

There have been various statistics flying around, so I checked up and here are the definitive ones...whether you like it or not! I've been a member of the University for a shade over 45 years. I've been on the payroll for about 41 years, and I've been teaching for 37 years (I think that actually beats Brian Spratt and Peter Brown, although not combined!). And I've driven about 115,000 miles to and from work, and run over 150 UCAS days.

People have wondered how I could work for the same employer for all that time; the answer, of course, is that for me it's been a wonderfully varied experience.

I came here in 1970 to read Electronics; that was my first mistake. I hadn't realised that, at the time, the Kent degree wasn't as engineering based as it is today; there was a lot of physics and maths, neither of which were strong subjects for me. The turning point came soon, when in my second term I was taught BASIC by none other than Peter Brown. I never looked back. Within a couple of terms I'd taught myself FORTRAN and assembler for the ICL 4130 mainframe, and a term later I'd hacked the system (with some accomplices) to get total control, being able to write *anywhere* in memory regardless of the memory management hardware (but surreptitiously, although it was a close thing once or twice, and Brian Spratt became suspicious very early on). In my second year, Peter Brown got me interested in his research, and I did a couple of hardware projects in my Long Vacation project and my final year project. I've used the same diversionary approach on awkward students myself (Jim Darby, anyone?)

On graduation, I was offered jobs at ICL, IBM, BT and CAP, but decided to apply for a postgrad programme. I turned down a place at Imperial as it all seemed a bit basic (and it was!) and went to Essex instead. One day I received a phone call from Peter Brown, inviting me back to Kent.

I moved on as a computing postgrad, and started a bit of teaching, as postgrads do. It was at this point that I did my most far reaching (but not difficult) hack. I got into Brian Spratt's account on the student records system by guessing his password at the first attempt (it was his wife's name). I used that to get the address of a girl I really liked, so I could send her a Christmas card. She is now my *current* wife.

I ended up as a part time system programmer, until one day Brian Spratt took me aside and said "There's a lectureship going; you'd be daft not to apply for it". So I did, and I got it. My first module was Peter Brown's one on BASIC! His lecture notes were rubbish (as he said) and he asked if I still had mine from his course; I had, and I used them. In those days we taught for a year, and then we were sent on a teaching and learning course, run by a scary man by the name of Lewis Elton (he was Ben Elton's father).

I was appointed lecturer in March 1978, to start in October. However, in April of that year I was asked to help out a visitor who was trying out a new operating system (EMAS) for our mainframe (the ICL 2960). The result was that I spent the next eight years managing that system as well as teaching, and research was put on the back burner, never to return, at least

officially. I moved on to manage the replacement system (the VAXcluster), as I already knew a lot about it, for the next six years. I also got the chance to do some advanced system programming and microcode modification!

Then I had a change of direction and became Master of Darwin for the next ten years; a fascinating job, lots of free dinners and sometimes boring guests; I could spend ages talking about some of those, but I won't! It was a varied job in itself; not just entertaining and ceremonial, but a lot of committee work, not to mention disciplinary hearings and dealing with more serious matters such as deceased students. The teaching provided a good counterbalance to the occasional doom and gloom.

Then I moved back to Computing and no-one knew quite what to do with me. I became MSc exams officer for all of two months; I think I attended one meeting. Then Simon Thompson asked me to do some admissions work, and here I am, 13 years later, still doing it (well, until this week). Great fun again, and of course the teaching too.

I've worked with some great people over the years, and many of them are here today. It's quite weird that I've taught so many existing and past staff, mainly but not exclusively in computing. I can't remember them all, but the earliest one (although I don't remember him) must be Ian Utting. There's also Jonathan Roberts (gone now), Gerald Tripp, Mark Wheadon, Tim Bishop, Fred Barnes, Olaf Chitil, Daniel Knox, and even Richard Jones. And, apparently, Andy King's brother! I believe there are one or two in IS, and at least one in EDA.

Why did I become an academic? I wanted to play, find stuff out, and experiment. I couldn't see me getting my own computer to play with (how wrong I was!) but there was just so much I wanted to do, and mostly I did it. It didn't happen quite as I planned, and I never became a formal researcher; Peter Brown did introduce me as a "non-specialist specialist", which is probably a kind way of saying "Jack of all trades, master of none". He did say I learned fast, though. This came in useful when I did consultancy work (sometimes quite lucrative) for people such as Pfizer, Dun and Bradstreet, and so on! And of course, things have moved on, and I have my own computers (at last count, we had about 35 at home, excluding tablets, Raspberry Pis and Arduinos, etc.).

I don't suppose I ever expected to be here this long! Things have obviously changed a great deal. The number of students has increased by an order of magnitude, and the number of buildings about the same. The eight teletypes that we started with (under the stairs in the foyer, mostly) have now become many, many PCs round campus, not to mention all the other network clients. And of course bureaucracy has increased dramatically...

The word 'retirement' keeps being mentioned. I want to make it quite clear that I am not retiring. After a couple of pivotal events about 15 months ago, I decided it was time to refocus, that's all. I am going to be working for at least one higher education institution, possibly two. In addition, I expect to be working for a small local start-up company, but

that's under NDA so I can't say more yet. I am going to be representing the BCS in schools, inspiring pupils to consider computing careers. I will also still be involved with the BCS Kent Branch, and with the Kent BCS Student Chapter. I am also involved with the BCS Computer Conservation Society, where I will no doubt run across Peter Linington (although we are working on different projects). And I'll once again have time to play with stuff – such time has been in short supply the last few years.

I would like to thank all my colleagues (in other Schools too) for being so great, and for being so supportive at times. I have served under all seven Heads of School, although they often had different titles. Although they are no longer with us, I owe a particular debt of gratitude to Peter Brown and Brian Spratt, for encouraging me along the way; if it weren't for them, I wouldn't be here today. Thanks to Heather Brown, who showed me how to write proper lecture notes, and provided support when I most needed it. Also, special thanks to Ann Wood, my PA for about 6 years in Darwin College. I must give a big thank you to all of the support staff, particularly the Course Admin Office, who've put up with me turning up early in the morning, usually with a load of work for them. They have provided service with a smile (and occasionally with a snarl...!) I could go on and mention a whole load of people, but this is supposed to be short, so just two more ... Crispin and Martin, who have dealt with many, many awkward parcels delivered for me (and then Martin has carried them to my car as if they weighed nothing!)

If I haven't mentioned you, sorry – take it as read.

Thank you all for coming today; it's really good to see you all.