

BICC Wood Lane Reunion news and gossip - Summer 2018

Friday 18th May was when we assembled for the 9th year in succession at The Bull, and 54 people came along to celebrate having been part of a special organisation. The weather was warm and sunny – maybe practicing for the little “Do” in Windsor the following day – and the ambience was, as always, relaxed and convivial. Norel (the 3rd Events Manager since the previous year) and the team did all that was needed to make us welcome, and provide us with food and drink, and we thank them for their efforts.

As always we paused for a moment to remember those of our colleagues who had left us in the previous 12 months, namely:

Albert Jackson, who many remember as husband of Maureen
Graham Wills, a long-standing member of the Radiation Department and who was recording his memoirs, both of his childhood in China and of BICC, at the time of his death

In addition we remembered **Trevor Carter** (Diffraction and Microscopy) whom we discovered had died in June 2014, only a few weeks after attending that year’s reunion.

An astonishing feature of the reunion is that, even after 31 years, there is always at least one person who manages to join us for the first time. This year it was **Alan Fenwick**, who left the then Rubber and Plastics Department in 1967 to go to Canada. Some of his subsequent work and travels were recorded in the 2017 Newsletter, and it was wonderful that he especially flew over to be with us. He later wrote to say *“I am really happy that I was able to attend the May 2018 reunion of BI Wood Lane employees. I had a wonderful time reminiscing with the help of you all to guide me down memory lane. The time just flew by because I was enjoying myself so much.”* **Ena Prendergast** again joined us to create a little knot flying the maple leaf flag. The left-hand photo below however belongs to yesteryear. Left to right – Mike Squelch, Ena, Mike Key and Alan. **Mike Squelch** is another who keeps in touch from overseas – well, the Isle of Wight! He reported that his prostate operation had been successful and he is back on his bike.



From the reunion photo it is clear that Alan (back to camera) has lost a little hair, but is clearly engaging **Albert Pinching, Mike Kendle and Dennis Cooper** with his reminiscences.

Most of us travelled shorter distances than Ena and Alan to be present at The Bull, many using the London Overground service to Shepherd’s Bush from Clapham Junction or Willesden Junction, with trains every 10 minutes, and only a 100 yards walk from the station.

By contrast a number of people remembered the “Kenny Belle”. This was a train that ran twice in the morning from Clapham Junction to Kensington Olympia, and twice in the evening in the return direction. Its principal purpose was to serve Charles House, which was the large Post Office establishment in Kensington. For many years the service was not listed in the official timetable. This gave rise to rumours that part of Charles House was occupied by MI5. It used some old rolling stock and a wide variety of locos. It was reputedly the last train in Greater London to be steam-hauled, and it survived into the 1980s. Tickets could be purchased by anyone. For some of us this was worth the 35 minute walk from Kensington to Wood Lane.

Nick Theale joined us again from Liverpool, and recalled the company’s policy on business travel, especially the lack of discrimination when visiting northern factories with a more senior member of staff. The class of travel reflected that appropriate to the most senior member of the group. Often that meant 1st class Pullman with silver service breakfast on the way, not to mention liveried chauffeurs to pick you up at the station and take you to Prescot, or wherever.

Nick had also discovered a Wood Laner from back in the early 1950s - **Roman Russek**. He had been another of those who got out of Poland at the time of WW2 and made it to Wood Lane – in his case in the Physics Department. The reason Nick came across him was that he was searching for a spare part for his very special old slide rule, and the relevant website described a number of old types including one that had belonged to Mr Russek. He had died in 2011 and his family had provided a brief description of Roman to accompany the item.

It is always good hear of other reunions, where former Wood Laners can get together. **Yvonne Ferrier** came over from Spain last summer and, with the help of **Jon Ballard**, arranged a gathering at the IET (formerly IEE) in Savoy Place. Here are (l-r): **Yvonne, Charles Williams, Ann Huybrechts, Jon, Dave Cole, Guy Secrett, Dave Power and Charles Largie**.



As always there were a number of apologies for all the usual reasons, but two of them also contained reminiscences of those from 60 or so years ago. **Roger Seebold** had been in contact with another “Roman”, namely **Roman Dabski-Nerlich**. Roger has since met up with him and his wife Patricia. Like Roger, Roman was in BDR, and especially recalled the late **Karl Plessner**. Roger has also been in touch with **Pat Andrews** who, like Roger, had to send apologies. Best wishes to them both. The other name from earlier times was **Doreen**

Venus (later Doreen Endacott). Doreen still lives in New Zealand, where she and John went some years ago. **Tony Arkell** remains in contact.

Alex Ranicar joined us again, and made light of his pending double knee replacement and consequent reduced athleticism. Now, in his own words, more or less retired, he is assisting with a new biography of his uncle – Prince Alexander Obolensky. Before WW2 the Prince represented England at rugby, scoring a pair of tries in their famous first every victory over the New Zealand All Blacks in 1936. “Obo” as he was sometimes known, lost his life in 1940 when flying the famous Hurricane fighter plane. He was 23. Alex’s family research also leads him to the conclusion that another of his Russian ancestors was one of those, or even the one, who assassinated Rasputin in 1916. Happily Alex does not seem to have inherited such traits!!



When it comes to memorabilia rather than personalities, **Eve Taylor** (here seen with **Peter Walton**) recalled the end of Bloomsbury Street and the fact that certain cable-related paintings and photos were likely to be abandoned. She rescued some, together with company wax seals that might otherwise have been lost.



Peter continues to maintain our website:

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

There you will find more photos from the reunion. Many thanks for keeping it going Peter.

Many people were grateful to **Frances Verne** who had found surplus copies of The History of Wood Lane amongst her late father's collection and made these, and other items, freely available. One or two are left if needed. She had also discovered a handsomely embellished and signed certificate from around 1960 which related to a bottle of vintage port. The signatories were the Wood Lane senior management of the day, and the bottle was dedicated to their equivalents in the "Senior Mess" 25 years later. The port had gone!!

As always opportunities were taken to gather with one's closest associates. Two examples demonstrate this. First the metallurgists assembled – from l to r: **Annette Robinson, Janet Matheve, Maria Vernon, Malcolm Ward and Peter Raw.**



The photographer was the 6th member - Maria's husband John.

Not to be outdone, the Engineering fraternity managed to "say cheese", so here are **Clive Carroll, Roger Hazelden** (who also worked in Optical Transmission), **Mark Hamlin, Bob Girkin and Bob Price.**



Clive was especially cheerful, having retired 3 weeks earlier, and Roger recalled the other end of one's career when, with a paternalistic concern that used to be the norm, the company found him digs with one of their approved landladies when he first came to Wood Lane. The photo also shows how Mark continues his campaign for us all to wear name badges – a suggestion that we are all beginning to suffer from inconsistent memory!

Holidays seem to play an important part of our lives, with apologies for that reason from **Pauline Kelly** (away with "The girls"), **John Reeves** (Spain) and **Terry Watkins** (Menorca). By contrast **Sue Hurst** was present and explained how much she had enjoyed the Northern Lights. Quite how that other chap got into the picture we do not know.



It is always good to hear from former colleagues, and one who wrote earlier in the year was **Olive Drage**.

She confesses to some frailties but is always pleased to hear of and from those who remember her.

From the archive this photo shows Olive with **Doreen Williams**.

Many thanks to everyone who attends our reunions, and to those who keep in contact. Likewise, to all who continue to find memorabilia. I now have 5 versions of the famous BICC "Cables and Tables", ranging from August 1953 to March 1991. It is all much appreciated.

Mike Hagger
17 June 2018

2018 Reunion – Attendees (54)

Andrew Ainger
Maureen Ayres
Jon Ballard
Anne Buchanan
Clive Carroll
Dennis Cooper
Bill Dawson
Alan Fenwick
John Flegg
Steve Frost
Bob Girkin
Richard Grigsby
Mike Hagger
Shirley and Richard Hammond
Mark Hamlin
Roger Hazelden
Alan Hopkins
Sue Hurst
Peter Jennings and Jude
Mike Kendle
Charles Lergie
Janet Matheve
Brian McCarthy
Les Miles
Lesley Mulhall (formerly Irwine)
Sasha O'Bow Hove
Pedro Perez and Anne
Albert Pinching
Ray Pinner
Ena Prendergast
Bob Price
Alex Ranicar
Peter Raw
Peter Revell
Annette Robinson (née Mattock)
Guy Secrett
David Sevant
Eve Taylor
Graham Taylor
Nick Thearle
Brian Tilbury
Maria and John Vernon
Jan and Peter Walters
Peter Walton
Malcolm Ward
Sandra West
Helen and Chris White
Charles Williams

Apologies

Pat Andrews
Tony Arkell
Jocelyn and Alan Arnold
Annette Burgess
Valerie and Roger Carroll
Tess and Stuart Castle
John Childs
Rob Corne
Sarah Cowper
Olive Drage
Norman Fairey
Yvonne Ferrier
Marion and Ian Fordham
Dave Green
Barbara and Denis Groombridge
Ann Huybrechts
Vivien Irish
Pauline Kelly
Mike Key
George Kitchie
Barry Lambert
Geoffrey Layzell-Ward
Eddie Lightstone
Barbara Lockwood (nee Westaway, formerly Smith)
Barry Mitchell
Elizabeth Ness
Michael Pater
Andy Platt
Michael Poole
John Reeves
Roger Seebold
Rod Seville
Glynn Stainthorpe
Mike Squelch
Eleanor Tarbox
John Taylor
Maureen Taylor
Carol Tilbury
Terry Watkins
Chris Willson