ICL AllStars Magazine

Well, here we head off into another issue. We hope it finds you in the best possible health, although we are aware of a few sick colleagues.

Raf Dua gives us a valued and potent history of his longevity with PERT and later, adds a strong appeal for essential support directed at the ovarian cancer problem. Moving on, we note the retirement home visit to the esteemed **Mike Banham** by **Bob Shaw** and **George Webster**. It's then onto an exchange of correspondence between **Irene Dawson** and **Kent Brooks,** and **Jon Duggan** and **Kent**. **Sam Green** sends us a note from the UK, with mention of **Anthea Vitarelli** and **Marcus Seldon**.

Coming right up, an item on the disappearance of great IT product names, and including a pic of associate member **Mike Vanderkelen**, and commentary on the COVID 13 virus in the UK from **Jean Hackett**. Thence an article on his experiences in OZ from **David Hughes** who also makes reference to **Biff Grindley**, **Tim Boyd**, **Paul Beckhaus** and **John Watson**. From an old *ICL Reporter* magazine we have a humorous aptitude test from **MaryAnne Leighton**. It's then to some file shots that include **Rod** and **Eileen Rodwell** with **Mike Benton**.

Along the way, and at issue's end, we catch up with **Warren Grace**, **Pam Garnsey** (in modelling mode for ICL), **Merv Cooper**, **Peter Garnham**, **Ron Gasnier** (with **Helen**), **Geoffrey Howell**, **Hamish Carmichael**, **Gary Hoole**, **John Bannisto**, **Malcolm McLennan**, **Simon Fowler**, **Christopher Reeves** on COVID 19 in Canada) and **Brian Hackett**..

Once again, sincere thanks to **Kent Brooks** and **Raf Dua** for all of their work with our database and distribution systems. With a new application for this work now being used (see Raf's article in this Newsletter), there have been a few teething problems. However, these are being assiduously worked on, and so we hope to get a resolution pretty soon.

A huge amount of gratitude as well to the ever patient and meticulous **Jean Hackett** and **Anthea Vitarelli**, who do such a great job proofreading each issue.

That said, we trust that you our readers will find something in the following pages to amuse, to rekindle fond old memories and to let you know what some old friends and colleagues are now doing.

Of course, we are always on the lookout for new material both of a word and a pictorial nature.

Do please, please think of contributing.

This will be the final issue produced by your Editor of 14 years, so:

**** With this in mind, Kent and Raf have had their training wheels confiscated, so please address all future contributions to kent.brooks@bigpond.com or rafmdua@gmail.com and they will see that it is shared with you all in future issues of The ICL AllStars magazine and if you find yourself with some spare time in retirement, we would be happy for you to provide some help, ****

In the meantime, happy perusing.

As ever. Ian Pearson!

…ooOoo…

Feedback

• In response to a note from **Kent Brooks**, **John Duggan** wrote: Hi **Ian**, I hope all's well with you in Adelaide and it must be a good time to be in South Australia rather than Victoria or New South Wales given the Covid-19 pandemic.

Editor's note: Sure, is cool down here in Sleepy Hollow. But my sincere sympathies to all of our colleagues in Victoria, in general, and Sydney specifically.

Jon continues: So far as **Kent Brooks'** earlier email message is concerned, you'll recall that I sent you a bit of an overview of my life which you published in issue 65 of the ICL AllStars Magazine last year. With this in mind, all I can possibly add is my experience in whiling away the days since the Australian Government decided to recognise that the Corona Virus was in fact all so real.

With that in mind, my long-suffering wife **Di** had to give up her twice weekly golf when the Chatswood GC closed, along with her involvement with a Mah-Jong crowd and the Willoughby Bridge Club.

She has had to make do with watching replays of both golf and tennis on cable-TV, knitting for our eight grandchildren and completing large complex jigsaw puzzles.

Editor's note: A delicious blond was completing a jigsaw whose box noted "up to ten years". She was ever so impressed that she had completed it in one weekend.

In the last month or so she has managed to return to actually playing golf again, but the Bridge and Mah Jong endeavours are yet to restart.

All this time I have been reading and scanning some of the zillions of old photographs we have acquired that are in removalist boxes.

This is a very and pathetically slow process, as it entails scanning (say three or five at a time), cropping each individual pic and then attempting to file them in some sort of logical sequence for further reference. A huge effort that is made none the easier by knowing that probably no one will be interested in them apart from **Di** and my good self.

As I encounter photos from business trips and/or holidays, I also elect to create Microsoft PowerPoint presentations which I rather stupidly intend to link to our large TV in our living room.

I can then show these to unfortunate friends while they have a drink at our bar… that should ensure the safety of my liquor cabinet. Indeed, if they have had enough to drink, they may even endure the slide-show presentation without undue complaint. If only

Editor's second note: Send us some of the relevant pics mate. We always have a spot for them.

JD continues: Apart from that we've had a few small lunch/dinner-parties for close friends and family, so we're really looking forward for the CoviD-19 pandemic restrictions to ease so we can do a modicum of travel.

Such considered peripatations including a road-trip down to the Mornington Peninsula in Victoria.

This will be all about seeing one of our great daughters and her family that now amounts to two delicious grandchildren who we haven't seen since Christmas. The gang have an inviting hobby-farm down south, well away from their real home-base in suburban Melbourne.

I trust that the above may give you something to commence a new column in your excellent ICL AllStars Newsletter… What Did You Do During The XXXXXXX-Virus Lock Down?

Editor's note take three: Mate in response to your question … my lock down experience was a dance with boredom, a solo gavotte, a dull and dreary waltz, for one, and a miserable tango without a partner.

• **Irene** (one time) **Dawson** writes: Brilliant last issue. Thanks, so much **Kent**.

FYI, I'm still in touch with **Trish Stanley** et al ... so we might all meet up again at one of the Xmas gatherings. That's when things get back to normal, which is unlikely to be this year.
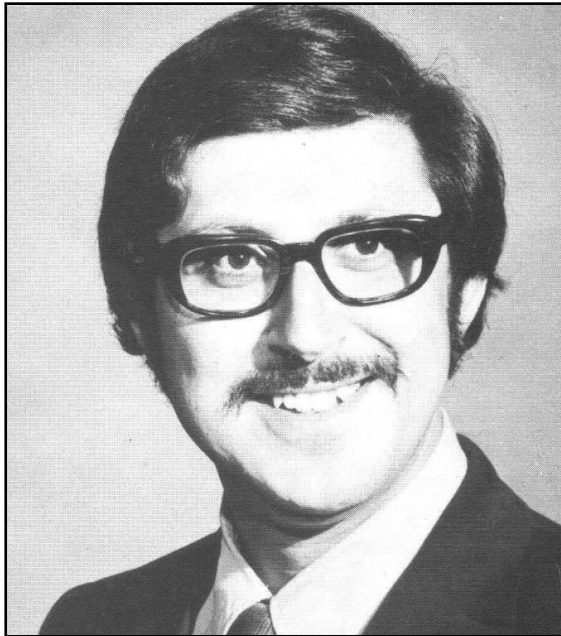
You're doing a great job with the AllStars. Thanks - all great memories. Cheers **Jock** xxx.

An Alpha female: **Jock** and an Italian classic.

Working with CPM & PERT: via BTM to ICL

From Raf Dua

Always pert: Raphael Dua.

So, let's turn the clock right back and record that I started in the world of IT in July 1954 with British Tabulating Machine (BTM). This was as a cadet data processing person.

An early lesson in IT was a lot about the power of 80 column punch-cards and how you could process invoices and create product lists and all sorts of clever things.

And yes, I learned to punch cards, then to create a system flowchart to work out how to process information using plug wires. Taught to do this by **Beryl Acty**

Hold the chads: A rather old card punching device.

My early career progress was then to the task of plugging the 915 and 975 tabulators, and later the HEC4 which became the 1202. It was also all about

programing these 1000-valve computers with their drum for storage.

In 1959/60, ICT negotiated with RCA, in Cherry Hill New Jersey, to purchase the rights to produce the RCA 301 and sell it as the ICT 1500.

True lap top computing: An ICT 1500

I was fortunate enough to get to go to Cherry Hill and learn about this product. (I still have my RCA 301 programmer's manual - well the system might come back).

Beginning, what later become a long-term product association, I was propitiously put onto the RCA 301 PERT programing team which was being used on the Fleet Ballistic Weapon project better known as Polaris.

It was a return, in January 1961 to work for the Operations Research team under **Ben Aston** at 149 Park Lane, London with **Iain Drummond**, **Frank Ellison**, **Bill Byrne** and **John Holland**.

At that time, a key assignment for moi was to be a programmer to commence the upgrade programing of RCA 301 PERT to ICT 1500 PERT. The Operations Research team, was under the auspices of **John Grant**, with **Sam Woodgate** as the manager charged with taking over the RCA 1301 PERT package that they had been jointly working on and upgrading it to be the ICT 1500 Series PERT.

An abridged version: Putney Bridge, with Bridge House North at left.

Raf and PERT cont …

By January 1962 we were transferred to Putney Bridge House North (see above), where I met up with the ICT1300 PERT team and the legendary **Hamish Carmichael**.

There were 1500 or so great folk in our building and a great many involved in the PERT project, so we spent quite a lot of time going backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards. Such is the inevitability of a complex exercise.

Hamish Carmichael

During programming, several major advances in critical path methodology were made by the OR group, most notably the ICT 'Ladder Techniques'.

At that time, I had the privilege representing ICT on the Operational Research Society's critical path analysis committee, which comprised the major OR departments in UK industry, such as the National Coal Board, Unilever, Consultants PA and PE as well as IBM.

Many ideas which became part of the UK PERT software capability originated from this committee.

Five major upgrades to 1500 PERT were made from 1962 to 1965, during this time I was also one of the programmers working with the 1900 PERT team working for **Geoff Newman**. I was fortunate enough to have my cousin from the US join us from RCA as the leader for the enhanced versions of 1500 PERT, with much cross pollination to 1900.

In the early days, what we called the Ladder Technique was most likely responsible for the UK's CEGB multiple 1500 purchase - to run the PERT program. The technique was used extensively in all the subsequent ICT/ICL PERT programs

All of this, and the company's OR team were also actively supporting and developing the ICT 1301 PERT software.

Hamish Carmichael and **John McKenzie** were major players here, with others also working on APPRAISE for the ATLAS computer and OPUS for the ORION and a small simple CPM software package for the Sirius, Pegasus and Mercury ranges of computers (ex-Ferranti) this took place from 1961 to 1966.

Floor-top Systems: An ICT 1301.

Moving right along, I note that during early 1964, the ICT 1900 PERT team was established, and the product they drove maintained tradition with many more advanced techniques and features than most of the US-based CPM/PERT applications.

Almost immediately, several orders for 1900s were taken on the strength of the proposed 1900 PERT specification, Richard Costain, the major UK construction firm being a very notable one.

As **Raf** sarcastically says: "The really nice thing about not planning, is that failure comes as a complete surprise and is not preceded by long periods of worry and depression'.

It's fair to say that ICT 1900 PERT was the most advanced application of its kind on the market at the

Raf and PERT cont …

time when it was launched in November 1965 in the UK and overseas (Australia and New Zealand) in January 1966.

Internationally, I was transferred to ICT New Zealand to the brand new 1900 computer centre which was being built in Auckland at Caltex House. From there, we had great views of the Waitemata Harbour.

Harbouring serious thoughts: Waitemata Harbour.

In training: On the Vic Rail network, **Raf** with a one-time Kiwi colleague the very great ICT Kiwi **Malcolm McLennan**.

Here I was responsible for the support of 1900 PERT for the first five 1900's which had been sold by the inimitable **Basie Du Toit** in 1965

I also supported a couple of 1300s, including one for the Apple and Pear Board in Wellington and another for Cadbury Fry Pascal Hudson in Dunedin.

It was then off to Kawerau (which is opposite White Island) to set up a 1900 PERT service for Tasman Pulp and Paper Company, who were converting from a 1301. ICT had about 20 or so PERT clients on the bureau and 10 installation on user hardware. It was a remarkably busy two years

The EELM/ICT merger had taken place in UK and in June 1968, I was transferred to the company's Melbourne bureau operations.

That said, there were also several hardware sites that had bought 1900 PERT, and it was crystal clear that a potent opportunity existed to build-up a solid bureau business throughout Australian and Papua New Guinea.

As an aside, 1972 saw me very marvellously selected by ICL's International Division to present the company's PERT offering at a major British Government funded Business Exhibition in Peking (as it was known at the time).

About to order take-away in Peking: **Raf** (right) with **Bill Jackson**, **Alan Ryder** and **Yao Chen**.

But back to home and reality. Harsh reality.

In 1974 when Cyclone Tracy devastated Darwin, our esteemed ICL DS GM, **Simon Fowler** sent me to work as part of the CDW Disaster Recovery team.

This was to run all the necessary planning and scheduling work

Yes your grace: **Simon Fowler** (left) seen here with **Warren Grace**.

Raf and PERT cont …

I was originally meant to be up there in Darwin for six weeks, but eventually stayed for three months. It was an experience and a half, and I was proud of my modest but important contribution.

Just one simple photo sums up the mayhem in Darwin after Tracy.

Moving right along, I note that when the 2903 was released, it came with an upgraded version of 1900 PERT, the only change being made was in the 1900 nametag.

Then came the ME29, which arrived replete with an upgraded version of 1900 PERT, the only change being made here was the 1900 label being changed yet again.

But when our New Range was announced, that pattern of re-naming became a thing of the past.

Indeed, a completely revised specification and scoped PERT was developed for the 2900. A system that was successfully delivered with the first 2900 system.

A model system: An original 2900 launch photo. The pics involved in this 'go to market' were supervised by a great South African ICL colleague **Jack Liebenberg**.

Greetings from Blighty
From Sam Green

It was a long time, indeed', over 30 years in fact, since I departed Melbourne for a so-called month's holiday.

This somehow extended to three months and then, somehow or the other, 30 years disappeared.

I keep in touch with the magic **Anthea Vitarelli**, but only rarely get back to Oz on flying visits.

The ever-bodacious **Anthea Vitarelli.**

Age tends to creep up and so I note that some while ago I retired. But that was for all of five minutes.

I initially rather hated being back in the front-line, but then along came some real challenges.

FYI, and in that context, I'm currently back working on the UK DWP (Department for Work and Pensions) project, which is all about moving their benefit systems (Jobseekers, Income Support, Housing Benefit, Social Fund, Pensions and more) into the Cloud. This as VME nears its ultimate end.

The task is a huge undertaking, and one might say, a leap of faith. But it has been both fun and a challenge. The oldest employee on the highly demanding and essential computer system is a young 76 and the

team is all 'old boys' pulled back in, as no none else understands the 30- year old system.

For a moment, back to the past In Melbourne.

I certainly recall the last couple of projects with which I was involved. Alongside the likes of **Knobby Clarke**, we did the Dalgety Farmers Wool System, and then their Blood Stock system.

But back to the chase: I did indeed depart Melbourne in 1987 for a holiday, post my father's death. This travel commitment was all about visiting my extended family in Northern Ireland with my mother.

That holiday surreptitiously extended.

I took a job with ASE Computing, which was largely driven by an Australian, Steve Collard, from Melbourne. The interview was, one of those very surreal moments when we realised we knew the same people and had actually met previously.

The job was all about examining the nation's benefits systems and followed on from a substantial Government re-arrangement of its departments.

I started as a consultant on Idmsx, using a product bought from Queensland.

And as an aside, I do record that on a career round-about, I've been a contractor, an employee, then a contractor again – All for the same client.

But there was movement the station. All of that IT was outsourced when EDS took over, and it then moved to HP, then DXC.

And so I retired, yet again, to the other side of darkness with an emphasis on any matter of things.

Right now, I am well and truly back in the workforce saddle one more time. The set task is that of a full-timer, with the last five years being all about VMER, the migration and conversion of VME benefit systems, the development of applications to run on cloud Linux vms, as DWP decided against Fujitsu offerings. A delicate subject and a legal standoff remains.

Another project of great interest has been moving ansi74 Cobol to micro-focus Cobol. We've also seen the Idmsx dbs converted and migrated to Oracle. To say this has been a challenge is an understatement.

In recent AllStars editions, there have certainly been some familiar faces. **Jeremy Wyatt**, for instance. Then there was **Anthea Vitarelli** who supported us in the Indepol days along with **Marcus Seldon**.

Recalling some other names, one cannot forget **Paul Sharman** who worked with me in the UK. And then there was **Jan** and **Bill Gregory**, who I teamed up with in the UAE, along with **Bruce Riddle**.

Another blast from the past is **Alan Barnes**, who in his very young days was my parents' paperboy in Gisborne New Zealand … another weird coincidence.
Alan is currently living in Victoria. And it's impossible to forget that he was an ultra-keen glider pilot and ten-time hang-glider British champion.

His fall from a great height in some French world championships was onto some electric power lines. This eased his final fall to the motorway: Unfortunately, a truck then hit him. He survived, to tell his tale.

In a nutshell that's my last few years, I plead guilty to having possibly mis-recorded some of my many roles, over time.

How green is my valley: Sam Green

Sam Green from the UK cont …

Support personified: Marcus Seldon

And now let me to get personal.

I am delightfully married with two sons, a delicious plethora of grand-children, and another expected soon.

I fought the 'big C' battle, 10 years ago and beat it. I live in quiet area, five minutes from beach, which is a huge open expanse of sand. Blackpool is 20 minutes away, Preston is 20 in other direction.

OK, hardly an Australian climate, but we do get the effects of the gulf stream with a slightly less severe winters and cold spells.

If anyone were to drop by, they would a garden that is full of New Zealand plants, flaxes and herbs. To be honest, the horticultural endeavours are an interest to keep me active when not at desk.

Regards **Jim Green**

Anyway, that is what I think
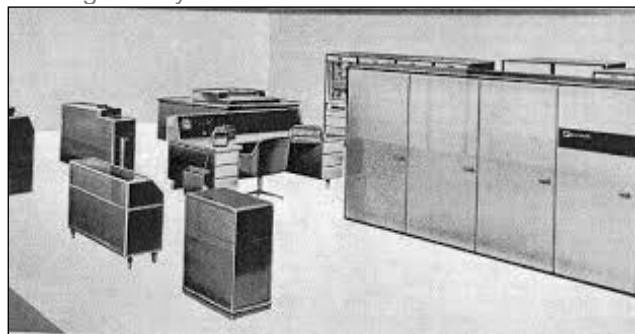## Musings from the editor

Why, oh why has our computer industry become more and more boring as it matures.

There is nothing wrong with the products being created. But I speak specifically of the names given to those systems.

Once upon a time, some manufacturers assigned great names to their products: there was LEO, of course, and in this issue alone, we have mentioned the likes of Sirius, Atlas, Orion, Pegasus, and Mercury. Inspiring labels indeed.

Working on the mythical, divine, flying horse: A very real Pegasus system.

A real hunter: An Orion Computer. Orion noted as one of the most conspicuous and recognizable constellations in the night sky.

At the same time, the rot had started to set in, and one cannot possibly be as motivated by names such as 1200 and 1500.

And that's what I think! cont …

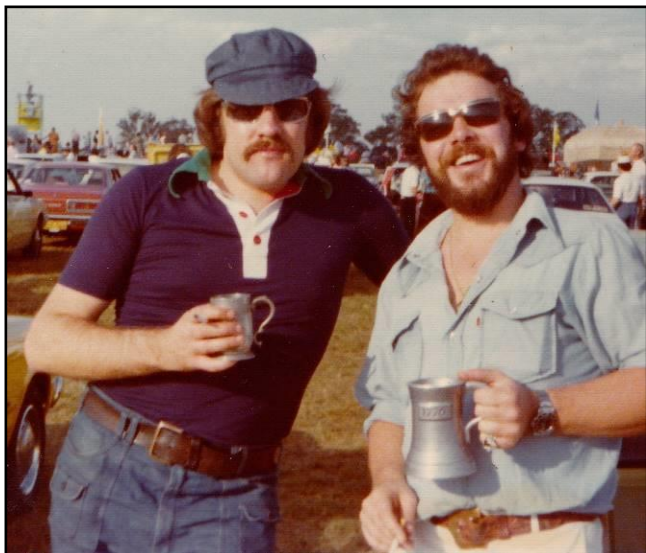**A name that roars**: A LEO 111.

Consider our own history.

We had the ICT 1900 and then for some inexplicable reason, the later systems were tagged 1900S. A great leap in progress technically but where in the heck did the 'S' come from. There was some small logic in the 2903 and the 2900. But what of ME29.

Interestingly, some suppliers did occasionally buck the ennui of naming.

Hewlett Packard, for example, had flashes of creativity like the naming of its desk top the HP Pavilion. The same company also launched a system named the HP 3000. But in the development labs, and as was everyone's habit, the product was lumbered with a nickname or codename.

Based on a Qantas ad screening in the US at that time, the propeller-heads dubbed their baby 'Koala'.

Now **Mike Vanderkelen**, a long-term friend and business partner of you humble pro-tem editor was charged with launching the system in Oz. He did so by shipping journalists to Taronga Park Zoo with the formal unveiling taking place in the Koala enclosure.

So much better out of antique pewter: **Mike VdK** at the Polo with your now pro-tem editor at Sydney's Warwick Farm. Get a haircut lads!!!

So, what in the heck has that to do with names? Well at a product promotion photo shoot, the dear furry creatures obliged by sitting all over the 3000 and much more.

Given the wealth of superb pics, **Mike** elected to compile a humorous brochure titled 'The Koala Guide to Computer Technology'. It was hilarious and was

simply designed as a low-cost production (Mike's business footed the bill for this delicious whim), for local consumption only.

But no! John Young, the Chairman and CEO of HP global saw the fun hand-out and asked **Mike** if he could drive a full colour, gloss, top quality version for international distribution.

My point being that a pleasing name that could be potently backed up by memorable graphics was a winner. Try to do that with an HP3000 tag. As a footnote, the product was a substantial success.

Back to home base, and no one has had any luck in trying to explain to your scribe things to do with the software side of things. As I recall, as an outsider, we had VMEB and then jumped to VMEK. What about C, D,E and F? Or was I simply at home that day.

Call it VME if you must – after all that did at least stand for something – but then add an inspiring word to replace the B or whatever.

Anyway, that's my view and I stick to it.

A view of Covid-19 from the UK
By Jean Hackett

Due to the unclear messages coming from government, we carried on life as normal, apart from handwashing frequently, in the first three weeks of March.

In fact, we were quite bewildered at headlines on stockpiling and shortages (of such items as pasta, toilet rolls, hand sanitiser and so on) at supermarkets.

We had been due to visit friends in Bournemouth on March 23rd for a few days, but we'd agreed to call it off before the sudden announcement of lock-down.

Shortly after that, our Easter trip to Sicily was cancelled, with the option of rebooking for later this year or next; optimistic as ever, we rebooked for mid-October.

We were also due to have a cycling holiday in Northern. Italy in late May, with an add-on of North Croatia, but postponed that until late September then, with complicated quarantine arrangements for Europe being proposed, we deferred again, until May next year.

Some of my voluntary activities had been planning how to offer a restricted service anyway, but suddenly, we were faced with closing down for the foreseeable future, which was done in an orderly fashion, despite the short notice.

Suddenly, the pattern of the week disappeared, and it was quite difficult to work out which day it was.

No one for love here: Eros all alone in Piccadilly Circus.

It turned out that, because we have achieved our three score years and ten, we were classified as 'vulnerable'.

This was supposed to grant us a few privileges, so that we could stay at home as much as possible. But, in fact, we were late signing up for on-line supermarket deliveries, so it took a while to make suitable arrangements.

We did find various local businesses adapting their business model, so were able to use a veg. box

scheme (shared with neighbours), and occasionally added requests to their weekly supermarket delivery.

I even found someone with hens for our egg supply.

In addition, **Brian** cycles into Reading once a week for the local market and a top-up shop, and I go by bike to our twice-monthly farmers' market (very small), to buy some supplies for friends who are shielding, as well as for us.

This market has been well-marshalled and organised since it re-opened in late April, with a limited number of customers, a one-way system round the stalls, and PayWave payments – and lately, a long queue outside, even before opening time.

Luckily, we have a variety of walks possible from our door, so we began the recommended daily exercise by doing a different one each day.

We were fortunate that there were amazing clear skies and warm weather for first few weeks, although this meant that some of our routes were quite busy. We took the chance to talk to friends as and when we met them while out, often from one side of the road to another – with other people walking down the middle of deserted roads to stay at reasonable distance.

With many parents working from home, there were lots of families out walking, scooting, and cycling, and very little vehicular traffic, apart from delivery vans.

Despite the fact that some people have returned to work and schools now have some year groups (or part

of them) back, it's heartening to see that many locals are still including a walk in their day. Indeed, later each day and at weekends, families are still out walking together or cycling, which is also encouraging.

After all, the climate crisis hasn't disappeared; it's merely been on hold.

England expects that everyone will do their duty … and stay home. A lonely Nelson in a person-devoid Trafalgar Square.

Once we discovered there is no limit on time for exercise in England, we began taking a 30-km bike ride once a week for a change of scenery, with the odd call at a farm shop or similar for extras.

After the initial run on pasta and toilet rolls was over, there was a shortage of bread flour (a limited capacity at mills for packing retail-sized bags, we gather) and yeast (I make ours, using a bread-maker most of the time), and later ordinary flour and eggs, but I have managed to find supplies – including sharing a 16-kg sack of wholemeal flour with some allotment friends.

In the first few weeks, we both took the chance for some clearing out and tidying, plus decorating although, as time has marched on, the urgency has disappeared.

I also experimented with different sorts of bread and rolls (some without bread flour) and tried out some new recipes for meals.

As he was unsure whether work at allotments would be allowed (it was, as it's good exercise, and outdoors), **Brian** planted some veggies in the garden, but also spends some time at the allotment each week. Apparently, this is the first year for many that the plots have looked tidy, as so many of the other holders have spent more time than usual there.

We're now picking and processing produce, much of it ripening earlier than normal (gooseberries, tayberries).

As a result, now that the last mini heatwave is over, we are filling the freezer, giving some produce too friends and neighbours, and have started making chutneys

The UK Covid scenario cont

and jams, ready for later use. Our larder has never been so well-stocked!

Master chutney makers: **Jean** and **Brian Hackett**.

Despite all these opportunities for being out, we have had moments of feeling stir-crazy, but have enjoyed every chance meeting with friends while out walking.

Once rules were relaxed earlier in June, we met our daughter and son-in-law from Bath at a village in Wiltshire for a walk (a delicious collection of canals, windmills and woodlands) and so on to a splendid picnic-lunch.

On the road again: **Brian** and **Jean** trekking, pre the blooming virus.

We've also had some short visits from our other daughter (based in Reading), a community nurse who worked throughout, except when she herself had the virus.

While relaxations of the lockdown were announced, many people have jumped the gun, such as going to the beach in great numbers.

Cynically, one might say, that the first easing of restrictions was introduced to take everyone's attention off the rule-breaking chief adviser to Boris Johnson.

But positively, it did allow plant nurseries to open, so that people could take advantage of the good weather and their extended free time to work in the garden, which gave them exercise as well.

Although non-essential shops had not been open since the middle of the year, we welcomed the latitude extended to barbers and hairdressers who were eventually were included: hooray!

PRIOER TO THAT I've cut **Brian's** hair twice, and he's done a tidy-up job once on mine. We shall not give up our day jobs! Also, July saw children's playgrounds and many schools still closed or partially closed, respectively. Sad indeed.

Positively, Dentists are now open, but having huge challenges catching up on their backlog of appointments. And at the time of writing, gyms and swimming pools still had no firm date for re-opening. With news that hotels, camp sites and caravan parks are able to re-open.

There is no knowing where and when Brits will be welcome in Europe, but that means holiday bookings are through the roof here.
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Here's hoping that 'normal' life returns soon.

One other interesting feature of life now is how the essentials for any trip out have been honed, and are house keys, phone, hand sanitiser and credit card, joined by face mask (from June 15th) when going into enclosed such as shops.

I wonder how long it will take before I find carrying round a bag of other paraphernalia is not as necessary as it seemed pre-Covid.

Throughout, it seems that the Government has been struggling to find a coherent strategy to deal with the pandemic and has been very unclear in the messages given to the public.

In some cases, easing has been used as a distraction; in others, it has been announced so far ahead of implementation that the general public, frustrated at observing the rules while politicians and other public figures haven't been, has started implementing things for themselves.

A miscellany of OZ experiences
From Paul Slater

David Hughes' piece in the last newsletter talked about LAFIS.

Paul Slater cont …

Like **David** I had a long association with the package although much later. Still there's a few tales to tell.
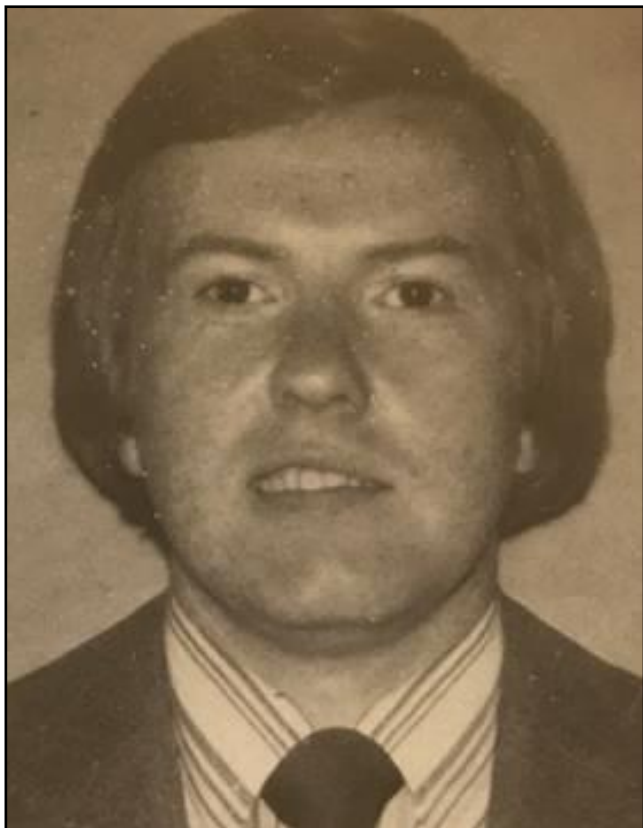
I came rather late to ICL Australia, joining in 1989 and carrying on through the merger.

I first joined ICL UK's Project Services in 1979 starting out on the EEC project and had a long and happy relationship with the Local Government group, working with them for most of the ten years before I emigrated in 1989.

In the middle of this was three years on the LAFIS development team, having been recruited by the noted **Pete Turner**.

One of the business analysts at the time was **Steve Gorton** whom I would meet again as he worked on LAFIS for the City of Sydney Council.

Totally disenchanted with what was then Thatcher's Britain I was thinking vaguely about emigrating. Then, in 1986, I met the Oz **Biff Grindley** at a *Vicar's and Tart's* party in Bradford. Together, and some thirty-four years later I suppose you could say we hit it off.

50 Hughes of Grey: Sorry it's a b&w pic of the legendary **David Hughes**.

Waiting for lunch: **Biff Grindley** (second from left), with **Jon Duggan**, **Pam Garnsey** and **Tom Shaw**, all at an ICL Christmas gig in Sydney.

After a long holiday in Oz in 1988 I was set on emigrating and started the process. In 1989 the stars suddenly aligned for me.

Derek Sargent was managing LAFIS support in Australia from Melbourne, and after meeting him when he came over to Reading, I had a job to come to and with much assistance from the dear old firm, the emigration penny dropped. I'd been trying for nearly a year to get the move organised for myself. With ICL help it was just a matter of weeks before I was on an aeroplane leaving poor **Biff** to pack my house and follow me later.

My first task was to go to Papua New Guinea and assist **Derek** with the installation and setup of LAFIS for the PNG Department of Finance.

But back to basics. May 1989 was quite chilly in Sydney, to say the least. I had the Arran sweater my Mum had knitted for me.

But then stepping off the aeroplane in Port Moresby it suddenly wasn't so comfortable and with no shirt underneath baring all to the Customs officers didn't feel like a good idea.

Finally, out of the tin shed arrivals hall (oven' in some languages), I surprised the waiting **Derek** by opening my suitcase and changing in the car park.

One of my tasks was to teach the Department's staff to use AIDDTA, a query language to produce ad-hoc reports.
If it is an acronym, I can't remember what it was for. It's probably not; after all its authors couldn't spell Dataskil proper.

Paul Slater cont

After that initial three months I had another six visits to PNG. In the nature of the place there's a host of stories to be told.

One day the air conditioning in the building failed. After four days, as the atmosphere in the building got ever more intolerable, the local engineers were convinced they'd repaired it but couldn't get the system to start.

At great expense, an engineer was flown from Brisbane, who opened the main cabinet, pushed the reset button, and, job well done, retired to the nearest club.

On my last visit to Port Moresby the city was in the grip of a severe water shortage.

The Aviat club, whose main differentiator was a swimming pool, wasn't even allowed to make ice cubes. Apparently drinks with ice cubes in tasted strangely chlorinated. Such was the ever so different world of PNG.

A fairly recent customer when I arrived in Oz was the Capricornia Electricity Board. They had been set up with a lot of help from QEC but wanted to move from cash to accrual accounting. A project was set up and **Derek** and I paused in Brisbane for a briefing from the ever brilliant **Tim Boyd**.

If the hat fits, wear it: **Tim Boyd** piloting a wooden-or-so-raft on Lake Titicaca. The headwear was not mandatory.

Tim opened with a classic: "This is the first and last time you will show any amusement at this. The manager of the Electricity Board is Keith Watts. Yes, K. Watts. Now get over it".

Rockhampton was an interesting place to work at in those days. Unlike the massive palaces of NSW, poker machines weren't allowed in clubs in Queensland and the only things older than the furniture in the seedy little RSL Club were the three patrons.

Walking from one's hotel to the office could give much amusement. Enormous freight trains running openly down the main streets phased no-one, but the drivers' antics at Rockie's first ever roundabout were worth pausing to watch.

Of course, there were the absolute characters. For example, **Greg**, so gifted with anything ball-shaped that he could have been a world class golfer or a superstar in any football code, just liked his home life (a certain girl was mentioned too).
There was also a dude called **Stewart,** who would throw his hands into the air every couple of days and declare loudly "I'm a God!"

He wasn't, he was merely celebrating getting his latest COBOL program to clean compile. If only, if only, someone had introduced him to the concept of 'testing'.

Then there was **David** who gave me the best piece of advice about Australian life I've ever received.

One day, I'd passed a *Farmers' Supplies* store and was smitten with a hat in the window.

Telling **David** I wanted it but already had one, he stared me straight in the eye and said: "A man cannot ever have too many Akubras".

One day, while my latest so-called work of IT genius was compiling, I was staring idly out of the 3rd floor window of Capelec's rather splendid building.

Approaching, along the road, was an immaculate pale blue Austin 1100. At well over twenty years old it was plainly the pride and joy of the retired couple inside enjoying a drive in the big smoke on a glorious day.

It pulled up at the junction downstairs behind a fully laden double decker cattle truck. Before the "uh oh" thought had finished forming the lights changed and the truck driver gunned it.

Driven by physics, the contents of the two floors of his trailer were ejected from the rear, landing on the bonnet and roof of the once pristine Austin.

Paul Slater cont …

As I turned back to my trusty terminal, the last vision was of two white knuckled hands clenched on the steering wheel, slowly disappearing behind a veil of evil goop sliding down the window.

I was working on the development team in Britain when LAFIS was sold to Woolworths.
The major attraction for them was the way the application could aggregate accounts.

LAFIS was the only software in the ICL world that did it the way they wanted. And that's how the Local Authority Financial Information System became the Ledger Accounting Financial Information System.

They managed to put in an impressive number of enhancement requests for aggregations, keeping that part of the team busy.

Shortly after I came to Australia, Woolworths' IT manager decided to retire. A replacement was sought, and a candidate named David Wills had been identified. He was working in the US, and when Woolies got wind of **John Watson** making trip over there, asked him to interview Wills on their behalf.

An American Trip: **John Watson**.

John duly did so, and ever the consummate professional, reported to Woolworths that Wills was ideal for the job. Privately though he conceded that the man had IBM running through him like 'Brighton' through a piece of seaside rock.

As was their way Woolies had pushed LAFIS to extremes and uncovered a nasty bug. The UK team, unable to pin it to LAFIS, IDMSX, TPMS or even VME had struggled with it for a couple of weeks.

I was summoned into the Wills' presence. I had explained, as best as I could, the issues facing the team, when the customer looked at me and declared: "If it isn't fixed by the end of the week we'll throw LAFIS out and write our own".

Luckily, my mouth stayed firmly shut but my brain said: "A million and a half lines of COBOL and a million lines of SCL? Go for your life."

The era of the big mainframe computers was drawing to a close and LAFIS was certainly nearing the end of its life.

But it still had the legs to have a run in with some technology of the future at Incitec in Brisbane.

Again, one of our delicious customers, and a rather 'quieter' one at that, they wanted to discuss a couple of problems they were having, and I paid a visit.

Before I could get to these though I was told in no uncertain terms to fix the printers and the dumps coming out.

Incitec had bought a few of the latest and greatest in mainframe attached laser printers. These things were awesome. The print quality in those days was a revelation and the print speed terrifying.

That was the problem. When VME decided to print a dump, it was done before the operators could stop it and chewed through a couple of boxes of A4 from the stacker.

No matter that it wasn't my corner, I was ICL, get on with it, stop the waste.

Google wouldn't be able to help for another 10 years, so I unwrapped their never used VME manuals and started studying. The days back in Leeds playing with the PLANES team trying to hack their machine had been fun. Sitting alone on the other side of the planet on a customer site it didn't seem quite so jolly.

After a few hours writing SCL, working around things I didn't have permissions to, I thought I had it licked. But how to prove that? I could invoke a kernel dump or login and crash the virtual machine.

However, if I'd got it wrong it would be embarrassing and if the forewarned operator couldn't stop the right printer in time, expensive. Right on cue, bless its little cotton socks, VME came to the party. Up on the console monitor popped the news that a VM was dumping. To disc. Yay!

Paul Slater cont …

Resisting the urge to throw up my arms and yell "I'm a messiah", I went to report and receive the adulation due. "Good. Now, about LAFIS".
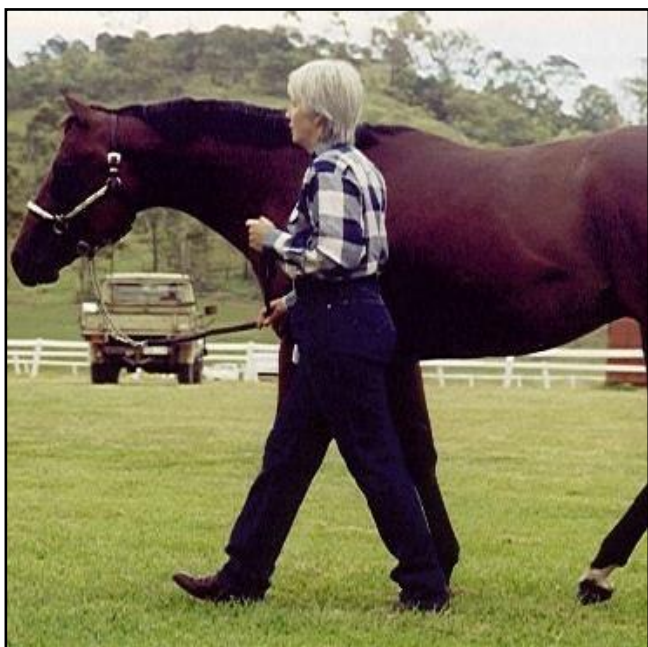
The troubles there were quite trivial, and the finance officer really just wanted someone to shout at and vent his frustrations. It was more about how Incitec did accounting than the software.

I listened politely, told him how to solve the LAFIS issues and went back to the bunker in Sydney. Such was life in application support.

Are you up to it?
From The ICL Reporter

It was about mid-year in 1978, and the charismatic **MaryAnne Leig**hton was at the PR helm, a demanding task for ICL that included the job of editing the *ICL Reporter*.

In that house magazine capacity, we are reminded of one of the gracious lady's highly creative suggestions for the old firm's Aptitude testing.

Horsing around*: **MAL** and a friend.

So let's continue: **MAL'**s editorial of note, contained a masterful lead piece that suggested some pretty rigid hiring yard-sticks.

The item explained that the test had been compiled for several positions.

The instructions were to read each question carefully and to then answer everything. Four hours the set time limit.

HISTORY: Describe the history of the papacy from its origins t the present day, concentrating especially, but not exclusively, on its social, political, economic, religious, and philosophical impact on Europe, Asia, America and Africa. Be brief, precise, and specific.

MEDICINE: You have been provided with a razor blade, a piece of gauze and a bottle of Scotch. Remove your appendix. Do not suture until your work has been inspected.
You have 15 minutes.

PUBLIC SPEAKING: 2500 crazed rioters are storming classroom. Calm them. You may use any ancient language except Latin or Greek.

BIOLOGY: Create life. Estimate the difference in subsequent human culture if this form of life had developed 500 million years earlier, with specific attention to its probable effect on the democratic parliamentary system. Prove your thesis.

MUSIC: Write a piano concerto. Orchestrate it and perform it with flute and drum. You will find a piano under your seat.
PSYCHOLOGY: Based on your knowledge of their works, evaluate the emotional stability, degree of adjustment and repressed frustrations of each of the following – Alexander of Aphrodisias, Ramsey II. Gregory of Nicaea and Hammurabi. Support your evaluations with quotations from each man's work. It is not necessary to translate.

SOCIOLOGY: Estimate the sociological problems which might accompany the end of the world. Construct an experiment to test your theory.

ENGINEERING: The disassembled parts of a high-powered rifle have been placed in a box on your desk. You will also find an instruction manual, printed in Swahili. In 10 minutes, a hungry Bengal tiger will be admitted to the room. Take whatever action you feel is appropriate. Be prepared to justify your decision.

ECONOMICS: Develop a realistic plan for refinancing the national debt. Trace the possible effects of the proposal in the following areas – cubism, the Donanist controversy and the wave theory of light. Outline a method for preventing these effects. Criticize this method from all possible points of view.

POLIICAL SCIENCE: There is a red telephone on the desk beside you. Start World War III. Report, at lengths, on its socio-political effects, if any.

EPISTEMOLOGY: Take a position for or against truth. Prove the validity of your choice.

PHYSICS: Explain the nature of matter. Include in your answer an evaluation of the impact of the development of mathematics on science.

PHILOSOPHY: Sketch the development of human thought. Estimate its significance. Compare with the development of any other kind of thought.

GENERAL KNMOWLEDGE: Describe in detail. Be objective and specific.
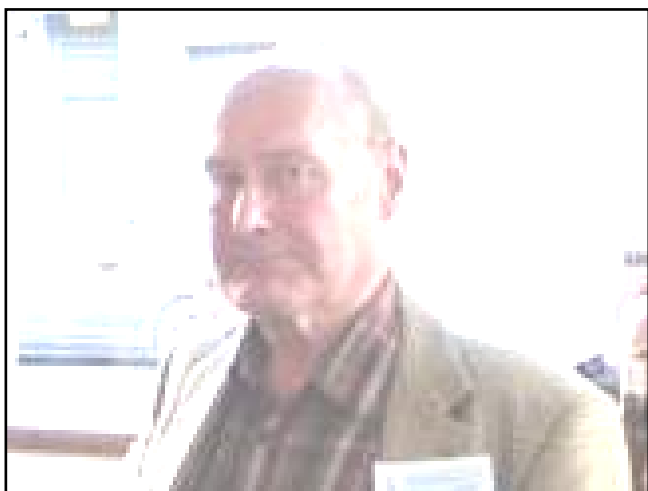
My time at ICL
From David Nowlan

Dave writes: "Hi **Kent,** delighted you have requested some input on my delicious time with ICL.

"I have to say that one of the most interesting, intriguing and different projects I had the good fortune to be involved with, was the support for ICL's contribution to the ABC's radio and television state and federal election coverage broadcasts.

"It was so good to have been involved – especially when in later days I watched the coverage on TV.

"Very best wishes mate.

"Stay well."

Vote 1 David Nowlan.

Why has the ICL AllStars newsletter changed its delivery method?
From Raf Dua

As we all know **Geoffrey Howell** was very dedicated to ensuring that the *ICL AllStars Newsletter* was a great success, with **Ian Scott Pearson** performing the unenviable task of writer, author, and editor for 14 plus years.

What none of us knew was that **Geoffrey** spent a lot of his time in maintaining the database which contained over 2600 names.

There were 646 known members with a current e-mail address, each time a new edition of the newsletter was sent out there were inevitable bounces.

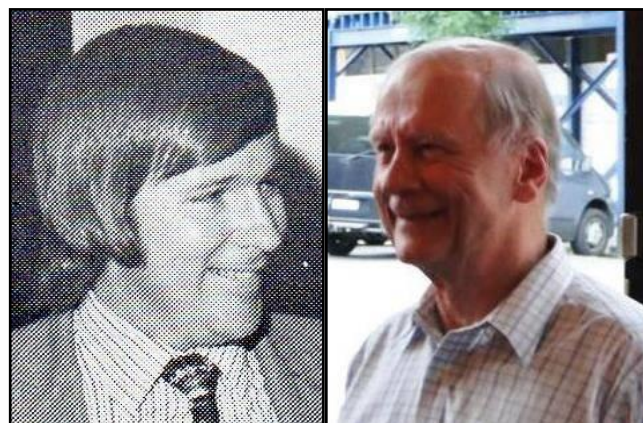Not everybody kept **GH** informed of changed e-mails.

The dedicated lad wanted to make sure that everybody in the list got their copy of the newsletter, and so he continued to send to bounced addresses as some seemed temporary (ie mailbox full), however after three bounces the specific person was removed from the live sending portion of the DB. Nobody was removed from the total system, as we might find them again.

When **Geoffrey** passed and I took over the management of the database, I soon learnt that MS Outlook has limitations when you use the home version of Office 365.

There was a limit of between 50 and 100 e-mails per day from the same IP address depending on the version of Outlook you were using. This caused several problems for us as it meant it took seven-days to send out the newsletter to everybody. Add to this that as soon as this limit was reached, the system stopped sending. But, and it was a huge but, it didn't let the sender know what had transpired.

Kent Brooks took on the task of finding a better system which would allow us to send all copies at once.

The main criteria was that it had to be "free" as there needed to be no membership fees. We could have equipped all AllStars with the business version of Outlook at a cost of A$132,000 per annum but this was a no brainer.

Masters of the AllStars' database: **Kent Brooks** and **Geoffrey Howell**.

Kent found that *Groups.io* fitted the bill and it allowed us new facilities for our AllStars to communicate with each other on a more secure basis than that of Facebook.

However, the FREE version of the system was not, in itself without its complications in mailing limits, as it uses Outlook as the carrier.

However, it did give **Kent** and I useful statistics about who was getting a copy of the newsletter and who was not.

You have been invited to "accept" the invitation to belong to the ICL AllStars group, and initially some 390 out of 654 accepted, which puzzled us as to why so few.

After much effort we have found that several ISPs limit the sort of e-mail we are sending out and flag the e-mail we send out as junk and direct it into the user's Junk Box: We have found many instances like this.

So we hope, that in providing this explanation, you might ask any of your ICL colleagues if they are getting the newsletter, and if not to suggest they check their Junk mail and let **Kent** or me know on: kent.brooks@bigpond.com and rafmdua@gmail.com

But what is equally important is we need your input to keep the newsletter running, otherwise this may well be getting awfully close to the last edition.

You will receive an email when the next version of the *AllStars Newsletter* is released, it will reside in Groups.io as an easily accessible file alongside all past issues of our newsletters.

Covid 19 - The last diatribes
From Christopher Greaves in Canada, with added comments from Raf Dua

Raf old mate, thanks for the compliments about my previous email ramblings. It seems to me that most people are potty.

Everyone I speak with here thinks that the self-isolation is stupid. But still they close down like headless chooks waiting to be plucked, if that's the right word. Sounds right.

RD> I have settled down into splendid isolation. My eldest daughter Kathryn is giving me some unhappiness as she is not coping too well after having Ovarian cancer surgery almost four months ago.

This is sad news. Two days ago, a bloke named Harold, whose house I bought, dropped around for a chat.

His mother is in a nursing home here in Bonavista, and he has been visiting her each day, feeding her supper, wheeling her around the facility and outside in good weather (that's July 3rd-6th) and since mid-March can only stand and wave mutely through a window.

His mum, with dementia is, of course, disturbed at this, and Harold must hope that the nursing staff explain to Mum why he "doesn't want to come and give me a hug anymore".

We had a suicide here, a grandmother who thought that her daughter didn't want mum to hold her first grandchild, which makes a bit of sense, but not a lot.

Just an awkward and insoluble dilemma.

I have a contact in Maryland with an 89-year old dad. He, like me, is cerebrating life. I mean 89! Dad wants to go to the mall, get his hair cut, buy an ice-cream.

I understand him. at 89 years of age, "I woke up this morning!" is a thing to celebrate.

His daughter, however, is (somewhat insanely) convinced that (a) if dad sets foot outside the house, he will be struck down on the second step and (b) if she keeps him indoors he will live forever.

I can do nothing **Raf**, not even say "I know how you feel", but I suspect that this is tough on both you and your daughter.

Talking isolation: Chris Greaves.

Are you totally isolating, groceries delivered to the door etc, or do you make a weekly excursion to get fresh milk?

My canoeing buddy Fred and I have often discussed our situations. I envied him with his wife, three kids, white picket fence and so on, and he was jealous of me and my freedom to take off any time I chose to on a ten-day tour of the USA.

My life is essentially isolation, and what do I care if I stay indoors eating and reading books all day long?
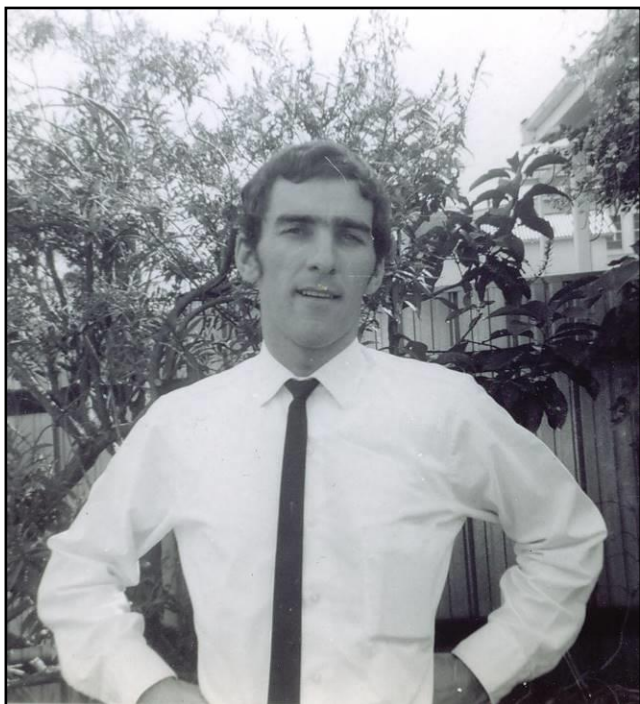
Christopher Greaves cont…

Supermarket trips are faster now. It is a 13-minute walk to either local store, and my record *for walking home* was 90 minutes because every man and his dog wanted to chat with me. With everyone staying indoors I can be out, shop, and back in well under an hour.

I have decked out my front and back lawns in Australia's national colours and refuse to mow down the dandelions: I am, after all, WESTERN Australian! The really good news (for me) is younger people's resistance. Look up "Trinity Bellwoods Park Covid" (with quotes) for the yuppy resistance to Toronto's social distancing.

Although I no longer drink, I might have stood a beer for every one of them.

I admire too the younger people protesting and rallying: I did not when I was younger, but now I embrace the use of "kids" with smart phones monitoring the police. "*Sammy Yatim Video" is* another good example.

Cheers. **Chris**.

Those were the days my friend: A somewhat younger **Chris Greaves**.

Another visit to Mike
From Bob Shaw

The ICL collegiate is as remarkable as it is broad.

The compassion which we deliver to our colleagues is remarkable. Just as an example, take on board the following note from the inimitable **Bob Shaw.**

George Webster and I visited **Mike Banham** again a few weeks ago at his nursing home in western Sydney.

It's great to report that he was in excellent spirits and we all spent a couple of very enjoyable hours recalling the great memories we had of our working days at ICL both at North Sydney and Frenchs Forest.

George and **Mike** and **Phil Radnidge** trained a lot together, doing their numerous Sydney to Surf runs, a few marathons (I think), and quite a number of long-distance bike rides.
Mike was so happy to recall these great times they had together. Of course, there was a lot of talk about ICL colleagues, **Mike** has so many friends from those days and he was keen to know what they were doing.

As **Valarie**, **Mike's** wife, has said to me. "**Mike** really needs the intellectual stimulation. Physically, he struggles with such things as his movement on his walker"

I would urge everyone that knew **Mike** well to take a trip out along the M2 and spend a couple of hours of sharing fond memories from the past.

I know you will enjoy it. I can assure you **Mike** does.

If you can get out there get *Valarie's* number from I*an* or myself and find out the detail of arranging a visit.

Regards … **Bob Shaw**.

The two of us: **Mike** and then ever vivacious **Valarie**.

Celebrating being 81 in new (difficult) times
From Raf Dua

We all know that covid-19 has caused major changes in how we can celebrate family and other important events.

Raf Dua cont….

So I sit here remembering just how good my 80th birthday celebration was last year, partying in a vineyard surrounded by my eldest daughter **Kathryn** and my "16:16" Train Gang (the potent mob who commute from our country town to Melbourne and back every day)..

Notably, we raised money for the Ovarian Cancer research charity, instead of me receiving presents.

Now one year on, I am asking for donations to the same essential cause.

Kathryn has most sadly become a recipient of this horrible ailment. When she turned 60, in January this year, at her party we asked her friends to also contribute to the Ovarian Cancer research.
Indeed, the dear lady dyed part of her blonde hair 'teal blue' as that the Ovarian colour signature to bring the request for research dollar inputs to everybody's attention.

Sad to say, four weeks after her birthday **Kathryn** was herself diagnosed with ovarian cancer. She has had essential surgery and is well on her way to immediate recovery.

But, as with all such cases, the long-term prognosis is not really that good. So, we, as a community, need to get far more research carried out.

And so to my rather irrelevant birthday. As the Corona virus rules dictate, there cannot be a physical party. Sad indeed.
,
And so, for my 81st I have once again asked my friends (and associates on my Facebook page) to make an all essential and vital contribution to ovarian cancer research. We raised $963.00, my and Kathryn's sincere thanks all those very kind friends who donated

The three musketeers: Raf with daughters **Louisa** and **Kathryn** (right).

A Look Back in Time: Observations on Computers in Manufacturing
From Steve Hunt

I have to start this account with some apologies. The observations I will make about my experiences with manufacturing software are inevitably coloured by my own particular preferences and prejudices, and while looking back 30 or 40 years provides the benefit of hindsight, some of the finer details are now lost in the mists of time.

However for me it is interesting to revisit the journey from the earliest days of punch card processing to today's streamlined manufacturing with computers and robots controlling every stage. Commercial computers first appeared in the 1950s and it is interesting to think that about that time somebody somewhere must have said: "You know, we could use this thing to manage our inventory and schedule our production".

On the shop floor.

Nobody really could have guessed to where that statement would lead.

I first became involved with computers manufacturing way back in 1970.

I had joined the manufacturing company British Industrial Plastics (BIP) in the UK who notably had a newly installed ICL 1902A. This company was a diverse organisation, to say the leaast, that manufactured everything to do with plastics, from raw moulding powders, injection moulding machines, and finished plastic products.

The division causing the business the biggest headache was undoubtedly the manufacture of moulding machines.

Steve Hunt cont….

.The equipment was marketed under the name BIPEL and was highly respected in the industry and the machines were exported worldwide.

This hard-won reputation was under threat because of massive problems with inventory, late deliveries, and non-availability of spare parts.

These were classic issues in the manufacture of complex products which were supported only by manual inventory recording and ordering systems.

I was to encounter a similar set of problems when I joined the Australian company Warman in 1978.

joined the Australian company Warman in 1978.

But back to ancient history. BIPEL first started using the ICL PROMPT system in 1969 at a bureau, and were sufficiently encouraged by the initial results to persuade management to acquire an in-house ICL machine so that they would have much faster turnround and greater control.

PROMPT was developed originally by ICT in the mid-1960s, when packaged application software was just emerging as a tool to assist in the selling of the main event, which was the highly expensive hardware.

Being Prompt.

This was in the days of 'bundling' when software (including PROMPT) was provided free of charge to purchasers of mainframe computer hardware. This seems incredible now, when hardware is cheap and software can be (comparatively) expensive.

In hindsight, PROMPT was a remarkable piece of software, and a tribute to the designers and programmers that developed it. Using flat files, stored on magnetic tape, it enabled the creation of multi-level bills of material and detailed operations stages for each manufactured part. Inventory could be transacted and work orders monitored. This base information could then be used to process material requirements planning (MRP) and factory forward loading.

The application was able to inform what you needed to manufacture, when it was required, and whether you had sufficient workshop capacity to undertake it.

These were exactly the areas that were so difficult to control and manage using manual systems. To inventory managers and factory managers, struggling to satisfy internal needs, and ultimately customers, PROMPT seemed like a godsend.

To execute the early PROMPT, you simply loaded the program from magnetic tape and started it running. It began reading from the card reader, and the first punch-card informed the system what you wanted it to do: stock update, breakdown, forward load and so on .

In those early days, every single piece of information, held within the PROMPT system, needed to be punched on to cards. The program would then ask the operator to load the magnetic tape files that it needed to process the job.
During the courseof a PROMPT run, the operators were required to change tapes constantly. It was quite a labour intensive task and kept the computer room staff on their toes.
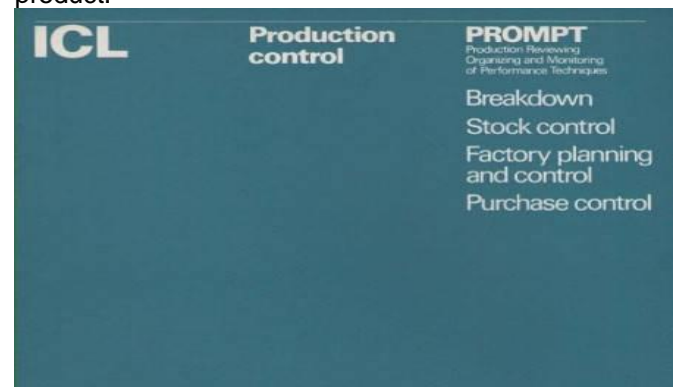
Some good things about PROMPT
It was fundamentally a reliable piece of software.
I can rarely remember PROMPT 'crashing' or producing the dreaded message ILLEGAL.

Additionally, it was a rigid and non-customisable product. Some might see this as a disadvantage, but it imposed a discipline on the user that (in some cases) was useful in gaining control of their inventory and production.

The late Bryan Merchant (manufacturing guru with ICL and later IBM) was very knowledgeable about manufacturing software, and considered PROMPT to be a robust piece of software that could be used to bring much-needed order to untidy areas of a business.

It acquired a considerable number of users, probably in the hundreds. There were active user groups all over the UK. I attended the Midlands user group meetings on a number of occasions and it was very valuable to be able to discuss problems and workarounds with other users. The user groups also provided a channel to the ICL development team and were able (sometimes) to influence the development of the product.

Manual labour: A PROMPT manual.

But so to the limitations of PROMPT
At day's end, we have to accept that it was magnetic tape based. Even after direct access disc systems were introduced and became commonplace, PROMPT remained a mag-tape system.

Despite all the efforts and lobbying of the user groups, ICL steadfastly refused to port the system to disc.

The reason was, of course, that ICL did not want to damage the prospects of the replacement system NIMMS.

But that meant that runtimes could be huge if inventory levels were large. BIPEL, for example, had an inventory approaching 40,000 discrete stock keeping units. This stock file occupied three reels of magnetic tape. And a stock update would run literally all night.

A massive risk with magnetic tape was the dreaded tape crinkle or breakage. This would ruin ones entire run and the ever patient operators would have to start all over again.

Countless times I would arrive in the morning to find that the run had failed, or that the run was still in progress having failed sometime in the middle of the night.
You had to be very patient to be in charge of a PROMPT project.

PROMPT was, of course, incredibly manual and labour intensive. Every single piece of information needed to be written on to a docket and submitted to the punch room. The punch card operators would do their best to decipher the scrawl of the storeman, and the cards would go into a batch update run.

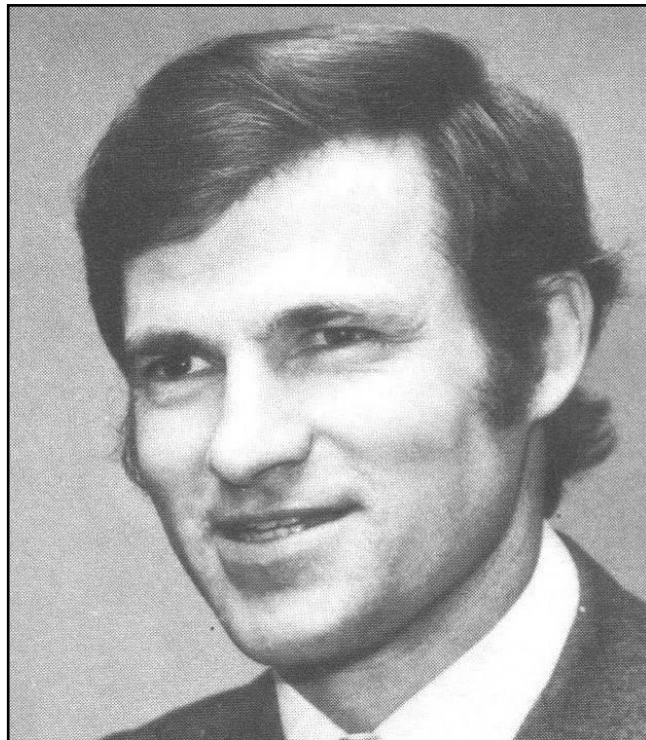This would inevitabbly generate large numbers of errors that had to be returned to the users for correction.

Sometimes the error print outs were mislaid, run over by a forklift, or whatever. Trying to maintain accurate inventory figures was exceedingly difficult. Eventually I designed and we developed a recycling error file, so that no transactions went missing. The success of breakdown depended on accuracy in your bills of material and up-to-date stock figures.

What happened next?
ICL in Australia advertised for a PROMPT specialist to work in Sydney.

I read the ad in the Computer Weekly (the jobhunter's bible) and wrote an application exceedingly extolling my detailed experience with PROMPT and explaining how I was exactly the man they wanted.

After four years at BIP I was absolutely ready for a change of scene. I was interviewed at Putney Bridge House by **Brian Lovelock** (then a senior figure at ICL North Sydney) and he asked all the right questions and I had seemed to have all the right answers. A couple of weeks later I had a call to say the Aussie job was mine. I am pretty sure I went to the pub that lunchtime.

Fast forward to March of 1974 and my wife and I landed in Sydney to be met by **Paul Beckhaus** (above**)**. And that was the start of the Australian adventure.

A breakfast in Brissy
From Bob Shaw

The ICL All Stars Breakfast Group had our monthly breakfast yesterday.

During the get together, the conversation inevitably came around to discussing "what ever happened to ….?"
 Sandy, **Bruce** and **Pam** were also asking after you.

How are you travelling?

Thought I would check whether my recent email got through to you. I have been having a few issues with my system, so I thought I should check whether you received it.

A few at the ICL Mates Golf have been asking whether there has been any resolution of the recent issues with the new Group01 Email System.

Look forward to hearing from you.

Doubling Up …

And so to our inevitable end of issue photo line-up, featuring those archive shots (re-run or never seen before) that need a double column format to do them justice.

- First to the svelte **Pam Garnsey** who records: "I had only recently joined the ICL UK Government Region in its Defence Sector as a modest systems engineer.

"But for some reason, lost to memory, I got roped in to work on a key Business Efficiency Exhibition stand for the company.

"In the following picture, I'm ninth in line (from the left). The OIC (officer in command) being **Beryl Acty** our demonstration room manager.

"And I do add we got to keep our elegant outfits that were styled in white linen, set off with orange ICL scarves.

"My big problem was that I could not type - still can't. The real demonstrators were whizzes on the keyboard, whereas I just stood around talking to visitors and making visits to competitors' stands."

Elegance personified: **Pam** with the other exhibiting young ladies.

- Next it's to Sydney and a farewell retirement party for the esteemed and ever popular **Albert Orsborne**.

In our picture below, we have from left to right (standing) **Bob Heldt, Malcolm Belle, Tony Hall, Sid Daniels and Geoff Batty.**

Sitting, kneeling, and crouching are **George Sanderson**, **Bernard Croswaller**, **John Dickson**, **Albert** and **Gwen Orsborne**, **Ron Gaznier** and a largely blocked out **Jack Nicholson**.

Albert will be remembered for many things – his long-term commitment to engineering, and away from work as a keen organist and an avid motor bike rider

- And so to Perth and our very successful WA team.

As the song says – amazing grace: **Merv Cooper**, **Peter Garnham**, **Warren Grace**, **John Bannister**, **Dave Varey**, **Rick Gallagher** and **Gary Hoole**.

- Moving down to South Australia: Certainly, a photo we have featured before, but one warranting a re-run. The shot is of the remarkable **Rick Schoff** on the field in SA for the ever-great Sturt Football Club.

The big men fly: That's going to hurt on landing.

• The following pic was snapped in either Paris or Geneva … we forget which. It shows an informal gathering of a small part of the 'Ratties' crew, celebrating with a libation or two. Featured are **Rod** and **Eileen Rodwell** and **Mike Benton**.

This **adored audience** was mostly a silent partner for all the 59 Issues of our newsletter that your heroic editor **Ian Scott Pearson** put together uncomplainingly.

Our next edition will be the 70th, so we are in great need of copy. Raf says too much Raf in the newsletter is too much. He clearly remembers there were a lot of people in ICL Australia during his 32 years service, and is sure there must be a corresponding number of stories. Please don't be afraid to contribute.

In closing, we would like to offer our heartfelt thanks on behalf of all AllStars to Ian for all the hard work that has gone into the production of your newsletter.

Kent & Raf