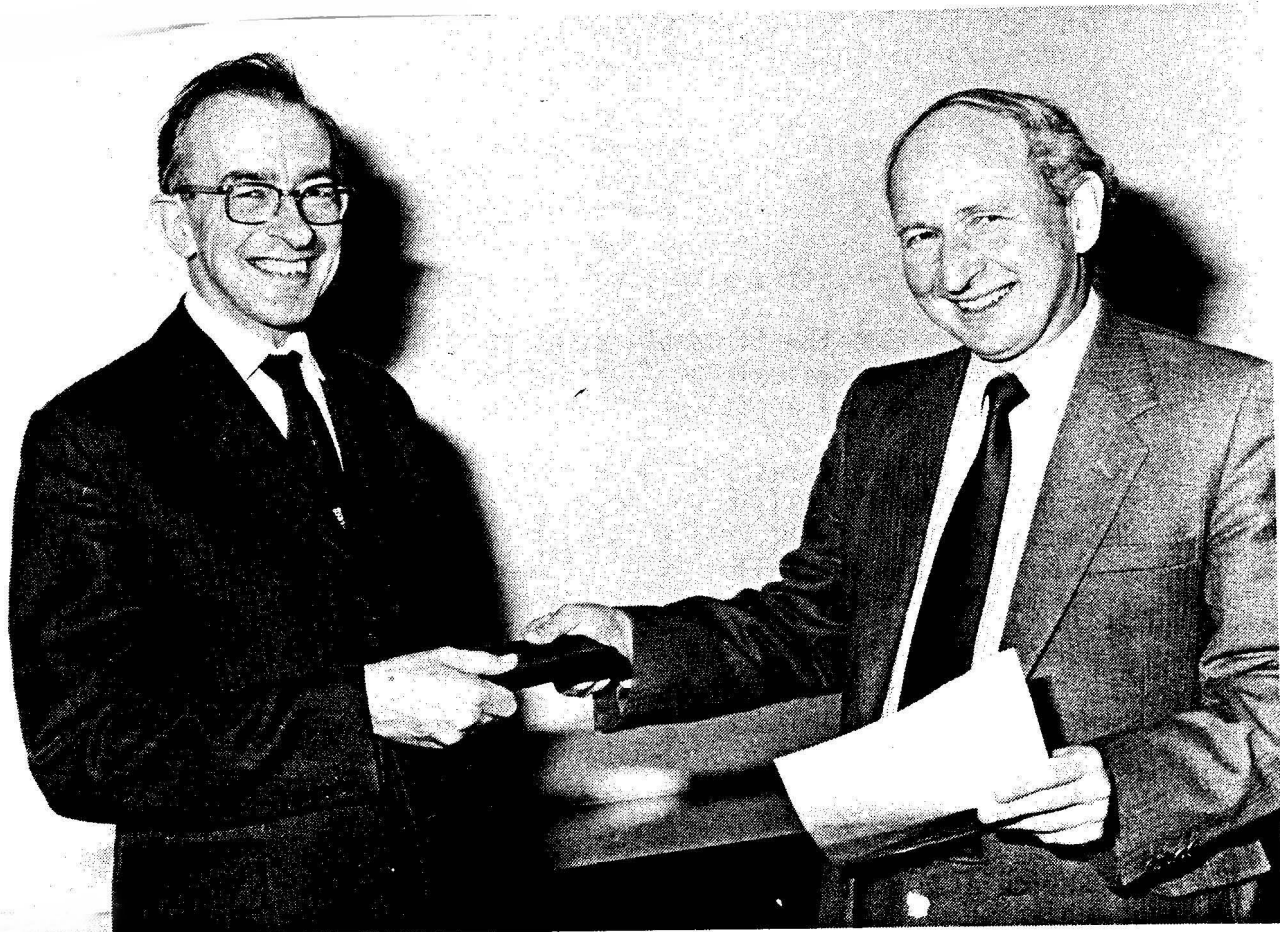


40 YEARS ON

LONG SERVICE PRESENTATION

DR. R.M. BLACK



It was a great pleasure last month to be present on the occasion of Bob Black's "fortieth". A gathering of his colleagues heard Dr. Farmer fill in the details of these years of service at Wood Lane.

Bob joined the Company on the 20th August 1945 at the age of 20 years as a Research Chemist having gained BSc GENERAL in 1945 (Chemistry, Physics and Maths). His starting salary was the princely sum of £4-12-6d per week plus £1-3-0d "temporary allowance"* giving him an annual salary of about £300 per annum. The normal working week at that time was 38½ hours. His terms of contract concluded "It is understood that the appointment is of a temporary nature owing to war conditions". Forty years later,.....read on!

Employed in the then Chemical Laboratory, Bob worked on Analysis and Microscopy and, during the early years undertook part-time studies in Chemiluminescence which led to the award of PHD in 1953. About this time Dr. Brazier became aware of work being carried out at Harwell on Radiation X-linking by Professor Arthur Charlesby. LGB arranged for Bob to be seconded to Harwell as a Section Leader working on irradiated polymers. Within the year (1954) LGB had made the decision to buy "one of the electron beam equipments" from High Voltage Engineering. As we now appreciate this proved to be a far sighted move although by a strange twist of events chemical crosslinking was exploited sooner even though electron beam irradiation had been discovered first. Bob returned to Wood Lane in 1956 and within a year was Head of the Irradiation Laboratory.

*Paid "owing to war conditions", and "is subject to modification or withdrawal at any time."

About this time he applied to join the IEE but met some difficulty "because of his chemical upbringing". However the matter was resolved following various correspondences one of which is a classic for an inappropriate (?) choice of words. The note read as follows

"Dr. Black is in charge of the BICC irradiation laboratory. In this position he is responsible for much electrical equipment, including a 2 million volt electron accelerator, demanding the highest degree of electrical and scientific ability. He discharges these responsibilities with complete competence."

In 1961 the Irradiation Laboratory was broadened and Bob became Head of Physical Chemistry, a post he held until 1968 when he became personal assistant to Dr. A.L. Williams.

Bob's interest in the historical side of cables and BICC in particular is well known and he is the official Archivist in these matters. Apart from writing his book on the History of Electric Wires and Cables, Bob has also written a pamphlet for the Science Museum on a similar topic.

After congratulations and thanks by Dr. Farmer on behalf of BICC, Bob was presented with "bread" (money and wallet) and "wine" (a bottle of historical significance to a select few!).

In reply, Bob thanked all who were present for his presentation and reminisced over his time with BICC which was particularly highlighted last year on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the opening of the Research Laboratories at Wood Lane. To mark that occasion he gave a talk on the development of these laboratories, to a meeting of the Wood Lane Technical Society.

It is pleasing to record that Beryl Black was present to witness Bob's presentation. Beryl also worked for BICC, and at one time was Secretary to Dr. Brazier. She and Bob were married in 1957, Beryl subsequently moved to Bloomsbury Street where she served as Private Secretary to successive Group Chairmen including Lord Pennock.