

LIRC News

29th January 2026

WELCOME to this quarterly publication from the **London IBM Retirees Club**.

The next LIRC News will be published on Thursday 30th April 2026.

WHAT'S INSIDE

Your committee enjoy receiving interesting articles from you that may be of interest to our club members, especially articles related to your career with IBM.

We have an excellent example of this – you will find it on page 3.

Your committee regularly investigate possible venues and events that may be of interest to our members but sometimes find that it is not feasible to advertise them as a club event.

Information on two more venues can be found on page 4.

FROM YOUR CHAIRMAN

Dear Member,

Wishing you, your families and friends a happy, healthy and enjoyable 2026.

The committee and I would like to thank you for all your support and encouragement during last year and we hope to see you at the events we organise during this year too. As ever, we will do our best to provide a variety and hope that some, if not all, appeal to you.

We finished last year with our Christmas Lunch, which was enjoyed by 75 members and guests, and the feedback has been excellent. We know it was a fair distance for many to travel but we were encouraged by the responses and requests to “do it again next year”! We do appreciate that the location is not the best for everyone but finding a suitable venue further south or west of London remains a challenge, so we have some work to do...

As those of you who receive our monthly Events Bulletin will know, we have decided to offer a Short Break abroad for the first time since we had to abandon our trip to Montenegro because of lockdown. It is not exclusively for our Club but is being offered by Dunwood Travel, who regularly run these holidays and we are joining one of these. Our block booking is now closed but, if you are interested and haven't received the information, you can access it [via this link](#) and I will try to get you added, albeit there being a possibility of a slight price difference because of airline booking times.

Some of you experienced sadness during 2025 and we lost some lovely members. To their partners, families and friends, we offer our sincere condolences and hope that during this year you will enjoy the companionship and warmth of other members to see you through the times ahead.

We also welcome several new members, some of whom are current and retired IBMers and some are family and friends of current members. All are welcome, so please encourage your friends and family to join us via [this link](#).

Our AGM is on **18th February** and we hope many of you can join us for that. [Book via this link](#) if you haven't done so already. We will elect our officers and committee then and, if elected, I look forward to working with them in the year ahead and to seeing many of you at our programme of events.

David Sparrow

EVENTS FEEDBACK

Ned's Old Vic Backstage Tour - Wednesday 26th November 2025

Ned was our guide for this exploration behind the scenes at The Old Vic where we discovered over 200 years of theatrical history, from its opening in 1818 to becoming the home of the National Theatre Company. By 1871 the theatre was put up for auction and sold to new owners who commissioned an entire reconstruction of the interiors by architect Jethro T Robinson. Today it is one of the only two surviving examples of Robinson's work. Acting legends from Laurence Olivier to Judi Dench to Ian McKellen have all trodden the boards at The Old Vic. Our tour enabled us to follow in their footsteps, hear about The Old Vic's fascinating past and see the theatre in a new light.

Our guided tour today of The Old Vic was highly engaging and impressively well-informed, led by our award-winning guide, Ned. Many thanks for having arranged such a worthwhile and entertaining tour. Tony Ford



Christmas Lunch – Tuesday 16th December 2025

We were delighted to be able to reintroduce a Christmas Lunch to the annual schedule of club events, even though it was in a smaller venue than in the past (when our events were subsidised by IBM). Here are just a few of the many emails we received in the days following the lunch.

Many thanks for arranging the great Christmas lunch at the Blue Check restaurant. The food and all the arrangements were first class. Hope you will be able to arrange it again next year.

Margaret and Gerard Tiley

David, many thanks to you and whoever else assisted with the organisation of yesterday's lunch. It was a memorable occasion and so nice to reinstate the event after so long. Dyllis Wretham

Dear David, thank you for your usual excellent organisation of the Christmas Lunch yesterday, we thought it all went exceedingly well. The Blue Check did a grand job with the food and the service and the portions were more than adequate, well prepared and served. I don't think I could stand the heat in their kitchen which must be some masterpiece of organisation. Chris & Maureen Nickless



Cirque Du Soleil - Friday 16th January 2026

Once again, we experienced a dazzling show, bursting with breathtaking acrobatics inspired by insects, where crickets leap skyward, butterflies soar midair, ants juggle with precision, and spiders contort, bend and twist in defiance of gravity. Each act showcased the exceptional talent you expect from Cirque du Soleil. In this breathtaking spectacle, an awkward, quirky insect discovers a magnificent ladybug in a bustling neighbourhood, and they instantly fall in love. Their enchanting romance unfolds amidst a vibrant ecosystem, revealing a world filled with energy and life. Insects work, eat, flutter, and play in a riot of motion, showcasing the beauty and biodiversity of their hidden universe. As a mysterious egg appears, curiosity and awe fill the community, representing the cycles of their lives.



EVENTS PLANNED FOR THE COMING MONTHS

<u>Event Date</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Sponsor</u>
Wednesday 11 th February	Turner and Constable Guided Tour at Tate Britain	Pat Smith
Wednesday 18 th February	LIRC Annual General Meeting (on Zoom)	David Sparrow
Tuesday 24 th February	Old Vic Backstage Tour	Derrick Daines
Saturday 28 th February	Secrets of the Magic Circle	Alan Jarvis
Wednesday 4 th March	I'm Sorry, Prime Minister at the Apollo Theatre	Pete Wells
Thursday 23 rd April	Shadowlands at the Aldwych Theatre	Yvonne Raisin
Thursday 14 th May	Kinky Boots at The London Coliseum	Pete Wells
Thursday 21 st May	Paddington the Musical at Savoy Theatre	Pete Wells
Saturday 30 th May	Abba Voyage at the Abba Arena	Pete Wells
Tuesday 30 th June	High Society at the Barbican Theatre	Yvonne Raisin
Thursday 6 th August	Jesus Christ Superstar at the London Palladium	Pete Wells
Thursday 3 rd September	Cats at Regents Park Open Air Theatre	Pete Wells
Thursday 19 th November to Thursday 26 th November	Autumn Break in Paphos, Cyprus	David Sparrow

We advertise future events in the monthly *Events Bulletin* which is broadcast to club members via email around the 6th of each month. Some of the events listed above will be advertised in the next Events Bulletin but most have already been advertised and may no longer be accepting bookings. A description of those events that have already been advertised, together with an online booking form can be found on the club's website at:

[At A Glance – London IBM Retirees Club](#)

IBM QUALITY INITIATIVES IN THE EARLY 1990's

Your LIRC committee really enjoy hearing from you all and especially when you send us interesting articles and those related to your career with IBM. Adrian Conrad clearly enjoyed reading the October 2025 issue of the LIRC News and was prompted to write an article due to two items that he read; one was the sad news of Sir Anthony Cleaver's passing and the other was the inclusion of the word *gobbledegook* on the page that had a long list of exotic words. Adrian begins his article with "Some of your readers may remember the heady days when two "quality" initiatives came in quick succession from IBM management and everyone in IBM UK received a little brochure in which the great and good of IBM UK management, from Tony Cleaver down, each took one page to tell us how much better things were going to be". If you would like to read the complete article, then please click on this link: <https://retireelondonclub.org/wp-content/uploads/keep/memories/IBM-Quality-Initiative-Article-from-Adrian-Conrad.pdf>



A study just released says that if you drink coffee in the nude you're much less likely to spill it

INTERESTING VENUES AND EVENTS

In the LIRC News last October, we included an item called Interesting Venues and Events. We are including it again and hope you find it useful. It contains information about particular venues and events that may be of interest to our members but are not suitable or feasible to advertise as club events. Here are two examples that we have recently been investigating.

The first one is the **Sky Garden**, London's highest public garden. It is located near Fenchurch Street in central London – its address is Sky Garden Walk, London EC3M 8AF. Visiting the Sky Garden is free but spaces are limited, and visits must be booked in advance through the web site Sky Garden - London's Highest Public Garden. Bookings can be made up to three weeks in advance. As well as being the capital's highest public garden, it showcases two destination bars and two beautiful restaurants, alongside a range of private hire options. It has a dedicated entrance on Philpot Lane, on the south-west corner of 20 Fenchurch Street and has signs at ground level around the building. It is open seven days a week, from early until late. Ticket holders can visit from 10am to 6pm weekdays and 11am to 9pm weekends and Bank Holidays.



The second one is the **Horniman Museum and Gardens**, located in the Forest Hill area of South East London (SE23 3PQ). Visiting the museum and gardens is free, but there is a charge for the Aquarium, Butterfly House and some events. It first opened as the Surrey House Museum in 1890 in the Horniman family residence and in 1901 it changed its name to the Horniman Museum and re-opened in a new purpose-built museum building. The Horniman is named after Frederick Horniman, who inherited and ran his father's business, Horniman's Tea in the 1800's. The huge profits that he made from the tea trade enabled him to expand his collection to around 350,000 objects, including internationally important collections of anthropology and musical instruments. More information can be found on the museum's web site - Homepage - Horniman Museum and Gardens



It is open daily from 10am to 5.30pm, the Butterfly House from 10.30am to 4pm (last entry 3.30pm) and the cafe is open from 9am to 5.30pm daily. The gardens are open daily, from 7.15am (8am Sunday) until sunset.

SOMETHING A LITTLE LIGHTER

Had the worst day ever - I paid a joiner to build me a double bed and he's done a bunk. It's just one thing on top of another.

One day I was walking down the beach with some friends, when one of them shouted, "Look at that dead bird!" Someone looked up at the sky and asked, "Where?"

Beware of a new Amazon scam. My husband ordered me some expensive jewellery, but motorcycle parts came instead. Thankfully they fit his bike...



For those who don't want Alexa listening in on your conversations, they're making a male version.....it doesn't listen to anything.

JUST FOR RETIREES

If you were born between 1930 and 1946, you belong to an incredibly rare group: only 1% of your generation is still alive today. At ages ranging from 77 to 93, your era is a unique time capsule in human history. Here's why:

You were born into hardship. Your generation climbed out of the Great Depression and bore witness to a world at war. You lived through ration books, saved tin foil, and reused everything - nothing was wasted. You remember the milkman and fresh milk was delivered to your door. Life was simpler and centred around the basics. Discipline came from both parents and teachers, with no room for excuses.

Your imagination was your playground. Without TVs, you played outside and created entire worlds in your mind from what you heard on the radio. The family gathered around the radio for news or entertainment. Technology was in its infancy. Phones were communal, calculators were hand-cranked, and newspapers were the primary source of information. Typewriters, not computers, recorded thoughts.

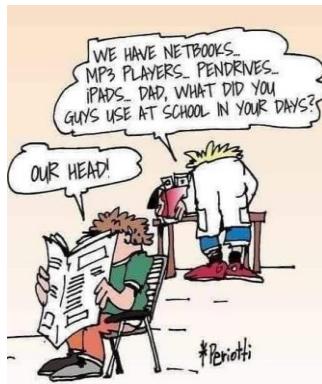
Your childhood was secure. Post World War brought a bright future with no terrorism, no internet, no global warming debates. It was a golden era of optimism, innovation, and growth. You are the last generation to live through a time when black-and-white TVs were cutting-edge and highways weren't motorways.

While your parents worked hard to rebuild their lives, you grew up in a world of endless possibilities. You thrived in a time of peace, progress, and security that the world may never see again. If you're over 77 years old, take pride in having lived through these extraordinary times. You are one of the lucky 1% who can say, "I lived through the best of times."

DUCKS IN HEAVEN

Three women die together in an accident and go to heaven. When they get there, St. Peter says, "We only have one rule here in heaven: don't step on the ducks!". They enter heaven, and sure enough, there are ducks everywhere. It's almost impossible not to step on one. Despite their best efforts, the first woman accidentally steps on a duck. Along comes St. Peter with the ugliest man she's ever seen. He chains them together and says, "Your punishment for stepping on a duck is to spend eternity chained to this man!". The next day, the second woman accidentally steps on a duck. St. Peter arrives, again with another extremely ugly man, and chains them together with the same warning. The third woman, seeing what's happened to her friends, is determined to never step on a duck. She manages to go months without incident. Then one day, St. Peter comes up to her with the most handsome man she has ever seen. Tall, gorgeous — movie-star material. Without saying a word, St. Peter chains them together and walks away. Overwhelmed, the woman says, "I don't know what I did to deserve this!". The man replies, "I don't know about you, but I stepped on a duck."

My boss calls me "The Computer".
Nothing to do with my intelligence - I go to sleep if left unattended for 15 minutes.



The fitness trainer asked me, "What kind of a squat are you accustomed to doing?" I said, "Diddly."



Eating in the 50s

1. Pasta was not eaten
2. Curry was a surname.
3. A takeaway was a mathematical problem.
4. A pizza was something to do with a leaning tower.
5. Crisps were plain; the only choice we had was whether to put the salt on or not.
6. Rice was only eaten as a milk pudding.
7. A Big Mac was what we wore when it was raining.
8. Brown bread was something only poor people ate.
9. Oil was for lubricating, fat was for cooking.
10. Tea was made in a teapot using tea leaves and never green.
11. Sugar enjoyed a good press in those days, and was regarded as being white gold. Cubed sugar was regarded as posh.
12. Fish didn't have fingers.
13. Eating raw fish was called poverty, not sushi.
14. None of us had ever heard of yoghurt.
15. Healthy food consisted of anything edible.
16. People who didn't peel potatoes were regarded as lazy.
17. Indian restaurants were only found in India.
18. Cooking outside was called camping.
19. Seaweed was not a recognised food.
20. "Kebab" was not even a word, never mind a food.
21. Prunes were medicinal.
22. Surprisingly, muesli was readily available, it was called cattle feed.
23. Water came out of the tap. If someone had suggested bottling it and charging more than petrol for it, they would have become a laughing stock!
24. And the things that we never ever had on our table in the 50s and 60s: elbows or phones!

shared by silversurfers.com

THE RAILWAY RIDDLE

The US standard railroad gauge (distance between the rails) is 4 feet, 8.5 inches. That's an exceedingly odd number. Why was that gauge used? Well, because that's the way they built them in England, and English engineers designed the first US railroads.

Why did the English build them like that? Because the first rail lines were built by the same people who built the wagon tramways, and that's the gauge they used. So, why did 'they' use that gauge then? Because the people who built the tramways used the same jigs and tools that they had used for building wagons, which used that same wheel spacing.

Why did the wagons have that particular odd wheel spacing? Well, if they tried to use any other spacing, the wagon wheels would break more often on some of the old, long distance roads in England. You see, that's the spacing of the wheel ruts. Now, who built those old rutted roads? Imperial Rome built the first long distance roads in Europe (including England) for their legions.

Those roads have been used ever since. What about the ruts in the roads? Roman war chariots formed the initial ruts, which everyone else had to match or run the risk of destroying their wagon wheels. Since the chariots were made for Imperial Rome, they were all alike in the matter of wheel spacing.

Therefore, the United States standard railroad gauge of 4 feet, 8.5 inches is derived from the original specifications for an Imperial Roman war chariot. Bureaucracies live forever. So, the next time you are handed a specification/procedure/process and wonder 'What horse's arse came up with this?', you may be exactly right. Imperial Roman army chariots were made just wide enough to accommodate the rear ends of two war horses. (Two horses' arses.)

Now, the twist to the story. When you see a Space Shuttle sitting on its launch pad, there are two big booster rockets attached to the sides of the main fuel tank. These are solid rocket boosters, or SRBs. The SRBs are made by Thiokol at their factory in Utah. The engineers who designed the SRBs would have preferred to make them a bit fatter, but the SRBs had to be shipped by train from the factory to the launch site. The railroad line from the factory happens to run through a tunnel in the mountains, and the SRBs had to fit through that tunnel. The tunnel is slightly wider than the railroad track, and the railroad track, as you now know, is about as wide as two horses' behinds.

So, a major Space Shuttle design feature, of what is arguably the world's most advanced transportation system, was determined over two thousand years ago by the width of a horse's arse. And you thought being a horse's arse wasn't important? Ancient horse's arses control almost everything. Not a lot of people know that!



YOUR LIRC COMMITTEE MEMBERS

We have included below a selection of the current members of your LIRC committee. If you have questions for your committee, please use the contact information below.

THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS WILL ACCEPT TELEPHONE CALLS FROM YOU, BUT PLEASE TRY AND CALL ONLY DURING SOCIALABLE HOURS.

David Sparrow	Chairman	LIRCnews@gmail.com	020-8440-5871 07711-627788
Harvey Schonfeld	Treasurer	harvey.schonfeld@gmail.com	01276-453205
Alan Jarvis	Club Secretary & Minutes Secretary	alanjarvis029@gmail.com	07586-354341
Peter Morley	Membership Secretary	retibmlon@outlook.com	07779-102015
Tony Shortman	LIRC News Editor	shortmantm@gmail.com	01844-350014

ANNIVERSARIES, WEDDINGS and FINAL RESTINGS

Sadly, we have to report the passing to final rest of our colleagues:

- John Horn who died on Tuesday 14th October 2025
- Frank Watson who died on Friday 31st October 2025
- John Chalke who died on Tuesday 4th November 2025
- Pete Sadler who died on Saturday 8th November 2025
- Simon Treen who died on Friday 28th November 2025
- Ron Fielder who died on Saturday 29th November 2025
- Nick Buchanan who died on Monday 1st December 2025
- Lee Budd who died on Monday 22nd December 2025
- Terry Duckworth who died on Sunday 4th January 2026

For those members who know Terry Duckworth, we have been informed that his funeral will be on Sunday 8th February 2026.

INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT THE EARTHS POPULATION

The population of Earth is around 7.8 billion. For most people, it is a significant figure. However, if you condensed 7.8 billion into 100 persons, and then into various percentage statistics, the resulting analysis is relatively much easier to comprehend. Out of 100:

- 33 are Christians, 22 are Muslims, 14 are Hindus, 7 are Buddhists, 12 are other religions and 12 have no religious beliefs.
- 11 are in Europe, 5 are in North America, 9 are in South America, 15 are in Africa and 60 are in Asia.
- 49 live in the countryside and 51 live in cities.
- 75 have mobile phones and 25 do not.
- 30 have internet access and 70 do not have the availability to go online.
- 83 can read and 17 are illiterate.
- 26 live less than 14 years, 66 died between 15 - 64 years of age and 8 are over 65 years old.

If you have your own home, eat full meals and drink clean water, have a mobile phone, can surf the internet and have gone to college, you are one of a minuscule number of privileged people (in the less than 7% category).

Amongst 100 persons in the world, only eight live or exceed the age of 65! If you are over 65 years old, be content and grateful. Cherish life. Grasp the moment. If you did not leave this world before the age of 64, like the 92 persons who have gone before you, you are already the blessed amongst humankind. Take good care of your health and cherish every remaining moment.
