

From: Tim Strutt  
Sent: 11 March 2023 06:16  
To: info@royalgunpowdermills.com  
Subject: Archive - Additional Information

Hi,

I was just looking at the ERDE Archives, here is a bit more information that I hope might fill in a gap or two.

I started there in 1970 as a sandwich course student in the Organic Section. I was then employed there full time from 1971-74 when I left as an SO on a transfer to the Home Office as a forensic scientist.

At ERDE I worked with John Bell, Dave Salter, and Dave Debenham. For a while I shared an office with Mary Best before she left to marry Frank Carver (who was at Woolwich at the time). Our office was next to the tea room/board room, opposite the organic labs; and was very popular, as it was one of the few places that you could smoke. John Bell left as Section Head and went to the US (Washington Embassy Liaison?) and was replaced by Norman Scilly (not sure of spelling?). I think Mike Healey ran the mass spectrometer which was in another building. A later occupant of the sandwich course position (PhD student?) was Paul Mudge, who was much brighter than I...

Down the corridor were Dick Dedman, John Grindley, Bob Simkins, and Walter Batty (Who had nominally retired, but was kept on as a "Special Merit" position - The rumour was that he had been awarded the OBE in WW2 for firing armour piercing rounds at nitric acid Sprengel explosive bombs!).

I also helped look after the reference/heritage explosives collection which was stored in its own magazine. This was during the "Three Day Week" when the power and heating were turned off. Obviously there were significant problems if the power was turned off in the magazine, so I had somewhere warm (19-20C?) with lighting to do background research.

I enjoyed my time at ERDE - Most of the staff were kind to a new entrant, and with their help, I learnt a lot that would be useful in my later career - Including being co-opted as the IPCS junior staff rep (politics and industrial relations).

I left the Home Office in 1981 and went to work for the Scientific Services Division of British Rail Research, running the chromatography and mass spectrometry labs, and later became "The Computer Advisor". I emigrated to Australia in 1991, where I now live; and initially ran the Australian Environmental Laboratories Group, and later became the MD of Information Services & Technology Pty Ltd.

An example of staff welfare was: In the 1970's suitable affordable local housing was difficult to

find. Some single staff were living in bed-sits (including me), so ERDE made (two?) houses available for single men on the Monkswood Avenue estate. For a while I shared 90 Monkswood Ave with Steve Hutchings (The carpenter [Buildings Management?]). It was a large 4 bedroom house with French windows opening onto a large pleasant garden. Dave Debenham shared 92, next door with Mike (???). After I got married in September 1973 I moved into 97, a three bedroom across the road. Steve got married a few weeks before me, and had moved to a few doors further along from 97. I see that the estimated prices for the two houses are £750,000 and £620,000 - Even allowing for inflation these would be well above what a lowly Scientific Officer could afford...

Regards,

Tim

Timothy Strutt