

LIRC News

31st July 2025

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

The next LIRC News will be published on Thursday 30th October 2025.

WHAT'S INSIDE

IBM has been running world-wide conferences on the theme "What's next in the future of computing". If this is something that might interest you, we have included a video link on page 3.

Over the past four years, we have included many articles from historic **IBM UK News** publications. Today we have our final historical article for you – "IBM's House of Cards" on pages 6 and 7.

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FROM YOUR CHAIRMAN

Dear Member,

It only seems like yesterday that I was writing my last letter for the LIRC News – where on earth is this year going? It's been lovely to see our events so well supported and we were able to share a week with over 40 others at Heythrop Park, the big new Warner venue, last month. The weather was ideal; the venue excellent; 'old hands' and 'newbies' socialised; and we all had a great time. As a result of some bringing friends too, we now have several new members in our Club and we welcome them all.

A good number of us will meet again at Potters Resorts in October and it is further evidence of how important our Short Breaks across the years have become in cementing friendships. Yes, we are looking at something for next year but the challenges of managing a large group of the 'not so young' outside the UK since Brexit has narrowed our choices. Pete Wells continues to come up with numerous theatre trips for us and almost all sell out very quickly. We have even managed to fill last-minute vacancies for some events when members have fallen ill (we still have a couple of tickets left for Oliver! on 24th September 2025). The reports on the recent visit to Hadestown seem to be echoing my own experience – a brilliant show.

All members of your new committee are working hard and you will see more events advertised in the coming months with some varied and interesting places to visit. Watch out for our monthly Events Bulletins and, if you are not receiving them, please ask Peter Morley (retibmlon@outlook.com) to add your name to the distribution list.

Now, I know that we are still in summertime, but as so many expressed a high level of interest in our Christmas Lunch, we have booked it. Even if you registered interest, you still now need to book, so if you haven't done so, [please book now](#). We need a minimum number of 80 to take over the whole restaurant. We are nearly there but we need a few more to confirm...the date is Tuesday 16th December 2025 (<https://www.retireelondonclub.org/event/christmas-lunch-2025/>).

I hope you are all enjoying the good weather and look forward to seeing you at many of our upcoming events – in fact today, as I write, we will be going to the T20 Vitality Blast match at Lords to see Middlesex v Surrey and on Saturday, Battle Proms at Hatfield House (hope the good weather holds...). So many varied things to attend.

As ever, we have sadly seen some of our members go through hard times of late and some have even left us. We offer our love and support to those left behind and hope you will feel the warmth of the Club membership around you. Now, enjoy this wonderful issue of LIRC News and we hope it lifts your spirits and encourages you to keep in touch.

David Sparrow

EVENTS FEEDBACK

Thames Mudlark Tour – Thursday 5 June 2025

An enthusiastic group of us gathered at New Crane Place, Wapping, to experience that most curious and historic of London pastimes: mudlarking. Though the name suggests squelchy boots and thick river mud, the reality was quite different. This stretch of the Thames foreshore was surprisingly firm underfoot, covered with pebbles, rocks, and centuries' worth of discarded fragments from London's rich past. Before descending the historic (and rather steep) New Crane Stairs, we were treated to a fascinating 20-minute briefing from our guide from the Thames Explorer Trust. She explained what we might discover - pottery shards, clay pipes, bones (a nod to the Victorian abattoirs that once lined the riverside), and other remnants of everyday life spanning hundreds, even thousands, of years.

As we gathered to compare our discoveries, the guide singled out a fragment found by my wife. To her delight, it bore a blue design she recognised from Chinese folklore, known as "The Cowherd and the Weaver Girl". A small but poignant connection across cultures and centuries. For me, the experience had an added layer of meaning - having grown up in South London, worked for many years at IBM Southbank, and with a great-great-grandfather who worked as a Thames Waterman around 1860, it felt like walking in the footsteps of family history. First inspired by watching the 2011 TV series Mud Men, hosted by Johnny Vaughan, this outing more than lived up to expectations. No treasure, perhaps—but a treasure trove of memories, camaraderie, and connection to London's endlessly layered past. Len Picott



Short Break at Warners Heythrop Park - Monday 23 to Friday 27 June 2025

Set in 440 acres of glorious parkland, Heythrop Park is one of Warner Hotels' grandest buildings – a stylishly refurbished Grade II listed hotel. It provided the perfect country escape for us where we could choose to unwind at their luxurious spa, challenge ourselves on their par-72 golf course, take walks in the wonderful grounds, or engage in other pastimes.

Sandra and I would like to thank you for the welcome and kindness you all showed us during the visit to Heythrop Park. We both thoroughly enjoyed the facilities, food and fun we had with you all and look forward to joining you all again in the future. Unfortunately, we will be unable to join you at the event at Potters in October, but we hope that all goes well and you have a wonderful time. We are about to complete the application to join your wonderful club and much appreciate your kind invitations. Ian and Sandra Kydd



The Pudding Club Dinner – Friday 27 June 2025

This event was timed to coincide with the end of the short break to Warners Heythrop Park (about 24 miles away). The Pudding Club dinners, which have been running since 1985, start with a glass of Buck's Fizz and an introduction by *The Pudding Master*, followed by a light main course of Chicken, Fish or Vegetarian option. Then there is the Parade of Seven Traditional Puddings (with three of them in this photo), with all its noise and ceremony. The aim was to taste all the puddings and then to vote for your favourite pudding of the night over coffee. The votes are rolled forward to pudding of the month, quarter and then the year. As you can see from the photo, guests depart with certificates in hand!



EVENTS PLANNED FOR THE COMING MONTHS

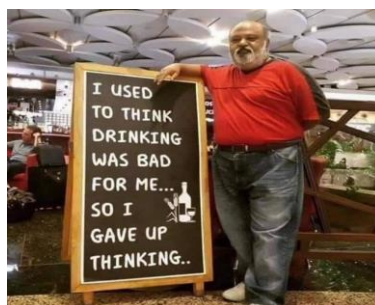
<u>Event Date</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Sponsor</u>
Tuesday 12 th August	Jurassic Park Immersive Experience	Pete Wells
Thursday 21 st August	Brigadoon at Regent's Park Open Air Theatre	Pete Wells
Thursday 28 th August	Good Night Oscar at The Barbican	Pete Wells
Thursday 11 th September	The Tina Turner Musical at the Aldwych Theatre	Pete Wells
Monday 15 th September	Buckingham Palace State Rooms and Garden Highlights	Pat Smith
Monday 15 th September	Organ Recital at the Royal Academy of Music	Alan Jarvis
Wed/Thu 17/18 September	Leeds Castle and the National Fruit Collection (in Kent)	Harvey Schonfeld
Wednesday 24 th September.	Oliver! at the Gielgud Theatre	Pete Wells
Wednesday 24 th September and Friday 26 th September	Aston Martin Heritage Museum	Derrick Daines
Monday 13 th October to Friday 17 th October	Short Break to Potters Five Lakes	David Sparrow
Thursday 23 rd October	War of the Worlds at the Hallmark Building	Paul Welstead
Saturday 6 th December	Festive Family Carols at St Martin in the Fields	Pete Wells
Tuesday 16 th December	Christmas Lunch at the Blue Check Restaurant in Bushey	David Sparrow
Thursday 18 th December	The Importance of Being Earnest at Noel Coward Theatre	Pete Wells

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 above have already been advertised in an Events Bulletin and although some may no longer be accepting booking requests, others have places available, for example, the Christmas Lunch. A description of each event, together with online booking, can be found on the club's website at [At A Glance – London IBM Retirees Club](http://www.retireelondonclub.org).

IBM THINK 2025 – WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE FUTURE OF COMPUTING

IBM has been running an annual conference in various countries around the world called IBM Think. The web link below is for a video taken from that conference where some of the brightest minds at IBM Research unpack two radically powerful, though radically different, styles of computation, giving you an inside look at what's coming next in enterprise computing. This video may not appeal to everyone, but it does give us an insight into the latest thinking within IBM Research. The web link is:
[What's next for the future of computing - IBM Think 2025](https://www.ibm.com/press/us/2025/09/01/ibm-think-2025-what-s-next-for-the-future-of-computing/)

POINTS TO PONDER



Thinking back to when "a new hip joint" meant someplace I wanted to go on Friday night.



Things that used to hurt my back:

- Jumping off of garages
- Crashing my bike
- Falling out of a tree
- Diving in the shallow end
- Contact sports

Things that hurt my back now:

- Sneezing
- Washing the dishes
- Brushing my teeth
- Tying my shoes
- Rolling over in bed

THOUGHTFUL QUOTES

- "I have lived through some terrible things in my life, some of which actually happened." *Mark Twain*
- "Don't worry about avoiding temptation, as you grow older it will avoid you." *Joey Adams*
- "What I like about cities is that everything is king-size, the beauty and the ugliness."
Joseph Brodsky
- "Blessed be the young, for they will inherit the national debt." *Herbert Hoover*
- "I don't believe in Astrology; I am a Sagittarius and we're sceptical." *Arthur C Clarke*
- "I have lost friends, some by death.... others by sheer inability to cross the street." *Virginia Woolf*
- "Boldness is to eat at a restaurant without paying the bill, audacity is to come back there the next day." *Bernard Shaw*
- "Competence, like truth, beauty and contact lenses, is in the eye of the beholder."
Laurence J Peter
- "The holy passion of friendship is so sweet and steady and loyal and enduring a nature that it will last through a whole lifetime, if not asked to lend money." *Mark Twain*
- "It's one thing to surmise what happened, but we don't speculate on that until ballistics confirms what happened." *John Hansen*
- "As I hurtled through space, one thought kept crossing my mind – every part of this rocket was supplied by the lowest bidder." *John Glenn*
- "A computer once beat me at chess, but it was no match for me at kickboxing." *Emo Philips*
- "The first piece of luggage on the carousel never belongs to anyone." *George Roberts*
- "If God had intended us to fly, he would have made it easier to get to the airport." *Jonathan Winters*

WHAT IS ANOSOGNOSIA?

We always include jokes in the LIRC News about the joys or otherwise of our advancing age, so hopefully you will find this article reassuring. In the following analysis, the French Professor Bruno Dubois, Director of the Institute of Memory and Alzheimer's Disease (IMMA) at La Pitié-Salpêtrière Hospital (Paris), addresses the subject in a rather reassuring way:

"If anyone is aware of their memory problems, they do not have Alzheimer's."

1. You know you forget names of families.
2. You know you don't remember where you put some things, but you remember you had them.

It often happens in people 60 years and older that they complain that they lack memory. "The information is always in the brain, it is the "processor" that is lacking." This is "Anosognosia" or temporary forgetfulness. Half of people 60 and older have some symptoms that are due to age rather than disease. The most common cases are:

- forgetting the name of a person,
- going to a room in the house and not remembering why we were going there,
- forgetting a movie title, actor, actress, etc, and
- wasting time in searching where we left our glasses or keys.

After 60 years most people have such a difficulty, which indicates that it is not a disease but rather a characteristic due to the passage of years.

Many people are concerned about these oversights, hence the importance of the following statements:

1. "Those who are conscious of being forgetful have no serious problem of memory."
2. "Those who suffer from a memory illness or Alzheimer's are not aware of what is happening."

With thanks to French Professor Bruno Dubois

WORD DEFINITIONS

CLASSIC: A book which people praise, but never read

EXPERIENCE: The name men give to their mistakes

MISER: A person who lives poor so that they can die RICH!

SMILE: A curve that can set a lot of things straight

TEARS: The hydraulic force by which masculine willpower is defeated by feminine waterpower

DIPLOMAT: A person who tells you to go to hell In such a way that you actually look forward to the trip

COMPROMISE: The art of dividing a cake in such a way that everybody believes they have received the biggest piece

OFFICE: A place where you can relax after your strenuous home life

CONFERENCE: The confusion of one man multiplied by the number present

POLITICIAN: One who shakes your hand before elections and your confidence later

CIGARETTE: A pinch of tobacco rolled in paper with fire at one end and a fool at the other

Actions prove who
someone is, words
just prove who they
pretend to be.

-UNKNOWN

"The forest was shrinking,
but the trees kept voting
for the Axe, for the Axe
was clever and convinced
the Trees that because his
handle was made of wood,
he was one of them."

~Turkish proverb

A CHINESE WELCOME

On a recent visit to Beijing, this helpful brochure was provided by the hotel. Obviously, it has been translated directly, word for word from Mandarin to English.

Getting There:

Our representative will make you wait at the airport. The bus to the hotel runs along the lake shore. Soon you will feel pleasure in passing water. You will know that you are getting near the hotel because you will go round the bend. The manager will await you in the entrance hall. He always tries to have intercourse with all new guests.

The Hotel:

This is a family hotel, so children are very welcome. We of course are always pleased to accept adultery. Highly skilled nurses are available in the evenings to put down your children. Guests are invited to conjugate in the bar and expose themselves to others. But please note that ladies are not allowed to have babies in the bar. We organize social games, so no guest is ever left alone to play with them self.

The Restaurant:

Our menus have been carefully chosen to be ordinary and unexciting. At dinner, our quartet will circulate from table to table, and fiddle with you.

Your Room:

Every room has excellent facilities for your private parts. In winter, every room is on heat. Each room has a balcony offering views of outstanding obscenity! You will not be disturbed by traffic noise, since the road between the hotel and the lake is used only by pederasts.

Your Bed:

Your bed has been made in accordance with local tradition. If you have any other ideas, please ring for the chambermaid. Please take advantage of her. She will be very pleased to squash your shirts, blouses and underwear. If asked, she will also squeeze your trousers.

Above All:

When you leave us at the end of your holiday, you will have no hope. You will struggle to forget it.

HISTORICAL NEWS

Over the past four years, we have been reproducing interesting articles from historic copies of the **IBM UK News**. We have selected only those that we feel would be of interest to our club membership and in this issue of the LIRC News we are including the final and longest one. It is reproduced from issue 46, published on **3rd December 1971**, and is an interesting reminder of the importance of those 80-column punched cards in the 1970's.

IBM's House of Cards

IBM's Harrow card plant is perhaps one of the Company's less impressive buildings from the outside; a 30 thousand square-foot plain construction, housing manufacturing and office areas, situated in a quiet backwater off Harrow's small but busy High Street. But the plant, part of the DP division, has the responsibility for several products and total UK manufacturing responsibility for one, IBM punched cards. On the face of it that may not seem a very great responsibility. But if the punched cards are not made exactly right and to the right design; if they are not delivered exactly on time anywhere in the UK and in the right quantity; millions of pounds of customers' DP equipment could stand idle. It is Harrow card plant's job to ensure that situation never comes about.

"We are very much a little business here," said 39-year-old London born Vernon Ford, the plant manager and boss of 120 personnel. "We are a completely separate entity controlling and handling raw material at one end and at the other ensuring door-to-door delivery of a high quality finished product." Guarding the efficiency of the cycle that goes on in between is a team, many of whom are long service employees, who underline the feeling of group belonging and Vernon's "little business" atmosphere. At Harrow the personnel are stayers. "We are proud of the fact that 25 percent of our personnel have been here for ten years or more. We believe this is the highest of any location in the UK. Our cashier joined the Company when it was known as ITR 35 years ago." Most of the managers reporting to Vernon, himself 11 years with the Company, have ten years or more service.



Vernon Ford, plant manager.

It is not surprising that between them they have honed down the card plant operation to a tight manufacturing cycle that can, in a special emergency, reduce a standard ten-day turnaround to 48 hours including delivery time. Vernon Ford and his managers explained the plant's departmental functions and how they can achieve a high level of customer satisfaction. "We supply the IRD operation," said Vernon, "with standard cards and special cards and arrange shipment of magnetic tapes. "The biggest item is the standard cards of which the major ingredient is of course paper. But paper of a special type. It is known as tagboard and there are few suppliers of it in Europe. It has to be just right and of a very high quality.



A general view of the manufacturing area.

The paper is in fact bought by central purchasing at Empire House principally from one major UK paper merchant. Samples of each batch (and the plant uses enough to cover the pitch of Wembley Stadium a foot deep) are sent to the plant's fully equipped laboratory for testing and into the control of Brian Roberts, quality and design manager. "In the laboratory," explained Brian, "we use £20,000 worth of equipment to put the paper through a number of stringent tests that can last as long as two days. The paper is tested for strength, abrasion, smoothness, fold, porosity, thickness, friction and curl and that's not the end of the list. "But we reject very little. The standard of tagboard from suppliers today is very high. A few years ago we were rejecting two or three hundred tons a year." The QC tests are set by specifications prepared by IBM US and guarded by the European central quality control lab in Boeblingen, Germany. There are twenty-six different tests.

Once the paper batch has been accepted by IBM, bulk delivery is made and the huge paper bales, any one of eight standard colours, are cut into 'cheeses', long rolls three-and-a-quarter inches wide which produce nineteen thousand cards each. There are two or three bulk deliveries a day and very little is scrapped. The 'cheeses' are then taken to the plant's £100,000 rotary press machines which cut, trim and pack the cards. But before the machines can roll they need one important item; the customer's own personalised punched card pattern.

The link man between plant and customer is Paul Schurer, orders and shipment manager. "Our biggest customer at the moment is the Ford Motor Company who have over 120 different card designs of various colours. We also supply the punched cards used with the Barclaycard credit system. Barclays is another big customer. Three million cards is the biggest single order we have received recently. More usually the order is between 50 and 90 thousand." When ordering, more often than not by telephone, the customer quotes an electro-cylinder number. Each card pattern often designed initially by Brian Robert's department, is etched onto a cylinder, given a number and stored. When the customer orders, the cylinder is pulled out of a store of more than 20,000 cylinders, popped onto the waiting rotary presses and away the cards go neatly packed 10,000 cards to a box selling at 55p a thousand.

Vernon Ford for twenty years an opening bat with the Osterley Cricket Club is confident he can show a growing number of visitors that his team can face almost anything thrown at them. Vernon is supported by his own professional buyer; a 24-hour engineering support group; accounting, invoicing and administration: and all the other skills which make up a successful plant team. In his house of cards he holds a winning hand.



'Cheeses' are stored ready for the presses.



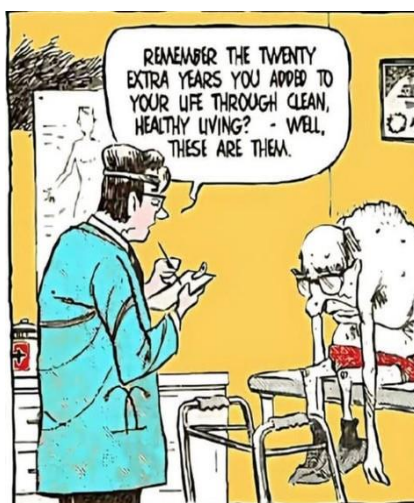
Paul Schurer.



Like a well-stocked wine cellar, customers' cylinders are stored in ordered rows.

"DUNNING-KRUGER EFFECT."

... a type of cognitive bias, where people with little expertise or ability assume they have superior expertise or ability. This overestimation occurs as a result of the fact that they don't have enough knowledge to know they don't have enough knowledge.



105 year old lady's advice to us all



"For better digestion I drink beer. In case of appetite loss I drink white wine. In case of low blood pressure I drink red wine. In case of high blood pressure I drink scotch. When I have a cold I drink Schnapps."
"When do you drink water?"
"I've never been that sick!"

YOUR LIRC COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Included below is a list of all 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.

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Pat Smith	Event Organiser	patsmithpotton@gmail.com	07802-245623
Paul Welstead	Event Organiser	Welsteadp@gmail.com	07984-964503

ANNIVERSARIES, WEDDINGS and FINAL RESTINGS

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

- Nigel Pinches who died on Monday 21st April 2025
- John Chrystal who died on Thursday 17th April 2025
- Jonathan Adams who died on Tuesday 13th May 2025
- Bill Foulkrod who died on Tuesday 10th June 2025
- Alan Gregory who died on Friday 13th June 2025
- Phil Taylor who died on Monday 7th July 2025

ON A LIGHTER NOTE

"Do you have a good reason for calling your wedding off?" "I can't say I do."

I think my wife might have been secretly taking goalie lessons. I certainly wouldn't put it past her.

What do you call a woman that sets her credit card bills on fire? Bernadette.

What do you call 100 sheep rolling down a hill? A lambslide.

What's green, has six legs and would kill you if it fell out of a tree? A pool table.

Boeing uses potatoes to test their in-flight Wi-Fi, as they reflect and absorb the signals similarly to people. The project is called Synthetic Personnel Using Dialectic Substitution - or SPUDS.

I went into a shop the other day and asked if I could pay by card. The shopkeeper said "Of course. Which card do you have?" I answered "The 6 of spades".

It was mealtime during an airline flight and the flight attendant asked passenger John, "Would you like dinner?" "What are my choices?" John asked. "Yes or no," she replied.