

## BICC Wood Lane Reunion news and gossip - Summer 2015

Once again The Bull in the Westfield Centre, just a stone's throw from where McFadzean and the other laboratories stood for so many years, was the venue for the annual reunion. Forty seven made their way there on 15<sup>th</sup> May, and Charlie and her staff looked after us very well, though once again the lift conspired to thwart **Eileen King's** journey upstairs – maybe she has put a curse on it! After setting off the fire alarm last year, this time she found it totally disabled, necessitating a detour via the service lift. For compensation she was guided through by a young male member of staff who clearly relished the task. Suffice it to say that Eileen took it in the best of spirits as always.

The list of Absent Friends has sadly grown, and everyone joined in a toast to their memory. In the previous 12 months we had lost:

**George Scott** (Physics and Tolworth)  
**Mike Denton** (Patents and Licensing)  
**Dave Connolly** (Microscopy)  
**Ian Wilson** (Chemistry)

By contrast we were again pleased to welcome those who hadn't been able to join before. **Tony Arkell**, who many remember for his years as Chief Engineer at Erith, did work at Wood Lane with people like **John Banks** back in late 40s and 50s .....in a hut behind the library.

**John Childs** was another who made it for the first time. As well as catching up with former Wood Lane colleagues, he had the double-whammy of former BSI colleagues **John Taylor** and **Roy Farmer**. Roy hadn't joined us for a few years but like everyone didn't look a day older, though it's difficult to see in this photo of him in earnest conversation with **Chris White** and **Alan Hopkins**.



Our only overseas visitors this year were **Valerie and Roger Carroll**. It was a few years since they had made it over from Belgium. Here Roger looks on quizzically as **Shirley Hammond** seems to be taking a “Selfie”, whilst **John Childs** looks more towards satisfying the inner man.



**Rob Corne** joined us in spirit on the day – well in beer actually as the next photo shows. Another “ex-pat”, **Guy Secrett**, was also an apologist, though he aims to be over later in the summer and will try to meet up with some former colleagues. **Jon Ballard** was one hoping to catch up.



Those away on holiday included **Celia and Norman Waterhouse** in Guernsey, **Anne Huybrechts** in Cuba, and **Dennis Cooper and Sue Hurst** in New Zealand. Hope to see them all next time.

Other UK-based apologists included **Sasha O’Bow Hove**, who vowed to put in a brief appearance, but the time needed for his journey north-east to a Bryan Ferry concert proved too limiting. **Lesley Irvine** was another – but for the perfectly lovely reason that her Hen party coincided. By now we hope she is happily married. **Sarah Cowper** missed out because she and Andrew are moving to Exmouth, in fact due to the delay in this Newsletter, they have now moved. Chiswick won’t be the same, but we hope the move went well and that excursions to London can be made in future years. **Terry Watkins** was also away, in his case supporting his daughter Alison in her attempt to win the national Vintage Award for singing (songs of the 30s, 40s and 50s). At the time of the reunion she was in the final dozen contenders.

Many will remember **Freddie Irish**, so it was very fitting to learn from **Vivien** about the way he is now remembered. The library at York Minster has a copy of the earliest known metallurgical book, “De Re Metallica” by George Agricola, known as “the father of metallurgy”. It was published in 1556 and it was the only authoritative book on the subject for 200 years, Vivien has now adopted it in Freddie’s memory. In the photo below, she explains all to **Alan Bangay** and **Peter Raw**.



Former Wood Laners who would like to see the book can contact Vivien on [virish@theiet.org](mailto:virish@theiet.org) or on 01904 679 778 to make an appointment. The full dedication is shown in the annex to this Newsletter.

There are many good reasons for coming to the reunion. **Malcolm Ward** had one, namely the ability to show us what he had salvaged from the laboratory – a Flextime key and counter – it looked as though he was still due a half-day flex leave!!

**Peter Jennings** and **Dave Sevant** on the other hand were able to reflect upon the fact that their friendship long pre-dates Wood Lane, having been at primary school together, and continues post-Wood Lane by serving Her Majesty's Government. From their respective perches in the Ministry of Justice and the Foreign Office they were unable at the time to reveal any secrets from the new government.

Probably the most enduring reason though is simply to say "We are still here and we remember good times". That certainly seems to be reflected in the next photo showing (l to r) **Graham Taylor, Denis Groombridge, Eve Taylor, Andy Platt, Brian McCarthy and Peter Walton**.



Our thanks as always to **Peter Walton** for maintaining the Wood Lane website –

<http://www.woodlanebicc.co.uk/>

Do visit the site, and please pass any potentially interesting material to Peter.

Last year we speculated on the possible demise of the Fairleigh window, but happily we were wrong. It went from Wood Lane to the Wrexham Technology Centre and was installed in the reception. When the centre closed and the premises sold, the site became used, as it still is, by a company making wooden pallets (Larch Limited). Happily the window remains intact, though the owner is loath to part with it. A close eye is being kept on it by Dr Darren Spiller who manages the cable accessories business in the old power cables plant (now Prysmian Cables). He kindly sent the photo below.



Finally, Balfour Beatty has again been back in the spotlight with further profit warnings and the rebuttal of a merger with (takeover by) Carillion. A more recent rumour concerned an interest from a Chinese company, but that seems to have gone quiet. Hold on tight though – our pensions may still be at some risk, although one announcement was of a structured commitment to plug the gap.

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A full list of this year's attendees and apologies is attached. As always, many thanks to everyone who supports, attends and keeps in contact – it is appreciated.

**Mike Hagger**  
**July 2015**

Annex – Memorial to Freddie Irish

Matthew gift, 1628

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YORK MINSTER LIBRARY



De re metallica, by Georg Agricola

Adopted by Vivien Irish in memory of  
Freddie Irish, 09-07-1931 to 22-06-  
2006, B.Sc (Metallurgy), York  
Resident 2005-2006

## 2015 Reunion – Attendees (47)

Tony Arkell  
Maureen Ayres  
Jon Ballard  
Alan Bangay  
George Bielstein  
Anne Buchanan  
Clive Carroll  
Valerie and Roger Carroll  
John Childs  
Bill Dawson  
Roy Farmer  
Bob Girkin  
Richard Grigsby  
Barbara and Denis Groombridge  
Mike Hagger  
Mark Hamlin  
Shirley and Richard Hammond  
Roger Hazelden  
Alan Hopkins  
Vivien Irish  
Peter Jennings  
Eileen King  
Brian McCarthy  
Barry Mitchell  
Pedro Perez  
Albert Pinching  
Andy Platt  
Bob Price  
Peter Raw  
Peter Revell  
David Sevant  
Maureen and Eve Taylor  
Graham Taylor  
John Taylor  
Brian Tilbury  
Stefan Verne  
Maria and John Vernon  
Peter Walters  
Peter Walton  
Malcolm Ward  
Sandra West  
Chris White

## Apologies

Andrew Ainger  
Terry Alleyne  
Bob Brown  
Annette Burgess  
Tess and Stuart Castle  
Dennis Cooper  
Rob Corne  
Sarah Cowper  
Norman Fairey  
Yvonne Ferrier  
Chris Finney  
Ian Fordham  
Steve Frost  
Andy Fry  
Don Fry  
Dave Green  
Sue Hurst  
Ann Huybrechts  
Lesley Irwine  
Mike Key  
Barry Lambert  
Edwin Lightstone  
Janet Matheve  
Sasha O'Bow Hove  
Michael Pater  
Michael Poole  
Bryan and Pam Pledger  
Annette Robinson  
Guy Secrett  
Roger Seebold  
Viv Semmens  
Glynn Stainthorpe  
David Stirling  
Eleanor Tarbox  
Nick Thearle  
Carol Tilbury  
Jerry Turner  
Jan Walters  
Celia and Norman Waterhouse  
Terry Watkins  
Dick Weeks