programmes. "The notorious Beeching Report of 1963 led to the closure of a third of Britain's railway lines and stations compelling tens of thousands of the population to travel by road." And went on to refer to the "halcyon days of travel by rail". What a load of overblown rubbish. Even the programme makers and presenters could not find any evidence for any of that.

Unfortunately, for the railways, the aforesaid tens of thousands, and many, many more had already decided to avoid the railways, as they were now able to buy their own car. Those people knew all about the "halcyon days of travel by rail" and desperately wanted to have their own transport.

In most of the programmes it seemed necessary to embellish the hate figure of Beeching with a reference to his

salary of £25,000 per year, "Half a million pounds a year in today's terms" and to say, "Of course he didn't close his own station of East Grinstead down but he closed down the east and west routes from that station which he, of course didn't use." In the actual programmes little evidence was forthcoming about "the hated figure", indeed most personal reminiscences referred to him as quite a nice old cove but a little distant. And the number of passengers using the east and west routes from East Grinstead was about 35 per day.

The best quote came from a little old lady in Scotland who had organised an unsuccessful campaign to save her local line. As she nostalgically viewed old footage of the last train and the thousands there that day packing the train, the stations and lineside vantage points she wistfully commented that it was a shame that most of them couldn't be bothered to use the train while we had it.

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER

VOLUME 14, ISSUE 1, SPRING 2009

On yer bike

For me the new season really begins with the classic Paris-Roubaix race; known as "The Hell of the North." This year the 107th staging of the 259.5km event took place on Easter Day. The commentator said it was not staged neither during World War I, understandably, nor from 1939 but resumed again in 1943, which I find very hard to believe. The marauding Typhoon fighters that had a free rein over Europe in 1944 and 1945 would have made a real mess of the peloton.

Usually the race is run into the teeth of northerly gale force winds with at least torrential rain and a temperature hovering just above freezing point making the long twisty runs on narrow cobblestoned lanes extremely treacherous. This year the weather was positively benign with just a gentle breeze but no sun. Some spectators were stood around in shirtsleeves! It was an exciting race and finish with the usual quota of spills on the cobbles. Hopefully this was the start of an exciting new season.

Radio days

Up to the age of 12 or so I lived in a house without electricity. This made radio listening difficult but there were ways around it.

The first radio I remember was in a big veneered wooden cabinet with a fretwork façade backed with cloth to keep the dust out of the works. The cabinet was full of thermionic radio valves that contain spiral electric filaments that glowed when the power was on; just like electric light bulbs, which, so far as we were concerned, had not yet been invented.

This contraption power needed two sources of power to drive the valves, a high-tension battery about the size of a biscuits tin and a low-tension power source called an accumulator. This was a bit like a totally transparent old type car battery but with a stout metal carrying handle. Essentially it was a glass container full of acid that could be charged up via the terminal and connected to the radio similarly.

The accumulator had to be replenished fairly frequently though the high-tension battery was always good for another evening or two if it was popped in the oven for an hour or so. This procedure was not recommended for the accumulator.

Dealing with the accumulator was the job of my elder brother Peter and I aged six and four respectively. First an adult disconnected the device from the radio. Together we carried it to a radio/hardware shop called Bagshaws where it was charged up, a process that took a day or two. "And don't forget to ask for a loan!" was the instruction that always followed us down the road. The "loan" was a lighter and altogether more flimsy accumulator than the real thing but much easier to carry. As neither social services nor health and safety had yet been invented the process of using small boys to carry glass containers of acid was unremarked upon.

In the early 50s we experienced a great leap forward. A firm called RadioElect arrived and the whole village was wired up to premises that received radio

signals and distributed them by wire. Cable? Eat your heart out. And electricity was still not needed. Inside the house there was just a speaker with 2 knobs; one for on/off and one to switch between the Light Programme and the Home Service.

In those days the radio was the centre point of family home entertainment. It was only later that it became a minority interest ie "I'd sit alone and watch your light; my only friend through teenage nights."

What did we listen to? There was Dick Barton Special Agent, later on superseded, but never replaced, by The Archers. And Mrs Dale's Diary, "I'm a little worried about Jim," Friday Night is Music Night and Workers Playtime. There were plays that lasted 90 minutes and every Saturday the BBC "Stopped the mighty roar of London's traffic" for In Town Tonight.

And then in 1953 we moved to a house with electricity and hot water and a bathroom. The previous owner had left behind for us a big round wireless in early brown Bakelite with a cracked case held together with yellowing sticky tape. This was in the living room but was soon upstaged by a television set that took pride of place in the front room.

It was at this stage that radio became a minority interest and many solitary hours were spent searching for Radio Luxembourg and The Voice of America. Luxembourg always faded away when a good record was played but I can still remember all the words of "We are the Ovalteenies" and whenever I travel from Bristol to Bath I don't need to read the station sign to know that Keynsham is spelt K,E,Y,N...S,H,A,M.

The VOA was the only station then that played Jazz and many happy hours were spent listening to the VOA Jazz Hour with its distinctive signature tune "Take the A Train" as played by the Duke Ellington Orchestra. As that tune came bustling through the interference you knew you were home and dry.

It was only recently that I heard of the origins of that tune. In his early band leading days Duke met Billy Strayhorn in Philadelphia and was invited to join

the organisation as arranger/composer. Before travelling up to New York he asked Duke for directions once he reached the Big Apple. "Oh, Take The A-Train," he was told.

Then followed a lifetime of productive collaboration, Billy conducted the band and filled up "The Band Book" with his compositions and arrangements.

Johnny Dankworth's son, Alec, performing in Bury St Edmunds, had a story about the legendary, voluminous, and comprehensive Duke Ellington Book. The Ellington Orchestra is still functioning long after the founder's death and remains faithful to the original compositions and arrangements contained in The Book.

Alec is a good bass player and some years ago joined the Orchestra but after a series of travelling mishaps he only caught up with the band a couple of hours before his first performance. He was welcomed and issued with the legendary Book, now even more voluminous and comprehensive and was fearful of the band's reputation for accurate reproduction of the original sound.

"Look," he said, "I can't play; I won't be able to familiarise myself with any of the Book in time!" "Don't worry," he was told, "Just busk it."

More Whitsuntide Suits

In truth I never had the opportunity to get the wear out on the Teddy Boy suit and eventually passed it on to my father who, at that time, was a "Deputy" at the local mine. A deputy was an "overman" responsible for all safety and production matters in a defined area underground. The job was hard on clothing and as the Board had not yet taken to issuing staff with orange "Guantanamo" overalls most men made do with whatever came to hand. Hence my suit was acceptable. Looming out of the darkness he must have cut a strange figure with hob-nailed boots, safety helmet, Deputy's safety lamp and stick, and electric blue Teddy Boy suit.

That was my last Whitsuntide Suit, now I was one my own. So next I went for

a white sport coat with green cavalry twill trousers. Do you remember Terry Dene's record "A White Sport Coat (and a Pink Carnation)?" It got to number 18 in mid 1957 and was in the charts for 6 weeks. That gave me the idea but I never did try the pink carnation; I don't think I would have got out of the Dinnington Miners Welfare Concert Room alive! In any event there was an accident first time out. It was in the Ivanhoe, Thurcroft and halfway down my first pint of Stones Bitter I thought I would light up a cigarette. On striking the match with a flourish the head departed from the stick at about the same time it caught fire. This fell into my lap burning a small but very noticeable hole in the groin area of the new trousers.

The outfit then superseded the subterranean Teddy Boy suit.

My final attempt was to order a made-to-measure 3-piece suit in a loud virulent green bookmakers' check. I wore it only once. The cloth had the consistency of wire wool and the trousers were too tight a fit under the armpits for comfort. It went straight down the pit.

At this point my father made it clear to me that any further cast-offs would have to be declined as he was beginning to lose all authority at work.

Farewells

In my time I must have delivered quite a few farewells to departing colleagues and always tried to strike a positive note, even when this was difficult, and whether the leaving was voluntary or otherwise. Only once did I accept a few pages of notes put together by someone else. This was on the retirement of Tony Kirk, Head Hall Keeper, who I didn't know well and who had been looked after mainly by my number two.

The notes were extensive, obviously well researched, and, I had to assume, accurate. As this was the first time I used someone else's words I did read the stuff through a couple of times before the day but remained a little mystified by some of the comments though they were clearly meant to be humorous. Unfortunately I didn't have time to check out what they all meant.

Come the day I plodded through the notes and was pleased to read that Tony would be achieving his lifetime's ambition of retiring to live in a narrow boat, already acquired and stationed, on a canal, somewhere in the Midlands. He couldn't wait. Somewhat mysteriously he had decided to call the narrow boat "The Enterprise" and after a lifetime of being ordered about he had decided he would be the Captain. Why am I saying all this, I wondered, but it seemed to be going down well.

I then heard myself saying that Tony would take time to explore the seldom-visited parts of the canal network or as the words I was reading put it "To boldly go where no man has gone before." "On

no," I thought, "that's a split infinitive and I missed it", but then the penny dropped, and I couldn't do any more for laughing. The heavy references to Captain Kirk and his ship The Enterprise had at last got through.

Needless to say when my time came I refused to countenance any sort of retirement presentation even though I had, for a long time, carried with me a draft of my speech of response.

This was based on Bob Newhart's "The Retirement Party". Some of you may remember Bob did "Introducing Tobacco to Civilisation" which became very popular in the late 60s and began his imaginary telephone call to Sir Walter

Raleigh out in America with those immortal words, "Hi there Walt baby." In his Retirement Party piece he takes the part of a long-serving employee, slightly the worse for drink, who is retiring and responding to the oleaginous clap trap just spouted by the owner of the company. He started off with, "Thank you for those kind words and comments about me and my service with your company. While listening to them there was just one thought constantly running through my mind - I think I'm going to throw up."

A good start you must agree. Perhaps it's just as well, for me that the opportunity never arose. One day, perhaps.....

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER VOLUME 14, ISSUE 2, SUMMER 2009

More on The Manor House

A decade ago when Betty and I were advocating the benefits of partnership to an unheeding profession we felt ourselves lucky indeed to have a paper published in the Chartered Firelighter. In the event the paper was edited to fit the available space seemingly by holding a printout up against the space available and cutting off the overlap with scissors. Well, it's happened again! So for those who read that far and are anxious to read the conclusion – both of you – the final paragraphs and the outcome are set out below.

You will remember that you were struggling to stay awake but were nearly through an explanation of the Well-Being assessment process. Now read on.

"To rule out potential bias, and playing safe again, the evaluation of well-being bids was to be undertaken separately by a third party of unimpeachable character. A local head-teacher and a member of the Chamber of Commerce were invited to sit on a Panel, with the Corporate Director of Community."

The tender evaluation

At noon on 31 January 2007 there were 5 envelopes to be opened and offers ranged from £1 (yes one pound) to £1.4million.

The £1 well-being bid was evaluated and found wanting by the independent Panel. As the minimum threshold of 25 points was not reached the positioning of the score against the highest bid did not come into play.

After evaluation the successful bidder was notified on the morning of the appointed day and asked to transfer 10% into the council's account by BACS – and before noon. This worked well but the bank found it difficult to tell us we had received the money.

The end?

Completion of the transaction was unremarkable and I met the owners on site to hand over the keys. Members were mildly appreciative of a job well done. Frankly we had just about had enough of the whole saga.

One positive thing to emerge from the sale was the process of assessing and measuring well-being. With government's increasing interest in community management and ownership of assets we now had in place the framework for effective options appraisal.

Not quite the end

But that was not quite the end. Almost 12 months on an anonymous

whispering campaign began. This suggested that the sale was unsatisfactory. This was even though the price achieved was more than twice the "market value" of an expensive "west end" valuation commissioned for the tender evaluation process! Apparently the problem was that the property had not been advertised appropriately.

There was no full-page ad in Country Life!"

Exciting stuff eh?

Mr Grumpy

On my way back from Scotland the other week I broke my journey in Durham – among other places. This was to be my last stop before the final leg home. The Caravan Club Handbook suggested the site was "within easy reach of the City of Durham with walks from the site into the city." For reasons I might go into another time I thought I could reach the site by 2pm then have a nice little stroll and an afternoon in the city. Perfect!

I did arrive just before 2, checked in, parked, plugged in the electrics then asked about the walk into Durham. "The walk is about 3 miles, across country, and will take about 1½ hours." Not the impression given to me by the Handbook entry but no doubt a clever solicitor could defend the Caravan

Club's position with ease. "1½ hours," I responded in a voice an octave above normal. To be fair the site, off the A690, was close to an A1 (M) junction and Park and Ride facility and I was advised to just park there and use the bus. And, as they added "I'm sure you'll have your bus pass with you so it won't cost you anything." Cheek.

I walked; armed only with an A4 sheet of instructions. The route was along the edge of 2 fields, then across another one to reach the river, down a precipitous slope of about 50 yards to reach the riverbank then along the river (Wear) to reach the City. The walk did take the best part of nearly 2 hours and I have in mind suggesting to the SAS that winter manoeuvres on Dartmoor could realistically be dropped in favour of doing this walk in May.

I had a pleasant sojourn in Durham then opted for the easy option on the A4 sheet, "If you wish to return by bus take the X20 (Sunderland) and ask for the Ford Garage in Carville High Street." Enter Mr Grumpy.

I found the bus station, and the X20, and was just going through then gate when the driver closed the door and began to reverse. He then saw me and to give him his due, with a huge sigh, he slammed on the brakes. Everybody on the bus was thrown backwards over the seat except for the babies parked in their prams facing the engine who doubled up over their safety straps. I boarded the bus and noticed another OAP snuck on behind me and slinked along to a spare seat. I showed the driver my pass and with another huge sigh he rolled his eyes and jabbed his ticket machine causing about a 2-foot length of free tickets to emerge.

"I wonder," I asked diffidently, "if you could let me know when we reach the Ford Garage in Carville High Street." "If I can remember," he replied, end of conversation. I took this to mean no. What is it with these people?

As it was I spent quite a lengthy journey craning round trying to spot the aforesaid Ford Garage in Carville High Street and I did manage to see it in time and get off the bus with profuse, yet slightly ironic, thanks for the still mute driver.

I put down his grumpiness to the probability that he came from Sunderland, the destination of the bus, but I found his Suffolk counterpart a week later. I had to go to Ipswich and parked at the Norwich Road P&R, a facility I have used for some time now. The driver was already in his seat and sitting comfortably behind his armoured glass screen and looking through his windscreen. There was no movement when I showed my pass so I repeated the manoeuvre then realised he was pointing at his ticket machine and the ticket already issued. He refused to look my way. Mr Grumpy III!

What is their problem? I know, from casual observation that 9 out of 10 passengers have a bus pass but, presumably, the free trips aren't taken out of the drivers' wages. So they have it made. Their customers have every incentive to continue using the service irrespective of any economic downturn.

The hoarding

For many years my work office was located in a "new" building on the periphery of the County Hall site. The other end of the site was just off the secondary edge of the town centre retail area and our end of the site was a secondary terraced edge of town centre housing location.

From where I sat I could see quite clearly the little American boy with dungarees, sideways baseball cap, and catapult in his back pocket.

My ground floor office widows overlooked a road across which was a large open car parking area and then the backs of the aforesaid terraced houses. I could see the backs of these terraces, the car park and the little American boy as well as a coy little American girl in a gingham dress and hair in bunches. Also, from time to time, local residents walked by the windows, almost close enough to touch, a salutary reminder about who we really worked for.

The car park was owned by the council and was extensive, ungated and used, unofficially, by any Tom Dick or Harry, as well as council staff. This caused, as you might imagine severe

problems. Accordingly management responsibilities had just been handed to me along with the question "Well, what are you going to do about the aforesaid problems?"

Also, just outside my window, and across the street was a large advertising hoarding. I had a good view of it; in fact it was the best bit of my view. But Ipswich Borough Council didn't like hoardings and was ruthlessly eliminating them except, or so it appeared to us, where they got the rent. Fortunately this hoarding had a permanent consent and so was safe. I found it interesting watching the poster being changed.

The current poster was the little American boy with dungarees, sideways baseball cap, and catapult in his back pocket offering his tin of Quality Street to a coy little American girl in gingham dress and hair in bunches. He is holding the tin out towards her with his right hand whilst his left hand, hidden behind his back, is clutching a big bunch of sweets.

The captions read, "Made for sharing - Except for the big purple ones."

In my imagination I could see the Chief Executive holding out a big tin towards me contain bundles labelled "FM responsibilities" and "Car parking responsibilities" and "Gypsy responsibilities" etc while his other hand, concealed behind his back is holding big sweeties labelled "Resources".

But the hoarding had other uses. I arrived in the office one morning to see a small group of what appeared to be yobs hanging around the hoarding. From time to time one or two more appeared and joined them. They were all casually dressed; most wore shades and baseball caps and carried cups of coffee in polystyrene cups. I was tempted to go across and tell them to bugger off.

Eventually there was a lot of consulting watches and as they were obviously off to do something exciting most disappeared behind the hoarding for a minute or two before forming up, and running across the car park into the back of one of the houses. A drugs bust!

However the car parks were becoming more untenable without any form of control. So I arranged for fencing and a number of automatic barriers to keep out interlopers. The Planners carefully watched the succession of committee papers this entailed and waited until a contract for installing the barriers had been let before telling me that a change from land used for free-for-all car parking to a controlled car park for staff needed planning consent.

Without getting too up-tight we waited for planning consent. This was eventually granted but with an undiscussed and surprising special condition that the hoarding must be taken down, obviously a favour for their chums in the Borough. But this caused a tremendous fuss mainly because I refused to accept this condition was reasonable. The fences were erected and the barriers were installed but there was no way I was going to touch the hoarding; and said so.

This caused a pleasing furore within the Planning Department and many earnest appeals were made to the Chief Executive and senior Members. Eventually I agreed to take a report, explaining the impasse, to Members.

At this time there was no Property Committee and instead a Property Panel (of members) met regularly in my office, to my timetable in order to discuss property matters. I prepared the agenda, papers and minutes.

I drafted the paper and consulted widely to ensure everyone was happy that I was giving members the full story. They were. At the meeting, when we got to this paper, I gave a brief introduction and waited for the discussion. There was none.

"Tell them to get stuffed," was the Chairman's only comment. "I can't minute that, Chairman," I said. "You can so far as I am concerned," was his reply. I offered to get as close as I could and this was, as far as I can remember wrote "The Panel duly considered Paper P765 and after a detailed discussion and fully taking into account the circumstances and the reported comments of the County Planning Officer The Panel agreed that the hoarding in question should remain in-situ for the foreseeable future".

The aftermath

I had expected the arguments about the hoarding to rumble on for months

afterwards in the way that any disagreement with the planners tended to do. But they didn't because the new car park barriers had delivered a tremendous weapon into my hands.

By modern standards the barrier system was quite antique. Each authorised user had an electronic card that had to be inserted into a slot at the barrier. A mechanism then read the electronic number imprinted on the card, checked a central list and if the number was on the list the barrier opened. If the number was not on the list the barrier remained closed. There was no voice communication between the barriers and some central control office. Stalled drivers had either to just go away or hope a colleague would let them through, a manoeuvre that was, of course, strictly verboten and easily picked up on the CCTV cameras.

Naturally there were a few teething troubles. The central list was compiled and inputted manually. Sometimes numbers were accidentally deleted thus causing a lot of agro for the particular driver. Deletions usually occurred when my man highlighted a particular number and, on my instruction, jabbed his finger on the "delete" button.

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER *VOLUME 14, ISSUE 3, AUTUMN 2009*

Sales: due diligence

Have you ever completed due diligence on title and are still left with the feeling that those slightly worrying couple of loose ends might mean something?

The subject was a major office building with accommodation on 3 floors built in 1937. Original building plans and plans of a major 1960s extension were to hand with a copy of the planning consent and news reports on both the original build and the later work. And I had a lot of information on all those interesting little details than enliven sales particulars.

There were lots of distractions of course, for example a major staff move to free up vacant possession. Would the replacement building, under construction, be ready in time? Other

authorities might be thinking about buying before sale.

Title looked absolutely straightforward. The deeds all fitted together precisely. There were a couple of restrictive covenants but these seemed understandable and, better still, there was a solicitor's opinion on file explaining the covenants and giving the property a clean bill of health titlewise. Even better still title had recently been registered and this all checked out with the other sources of information.

I knew the building of course but nonetheless took the opportunity to inspect the property formally with the building surveyor who had looked after it for many years, then with the head hallkeeper, and then showed round the other authorities on more than

one occasion. I was becoming tired of walking up and down the stairs. I knew every inch of the building.

Except one!

With the benefit of hindsight I remembered that twice when inspecting the basement I asked, "What's that in there?" and was told "Oh that's the electricity substation room." On the outside of this space there was an array of electricity meters that proved the point. "Can I look inside?" "No, it's full of dangerous electric equipment, and we don't have a key."

That's all right then.

So we went through an expensive marketing exercise in a very difficult market only to prove that the formal

tender approach would not work. Belatedly we then adopted our agent's advice, rejected about 6 months previously and tried "best offers". This did work and we accepted quite a reasonable offer. With a sigh of relief instructed solicitors. End of story - not quite!

A few weeks down the line came a question from the other side's solicitors. "Do you have a copy of the substation lease?" Even as I was saying "What substation lease?" I could feel the loose ends falling into place and that empty, icy feeling in the pit of the stomach indicating that something is about to hit a fan that is too close for comfort.

It took a little time and a lot of research even to identify the problem. In fact there was no substation lease but the substation room was in fact a live substation operated by EDF. The exact legal situation was that the freehold of "the premises," namely one room in the middle of the basement of this major office building was owned by EDF and other than custom and practice nothing was written down about access, cable rights, repairs to the building etc, etc. Oh and the substation fed half the town centre and not as we thought just the office building.

As it happens everyone was quite laid back and neither EDF, nor the purchaser, nor "management" got too upset. A solution emerged. The purchaser wanted a complete freehold. EDF would sell the freehold but wanted a modern lease clarifying its position and "management" just wanted to complete the agreed sale. Negotiating the solution was down to me.

EDF was prepared to go along with this and told me that but it always instructed local private sector surveyors to negotiate. I would be hearing from them. At this point my luck changed. When the surveyor's letter arrived it was signed by a former colleague of thirty plus years ago and with whom I had maintained contact ever since. This enabled both of us to reach an early settlement without months of playing cards too close to the chest. The sale went through with only one minor hitch. It took a month, after completion, to

persuade the purchaser, whose laid back attitude persisted, to take the keys.

You need to know how this situation arose – just in case.

Under the Bury St Edmunds Electric Lighting Order 1897 the Bury St Edmunds Corporation was the "Undertaker" authorised to supply electricity in this area. In the 1930s, when the corporation was constructing a new office building close to the town centre, what would be more natural than to take the opportunity to incorporate a new substation to serve the town centre? Shortly after legislation providing for electricity supply companies to take over the supply of electricity was passed. On 8 January 1938 the Corporation entered into an agreement with the East Anglian Electric Supply Company Ltd to transfer its undertaking and fixed assets. This is a very detailed agreement written in the future tense and anticipating further documentation to actually transfer responsibilities and assets. I suppose that with the storm clouds gathering over Europe it wasn't easy to concentrate on the long-term implications and the land transfer document, dated sometime in 1942, disappeared and has never come to light.

How ironic that a legal document completed, and then buried, in the year I was born should lie there undisturbed for more than 60 years until, in all innocence, I wander by and step on it.

Was your authority an electric supply company before the war? Are you sure any transfers were properly recorded? Beware the closed room, no matter how innocent it all looks.

Le Tour 2009

The Tour this year was, or seemed to be, drug free and was the most exciting for many years. Local riders are beginning to feature in the results and I'm already looking forward to 2010. The ever-knowledgeable commentators Phil Liggett and Paul Sherwen enhanced the live afternoon TV transmissions.

There seemed to be more accidents than usual this year and one curious fact emerged. After a big spill on

Stage 6 Gerona to Barcelona one rider completed the rest of the stage nursing a damaged left arm. An X-ray that evening confirmed a double fracture of the arm and so he was unable to restart.

Later a team mate of Lance Armstrong rode out the last 3 days of the event with a suspected collarbone fracture. He refused an X-ray because if this confirmed the fracture he would then be unable to race.

There is no stopping the event to bring on the trainer here. If treatment is needed the doctor delivers it leaning out of his car window at about 25 mph. And there is no need for pantomime blood capsules as all you see is real.

The contribution of Mediaeval industrial chemistry to the lexicon of phrases and sayings in common usage

Many well-known phrases and sayings still in use today originate from soldiering eg "another string to the bow", or naval life eg "not enough room to swing a cat." However one well-known and often heard expression owes its origins to mediaeval industrial chemistry. I am indebted to Adam Hart-Davis for the following details.

After Henry VIII divorced Catherine of Aragon the Vatican retaliated by cutting off supplies of alum thus devastating the Tudor dyeing industry. How so? Alum is, chemically, the double salt ammonium aluminium sulphate. To dye woollen cloth you need a mordant, a chemical with teeth to hold the dye molecules on to the fibres of the cloth. In its absence the dye washes out easily and colours are not "fast". The mordant in common use then was alum.

The search was on for local supplies. Then some genius discovered how to make alum from a grey shale found on the north coast of Yorkshire and in the 17th century a huge industry grew up between Kettlewell and Ravenscar and Whitby developed into an important port. The process was incredibly complicated. The shale was mined and built into giant bonfires with wood and coal, then roasted slowly for nine

months. The resultant pink ash was dug out and washed repeatedly to extract the aluminium sulphate and the solution was boiled for 24 hours to concentrate it.

[I hope you are making careful notes, as I will be asking questions later.]

The next stage was to add the ammonia to produce alum, the double salt ammonium aluminium sulphate; remember? The easiest and most available source of ammonia was decomposing urine and as the industry expanded so did the demand for the ingredients. So much so that most of the urine had to be shipped in from London where 25-gallon barrels were left on street corners and men were invited to contribute generously.

The barrels were transported up to north Yorkshire by sailing ship and captains, embarrassed by their cargo, often claimed they were carrying wine, but their rivals said, "On no; you're taking the p***."

The trade ended when the Victorians invented synthetic dyes but the phrase lives on.

Don't thee tha me!

One of the few things that really got up my nose in my previous work was the habit of staff to conduct correspondence on a personal basis ie "Dear Fred/Yours sincerely." This had not been the practice in my previous employment, on the Railway, where, almost without exception, all correspondence was conducted on an impersonal basis ie "Dear Sir/Yours faithfully." Indeed I believe that the more traditional sign off "I remain, Sir, your most obedient servant" had only recently been phased out, shortly after nationalisation, when, of course, railway employees officially ceased to be the servants of anybody in general and railway travellers in particular.

Whenever I challenged staff about this, for example, why are you writing in the most friendliest of terms to someone who you have only met once and then just for a few minutes most of which were used to berate your professional competence; I was usually rewarded with a blank stare of total incomprehension.

I suppose it's an age thing and my training paid far more attention to status, position and politeness. For example as a young teenager taking up my first job on the buildings back in Yorkshire I received an instant lesson in status, position and politeness. The concrete mixer driver, in his early twenties I imagine, was explaining my duties vis-a-vis feeding sand, ballast and cement into the hopper when, just to make polite conversation, I said something like, "How long's tha been working here then?"

He gave me a withering look and with tremendous dignity said, "Don't thee tha me. Tha only thas them that tha thee!"

If the accent is not getting through to colleagues in the soft south had he known French he could have drawn the parallel of the use of "Tu" and "Vous." The strict requirement is that the formal "Vous" is used always unless a close personal friend or a child relative is being addressed in which case the more informal "Tu" can be used.

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER *VOLUME 14, ISSUE 4, WINTER 2009/10*

A chartered surveyor? A belated episode 2

Having been introduced to the RICS, "A Chartered Surveyor?" Volume 10 Issue 4 (the one with Betty on the front cover) the need to take and pass the examinations became paramount.

Given my academic background, failed BSc (Civ Eng), the chartered surveyor exam route looked to be a doddle. My starting date at Sheffield was such that I only just had time to get my forms signed and submitted before taking the "First Exam," without any formal study, but I passed. On to the Intermediate!

We exam takers soon established a routine. We had day release and the surveying course at Sheffield College was taken at an "annexe", the unused half of an operational infant's school in Attercliffe. We were much bigger than

them and shared their dining facilities. They didn't eat much but we made up for it. In addition we all stayed on in the office 2 or 3 evenings a week studying at our drawing boards until about 9 o'clock. If you think it's easy to sit up on a tall stool at an old fashioned drawing board until that time let me assure you it isn't. In fact without too much effort it's easy to drop off to sleep, and drop off, but I do not recommend it.

Leaving the city late at night was not without its perils. I had bought a motorbike, a new Honda, one of the first imported into England I would imagine. It looked the business but the front brake was pathetic. One night a police sergeant used me to demonstrate to his accompanying cadet how to check the documents of a motorist. At the last minute he just stepped out into the road arm raised and palm towards me as set out in

the Highway Code. I thought he was a goner. Without time to swerve I just braked as hard as possible and prayed. My front tyre came to rest touching his highly polished boot and neatly pressed black trousers. With a withering look he calmly brushed off the dust and proceeded with his interrogation.

The Intermediate exam took place at the Mechanics Institute Reading Rooms in Leeds; a train ride away for we Sheffield people. It was necessary to attend with a double elephant drawing board and T-square. There were about 300 of us in the examination hall, seated at folding desks against which leaned 300 boards and T-squares. The exams got under way. Once the invigilators had stopped rushing round saying "Cease smoking" peace reigned - for at least 10 minutes. Then the first drawing board went over and slapped against the wooden floor with a satisfyingly loud crash; followed

at regular intervals by the other 299. It was like a war zone in there.

Halfway through the exam the cabaret began. With a loud rattling noise, like Marley's ghost, an aged, silver haired, uniformed retainer appeared from the wings carrying a large silver tray burdened with a silver-plated teapot, jugs for hot water and milk and sufficient crockery for the 3 invigilators now seated on the stage. Eventually, and very slowly, he reached the centre of the stage and placed the tray on a convenient side table. He then proceeded to serve the 3 individually, a process that took some considerable time during which he had the full attention of all the 300 examinees. Eventually he shuffled off stage left and, had we been brave enough, we should have given him a round of applause.

The only sour note came when we got back to Sheffield. Our group got as far as Fitzalan Square, where we were all to go our separate ways. We were of course still carrying the aforesaid drawing boards and T-squares. Before we could finish our goodbyes our little meeting was roughly broken up by the local constabulary and we were told in no uncertain terms to move on. I can only assume that they imagined we were about to stage some sort of demonstration and the drawing boards were placards.

On a lighter note I got through so that meant a 2-year wait for the final and the dreaded practical test but meanwhile I had already decided to move on to pastures new.

(Stay tuned for more exciting episodes; hopefully episode 3 will not be as long delayed.)

A forest of tower cranes

Do you remember our trip to Newham in 2004 when young Malcolm Dawes chose as his theme London 2012 and the Olympics? Many of the presentations at his Presidential Conference told a compelling tale about the vast amount of investment and activity that was about to be visited on Stratford railway station and its immediate environs.

Despite the extreme plausibility of what we were told I feel sure I was not the only cynic who thought it best to wait and see, after all we have all seen plans and dreams fail to come to full fruition.

So let me put minds to rest. I travelled up to Lee's (Dawson) Presidential Conference at Brentford by train. Now all the main line trains from East Anglia stop at Stratford so I had a very good view of the Olympic site and saw the biggest forest of tower cranes I have ever seen. A huge amount of work is indeed underway with vast amounts of equipment, mountains of materials on the move and emerging skeletal stadia.

Brentford 09

I have to say that I really enjoyed this conference, after all it's not often that one finds both the President and an antepenultimate but one past President waiting at the door of the venue to greet my arrival. The hospitality was superb, the area was interesting and attractive, the Bollywood dancing was fantastic – but one doubt remains; did the 3 boys in the boat make it back home?

The wonder of Woolies

When Mr and Mrs Ramsbottom went to Blackpool with young Albert, their son, we were told he carried a stick with an 'orses'ead'andle, the finest that Woolworth's could sell. Having seen so many famous shops close forever over the last few years I do find it difficult to go in and pick up a few "closing down sale" bargains as it feels like picking the pockets of a corpse. However as soon as the first whispers about Woolies spread I did go in before the sales started to stock up on those items that would also disappear forever ie those glass saucer-like things for extracting the juice from lemons and little porcelain soap dishes.

Woolworths has been an ever-present part of the High Street for as long as I can remember and my particular memory of the store goes back to the 70s.

The Stowmarket Woolies had been updated. The gaslights had been replaced with neon tubes but all the fittings were still suspended from

the ceiling. The creaky, narrow, very hardwearing, floorboards had been disguised with an overlay of thick brown linoleum but still creaked. But the supermarket style layout with a couple of checkouts had not yet arrived. Instead the traditional layout of island displays in the shape of an elongated "O" with an assistant and a till trapped inside the "O" still prevailed. The goods were set out on the flat surface of the display unit separated by low plate glass dividers. The depth of each unit was such that you could, if you both stretched, hand your purchase and money to the assistant trapped within.

I had, somewhat daringly, bought an early model hand-held calculator the previous week and it was faulty. I spent a long time that week trying to establish clearly what was going wrong and had a carefully rehearsed presentation ready for the purpose of convincing an assistant that I should be given a replacement. Woolies assistants, at that time, it would not be too unkind to say, were not noted for either their high-tech prowess or for being the sharpest tool in the box and so I anticipated difficulties. Little did I know that 20 years on I would face a regular similar challenge at committee?

So with some trepidation I presented myself at the calculator area of the same display unit, attracted the attention of the assistant, and then launched into my presentation with illustrations provided by the aforesaid calculator. I sensed I was not getting much feedback and glancing up I saw the assistant was just standing there holding out her hand. She obviously wanted to try out the unit herself. I handed it over, with the box. She returned the calculator to its package and then expertly tossed it about 20 yards into a bin located within the display unit and provided for just this eventuality. Simultaneously she picked up another unit from the display and handed it to me without a word. Little did I know also that 20 years on I would often receive a similar response from committee?

Estates Gazette revisited

In the issue of 29 August, page 25, under the heading "RBS acts to stem losses..."

the opening sentence “RBS is creating several vehicles to buy back distressed commercial properties it has leant against...” struck a chord.

Some years ago I was responsible for moving my staff into a new purpose-built office building. Unfortunately the budget ran out just before building work was completed and so initial cleaning up of builders rubble was skimpy, to say the least, and no finish was applied to the internal walls of up-market breezeblock. Although the property was not distressed we certainly were when we leant against it.

Mind you not as distressed as I was when visiting a farm tenant some months later. I leant against a complicated piece of agricultural machinery and something stained right through the suit, the shirt and on to the arm. It could have been residues from the hydraulic system, or whatever the noxious substance the machinery had been spraying, or probably a mixture of the two but it never did come out of the suit or the shirt.

The move

That reminds me.

I have just been involved in my fifth major office move in 40 years of working in local government. As usual it was traumatic but, uniquely, I was not responsible for any of the arrangements for the new building in Bury St Edmunds. I missed the first few days in the new environment, on reflection a major tactical error, so arrived early on the second Monday morning without the requisite ID to get into, and about, the building. Fortunately an ACES Past President had kindly offered to let me in and I was conducted straightaway to an inner FM security sanctum where arrangements had been made for the top man to be on standby to sort out my credentials. He was not there but a nice young lady, who looked vaguely familiar, at the far end of the office immediately got up and came over and said “You are William Marshall, the County Land Agent and Valuer.” What a lovely welcome.

But back to the story, in my time I organised 4 major office moves and

thought I ought to pass on to you, briefly, lessons learned.

The first was an outcome of the 1974 Reorganisation. This had a big effect on Suffolk where 2 existing county councils were being merged. I was involved in taking a lease of a 9-floored office block in Ipswich, St Peter’s House, to supplement the existing County Hall accommodation. The shadow authority had decreed that the new building was to be open plan and that new system-built furniture only was to be used. The East Suffolk Procurement Officer refused to get involved in purchasing this for the new authority and so I ended up buying and signing for the delivery of £75,000 of new furnishings!

I was also asked to organise the move of all property staff into the new building and to produce a floor layout fully in accordance with German “burolandschaft” principles. This I did by replicating the new office structure diagram on the floor plate with the open plan furniture. There were no corners or fixed offices, just gentle curves and a wide-open vista. It looked fantastic. No one complained; there was no-one to consult with other than the new Property Chief, as he was the only person yet appointed to the new authority.

Ten years later I organised the move of property staff from St Peter’s House back to the County Hall site but into a new purpose-built “architect designed” office building known as St Edmund House. It was specifically designed for open plan working but unlike the previous “spec built” office was a dismal failure. There was only minimal consultation with staff, as there was little to discuss, and professional removers were used to dismantle furniture, move it, and re-erect at the other end as directed by me.

After the event I learned staff were disgruntled as they were not asked to approve floor layouts and personal desk positions and had not been asked to come in over the weekend to move and re-erect furniture!

Ten years on, in 1994, I began to organise the move of substantially the same staff from St Edmund House to

an older and smaller office building nearby, St Giles House. From the start I asked each section to nominate a representative for the Move Committee. This was done and I chaired the meetings; there were agendas and minutes. All the previous areas of complaint were addressed. After a few meetings a senior member of staff came to see me on behalf of the other representatives. They didn’t want to be involved in the preparations any more. They felt they were being implicated in the process and their ability to complain, after the event, was being limited. There were no more meetings; I did it my way.

Six years on, after being given notice of my pending redundancy, I was asked to organise the move of all property staff, except me, from St Giles House back to St Edmund House. It all went well, there were no complaints, and in fact I can remember little about it.

Lessons?

Just remember that when it comes to offices, desks and parking people will complain whatever you do and however it is organised. So ensure that at least one person is completely satisfied with method and outcome, ie you.

Going undercover

I am currently involved, peripherally, in the letting of an important town centre space as a possible "drinking establishment," to use the planners' rather inelegant technical term. It's not an idea that has gone down well with "the great and the good" and immediately began to generate letters to the local paper based on the 2 usual grounds plus a rather surprising one.

The 2 usual grounds are, of course (1) You cannot approve another pub/shop/café in the town as this will compete with my pub/shop/café and (2) this is a council-promoted project so must, by definition, be wrong.

In addition some complaints read like the teetotalers' tracts that we used to be issued with years ago at Sunday School highlighting the evils of the demon drink. An interesting approach to adopt in a town whose prosperity was created by, and is sustained by, a major brewery!

But getting back to the story it is possible that a major national chain of family drinking establishment operators might be interested and this created much high-level internal discussion although it soon became apparent that neither Management, nor Members, or I, had any personal experience of the particular pubs in question.

In the Armed Services "Never volunteer for anything," is the watchword but as I was going up to Warwick I volunteered to lunch in such an establishment and report back. Sometimes it's a hard job but someone has to do it.

On the day I soon located the premises and went in. I had to draw the line at any undercover photography though as, although my new camera is compact enough not to draw attention, I cannot yet turn off the flash. I found it a very pleasant place to be in with a lunchtime family orientated clientele. And there was something on the menu I could actually eat ie chicken Caesar salad so I ordered that at the bar along with half

a Guinness. "It'll be about 10 minutes," I was told so I sat down to study the house magazine. So far so good, no one had spotted me as a spy!

The meal arrived in 4 minutes and looked good enough to eat. Lots a big salad leaves, OK on my diet and lashings of Caesar salad dressing, best not to think about it. There was also plenty of Parmesan and croutons; all best avoided as far as possible.

After a minute or two I sensed something was amiss; there was no chicken. Would complaining blow my cover? Would not complaining blow my cover? Was I being watched from some secret control room?

I attracted the attention of the Polish lady and explained the problem. She whisked the plate away and then kept me waiting just long enough to wonder if she was ever coming back when she returned triumphantly with a chicken Caesar salad with a double helping of chicken. "Enjoy!" My cover was not blown. I finished my meal then slunk away.

A chartered surveyor? The prequel

Having decided, quite recently, that I had to digitise a lifetime's accumulation of photographs and transparencies I immediately came up against the age-old problem of inadequate record keeping; most were undated. However in looking for evidence I did find I had retained quite a lot of written material such as a complete collection of work diaries from 1969 so not only do I know where all the bodies are buried but I have documentary evidence too.

This search for material eventually led me to a box containing a number of 50-year-old school exercise books and a surprising discovery. In "A CHARTERED SURVEYOR 1" I expressed some surprise when offered a training position with the objective of becoming a chartered surveyor. I had no idea what a surveyor was although on reflection I thought it sounded just up my street.

Fifty years on I have only just realised how true that was. The school exercise books mentioned above contain a number of carefully drawn and labelled maps of my village with all streets clearly labelled and features of interest shown. These were done freelance as it were and pre-11 plus. Then when I was 12 we obviously had a session on scale drawings and off I went doing ever-improving scale drawings of the IIA form room eventually with each desk labelled up with the occupant's name.

Not having looked at this material for many, many years this all came as a big surprise and in any event who but a chartered surveyor would, due to other pressures, fail to date (value) photographs as they were taken but would, nonetheless, retain sufficient contemporary documentary evidence to allow accurate dating (valuation) to take place decades later?

Bankers' bonuses

I have to say that my heart went out to the bankers the other day on reading this story. It concerned the "Banking Group" that would have gone down the tubes last year taking squillions of our money with it had not the government pumped in squillions of our money to save their bacon. Now this year the Group's position had picked up and it had only lost a few billion, presumably, of our money. And apparently the Board of Directors had spent "a long time" considering very carefully the bonus position and had decided, given the very sensitive nature of the topic, to award themselves only a few millions of our money as bonuses for not losing more than the few aforesaid billions. The Board must be paid vast fees for taking such vital decisions.

I wonder if these bankers will ever tell us what really happened in the crash? We know that billions were lost recently. So who trousered the billions of pounds of profit? And given the bonus culture, ie you help yourself from the till when things go well and when the big losses were sustained did you have a whip round and put some back?

Which all reminds me, not of the current "Scandal" about pay-offs to Chief Executives but an initiative adopted in local government about 20 years ago to assess all salaries on an impartial and objective basis so that we would all be on the same footing. The problem to be solved was the inequity whereby salaries were dependent upon the power and rapaciousness of the employing department. Apparently this then new system, widely used in the private sector, assessed responsibilities under a number of headings, for example budget controlled was one, then added up the scores and with the aid of a points table that came with the system, produced, independently and equitably, a salary.

"Isn't this a wonderful system?" said the Chief Executive. I alone disagreed. "Look," I said, "I accept the present arrangements where the powerful departments get the lion's share. It's the way of the world. All the new arrangements will bring is a complicated assessment that will have to be manipulated to prove the powerful departments really deserved their big salaries all along. As I say I don't mind that but I do object to being regarded as a simpleton." "What a cynical view. We will train you as an assessor and put you on the Appeals Panel. That will show you how wrong you are."

It didn't. After a huge amount of work, and massaging by the operators of the

system it was proved that the old order of merit was right all along and, indeed, in some of the bigger department salaries were enhanced.

Then the bigger departments began reorganising and some individual salaries were greatly enhanced to reflect new responsibilities. Within 6 months a second wave of reorganisations began in which the salary-enhancing responsibilities were switched within teams to give other staff enhanced salaries. "Didn't we consider this reorganisation 6 months ago," I naively asked, "and improved the salaries of A, B and C? Now A, B and C are losing their new responsibilities to X, Y and Z who should have their salaries improved too. Does this mean that the salaries of A, B and C revert back?" "That is not a question you can ask," said Personnel.

One issue I could not resolve was that the authority was not prepared to take into account capital receipts in assessing responsibility-based points as both the system and the authority only regarded expenditure budgets as a true measure of responsibility. As the Treasurer himself put it, "You may be raising £3 million in capital receipts each year but anyone can do that. It doesn't really involve and professional expertise or difficult judgements. On the other hand we in Finance have the real professional job of "overnighting" those capital receipts when they come in and then investing them prudently so that income is

maximised before we spend them. That's the real professional task!" Which is not what was said when the Iceland Banks went into meltdown taking many authorities' assets with them. A whole procession of Finance Officers, and their groupies, appeared in the media to say it wasn't their fault. Investment decisions were just a tick box exercise. If government gave the Bank of Toytown a good credit rating then that's where the money went.

In some professions you just cannot lose.

Kenneth Kemp Turner FRICS

The RICS reported that Kenneth Kemp Turner died aged 96. He had lived in Newmarket for many years but had recently moved to the south coast. He retired many years ago as Defence Land Agent and was for a time Chairman of Suffolk County Council. He was a real gent of the old school, always polite, considerate and had a wonderful turn of phrase that he used in both speech and letter writing. County council meetings were always orderly and well conducted in his time.

What many may not realise is that when he, a chartered surveyor, was Chairman of the council both the Chief Executive and the County Land Agent and Valuer were chartered surveyors too; a unique situation for the Royal Institution.

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER *VOLUME 15, ISSUE 2, SUMMER 2010*

A Century Surveyed

The Centenary Book, which arrived pre-Liverpool, is a superb, comprehensive and glossy recording of the history of ACES and its predecessor incarnations. Colin and Tim should rightly feel proud of their part in its production. The decision to include so many historic photographs was absolutely correct.

The book celebrates the centenary of CLAVA, the County Land Agent and Valuers Association. I was a member of CLAVA. My, how the years have flown by. I really must dig out my tweedy plus fours

and trilby in time for Newquay. It sounds just the sort of place to sport plus fours – a century ago!

Professor Eric Laithwaite

I happened to be, by chance, in a second-hand bookshop on the way to Liverpool when I came across "An Engineer Through the Looking Glass", by Professor Eric Laithwaite. Although it was priced a little outside my reach I did have a quick flick through the pages and soon decided I didn't understand a word of it. However his photograph, which must have dated from the early 60s, was

exactly as I remembered him.

I had started a BSc Honours degree course in Civil Engineering at Owens College, Manchester University and dutifully attended a year's course of lectures in electrical engineering in, appropriately enough, the Electrical Engineering Department. Professor Eric gave these. The other elements of the course involved numerous complicated lectures in the Mathematics Department and the Mechanical Engineering Department and probably others elsewhere but we never went near the Civil Engineering Department. This rather destabilised me

and to correct this I tended to focus on the Union building, especially the bar on the second floor.

Perhaps you remember Eric, he invented the electric linear induction motor now used to power rapid transit rail systems all over the world, but none in this country. He mentioned his invention from time to time in his lectures, and became something of a TV personality thereafter.

At the end of the first year we had to take a relevant vac job. I ended up a Junior Civil Engineer on a big site in Sheffield and learned a lot about the role of the civil engineer and their status on site ie you were likely to be the poorest paid person on site and could be despatched to Abu Dhabi or Alaska on a few days' notice.

Having reconsidered my position I didn't return to Manchester, or become a civil engineer but became a navvy instead; a decision I have never regretted.

Oh and I didn't buy the book. As I said, I dutifully attended a year's course of his lectures in Manchester, and much like the book, didn't understand a word of them either.

A very nice man

I may have mentioned this before but I am a motorcaravanner. I bought my fifth one 3 years ago, on a bit of an impulse, just before, or so it transpired, I embarked on an extensive course of medical examinations, hospitalisation and convalescence.

So by the time I felt inclined to use it again its electrical system had shut down completely ie it was impossible to open any of the doors. By chance I had not backed the van up against the garage wall, as was my original plan, consequently the rear "hatchback" and its non-electrical lock, was accessible, otherwise the remaining option for access would have been, presumably, a tin-opener.

I have to say it was difficult clambering in, as, at the time, I was held together by 29 industrial size metal staples, the executive variety of course, but I did manage to disengage the other locked doors, in time, eventually, for the first visit of the AA man. Since then I have built up quite a

relationship with a succession of AA men, interspersed, just for variety, with VW Assist usually represented by the RAC, and always to attend to the same problem, a lack of starting. Thank goodness for Home Start.

All were polite and competent and came to the same conclusion. The van was not being used enough. Even my own garage confirmed this.

Eventually I became completely fed up (after nearly 3 years!) and instructed my garage to fit the biggest and most powerful battery they could find and to check thoroughly the electrics for faults. This was done and a few wiring faults were also traced and corrected. I promised to use the van more regularly.

Three trouble-free months of motoring later I stopped off in Bradford on my way home from York to visit my brother. As an afterthought, because he lives on a narrow road, and the dustbin lorry was due, I swung in the electrically operated mirrors. Aren't these modern electric gizmos wonderful; how did we survive without them?

When the time came to leave, before the M62 rush hour, I did, fleetingly, worry about whether the van would start but it fired up first go. Then swing out the mirrors and off we go. No mirrors. I twiddled the knob every which way but no joy. They remained retracted.

So, yet another call to the AA! It was estimated he would arrive in 60 minutes. He did. "Never heard of that before," he said. Progress! He tried everything I had already tried; no luck. He opened up 3 fuse boxes accessible from the driver's cab and tried each fuse one by one. No luck but he did revive an internal light that had failed years ago.

Then he tried his dashboard computer in his van and found 2 or 3 possibilities but no luck. Then he "phoned a friend". When things get desperate they can contact a central source of expertise with access to the Internet and manufacturer's information. He made a number of suggestions most of which we had already tried but tried again just to be polite. No luck. Then he said there's a build-up of static in the system, disconnect the battery, discharge the static, reconnect the battery and away you go! We fell about.

But OK said the man; we'll give it a go. It worked!

This process had taken 90 minutes plus the first hour's waiting time, which meant I joined the eastbound M62 at the height of the evening rush; and was pleased to do so.

The very, very nice man was AA staff number 76679, probably based in Leeds. If you meet up with him say hello from me.

Before I left he gave me one piece of invaluable technical advice. "See that knob there," he said pointing to the switch that controlled the mirrors, "never, ever touch it again."

The A64 Chinese mystery

Travelling along the A64 dual carriageway one morning I was on the lookout for a likely looking filling station, spotted one coming up, and began to pull in. Too late, I realised it was not a direct access but one of those tedious service roads that take you right round the houses and into the back door, as it were.

There were a couple of cars filling up as I reached the pumps but by the time I was ready they had gone and another car pulled in just as I began to walk over to the shop. In there I was somewhat taken aback as the only person visible in the place was a Chinaman sat behind the counter and slumped over the cash desk. He looked completely comatose – or dead!

Had the previous customer, who had left while I was filling up, robbed the place and knocked him out, or topped him, or what? Before I could decide the door opened and the next customer came in and stood behind me. "Oh," he said, "It's help yourself time is it?" "Absolutely not!" I replied. Is nothing sacred, I thought, anyway the place was probably full of CCTV cameras, not to mention the forecourt.

I rapped the edge of my credit card on the counter. The dead body jerked upright instantly. "Pump?" he asked. I paid and was glad to get out. The customer behind me had gone by the time I was ready to roll and out of curiosity I drove slowly past the shop and yes, there he was already slumped over the cash desk looking completely comatose – or dead!

It's different up North

Felicity Goodey CBE, the former BBC Industrial Correspondent and currently Chairman of Central Salford URC Ltd gave a very interesting, articulate and energetic presentation in Liverpool about the changes in Salford brought about by the demise of the Manchester Ship Canal and the Port of Manchester (renamed Port of Salford after closure). I have just finished editing the following small section; these are Felicity's spoken words. We still have a lot to do, this is Chapel Street ... the heart of the old city, one of our next major development areas ... we have a £1 billion framework deal here ... they submitted, with our support, the largest single planning application which Salford City Council has ever received ... and the reaction of the local community was, "Well come on just get on with it."

I couldn't get over the reaction of the local community. It must be very pleasing to work in that sort of atmosphere. The contrast with the culture down here is amazing. The "reaction of the local community" is never heard. Any development, however small, any change to the status quo, no matter how minute, has to be challenged by the same small group of letter writers in alliance with the local press.

For example just after the Liverpool Conference the local authority announced a major shake-up in wheelie bin emptying rounds and let it be known that it intended to send a circular letter to all local residents and stick an identical reminder on each wheelie bin on the last round of the old regime. Instantly the bottles of green ink were unstopped and the authority was vilified in the local press the following week, not for changing the rounds, but for the waste incurred in telling everyone twice!

A mild response in the local paper the following week from the authority hinting the not everyone read every letter or wheelie bin attachment produced an even more vitriolic response from the green ink brigade

accusing the authority of badly underestimating the intelligence of council tax payers and being out of touch with the real world.

This double exchange brought us up to the time that I should have been getting Liverpool Conference transcripts from the lady who also works in the Waste Disposal admin office of the local authority and, by coincidence, it was the time the rounds actually changed.

That was about 2 months ago. Since then it has been all hands to the pump in the Waste Disposal admin office as for 2 months the phones have not stopped ringing as local residents complain vociferously that their bin had not been emptied and how dare you change the rounds without telling us. Not that this means much to the green ink brigade. Having put the world to rights – again – other windmills have appeared to take a tilt at.

This is why the production of Liverpool transcripts and the publication of the Liverpool Asset have been so badly delayed.

Motorbikes II

Some time ago I promised a second helping of Motorbikes and here it is. I bought the little Honda 50 early in 1963 and I changed it in mid 1965. During its short life however I used it for both work and to travel to numerous motorcycle race meetings. My "local track" was Cadwell Park, and I haunted the place, but Mallory Park was almost as close. Further away was Oulton Park in Cheshire and I remember 2 epic Easter Monday journeys across the Pennines in the snow. Eventually I bought a new Honda 305cc CB77 super sports model for £269.19.0, if I remember rightly. It was a ridiculous choice really. This model had a top speed of more than 110 mph, accelerated faster than anything I have travelled in since, including a Porsche sports car, and the brakes, if applied in earnest, had an effect similar to someone sticking a metal rod through the front wheel.

On reflection I was lucky to survive.

By this time I had moved on from Sheffield to Retford as a Valuer for British Railways Estates and Rating department. Retford was a 16-mile cross-country trip from home and this, with practice, took about 16 minutes. The bike had an electric starter and started first time every time. However it took a minute or two to warm up sufficiently to pull away so I used to leave it on the stand popping and spluttering until it was ready, much to the chagrin of Fred next door who had usually recently returned from the night shift. Once, and only once, I offered my mentor, Robbo, a lift back from the office to his village about 4 miles up the old A1. "How fast were we going?" Robbo asked the following morning. "I just managed to reach 110," I replied, as he went slightly green.

Shortly after buying the machine I had some problems with the headlight dipswitch and stopped off at a motorbike garage on the way home, run by a recently retired racer. He heard the engine, a free revving twin, and came out at once to see what it was. "Ah, one of the new Hondas, looks fantastic, what do you run it at?" he asked looking at the rev counter and taking charge of the twist grip before I could get off the bike. "I'm still running it in," I said, "and haven't gone over 1,000 rpm yet." He then asked what the upper limit was and I told him nearly 10,000 rpm at which point he rolled the throttle round to maximum and the machine and my eyeballs disappeared in a horrendous blur. "Fantastic," was his response and he lowered the rpm down to about 7,000. "When riding never let the revs drop below that," was his considered, expert view. I did try it on the way home but frightened myself very badly.

Some years later I saw a photo of Steve McQueen astride the same motorcycle in a Sunday colour supplement feature on "Style Icons." This is Steve on his machine.

And this is me, similarly mounted, back in the sixties.



rivers jointly run into the North Sea accommodates the 2 major ports of Felixstowe and Harwich.

Our starting point was Shotley Gate, situated at the point of the peninsula, and with great views of both ports. Driving down the hill to the Bristol Arms offers up the first view of the water and I saw that a huge cruise ship parked up at Parkeston Quay, across the water in Harwich, dominated the skyline. Shimmering white in the morning sun this 8 or 9-storied leviathan was obviously between cruises and when you are that big, parking is an issue. This view contrasted well with the huge container ships at Felixstowe stacked high with containers.

An hour or so later we were to come across a very different nautical scene.

This year there were 25 walkers and one dog, with the vast majority East Anglian chartered surveyors, as usual, covering under the bedclothes until we were safely on our way. The walk took us north alongside the Orwell then across the peninsula and back to the start along the banks of the Stour. We were to turn inland away from the Orwell at the "iconic" Pin Mill with its "iconic" views up the Orwell to the A14 crossing via a 20-year old concrete motorway bridge. (It's not clear whether it's the view or the bridge that is iconic).

I think the historic significance of Pin Mill is that it is where, in years past, sailing barges could be beached and repaired. Our path brought us up to Pin Mill through a wood that runs down to the riverside and here we saw about half a dozen "hulks" hauled up partly on to the bank. I looked around nervously expecting Magwich to grab me by the throat demanding "vittles." I'm not sure what the origin of these vessels was but they were quite big, made of steel not timber and all had been converted, somewhat idiosyncratically to residential purposes.

Had the temperature been up in the 90s, with 100% humidity, and lots of wood smoke in the air we could have been walking through the worst slum areas of Shanghai or Saigon or Mumbai not dear old Suffolk.

What an absolute shower

Back in August I heard on the late news that this was the best night to observe the meteorite showers but, unfortunately, most of the country would be covered by cloud, to the intense disappointment of many. I peeked out of the window only to see the sky was as clear as a bell so I felt obligated to go out and observe. Damn!

As I'd already had a small dry sherry before dinner and half a glass of tonic wine with the fish I was feeling a bit woozy anyway but thought that the fresh air would help. It was actually warm and pleasant out on the patio and, I don't know whether you tried it or not but it is difficult to "observe" when you have no idea about either direction or timing. So I adopted the procedure of constantly turning round and round so as not to miss anything and saw 2 cracking meteorite tracks and thought I saw 3 others but couldn't be sure.

Needless to say after half an hour turning round and round I did begin to feel really woozy, not to say bored, so packed it up and went to bed.

The Hole in the Elephant's Bottom

While on the way to Newquay I happened to be in a shop selling second hand books and CDs when I chanced across a copy of Roy Hudd's CD "Those Music Hall Days – 15 nostalgic favourites from the master of music hall". One song has the above title and the sleeve notes, and his autobiography, confirm that this number was actually learned at his grandmother's knee "and when you hear the lyrics it'll give you an idea of the sort of upbringing he had!"

Although born and brought up in Croydon Roy Hudd is now a "local" as he lives somewhere in Suffolk. Some years ago I went along to the Theatre Royal in Bury St Edmunds to catch his show "Roy Hudd's Extremely Entertaining Evening." The event was a sell out and the audience comprised mainly elderly, well-to-do, couples. The show was to focus on Roy's main interest in music hall and feature some of his many anecdotes and favourite songs.



Doing the LionHeart Walk - again

The first Saturday in September is LionHeart Challenge Walk time. This was the fourteenth walk, all researched and arranged magnificently by Geoffrey Dyball of Breton Chartered Surveyors Ipswich. This year we visited the Shotley Peninsular, south of Ipswich, and bounded to the north by the River Orwell and to the south by the River Stour. The estuary where both

His opening announcement was that his first number would be "The Hole in the Elephant's Bottom." My jaw dropped. Although I had never heard of it I did not think the title suggested a song wholesome enough for this audience. How wrong can you be? From the first

note everybody in the theatre, except me, was singing along and knew all the words. To give you a flavour here's the opening verse:

I wanted to go on the stage/And now my ambitions I've got 'em/In my grey

pantaloon I'm the rage/I'm the hole in the elephant's bottom.

And thereafter the last line of each verse is "Through the hole in the elephant's bottom." The lyrics are wickedly funny; you must try and catch it sometime.

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER VOLUME 15, ISSUE 4, WINTER 2010/11

It's different up North – again

Remember last edition's piece about the bins? It came up again recently.

I had just finished a meeting with a senior planner, a man I have known for about 10 years. He is highly respected, Members listen to him, he is articulate and very well spoken. I had him down as a Home Counties man, possibly ex public school.

Just for something to say as we packed up our papers I mentioned Felicity Goodey's comments the Chapel Street Salford Regeneration, their £1 billion framework deal with developers that produced the largest single planning application Salford City Council has ever received and the reaction of the local community was, "Well come on - just get on with it." I bemoaned that fact that this just didn't happen here. He made what I took to be a slightly flippant comment about "The North" and I asked how he knew that.

"Well I was born up there," he said.

"Where?"

"Up north."

"Where?"

"Well Sheffield actually."

"Whereabouts in Sheffield?"

"About 12 miles to the east."

[Like getting blood out of a stone isn't it; the years of planning training have really paid off.]

"Where exactly east of Sheffield?" I asked. "Oh, in a little village you will never have heard of called Dinnington,"

he replied, at which point I almost fell off my chair. "That's where I was born," I told him.

We had never met. He is about 10 years younger than me so our paths never crossed there and he lived at the posh end of the village. We lived at the other end, where, had we had a bath, we would have kept coal in it. He is the first person ever from Dinnington, or possibly the first person prepared to admit it, that I have met in the 50 odd years since I left the place.

The good old days

My meeting with the senior planner, and subsequent reminiscences, has dredged up a load of memories that I will undoubtedly pass on to you over the next few months. The said senior planner still visits the place regularly and tells me, for example, that there is now a Tesco supermarket in the village. This appears

to be built over the former cemetery, and possibly my grandmother's grave, with access involving the demolition of the public library.

The library was a place where I spent most of my childhood hours, with the possible exception of the Palace Cinema.

Back in the 40s and 50s there were a number of "high street" grocers trading in the village. I remember Gallons, and Meadow, and Thrift. We were Gallons people. You could shop there and carry your stuff away but most wrote out a weekly order in a notebook, dropped it off at the shop and paid for it, and then the errand boy would appear at your door later in the day with the purchases carefully packed in a cardboard box. So much for the innovative Internet based home delivery services of today.

There were also a number of men's hairdressing saloons though I cannot





recall any ladies' establishments. Haircutting was another "rights of passage" situation. At first boys were taken to the barbers by the father, an unusual situation, as mothers were primarily and almost completely responsible for childcare. The saloon of choice for us was the one run by Charlie Spittlehouse in the High Street. There was very little chat as I remember and the décor and ambience was similar to a funeral parlour. You had to remember your turn ie after all those waiting when you came in and before all those who came in after you sat down. A system requiring much self discipline that, I imagine, would not work today.

When my turn came Charlie would produce, with a flourish, a board about 2 feet long that rested across the arms of the traditional barber's chair. Children were sat on this for their haircut during which neither crying nor tantrums were an option. As soon as you became too big to sit on the board you were on your own regarding future visits.

At this point I transferred my allegiance to Harry Singleton's place. This was non-High Street and less formal, after all Harry sported a beard, which in that environment was quite unusual. The décor was the same with the same bottles of brightly coloured liquids enticingly placed around the mirror, merchandise that never seemed to change or get sold, and large poster pictures of weirdos with haircuts that were never, ever fashionable. The floor was covered with copious amounts of hair clippings, bits of fag paper and dog ends.

There was slightly more chat mainly related to horse racing prompted by careful scrutiny of the Daily Herald racing pages. Occasionally there was some political comment. I remember one such event vividly.

The Hungarian Uprising occurred in late

1956. The Hungarians had thrown off the Soviet yoke and had elected their own President Imre Nagy (pronounced Nage). The Russians, upset by this, launched a severe military response and Soviet tanks rolled into Budapest. The Soviets offered Nagy safe passage out of the country and then, on 4 November 1956 executed him - outside Hungary. This was reported on the front page of the Herald. One customer, clearly moved by this, said out loud, "I see they've killed Naggy then." To which, after a moment or two, 2 or 3 other customers responded, "Aye."

Financial crisis. What financial crisis?

As a member of a County Management Team from 1978 to 2000 all I ever remember discussing at Management Team meetings, apart from the County Hall Beverage Pricing Policy, was the latest in a constant stream of financial crises. I feel I ought to offer some experience-based practical advice to those currently in the hot seat. Advice about dealing with cut backs that is, not the price of vending machine teas and coffees.

Faced with a 20-year drip feed of financial cut backs we went through 3 distinct phases in handling them.

Phase 1. Hours and hours of Management Team time were spent in preparing advice on how cuts could be implemented with minimal impact on ratepayers. Member reaction was usually to blame chief officers for imposing the cuts, to ridicule the advice offered and to eventually agree to a slightly amended version of the suggested package.

Phase 2. Eventually we got fed up with this and moved into the next phase where hours and hours of Management Team time were spent in carefully identifying the financial extent of the latest cuts needed, and more importantly why. The only additional advice offered was putting the size of the required reductions into context. You know the helpful way the BBC News reports help us to understand big numbers ie the water leaking from the Northern Ireland system would fill Wembley Stadium 3 times over, or, and

that is the height of 3 London double decker buses. But not like the reporter who said, "The snow here is very deep, about 90 centimetres, or, to put that in context, 3 feet." So we would advise Members that the required cuts, to put this in context, would be equivalent to, for example, cutting out all winter highway maintenance or closing all old people's homes. This produced the same Member reaction as before but involved us in less angst.

Phase 3. When eventually the previous approach palled hours and hours of Management Team time were spent in carefully identifying the extent of the latest cuts, and why they were needed, and then Members were asked to identify and agree how they could be implemented.

If this sounds a dangerous approach you are correct. Once they are handed the keys; it is impossible to get them back.

RT ok

One thing I remember as a constant of childhood days is the presence of the Radio Times. This seems very strange as we only ever listened to the Home Service and the Light Programme. In fact the only available stations were those aforementioned two and the aptly named "Third Programme" so the listings content of the magazine must have been pretty thin. There was a crossword, as there is today, and my mother always used to complete it but apart from that its presence remains a bit of a mystery.

However I resolved that as soon as I had a house and radio of my own I too would buy the Radio Times. And so I have; it's my one little luxury.

The listings content has, of course, expanded exponentially but additional BBC radio channels and commercial radio stations as well as its 4 TV channels and the too many to count satellite stations. But there are fewer "must see or listen to" programmes than there were in the days before television. One looked forward to, and rarely missed, "Dick Barton," "Journey Into Space," "Have A Go," "The Goon Show" or "Hancock's Half Hour" for example. There is very little, or nothing, today that could be

put in the unmissable category so much so that I only look at the Radio Times listings one day at a time to minimise the disappointment.

One thing has changed though and that is over the last few months the Radio Times and changed into quite a readable magazine in its own right. The Ambridge Diary (sadly missing from the bumper 2-week festive edition) is a scurrilous character assassination of those well-loved characters and their jolly doings. And the comments of the TV editor Alison Graham and her team are often wickedly funny. Who else, in previewing a documentary about the late Carl Wilson of the Beach Boys, would

quite properly describe him as the only true rock and roller of the group, unlike the "portly fusspots" who preside over the group today? Magic!

No RT still ok

Having said that I missed, due to inclement weather, buying the first RT of 2011 and so have made do with a Saturday newspaper listings supplement. It is quite an inferior product, relatively speaking, particularly the minimalist font size, except for this gem.

In describing a comedy programme to be devoted to producing a People's Political Manifesto it gives, as an

example, a proposal that professional footballers should have to receive all their pay, in cash, in front of their fans. (Proposal 1).

The writer then adds, helpfully, "Good idea, as long as it's in loose change and they have to shovel it all up themselves, afterwards." (Proposal 2).

Unfortunately, due to the minimalist font size I misread "shovel" as "shove" with obvious hilarious consequences. (Proposal 3).

Vote now for Proposal 1, 2 or 3.

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER

VOLUME 16, ISSUE 1, SPRING 2011

You're still working?

About 20 years ago, whilst pitched up on some French campsite, I got talking to a bunch of middle-aged English caravanners all travelling together. They were hoping to drive on through Switzerland, Austria and Italy and eventually reach Yugoslavia.

"Are you going much further?" they asked.

"No," I replied, "we've already been away 10 days and I have to get back."

Their leader looked at me with wide-eyed horror. "You're not trying to tell me that you're still working are you?" he said.

That's the sort of off-hand comment that sticks in the mind for a long time like when on "Homes Under the Hammer" you see a kitchen just like yours dismissed with the terse comment, "Well this will all have to be ripped out for a start."

But I am still working for a couple of days a week and attending the regular CIPFA Property AMP Network meetings mainly for the excellent Technical Updates delivered by David Bentley. I am often asked why but no one believes my very simple explanation.

When I work I get up at 06.10 hours and leave home at 07.10 to be logged in and ready for work by 07.30 hours. When

I don't work I don't have to get up at 06.10 hours and, in contrast, it's so much more enjoyable.

When I attend the CIPFA meetings I hear David expound on the latest shiny new initiatives giving more and more power (to frustrate) to Members and the public eg Assets of Community Value and Community Right to Challenge and am just thankful that I am no longer involved. Mind you I often think someone is copying a former local government minister who enjoyed two careers involved with local government. His first self-styled involvement was "bringing local government under control" through the imposition of more and more bureaucratic controls, ie red tape. His second career was "freeing local government from unnecessary red tape" mainly by dismantling many of his aforesaid bureaucratic controls.

I've just come across two interesting quotes that I will pass on to you now. The first is a John Wayne quote. "Courage is being scared to death but saddling up anyway." I think that is my first John Wayne quote and it's a good one.

The second is also American. In 1864, during the American Civil War, General Sedgewick peered pompously over the parapet at the enemy some distance off and uttered the immortal words, "The couldn't hit an elephant at this

dist....."

That is similar to that farming expression relating to poor marksmanship "He couldn't hit a cow's ar** with a banjo." Does anyone know the origins of that one?

Somebody better get down there and explain offside to her

Just in case some readers have been in a coma for the past few months this was the opening line in a dialogue conducted by the then 2 leading Sky Sports presenters when they noticed, belatedly, that one of the referee's assistants (the term for many years was linesman) **WAS A WOMAN!** The conversation was not broadcast but recorded and secretly handed to the press.

The 2 presenters were fired and are now in a position where their antediluvian views are unlikely to be either heard by or offend anyone ie they are presenters on radio's Talksport.

Unfortunately the tape released to the media failed to include this additional dialogue.

Somebody better get down there and explain offside to her and while you're down there:

- Explain offside to the defensive

units of both teams neither of whom seem to understand the rule when an attacker gets through and scores

- Explain offside to the attacking units of both teams neither of whom seem to understand the rule when an attacker is penalised
- And although it's probably a waste of breath give the managers a run down on the rule too, particularly the grey haired old gent with the red face who is already practicing repeatedly jabbing his wristwatch with his index finger
- Explain to the Spanish International that it is not sufficient for him to just sit down in the penalty area to be awarded a penalty – and no, he cannot have a ball boy ready to come on with a warm dry towel for him to sit on next time to save muddying up his shorts
- Explain to the foreign players that FIFA has now ruled that snoods are not to be worn in July and the wearing of woolly gloves at any time really is highly suspect especially if not attached to a piece of elastic going up one sleeve and down to the other glove.

What financial crisis? This one!

In the last column in recalling my time on County Management Team and experience of dealing with cut backs I did suggest that having tried initially to suggest to Members the least disruptive method of implementation we then moved on to clarifying the extent of "savings" required and then advising, somewhat satirically, "to put this in context, this is equivalent to, for example, cutting out all winter highway maintenance or closing all old people's homes."

Well, either local Members have been reading my column or, more likely, those Management Team papers of 20 years ago, as here in Suffolk their opening shot at generating the required savings

currently, in addition to massive staff redundancies, is to:

- Sack all lollypop persons
- Get out of the old people's homes business
- Close 20% of all libraries
- Cease to support speed cameras (that the press have told us repeatedly are just a licence to print money)
- Close an Ipswich Park 'n Ride that took years to establish.

A far more courageous package, as Sir Humphrey would put it, than we could ever have suggested even in our most satirical dreams.

In addition, and presumably to assuage some of the hurt felt by the Park 'n Ride closure, they intend to consult on a multi-million pound scheme to improve the town centre dual carriageways and roundabouts "to make them work better."

How to get on in villages

One of John Betjeman's earlier poems "How to Get On in Society" is the inspiration for this piece. At junior school we memorised a lot of poetry but little in the way of explanation was offered. It was only much later that I came across John Betjeman, probably as the amiable old gent on TV doing programmes about suburbs, railways, and what he called "Goff" ie golf. Then it wasn't too long before I fell head over heels for Miss Joan Hunter Dunn, furnished and burnished by Aldershot sun. And "What strenuous singles we played after tea, We in the tournament, You against me."

His "How to Get On in Society" was originally set as a competition in Time and Tide the objective being to include as many references as possible to the then modern fads of society eg "Phone for the fish knives, Norman, As cook is a little unnerved." You get the idea. My how times have changed.

Having lived in a pretty Suffolk village for the past decade I have watched with interest how incomers, usually

rich incomers, conduct themselves in the belief that this is how to become popular and influential. Hence "How to Get On in Villages. Had I the skill I should have done it in verse and it would have begun "Email the fish and chip shop Norman, Oh dear the broadband is down again etc."

However, how to get on in villages; if your situation permits these are actions to take straightaway, or as soon as the garden trampoline is in place:

- Fence into your property some well-loved and well-maintained local feature eg the pond on the village green. Remember you will be better able to afford the legal costs than the Parish Council if this is disputed
- If a public right of way runs alongside your property re-fence the boundary in the style of a POW camp and, if possible, hire a demented Alsatian to run up and down the boundary to put people off
- If there is a public footpath across the front of your property park the 4-wheel drive on it; hire one if necessary. Only ever move it to do a mega shop but only at Sainsburys. Never take reusable bags, always buy enough to fill at least 20 pristine new carrier bags and leave the tailgate open for at least 30 minutes so all can see the opulence
- Buy a pedigree dog as a pet. This must cost 350 guineas as a minimum but this makes a good after-dinner conversation point, at least until house prices begin to move up again. But beware dogs have some very unsanitary habits and so are best kept in a shed as far away from the house as possible and only brought out, briefly, to impress
- Two children, one of each, are also useful as after dinner conversation points. But these too have some very unsanitary habits and so the same tips on care and maintenance apply

The kite

I often wonder what my earliest memory could be. Although I have a distinct memory of me, in a pram, in the front room, in a village 12 miles east of Sheffield during a very heavy air raid my viewpoint is of the room and the pram, not from the pram so it must be false.

One real memory is of the kite. It's on my desk as I write, still stored in its original packaging. It is identified as KITE M-357-A Stock No. 2A1678-357A made by the HOFFMAN RADIO CORP. LOS ANGELES, CALIF. The pack is dated 15 January 1945.

It is of course a yellow box kite with a frame of small aluminium tubes that fit together to support squares of bright yellow fabric. The original purpose was to fly off a radio aerial from small naval craft or surfaced submarine. In the post war 40s this was the nearest we got to a "toy".

My father and I used to fly it from the nearby recreation ground, a large open space, in the company of one or two other kite flyers. After a false start using poor quality string, that soon broke, the regular kite flyers soon put us onto fishing line and we never looked back.

We soon became regulars and I, aged 4 or 5, sometimes got to hold the line rather than just running with the kite to get it airborne. One of the regulars' tricks that I much admired was to put a hole in a piece of paper, thread the string through it and then watch the paper slide up the line to the kite. I really wanted to do this and after much pleading my father said, "OK, but don't let go of the string."

I held on to it while Dad unwound the unused string from the piece of wood we used to wrap the line round, introduced the sheet of paper and then began to rewind the loose string. I let go of the string. It was a very windy day and the kite, now trailing about 50 yards of fishing line attached to a piece of brush handle, took off across the field toward Farm Lane. Good-bye kite, or so I thought.

Dad and I and most of the regulars gave chase. The kite reached Farm Lane long before we did and we all thought that if it reached the open fields on the other side we'd never ever catch it.

But we hadn't taken into account the roadside telephone line. The kite went over the top and the last of the line wrapped round the wires with the brush handle forming quite a nice locking mechanism. At least the kite was now tethered, albeit about 30 feet up in the air but it looked as though the wires would break quite soon and we would lose the kite and vandalise the GPO telephone wires, almost a capital offence in those days.

At the age of 4 or 5 I couldn't think how we could retrieve the kite. But Dad and the other regulars, all miners, were accustomed to solving practical problems. He asked if he could borrow some string from one and despatched another to find something heavy and metallic. He returned with a weighty adjustable spanner. Tying one end of the borrowed string to this he carefully tossed it over the runaway kite string so that the weight returned to earth on the other side of the string. In this way the kite string could be retrieved and, although it took most of those present, the kite was then "capsized" and returned to earth.

We didn't do much more flying that day.

MediaCityUK

Remember MediaCityUK, enthusiastically explained to us at the Liverpool Conference by the delegates from the Central Salford Regeneration Company? Many cynics amongst us thought that while the buildings would appear on site there was considerable doubt as to whether the major new tenant, the BBC, would.

Well, on June 3 2011 Mike Dixon conducted the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra in a special concert broadcast live from Salford to celebrate the new home of the BBC Philharmonic.

And a little earlier, in April, the Sunday Times Magazine published a big piece containing 2 contrasting views on the BBC's new northern headquarters; one from a Londoner and one from someone who was originally from the north. There are no prizes for guessing who thought what.

An interesting point in the piece concerned travel costs and how full vfm is obtained from our licence money.

The journalist opposed to the move north put forward, as one of his arguments, the likely excessive travel costs involved on London Euston to Manchester train fares. Apparently "the BBC is going to have to fork out for this journey hundreds of times a week, ferrying guests, technicians and producers."

And the cost of the journey was based on the practical experience of the 2 journalists involved and the BBC Creative Director who travelled up together having bought 3 presumably walk-on return tickets at Euston for the princely sum of £700! The party met an independent producer on the platform who was also travelling up that day but they could not travel together as he had a first class advance ticket bought for only £25. As the BBC man boringly explained, at length, he could not be seen in first class as he had to appear to be a thrifty man of the people and travel second class. (And who would know his fare cost about £200 more than a first class saver?)

And still the penny didn't drop! I could save them millions if they follow these suggestions.

- How many of the guests, technicians and producers need a return ticket? Buy them a single and let them work it out for themselves
- Require travellers to plan ahead and reveal their travel plans in advance. For example our party of 3 didn't just decide to travel up that morning

- Bring in an unemployed teenager on a YTS scheme to buy advance tickets on the Internet.

More TalkSport

My disparaging comments about TalkSport in the last issue were ill-judged. In reflecting on Andy Gray and Richard Keys pre-match comments on Sky I said, "The 2 presenters were fired and are now in a position where their antediluvian views are unlikely to be either heard by or offend anyone ie they are presenters on radio's TalkSport."

I spoke too soon. TalkSport recently won a Sony Award for its bright and breezy tabloid Andy and Richard morning show. Given that success I understand the Board is now considering a complete revamp of their station's format.

The spirit of Arthur

I never thought Arthur's influence would manifest itself in good old Suffolk.

We of course have regular fire evacuation tests in our new West Suffolk House, (a property and project so ably described in the last issue of Terrier; see pages 30 and 31), and usually the Building Manager chooses a cold wet day. That option was difficult this spring as it has been incredibly dry here and latterly wonderfully warm.

So early one warm sunny morning the

alarms went off and we were duly turfed out to stand around our respective muster stations enjoying the sunshine and a peaceful chat. Eventually the H&S man emerged from the building with his loudhailer and told us that we had all done very well and could now go back to our desks.

Incredibly, and without any prearrangement, the whole crowd spontaneously broke into the chant "We're not going back, we're not going back." It reminded me strongly of Arthur's addressing his members outside NUM HQ in Sheffield and telling them the strike was over and an orderly return to work was planned.

Their chant lasted a long time. Ours a short time dying on our lips as we instantly trooped back into the building.

F1

What's happened to F1 these days?

In the good old days racing used to take place on well worn, old fashioned, traditional circuits in front of a packed house of motor racing enthusiasts. The TV coverage was also presented in a traditional manner, but by the enthusiastic commentary team of Murray Walker and James Hunt. OK, so in those days, certain teams and a few established drivers were allowed to do whatever they liked but, hey, nothing's perfect.

Today, more often than not, the race is staged on a brand new circuit, with every facility on hand, in some place we have hardly heard of, and in front of vast, spectacular but completely empty grandstands. Before each race the grid is packed with "celebrities", bussed in specially, but where do they go when the racing starts?

Murray and James are long gone and are now replaced by a vast team of pundits, presenters and commentators. I somewhat absent mindedly tuned in to one of these "fly-away" events and was surprised by the vast crowd in front of the camera and remember thinking there are many more spectators than last time until I realised that we were being introduced to the presentation team.

Technically the TV coverage is now excellent but the commentary finds it difficult to keep up with the race. The event itself is now more complicated with various grades of tyres designed to not last the race, refuelling or not (currently not) and lots of new technical gizmos such as KERS, DRS and DCF to keep the commentators and us on our respective toes.

Years ago I use to go to the Friday practice of the British Grand Prix and join the end of the Silverstone entrance gate queue just west of the M1 at 6 o'clock in the morning. I wonder if that still happens?

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER **VOLUME 16, ISSUE 3, AUTUMN 2011**

Work

My mother always used to say "Work that makes the world go round."

I lived in a mining village that was extensively influenced by the surrounding agricultural activities so much so that the autumn half term break at school was always referred to as "potato picking week" and the expectation was that most would do just that. There were no Eastern European immigrants in those days. Or rather there were many Poles, Ukrainians and, some, alleged Russians, who arrived during the

war and wouldn't or couldn't go home, but they all worked down the pit.

So my first recollection of work was pea picking at about the age of 5. I must have gone with a friend and his mother and I remember that we, a group comprising mainly mothers and kids, were picked up and taken out to the field on the farmer's trailer. Here we were issued with a sack each and a designated row to pick with the instruction that, "when the sack's full take it over there to be weighed and we'll pay half a crown a sack", or whatever it was.

As I stood there, somewhat bemused, thinking about the hard work to come and how on earth I could possibly carry a full sack when I heard heated words coming from the weighing-in area.

"These pods are too thin, we can't possibly do this for half a crown a sack," said a formidable lady as spokesperson for all of us.

"That's all there is," said the farmer.

"Then we're on strike," was the response to which the farmer replied, in a very conciliatory tone, "Well bugger off then."

And so we did, having, so far as I was concerned, learned some invaluable lessons about the nature of work and strikes.

Red card

Long, long ago, in what now seems a much different, and more appealing, environment I became a chief officer and soon settled into a new routine which I intend to tell you all about. Or rather I didn't immediately settle in, as I was already booked into a 6-week residential INLOGOV Senior Management course that coincided, more or less, with the first 6 weeks of my appointment.

With 20/20 hindsight I would strongly recommend this as the best way to start off a senior management position as it certainly focuses the mind on structures, responsibilities and delegation. However on being parachuted back into my familiar office surroundings I quickly established the following routine.

To avoid the traffic I reached the office early, after a 30-minute drive I was at my desk by 8am. Fortified only by about 10 cigarettes and endless mugs of strong black coffee I, literally, never left the desk until midday doing whatever it was a chief officer did in those days which, I suppose, was monitoring and directing all incoming and outgoing communications and supervising the conduct of all professional work and administrative/management actions.

I ate lunch at the desk. Invariably it was a minimalist "salad" with either smoked mackerel or a hearty Ardennes Pate plus a few slices of fine soft white bread liberally spread with farmhouse butter. Also I was always able to accommodate any cream cakes going if someone was popping across the road to the bakers. For relaxation I would glance through the local paper at any relevant articles my PA had highlighted for me.

After about 15 minutes, and another cigarette or two, it was back to work for the rest of the afternoon. Again fortified only by about 10 cigarettes and endless mugs of strong black coffee I worked away at the desk until about 6pm at which time I would then drive home.

Of course it was not always possible to stay desk-bound for the whole day. There were hours of thumb-twiddling committees that I had to be seen at and Management Team meetings and similar forums to attend. Sometimes I had to conduct professional meetings where negotiations had gone off track or reached an impasse and there were site visits to make. Although I knew the estate well I still found it difficult to sign off deals without, at the very least, having driven by the property, slowly, first.

Having driven home I would indulge in a large sherry, or two, until a large evening (meat and two veg) meal was ready at about 7pm. After this, and a couple of glasses of wine, I was ready to sit in front of the telly and sleep the evening away feeling self-righteously tired due to a hard day's work.

Finally after a large brandy it was off to bed with a mug of black coffee. More often than not I was asleep before, as they say, my teeth hit the bottom of the glass.

But it was not all hard work and stress, oh no! There were holidays to take. The usual format was as follows. On Friday, after a normal week at the office, and the usual evening meal, during which I would refrain from drinking too much we (when I say we I mean I) would drive down to Dover to catch a late evening ferry and then drive overnight down to the Dordogne or Biarritz, arriving in time for breakfast. After a couple of weeks we would drive back to Calais on the Sunday to catch an evening ferry and eventually reach home at about midnight and so back to the office by 8am.

I became a chief officer on 1 April 1985. Four years later, almost to the day, I was surprised to wake up in the Coronary Care Unit at the local hospital wired up to a number of complicated looking pieces of IT equipment. On reflection it's a wonder I survived so long.

You have been warned.

A big lie?

I think it was Dr Goebbels who said that the art of propaganda was that if you are going to tell a lie - tell a big one. And so it is with wind power.

As I've already told you in my opinion those under water power lines leading to the wind turbines out at sea are there for the purposes of driving the sails round; not for harvesting electric power "generated" by those turbines. That's all propaganda to give the impression that something is happening on the green energy front.

There are a number of wind farms off the East Anglian coast and finishing touches are just being applied to the Greater Gabbard wind farm that will double the number of turbines out there. This is where the "big lie" comes in as the authorities could not help saying that plans are in preparation to build an additional wind farm further out to sea that will dwarf the existing provision. And to prove it they had some film of work being undertaken out at sea on new turbines but gave away the whole plot by allowing us a glimpse of the Suffolk shoreline and the Sizewell Nuclear Power Station!

It is well known that an additional reactor is to be built there. No wonder. The power demands created by the need to drive all these new "turbines" must be immense. To tell you the truth I think I'm losing count of where we are reactor-wise at Sizewell. I am pretty sure the original reactor, "A", is now decommissioned but Sizewell B is still going. I was at the county council when the planning application for "B" was under discussion. Lord Marshall (no relation) used to come out for regular discussions with the Chief Executive, the Planning Officer and the Leader. He was always driven up in the CEBG's stretched Volvo limousine, which was parked in the courtyard. The main committee room overlooked the courtyard car park.

It was a commodious courtyard with a separate entrance and exit and wide enough to park cars either side, end on, leaving plenty of room for a central drive-through access road. The only staff allowed access were chief officers, deputy chief officers and senior personnel in the Chief Executive's Department. Unfortunately one of these failed to realise that the parked stretched limo, with about 5 feet of back end sticking out into the access road, ought to be driven around with the

result that he drove straight into it just outside the main committee room and watched by the aforesaid Lord Marshall and a host of dignitaries. I don't think the meeting went too well after that.

Still planning consent was forthcoming eventually and Sizewell B was duly built. At the far end of the beach, and with great foresight, the owner of the Beach Café renamed it "Sizewell T." I reckon that there is probably just enough frontage left to cram in Sizewells C to S (inclusive) without needing to disturb or rename the café.

Solar panels

Now these are different – to wind turbines - and actually work. I've just had

21 fitted on my south facing, unshaded roof and they look spectacular. Mind you there's not a lot of roof left to see.

Having already had about 9 inches of insulation put in the loft I'm beginning to wonder if the structure is able to take all this additional weight.

The installation was done on a very bright and hot day and when it was complete Liam switched on and showed me how it worked. By now it was midday and the meter that showed, by a flashing red LED, how much electricity was being generated, was going like the clappers. Apparently my unit of payment is every time the LED flashes so that was quite impressive. There was more to come. Liam took me out to the meter

cupboard and we looked at the meter. "Going round pretty fast, isn't it," he said nodding towards the horizontal rotating disk under the dials. "Yes," I replied, "But have you noticed anything unusual?" "No." "It's going backwards," he explained but I still don't really know if he was having me on.

The sun is blazing down in this Indian Summer we are having and the LED is almost flashing itself off the wall. I reckon on a bright day they probably have to take Sizewell off-line because of my roof. Still that should enable everyone to get ready for powering up the huge numbers of new wind generators still to come.

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER *VOLUME 16, ISSUE 4, WINTER 2011/12*

Dick Miller has left the county

New readers need start here. Dick Miller was the Chief Estates Officer for Norfolk County Council, in the years immediately preceding "NPS". And I am going to have to mention CLAVA, the County equivalent of ALAVES, both of which merged and combined into an association called LAVA, which eventually became the present day ACES.

Back in November Tim Foster received an email from Dick's son Geoffrey to say that ".....Sadly both mum and dad have seen their health deteriorate in the past few weeks..... Mum and dad decided, as they couldn't live by themselves, and because they required more medical attention than my sister and I could provide for them at home, that it would be best if they moved to a home, which they did in mid-October." The home is called Sunrise of Sevenoaks, close to where Geoffrey lives.

So, who is Dick Miller?

I attended my first CLAVA meeting at the Lords Hill Hotel, Shrewsbury, on Wednesday 5 June 1985. One of the items on the agenda dealt with a membership application from Dick Miller of Norfolk County Council. He

was the top estates man at Norfolk but I cannot remember his precise job title. In those days we all had weird and wonderful and traditional job titles. Dick had joined the LCC in 1959 and left in 1967. He became President of LAVA in 1988/89.

He personally founded the LAVA Eastern Branch sometime in the 80s or early 90s and made all the arrangements including hiring a room in The Maltings in Ely until branch officers were appointed.

When we both had proper jobs we were opposite numbers at Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils. In the 90s Dick and I use to meet for lunch in the Scole Inn, situated on the border and after Eastern Branch meetings in Bury St Edmunds, in the days before refreshments were provided, in the One Bull Inn.

He was a confident public speaker, with more than a trace of London accent, (always referred to in this column as "The Fenland Diamond Geezer") and a wise and seasoned professional, while still being – one of his favourite expressions - streetwise. He also told at a London AGM the Welder's Joke for which I will always be grateful.

As YESTERDAYS MAN Dick wrote a

column in The Terrier for, as I said in my first piece, 35 years but that must be an exaggeration. He gave it up at the end of 2001 Volume 6 Issue 3. His final piece is typically forthright and slightly subversive.

Also in 2001 Dick organised a final STEPS International Tour featuring the now defunct Betty'n Bert Roadshow International Tour with events at Cambridge, Walsall and Cardiff. I wrote at the time his organisational skills will be sadly missed. Dick has made an immense contribution to ACES and has now left "his" county to be closer to his family, and to sit back with his feet up.

Work II

My second experience of work was when I was 11 years old.

Elder brother Peter, always a worker, was an agent for Ingrams Tea. This involved delivering packets of tea and other stuff to his own set of customers in the village. The option was always available to extend his customer base and/or sell more tea and extras such as biscuits and the like.

Peter was 2 years older than me and looked after me at Sunday school, junior school and grammar school. He taught

me how to ride a 2-wheeler bike, but didn't like me riding his little black 2-wheeler. But then he wasn't always there to stop me.

When he got a full size bike, a Raleigh Lenton Sports, I was never allowed to ride that – ever.

However I was called upon to help out with his tea job when he was ill. I think he had "rheumatic fever" and had to stay in bed for a number of months so it was all hand to the pumps tea-wise. I cannot now recall negotiating premium rates for my services or big bonuses but just said "yes" and got on with it; a story to be repeated time and time again throughout my working life.

Anyway back to the bike. To facilitate deliveries I was allowed to push, but not ride, this bike round the village. I have to say it was too big and heavy for me actually to ride but the panniers and saddlebag were perfect for carrying the tea and other stuff. My temporary secondment included a Christmas period when more journeys were needed to cope with the big boxes of biscuits and sweeties.

I can remember feeling greatly relieved when my temporary assistance was no longer required.

Steve Jobs

Having made at least 2 fortunes in his lifetime and founded 2 hugely successful companies Steve Jobs left a huge legacy behind after his untimely death.

Two very interesting points emerged about his life.

Firstly his lifelong motto was adopted from that a top-flight ice hockey player who used to say that his game plan was always to skate towards where he thought the puck was going to be; not where it was. His invention and development of several must-have electronic devices and new methods of film animation can demonstrate his adherence to this. Interestingly the motto of NASCAR drivers is the exact opposite. They say that if you are coming off, say, turn 4 and see a major crash occurring at the end of the straightaway, as demonstrated by a big cloud of tyre smoke, head straight for it as by the time you reach it the wreckage will have moved elsewhere.

Secondly I saw a recording of a lecture he gave to students in which he urged them, with great passion, "not to settle." In other words no matter how difficult the job market do not accept whatever job offer comes along unless you really want to do that work and are genuinely in that line of work.

Dinnington Colliery

As you will read in "Work IV" or possibly "V" in the late 1950s, about 50 years ago I worked at Dinnington Colliery, as did almost every other able-bodied man in the village. The Pit was the focus of village life.

About 10 years earlier, at the village infants' school we were all invited to write an essay "Dinnington in 50 years

time" and it proved to be a popular assignment as at that time, some 10 years after the war, people in general were beginning to look forward after a decade of total focus on the war and its aftermath.

A lot of innovative thought went into those essays. For example it was suggested that the Pit bus would be phased out, as most people would have their own personal transport for getting to work and for pleasure purposes. Gone would be heavy wash day workload of work clothes deeply ingrained with coal dust as modern fabrics would be developed that could be cleaned and restored with a vigorous shake. And our fathers would no longer need to take to work sandwiches in an air tight "snap" tin and an old Tizer bottle full of cold tea as tablets and energy drinks in unbreakable bottles would replace all that.

With hindsight most of these predictions were correct and in a sense all were completely wrong. The details were correct but the underlying assumption of all essays was that the Pit would still be at the centre of village life in 50 years' time but the reality was that in the early 90s the Pit was closed and the site completely cleared. No one had come up with that as a possibility.

So imagine my surprise when it was pointed out to me that my local paper, the Bury Free Press, is "printed by Sheffield Web, Claxton Way, Dinnington Colliery Industrial Estate, Dinnington, South Yorkshire."

Now who could have predicted that!

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER

VOLUME 17, ISSUE 1, SPRING 2012

Sporting miscellany

What better way to spend a freezing cold, damp and dismal Easter Bank Holiday than sitting close to a real blazing fire and watching the year's first professional cycling classic, the 259 km Paris- Roubaix race? Not for nothing is it called "the Hell of the North" due to much of the course being on cobbled lanes livened up with horizontal sleet and depressingly low temperatures. Today, however the

weather looks almost clement. Some spectators have removed gloves, scarves and bobble hats!

Remember Eric "The Eel" Moussambaul of Equatorial Guinea who swam for his country in the 2000 Olympics in Sydney? He was the one who seemed ill at ease with swimming and registered incredibly slow times in his races with the pool lined with alert life guards. Well he's back and will be at the London Games having

been appointed swimming team coach for his country.

Will Eddie the Eagle, the British ski jump record holder, make a comeback at the next winter Olympics?

After Fabio's somewhat abrupt departure (never, probably, has the phrase "crying all the way to the bank" been more appropriate") the overheated talk about 'Arry has eased

off a bit. Although he has received almost universal acclaim from the British Press they could easily turn on him. For example in explaining why Samassi Abou, then a West Ham striker, had been omitted from a team sheet 'Arry announced at his weekly press conference that "The lad went home to the Ivory Coast and got a bit of food poisoning. He must have eaten a dodgy missionary or something." I cannot think of any previous or potential England Manager who could get away with saying that.

My money is on Stuart Pearce, "Psycho", who has a more of a breadth of experience. Before being transferred to Nottingham Forest in 1985 he played for Coventry and at the same time worked as a self-employed electrician. It is rumoured that one of the things that clinched his move to Forest for £240,000 was that he was prepared to rewire Cloughie's house for a very keen price.

Finally back on planet Sky football watchers are forced to endure a never-ending beauty parade of aspiring, and perspiring, well-scrubbed and smart suited football insiders, ex professionals and failed managers all, vying for the lucrative contracts abandoned by the "lady referee's assistant two". On and on they drone, some only speaking in clichés, some adopting the role of "players' friend" and some the constantly joking Jack-the-lad. The only thing that shuts them all up instantly is if



Caption: Wat Tyler's death (left to right: [unidentified]; Sir William Walworth, Mayor of London (wielding sword); Wat Tyler; Richard II of England; and John Cavendish, esquire to Richard II (bearing lance)

the ref blows up for offside and the director switches to a picture of the aforementioned lady referee's assistant pointing her flag across the field.

The Scribbler motorhome

For information members may wish to know that I have got rid of my executive motor caravan and just before Christmas replaced it, and my car, with a micro motor caravan based on a Fiat Fiorino. Just so you will all recognise it at future ACES meetings here's a recent picture.

Wat Tyler

The new vehicle had, by coincidence, its first outing at the ACES Eastern Branch Spring Meeting, ***summarised elsewhere in this issue***. We had to travel to the Deep South for this meeting, namely Wat Tyler Country Park Basildon. The Park extends to 125 acres, and is a small part of Pitsea Marshes, and the location was described by Steve Prewer, Open Spaces Project Development Manager, Basildon BC, who gave us a talk on the origins, development and purpose of the Country Park, as "a glacial non-conformity on a sea of alluvium."

But who was Wat Tyler? Knowledge of his early life is limited and derives mostly through the records of his enemies, as is everything else we know about him. Historians believe he was born in Essex, but are not sure why he crossed the Thames to Kent. However he was

involved in the Peasants' Revolt.

With news of rebellions in France and Flanders, the start of the "European Spring" in today's terminology, England readied for insurrection. Tyler and other rebel leaders advocated the destruction of the hierarchical feudal system. Contemporary chroniclers recorded harsh and often unfounded criticisms of the rebels but given that they belonged to the educated upper classes, who were the targets of rebellion rather than its supporters it is difficult to get an accurate sense of the actual aims and goals of the rebels.

The rebels also had issues with the Dukes of Lancaster, York and Gloucester governed in the name of Richard II who was only 14 at the time of the rebellion. The rebels held that the Dukes were traitors to the King and undermined his authority. The final straw was the imposition of a poll tax of three groats, which outraged the people because it was the same for rich and poor.

Tyler led the Peasants' Revolt, a mixed group of simple peasants and village craftsmen and tradesmen in taking Canterbury, before advancing to Blackheath, outside London. Tyler then entered the city of London at the head of a group estimated at numbering over 50,000. After crossing London Bridge without resistance, the rebels then gained entry to the Tower of London and captured the

unpopular Archbishop of Canterbury, before proceeding to behead him and several of his followers. The rebels also destroyed the Savoy Palace during subsequent rioting and killed the King's uncle. Richard of Wallingford presented a charter to King Richard II on behalf of Tyler. The King met the rebel army at Mile End and promised to address the people's grievances, which included the unpopular taxes.

Twenty thousand people assembled at Smithfield. Richard II agreed to meet the leaders of the revolt, and listen to their demands. Wat Tyler decided to ride out alone and parley with the King. What was said between Wat Tyler and the King is largely conjecture and little is known of the exact details of the encounter; however, by all accounts the unarmed Tyler was attacked without warning and killed by the Lord Mayor of London, Sir William Walworth and John Cavendish, a member of the King's group. This unprovoked betrayal of the truce flag and Tyler's killing threw the people into a panic. Not being organized as a military force, they broke and began to flee for their lives.

The site of the Country Park had many earlier uses including, due to its isolated and undeveloped nature, the location of a newly developing Gun Cotton Industry. This shows the thoughtful nature of the people of Essex because when Suffolk's Gun Cotton industry was founded it was located near to the centre of the quiet market town of Stowmarket. Inevitably when an accident occurred and a massive explosion devastating the Gun Cotton Works it took a big part of the town with it.

Sir Paul McCartney

I've never really liked this particular Beatle and I'm not sure why. Perhaps it's because he failed to turn up to an arranged meeting on a Boxing Day years ago but it's probably due to seeing him turn up to his knighthood investiture in gym shoes.

About a year ago I listened to a radio documentary programme about a famous meeting between the Beatles and Muhammad Ali, both at the height of their fame. The meeting, held primarily to generate some

interesting photographs, was fraught with difficulties and misunderstandings, mainly because although the Beatles knew who the boxer was Ali had no idea who the Beatles were. The punch line, pardon the pun, was delivered by Muhammad Ali to his minders after leaving the meeting and it was, "Tell me again, who were those 4 sissy boys we just met?"

By coincidence a few weeks after hearing that programme I saw a news film clip of Sir Paul at some formal presentation; and I think it was this that began my change of mind. In the audience was Muhammad Ali looking, as usual, and tragically, completely non-plussed and when Sir Paul came to the end of whatever he was talking about he looked Muhammad in the eye and reminded him of that meeting. There was a glimmer of remembrance. "Do you know," Paul went on, "although you were World Champ at the time we were young and fit and could have taken you down." Muhammad responded with a slight shake of the head, and a smirk, and then a genuine smile of understanding.

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER

VOLUME 17, ISSUE 2, SUMMER 2012

More Macca

I missed the Beach Boys first time round only to rediscover them a year or so ago. If you want to experience both the nostalgic videos and the updated Beach Boys experience, keep an eye on the SKY Arts channel where they are re-shown regularly or buy The Beach Boys: Stars and Stripes CD; mind-blowing!

Macca was giving yet another speech, this time at a function where Brian Wilson was being inducted into some Hall of Fame. He said some very nice things about his work then said; "One of the reasons you deserve this honour is that when we listen carefully to your lyrics it makes us cry." And do you know he is right.

I must also mention one little cameo within one of the Beach Boys films that is regularly shown on SKY ARTS. Speaking

is a man identified as Brian Wilson's High School teacher of musical composition. He is talking about one of the original hits, "Be True to your School." He explains has set his class an exam task of writing a composition about their school. Brian wrote the aforementioned number and somewhat mournfully the teacher says, "I gave the song a B minus, and Brian made a million dollars out of it."



Finally one little story about our other Knightly Ancient Rocker Sir Mick Jagger. Backstage somewhere Sir Mick and George Melly came round a corner from opposite directions and had a close up head to head confrontation. Then ensued the following dialogue:

George: "Crikey Mick, what a lot of wrinkles and crinkles you've got."



Mick: "They are not wrinkles George, they're laughter lines."

George: "Mick, nothing could be that funny."

An apology

Since writing the last piece I have been struck down by some dreadfully inconvenient illness, which has confined me to home, thus missing, amongst other things, a much anticipated trip to Barnsley. It has also caused a severe sense of humour failure, hence the somewhat curtailed column this time.

Although I am now on the mend my low point occurred at about the time of the Thames Jubilee Pageant. Hoping for some diversion I draped myself languidly on the settee in front of the TV in preparation for a whole day's viewing. As the day progressed my jaw dropped further and further and I could not believe what I was seeing.

How we all sniggered when the North Koreans, after the death of their Great Leader, were able to put group after group of citizens in front of the TV cameras, each clutching an identical national flag, and seemingly the ability to cry on order.

Clearly the BBC was impressed as the coverage of the Pageant was liberally interspersed with similar performances. Time after time the coverage would cut to some "TV personality" or other, placed in front of a small drenched group of British citizens, each clutching an identical national flag, with the objective of conveying delirious excitement as they listened to the sparkling repartee delivered about official Jubilee logoed sick bags or whatever. But they could not even organise that, as every time the presenter would launch into his or her piece, the backing group would remain looking drenched, cold and disinterested until, and far too late, told to do otherwise.

Clearly the day's strap line was: "Don't mention the boats!"

As the BBC spokesperson said later: "We didn't think you could take in a lot of detailed information about the boats

you were seeing on the screen." Why is it that the BBC holds us in such contempt, just like the bankers, the journalists, politicians on the fiddle, etc etc etc etc etc etc etc etc etc etc etc.....

Work III

Thoughts of a summer holiday job began to loom large at my school towards the end of the Lower 6th year. There were 2 options in my area, where employers were able to handle unskilled and totally inexperienced short-term workers. These were the bread factory or the glass bottle factory, both situated in Rotherham, a short bus ride from home.

I went for the glass bottles and had no trouble getting hired and reported for work bright and early the next Monday morning in my brand new TUF boots and old clothes. The firm was Beatson and Clarke and I think they are still in business. They specialised in small medicine bottles and the like and every time I get hold of such a bottle, even today, I turn it over to see what trade mark is underneath. And more often than not it is a Beatson and Clarke double arrow looking like an early prototype design of the British Rail logo. Try it for yourselves.

I was allocated to the "yard gang" whose duties were mainly ensuring that all raw materials were unloaded from whatever transport brought them and stored ready for use in the factory. And the first job was to tackle 3 railway wagons of sand that had been run into the firm's private siding overnight. These were unloaded, with a shovel, into industrial wheelbarrows that had 2 wheels and a tipping mechanism, but could be handled by one person. The sand was transferred to a concrete bunker.

As you might imagine sand was the principal raw material but many other ingredients, mainly colouring agents, arrived by lorry in 1cwt sacks, apart from sodium carbonate, I think it was, which came in much bigger hessian sacks. This stuff got everywhere and would get into any cut or graze and sting like hell.

The sacks were moved with sack barrows except for when the charge hand, whose

name escapes me at the moment, did his party piece - 2 colleagues would gently lower one of these big sacks from the lorry onto his back and he would walk to the store with it getting lower and lower as he went. No one else tried it, and in case you think he was some sort of athlete I have to say that he was the weediest person in the whole gang.

His other party piece took place immediately after we finished our lunchtime sandwiches which we partook in our dedicated underground concrete bunker refreshment facility. He would draw out of his pocket a tin box wrapped in an old bit of towelling. The box looked like it might contain a travelling geometry set but he opened it up to reveal an impressive glass and chrome syringe and proceeded to give himself an insulin injection, as he was actually a diabetic. Then he would hitch up his shirt at the front and check out the bandage around his middle. He constantly bled profusely from his belly button, probably due to his sack carrying exploits, and sometimes the bandage needed renewing or adjusting. [Thanks for that, Scribbler! Editor].

That then signalled an end to our break and so back to work.

Higgs boson made interesting

The Higgs boson or Higgs particle is an elementary particle in the Standard Model of particle physics. The Higgs boson is predicted to exist and is named after Peter Higgs who, along with two other teams, proposed the mechanism that suggested such a particle in 1964 and was the only one to predict explicitly some of its theoretical properties. In mainstream media it is often referred to as the "God particle". The Higgs particle is a boson, which is a type of particle that allows multiple identical particles to exist in the same place in the same quantum state. It has no spin, electric charge, or colour charge. It is also very unstable, decaying into other particles almost immediately.

In an attempt to prove the existence of the Higgs boson, CERN has been conducting experiments first of all with the Synchro-Cyclotron, a particle accelerator with a circumference of 50 feet and currently with the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) built in 2008 with a circumference of 27 miles and at a cost of £3 billion.

The latest news from the LHC, and the reason for this explanatory piece, is that the experiments already conducted may have (or presumably may not have) detected the Higgs boson, the particle which may (or presumably may not) actually exist.

Such is the excitement that this news has caused that CERN intends to shut down the LHC for a two-year upgrade to increase its power and plans are already being made for a much more powerful "Super Collider" with a circumference of 50 miles.

Any further comment from me is unnecessary.

London 2012

I had decided not to watch the Olympics this time on the basis that usually the live TV transmissions only take place in

the middle of the night. It was only a severe bout of insomnia, brought about by damaged rib ligaments, that made me realise on the third day that this was not so and the live programmes were on during daylight hours. After that there was no stopping me.

I should explain here that years of commuting from Essex along the old Great Eastern line and passing that huge area of dereliction at Stratford, now the Olympic Park, had led me to believe that Stratford was in another time zone as we nearly always arrived at Stratford on time, yet were very late at Liverpool Street station only a couple of miles down the track.

The main events at the Olympic Stadium and the Velodrome were excellent although how the officials failed to spot that the leading competitor in one of the cycling events was using a moped is beyond me.

What interests me about these international events is how the commentators and competitors describe what is going on. Over the first few days there is usually a desperate search for new superlatives and as soon as something that sounds profound emerges, everyone uses it as often as possible. This time, taking the lead from the 2011 BBC Sports Personality of the Year, the favoured word was "amazin" which roughly translated means "I have had a very expensive private education with no expense spared but all I can say in response to any question is amazin."

Coming a close second, and this time lifted from SKY's coverage of speedway, was this response to any long rambling question so framed as to call for a confirmatory OK from the interviewee. It has to be delivered in a voice sounding like a very bad Bluebottle impression and goes "Yerssss, [long pause] definitely."

Nonetheless all the coverage I saw was exciting, genuine, well-mannered and respectful. In stark contrast to a football "showcase" event that followed that

seemed mean-spirited and tawdry with a noticeable lack of any personal commitment whatsoever.

Resveratrol

On Monday 20 August 2012 the Telegraph published a news item on resveratrol under the heading "Red wine's little miracle could keep you steady on your feet." As I have been taking this since 2007, this item caught my attention.

It explains that a compound found in red wine could improve your balance although it would take about 700 glasses of actual wine a day to achieve the effect, although this level of intake would probably exceed Government norms. Apparently when the active ingredient was fed to mice it helped older mice improve their balance and mobility and so the scientists are now suggesting that the addition of resveratrol to the diets of "our ageing population" could improve balance and walking and reduce falls.

I think some of our so called ageing population would prefer a more cautious approach and stick to the red wine initially.

Caister men never turn back

In 1901 an inquest was held into the deaths of 9 Caister lifeboat men who died during repeated attempts to put to sea in atrocious conditions to go to the aid of the crew of a stricken vessel. At this time lifeboats were little more than sail assisted rowing boats. When the retired lifeboat coxswain James Haylett was giving evidence at the inquest the coroner asked why the crew had persisted in their efforts to launch, his reply, above, remains a legend in the lifeboat world.

The Beatles 50 years on

Apparently the 50th anniversary of the entry of The Beatles into the charts is upon us. The local media has been seeking out Beatles stories so



here is mine which some readers may remember seeing before.

"Meeting the Beatles: In the late 60s I was "on the railway" working out from Kings Cross to the north and east. The area I worked included a number of Hertfordshire towns including Ware. There was an empty goods shed in the station yard. Built solidly in brick in the 1860s it was massive with a vast uninterrupted internal space with wrought iron columns and all the period features. A bit of a pain then but probably "highly sought after" now. It was also in remarkably good condition.

Sometime before Christmas 1968 I received a number of intriguing phone calls from someone purporting to represent Apple and The Beatles. Eventually it was established that these calls were genuine. In summary The Beatles were planning another TV Special and were looking for a unique building in which to film it. They had been told about the Ware goods shed and was it available etc. Yes. OK John and Paul would like to see it, was this possible? Yes. The only snag was that the only day they had available was Boxing Day. Could I be available? Certainly.

I was living over in Bishops Stortford at the time and could borrow a car for the trip over. I remembered to take the keys home with me and Boxing Day dawned clear and bright with a vicious frost. Just in case of trouble on the road I set off early and arrived at the goods yard about 15 minutes early. After about

5 minutes a scruffy looking individual wandered across the yard and tapped on the car window.

"Are you from Estates and Rating?
He enquired, for this is what we were known as.

"Yes."

"You here to meet The Beatles?"

"Yes."

"Well hard luck mate they're not coming."

"Who says?"

"Their man phoned me at the Station House. Said they went over to Amsterdam Christmas Eve and now have got better thing to do than meet you and look over that pig sty."

And so my chance of fame and fortune was gone."

A few jokes

This is one of my favourite one liners the origins of which were a mystery to me until a friend pointed out where it had come from. I will reveal the source, a well-known 60s spy story, in the next issue.

Vaclav, the Czech Officer is about to eat with the Russian KGB Colonel. They both have wet feet and Vaclav is stuffing the insides of his shoes with strips torn from the local communist newspaper.

"Don't use that," bellowed the Russian Colonel, "Pravda is what I use, it seems to draw the moisture out somehow." Vaclav smiled, he knew he was being teased.

The colonel ate his veal and drank the whole of his lager in one go. "You don't waste time," said Vaclav. "I had one knocked over once," the Colonel said and roared with laughter.

This one is from Canada. The first NASA astronauts quickly discovered that ball-point pens would not work in zero gravity. So their scientists spent a decade and \$12 billion to develop a pen that writes in zero gravity, upside down, underwater, on almost any surface including glass and at temperatures ranging from below freezing to 300 degrees C. The Russians used a pencil.

And from Scotland. I want to die peacefully in my sleep like my grandfather. Not screaming in terror like his passengers.

Let's be careful out there

A friend of mine (and indeed of many of you too) had a routine blood test in April. His doctor wanted to do the tests because, like many of us, he takes statins. The tests came back with a disconcertingly raised PSA (Prostate Specific Antigens) level above the previous test taken two years earlier. So he was sent for a prostate biopsy which confirmed he had prostate cancer. At the end of August he had his prostate surgically removed and is hopeful that it was caught early and will be resolved.

I tell you this because at no time did our friend have ANY symptoms that anything was wrong, and indeed but for the blood test, he probably still wouldn't know. Indeed I have had over the past 5 years 2 forms of cancer confirmed in similar circumstances ie no symptoms or pain or discomfort experienced at all, that is until I met the surgeon.

I am telling you this, because please all of you men readers go to your GP and ask for a PSA blood test. If you are OK, there is nothing lost and you have peace of mind, but if by some chance you aren't, it is better to learn as early as possible!



Funeral in Berlin

The answer to the question in the last edition is as follows. ***I had one knocked over once the Colonel said and roared with laughter*** appears in Len Deighton's third novel, *Secret File Number 3*, *Funeral in Berlin*. As yet the "hero" of the 3 volumes is unnamed and the Colonel is Colonel Stok of Red Army Security who goes on to appear in later novels, as does the unnamed hero.

Tax

After 10 years of self-assessment I now realise I have been doing it all wrong. The usual routine is that after the end of the financial year I give my accountant full details of all my income and expenditures from which he calculates my liability to tax and agrees his calculation with HMRC.

I now realise that I should stop the process when my accountant assesses liability at which point I let HMRC know that I might be prepared to offer something and can we negotiate? I could offer to buy the Tax Inspector a cup of coffee and a bacon roll at the Burger Van on Bury market to sweeten the pill. Alternatively I could say that I have no liability to tax as my IT equipment is funded by a loan from my daughter in the Cayman Islands at such an horrific rate of interest that it

has wiped out my profits for the past 10 years.

This approach works for the £ multimillion liability of the global businesses so it ought to work for my 2 pennuth; shouldn't it?

Quotes

I was reading a column in the Telegraph the other day by Michael Deacon; not his usual Parliamentary Sketch column but a sort of a review of the newly published ***Dictionary of Humorous Political Quotations***, Editor Fred Metcalf, publishers Biteback. He made the point that although England's finest political wit was without question Sir Winston Churchill: ***An appeaser is one who feeds a crocodile hoping it will eat him last***, what really caught his eye first were his own quotes, 15 of them to be precise. He only quoted one of his own, a heartless and unjust slur about ***Gordon Brown looking like a bad-tempered wardrobe in a suit***.

Other quoted quotes include Clement Freud calling Mrs Thatcher ***Attila the Hen*** and one from Mrs Thatcher herself: ***The problem with socialism is that eventually you run out of other people's money***.

He doesn't mention President Ronald Reagan, who had a never ending supply

of cracking one-liners delivered with real professional panache, as one would expect from an old trouserer, but the best quote in the piece is from an unlikely source, Malcolm Rifkind: ***You realise you're no longer in government when you get in the back of your car and it doesn't go anywhere***.

Le Tour

Presumably "everything" now being said about Lance Armstrong is true, or at least remembering the outpourings that followed the downfall of Robert Maxwell, "most things," but 2 thoughts occur to me. Firstly as a winner of 7 Tours, or whatever it was, and innumerable stages, he must have been one of the most drug tested competitors in the world. Why was nothing ever discovered? And secondly, bearing in mind he seems to have been shopped by most of his "friends" or former teammates, it illustrates the old maxim of treating contacts reasonably on the way up or inevitably they will get their own back on your way down.

But now we have, at last, an English winner, Bradley Wiggins, plus his Olympic successes; and someone who looks to be a far more down to earth character than most other competitors in any sport. Let's hope it is the start of a new era for this event.

Redundancy payments

Chelsea Football Club has fired about 9 Managers in recent years at a total cost of something like £100 m apparently. So it's hard to feel too sorry for the somewhat shabby treatment meted out to Roberto as it looks like he will pick up a substantial pay-off. As my football insider Kev comments: ***by 2025 we'll all be no more than 20 yards from an ex Chelsea Football Manager***.

Chelsea has almost inexhaustible funds to spend as it likes, and why not? It seems to be as profligate as the BBC, which, on the other hand, does it with our money. I do not want to satirise the

organisation's latest incompetencies, it's like shooting fish in a barrel, but apart from doubling up on legal obligation payments, apparently the BBC tradition is that when someone is leaving, the event is usually marked with an expensive gift and often a good dinner somewhere for the leaver and his close colleagues. And it is not usual to fund these matters by way of a whip-round amongst those involved but the practice is to use BBC departmental funds, i.e. our money.

Football notes

An evening in Warsaw

On Tuesday 16 October I turned on ITV just before 8pm, the advertised kick off time for the international Poland v England.

The team of Adrian Chiles and 3 "experts" did not look happy. In fact they looked like rabbits caught in headlights. It soon transpired that there was little chance of the game being played. It had been raining very heavily and the pitch was already waterlogged.

The venue was the new state of the art National Stadium. There was a sliding roof but this remained open throughout. Apparently the ref had ventured out about 30 minutes ago and gone through the motions of dropping the ball onto the pitch in order to demonstrate its unplayability. Since then no groundsmen had appeared, the roof remained open and the team had clearly run out of things to say. The ref appeared again at kick off time and went through the same pantomime. He let it be known that he would make a further inspection in 30 minutes time and unless the situation improved the game would not take place. As the rain continued to fall in biblical proportions and no one was doing anything at all, in effect the match was already postponed.

When this was communicated to the crowd there was no reaction which immediately suggested that the postponement was acceptable to Poland as it would mean that their star player's ban would expire and he could play after all.

This all brought back memories of the

1974 World Cup qualifier with Poland where a defeat cost England its World Cup place. I remember the match well. Brian Clough, as the commentary team's expert, pronounced the Polish goalie to be **a boxer in football boots**. Of course he then had a phenomenal game and kept a clean sheet. The final irony came late in the game when Poland brought the ball down their left wing in a surprise and swift counter attack. Our goal was protected by the presence of Sir Norman Hunter who surprised us all by not only missing the ball but the player too. Poland scored; England lost.

Racism

Recently John Terry was belatedly found guilty of racism by the FA. The video shows an exchange of views during a match, a fairly short outburst from JT and a much longer response by his interlocutor. The FA judgement gave no details; but it would help us all if it did. For example what word or words did JT use that were so unacceptable? And could we have a note of the many, many words used in response that were deemed to be "acceptable"?

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER

VOLUME 18, ISSUE 1, SPRING 2013

The Kid from Red Bank

Born in 1904, in Red Bank New Jersey, The Kid and his big band spent 60 successful years on the road; he must have something to tell us about management?

I saw him and his band at the Sheffield City Hall on 2 November 1957 and lashed out 5 shillings on a balcony seat. I can still remember some of the evening. Although his long time rhythm section of Joey Jones on drums, Walter Page bass and Freddie Green on acoustic guitar was widely regarded as the best ever anywhere Sonny Payne had taken over the drum kit by the time the band reached Sheffield and it is his magnificent, energetic and loud work I remember most. The band vocalist was Joe Williams but I always preferred his predecessor Jimmy Rushing who, by coincidence, turned up at Sheffield almost exactly a year later.



Just in case anyone out there has lived under a rock for the past half century I am of course talking about Count Basie the ***Jump King of Swing***.

So what can a man who successfully led a group of 16 to 20 highly talented and individualistic artists out on the road for more than 60 years?

First his key word was simplicity. His own piano playing style demonstrated this. ***He left out more than some people play*** was one comment from an eminent former sideman and ***he could play just one note and make it swing*** was another. This all sounds like one of the basic principles of those management gurus of the 70s, Peters and Waterman (or was it Peters and Lee?) i.e. ***stick to the knitting*** from ***In Search of Excellence***.

Secondly the band style was to play together and all pull in the same direction. Sound familiar? In rehearsing new stuff if something wasn't quite right he would merely look at whichever section was at fault and did not need to say anything directly because, as he put it himself, ***I knew what they are thinking and they knew that I knew and I knew that they knew that I knew***. A policy of self-correction.

And if he really needed to offer words of advice to an individual musician, he did it in such a way that the rest of the group were unaware of what was going on. One great example of such advice was in relation to a trombone solo where he told the musician, ***there is no need to demonstrate all your ideas in the first solo; save some for later***.

And did this all work? Well in a TV biography he was asked how he wanted to be remembered he said 2 words - ***Nice Guy***. In the programme many illustrious sidemen, rival bandleaders and business associates were interviewed but no one had a bad word to say about him. And he kept the band on the road. Although he bought a house in the Bahamas in the 70s he did not spend a lot of time there but carried on touring even though in the end he was a very sick man. He died in 1984.

A gritty problem

Every year, after a really bad spell of winter weather, the media interview motorists who have been held up, and always one of them will assert; ***They never bothered to send out the gritters, and that's why we were held up***. Whereupon the media then turn on the hapless character who is in charge of winter maintenance and attempt to wring out a confession that indeed no gritting took place. Despite what is said the impression is always left that, as usual, the incompetent local authority fails again.

I would advocate an alternative approach and imagine the following dialogue would take place.

Local Media TV Reporter. "Yet again motorists have been stranded overnight in a blizzard that dumped 30 centimetres, or to put it in context 12 inches, of snow on the motorway and have had to survive gale force winds and temperatures about 10 degrees below zero. I put it to you that you failed to send out the gritters and that had the motorway been gritted then no one would have been stranded. Did you send out the gritters?"

Winter Maintenance Chief. (Adopts a look of total astonishment and slaps his head.) "We need you on our team. We had been tracking the incoming storm for 48 hours. We were aware of its likely severity. And that it was likely to hit us in the early hours of the 20th. So I called in the whole team for 10pm on the 19th and there we all were surrounded by about 100 tons of salt and all these huge yellow lorries with snow ploughs on the front and, do you know, not one of us could remember why we were there. We just sat around drinking tea, had a few games of snooker then called it a day and went home. That's why we need you on the team. You could have put us straight. I'll tell you what, give me your phone number, and next time we have a similar forecast, you can come in and make sure we send out the gritters."

What's the beef?

Remember the BSE crisis when Europe fell over itself to ban exports of British beef for fear of eating something contaminated? The outcome was an extremely complicated system of linking written

evidence of origins and production with the beef carcass. Apparently a similar system has been set up for horses but, or so I hear, it is a laughing stock and seldom complied with.

Some argue that there is no problem anyway as horseflesh is quite palatable and we should not be afraid of eating it, although when they say ***we*** I rather think they mean ***you!*** However that is not my problem as I don't eat beef, ***or so I have recently learned***. But the difficulty is that, with the best will in the world, horseflesh is not being introduced as an expensive flavour enhancer but as cheap filler. And although testing seems to have been mainly confined to horseflesh, and occasionally pork, what else could be lurking in the cheap end of the beef products market? Dead zoo animals, dromedary giblets, road kill, or whatever can be pressure-hosed off the front of TGV or Eurostar trains? What might be uncovered if the testing for adulterations was widened?

And finally the most pompous quote on the problem. I always understood that those without the resources to supermarket shop in the normal way, those we used to refer to as ***the poor***, were in some way allowed access to out of date products either directly from a designated skip at the supermarket or these products were delivered directly to charity-run shelters. Having spent weeks assuring us that there was no actual harm likely to occur from consuming the horseflesh contaminated products that were now being removed from supermarket shelves, when asked if they would be passed on to the aforesaid ***poor*** the spokesperson appeared to be shocked and said ***No*** as that would stigmatise ***the poor*** as second class citizens!

Work IV

After Beatson and Clarke I opted to go closer to home for my next 2 summer jobs and was able, through my father's connections, to get a temporary job at the local pit, which, traditionally, never took on temporary workers.

I was taken on as a labourer in the fitter's shop under the following non-negotiable conditions

Hours were 6am to 2pm, known as **Days**

The pit-head baths system to be used

Union membership was compulsory, all done through the pay system, so, technically, for 2 periods of 6 weeks I was a member of the NUM.

Initially, getting up was no problem, and it was only a 10 minute walk to work, but trying to stay awake in the afternoon and evening was a trial. This was essential to ensure a sound night's sleep.

The pit-head baths system may not be immediately familiar to everyone. The building had a clean side, where you went in with your street clothes, and a dirty side, used when dressed in work clothes. The process was having gained access through the clean door, with your street clothes, lunch container (snap tin), drinks bottle (the most common was a empty Tizer bottle, as it had a screw cap, filled with cold tea; yuk!) and dry towel, you changed out of your street attire and left it all in your numbered locker then walked through to the dirty side, found your similarly numbered locker containing work clothes, changed into those then walked out into the pit yard and **clocked-in**.

The unwritten, but always observed, main rules of conduct were as follows.

- Sitting down was not permitted except during the 2 designated break periods and then only on the forms either side of the metal snap table within the shop.
- If a trip outside the shop was called for something had to be carried in order to demonstrate the nature of the errand.

The shop foreman seldom ventured into the shop but had he done so, and seen anyone contravening the above first rule this would probably have resulted in dismissal. Indeed the staff were said to police this rule themselves and the story was often told of the fitter who was having a nap during work time with his hob nailed boots on the metal table, who woke up to find his boots, with his feet inside them, welded to the table. The second rule was waived at **clocking-out** time. This was the only place I ever

worked at where everyone finishing their shift was allowed to lurk near to the clock whilst one person was allowed to stand at the clock repeatedly stamping his card until the time of 2.00 registered; then it was every man for himself.

And what were the fitters' duties? These included fabricating and erecting any metallic artefacts needed on site or below ground; and repairing or maintaining the same. And repairing or maintaining any machinery used on site or below ground. I was put to work with Les Bilton whose main job was the repair and maintenance of coal cutting machinery.

I have to say that I thoroughly enjoyed my time with the fitters who also taught me how to use most of the machine tools in the shop except the lathes.

Mister Ed

When Ed Milliband was first introduced to the general public after his election as Leader of the Labour Party I must admit I was caught in 2 minds. This first interview took place on the steps of his London residence where he appeared in his 3 button, one size too small business suit. On seeing this I wondered whether we were looking at a reincarnation of Norman Wisdom (knockabout humour) or Alexei Sayle (hard edged, biting left wing satire). In the event neither option has materialised. But what we have is a perfectly written and perfectly delivered one-liner worthy of the most accomplished stand-up comedian of any era as witnessed by this question to the PM on 14/03/2013. ***In the light of his U-turn on alcohol pricing could the Prime Minister tell us, is there any activity he could organise in a brewery?***

It brought the House down!

The alcohol problem

The argument goes that if the price of cheap booze is increased it will cut out the late night mayhem in city centres, defined as public drunkenness, fighting in the streets and the deliberate damaging of public and private property. What the politicians and assorted do-gooders seem to forget is that all these are criminal acts and police should be asked/required to deal with them accordingly. But currently the police

seem to have adopted the social services role. So when they come across someone utterly incapable of looking after themselves through drink their overriding duty is not to arrest but to see them safely home.

And should anyone be arrested, from my viewing of the numerous fly on the wall series now on TV, the arrested person can ask at any time for an ambulance to take them to A&E. No wonder the 91 year old war veteran, locally, who had the misfortune to cut his head open pretty badly on a Saturday night had to be taken to hospital by his family and then sat around in A&E for 4 hours with no treatment whatsoever before his family took him home again.

There is a link with the beef pie however. No one now is confident about eating cheap burgers any more for fear that they probably contain horse-flesh or horse-manure as I call it when I read it to myself. However few are similarly reticent about drinking, or pre-loading to use the technical term, very cheap supermarket cider before an evening out, even though everyone knows that it contains 50% horse-p*ss.

A joke

Simon Hoggart, in a recent Guardian column, said that last week he recently wrote about the way jokes spin down the generations and as an illustration recalled this one which he said he had first heard around 30 years ago.

A hungry chap sees a sign in a pub window, "a pie, a pint and a friendly word - £3". Inside the barmaid serves him the pint and the pie. "Just a minute," he says, "where's my friendly word?" "She says, "Don't eat the pie."

I heard the Yorkshire version about 50 years ago.

A hungry chap goes into a pub and sees this sign "a pie, a pint and sleep with the barmaid for £3". The landlord greets him and the hungry chap notices an absolutely stunning barmaid serving in the other bar. The landlord points to the sign, and with a faint nod in the direction of the barmaid asks, "Are you interested?" He got the following curmudgeonly reply, "What sort of pie is it?"

Entente cordiale

Apparently so many French footballers have ended up in Newcastle that the manager, Alan Pardew, is now often referred to as Alain De Pardew, pronounced Alain Depardieu. And possibly he has become a relation of Gerard Depardieu, the famous Belgian.

I cannot understand why so many French players have ended up in the north east. But, according to my football insider Kev, they are all attracted by the genteel and artistic environment of the area and the burgeoning café society of Tyneside and Wearside.

Whatever, it seems to work for Newcastle.

Faugères

Continuing with the French theme, at one time I was very partial to Faugères, a robust red wine from south west France. Years ago when I visited the country regularly it could be readily sourced from any big supermarket. However, more recently, I took to picking up my supplies on the way home in one of the industrial warehouse type establishments that cluster around Calais docks.

On my last visit, a few years ago now, I diligently searched my chosen warehouse but without success and so went to seek guidance from Le Patron. It is at times like this that the grammar school French, unused for 3 or 4 decades, immediately resurfaces.

"Bonjour monsieur," I began, always a good opening, "avez vous du vin qui s'appelle Faugères?" Realising he was being addressed by a fluent linguist he responded volubly in his own language to the effect that there had been a sudden run on this wine that had cleared out his stock and indeed, he showed me an empty space where the wine had been on display. Although I could understand his French quite well, I felt the need to revert to my own language in order to properly convey



the disastrous effect of his news i.e. my favourite wine, unobtainable in England, always relied on stocking up here, possibly my last trip, etc etc.

He listened to my outburst with a very straight face then bowing his head slightly he looked me straight in the eye and said, "Je suis desolé monsieur" a reply which, in the circumstances, dealt with the situation in a completely acceptable manner.

Vin rouge

I have changed my campervan recently so there is no point, at the next national meeting, in looking for the snow covered silver one featured in this column in 2012 Spring Terrier. It is another unique Wheelhome, Fiat based, model similar to the silver one but slightly longer, wider and higher. It is coloured Fiat red; a real fire engine red.

I have christened the vehicle "vin rouge."

It is a 3 berth although there are only 2 seats for travelling. The picture shows the vehicle in "on site" mode and of course the roof hinges down for travelling. Inside there are 2 diesel fired hot plates for cooking, a fridge and a sink unit. There is also a secret feature that, I think, in future years, will become standard. I cannot say too much at this stage but the following picture gives the game away.

Trouble at t'mill

I was recently given a most interesting book about the history of a local water mill. The original mill was built almost a thousand years ago, some years before the Norman Conquest, and its successor still stands on the same site today – as a working water mill.

The mill remained in continuous commercial use until the early 70s when the outgoing miller closed down in business and sought to make the most of his remaining asset, the mill building, by obtaining a planning consent for residential conversion.

At this point the Director of the local preservation society and the Borough Planning Officer jointly began to investigate ways and means of securing the future preservation of the building



as a working unit without denying the owner the opportunity to dispose satisfactorily of his asset. I was brought in, as the Suffolk County property man, to advise on valuation matters.

Looking back at my work diary of the time I see that the 3 of us met quite often over a period of 12 months in order to discuss the way forward. Eventually, after a lengthy Planning Enquiry, at which I gave evidence, an acceptable solution was found and ownership passed to the preservation society and the future of the working water mill was assured.

The reason for giving you all this detail is to highlight the different perspectives of the parties involved. Looking back I thought that the local preservation society Director, the Borough Planning Officer had played an important and

possibly key role here and, to a certain extent, so had I.

However the book, written from the point of view of the people who worked on the practicalities of restoring the structure and mechanisms of the mill, see it otherwise. The thousand-year history is well documented but the Director is only given one name check and a few lines; the Borough Planning Officer gets no name check and his authority's name is rendered incorrectly; and neither I, nor valuation matters, are mentioned at all!

It is probably a useful lesson to all of us in the public service to see that what we regard as key involvements are not so regarded by the wider public.

The book is a good read particularly on the technicalities of water mill

operations and the milling process. For example it is very important to deliver the right amount of grain to the grindstones. Too little and friction could cause the stones to heat up and ignite the flour dust-laden atmosphere in the mill; too much will clog up the gap between the stones and then they will "grind to a halt."

And there is a delightful quote from a 16th century book on healthy living. At that time the milling process produced a heavy brown bread that had "much branne that fylleth the belly with excrements and shortly descendeth from the stomacke." As someone who can now only eat rye bread, which is very similar to the 16th century brown bread, I can only say that that quote rings very true 500 years on!

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER

VOLUME 18, ISSUE 3, AUTUMN 2013

Faugères

In the last edition I forgot to say what prompted me to write about Faugères at this time. Well out of the blue I saw the name mentioned in the weekly advert of my local Waitrose and I thought, "I'm having some of that!" But I couldn't find it on the shelves anywhere and had to ask the wine-man for help. It took us quite a time to locate it during which I told him the tale of my long unrequited love for this particular wine.

So when he spotted me the following week he was agog to discover how I had got on. "Tell me," I said, "have you ever come across some young lady you were very sweet on 20 years or so ago and then spent the evening together for old time's sake?" He nodded. "And how did you feel during and after that evening?" I asked. "Disappointed," he replied, "we had all moved on."

"Exactly," was my response.

Blundeston Prison

It has just been announced that Blundeston Prison is to close before the end of this year. Blundeston is a small

village about 4 miles north of Lowestoft. Apart from its modern prison, the village has little else to offer apart from a mention in the Charles Dickens novel, David Copperfield.

Do you remember Wayne Hemingway MBE who spoke so entertainingly at the ACES Annual Meeting of 2012 and contributed a piece called Town Centres Now in 2013 Spring edition of the Terrier? In that article he imagined a modern flat development as a prison with before and after photographs, the

latter being photo shopped with added high security fences and watch towers.

Photos of Blundeston look quite like this and I wonder if Wayne fancies the challenge of taking on the former prison and turning it into some lovely and loveable flat development after removing the high fencing and other security features?

Heathrow

The good old BBC can always locate



Artist's impression

the right member of the public to back up its corporate view of a news item. This item was the possibility of expanding Heathrow by the addition of a further runway in order to provide the estimated additional capacity to satisfy an assumed ever increasing demand for air travel. Cut therefore to a man-in-the-street, or it might have been a woman, I can't remember, standing in a street of rather plain semis, facing the camera. Before any speaking takes place, Vox Pop is the technical term; a jumbo jet appears stage right at an altitude of about 50 feet, flies across the frame before disappearing behind the gable end of one of the semis.

It is a location we know well and the usual scenario is, "Heathrow should be closed as all this makes living here intolerable," or "Heathrow should buy up our houses and let us all move on to somewhere more salubrious." However this time, and with a completely straight face, the message was, "The new runway proposed will require the acquisition and demolition of our beautiful houses and would be the end of our delightful neighbourhood."

Last Night of the Proms

I have watched this event on TV for nearly half a century and then just missed the start as I had fallen fast asleep during a preceding programme. These days, when I wake up, it takes a minute or 2 for my vision to clear so the first thing I saw was a very blurry picture of the conductor, Marin Alsop, and in my befuddled state I thought I was seeing Angela Merkel dressed in a Salvation Army uniform waving a big stick. Crikey,

I thought, all my fantasies have come in at the same time; is it my birthday? [Ed – I'll let this one pass!]

Apart from that I thought it was an excellent evening. Perhaps it was because a woman was conducting for the first time since the proms began in 1895 but the Promenaders were much less jingoistic than usual, the featured singer, mezzo soprano Joyce DiDonato, sang like an angel and violinist Nigel Kennedy just played his violin and resisted the temptation to treat us to another demonstration of his "mockney."

Health

I have never been to Glastonbury and feel that at my age the prospect of a visit is now beyond my physical capabilities, given the need to live in a field for the duration, the possibility of inclement weather and the medieval toilets. I did however watch the best bits on TV including Mick Jagger who is, I discover, a year younger than me. Clearly he must have adopted long ago a strict regime of exercise and diet that allows him to reprise his singing and dancing and still be able to entertain 100,000 people and keep them happy.

I wish I had adopted a similar regime years ago too. As it is I remain haunted by the words of Eubie Blake, the American composer, songwriter and ragtime and jazz pianist who lived until he was 100. He died in 1983. In his later years he stated that, "If I'd known I was going to live this long I'd have taken better care of myself."

Two Berts

Bert Trautmann died in July this year. According to my copy of Football Parade, Presented by Stanley Matthews, Christmas 1951 edition, Bert was a regular member of the Manchester City League Division One team in the 1950s. At this time this was the topflight. Bert was a German ex paratrooper who fought on the Russian front and later in the Ardennes and at Arnhem before his capture by the British Army and transfer to a POW Camp in the northwest. His football career started with his POW Camp team before moving to amateur football and then to Manchester City. He never left the northwest and retired at the age of 42. He had 2 unique claims to fame:

- He played in the 1956 Cup Final, broke his neck tackling an opposing forward but played on!
- He is the only footballer to have been awarded the Iron Cross, an OBE and Footballer of the Year.

In contrast the other Bert, Bert Williams, was in the RAF during which time his football career began to take off. After demobilisation he joined Watford then Wolves. He played his first match for England in the Victory International against France in May 1946 before 60,000 excited Frenchmen in the Colombes Stadium Paris. Oh hang on wasn't that the game with Sly Stallone in goal and Pelé and half the Ipswich team against a German Army side?

PPI

Help, I think I've been mis-sold PPI; is there no-one out there who can help?

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER

VOLUME 18, ISSUE 4, WINTER 2013/14

A tale of 2 goalies

The fastest Premier League goal this season was scored on 2 November 2013 in the fixture Stoke City v Southampton. The official time was 13 seconds. Stoke kicked off and after a couple of passes going forward the ball eluded both defenders and on-rushing forwards and bounced "harmlessly" into the Southampton penalty area.

In order to clear his lines, Begovic, the Southampton goalie, lustily booted the ball back up-field. A strong following wind helped the ball on its way and it landed, first bounce, mid-way between the half way line and the Stoke penalty area. Here physics took over and the ball bounced high and over the head of the Stoke goalie who had wandered far from the goal line. This bounce took it straight into the Stoke goal.

The Stoke goalie, Boruc, (pronounced Borrux; yes weally) was rightly mortified by this and spent the remaining 44 minutes and 47 seconds of the first half muttering his own name under his breath in self admonishment; oh borru, borru, borru [Ed – I'll let this one go!].

The Mediterranean diet

This diet is currently making a comeback

as it has recently been identified as of possible assistance in delaying or avoiding the onset of dementia, a completely heartless disease that we will all need to face up to eventually, should we live that long. I first came across the diet about 20 years ago and at that time it was also being heralded as a possible miracle cure for something or other.

The Mediterranean diet is based on the traditional dietary patterns of Greece, Spain and Southern Italy. Its principal aspects include a high consumption of olive oil, legumes, unrefined cereals, fruits, and vegetables; moderate to high consumption of fish, moderate consumption of dairy products mostly as cheese and yogurt, moderate to high consumption of spring water, one to one and a half litres per day was recommended, moderate red wine consumption, and low consumption of meat and meat products.

At the time I took up the diet I had only heard about it via the radio and had never seen it defined in print and the version I tried to follow became a little garbled. The mention of spring water was overlooked and the recommended daily consumption of up to one and a half litres was transferred to the red wine element, thus making the

whole concept look rather attractive. Consequently, despite my most valiant efforts, I was never able to reach the recommended red wine "target" though it was fun trying.

I still follow the recommended version of this diet apart from the dairy products for which I have substituted goats' cheese and soya based yoghurt. I have to say that I feel much better for it.

Arsène Wenger OBE cracks a joke

Arsène Wenger is a French football manager who is in charge of Premier League side Arsenal. He is the club's longest-serving manager and most successful in terms of major titles won, having led Arsenal to 11 trophies since 1996. Football pundits give Wenger credit for his contribution to the revolutionising of football in England in the late 1990s through the introduction of changes in the training and diet of players.

His nickname "Le Professeur" is used by fans and the British media to reflect Wenger's studious demeanour.

His approach to the game emphasises an attacking mentality, with the aim that

football ought to be entertaining on the pitch. He has been criticised for his regular refusal to splash the cash when the transfer window was open instead preferring to rely on home produced talent brought on through Arsenal's own youth programmes. Until the start of this football year anyway when, uncharacteristically he spent a few tens of millions on the German star Mesut Ozul who has settled in remarkably well into the English Premier League scene. Ozul hadn't put a foot wrong until recently when, astonishingly, he missed a penalty; a most un-Germanic thing to do.

When asked to comment on this during the post-match TV interview Wenger adopted his most studious demeanour and said, "Well, that's good news for England." (That was his joke by the way.)

I thought he might have been at it again during his post-match interview after the Manchester City v Arsenal fixture in December when, in response to a question about his opposite number he said, "Well, Pellegrini is an offensive manager; as indeed am I." This was said in his usual manner and I took it to be another joke; but now I'm not so sure.

What do you think?

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER VOLUME 19, ISSUE 1, SPRING 2014

Work V

Fresh from my work with Beatson and Clarke's glass bottles and 2 stints at the local pit clearly it was time for a spot of higher education, particularly as my welcome at grammar school was beginning to become rather thin. Having considered very carefully all the careers and further education advice made available to VIth formers, (in my case NIL), I had opted to read Civil Engineering at Manchester University. My reasoning was that I wanted to do something practical and Manchester was a reasonably short trip across the Pennines by electric train.

So off I went one bright October day, initially by bus to Sheffield, with a very large suit case packed with enough

stuff to last me until Christmas. To mark the importance of the occasion I was accompanied on this stage of the journey by my father who had already given me a new wristwatch and raincoat. Eventually I arrived at my digs in Fallowfield having resolved never again to try and lug a very large and very heavy suitcase on and off 2 buses and a train.

My fellow lodgers were 2 Yorkshire lads, and a cockney, all new boys like me, plus a guy from Birmingham who was a second or third year medical student. He was always pi**ed and for years my nightmare was waking up at the scene of some horrendous accident with him leaning over me asking how I felt.

The University, or at least Owen's

College, was only a 10-minute bus ride away, and I soon had the geography sussed. However it took a little longer, probably a week or 10 days, before I became totally disillusioned. I could not understand why there were no lectures on civil engineering or related topics. We did electrical engineering, mechanical engineering and pure physics and pure maths, the latter being based, apparently, on the square root of minus one, a somewhat difficult concept to grasp for someone like me with only 3 maths A levels. I was not happy. However I was happier having found the Union building and I decided to make the most of what I was already beginning to believe was likely to be a less than a 3 year stay by joining a few societies. These were the Engineering Society, whose sole purpose seemed

to be to arrange Hot-Pot Suppers; the Industrial Society, visits to interesting industrial locations such as Longbridge; and best of all the Manchester University Mountaineering Society with which I went on a number of rock climbing trips to the Peak District.

But best of all I found the Union Bar and proceeded, from day 1, to have lunch there. For the whole of year 1 my lunch was always the same, a pint of Watney's Draft Red Barrel and a pork pie.

However all good things must come to an end and I failed the year 1 termly exams in spectacular fashion; my high point being refused permission to leave the exam hall until 30 minutes had expired. I tried to leave after 5 minutes having written all I could but had to wait. It was the Pure Maths exam and when I turned over the paper to start I realised there was a problem; I could not understand a word of it!

My disillusionment was further enhanced by my vac job of junior civil engineer on a major site in Sheffield. In terms of status and pay, this job was the lowest of the low and rather insecure as junior engineers could be told "As from next Monday you will be working in West Hartlepool or West Africa." And you would be expected to be packed and ready to go. Not exactly my cup of tea.

So when the termly results came out shortly after finishing my agreed time on the vac job I was not surprised or concerned to see the word "FAIL" in capital letters in my letter. The procedure laid out was that I had to satisfy Faculty Management of my continuing interest in becoming a civil engineer and resit the termly exam, and pass, before starting year 2. I duly returned to Manchester to be interviewed by the Faculty Professor and the Head of the Civil Engineering Department and it soon became apparent to me that all 3 of us had little or no interest in the outcome of the interview and I left the meeting on the understanding that I would be unlikely to return for the resit.

In telling my parents when I got home I didn't get the reaction I was expecting. All my father said was, "I'm glad tha not going back. By the look of thee I don't

think tha would have lasted another couple of months anyway."

John Terry

On 19 January Chelsea hosted Manchester United at Stamford Bridge and beat them soundly. Samuel Eto'o scored a hat trick; the first time ever this had happened against the Reds. In a radio interview after the match, involving John Terry and Samuel Eto'o, the reporter asked Samuel, "This is the first time ever that an opposing player has scored a hat trick against Manchester United. How happy are you to be the first player to do this?" His answer was framed in 3 or 4 sentences of elegant, fluent French to which the reporter's response was to say, "Oh dear I wasn't expecting that. John, can you translate? How happy is he?" Without missing a beat John explained, "He says he's very happy." Yet another unsuspected skill possessed by the Chelsea Captain.

I was reminded of this during the confrontation between Russia and Ukraine in March when a BBC reporter, standing on a deserted dockside somewhere in Ukraine, telling us that the Russians had blockaded several Ukraine ships, when an Ukrainian officer with walkie-talkie appeared possibly heralding the imminent departure of the blockaded ships. The reporter immediately asked the officer if this was so and he replied at length using the word "Blockadeski" and many other words in his own language which left us all none the wiser. And possibly a scoop missed.

Where, I thought, is John Terry when you need him?

Worst work in the world

Some years ago I visited a Safari Park in my motor caravan which at the time was a fairly large Elddis with a big square body. It had a flat reinforced roof that could be used to carry extra luggage or as a viewing platform. There was a fixed ladder giving access to the roof which had a low peripheral handrail for health and safety.

In driving round the park it was no problem transiting from enclosure

to enclosure as there were staff to open and close the gates; unlike my experience at a POW Museum I had recently visited where the main access was controlled by a driver-operated barrier with a height restriction. This meant that when a high vehicle like mine approached the barrier, a "Guard" appeared dressed up in WWII uniform who then, rather insolently in my opinion, gestured to an adjoining gate, with no height restriction, and let me through.

Meanwhile back at the Safari Park all went well until the monkey enclosure. It was no problem getting in and the inmates clearly liked my out-of-the-ordinary vehicle as one small monkey immediately climbed aboard and sat on the supporting arm of one of my lorry size rear view mirrors rather like an unilluminated Michelin Man. And there he stayed until about 6 of his mates accessed the roof whereupon he joined them and, in some excitement, all enjoyed the ride and the unusually high vantage point.

Again all went well until I approached the exit gate and a rather well built girl appeared wielding a large yard brush. Clearly one of her roles was to prevent inmates escaping and my escapees had encountered this lady before and had probably felt the weight of her yard brush. Anyway she clearly terrified the monkeys and in something of a panic they all scrambled off the roof and away. I was cleared to leave the enclosure, the park and to go home.

Some days later I began to detect an unusual pong in the vicinity of the van and on climbing the ladder in order to peer over the roof I saw that the monkeys had left copious traces of their panic stricken exit from the roof. It took a few hours hard work with a hose pipe and stiff brush to clear it all up.

Planes

RAF Mildenhall in Suffolk is the USAF's European Logistics Centre and home to its European Refuelling Wing and 1 or 2 Special Operations Units. I live close enough to see most of the flying but not close enough to feel that the next one will take the tiles of the roof.



The Osprey

There is no fixed flying timetable but there are lots of planes to see. Mainly Boeing KC-135R Stratotankers, AWACs (airborne warning and control), Lockheed Hercules and various types of heavy lift transport aircraft.

Recently a newcomer has joined the ranks, the Osprey. This unusual aircraft joins the Hercules in Special Operations, namely "the insertion and extraction of personnel." The Osprey has 2 massive engines each with an oversize propeller mounted either side of the fuselage on short stubby wings. To achieve vertical flight, uniquely both engine units rotate through 90 degrees. Having seen the Osprey fly by, its oversize and slowly rotating propellers present quite an amusing picture.

I haven't seen one land but in my imagination I am taken back to the circus clown's car and imagine a perfect landing and as the plane taxis to its

destination I can hear the pilot sounding off his hooter, one of those brass trumpet units activated by squeezing an air bulb. As the plane stops there is a huge backfire, lots of smoke and the pilot's door falls off. Then a large boot emerges followed by the pilot dressed in a lime green and yellow checked onesie and a very large bow tie that probably rotates. The pilot's face will be made up mainly in white with the usual clown accoutrements and a red bulbous nose surmounted by an orange fright wig.

However in undertaking special operations I am sure arrangements are much more serious than my imaginings but I'll wager it would severely unsettle the opposition in, say, rescuing under fire a downed pilot in Taliban territory if my scenario was tried.

All our yesterdays

As this column is rapidly approaching its 50th anniversary I wondered whether a reprint of some earlier columns might be interesting otherwise I might be tempted to take an earlier piece, give it a quick tosh over and represent it as "new and original". For example the following appeared as the first few sentences of the new column in succession to the long standing column "Yesterday's Man" as written by Dick Miller.

"ALMOST YESTERDAYS MAN

I thought the auditions queue for YM would have gone right round the block but no, just a guest column from Malcolm, with a nice picture to cut out and frame. Mine has pride of place on the mantelpiece. It keeps the kids away from the fire.

The last issue was full of references to Cardiff and, by coincidence, I was there only the week before the AGM with that Diamond Fenland Geezer, the real YM. It was the occasion of the last STEPS Seminar of all time and County Hall Cardiff was the last stop on YM's Farewell Tour. Although his Betty'n Bert Roadshow went like clockwork at Cambridge and Walsall, it nearly fell at the last hurdle. Adrian James was introducing Betty's pre-lunch spot whilst AYM was doing a last minute sound check on the laptop. As Adrian got to "and here she is..." we both looked up and she had disappeared! Someone muttered, "Bl**dy hell, she's b****red off", but all was well. She was actually scrabbling round on the floor recovering the contents of an upturned briefcase. So Cardiff was saved and did not miss out on its share of GN11 Update and the valuation of social housing, or a brilliant demonstration of the "Australian Position".

YM's organisational skill will be sadly missed. Come back YM, your profession needs you."

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER **VOLUME 19, ISSUE 2, SUMMER 2014**

Educating Yorkshire

This piece is about the above television programme and not an overly elaborate lead into the punch line "Tha' can allus tell a Yorkshire man; but tha' can't tell him much."

Educating Yorkshire was a "fly-on-the-wall" documentary about a comprehensive school, the staff and pupils and how they all interacted. I was very interested to see if things had changed in the decades since I had been subjected to educating Yorkshire; and they had, substantially.

In the 50s, education, in the mining area where I spent my formative years, was seen as the only available escape route to a better life. Of course we pupils were unaware of this but our parents and the teaching staff and the education authority were all in on the conspiracy. And to emphasise this, at every school there would be a cast iron notice securely fixed either to the building or a substantial metal post setting out do's and don'ts, but mainly don'ts, and all signed "A. B. Clegg MA Chief Education Officer, West Riding of Yorkshire"; an early example of the reinforcement of brand awareness.

I was started at school at the tender age of 3. Our lunch comprised sandwiches brought by ourselves following which we all lined up outside the main hall, where we were issued with a camp bed which we carried in, erected and then slept the remaining lunch period away; a facility which I have keenly missed ever since.

The only objective of the education system was success in examination results, and later on how many pupils gained places at either Oxford or Cambridge. To this end likely pupils were accelerated through the system; though not always with complete success. For

example I leapfrogged one year pre-11+ only to spend 2 years in the last year of primary school and then at grammar school I was leapfrogged over the fifth year only to spend 2 years in the Upper Sixth prior to going on to university.

The way the system was organised was that we pupils received education provided by a munificent municipality and delivered by teachers who were clearly totally different. Neither the authority nor the teachers welcomed questions or “participation”. To emphasise their difference most teachers, mostly men, wore tweedy sports jackets complete with leather accoutrements; clothing that self-respecting miners would object strongly to being buried in.

Clearly there was seldom much real contact between teachers and pupils. We were all addressed by our surnames. As I recall parents were not made welcome.

As shown on TV the system had changed totally. Teachers and pupils were all on the same side and participated in real conversations with each other. Pupils had changed completely. While we would not say boo to a goose, these pupils had firmly held opinions and feelings that they were not afraid of putting over in the strongest possible terms. The headmaster, Mr Mitchell, was a revelation. He strolled about the school corridors, sported designer stubble and chatted freely with pupils whom he addressed by name, as if he knew them!

I just wonder if I would have flourished better under such an enlightened system.

The best example of the new system involved Mr Burton the English master and Musharraf, known to his friends as Mushy P, who was a stutterer of heroic proportions. Mushy, who had Pakistani origins, was an intelligent and keen pupil anxious to get involved in all aspects of classroom activity. When Mr Burton asked a question his hand was always the first to go up but his stutter always got in the way of his answer. Or to be more accurate his affliction was such that he was unable to get as far as his stutter.

Mr Burton went to great lengths to help him but without success. As a last resort he tried the solution used in the film “The King’s Speech” in which to lessen the impact of King George VI’s speech impediment his Aussie voice coach got him to wear headphones through which music was played as a distraction while the King read from a prepared script. After some experimentation Mr Burton and Musharraf got this to work and the final scene in that episode involved Musharraf giving a heartfelt speech of thanks to his fellow pupils.

There wasn’t a dry eye in the house.

The ex-para

On the subject of “There wasn’t a dry eye in the house” I caught this on TV at about 3am while waiting to feel tired again.

The motorway cops were alerted by the emergency services dealing with a minor collision on the M62. It was suggested that they ought to attend.

When they reached the scene they found that a car had had a minor collision with an HGV resulting in damage to the nearside front car wheel and nearby bodywork. The HGV was undamaged and was sent on its way. The car driver proved to be, after lengthy questioning, a 90 year old ex-paratrooper on his way to an annual regimental reunion in Holland. And the reunion was expected to last for 5 weeks and he had a ferry booking at Hull for early evening. So could someone put his spare tyre on so he could be on his way?

Although aged 90 the driver clearly was in possession of all his marbles and he spoke in polite and respectful terms to the policemen while emphasising that it was imperative that he caught his ferry. Given his attitude and his wartime service the motorway cops decided to try and help and went way above the call of duty to provide all forms of assistance including real help.

His car wing was too damaged to allow him to continue so a hire car was the answer but who would want to hire a car to a 90 year old for a 5 week trip abroad starting today? The cops thereupon

made arrangements for the recovery of his car, took on board his stuff for transfer, then found a car hire place willing to provide a replacement vehicle. The last we saw of the ex-para was him driving off in the hire car to Hull.

At the end of the programme there was a very deadpan announcement telling us that he did in fact make the ferry at Hull and the start of his regimental reunion but, sadly, he had died after 3 weeks surrounded by his wartime colleagues.

The “N” word

The other day I came across a discussion in the Times, that is the Radio Times, about the epic wartime black and white film The Dam Busters which had just been reshown on TV. The discussion was about an apparently serious project to remake the film but this time in full colour. However there would be a need to update the name of Guy Gibson’s black labrador which is referred to by name in the film in order to recognise how social sensibilities have changed in the last half century or so. The dog’s name is, of course, Ni***r.

Why leave it there as there are a number of other updates that could be deployed; for example:

- A black labrador could be seen as far too masculine and aggressive; would a cuddly kitten widen the film’s appeal; and perhaps the name “Tiddles” would be a safer bet?
- When on “ops” bomber crews were sent off with a cooked full English breakfast which we now know is not the healthy option. Perhaps bomber crews could be shown being sent off after a modest breakfast of muesli and non-dairy milk
- And in the film, returning flying crews are seen celebrating in the Officers’ Mess with pints of beer and high jinks. Not a very good example really. A more sensible celebration could comprise a small dry sherry, a few glasses of sparkling Vimto and a jolly good sing-song.

Clearly once you start changing small elements of a successful formula it's possible to justify continuing changes until the whole point of the original is lost. For example the original film depicted one small event in the war with

Germany. An unthinkable proposition today although I find it difficult to suggest an acceptable alternative opponent.

Perhaps a different sort of conflict could

be depicted that would not offend anyone? I suggest an international competition between European WIs to produce the most appealing and tasty preserves – THE JAM BUSTERS!

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER

VOLUME 19, ISSUE 3, AUTUMN 2014

The end of an era

The purpose of this piece is to thank Tim Foster and Colin Bradford, on the occasion of their "retirement", for the major contributions they have made to the wellbeing and status of our Association.

Tim

In those far off days, before Tim Foster and the post of Secretary were invented, if I remember correctly, it was the President who called meetings if there were topics to be settled in between Annual Meetings. The only fixed and "formal" meeting was the AM when we all turned up at the Lords Cricket Ground hoping that his time, if we were lucky, we might actually catch a glimpse of WG Grace. Even so there was no agenda and, for example, the Treasurer never gave a written report but assured those present that income was being collected, sales of memorabilia were going well, and there was no need to make any changes. Clearly a modern professional association would be unlikely to flourish under such an informal regime and, thanks to Tim and his efforts over the years, ACES now has up to date systems of governance in place so that decisions can be taken at the right time and more importantly recorded correctly and progress monitored appropriately. We have a lot to thank Tim for.

In between times of course I cannot ever remember Tim failing to attend a meeting at which his presence was required and he has successfully taken on additional tasks, such as editing journals, in order to preserve continuity and quality. Many thanks Tim.

Colin

Singlehandedly Colin has developed

the Association's 2 main publications, the Terrier and Asset into top quality journals that are envied throughout the professional world. For example with Asset, Colin would transport recording equipment to meetings, set it up and monitor its performance, arrange for transcription, sub-edit the transcripts and then edit the final product, arranging for printing and distribution to members. At meetings, in between times, he was also the ACES official photographer and we have all seen, and envied, numerous example of his quality work in ACES journals.

We have a lot to thank Colin for both in attaining and in continuing to achieve high standards in the main journals and related one-off publications.

Doctor, the Reverend, Ian Paisley

Sadly, Ian Paisley died recently and almost without exception the obituary writers zoomed in on Paisley the "NEVER! NEVER! NEVER! Never!" politician. My memory of him is somewhat different even though we met in the circumstances of an un-concluded compensation claim which seemed always to offer the celebrity/VIP claimant full licence to behave very badly indeed. However Dr Paisley resisted this and conducted himself in a gentlemanly manner throughout and so we were able to conclude the negotiation quickly and successfully as I reported in the Winter 2003/4 edition of The Terrier:

Ian Paisley, so it is said, was delivering one of his scorching sermons. "In the hell that awaits the sinner," he roared, "there will be a-weeping and a-wailing and a-gnashing of teeth." An old man in the front row was impressed, scared and a little puzzled. "Dr. Paisley" he mumbled through his ancient gums, "what if you have nae teeth?" The

great man paused for only a second. "Teeth," he thundered, "will be provided".

Dr. Paisley's public image is that of an uncompromising, obstinate, intolerant, hard-line politician. Not the sort of man you would want to share a pot of Earl Grey with. And yet some time ago, a friend, with religious inclinations, took the trouble to go to his church in Belfast to see what it was all about at first hand. He reported back that Dr. Paisley was the most charismatic preacher he had ever heard.

So when I had my opportunity to meet him I did not know what to expect.

In the days, long, long ago when there were extensive programmes of compulsory acquisition work, usually for highway purposes, it so happened that in my authority one of our road schemes brought about the demolition of one of Dr. Paisley's churches; a clear-cut equivalent reinstatement situation. Compensation principles and the building of a replacement church were resolved without too much difficulty. Then the great man let it be known that there were "one or two loose ends" and he wished to conclude the negotiations personally when he was next in Suffolk.

Now this was at the height of "The Troubles" and arranging a meeting was not altogether straightforward. A date and time of 2pm were fixed and later "a civil servant" telephoned me. "Where exactly will the meeting take place?" he asked. "It could take place in my own room," I replied, thinking a matter of status could be involved. "What sort of room is it?" he said and when I mentioned ground floor with windows along 2 sides he made it clear that was totally out of the question. "Is there an internal room with no windows?" "Yes," I said, "then that's the one." Other than that I was not expecting to attend the meeting personally.

So I forgot all about it until lunchtime on the day of the meeting. Usually I took a lunchtime walk and left the building and walked off down the road as usual. After a few steps a black Granada cruised past only to do a flashy 3-point turn further on and cruise back. There were 4 snappily dressed young men in it with short haircuts. It would have blended in more with a flashing neon sign saying "SPECIAL BRANCH" on the roof. "Christ", I thought, "This is the day Ian Paisley is due." Trying not to draw any attention I hotfooted it back to the office.

After a hurried briefing my Valuer said he wanted me to attend and do the talking but he had no idea what the problem was. Those of you who have done compulsory acquisition work will know exactly what I thought. It was common practice for all owners and agents to pull any trick in the book to increase compensation. Those with member contacts or even minor celebrity status were by far the worst.

Just before 2pm one of the Granada Four introduced himself and then began to lurk just inside the entrance to the building. We were told to sit in the meeting room. At precisely 2 pm more black Granadas arrived and the Ian Paisley party was conducted in. He sat on the opposite side of the table flanked by 2 vicars and a minder. Dr. Paisley was affable but the others were unsmiling and watchful. It was soon clear that I was completely wrong about Mr Paisley. He was one of the most courteous and professional negotiators I ever dealt with, and a real gent.

First he made it clear that he had come to conclude negotiations with me, and no one else. He added that he was very grateful with how the whole business had been dealt with, very satisfied with the new church and looking forward to an official opening ceremony. But there were a few minor matters that he hoped we could help with. "Such as?" I asked. "Well first of all most of my congregation are elderly and will need help to attend services in the new location. My church," he confided, "has built many more churches in recent years than anyone so we know a little bit about this. And what we need is another minibus. A second hand one will suffice costing probably about £3,000. Could the authority fund this?" He stopped.

My turn. Taking a deep breath I said, "Before agreeing to that I would prefer to hear the full list of additional minor matters." He smiled, and leaning forward touched my arm lightly. "A very professional approach," he commended, "I can see you've done this sort of thing before Mr Scribbler" Without further ado he went through all his additional claims and in no time at all we did a deal, and he, and his party were soon on their way.

About 10 years later, at a loose end following a foreshortened RICS meeting, I was nosing around a second hand bookshop in Charing Cross Road when I realised that a fellow browser was Dr Paisley. He was looking through some dusty ecclesiastical tomes. Should I go across and introduced myself? To do so would mean going across the room and tapping him on the shoulder. Checking out the others in the room I couldn't spot which were the minders so thought it best to leave well alone and be on my way.

Louis (Satchmo) Armstrong

Were he still alive Satchmo would have celebrated his 100th birthday in September so by way of a reminder you might wish to re-read the following piece that was first published in the Spring 2003 edition of The Terrier:

If you've read the Sheffield papers yet you will remember the Sheffield City Centre Regeneration piece by Alison Nimmo and Carolyn Kenny. The City Hall was featured. "We are trying to find creative ways to unlock the value of The City Hall ... to regenerate it and the surrounding streets, and develop these into a new square." I wish them well.

45 years ago, when I was a regular patron the City Hall was a top concert venue. The building is circular in plan with a big open stage area capable of taking the biggest orchestra. Behind this is a tiered bank of seats, a bit like the Albert Hall, capable of seating massed choirs, so that, for example, Handel's Messiah could be staged comfortably, as it often was. If these seats were not needed for the performance they were made available cheaply to customers and provided an uncomfortable, unusual, but if you got there early enough, exciting viewpoint. Performers accessed the stage area up a flight of stairs that emerged centre stage

level with the front row of stage seats. The exit was guarded on both sides by large lions, which stared sombrely out at the audience.

At school we had an enthusiastic jazz club and band. The time came when we felt old enough to go and see our jazz heroes at live concerts. There was plenty of public transport and venues. The first band I saw was Chris Barber and his Jazz Band at, in fact, the Gaumont Doncaster. I could give you the line up now but will forgo that pleasure. Doncaster was a little far afield but fortuitously, at about that time, the Musician's Union lifted its ban on American live music and The City Hall became a principal venue on the visiting Jazz Stars circuit.

Perversely the first jazz band I saw at Sheffield was Humphrey Lyttleton and his Band. After that I saw every touring American jazz star. Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Earl Hines, Eddie Condon, Kid Ory, Big Bill Broonzy, MJQ, Jazz at the Philharmonic, Dave Brubeck and so on. Magical names, most of which are utterly confusing my spell checker, so I'll leave it there, except for one more; the great Satchmo himself.

When we heard he was coming we booked early, and on the night, got there early. I was on stage, on the front row, next to the right hand lion. I can't remember the supporting band at all but the tension built as they went through their set. After the interval the All Stars came on stage one by one and then Satchmo was announced. He came out on to the stage and stood in between the lions saluting the crowd with arms outstretched one hand clutching his trademark white handkerchief and the other the golden trumpet. His roar of greeting was drowned by the roar of the crowd. He was about 6 foot in front of me and I could see him, or at least his back, clearly. Although a musical giant he was in reality quite small. He had obviously been briefed on the customers on the stage and didn't want to ignore us. He took a couple of steps to the right and turned round to face us. He was right in front of me. He looked me in the eye, smiled, and with outstretched arms again roared his greeting straight at me. I don't think I stopped smiling for weeks.

Brazil 1 Germany 7

It is said that everybody knows where they were when England won the World Cup Final in 1966. I don't as my 1966 diary is silent on that date and the days before and after, as is my memory.

However I will always remember where I was when South American football was eventually exposed and humiliated on 8 July 2014. I was at home!

I didn't watch the interminable preliminaries on TV where every Glen, Dick and Harry are invited to give their views, but just switched on for the kick-off. After a tentative opening 10 minutes, on the basis that little happens in the first half friendlies, I decided to clear the dining table of used items. I returned from the kitchen only to discover the score was 0-1 (Mueller 11 minutes).

Ten minutes later I was back in the kitchen making a quick cup of tea, a process that normally takes 5 to 6 minutes. By the time I settled down again I realised the score was now 0-5 (Klose 23 minutes, Kroos 24 and 26 minutes, Khedira 29 minutes).

I stuck with the half time summaries, if only to find out what was going on, and then went back to the kitchen to pour a glass of red wine; yes you've guessed on my return the score was 0-6 (Schuerrle 69 minutes).

By now I was determined not to move until the final whistle but on making an ill judged and overly exuberant hand gesture the tip of one finger caught the rim of my wine glass on the coffee table, projecting its contents across the light biscuit coloured fitted carpet. The score became 0-7 (Schuerrle 79 minutes), while I had my head stuck under the coffee table trying desperately to minimise some of the damage.

I did see the score become 1-7 (Oscar 90 minutes) but by then was passed caring.

Wat Tyler's mate

In the Spring 2012 issue of *The Terrier* there was an explanatory biographical piece on Wat Tyler to mark an Eastern Branch outing to Wat Tyler Country

Park in Basildon. Sadly I failed to mention Wat's mate John Ball, the subversive "hedge priest" whose radical interpretation of the Bible dovetailed with Wat Tyler and the so-called "peasant's revolt" in 1381, bringing England to the brink of revolution. (No I don't know what hedge priest means either; nor why Melvyn Bragg keeps banging on about the "so-called peasant's revolt.")

John Ball is one of the forgotten heroes of English history: a radical who was so subversive he was written out of history for centuries. He trained as a priest in



Colchester, a place that "swarmed with religious battles" and young chaplains with a reputation for "gambling and drunkenness". But boozy priests were the least of England's worries. Ball was preaching to a country broken by death and taxes. The plague years of the Black Death were followed by the war years – which somebody (the peasants) had to pay for.

By 1364, the church had had enough and Ball was excommunicated and forbidden to speak in any church. So he took to hanging out in churchyards, speaking to parishioners in English, the language of the commoners, and not the French of the courts or the Latin of the clergy. He continued living as an outlaw whose arguments were so threatening to the status quo that the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Simon of Sudbury, had to call on Edward III in his next bid to silence him and eventually he was thrown into prison.

By 1381 Wat Tyler had emerged as a people's leader for the Kentish Rebels,

freed the imprisoned Ball and together they marched on London to protest against the poll taxes. However Ball was soon back in the hands of authority and was gruesomely put to death by being hung until he was nearly dead, then cut down while he was still breathing and disemboweled with just enough life left in him to see his entrails burned before him. He was then executed, presumably with the words "He's not the Messiah, he's a very naughty boy," ringing in his ears and promptly written out of history books for many centuries to come.

Getting older

There are, I think, for a man, 3 stages in life when transfer from one to the next calls for either some physical change or some external validation. I am thinking of course of the change from short to long trousers, the change to adulthood, and then becoming "old".

I reckon I was still in short trousers when I started at grammar school but changed soon thereafter, say in 1953. And thinking back it must have been just before 5 November 1965 when, having transferred to British Railways Estates London location, I was constantly implored by local urchins on my way down the steps to Kings Cross Underground to give a "Penny for the guy, Mister."

Now I have just reached the 3rd stage as confirmed by the actions of others. Accordingly you are getting old when:

- I was at the gym and about to change from one machine when another member, who appeared to be at least as old as me, offers me his assistance to get off the machine
- And later in the changing room when putting on a clean T shirt it became locked up in a hopeless tangle and someone comes up behind me and says "Let me help" and frees the whole thing up. It may have been the same man as above
- And a few minutes later, when I thought the coast was clear, I got into the same bind when trying to put on my ex rugby shirt when, lo and behold, the same man strolls in and offers his assistance for the third time!
- Finally I was doing an early run round Waitrose on the Saturday before Christmas when I stopped by the newspaper shelves to get a Times from the top shelf. As

it was Saturday the paper was heavier than usual, and I did have my shopping list in my right hand, so I was trying, unsuccessfully as it turned out, to grip the paper and lift it from the top shelf when I felt this very faint tapping on my right arm. It was a very short little old lady who said, "Move out of the way dear and let me help." She must have been in her 80s. So I moved out of the way and she got me the paper without any problems.

And the moral to this story? Accept any help offered with as much good grace as you can muster.

Linguistic development

English is a constantly developing language with new words and or usages being absorbed or discarded by popular demand, as it were, and not through some learned official body, as in France for example. Although ultimately a form of "official" approval is bestowed when a new word is included in the Oxford English Dictionary.

For example the words fab, gear and grotty came into popular usage in 1961 as one of the outcomes of Beatlemania although that word only came into popular usage in 1963 when it was coined by the Daily Mirror as a headline.

More modern new words include chav, omnishambles and credit crunch. Waiting in the wings for inclusion in the next edition of the OED are onesie and selfie where the latter is defined as "a photograph that one has taken of oneself typically with a smartphone and uploaded to a social media website". To show how change is an essential part of the process I did see in a magazine only this week a cluster of close photos of various dogs described as "selfies," not quite true yet but in the future; who knows?

I suspect that this is an area that the BBC would like to have some official involvement in and, indeed, may already

be operating covertly to that end. For example I hear on the BBC the word "genre" used on an almost daily basis and yet seldom hear it used elsewhere. Similarly whenever a volcano erupts or large volumes of water escape from a main or a canal the word of choice used to describe this is "spew"; not a form of popular usage. And why is the quantity of water involved always described in terms of a specific number of Olympic sizes swimming pools?

But in my opinion the worst example of trying to start a new form of popular usage is in the jarring format the BBC uses to describe small modern combat aircraft i.e. the expression "fighter jet" is always used. Since the late 1940s I have only ever used the expression "jet fighter" and the only time I have ever heard the BBCs version used is in a 50 year old American documentary broadcast on some obscure satellite channel.

My version is used throughout the Encyclopaedia of Air Warfare e.g. The Early Jet Fighters and in further support of my version, the one that puts the horse before the cart as it were, I quote the first line of the popular song "I'm leaving on a jet plane" and not, you will note, "I'm leaving on a plane jet."

Free the Beyton 14 – or is it 15?

Beyton is a village to the east of Bury St Edmunds situated just off the A14 trunk road. In the middle of the village is a large triangular shaped green bounded on all sides by public roads. Indeed one of the green's adjacent roads was the then A45 trunk road until the village was bypassed some 20 to 30 years ago.

The village sign incorporates geese as for as long as anyone can remember there have been a dozen or so geese free ranging over the green and its surroundings. This caused no problems, apparently, even though one of the adjacent roads was a very heavily used trunk road.

However a few years ago all the geese disappeared and were last seen, or so I am told, walking, late at night, up Church Road heading for, probably, the celestial freezer in the skies. The green then remained empty of livestock for a year or so until, following a survey of parishioners, geese were reintroduced to the green.

When I was last in full time employment our weekly Management Team meetings were held on Monday mornings in order to get the bad news out of the way early. Proceedings were considerably enlivened when we were joined by a new chief officer from Scotland who regaled us with stories about how things were done north of the border. Our favourite stories ended up with "and then the police had to be called in order to restore peace among the members." These were our favourite stories as calling in the police was so alien to us as to be inconceivable.

But back to the Beyton geese; apparently one parishioner objected so strongly to their reintroduction that she turned up at a formal meeting of the Parish Council and started to film and record the proceedings. On being asked to desist she refused and the Chairman suspended the meeting and summoned the police! And in fact the police were powerless to act as a recent

change in the regulations governing public meetings means that a member of the public can now make recordings in meetings.

The outcome of this intervention so far has meant that:

Half the members of the Parish Council have resigned

Parish Council business has come to a virtual standstill until new Parish Council members are elected on 7 May

The geese still roam the village green.

East Anglia matters

Isolation. Perhaps it is a product of the feeling of isolation but I cannot help but view the latest pronouncements by both local and national bigwigs on the impending broadband "roll out" with huge amounts of cynicism. No doubt the aforesaid bigwigs are excitedly calling each other on their mobile phones full of self-congratulations and wishing that this latest roll out is as successful as the earlier mobile phone signal roll out.

However so far as I am concerned the mobile roll out didn't happen here at all as I still cannot get a mobile signal at my property unless, that is, I stand on top of a step ladder situated in the north east corner of the lounge. In this position I can get a call out provided I do not nod or shake my head while doing so.

Apart from that we have in my village perfectly acceptable broadband and we all hope it survives unscathed the planned roll out.

Our East Anglian predecessors defined the area's isolated nature as follows:

Access to the north and the east is curtailed by the North Sea

Access to the west is curtailed by the Fens

And to the south is curtailed by the London and North East Railway.

The 3rd item can now be updated as follows:

Access to the south is generally limited particularly after bank holiday weekends by the joint efforts of Greater Anglia and Railtrack.

The Suffolk Punch. Our East Anglian predecessors were pretty good at definitions and described the Suffolk Punch as, ideally, having the head of an angel, a body the shape of a Greene King beer barrel and having a rear end like a farmer's daughter. The Punch is, of course, a heavy work horse, now alas an endangered species, as, not so many years ago, hundreds were employed in agriculture and in railway goods yards, shunting wagons.

The End of an Era. In January the Pentagon announced its intention to redeploy the activities and personnel and to eventually close RAF Mildenhall. It is estimated that the base contributes around £200m a year to the local economy and provides direct employment opportunities to a few hundred local people. Immediately local politicians and MPs went on record to say that plans for reinvention, growth and investment are discussed and completed before any base assets become available. Discussions began on the formation of appropriate working parties. However a few weeks later the MOD announced that the possibility of the RAF taking over the base was still being discussed and plans were being made to mothball the base if needs be.

Sic transit gloria mundi

A former chief officer colleague asked me some time ago whether, now I was fully retired, I took the time to take a look at developments I had been associated with. I didn't really know how to respond to this as so far as I was concerned the possibility did not arise as I had been mainly involved with the generation of capital receipts, so there was little to see. However one situation where there was something to see came to mind and the "development" arose as follows.

Back in the late 60s and early 70s I was beginning to feel that my time with British Railways in London had run its course so when an opportunity with Suffolk County Council at Ipswich, close to where I actually lived, was advertised I jumped at the chance. So on 2 April 1970 I was interviewed for the job but didn't get it as they were looking for someone with compensation experience. However they were impressed with my landlord and tenant experience, which they could also use and so I was hired on that basis, subject to approval being forthcoming for an establishment increase. I duly started work as a Junior Valuer at County Hall on 18 May 1970.

The project they had in mind for me was land at the eastern end of the County Hall site; a narrow strip of land with frontage to Milner Street and currently occupied by a number of small workshops all mainly engaged in the motor trade. My job was to displace these users and recover possession so that the site could be developed as offices sufficient to make up the shortfall of office space on the County Hall site.

So first thing I had a chat with each occupant to put them in the picture, then served the appropriate notice on each as provided for in the 1954 Landlord and Tenant Act. The occupants duly left the scene and the office block was built and christened Milner House.

Over the years many departments moved into and left Milner House which at some point was rechristened St Giles House until in January 1988 I and my relatively small number of staff took over half the ground floor. We shared the building with the Treasurer who had no intention of leaving for more prestigious accommodation elsewhere even though St Giles House was, due to its age, expensive to heat in winter and had no cooling for summer time temperatures. From the Treasurer's point of view the building was a good long walk away from Members' rooms and so was ideal.

All went well until it was my turn to be made redundant with a date fixed for the end of 2000 but in mid-October 2000 my staff were moved out and I had to leave my comfy partitioned-off

space on the Milner Road side of the building for a desk in a special "naughty boys" room on the first floor. Here I was expected to turn up every day until 31 December 2000 but soon got fed up with that and eventually just turned up for my last day.

Thus in terms of developments I had been associated with, even though I had survived almost 30 years, St Giles House, my only development, was still going strong after nearly 30 years. Having been prompted by the question referred to above, in January 2015 I decided to drive by the location after a routine visit to the Ipswich Hospital. In truth it wasn't far out of my way so I wondered why I had not done it during the intervening 15 years.

Having thought the matter through I realised if I took the first exit from the hospital roundabout, and not the more usual second, drive down Spring Road to the Rope Walk turn-off, then take the first left into Milner Street with luck I could park just outside my office window. On the day my plan went like a dream and the first parking space in Milner Street was available. I took it, switched off the engine then looked left to see who was using my comfy partitioned off space on the Milner Road side of the building. And the answer was no-one; there was just a nice green lawn. St Giles House was no more - it had been demolished!

Lance

Back in January 2013 I wrote what I assumed would be my last piece on Lance Armstrong. Among other things I said that following his "confession":

Presumably "everything" now being said about Lance Armstrong is true..... but 2 thoughts occur to me. Firstly as a winner of 7 Tours, or whatever it was, and innumerable stages, he must have been one of the most drug tested competitors in the world. Why was nothing ever discovered? And secondly, bearing in mind he seems to have been shopped by most of his "friends" or former teammates it illustrates the old maxim of treating contacts reasonably on the way up or inevitably they will get their own back on your way down.

Now (March 2015) a little light is beginning to be shed on the first point following a report by the Cycling Independent Reform Commission (CIRC). According to press comments the report, on Lance Armstrong and systematic doping in cycling, lays much of the blame on the International Cycling Union (UCI) and states that "There are numerous examples that Armstrong benefited from a preferential status afforded by the UCI leadership". For example:

Backdated prescriptions to legitimise failed tests

Collusion with Armstrong's legal team

The bending of the rules to allow his participation in races

The soliciting of financial donations

And a supposed investigation into the rider's EPO readings which was actually an investigation into how the information became public knowledge.

CIRC's conclusion is that while the UCI "did not act prudently" it could not classify its relationship as corrupt.

Although there can be no doubt that Armstrong's active participation in the above was corrupt, apparently the active provision of opportunities that enable a third party to act in a corrupt manner is OK.

Whatever; remember you read it first in The Terrier.

The importance of maintaining contacts

The background to this important sale was fully described in "Sales: Due Diligence" published in 2009 Autumn Terrier. The property involved was a major office building with accommodation on 3 floors, built in 1937. Original building plans and plans of a major 1960s extension were to hand with a copy of the planning consent and news reports on both the original build and the later work. And I had a lot of information on all those interesting little details than enliven sales particulars.

I knew the building of course but nonetheless took the opportunity to inspect the property formally with the building surveyor who had looked after it for many years, then with the head caretaker, and with the benefit of hindsight I remembered that twice when inspecting the basement I asked, "What's that in there?" and was told "Oh that's the electricity substation room." On the outside of this space there was an array of electricity meters that proved the point. "Can I look inside?" "No, it's full of dangerous electric equipment, and we don't have a key."

It was only when a sale had been agreed that it became apparent that the "electricity substation room" was in fact an operational substation in the freehold ownership of EDF! My previous paper identified above sets out the details of how this occurred. Upon asking EDF how we might regularise the position so that our sale could continue without delay and its operation could be safeguarded, the respondent said that they usually appointed a private consultant to advise on how to proceed.

When a consultant was named, he proved to be a former railway colleague with whom I had maintained contact over the years and so we were able to come to a mutually agreeable solution without wasting time investigating blind alleys.

Hippocalypse Now!

I have always admired the art of newspaper headline writing and the above caught my attention during the month of June 2015. You might remember the floods that occurred in Russia during that month that allowed most of the animals in some quite large zoo to escape. One of the tabloids had as its front page just a photograph of a very large and grumpy looking hippo being coaxed back into captivity with the headline Hippocalypse Now!

Perhaps it was this that caused the Times to recall some similar headlines of earlier years:

- *Headless Body found in Topless Bar*
- *Nut Screws Washer and Bolts concerning a psychiatric patient who took advantage of a laundrywoman before fleeing*
- *Missing baby found in Sandwich; it's a town in Massachusetts*
- *One-armed man applauds the generosity of strangers*
- *City bus on fire – passengers alight. This comes from the Guardian (the now defunct West Wales Guardian) and is thought to be a skilful exaggeration of a mildly dramatic local story.*

Here is another one that must date back to 1940. It concerns an isolated World

War 2 incident where an action by the French army managed to block, even if only for a short time, the then unstoppable advance of the German army. This event was reported under the headline "French Push Bottles up Germans".

The newly enlarged Large Hadron Collider

As was suggested in my original piece "Higgs boson made interesting" (2012 Autumn Terrier) having decided that the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) may have (or presumably may not have) detected the Higgs boson, CERN (European Organisation for Nuclear Research) announced its intention to shut down the LHC for a 2-year upgrade.

In 2015 it was announced that the upgrade had been completed and the LHC had now resumed experiments. No information is available on the nature and extent of the upgrades but it is probably safe to assume that these involved some sort of extension, a conservatory, double glazing and plenty of decking. Now that these are complete, it is stated that the LHC (or more accurately the ELHC, the enlarged Large Hadron Collider) is to run non-stop for the next 3 years, leading the search for those "missing" particles that are most likely to account for "dark matter".

Now I reckon that the latter phrase is code for something far more prosaic. When I was young my Christmas stocking always contained a bar of Fry's Chocolate Cream, rich dark chocolate



with a fondant cream icing, hidden among the Brazil nuts and tangerines. This, I think, is the dark matter being searched for. And I haven't seen this confection on the shelves for the last 30-40 years.

So, for the past few months I have been conducting my own search in the hopes that this might possibly assist CERN. Until a few weeks ago, all I had been able to discover was that Fry's went out of business years ago. Then I saw the product advertised on a flyer from Farmfoods, a frozen foods supermarket. However when I got there I could find no trace of it at all, but an assistant did offer the suggestion that they had been unable to source any due to excessive world-wide demand.

So near and yet so far!

Then by chance I spotted some bars very well hidden in Waitrose. In aisle 6, left hand side, the first and bottom shelf from the check-outs to be precise. I'd better tell CERN!

More sic transit gloria mundi

In the last issue I explained the background to my entry into local government in 1970 as follows:

Back in the late 60s and early 70s I was beginning to feel that my time with British Railways in London had run its course so when an opportunity with East Suffolk County Council at Ipswich (ESCC), close to where I actually lived, was advertised I jumped at the chance. So on 2 April 1970 I was interviewed for the job but didn't get it as they were looking for someone with compensation experience. However they were impressed with my landlord and tenant experience, which they could also use and so I was hired on that basis, subject to approval being forthcoming for an establishment increase. I duly started work as a Junior Valuer at county hall on 18 May 1970.

This explanation, however, overlooked one other vital detail, i.e. my experience with British Railways (BR). ESCC was not afraid to offer professional services to other local authorities and had for some time been acting for Woodbridge Urban District Council (WUDC) in a number of matters including a possible purchase of the disused goods shed and yard situated just outside the town centre. This was needed to provide a site for a swimming pool and sports centre and some desperately needed additional car parking.

Unfortunately despite the valiant efforts of ESCC staff, to date all approaches made over many, many months had failed to illicit any response at all from BR. On my first day my new boss was careful to mark my card on this one with the words that to get some negotiations going could be very helpful for ESCC/WUDC relations and my future.

The BR Woodbridge estate was administered from a district office in Norwich and the District Estate Surveyor was an old friend. I picked up the phone and spoke to him and explained the problem and that I was now acting for WUDC and could we discuss terms? He agreed to meet me the following week and suggested the best hotel in the town as a possible venue so he could buy me lunch. I now remember little of the negotiations that followed, other than they were completed quickly and to everyone's satisfaction.

ESCC's standing was greatly enhanced as a result and picked up much professional work from WUDC and other similar authorities in the county. And to complete where I started, another example of the importance of maintaining contacts.

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER

VOLUME 20, ISSUE 3, AUTUMN 2015

Free the Beyton 14 – or is it 15?

Back in the Spring I mentioned the reintroduction of geese to the village green in Beyton. Someone seems to have taken the heading to heart as a number of geese have already been sprung. There are now only 9.

But the controversy about their very presence rages on. This relates to the conflict between a group of fairly large animals, who are constantly eating grass, in occupation of land also used as a children's play area and for organised games. The nature of the conflict is obvious, so much so that in the latest Parish Magazine, delivered in the last few days, a part time **PAID** position

of Green Cleaner-Upper is being advertised.

I wonder if I ought to apply. After all I must be one of the few people in the village with relevant experience of this type of work; after all I was a Chief Officer in local government for a good few years.

Hippocalypse now!

In the newspaper headlines piece in the last Terrier I failed to mention my 2 favourite headlines. These are "Phew what a scorcher!" and "Gotcha."

Bury St Edmunds

Bury St Edmunds is a lovely, historic

market town in Suffolk. The name of the town is always written in this way and in speech is always referred to as "**Bury Saint Edmunds**." Nothing could be more straightforward so why does the name cause such confusion? Perhaps it is something to do with the town's historic development.

In the mid 7th century St Sigebert, the younger son of King Raedwald, the first Christian King of the East Angles, founded a monastery in the very small settlement then known as Beodericsworth. In the year 896 King Edmund was slain by the invading Danes and his body was removed to the monastery where he became revered as a saint.

In the 10th and 11th centuries the great Abbey Church was built, as the town had become an important centre of pilgrimage and the town changed its name from Beodericsworth to St Edmund's Bury. And here it is important to note that the word "Bury" does not refer to the "burial" of St Edmund but it is the German/Norse word for a fortified enclosure; as in, for example, Aylesbury, Canterbury, Tewkesbury and Glastonbury.

In the 11th century the appointment of a French monk Abbot Baldwin coincided with the growth of the monastic town which prospered and flourished and it is thought that this French connection helped preserve the town's prosperity despite the Norman invasion post 1066. However the last recorded name change took place and thereafter the town became known as Bury St Edmunds.

So where does the confusion arise?

The spelling of the town's name still

causes some confusion. For example some till receipts issued by newcomers to the town mistakenly print out the name as "*Bury Saint Edmunds*" or much worse as "*Bury St Edmonds*." And only this week my electrician, who drives a small Mercedes van with immaculate sign writing pointed out to me that his telephone number, carefully written across the rear doors of the van, uses the neat little centrally positioned door handle, in the form of the Mercedes logo, to separate the name from the actual number logo - providing that you can calculate the numbers correctly. However here the sign-writer calculated the number of spaces and letters in "Bury St Edmunds" to be 14 and not 15 and hence when he reached the centre he was a letter short; thus for many years the following information will be displayed ie "Bury St Edmund [logo] 755333"

And finally I remember one acquaintance, long ago, who delighted in asking, every time we met, "Hello and how are things in Bury Street Edmunds?"

AI

The BBC has taken up the advent of AI, artificial intelligence, with great enthusiasm and has taken the view that when some application with real AI is perfected, the machines will take over the world and, then to use the BBC approved reporting format, perfected when the bird 'flu scare was on, "you're all gonna die!"

But the BBC overlooks 2 important issues here:

1. Artificial intelligence relates to the thinking and problem solving issues and not to the mechanical process of connecting up to a power supply and ensuring that power supply is actually available
2. And that until quite recently the term artificial intelligence was a more polite way of saying "real stupidity".

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER VOLUME 20 ISSUE 4 WINTER 2015/16



Richard (Dick) Miller; always referred to in this column as "The Fenland Diamond Geezer"

I attended my first CLAVA meeting at the Lords Hill Hotel, Shrewsbury, on Wednesday 5 June 1985 as the new member from Suffolk County Council. One of the items on the agenda dealt with a membership application from Dick Miller, the Chief Estates Officer from Norfolk County Council. Earlier Dick had joined the LCC in 1959; only leaving for rural Norfolk in 1967.

We probably first met face to face at some national LAVA meeting in the late 80s and thereafter decided, as professional neighbours, we ought to meet on a more regular basis at some neutral local venue. The purpose of our meetings was simply to keep each other advised of what we were doing and the problems and benefits arising therefrom; this all seems unremarkable now but at the time was regarded as quite revolutionary, if not a little subversive.

Our 2 bases of operation, Ipswich and Norwich, are connected, geographically, by the A140 trunk road and there is a small town called Scole situated on the border between the 2 counties. Accordingly, we used to meet at The Scole Inn, in the hostelry's best lounge, the one with the huge open log fire. To preserve proprieties, Dick always took the seat on the north side of the table with me on the south.

As a result of these meetings and from reading his regular column in The Terrier, and from his contributions at national

LAVA meetings I soon realised that Dick was a confident public speaker, with more than a trace of London accent, (and so was always referred to in this column as "The Fenland Diamond Geezer") and a wise and seasoned professional, while still being, and this was one of his favourite expressions, "streetwise."

He became President of LAVA in 1988/89.

Up to this point there had never been an Eastern Branch of LAVA but after his successful Presidential year 1988/89, Dick took the initiative and set up an inaugural Branch Meeting by hiring a room in The Maltings in Ely. He continued to do this and make all other necessary arrangements until Branch Officers were appointed.

Thereafter the venue for Eastern Branch meetings was changed to the Borough Offices on Angel Hill in Bury St Edmunds. And in the days before branch meeting refreshments were provided, Dick and I

abandoned our regular lunches at The Scole Inn, instead opting for a lunch after the Branch Meeting at the One Bull Inn just around the corner. In those days this inn was regarded as a "Bikers' Pub" so we felt right at home there.

As Yesterday's Man, Dick wrote a regular column in The Terrier ostensibly dealing with Past and Members' issues but which focussed more and more on newish professional matters, while extracting therefrom any humorous and quirky side issues. He gave it up at the end of 2001 (Volume 6 Issue 3). His final piece is typically forthright and slightly controversial.

After his retirement from Norfolk, Dick and Patt set up STEPS, a training company specialising in providing assistance for local authority surveyors and so it was that in 2001 Dick organised a final STEPS International Tour featuring the now defunct Betty 'n Bert Roadshow International Tour with events at Cambridge, Walsall and Cardiff. I wrote at the time his organisational skills will be sadly missed.

Since 1985 Dick has made an immense contribution to ACES and its predecessor organisations while giving me about 25 years of professional companionship

and support. He also told at a London Annual Meeting the Welders Joke for which I will always be grateful. It came in very handy at the start of the aforesaid Betty 'n Bert Roadshow International Tour as the first event took place at The Welder's Institute in Cambridge!

Happy Days!

Thanks for that, Suffolk Scribbler – although I think you've now blown your cover.

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER VOLUME 21, ISSUE 1, SPRING 2016

The dentist

Having discovered that my newly purchased granola was a particularly hard variety, I was taking the opportunity to have a more than usually leisurely breakfast and leaving it to soak in milk for as long as possible. But as soon as I tasted the first mouthful, I felt something really hard in my mouth, which on closer examination proved to be a tooth, or more accurately half a tooth, as will be revealed later.

However, for the moment I could see where the tooth had come from but on closer examination, using my little mirror on a stick, part of a recently purchased "complete dentist's outfit" from Poundland, there appeared to be a new tooth already growing in the gap. Perhaps it was this new growth that had forced the old tooth out? An urgent consultation with my dentist seemed to be the best way forward.

"Oh, that's the loose tooth we pinned some time ago, remember?" said the dentist "and it's now sheared off along the pin line." I didn't in fact remember. "I'll make you an appointment with my Saturday extraction man. We ought to dig out the pin, the stump and the roots before they begin to decay and cause problems."

And so it was that I was shuffling my way into the dentist's chair one Saturday

morning without, apparently, a care in the world. "When did you last have an extraction?" the dentist enquired. As I couldn't remember he gave me the long version of his general introduction, including the piece about "and if it gets too painful wave your hand so that I can see it and I'll stop." That rang a faint bell and as he started to get to grips with the remains of my tooth, 2 earlier events came to mind.

First I was in the chair undergoing some rather painful procedure when it all got too much for me, and forgetting completely about the hand signalling option for terminating the treatment, I just bit down hard on the drill, thus bringing the process to an abrupt halt and incurring the severe wrath of the dentist.

The second time I was in that situation I decided to try out some deep relaxation techniques I had read about, so I ensured that physically I was as comfortable as possible and then I began to focus intently on something other than what the dentist was doing. This seemed to work well and the dental activity began to recede substantially. Unfortunately, all good things come to an end as very soon I became aware of some rather panic stricken cries of "Are you alright?" Apparently I had dropped off to sleep and this had freaked out both the dentist and the nurse.

Just thinking about these 2 previous events distracted me from the current work being undertaken and in no time at all it was all over. I didn't feel a thing. All that was left was for the dentist to present me with the traditional wad of sterilized gauze, with the words "Put that over the gap and bite down hard for the rest of the day to staunch the bleeding."

That is what was said last time and then, as I made my way a little unsteadily back to the car park, I found myself walking on the very edge of the footpath, nearly in the gutter, when a large truck swept by almost brushing my arm. That startled me so much that I could not help saying out loud the words "Gesuss Kist!" through clenched teeth.

22/02/1942

Although I still put a lot of effort in searching through stocks of second hand books, I do not buy as many as I used to as I have nearly run out of space at home. However, I did come across one very attractive tome a few months ago entitled "The 1,000 Day Battle" by James Hoseason. The objective of the book is recorded on the front cover as being:

An illustrated account of operations in Europe of the 8th Air Force's 2nd Air Division, 1942 to 1945, including particularly its 448th Bomb Group and other B-24 units based in East Anglia's Waveney Valley.

The book was published in November 1979 and its rather flimsy cover was beginning to separate from the rest of the book. Even so, it was priced in excess of what I would normally expect to pay, but it did seem to offer a locally based view of what happened, so I decided to buy it.

Imagine my chagrin when reading chapter one, I had serious doubts about the accuracy of the 5th paragraph, which stated that:

22 February 1942 was a key date... No air battles were involved... But 3 matters of great importance did take place in and from Southern England.

1. *Air Marshal Arthur Harris arrived at High Wycombe to take up his new appointment as Commander of RAF Bomber Command*
2. *General Ira Eaker and 6 senior US Army Officers arrived in England as an advanced detachment to prepare the groundwork for the V111 Bomber Command of the American Army Air Corps*
3. *British forces staged a successful raid on a German radar station at Bruneval in Northern France, capturing and taking home some of its advanced radar equipment.*

Inexplicably, the author fails to mention a matter of even more importance which took place on that date, 22/02/1942, namely the birth of yours truly, The Suffolk Scribbler.

Airfields of East Anglia

There must be more than 100 airfields in East Anglia, most of which were built specially for the use of the American Army Air Force from 1942 onwards. Some airfields were already in existence and were transferred to AAAF use. After the war, most became redundant and were transferred to the RAF. Some are still used operationally by either the RAF or the Americans.

I want to focus here on the former airfield at Martlesham Heath, Suffolk. This was designated as USAAF station number 369 during the war and was home to a number of fighter squadrons. After the war the station transferred to the RAF and was used for a variety of purposes, including experimental work. When RAF use ceased, the site was known as the Post Office Research Station, but it was subsequently renamed BT Research Laboratories, and later Adastral Park, to reflect an expansion in the organisations and activities co-located with BT.

While writing this piece, there was an item on the radio discussing some of the Research Laboratories' current work. Having worked locally for many years, I have attended a number of such talks and have listened to many dramatic announcements. For example, back in the 70s a BT boffin predicted that in a few years, and before any of us present retired, in our office environment we would see a computer terminal or a personal computer on everyone's desk. How we all laughed at this, particularly

those who attended on the needs of the "mainframe" housed in glorious isolation in its air-conditioned space.

Later, in the 90s another boffin predicted that a patient needing an operation could be admitted to a local hospital and be operated on, by remote control as it were, by a surgeon in, say, California. At the Q&A session at the end of this presentation, I asked if I was the patient requiring an operation, would it be possible using this technology, for me to be sent to California and operated on remotely from, say, Ipswich? No answer was forthcoming, showing, at the very least, that boffins may be able to predict the future but have no sense of humour.

Adastral Park is probably the most hi-tech use of a former airfield where elements of its former use can still be identified on site. Elsewhere the infrastructure, i.e. concrete tracks and dispersal points, of some airfields have become industrial estates or are used for some agriculturally-related purpose. After 70 years the location of nearly every airfield can be identified by physical remains still around, whether these are memorials, isolated groups of difficult to place buildings "in the middle of nowhere," control towers, hangars or a lot of concrete.

For those readers who do not live in Norfolk or Suffolk; why not come over here and stay for a few days in order to sharpen up your observational skills?

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER

VOLUME 21, ISSUE 2, SUMMER 2016

The dentist - an encore

After the successful extraction as reported in the last issue of Terrier, I was urged to avoid compromising the gap by chewing on the other side, at least temporarily. This immediately brought about the collapse of another tooth; in fact, the mirror image of the previous extraction. This time, what was left felt like a long extinct volcano and so an appointment was made for a return visit to the Saturday extraction man.

I should have spotted the bad signs as having got a firm appointment, the timing was adjusted twice before the due date arrived. However, I was up bright and early on the agreed Saturday and ready to go when the phone rang. Apparently the Saturday man had just rung in sick and so all his appointments were cancelled but the regular dentist was prepared to do the business on the following Saturday at 9am; agreed!

And so it was that I was shuffling my way

into the dentist's chair one week later without, apparently, a care in the world. After the usual pleasantries we made a start. I manoeuvred myself into a less uncomfortable position in the by now fully reclined dentist's chair and "opened wide," as requested, while the dentist began the usual cheery banter with the nurse. Almost at once things began to go wrong. The dentist's opening gambit was to grip the exposed side of the tooth with dental pliers and give the tooth a few exploratory twists and

pulls. With what seemed like a very loud **CRACK!!** most of the exposed side of the tooth then broke off and so it was that the dentist then had to spend the next 15 minutes wrestling with the remainder of the tooth before, finally, drilling it out.

I think it goes without saying that both dentist and patient had had more than enough of this particular extraction by then.

A painful encounter in the Waitrose car park

Normally the car park of my local Waitrose is a very civilised and unremarkable location which I visit once per week. On this particular occasion, perhaps out of devilment, or a need to change my routine, I decided to reverse into my chosen space rather than just driving straight in and reversing out.

Although there was plenty of room,

something was unsettling my reversing bleepers, which were sounding off even when I was only halfway into the space. As I could not see anything suspicious in my mirrors, I tried twisting round in the driver's seat and looking over my right shoulder. Still nothing; so I tried twisting round while trying to stick my head out of the side window.

It was at this point that I felt a couple of ribs rubbing together and a tremendous pain from the right hand side of my chest. In short I have severely bruised ribs; a problem which I am finding is very difficult to treat and live with [Ed – this man is a liability!].

Puppies and the BBC

On 16 May I happened to watch the Panorama programme 'Britain's Puppy Dealers Exposed.' The blurb for the programme, transmitted from 7.30 pm to 8 pm on BBC1 reads as follows: "An

investigation into the dog trade that uses secret filming to explore the supply chain of the nation's favourite pet. Reporter Sam Poling uncovers shocking truths about how some of these dogs are being bred."

It was certainly an horrific expose of the depths plumbed by some parts of the puppy trade. However, on the same evening the BBC transmitted a programme called 'Choose the Right Puppy for you' from 8pm to 9pm on BBC2; and the blurb for this reads: "Characteristics, habits and needs of different breeds of dog...Animal behaviourist Louise Glazebrook is also on hand to help prospective owners find the right puppy for them..."

I don't recall a mention in this following programme of the issues of puppy dealing. Perhaps the BBC needs to get its scheduling and referencing in order?

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER *VOLUME 21, ISSUE 3, AUTUMN 2016*

The Suffolk time traveller

It all started back in June 2016 during an exceptional period of hot dry weather. Thunderstorms were forecast anytime during the day.

And sure enough it started to rain about lunch time and the unmistakeable signs of a thunderstorm nearby were soon evident. Over to the west the sky became very black and although it was not possible to hear and see the neighbouring thunder and lightning, which would have been very, very frightening, there was no doubt that a thunderstorm was coming our way.

Within a matter of minutes, the rain began to develop in intensity and it became so dark indoors that it was necessary to switch lights on. I cannot remember now if we did get thunder and lightning but the repetitive dimming and brightening of the lights indicated that we would lose power before the storm passed us by.

However, this light show did seem to go on for a very long time and eventually it



was quite a relief when the power finally went down altogether. The storm then moved on fairly quickly and after a few minutes, electric power was restored.

The first job to get on with in this situation is to reset the digital time displays that are built into most items of electric equipment these days. It was then that I noticed that the clock on the microwave was flashing away like all the others. This was strange as the timer/

clock unit had not worked at all for about 12 months and I was set on replacing the unit anyway, as a microwave with no timer is pretty useless.

Having sorted out the clock situation across the board, I thought it was time to watch a bit of telly so switched on and discovered another change had occurred. My lovely flat screen TV system is fed by 2 aerials and has 2 controllers, one of which acts through the TV itself

and is fed by a standard TV aerial on the roof, and the other controls the SKYbox which in turn is fed by the SKY satellite dish. For many months now it had only been possible to control the TV through the SKYbox and my impression was that the ordinary TV aerial had ceased to work altogether. However, the power disruption had sorted out whatever the problem had been and now everything was "back to normal".

With the benefit of hindsight, I now wish I had had the courage to stick my fingers into a power socket during the power disruption. Who knows how many of my long-term health problems might have been resolved as well?

Or is there another explanation? My next move was actually to power up the telly in order to watch something and

the first programme up was a genuine episode of 'Hi-de-Hi', followed by an episode of 'Yes, Prime Minister', of a similar vintage.

This then made me wonder whether I had travelled back in time to a date when everything worked OK.

Watch this space!

"Fifty Not Out"

For some time now the Editor and I have been considering a possible project known as '50 Not Out'. This may have been mentioned briefly in a previous Scribble column. The intention is to bring together all previously published Suffolk Scribbler pieces in a pdf document and circulate an electronic copy to each reader. The infrastructure is

all in place and all that is required now is my input to tidy up the copy.

Unfortunately, what with one thing and another, I have not yet been able to focus on this, but I anticipate that this might be possible over the coming winter period. However, when originally conceived, the project title was quite accurate as we were just coming up to 50 Scribblers, whereas this piece is actually number 57.

'57 Not Out' does not make for such a catchy title as 50 Not Out; but I hope that I am not tempted to let more time pass so we can call it '**60 Not Out**'.

[Ed – I will give a fiver to the first person that spots the phrase from a popular song – a song which I personally hate, actually, and Scribbler well knows this.].

THE SUFFOLK SCRIBBLER *VOLUME 21, ISSUE 4, WINTER 2016/17*

50 Not Out

The simplest way to start off a new piece is to report back on any promises made in the last piece. In 2016 Autumn 2016 Terrier I mentioned that for some time now the Editor and I had been considering a project known as **50 Not Out** the intention of which is to bring together all previously published Suffolk Scribbler pieces in a pdf document and circulate an electronic copy to every member. The infrastructure is all in place and all that is required now is my input to tidy up the copy. I mentioned last time that I had not yet been able to focus on this, but anticipated that it might be possible to make some progress over the then coming winter period.

Sadly I have to report that no progress has been made as yet. In the circumstances it might be appropriate to say why. The main problem I have is a general lack of energy caused by what has been diagnosed, so far, as "parkinsonism." This means, as I understand it, that I have some of the symptoms of Parkinson's disease without necessarily having the whole thing. Consequently most of my energy is taken up trying to keep physically

mobile; hence the delay with the aforementioned project and my lack of appearance at ACES meetings for the past 2 years or so.

There is light at the end of the tunnel. For many years now I have been in contact with a nutritionist who has a lot to say on my current problems. She remains unconvinced by the diagnostic methods used here and felt that my problems could be triggered by alien toxins already absorbed by my body rather than a full blown "Parkinson Disease" attack. Accordingly, I have already had an analysis done and his has produced some, to me, surprising results.

The main toxins found were 'Roundup', which tested very high, as well as asbestos and 2 others sourced from compost heap fumes. On a lesser level toluene, methyl alcohol, methyl chloride, formaldehyde and metals from the environment and dental fillings also tested.

The good news is that the experts believe that now it is known what the toxins are they can be reduced chemically, which means taking additional tablets.

Watch this space!

Weather news

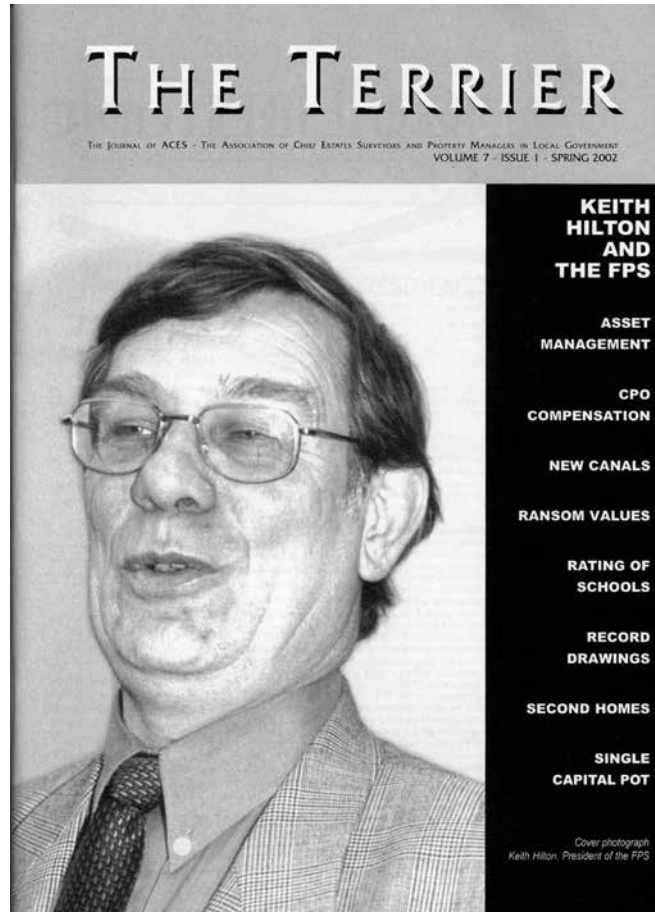
About 10 days ago we had the first really foggy day for quite some time. And as this coincided with the anniversary of the death, 10/12/2016, of weather forecaster Ian McCaskill, this naturally invited the media to remind us of some of the many humorous stories involving this "lovely man" who brought "sunshine to people's lives". He actually retired in 1998 and was recognised for his Scottish accent and known during his career for his exuberance and enthusiasm for anticyclones, warm fronts and isobars. He became the most imitated BBC TV weather forecaster during his 20 years presenting weather for the corporation and even had his own Spitting Image puppet. His daughter, Kirsty, said of him "Ian was a truly lovely man who loved his family unconditionally and brought lots of sunshine to people's lives with his friendly smile, kindness and sharp wit. He will be deeply missed."

My favourite anecdote concerned a forecast made when the whole country was blanketed by a traditional "pea souper" and Ian diligently ploughed through his forecast that offered not a

crumb of comfort to anyone anywhere in the UK. Also as this forecast was made in the pre-digital age, the forecaster had to embellish each forecast by sticking magnetic icons onto the studio weather map and early on in this forecast, Ian had duly stuck the letters "F", "O" and "G" onto the map but failed to notice that one of them, namely "F", had fallen off.

Thus Ian delivered most of his very downbeat forecast against a map showing the whole of the UK covered in "OG". He realised this at the end of his piece and in close-up he showed his concern by saying in his most sympathetic and concerned voice, "Sorry about the "F in FOG."

1st Terrier, Volume 7, Issue 1, Spring 2002



60th Terrier Volume 21, Issue 4, Winter 2016/17



