

Arthur Clarke



As some members seem to be recounting their careers both before and after leaving the RAF I thought I would do the same but divide it into two parts - Part 1 - before leaving RAF. And for those of you who have nothing better to do and can't stand the thought of it becoming a topic of conversation at the proposed reunion - Part 2 - after the RAF.

Part 1

I wanted somewhere near my girlfriend (Walton-on-Thames) so they sent me to RIS Henlow. All I remember about that is the Teahouse of the August Jim and the Café Billet (Pronounced with a French accent). I think Danny Boone was there but not on my team. While away on fitting parties my Henlow bed went mouldy and someone stole my locker. My party were installing BABS while Danny's team were ripping it out. Eventually they caught up with us!

It was then on to Newton for Bloodhound 2 - Danny, Roy, Nick Parker. Then the Ferranti factory where I met my first digital computer. Roy was there but I can't remember anyone else. After that the Northcoates Gulag for 7 long years. Roy, Danny and Nick there again. I went mad there.

41 squadron and Bloodhound 2 provided some relief and I fell in love with Norfolk. Danny and Nick and Stan were present. Two and a half years later I was selected for Skynet and went on a course on spacecraft at Farnborough. I wasn't on the really easy comms side but the hard Telemetry and Command side. Soon after our space-craft was launched the Chinese pinched our access codes and started occupying our channels to order takeaways, so it was off to Texas for 8 of us, to learn about encryption. We had a great time but no 84th I'm afraid. In fact



whilst there I was offered a job by a fishing pal who was the Advanced Projects Engineer (APE) at PYE TV. He said I could be his assistant (AAPE) and help him computerise the TV production line. After a quick interview with his Business Unit Manager (BUM) I was offered the job at a very lucrative salary! At that time the voluntary redundancy scheme was underway in the RAF so I took it with full pension rights and left.

Part 2

The first test jig we designed and hooked up to the leased IBM system 7 sent the whole factory out on strike claiming their jobs were being de-skilled. I sat around for the next three years writing software and waiting for the unions to sort themselves out. Sanyo took us over and I was made redundant, as were the unions.

Next job was as a tech author at Marconi in Norwich writing manuals for Sea Wolf and Tornado. Did a bit of programming of the Automatic Test Equipment (ATE) for Tornado and went on a programming course at the local tech. (Dick Cheeseman visited us from BAE but he seemed a bit harried and had little time to chat.) Made redundant after refusing to move to Chelmsford 10 years later. I'd been training German engineers on the ATE and they had told me about the silly money you could earn as a consultant in Germany so went to Stuttgart working for IBM as a Consultant Technical Documentation Engineer at four times the money I was getting working for Marconi. Six years later I was head hunted by a Czech. agency who needed someone to run the software library (C++) at Alcatel on a project to update the Deutches- bunderposte telephone system. Two years later the project fell through when they gave the contract to Ericson.

Alcatel moved me to Paris onto mobile phone base stations documentation but I really can't stand the French despite the food and wine in the staff canteen; left after two years and came home, formed a company with a tech. author called Russell Kent. 'Clarke Kent Ltd', would you believe. Offices in Sheringham. Work piled in. One morning on my way to work a lorry pulled out in front of me and I hit its side doing 60. Curtains I thought as I hurtled towards the windscreen. But no; Volvo's are built to take care of you and I lived; somewhat damaged said the neuro-surgeon. At that point I decided to retire with my compensation, and go fishing. Still doing it!

I still write the occasional manual for local firms but my heart is no longer in it.