

I started my career in 1965 at the Ministry of Defence working on communications research then joined the University of London as an operator on an Elliott 803. Electronics and IT was a very unusual job for a girl in those days and I was very often the only female working in the team. I never stayed very long in a job as I was 'working my way up through the ranks'.

I was a programmer (mostly Mk IV) at UCSL Stonebridge Park in 1972- 74 transferring from URL Isleworth. Not long but my short time there was memorable - more on that later.

In May 1974 I left for a post of Trainee Systems Analyst at Bayer. After qualifying, I designed parts of their Accounting systems which had previously been paper based. In Sept 1975 I left Bayer to have my first child - no maternity leave in those days.

My career was on hold for 10 years whilst I was a full time Mum to my 2 sons - very little childminding facilities available at that time but I would not have missed those years with my sons despite not having very much money.

In 1987, I went back to work (initially part time) at ICI Agrochemicals Research as an analyst and designer. It was quite daunting at first as technology had moved on so much in 10 years. However it was incredibly interesting as I helped design and implement their first 'real time' research sample ordering system which ran for about 12 years.

In 1991 ICI Agrochemicals (like many companies at that time) decided to 'focus on their core business' and all the IT staff were made redundant but were offered a 'wonderful opportunity' to work for Hoskyns (later to be part of CAPG). This opportunity was so wonderful that the boss only worked for Hoskyns on a 2 year secondment (so we found out later). It was all about saving money but it wasn't long before the costs that Hoskyns charged for the services of their former staff increased rapidly. As the 'tied' contract was for 5 years, ICI could do very little about it. So I worked for Hoskyns but still at the ICI research site for a while but then was transferred to various Hoskyns sites around the SE doing resource management - a very boring, nothing job - so I resigned in March 94. In 1994 ICI Pharms, Agro and Specialities became Zeneca.

Within a couple of months I was back at Zeneca Research as a Management Consultant on contract, planning the roll-out MS Office across the site. When the 5 years exclusive contract with Hoskyns/CAPG was up, I became a 'permie' again.

By this time I was a Project Manager and one of the most interesting projects was a Document Archive and Retrieval system for the Intellectual Property Department including full text 'fuzzy searching'. I gave quite a few external presentations on this technology as it was very innovative at that time. Then the Year 2000 'panic' was looming and I knew that the sample ordering system that I had implemented 12 years before was not compliant. The s/w was written by an external company and I had noticed some years before that the year field was 2 digits and looking through the code some helpful soul has included a comment to the effect that the system would cease to work after 1999 and had included a name and contact number with an extortionate sum of money to put it right! Bless!

So as part of a new very large project to deliver a replacement system for all the research data, I was the PM for a new sample ordering system. This time the system included fully automatic sample storage and retrieval (nicknamed the Haystack) - a large bit of 'kit' which was housed in a new laboratory building. An incredibly interesting project and it went in on time and on budget!

In 1999 Zeneca Pharms merged with Astra but Zeneca Agrochemicals remained as such with a 'for sale' notice on it. In 2000 Zeneca Agro merged with Novartis Agro and became Syngenta so all the computer systems, commercial and research, had to be 'merged'. Seeing as the former Zeneca Research system had been totally replaced only a few months before, it would seem sensible to adopt it for the new company - but no - the decision was to start again - so this would be the 3rd time that I had delivered a sample logistics system - yawn! By this time I was at management level so was responsible for forming the various technical project teams with an overall brief for the delivery of the systems as a whole and acting as a technical consultant trying to ensure that the 'holes' that had been encountered before were not 'fallen into' this time around. It was a time of endless meetings and training courses so I became an honorary member of the RSME (Royal

Society of Meetings Engineers), whose adopted theme song was 'A Little Less Conversation a Little More Action' especially as one of the projects was named LVIS.

Over the next few years I began to look forward to retirement and to fulfil my ambition to go back 'home' to my native country. In June 2008 I retired but continued to work for Syngenta as a part time contractor for another year as a consultant. Syngenta is now to be bought by the Chinese so I'm so pleased to be 'out of it' so long as my pension is safe.

I am now living back home in Cornwall after some 50 years. My main interest is family and local history and I have written several articles and given presentations to local groups on these subjects. I also enjoy visiting and walking around the county especially in the off-season when there are less 'emmetts' about and when it's not raining. Both my sons are married and both live in Cheshire. My elder son is a senior manager in a civil engineering company having a technical background in geology. My younger son is a GP and surgeon. I have 4 grandchildren - 1 granddaughter and 3 grandsons

As for my memories of UCSL:- amending the salaries programme to change the tax calculation and watching the print come off to make sure it was OK - very interesting but scary; the mainframe partitions having to be reconfigured into one so the whole machine was dedicated to run one of my jobs overnight oops; machine dumps - pages of hex from crashed jobs which were poured over by the 'real' techies - I was always in awe of those guys; evacuating the building (to the pub) on several occasions when there was bomb scare; train strikes and getting a lift from a couple of the guys from the Austin Company who were on the floor below us (one of which became a family friend and is godfather to one of my sons); the Christmas party in the canteen and dancing to Wings 'C Moon' with a certain gentleman from sales (who shall remain nameless); over the footbridge to the pub for lunch on a Friday; remembering this was the age of the micro mini and 'burn the bra' I was told that there was a 'book' on what colour knickers I would be wearing each day! - my leaving present: a junior sized article of ladies clothing, colour black, with an apple in one cup and an orange in the other (a certain young Geoff Thomas was responsible that I think) and the leaving speech full of technically based innuendo a copy of which I still have. I didn't stay long but I learnt a lot which helped in furthering my career in the years to come and I had a lot of good fun with some great people.