

On The Pull or... Let's Meet Bob and Sally...

Gordon Fulton finds out that retirement is far from dull!

Those old Digital folk do some strange things when they retire. I decided to try my hand at ringing church bells, and discovered a fascinating hobby for people of all ages.

There can be few people who haven't heard the church bells ringing, perhaps before a Sunday service, perhaps in celebration of a wedding, maybe a practice night, or sometimes just for the pleasure.

The English-style ringing that you usually hear goes



back at least 400 years, although bells have been rung much longer than that. Each bell is fitted in a wheel and turns almost full circle each time the bell strikes. By controlling precisely how high the bell swings, the ringer can adjust the speed to fit exactly with the others – and that is how the bells are rung in different sequences.

We're talking heavy metal here (literally). The modestly-sized tenor in my local tower weighs in at about 12cwt (600kg approx.). Raising a bell into the ringing position is a good workout, and keeping it up there on the balance certainly keeps the ringer warm on winter evenings.

That doesn't mean ringers are musclemen – we have as many women ringers as we have men, youngsters from about 11 years old to old-timers in their 80s and 90s, all ringing regularly.

So, anyone can start a bell ringing. The trick is to:

- a) ring it at the right time
- b) to stop when told to.

It's a bit like learning to drive – when you start, you're concentrating on the accelerator, brake,

Happy New Year!

AGM Reminder
 7pm: 8th Mar 2017
 Calcot Hotel
[Reading](#)

d e x o d u s

aims:

- To Inform
- To Entertain
- To Connect

steering etc. – but once you've learned the basic controls, the real pleasure begins.

Now, this next bit should appeal to all DECCies. Ringing is full of jargon. Let's start with the 'sally' – that's just the thick, fluffy bit of the bell rope! Ringing bells in the sequence of their weight is ringing 'rounds'. The next stage is 'ringing changes' – where the sequence of ringing is changed by calls from the tower captain. Ringers, who can do this competently will be asked to ring for services and weddings (and yes, ringers are paid for weddings, this is also a profitable hobby).

But the jargon and complexity go on for those who want to progress. I warn you, ringing can become quite addictive! There are numerous methods out there for five bells (doubles), six bells (minor). If you *think* you've learned a method, then the tower captain will decide that's too easy, and call a 'bob' or 'single' – modifying the sequence of two or three bells in the method. So, it's a great mental workout too and a real sense of achievement when it all works,

Just about every tower welcomes visitors and new learners. So, if you're looking for a new hobby and want to make some new friends, turn up at a tower on practice night.

Or, alternatively, send me an email (or give me a 'bell' ☺) and I'll find out what's available near you.

Gordon

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Selling HP Shares

Eric Cocker shares his experience when trying to sell his HP shares

Over the years, I had accumulated a holding of, originally, Digital shares. Over time, these changed to Compaq and then to HP shares. When HP announced the recent restructuring that gave me the necessary kick to go and do something. I wanted to sell shares held in the Dividend Reinvestment Plan and also a share certificate in my desk drawer. The question was 'Who knows how to do that?'

I did the rounds of old friends and studied the experiences of many of my ex-colleagues as described on the Dexodus website, without arriving at a useful-sounding solution. However, a search through some of the more recent documents describing the proposed changes to the structure of the Company revealed some telephone numbers for Wells Fargo.

At least, I had a starting point. I called +16514532122 to be greeted by a most helpful advisor, who listened to my story and then told me exactly what I needed to do. She would send me an email with links enabling me to download the forms that were needed and she talked me through how they were to be filled in. She also offered advice for posting the forms and the certificate back to the USA. The package she said should be tracked and insured for 3% of the value, to cover replacement costs, should they be lost.

I duly created a small package ready to take to the post office and obtained the appropriate insurance. I was able to watch the progress of the package while it wended its way to Minnesota, where it arrived two weeks later. A week after that, to my delight, I received dollar cheques for the sale.

Editor's Note: Thanks for sharing your experience Eric. We have since located the following HP Website page [LINK](#) which contains the basic information needed. Additional information can also now be found on the Dexodus Website via this recently updated [LINK](#)

HPPA Pensions Update

Steve Spillane outlines the ongoing work of HPPA...

Following our recent request, we are very pleased to report we have had over 120 members contact their MPs. Many have had supportive replies.

In so doing, we have learnt a lot about the process of getting changes to the regulations regarding paying inflation increases on pre-97 service. The key change we need is for the government to change their current support for employers to one of active support for pensioners.

The following illustrates the point:

Current guidance

- Any pension built up **after** 6 April 1997 is increased in line with the consumer prices index (CPI) or 5%, whichever is lower
- Any pension built up after 6 April 2005 is increased in line with the consumer prices index (CPI) or 2.5%, whichever is lower.

What we want

- Any pension built up **before** 6 April 2005 is increased in line with the consumer prices index (CPI) or 5%, whichever is lower.
- Any pension built up after 6 April 2005 is increased in line with the consumer prices index (CPI) or 2.5%, whichever is lower.

Our research shows that the majority of 'Defined Benefit' (DB) schemes do provide increases for inflation, some because of scheme rules and others because it is viewed as a 'moral obligation'. We estimate about 10% of DB schemes are *not* paying increases. Most of these are US based companies such as HP, Chevron (Texaco), Foster Wheeler and 3M.

We have met with several MPs - including submissions to Frank Field and the Work and Pensions select committee - and gained support, particularly from the SNP, Please watch out for further information from us which may well include further requests for your help.

Steve Spillane -HPPA

From the Chairman



[Peter Thomson](#)

It's January 2017 or, AD 51 if you like (Anno Digitalis!) and a good time to pause and reflect.

We had an eventful 2016 - once we'd decided that it was both the 25th anniversary of Dexodus being founded and the 50th anniversary of DEC being established in the UK. The 25th anniversary was celebrated at the AGM in March with a newsreel from 1991 and a video interview with Shirley Borrett the founding chairman of Dexodus. If you missed this interview, the [video](#) is still available via the Dexodus website.

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of DEC UK we had our visit to HP Labs in Bristol to hear about their latest research and to have a panel discussion amongst the 'founders' of DEC in the UK. Thanks to Geoff Shingles, Dave Lawrence, John Barrett, Peter Herke and Ken Parker we had some fascinating tales of the early days. Fortunately, we also

captured this on [video](#), so if you weren't able to get to the event you can still see it via the website.

So it looks like it will be difficult to make 2017 even more memorable than 2016. We start with the AGM at the Calcot Hotel in Reading on March 8th and we hope to have a good turnout again. We will have the usual reports from the committee and are currently finalising other topics for the agenda. We are short of a treasurer at the moment so would welcome any volunteers. If you fancy being on the Dexodus committee, don't be shy. We'd welcome some new blood whether you're interested in being treasurer or not.

I'd also like to remind you of the Dexodus 'Assist' programme. This is where we put members in touch with each other so people who need a helping hand can be matched with members who can be of assistance. If you know of any ex-Dec person who may need some help, or you are willing to offer assistance to a fellow Dexodus member, please email assist@dexodus.org.uk.

Editor's Bits and Bytes

[Tony Corbin \(TC\)](#)



Six weeks ago I was looking at a stock-pile of just two unused Newsletter Articles. I admit to wondering at the time about the sustainability of our noble publication in its current form.

I recognised we are all getting older and our memories of all the good times in DEC are inevitably fading with age. So is it soon to be the end of an era I thought?

The answer, temporarily anyway, appears to be a resounding no. As a result of an email plea to the eighty or so contributors of articles during my tenure as editor, more than twenty new submissions have dropped into my inbox. I find that quite remarkable in two respects - the number of contributors there have been in four short years and the number of those who responded to my plea. Thank you one and all!

There has been something of a change though, which you will see reflected, in this and potentially future issues. You'll find slightly less in the way of

DEC memories and rather more stories that focus on subjects like retirement or careers both pre and post-DEC. Hopefully you will enjoy reading this subtly different topic mix. Maybe some of you who have still to put pen to paper, article - wise, might even be inspired to contribute your own story?

So as we enter a new year, contributions this time around from John Heelan and Ian Loughlin take us back to the Cold-War era, whilst John Gray and Stuart Bartlett focus respectively on the uniqueness of DEC's 'Sales' Training and 'the DEC Interview'. Then to reflect the amazing diversity of submissions, Tony James offers a cost-benefit analysis of solar-energy whilst John Morgan introduces us to brother Roy and his exploding GPO van!

Changing subject, can I please alert you to an exciting NEW COMPETITION - details on page 10. You'll see there a photo of some DEC Kit - A PC 3000. There's a £25 voucher for the winner who identifies which ex-Royal Family favourite retreat this was recently spotted in.

Finally, the Spring Newsletter deadline will be **Friday 26th March**. Please send submissions to: tcdexodus@kempshott.plus.com



Learning on the job

John Gray relives his first DEC Sales Call

I'd never actually worked in sales when I joined DEC's Irish operation in 1977, but I was assured this wouldn't be a problem as I'd be given extensive Sales Training. And sure enough, six days into my new job I was off to Maynard for a month of 'sales' training, during which I was taught virtually nothing about selling. Instead I learned about configuring a PDP-11 and the wonders of RSTS/E, RT-11, IAS and MUMPS.

Three weeks into the course an enthusiastic trainer called Jerry Feldeisen stormed into the room and told us to forget all the rubbish we'd been taught and to focus solely on RSX-11M. So I arrived back in Dublin in a state of Operating System confusion, allied to the major worry that I knew nothing more about selling than when I'd set out.

These concerns were quickly overtaken by a new one – I'd been assigned my first target, and it was a big, prestigious opportunity that every supplier in the market was after. A quick glance through the user specification – two handwritten pages – left me feeling we didn't yet have the products to do the job, which screamed 'small mainframe'.

However, our Sales Manager, a larger than life, buccaneering figure known to all as 'Big Pat' was never one to see the negative side. He reckoned we were odds-on to win. This was largely because he thought the prospect's IT manager had once worked somewhere that had a PDP-8. That was my introduction to 'how to qualify the opportunity'.

I was also soon to find out that Pat was a 'big picture guy' who had a tendency to regard the company's product range and price book purely as guidelines. Additionally, he never felt constrained by fact. Generously, he offered to accompany me on my first customer call. What could go wrong?

Buoyed up with enthusiasm we drove to the depths of rural Ireland, along roads that were, at that time, unbelievably awful and we arrived over an hour late for the meeting. We mulled over our solution in the car, and somehow decided a pair of PDP-11/34s might do the trick, with BASIC-PLUS as the programming language.

'Ye're late!' screamed our irate host.

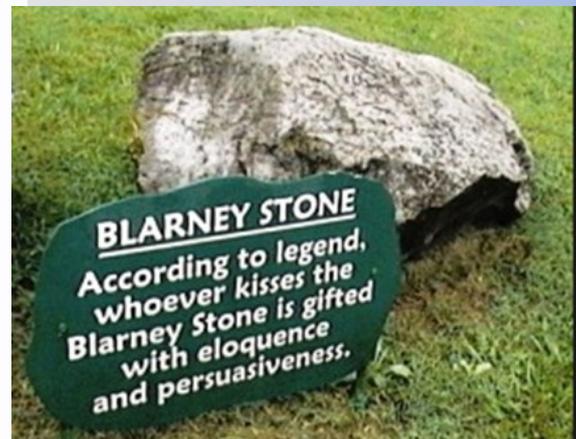
'Sure what's the problem?' responded Big Pat with a disarming smile, 'at least we got the day right!' I noted his objection handling technique, feeling that I was now learning how to be a salesman.

'Well, what have you got for me?' demanded our friend. 'And it better not be a PDP-11. That won't do the job, and ye know it! And I forgot to put in the specification that everything has to be in COBOL, none of that BASIC rubbish!'

This reaction threw me, because it somewhat undermined the proposal we had formulated in the car. But Big Pat remained calm, completely oblivious to this mortal blow.

'A PDP-11?' he sneered. 'What do you think we are? No, what we've got for you is way ahead of that. It's new. It can do batch, real time, payroll, run your factory, everything. And it's got the best COBOL in the market, there's nothing to match it!'

'Great! I love it' said our would-be user, totally captivated by Pat's eloquence and persuasiveness.



I sat there trying to look confident, but I had no idea what Pat had set about describing. I now know that it was a combination of a DECSys20 (price too high) and a VAX (not yet announced, and COBOL still some way in the future), with the best bits of each system being plucked out and combined to make up our 'solution'.

By now our man was hooked. He had to have this wonder machine. I just wanted to know what it was called – and so did he.

'And what IS this machine then...?' he asked, eyes bulging in anticipation.

Big Pat narrowed his eyes, looked around >>>



furtively, and leaned over the desk that separated him from his victim. With a conspiratorial look he whispered 'It's called Product X...'



'Product X? I want it!' The vision of being an early-adopter of Product X had driven the man to near hysteria. I was lost, so decided to try to add some value by turning to the specification and clarifying some points. For the next half-hour I mumbled a few questions, hummed knowingly at the answers, and wrote furiously with appreciative grunts all meant to indicate this was helping us configure the perfect solution and within the stated budget.

At last, we escaped back to the safety of the car and the open road. We stopped at the first pub and ordered two pints of Guinness.

'Well, that went really well,' observed my mentor.

'Eh, did it? Oh, yeah, OK...' I mumbled in reply, before daring to ask 'What the f... sorry, what exactly is Product X?'

'Ah, well now, that might be a problem,' came the reply, 'I'll have to call a few of the guys in product development and check a few things. But don't worry about it...'

Next morning we sat down to work out our next steps. Pat got on the phone as soon as America woke up, and after two hours of pleading, cajoling, and begging, he reluctantly concluded that Product X might not be a reality after all. Instead we would have to bid a DECSYSTEM 2040 – which was three times over the customer's budget, totally unknown to me as a product - and above all, it wasn't Product X!

Amazingly we almost won the sale. In the end it was 'bought' by a new entrant to the marketplace who wanted to build a client base. They failed. I'd survived my baptism of fire, and I'd learned a huge amount – a lot of it 'what NOT to do'. I was a salesman at last!

New Year 'Lexophiles'

With thanks to Malcolm Powell...

- I. A thief who stole a calendar got twelve months.
- II. The batteries were given out free of charge.
- III. A dentist and a manicurist married. They fought tooth and nail.
- IV. A will is a dead giveaway.
- V. A boiled egg is hard to beat.
- VI. Police were summoned to a day care centre where a three-year-old was resisting a rest.
- VII. A bicycle can't stand alone; it's just two tired.
- VIII. When a clock is hungry it goes back four seconds.
- IX. The woman who fell onto an upholstery machine is now fully recovered.
- X. He had a photographic memory which was never developed.
- XI. When she saw her first strands of grey hair she thought she'd dye.

Wanted - Old DEC Hardware!



[Rod Smallwood](#) collects, refurbishes and repairs all types of DEC hardware from PDP8's to DEC 10's. If you have a system, even boards gathering dust in the loft or in the garage, please give Rod a call on 0118 971 2462 or send him an [email](#)

'FIT' For Purpose

Tony James reports on 'micro-generation' five years on...

Okay people, almost 5 years ago to the day, I submitted [an article](#) to our magazine regarding my Solar Panel Installation. I imagine that you have all been gagging to hear if it was worth it.

To date I (or rather the panels) have generated 16,000kw of electricity. Now I know I often get kw and kwh mixed up - as pointed out by Jeff Goodenough in my original story - but I reckon you know what I mean.

In that time I have bought from my electricity supplier 24,180kw of electricity. Generating that 16kw has resulted in a Feed In Tariff (FIT) income of £7,600 tax free, straight into my bank.

What I can't so easily quantify is exactly how much electricity I have saved. During these five years my daughter has moved out and my son took to playing online computer games day and night, then luckily, also moved out. My wife and my habits have also changed such as trying not to use the dishwasher/washing machine/tumble drier until the sun is high in the sky.

As an aside, I have an almost fool-proof way of making sure the sun doesn't shine. Load the dishwasher on a bright and sunny morning, note that we are generating 2kw, switch the dishwasher on and within 5 minutes a dirty great bank of clouds will have appeared from nowhere and suddenly we are down to 200w! OK maybe I exaggerate, but honestly, it happens a lot.

Much of the time we are generating more than we consume and of course vice versa especially when the sun goes down. The FIT payment of 3p/kwh for electricity sent to the Grid works on the basis that 50% of what you generate goes out to the Grid i.e. you don't use. On that basis I have saved around 8kw over the 5 years which at the rate my provider charges of around 15p/unit is £1,200.

Back in my [original article](#) I based my calculations on the fact that my £12,000 installation cost would have brought me in £480 a year in interest. Little did I know that in 5 years time my ISA interest would be going down from £30 per year to a magnificent .01% interest rate sum of £1.20 per annum. In total an income of £7,600+£1,200 = £8,800 or £1,760 a year equating to 14%. Does the expression 'no brainer' come to mind?

Now here is an interesting development, a company, Solarbuyback Solutions Ltd, who have doubtless been scanning the countryside using Google maps to spot solar panel installations, contacted me with a letter addressed to the 'House with solar panels, Broadbridge Cottages etc.' This invited me to submit details of my installation and they would then offer to buy my panels off me in exchange for them getting the FIT payment. I would continue to benefit from the electricity the panels generated and they would also maintain the installation.



They came back with a quote of between £6,592 and £10,829 depending on verification of my data. I declined their generous offer and ticked the box to say I wasn't interested. Needless to say I have received several emails since the last of which offered me a confirmed buyback of £11,185 - for an installation that cost £12k!

Must be worth their while and if so, mine as well. Last years FIT payment was £1,401 and is inflation linked so it would take them less than 8 years to get their investment back not allowing for any maintenance like replacing the inverter. FIT payments are guaranteed for 20 more years so a good investment for them.

Now I might still be around longer than that 8 years and so would be better off not selling, but then I might not. A bit like equity release or one of those wonderful Michael Aspel plans isn't it? My much younger wife, hopefully, has at least double that time and I reckon the house will stay in the family so I think I'll leave it. Also would I want someone owning apparatus on my roof?

There you have it. I'll be happy to provide a 10 year update in 2021 if I can still see the screen!!

Page 007 - Two Terrifying Tales from the Other Side of the Iron Curtain!

Chased by the KGB...

Ian Loughlin endures 'heavies' in Brno

A long time ago, before the wall came down, I was asked to go to Brno to fix a memory system. I can't say much because, at that time, there were no export licences but where there's a will there's a way....

I flew from Heathrow to Prague then took an internal flight on the aptly named Cossack Airways to Brno.

When we landed at Brno the plane taxied to a halt outside a dimly lit Nissen hut. There was already a bus parked outside - engine running. All the



passengers got on the bus and I thought, okay, it's going to take us to the airport terminal building.

Unbeknown to me the Nissen hut was the airport terminal! My hosts were waiting there to take me to my hotel and then to their factory. When the bus sped off into the dark night, with me on it, my hosts panicked and thought perhaps I had diverted to 'forbidden territories'.

They must have twigged what had happened and alerted the authorities because, when I got to my hotel, there was a black car with a couple of 'heavies' wearing badly fitting overcoats waiting to apprehend me. Fortunately it was a town centre hotel and I had been able to use my Boy Scout training to locate it.

The 'heavies' interrogated me for about thirty minutes:

'Why did you get on the bus?'

'Everyone else did.' I replied.

'How did you know which bus to take?' 'It was the *only* bus'.

'Why didn't you go into the airport terminal?' 'It looked like a bike shed.'

Eventually I was able to book into the hotel then go and fix their system. I always felt that someone was watching me closely for the remainder of my trip.



Today's rather different looking Brno Airport

East of Checkpoint Charlie...

John Heelan's memories of the DDR

Nearly forty years ago, during the Cold War and living in West Germany at the time, I was employed by a well-known US research consultancy.

I travelled behind the Iron Curtain to give a series of lectures on computing. It was a memorable experience! Although based in Frankfurt, we had to fly into Berlin's old airport as all road transport between the then DDR border and the city was tightly controlled by the East German military and Border guards.

Landing at Templehof airport itself was an experience. The final approach was between tenement - blocks that seemed to be only a wing-tip away. The only other time I have had a similar experience was flying into the old Hong-Kong airports, the plane so close to the buildings you could steal from the apartment block washing lines!

A 'Mr. Fixit' Berliner met us at the airport. His role was to shepherd us through Checkpoint Charlie with as little hassle as possible. He was true to his task. We were waved through from the American sector by a languid gesture from a bored Black American soldier. We then



negotiated the chicanes of massive stone-blocks to be confronted with an interminable queue of people waiting to cross the border to the East.



'Mr. Fixit', however, led us to the front of the queue waving a large piece of paper (possibly blank!) and saying in a loud voice 'Important and official business delegation!' It worked! We were then challenged by the Border Guards who searched everything and demanded we change all our West German currency into East German currency on a one-for-one exchange basis (the actual going rate was 1:4!).

Once through Checkpoint Charlie, Mr Fixit rushed us to an anonymous grey building where our passports and visas were examined yet again and authority given for us to travel some 80 miles east of Berlin. Leaving the grey building, Mr Fixit drove us through the wasteland that surrounded the East German side of the wall for at least half a mile. It was eerie! A misty night, a few dim street lights and armed guards at every intersection. A very 'Harry Lime' scene!

Suddenly, Mr. Fixit pulled into a deserted side road where awaiting us, with its back doors open, was a windowless panel van. We were greeted in English by a rather charming woman before the van (and us) disappeared into the night leaving behind Mr. Fixit, our only link with civilisation as we knew it. James Bond - eat your heart out! We were now, incognito, en route to the Polish border. After two hours and being stopped several times by military road blocks, we finally arrived at a less-than-luxurious hotel in a charmless, newly built steel town of interminable faceless concrete apartments of the type favoured in the DDR.

We had been hired to lecture on computing to a group of bright young East Germans apparently belonging to the (so-called) 'DDR Import/Export Agency.' Although we used simultaneous English/

German translators (Professors of Leipzig University), we discovered that the students spoke good English. They laughed at mild sex jokes well *before* they had been translated!

The group was tightly controlled by two equally young political commissars who seemed to spend most of their time on the telephone. They (and the professors) would join us for breaks and meals and were very interesting to talk to. They were well travelled—the commissars had been in South America—but they had been severely limited in their views of the world in subsequent years.

Two days later, one of my travelling companions—a stereotypical Texan—was deported for insisting on going jogging every morning. He had also narrowly avoided (so I believe!) a blatant 'honey trap' by one of the students. It was all more than a little worrying as we were stranded deep in the DDR on the Polish border, out of contact with our support team and loved ones plus we'd had to surrender our passports to the local police! The very same local police who were escaping the DDR using stolen and forged passports!

Despite these worries, generally we were well treated and ate some of the best Blue Trout I have ever tasted. The course ended successfully, we retrieved our passports and were ferried back to the same deserted side road in East Berlin in the same windowless panel van. Mr. Fixit was waiting for us and we piled into his car to traverse Checkpoint Charlie this time from the East German side.

Despite Mr. Fixit, we were searched and had to account for all the East German DMs we had spent. Things were remarkably cheap - I bought a working zither as a souvenir for about £5. There was little else one would want to buy as the quality of most stuff in the shops was shoddy. After searching inside and under the car (including wheel arches for DDR escapees), the Border Guards finally released us to traverse the stone chicanes to then be greeted, once again, by a languid wave from a US sentry.

One memory stands out. I still recall the shock of emerging from the grey of the DDR into the ebullient light and 'joie-de-vivre' of West Berlin! That still remains a metaphor for my whole DDR experience and perhaps the real difference between the regimes.

That DEC Interview!

Stuart Bartlett recalls his labyrinthine journey into Digital

My helpful neighbour was insistent. 'If you don't try you won't know' he said. I was, as they say, between jobs at the time and looking for a career in selling computers.

This was back in 1973, I hadn't even heard of Digital but I sent in my CV nevertheless, only to receive the job outline for 'Sales Engineer' as originally advertised in a local Reading newspaper. I discovered that the job required me to have specific software expertise that my career to date had not embraced. That career had included time at Harwell Nuclear Research (my LIP qualifications were in Physics), Ampex (QA and Field Service Engineer) and RCA (Sales Executive in RCA selling magnetic media to DP Managers in the South of the UK). RCA had closed their Global Computer business around this time to concentrate on their Telecommunications business.

I had several job 'irons in the fire' so until my neighbour's persuasive 'nothing ventured, nothing gained' comments I was all set to pass up the Digital opportunity. Against all my expectations, I was invited to attend for interview, two to be specific, each interviewer making light of the stated software knowledge need. By the time I was invited to a third interview I was in that difficult space of trying to 'bat off' other quite interesting job offers, because of my intrigue with the young Digital UK subsidiary. I had decided to follow this intuition, as DEC appeared both impressive and attractive job interest wise.

The third interview was with an Interview Board of two Digital Sales Branch Managers and one District Sales Manager and shall I say, was a little less cosy than its predecessors. I was presented with two lengthy questionnaires to complete. The first focused on Computer and Communications Hardware, which whilst not exactly my 'specialist subject' I was able to provide a half-decent response to.

For a start, I could at least understand the majority of questions, which is more than could be said for the second part of the exercise, the software questionnaire. As I had declared in my CV and in the earlier interviews, I was utterly clueless on the subject. So it was that I handed in my two questionnaires well before the allotted time had



expired. This was largely achieved as a result of the software questionnaire having contained no answers to its, entirely alien to me, questions.

'You've wasted my time' I said quite tersely as I handed over the papers, 'I'm off!' The bemused DEC Managers asked me to 'have a coffee and stay as the marking would be completed in the next half-hour'. I'm afraid I continued to vent my spleen... 'as I said, this has been a complete waste of my time. You say in your advert you want Sales Engineers (I emphasised the word Sales) then you set a highly computer products specific pair of questionnaires that only a computer hardware engineer or design engineer could hopefully complete.'

That was it, I was out of the door, Digital was well and truly crossed off my list of potential employers. I countered my disappointment with the thought that at least I had told them what I thought about their interview process and a somewhat misleading advert.

So imagine if you will, my surprise, just three days later when the phone rang and it was Digital. It was the Country Manager's PA, no less, asking if I would be able to come and meet a certain Mr. Geoff Shingles. I was too shocked to reaffirm my earlier comments and agreed to meet him.

It wasn't plain sailing even then. On arrival, I learnt that Geoff was delayed and still on his way back (from Puerto Rico) and would hopefully arrive I recall around 6.00pm. At Margaret's (Geoff's PA or Secretary) behest, I once more practiced what became a regular habit at Digital, drinking coffee while waiting for a meeting to start. Fortunately the wait was not for too long and anyway, the 10th floor of Fountain House was a very nice place to wait.

Geoff eventually arrived, apologising profusely for keeping me waiting. He didn't waste any more time getting straight to the point by >>>

COMPETITION TIME!

Your Chance to Win a £25 Amazon or John Lewis Voucher...

immediately saying words to the effect ‘Stuart, I gather you’ve had a bit of a bumpy ride interview wise?’ I nodded and replied with a précised and polite account of what had happened at the third interview. Geoff I recall appeared concerned that for a while now this had been the style of their recruitment advertising for sales personnel and agreed the emphasis should be on sales experience albeit with an appropriate technical background. He also confirmed at this point that Digital provided excellent sales training on both its hardware and software products for new Sales people joining the company in both the USA and at Branch/District levels. Geoff seemed pleased that I had raised this point during the overall interview process.

A very convivial and enlightening conversation followed. I’d had two really enticing alternative jobs offered by the time Digital’s offer of employment dropped onto the mat. Despite paying £1500 per annum less than my other alternative options (there was no sales commission scheme at that time of course) I took the decision to join.

What precisely persuaded me and drew me into the fold, I’m not sure, but something did. And it kept me there successfully until my eventual retirement (then Compaq) in 2001.

Not once did I regret my decision to join a very different and uniquely engaging organisation. Upon reflection now, it was the Digital culture, ethics, leading edge products and of course the great people that somewhere, way-back in 1973, my instincts told me this was the right company for me and of course it was!

Editor’s Comments... I’d love to hear YOUR memories of your route into DEC, so if you have any tales to tell, please do contact me. ALSO...



This DEC PC has probably travelled the world. It was spotted last year in what is best described as a ‘former Royal Family favourite retreat’.

To be in with a chance of winning all we need to know from you is precisely where this little piece of DEC history is residing.

To enter, PLEASE click on the email address below:

Dexodus@kempshott.plus.com

and submit your answer which must reach us NO LATER than 1st March.

The winning entry will be drawn from the hat at the 2017 Dexodus AGM on 8th March at the Calcot Hotel Reading.

Good Luck!

**Contributions Sought for
Spring Newsletter
Government Team Feature...**

Stuart Bartlett was a member of the Digital Government Team largely based at SNAM (Snamprogetti House). We are planning a feature on the work of the unit in our next issue. If you were a member of the team please do get in touch with YOUR memories or anecdotes. Usual address: tcdexodus@kempshott.plus.com

2017 Digital Golf Classic

Stuart Haughton confirms the competition is due to return...

Why do we volunteer, play golf - (attempt!), diet, write articles for Dexodus, etc.? Or perhaps more pertinently do not?



I can excel at not doing, I'm one of those types who can happily put it on the back burner until it's really needed, and

then it's often too late - I think we've all been there and probably some still are!

This article has two objectives, one relates to voluntarily contributing your time, this is hopefully relevant to everyone. The second objective is primarily targeted at golfers (apologies, yes I dropped the ball and did not organise a 2016 Dexodus Digital Golf Classic competition!)

Thanks to a nudge from the estimable golfer Mr Alastair Wright, there *will* be a 2017 Dexodus Digital Golf Classic competition, probably in June. Alastair has kindly offered to help, so If you are potentially intending to play in the 2017 golf classic, please send me an email expressing your interest (this is not a commitment!).

The competition is open to aspiring pros and established hackers, the winner will be presented with the Dexodus Digital Golf Classic Shield to adorn your favoured viewing place or glory hole for a year. There are superb prizes, well pretty good ones, not all prizes go to the bandits - most importantly it's a thumping good day contributing to revivifying the fabled Digital 'Esprit de Coeur'.

So, back to objective one—why do people freely provide time and expertise for no obvious compensation?

Search the Web for explanations and you'll find a myriad of reasons why people volunteer their time. Without plagiarising the reasoning, it is accurate to state that willingly volunteering to contribute and help is very beneficial and rewarding for the volunteer.

I encourage you to check out the benefits of volunteering your time. One of my favoured aphorisms is 'life is not a rehearsal,' Another is 'if you don't shoot you don't score!'

My Brother Roy

John Morgan delivers an intriguing tale...

In his early twenties, Roy set-up as a 'Heating Engineer' or plumber to you and I. Good old Dad stepped up with the £75 to buy Roy an old Morris Minor based Post Office van.

An incident happened in the early sixties when guided missile testing was still in



progress at the nearby R.A.E. (Royal Aircraft Establishment) Aberporth. It was a bright summer's day and all was well with the world, the little Morris was going well on a narrow country road until, suddenly, all hell let loose. In my brother's words 'There was a blinding flash of light inside the van; followed by a powerful rush of air (like an explosion). I thought my world had come to an end. It was such a loud bang it set my ears ringing'.

'I very carefully emerged from the van and looked for the cause. I suspected that I had been hit by one of the RAE's missiles. There was nothing to be seen, the van and surrounding area looked completely normal.'

Taking courage in both hands, Roy turned the van around to tempt fate and repeat the run as before. As the speed was increased to the original 40mph it happened again! Flash – Whoosh – BANG! accompanied by the painful ringing ear syndrome.

He pivoted around in the driver's seat to witness the happening first - hand and all became clear. The van had sort of taken-off over a bump in the road, this was exacerbated by a stiff sea breeze passing through a farm gateway and under the van. What Roy had not known was that the roof of the 'Box' (separate from the roof of the cab) was rusted through at front and sides; it opened wide under these conditions like a sardine can letting in the bright sunlight and rush of air. When the brakes were suddenly applied, the near vertical box-roof slammed back again... with an enormous bang!





Letter To The Editor From : *Brian Minter*

Looking at the video of the 50 year gathering in HP headquarters in Bristol made for nostalgic viewing. I couldn't attend, (knee replacement surgery) but it was great to see the panel of pioneers. My God, you all looked so well!

One memory of my time at DEC was rekindled when I saw a familiar name in the literary section of the Sunday Times supplement - Peter Zinovieff. For those who are unaware, he was the pioneer in synthesised music in the U.K., if not the world. Even today his synthesisers are treated in the same awe as Alan Turin's enigma machines in Bletchley Park. Back in about 1974 I was given the job of installing a PDP 8L in Zinovieff's home in Putney, west London. I recall his back garden ran down to the banks of the Thames and I'm sure the varsity boat race ended on that stretch of the river.

I invite you now <click> to [watch a video](#) in which you can clearly see the PDP 8L. There is mention too of the PDP 8S he already had. Oh wow! The cruel said S was for slow, which it certainly was. I recall it took 21 micro seconds to do a 'No OP!' S actually stood for serial because that was how registers were loaded. The parallel loading 8L was going to be a revelation. All sorts went on in that studio. I'm told Paul McCartney and David Bowie were frequent visitors but they certainly didn't appear while I was there. But, while I was installing the 8L I saw movement and heard female laughter on a gallery above me and to my amazement half a dozen naked girls walked slowly across then disappeared from view. I hung around for a bit but they never returned!

Pension Queries

Equiniti Paymaster Limited

Queries regarding pensions in payment are dealt with by Pensions Payroll Services - Digital Team,
Tel: 01293 604429

For Temporary Extra Pension enquiries, for present and/or future payment. For queries on pensions **before** payment, contact the Digital Pensions Help Desk on:

Tel: 01293 604844

or e-mail

digital@equiniti.com

The above numbers are hunt group telephone numbers which members of the Digital Pension Team answer in turn.

If you make an enquiry by letter, please ensure that you quote 'Digital Pension Plan', in order to facilitate Paymaster's response to you. **Address your letter to: Digital Admin Team, Equiniti Paymaster Sutherland House Russell Way, Crawley RH10 1UH**

Reminder: Website In Memoriam Feature

Sadly we are all getting older and inevitably we hear of old friends and colleagues who have passed away.

To honour their memory, we have created an 'In Memoriam' topic on the Dexodus Website. This allows members to enter the news of a friend's death and to add some words about his / her life. To visit the site just click here on

[In Memoriam](#)

If you have received news of the death of a former colleague or friend create a new topic (think of it as a memorial stone!) and enter the details. If you prefer to ask the committee to do this then send the details to Eric Rein (eric@rein.me.uk). The only rule is that the DECeased should have worked at DEC; whether or not that he/she is a Dexodus Member is immaterial.

The 'Best Article' £50 Token Prize - You've got to be in it to win it!

Congratulations to **Alistair Wright** who won autumn issue prize for his article '*DEC Park, the Inside Story*'

To vote for this month's best article log in via www.dexodus.org.uk/poll/jan17 and the voting form will be displayed.

Forgotten your username or password? Click on this link: <http://dexodus.org.uk/user/password> Next, enter the email address via which you have received this newsletter. A link will then be emailed to you which will allow you to login to see your Dexodus username and/or change your password (and of course vote for your favourite article!).

Please send your Spring Newsletter contributions to tcdexodus@kempshott.plus.com by Fri 26th March.

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'Articles submitted by members for publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the Dexodus Committee'.