



Me, during 1st year at uni.

Left the sixth form with 4 A-levels in Maths, Physics, Tech Drawing and Wood Technology. From there I moved on to The University of Surrey to study Civil Engineering – a 4-year sandwich course. Spent the practical year living in a slum in Leeds while working first in the design office in Wakefield and then on the site of the M62. Spent most of my 5 months (over the winter, which was one with heavy snow) doing quantity measurement surveys along the length of the section from the M1 to Huddersfield. However, the previous 7 months in the design office working on bridge designs did come in useful. It meant the Bridge Design option in my final year was a doddle. Due to a rather full social life (especially in the 2nd year) I left with a 2-2 degree, as most of us. Firsts and Upper seconds were very much harder to get in those days.

What was easier was getting my first job – went for 6 interviews and got 5 offers. Plumped for a structural design consultant in London (just off Tottenham Court Road). Started there in the September the Tuesday after the Afton festival. Spent a year on the structural design of housing blocks for the rebuilding of the Lambeth Walk area. This was very repetitive and boring so I looked around for something better and found it at the Dept of the Environment. Got a job in their London office – the Bridge Standards group.

This was much more fun and there is still a bridge designed and supervised by me on the A6 (I think it is) outside Loughborough. However, it is so small you will miss it if you don't know where it is. This project was my design entry for my professional Chartered Engineer exam. I then spent 18 months on the design calculations for a large (250m long) bridge - so called box girder bridge - of which 3 had collapsed during construction. I had to implement new design methods and regulations. Finally, the drawings and bill of quantities were finished and it was due to go to tender. Then we had the 1973 Oil Crisis and it got cancelled. However, to complete my experience I needed at least 1 year on a construction site.

They arranged for me to get a post as Assistant to the Assistant Engineer (Bridges) on the current M27 contract from Cosham to halfway to Southampton. Moved into a bedsit in Southsea while spending weekends on the Island. The initial 12 months was extended to 18 (the contract was delayed). In 67, during the summer holidays. I had met a Swedish girl on a 4-week language course, and we had kept in touch during the following years. In 73 I went over to Sweden for a visit and in 75 decided to quit my job and go there for a longer stay (nowadays this is called a 'gap' year) I spent 8 months there and to fill my free time (when not playing golf – badly) I went to intensive Swedish lessons, 5 hrs a day 5 days a week for 50 weeks. As I had dropped French after the mock O-levels in which I achieved a record low score of 8%, I had no high expectations. However, I was greatly surprised at how easy it was and after the 20 weeks found I was reasonably fluent. During this break the girl and I had decided that there was no future so I returned to the UK.

I had also decided that engineering was not my future either so went back to the Institute of Education in London to qualify as a maths teacher (with English as a foreign language as a subsidiary subject.) When looking for teaching posts I found the only ones on offer were in the big cities and this did not appeal, however I found an ad for people to do a 2-year stint teaching English to adults in evening classes in Sweden. So off I went in 77.

They sent me to a very small town in the middle of a forest and we had the worst 2 winters since 63, 2 weeks in Feb with outside temp. of -17°C and -35°C at night. I got into a routine of digging the car out every morning and replacing the battery which had been taken indoors the night before. When the 2 years were up, I decided to stay on (accommodation with central heating, my own kitchen and bathroom at a lower rent than a grubby bedsit in London) and moved south to Malmo. Spent the next 7 years working on purpose designed courses for business men, technicians etc including one memorable course for technicians from the local airport who needed to learn to read repair manuals for helicopters in English. I never heard of one crashing so I must have done a good job!

In my spare time I joined a few other English teachers and formed a theatre group, we wrote our own material and performed in school in southern Sweden. We performed for expenses only, but it was very enjoyable. My prime responsibility was proving transport (in my 12-year-old Volvo estate), procuring or making props and producing audio material. We had 1, 20-minute play which was performed in silent movie mode with my synchronised sound track. Each performance left me a complete wreck.

Unfortunately, my boss at the school left to become a full-time church organist and choir leader and his replacement and I did not see eye-to-eye regarding how to grade the reimbursement for the different types of course, so I handed in my notice and returned to the UK and an old friend who lived in Camden. He had also taken a 'time out' from being a Design Tech. teacher and was working as a kitchen and bathroom builder (with draft-proofing of sash window as a speciality). At the end of 86 he decided to go back to teaching, so I looked for new job and found one as a translator for IKEA back in Sweden. Started there 1st January 87 – They later told me this was a mistake it should have been the 2nd as the 1st was a public holiday and they didn't usually pay people to start then. The company is based in an area called Småland which is often referred to as the Scotland of Sweden as they are very careful with their money.

The next 3 years I spent translating all sorts of material from product specifications to working methods and computer user handbooks and this provided an excellent introduction to most aspects of the business. In 90 I joined the new Purchasing Division Data dept. My task was to produce user documentation and training materials for a new system for Purchase Agreement Administration with suppliers and an ordering system which distributed orders every 4 weeks (previously twice a year) and with 2 years it was every week). This meant that I had to produce a practice system to train on. In this way, in a period of 6 months I learnt how to build and manipulate an Oracle main frame database plus how to program applications using something called SQL Forms. The system was implemented on Digital Systems Computers in each of our 32 Trading Offices around the world. Linked to the main servers in Sweden and updated each night.

Prior to rolling out the new system, I was asked to advise the regional training managers how to organise and implement training. This was prior to the general use of computers and the managers had no experience of system training. My 2-hr presentation was so successful they decided I should take over the job myself. I then spent a year on the road in Europe and Asia – made so much money on overtime they decided to make me a salaried employee! However, at this point the amount of time I spent on the road was falling rapidly, so the jump in basic remuneration more than made up. I had to work closely with our network guru and managed to pick up a few things from him. I stayed in this job for the next 15 years. I got more and more involved in system development, producing our 'Intranet', pioneering the publishing of information from a database and finally building an e-learning platform with practice modules for self-learning. Until this point, I had spent on average 14 weeks a year out on the road, much of the time in the Far East. I became an expert on airports, airlines, taxis and hotels. I also put on a bit too much weight and had almost permanent jet lag. In my spare time I had got together with an old friend from my teaching days in Malmo and produced PC-based vocabulary teaching aids in the form of word games. These were published as adjuncts to books written by my friend and for 10 years provided enough income to pay for my ever-expanding computer hardware collection.

In my spare time I returned to an early pastime, golf. This time I took it more seriously, taking lessons from the club pro. I got involved with club life first on the social committee where I took responsibility for the production of the club magazine and then on the competition committee which I chaired for a number of years. As I believe that If you are going to do something, do it right, I became one of the clubs 'Rules experts' and a regular competition referee, especially the more complicated ones. This meant on occasions making myself rather unpopular by handing out penalties for non-compliance with the rules.

At the same time, I became a regular participant in a national tour for golfers with 'physical impediments'. Each year we had 6 or 7 2-day competitions at various courses around Sweden. I managed to get my handicap down to 17 and had a certain amount of success. This culminated in 2004 with my selection to represent Sweden in a Ryder Cup style match against England. The First day went well and my pair managed a win and a draw. However next morning I somehow slipped in the bathroom and on the way down to the floor caught my right arm on the handbasin. Seriously dislocated my shoulder and tore a couple of tendons. That was the end of my golfing career.

My last few years leading up to my retirement in 2012 Was spent in developing advanced methods and tools for increasing the efficiency of the forecasting/purchasing process.

Whilst I worked at IKEA I lived in an old wood-frame house built about 1910, on a main road but in the woods. It's main attraction when I bought it being the 3-phase electricity supply in the large garage which I used as a workshop (parking the car in a car port) for making my own furniture. (I had got a B at A-level in Wood Tech). Being an old house, it did require constant maintenance and over the years I completely rebuilt the inside with a new kitchen, new bathroom/laundry extension, new toilet, new roof and new windows (3-glass).

On retirement I decided I was A) far too far from civilisation (80 miles to the nearest pub) and B) getting too old for this high maintenance house. So, I returned to the Island. One problem was that Swedish house prices in the area I lived were no match to those on the island, and the mortgage was far from cleared. So here I am sharing a bungalow with my sister and her husband. My main duty being to do the cooking.

Since moving back, I have been heavily involved in the local branch of CAMRA, the annual Beer and Buses Weekend in October, the PC Users Group – have given a few presentations myself, and have been doing quite a bit of family history stuff. Have also discovered the Raspberry Pi microcomputer and tried my hand at building a few things.

Those of you who can remember me will be aware that I lost my right leg to cancer when in the 2nd year, and I can say it has never been a problem, but now the local centre is about to turn my life upside down by fitting me with micro-processor-controlled knee and hip joints so I will have to learn to walk all over again. Exciting prospect.



As I was in my triker days
2009 -2014



On duty at the Newport hub on the Quay
2017.