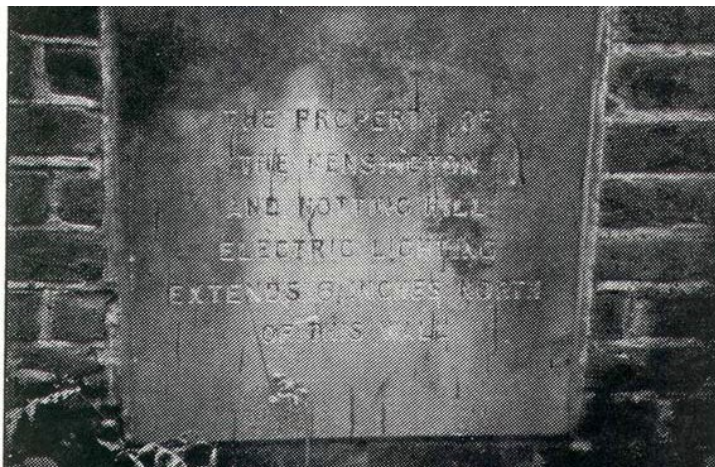


BICC Wood Lane Reunion news and gossip - Summer 2017

For some years after the completion of the Westfield Centre, there was one surviving remnant of the laboratory site, namely the northern perimeter wall with its plaque commemorating the old power station.



With further extension of Westfield now well under way, that too has gone. There is however something remaining that is more important, namely the spirit of Wood Lane, and it was this that brought a record turnout of 72 people to The Bull on Friday 12th May, and almost 30 years to the day since Dr Moore had the unenviable task of announcing closure. Ida and her staff rose to the occasion, with the buffet being widely applauded, and the mid-afternoon chocolate brownies just adding a final touch.

Before eating, we had paused to remember four of our colleagues who had left us in the previous 12 months, namely:

John Stephens-Ofner (Patents and Licensing)
Eileen King (Typing Pool)
Stefan Verne (Polymers and later Research Manager)
Alan Bangay (Metallurgy)

All had been Heads of their respective areas. John had lived abroad for some years, and Alan's family held a private ceremony in Devon, but Wood Lane turned out in large numbers to show support for Eileen and Stefan at their respective services in Ealing. **Pauline Kelly** (one of ten first-timers at the reunion), who was at the forefront of arrangements for Eileen, has written a very personal tribute to her which is appended to this Newsletter. She also found many old photos that caused some head-scratching as to who, what and when, plus the programme from the Annual Dinner and Dance of 1954, held at no less a place than the Royal Festival Hall. This is being scanned to go on to the Wood Lane website, which is still kindly run and maintained by **Peter Walton**. Go to

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

Our thanks as always to him for the work he does. Please continue to pass any potentially interesting material to Peter.

The website also has the earlier tribute to Stefan, with some harrowing revelations of his teenage years towards the end of WW2. His younger daughter Frances, who helped with the tribute, also found a collection of photos which were identified as from a Wood Lane pensioners' lunch held at the Erith site. Three of these are appended.

The 72 attendees included **Ena Prendergast**, who had flown in from Toronto to join us for the first time, and who many of us remember as Mr Tempest's secretary. She recalled the day in 1961 when the Duke of Edinburgh officially opened the McFadzean laboratory, and the fact that her role was as a door monitor. She was caught on camera when the Duke said a few words to her and this caused a significant rumpus because the press, always wanting to show the Duke with attractive young ladies, made it the main story, much to the displeasure of the BICC Board, who were seeking a more serious and image-boosting coverage.



Canada boasts at least two other former colleagues, both of whom were at Wood Lane in the late 50s/early 60s. They are **Mike Key**, who became vice-president at Phillips Cables in Brockville, and **Alan Fenwick** whose colourful career included working for Pirelli Cables near Montreal, Instron in Boston, Massachusetts, and then in Indonesia, where he taught English, and on to China. Now retired, he lives in Vancouver. Contact details are available.

Others who joined us from abroad were **Guy Secrett** (Australia), **Roger Carroll** (Belgium), **Dave Green** (Kefalonia) and, from as good as "abroad", **Ian Fordham** (Outer Hebrides) – Ian and Dave also being first-timers. Here's Dave alongside **Andy Platt** and **Peter Walters**, both of whom had again come down from the North-West.



Ian Fordham, who owns and runs Broad Bay Guest House near Stornoway on the Isle of Lewis, and is also chairman of Outer Hebrides Tourism, came along with Marion, and brought some old photos featuring Ted Morrison – one showing him with Eileen and a yet-to-be identified lady. This is with the appended historic photos in "Archive photos 1".

Amongst the apologies were two from other ex-pats – **Yvonne Ferrier** and **Rob Corne**. Yvonne sent us a photo showing why she finds it so attractive to live in Spain, but she will be over later this summer and would love to meet up with anyone who remembers her. Please contact her direct at yvonne@luzcasa.com



Rob will also be in UK in July, firstly in Liverpool where his daughter is getting married, and then for the weekend of 15/16 July in London. Again there is an invitation to contact him direct if you wish to renew acquaintances robcorne@hotmail.com

Returning to the day's event, **Jon Ballard** took this photo showing the general level of interaction and discourse. Jon was part of a very strong turn-out of ex HV, Electrical and Physics people including **Charlie Williams**, **Charles Largie** and **David Cole** – the last two again being first-timers. Charles Largie recalls working on the laminator project that was mentioned last year, and he continues to work part-time going into his eighth decade!



Bill Dawson was another admitting to passing that milestone. The consequence is that the criminal fraternity can breathe a sigh of relief as he can no longer sit in judgement as a JP.

For understandable reasons two of our former colleagues who are in their tenth decade are much less able to be with us, but have sent their best wishes. **Derry Moore**, like Dave Green, has a place in Kefalonia and the two sometimes see each other. **George Bielstein** has taken a sheltered service flat in Germany, but sadly the full realisation of his plans was disrupted when an accident left him with a broken ankle. He is being well cared for, but his future plans depend upon his recovery, which is slow. He did however report a goodly 90th birthday party.

There was an unfortunate interruption to the day when, mid-afternoon, **Chris White** had a temporary blackout resulting in the need to call for help. The response from the staff and then the paramedics was highly efficient, and a somewhat shaken Chris went to St Mary's Hospital for a check-up. As you all now know, he was able to be collected and taken home by early evening, and phoned the next day to say that all was well. He was hugely appreciative of all the help given, especially by **Anne Buchanan** who so kindly accompanied him, and stayed at the hospital until all was well. Many, many thanks Anne.

Mike Kendle was another who, with his wife Elizabeth, joined us for the first time. He confessed to passing a recent milestone, but remains hale and hearty, as he continues to "commute" from North London to his cottages in North Norfolk. Like a number of his former colleagues post-Wood Lane, Mike joined BT (or whatever they were in 1987) and he recalled at one time being given responsibilities for customers in the Kensington district, and for whom a money-no-object philosophy seemed to prevail, with consequential extra beer-money sometimes reaching the engineers' pockets.

Finally, we had a piece of cable at the event. Here it is. It sat quietly all afternoon next to the champagne bucket that was collecting your money. It did a good job, and so did you because the monies subscribed equalled the charges from The Bull to within $\pm 1\%$, so the small surplus from last year remains. Thank you.



Sadly the cable was not ex-BICC. For the technically minded it is a 3 core 1kV cable with 300 mm² sector-shaped conductors, made by an Egyptian manufacturer to a German specification. O tempora! O mores!

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
24 May 2017

My Personal Tribute to Mrs Eileen King My Friend



I met Eileen in August 1969. I had left a Girls' Comprehensive school and had applied to BICC as an Office Junior.

I was interviewed by Eileen and a rather intimidating man by the name of Mr Jim Condon. Eileen showed me where I would be working and explained the function of the typing pool. I would be working with five other women, and would be expected to touch type and send Telex messages to other branches of BICC.

My first thoughts of Eileen were how beautiful she was and how much she looked like Princess Margaret. She was smartly dressed and at the time seemed a bit Posh! However, she was kind and encouraging and I started at BICC the following week.

I would have described myself as a rather naïve sixteen year old who knew very little about the big wide world let alone the world of BICC and Men!! As with all of "Eileen's girls" she took me under her wing; she was maternal, patient and supportive. When I made a Hash of something (which was often) she would be encouraging. Gradually I got to know the other women, I sat between Shirley and Viv with Eileen at the helm.

Our day started at 9.00a.m. and Eileen would have cycled in from Ealing or arrived with her beloved Bob. Coffee break would be between 10-10.30 a.m. enough time to make rolls and coffee, or wash your hair, hem an outfit Eileen was making for one of us, have a discussion about all manner of things, including sex, who was the man of the moment or who fancied who! Working in a predominately male organisation, men generally figured in the conversations in the typing pool.

To each of us Eileen was much more than a Supervisor. She was a mother figure, a confidant, she was firm when she needed to be but always fair. Eileen had many skills. she could Knit, Crochet, Sew, Paint and was happy to share those skills with “her girls”, plus making outfits for all of us, sometimes having two or three things on the go at the same time. Eileen was generous with her time but more importantly she had a generosity of spirit.



I left BICC in 1976. Our special relationship lasted until her death in August 2016. She is entwined in my history and my life today and that of my family. Eileen was and has always been someone constant and special in our lives. She has been there during the hard times as well as enjoying with us the good times. I miss her greatly.

At times I chuckle to myself; I do not know another place where you could wash your hair in your coffee break, while the Supervisor sits crocheting. Happy Days made happier by Eileen.

Pauline Kelly (née Earles)

Archive photos 1 - From Eileen King's collection



Event unknown –
maybe a Works
Council
About late 50s/early
60s
Those so far identified:
From the left: Eddie
Carter, “Josh”
Reynolds; Eileen; Jim
Greenbury’
Immediate right of
Chairman; Jim Condon
Last but one on the
right: Syd Tempest



1970
Eileen and Shirley
Hammond get to grips
with the new dictation
machines

.....and from Ian Fordham



Archive photos 2 – From Stefan Verne’s collection

(These are from a Wood Lane pensioner’s lunch held at Erith – about 2005 (?))



John Vernon
Tom Ruben
Freddie Irish
Richard Grigsby
George Hamilton

Pat Andrews
Ray Slaughter
Michael Fox
(+ one hidden)



Roger Millward
Colin Coleman
“Johnnie” Walker
Bob Puckowski
Barry Howell

2017 Reunion – Attendees (72)

Andrew Ainger
Pat Andrews
Maureen Ayres
Jon Ballard
Bob Brown
Anne Buchanan
Clive Carroll
Roger Carroll
John Childs
David Cole
Dennis Cooper
Sarah Cowper
Bill Dawson
Marion and Ian Fordham
Bob Girkin
Dave Green
Monica and David Goff
Richard Grigsby
Mike Hagger
Shirley and Richard Hammond
Mark Hamlin
John Hargreaves
Roger Hazelden
Alan Hopkins
Sue Hurst
Vivien Irish
Peter Jennings
Pauline Kelly
Elizabeth and Mike Kendle
Barry Lambert
Charles Largie
Janet Matheve
Brian McCarthy
Barry Mitchell
Lesley Mulhall (formerly Irwine)
Elizabeth Ness
Sasha O'Bow Hove
Pedro Perez
Albert Pinching
Andy Platt
Ena Prendergast
Bob Price
Wordy Price
Peter Raw
Peter Revell
Annette Robinson (née Mattock)
Guy Secrett
Eve Taylor
Maureen Taylor
Graham Taylor
John Taylor
Nick Thearle
Brian and Carol Tilbury
Maria and John Vernon
Jan and Peter Walters

Peter Walton
Ann and Malcolm Ward
Terry Watkins
Sandra West
Chris White
Charles Williams
Chris Willson
Val and John Wilson

Apologies

Tony Arkell
George Bielstein
Tony Blythe
Tony Borer
Annette Burgess
Tess and Stuart Castle
Mim Collis (nee Gardener)
Rob Corne
Norman Fairey
Roy Farmer
Alan Fenwick
Yvonne Ferrier
John Flegg
Steve Frost
Barbara and Denis Groombridge
Ann Huybrechts
Mike Key
George Kitchie
Eddie Lightstone
Barbara Lockwood (née Westaway, formerly Smith)
Derry Moore
Michael Pater
Ray Pinner
Michael Poole
David Power (Physics)
John Reeves
Roger Seebold
David Sevant
Mike Squelch
Llyn and Glynn Stainthorpe
Eleanor Tarbox