

Peter Kendrick's DGEng Bugle Story

In a blink of an eye.



The life and times of Peter Kendrick

Do you ever look back on your life and realise that there were occasions when in the blink of an eye everything changed? Well I have and these are some of the blinks that happened to get me where I am today.

I first blinked on the 6th June 1948 in a very war ravaged Portsmouth. My Father who had served in the Royal Navy during the war took one look at me and went back to sea again and I didn't see him again until I was around four years old and about to start school. We had lived in pretty onerous conditions moving from rented rooms to rented rooms and at the time he came home from his long draft had moved to a naval estate in Gosport. I didn't realise it at the time but I was in the same year at school as Anne Widdecombe, although I don't recall her mentioning me at any time!

We moved back to Portsmouth after a

couple of years and my Father continued to serve in the Navy until the mid-sixties. My next blink occurred when much to my and everyone else's surprise I passed the 11 plus and went to the Portsmouth Northern Grammar School. I was a pretty unremarkable pupil but there was a blink that really changed my life. I was in a French language lesson when the deputy headmaster came into the classroom to announce that the 'powers that be' had realised that despite their best efforts most boys when they left school took the Dockyard Exam and went into Portsmouth Dockyard. So they were 'lowering their standards' and would begin to teach Technical Drawing as that subject might be of interest to that type of boy. He said that the following boys would form the first class; and the first name he call out was mine! That made me blink, I always thought that I was ok at French! But how right he was, because I was walking along the street one day when a class-mate pulled up alongside me on his Lambretta and said that he was on his way to take the Dockyard Exam which was just a turn-up and take a ticket type of thing, did I want a lift. So I did, and found that the exam was so easy being comprised of simple logic and general knowledge questions that I passed without any problems. Now I had inherited my Father's mechanical bent but had always

wanted to work with aircraft rather than ships. I had intended to join the RAF, to do what I don't know, but as I had an uncle who had been an apprentice at the Royal Naval Aircraft Yard (RNAY) Fleetlands and he had been the one to get me interested in aircraft I decided that as I would still be working with aircraft I would go there. So in September 1964 I became an Airframe and Engine Fitter apprentice. What a good apprenticeship that turned out to be. The first couple of years were spent filing and scraping lumps of metal, learning about the operation of piston engines (RR Gypsies and the like), gas turbines (RR Nene), welding, turning, riveting, hydraulics, advanced gas turbine (RR Avon and Gnome) and some electrics. At the end of the second year I was asked if I wanted to become a Technician Apprentice studying management techniques with the aim of becoming a PTO4 at the end of my 'time'. Well I did this and spent the next three years split between RNAY where I trained in the technician apprentice drawing office and shadowed various management posts around the establishment, and the Management Development Centre at HMS Daedalus in nearby Lee-on-Solent. As time went on though I felt that I was not experienced enough to go straight into a management position and asked that I be allowed to finish my craft apprenticeship so that I could learn things from the 'bottom up' and in 1969 I became fully fledged fitter working in the Fuel Component Section of the Engine Repair Shop (ERS)

During my years as an apprentice I had a good social life spent mainly zooming around on a scooter and inhabiting the local dance venues. On August Bank Holiday Monday in 1968 I was at a beach party on Hayling Island when one of my compatriots asked if I would go with him to the local Mecca dance hall in Portsmouth that evening. I agreed and whilst I was there I met a girl called Rita and in a couple of blinks I was married with two sons and a mortgage.

Back at Fleetlands I moved from the fuel section to working in a bonded compound getting engines ready for build, then on to the view bay examining engine components for condition prior to build, repair or modification. In 1973 I decided that I'd had enough of being on the 'shop floor and undertook a Ratefixer/Planner course which made me a PTO4 at its conclusion. I moved into the Technical Data Office TDO(E) of ERS where I was responsible for a team producing documentation for the overhaul and repair of marine engine fuel components that were being brought into RNAY with the advent of gas turbine powered ships. I then moved to the Gnome engine section again producing documentation for the overhaul, repair and modification and resolving day-to-day production problems with the Gnome engine. This was at a time when young PTOs were very poorly paid and interest rates rose from 7% to 15% in about a year so life at home was a bit of a struggle. I had

to take an evening job to manage and for about 18 months laboured at the local Sandersons wallpaper factory. I was on the point of leaving the MOD and even had a job lined-up with a local engineering company but I was advised to hang on a bit longer and sure enough things did get better.

In 1976 I moved to the drawing office Services and Design department (Eng/SD) where I had a change from engines and was responsible for the purchase, installation and maintenance of all machinery within RNAY from simple power tools up to the engine test beds. In 1978 following promotion to PTO3, still within Eng/SD I had another change of direction and oversaw the work, on behalf of the Property Services Agency (PSA), of contractors involved in the installation of a high temperature steam heating system throughout RNAY and its associated boiler house and also contractors installing an effluent treatment plant for the waste from a new engine cleaning bay. Anyway, later that year the word went around that the careers development officer was in the 'Yard. This always made a young PTO's knees tremble as it often meant he was looking for someone to ship off to London and sure enough this time it was me! So a blink later I was in Golden Cross House in London and later St. Georges Court working in the Naval Modification Section at the then Head of Aircraft(Naval) Department responsible for Naval Service Mods (NSMs) for Sea King, Lynx and the few remaining Naval fixed wing aircraft. This meant leaving home at

0500hrs each day and not getting back until least 1900hrs, not a very nice existence. I stuck this out for the requisite three years and went back to RNAY at the end of 1982. On my return I became the Workshop Officer for the Marine Olympus, Marine Tyne and Nimbus engine build sections, responsible for five PTO4 Technical Supervisors and 35 engine fitters. In 1983 the Careers Officer came knocking again! He wanted me to move to London for a year and then permanently to Perth in Scotland, but I managed to convince him that that wasn't such a good idea! However, by 1986 I was beginning to become restless and needed a change. I answered a Vacancy Notice and later that year found myself in an HPTO post in St. Giles Court working for Andy Bystra and Bill Revans responsible for repair and overhaul contracts for a large range of engine components at many contractors' sites from Brighton up as far as Liverpool. I enjoyed this work but a few years later after promotion to SPTO I moved to D.Eng2 working for Tim Moores responsible for the Post Design Services (PDS) contract for the Harrier Pegasus engine Digital Engine Control system. This is where I met one Ted Woodgate and enjoyed a good couple of years and a few entertaining visits to the USA. But it soon came to an end when the Harrier Project Office was moved to RAF Wyton and I moved to Future Systems(Air). In this very enjoyable post I was responsible for monitoring Technology Demonstrator Programs (TDPs) at RR Derby on behalf of the DTI. These involved the Advanced Low

Pressure Systems (ALPS) and Advanced Civil Core Demonstrator (ACCORD) for the Trent series of engines and also monitoring Launch Aid programmes for new marks of Trent. I later also took on the Advanced Small Turbine Engine Core (ASTECC) TDP with technologies aimed at the RTM 322 engine in conjunction with RR Patchway and Turbomeca in the south of France. I also advised other departments on engine fuel system matters and the DTI on grant applications. During my time in FS(Air) the move to Abbey Wood was announced and in 1994 Rita and I moved to Bradley Stoke ahead of the office move. A couple of years after we had settled in to Abbey Wood RR announced that they no longer wished to fund ASTECC and I lost a great proportion of my work. At about the same time DTI decided to carry out their own monitoring of the work at RR Derby and I was left with very little work, so it was decided that my post would be given up. It was a great shame as I had enjoyed being at the forefront of technologies which only now I see coming to fruition.

So it was a case of 'nil desperandum' and within 24 hours I had found a job in the team (all two of us!) procuring the Future Airborne Early Warning aircraft (FOAEW) for the new generation of aircraft carriers. I had at last found a job that I really didn't like! It was all studies and too much paper-shuffling for my liking.

One thing that had cast a shadow over the lives of Rita and me was that in 1974 she was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis (MS)

and although she had coped very well with it in 2001 it became very obvious that the time would soon come when she would need constant care. Luckily it was announced that 500 posts were to be lost from MOD(PE) so after quite a bit of argy-bargy with the Grade 7 in my personnel department, there wasn't much of a blink there as the chap dealing with my request didn't think I had enough of a case as it was just a 'domestic' situation, I was made redundant on the 31st December 2001. It was the end of an enjoyable career, along the way I met so many people, some a bit strange, but mostly good people and made some very good friends most of whom I see at the DGEng reunion each year. We immediately moved back to our 'home' area and now live just north of Portsmouth in Waterlooville, close to three of our four grandchildren where I care for Rita and play with my old motorbikes and scooters. We live fairly quietly waiting for, I suppose, the final blink.

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Such an interesting and well written story Peter. Most enjoyable. How very unfortunate that Rita became poorly so early on but you have both obviously successfully managed to make the very best of a cruel situation. We wish you both well.