

# *THE D.G.ENG BUGLE*

Many of you are on the circulation list for Mr Roy Gasson's wealth of jokes and anecdotes that fly through the air arriving with regularity in our e-mail In-boxes. Roy has taken time off to share his story with us and show the more serious side of his engineering expertise. As Author of the Napier Heritage Web site he would appreciate any contributions that you may have in this area. Here is Roy's write-up.



## **A Potted History of Roy Gasson**

I started work whilst still at school, with a Saturday job, serving petrol (with a smile). I can't remember how much I was paid, but I got to keep any tips; also as the workshop was not open on Saturday's, I got lumbered with any puncture repairs. Can you imagine Heath and Safety's reaction now? The reason for the pocket money was for the 'First Motorbike'. The first bike was duly bought and the test passed, then I moved up in size and bought my 1<sup>st</sup> 350cc Velocette, which was followed by another four of different engine sizes in the next 10 years.

On leaving school in 1960 I was apprenticed with D Napier & Son of Acton, starting in the Service Department at Acton 2 - as the Office Boy. I played rugby at school at second row (or number 8) and while I was doing the Office Boy stint I was asked to play for Napier's team, but I was only big enough to be a wing forward. We had some good fixtures

and great games, until a knee injury stopped my involvement with the game in 1964.

All Fitter/Turner apprentices did 6 months basic training; 3 months hand tools and then 3 months machine tools. Each part ended with a test-piece which was not easy to pass. After successfully passing out of the training school, I spent some months on machine tools in the main machine shops at Acton 1. This was followed by a stint in the Engine Build Shop, working on Gazelle gas turbines and the Deltic diesel.

Having had an interview with Mr Bonney the apprentice supervisor, I was transferred to the research machine shop. A marvellous place which undertook all work which the tool room refused, (as they could not make enough bonus on it). We were paid a flat rate so it made no difference to us. We had many jobs that were difficult to make or in some exotic materials for some research project. It was also a good place to be for 'Homers' (as Motorcyclists). Unfortunately due to the Government reducing Research budgets and deciding there would be only one Engine manufacturer (who we called 'them up the Road'), I had to complete my apprenticeship with a Company that made Lift winding gear. I moved to Battersea College of technology as the machine shop Technician in the Mechanical Engineering Department, which involved making anything that was required by the teaching staff and students for their projects. I then transferred, on promotion, to Senior Technician in the Bio-engineering Laboratory. This involved interesting work on a number of artificial limb projects, and film making of projects for BA's, BSc's etc. The College eventually became Surrey University and moved to Guilford. I decided not to move with them.

‘Onward and upward’, I secured a post with the Civil Service in 1968 in the A.I.D Labourites at Harefield, in the Metrology Lab, transferring in 1972 to RR Leavesden (small engines) to the Resident A.I.D office dealing with the inspection of engines in current production and the overhaul of in-service engines. I did 3 months detached duty at Westland’s Yeovil, in the A.I.D engine office, and then back to Leavesden, spent time on the Gem (Lynx Helicopter), during the 600hr assessment, which gave me my first contact with D.ENG.R.D staff.

My next move was to the RR Bristol Resident AQD Office dealing with Defect Investigations of in-service engines, Pegasus build, and Olympus overhaul for Concorde. Due to department shuffles I found myself back at Harefield in the AQD north London District Office, visiting a multitude of mechanical and electrical suppliers to MOD, which was a most interesting time.

The next move was to St Giles Court in 1983, where I worked on Engine Defect Investigations coordinating the issues raised by the armed forces and the responses from the equipment manufactures. One Friday afternoon in 1985 my Assistant Director decided that I would become an ‘Airframe Expert’. The following Monday I was one! A very interesting job which resulted in my QA involvement with the following Project Offices: Harrier (all Mk’s (RAF/Navy)), Nimrods, The Navy Historic Flight Fairy Swordfish, Shackleton AEW, The Queen’s Flight BAe 146, The BBMF Lancaster and the Boeing AWACS. I was not however expecting to be commuting for 13 years on London underground. Fortunately, I was not in the office every day.

When the decision was made in 1995 to have a dedicated QA officer with every Project Office, I managed to secure a post with the Resident Project team at Lockheed Atlanta, procuring

the Hercules C130J, in the deep south of the USA. (Little did I realise this would be my retirement posting)... I had the responsibility for QA of the total package at the factory and at their subcontractors; quite a task, but very enjoyable. I think we surprised the company with our stringent quality requirement for them to build to print as they were used to dealing with the US DoD - who would sign concessions for most things. They got used to it although there was a lot of muttering in the early days. We built a good working relationship, after they adjusted to our ways and contract requirements. They even got used to my peculiar sense of humour. In 1999 when it was decreed my tour would end I decided I would take the early retirement package that was on offer, as I did not fancy living out of a suitcase in the Bristol area for the next three years. I had visited Abbey Wood for meetings whilst in the US and the office setup did not impress me so I ended my Civil Service career in January 2000

I spent the first couple of years of retirement driving the school bus for the local school for disabled which was very rewarding and, in my own time, I used to take a number of the children to the local riding school for the disabled. My main hobby now is the Napier Power Heritage Trust; I was elected as Secretary at the last AGM (I did not duck quickly enough) which can be time consuming. I am trying to get as much of our archives (mainly aero engines) on to computer as possible and we are also running up to the Company’s Two Hundred years in 2008. A lot of effort is being put in to keeping the Company’s name alive and we have got our own website [www.napierheritage.org.uk](http://www.napierheritage.org.uk). Have a look and see what you think. All constructive comments will be appreciated.

*The site is a worthwhile visit and I hope that some of you can assist. Thank you Roy for your contribution to the DGEEng records (Ed).*

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