

NOTES FROM PETER MELROSE – PERSONNEL MANAGER WYTHENSHAWE 1964-1966

1 I was amongst the first 10 or so in inhabitants of the Northern Computer Centre at Wythenshawe when it opened its doors in 1964.

Editor's note -who were the other 9? Answers on an email to groveblue@sky.com.

2 I was at Wythenshawe on the evening of a summer thunderstorm, which very, very, nearly flooded the computer room.

Editor's note – If this was the same night I was actually on shift when this happened. With heroic efforts from the Operators we managed to do what King Canute had failed to do 900 years earlier. I recall an outstanding contribution from Mike Hughes who I can still picture with his trousers rolled up past his knees like he was on Blackpool beach.

3 I used to attend, on monthly basis, a very informal lunch, held by the vicar of the adjacent Church, to which various 'social workers' were invited. There were health workers, probation officers and 3 or 4 Personnel Officers. At each lunch, a speaker talked about his or her job. When it came to my turn to speak, I asserted that a Personnel Officer had to take a very firm line with Line Mangers about a number of issues e.g. possible dismissals. To my horror, and unknown to me, a reporter was present, and the headline (and I don't think that I exaggerate when I say this) of the following week's edition of the Wythenshawe Express read "BELIGERENT PERSONNEL OFFICER". Needless to say the article was pinned up on several notice boards, by various members of staff.

Editor's note – Years later, during the expansion of Wythenshawe under Shell UK Ltd, we used to use this church for car parking and the occasional meetings. Perhaps the good relations between us were formulated in these early days.

4 And on a somewhat 'murky' note, as someone who was responsible for Establishment Services, I remember being discreetly informed that, during the night, the Computer Operators were, quite wrongly, using the ladies toilets and would I look into this matter. Very circumspect enquiries led me to realise that, in fact, this dastardly deed was being committed. When asked why they did it I was told that the soft toilet paper, which was in those discriminatory days, not available in the gents. So much for the image of the young, mach, Operations Staff.

Editor's note – I am glad you got to the bottom of that problem Peter.

I would also like to include a personal anecdote involving Peter. When we moved from Hemel in 1965 our house did not have central heating. Full central heating, whether Oil or Gas, was outside our limited budget so we decided on what was then called 'background heating. This consisted of a glass fronted slow burning fire which heated the water and a limited number of radiators. I consulted Peter about obtaining a Company loan for central heating and when I mentioned that it was to be coal fired rather than oil he did not bat an eyelid. The application succeeded and we have been grateful to Peter ever since.