

**BICC Wood Lane  
News and gossip  
June 2008**

**Website**

The Wood Lane website that is kindly run by Peter Walton is undergoing a change of Service Provider. We will advise you when it is up and running again.

In the meantime, if you have any material that you wish to share please contact Peter at:

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or

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**Reunion and gossip**

A total of 53 attended the 2008 reunion at The Antelope – slightly down on 2007, but more than enough to make a considerable hubbub whilst catching up with their former colleagues.

**Stefan Verne** expressed great pleasure at the venue as it illustrated for him how the nature of pubs had altered over the years. He recalled that 60 years ago The Antelope was the only pub that he knew in London where one could order a glass of wine at the bar. How times have changed.

**Roy Farmer** was just back from Chine, where one week earlier he had been touring in the zone latterly hit by the massive earthquake. Not unnaturally given such an “escape” he was following the tragedy more closely than others. His initial view was that the Chinese had the manpower to throw at the rescue but maybe lacked sufficient heavy equipment.

A number of people asked about **Keith Elder**, who had been expected to attend. He had contracted a nasty cold the day before and wisely concentrated on getting well rather than risk infecting others.

**Eileen King** had been in touch with **Jocelyn and Alan Arnold** in New Zealand and reported that Alan was undergoing surgery on his neck. She has phoned him again, and we received the following message from Alan:

*I talked to Eileen on the phone yesterday and she said several people at the Reunion had been asking about my progress so I would be grateful if you could let everyone know my neck operation went well and I am now home again. I now have a permanently stiff neck with two titanium rods and 12 M5 bolts preventing movement. I will be in a hard collar for a couple of months and then a soft collar. Recovery time is six to nine months so I will be a bit restricted in what I can do for a while.*

Amongst those apologising were **Jan and Peter Walters**. Jan had to go to hospital to have a foot operation involving pinning, which reduced her mobility to the level of a Zimmer frame. Happily things are on the mend, and they both hope to attend in 2009.

Another to apologise was **Eleanor Tarbox**, who now works as a consultant at the University of Southampton. As well as passing on her own good wishes, she reported that her father Ron (former Head of Patents and Licensing) is now 92 and still retains his interest in technology, patents and poetry.

It was good to see some who had not attended for a few years, especially **Doreen Greenbury**, who looked a million dollars, and **Steve Frost** who looks after our direction finding at Multimap.

Of course nobody gets any younger, and much of the news was of blood pressure, operations, the quantity of pills taken daily, free bus passes and whether the pension will ever be enough. **Peter Revell** quietly poked fun at the use of "Dear Old Wood Laner" as a form of address, noting that now that he had a Bus Pass he saw the word "old" in a different light!! We will try to use "Former colleague" in future.

**Brian McCarthy** was one who had to apologise at the last minute due to having a heart attack. He wrote again some days later to say that he was improving and looking forward to getting home quickly. Brian has for some time now maintained contact with **Bob Harnor**, who is under long-term hospitalisation following a brain haemorrhage about 3 years ago.

As usual some people travelled long distances to be present on the day, and special thanks are due to them. In particular **Alan Bangay** came up from the South West, and **Valerie and Roger Carroll** arose as some unearthly hour to drive across from Belgium.

A full list of attendees can be found on the website (but see above), and we thank everyone for their voluntary contributions towards the cost of the event. We made a very small loss on the day, but with the small surplus from 2007 that was not a problem.

## **Industry news**

For those of you still following the fortunes of the cable industry it is good to report its general health in the UK has been better than for some time. Significant benefit has accrued from the higher levels of investment in the power distribution network following pressure on the utilities from OFGEM. This is projected to continue for at least 10 years maybe more, and is already leading to delivery times stretching to 18 months. The call for renewable energy, especially in UK from wind, is also having a positive effect as most wind farms are remote (or marine-based) and need inter-connection.

For general industrial cables there are major benefits from the London 2012 Olympics. This will be followed by expenditure for Crossrail and then for the 2014 Commonwealth games in Glasgow.

The contrary factor has been the steep rise in the price of copper and other metals, and now the downturn in the housing market. This is causing uncertainty for the ordinary wiring cables part of the market.

From the former BICC UK set-up Wrexham and Blackley remain as the major production centres. Wrexham is part of Prysmian (formerly Pirelli) and has recently brought another line into production for polymeric cables up to 132 kV. It also houses the components and accessories business previously at Prescott. Blackley remains as the UK's major producer of the multipair external telephone cables for BT, and is now in the hands of a management buyout company called B3 Cable Solutions. B3 has a strong sense of purpose and has already acquired two non-UK businesses to strengthen its activities.

Other active parts of the empire can be found at Leigh, where Brand Rex manufacture certain high performance cables and wiring, and at Huyton Quarry where the winding wires business is under the ownership of the US-based Essex Corporation.

### **Wood Lane redevelopment**

The new retail park on the former laboratory site is due to open later in 2008. For some details of progress go to:

<http://www.alwaystouchout.com/project/24>

<http://westfield.com/london/?redirect=no>

### **2009 reunion**

We will fix a date and venue for a 2009 reunion as soon as possible.