

The Story of David.

David comes from a family with a widely travelled history.

David's 4 Grandparents were all Chinese Missionaries and this has left a lasting connection with China for the whole family. His parents were devout Christians; though religion, didn't rub off on either David, or his brothers.

David's parents, Isabel and John, both grew up in China and went to boarding school there but only met and married when they were in London during the war.

David was born on the 12th February 1947 , in Hampstead, London in one of the coldest winters last century. He was the eldest of three, the others being Bryan and Malcolm. Bryan is with us today, together with Malcolm's children.

As a child David developed asthma. It was the time of the 'Big Smogs' of the early 50's and it was their doctor's advice that the family move away from the city.

They certainly did !

David's father got a job in Hong Kong as an architect, building a large new hospital, and so David spent his early years in Hong Kong, from the age of seven.

The journey out to Hong Kong was by ship and David spent the 6 weeks roaming the ship and investigating, particularly the engine room and any machinery the crew would explain to him. This experience coloured the rest of his life.

When it came time for the boys to go to secondary school the UK Government had a scheme at the time that paid for ex-pats to send their children to boarding schools in the UK. The first journey to school was again by ship with his

mother, and this time David was 13 and even more interested in all the technical areas on the ship.

David went to St Lawrence College in Ramsgate which was strongly Christian and by all accounts enjoyed it. In his final year he became Head of House and this experience made him realise that managing people was not his forte and he needed to work in a technical field.

As the government only paid for one journey home each year, it was necessary for David and his brothers to spend Christmas and Easter holidays with relatives in England. David came to stay each year with his older cousins Ian and Neil in Hove and they all became very close and have remained so. His brothers went to other cousins in Southampton and Bristol. Members of all these families are here today as the family has excelled at keeping in touch.

At school, he had to join the school's cadet force. He excelled at shooting and won a prize in the national competition. He also learnt to fly a glider. This was so enjoyable that he applied to the RAF for a flying scholarship and was accepted.

Soon after David had left school, his parents returned to the UK. David's scholarship with the RAF had fallen through because he wanted to defer it and spend a year in Hong Kong after school. He became a Tourist Guide taking visitors around by car to all the sights. He took great delight in telling people about it for the rest of his life.

As flying was no longer an option, he decided to come to the new college in Brighton and study the emerging subject of Computer Science. This was in 1966 when computers were huge and took up a whole room. His interest in things mechanical and electrical led him to choose subjects that involved controlling machinery by computer.

His year in industry was spent in the steel works in South Wales. These were the biggest and most dramatic pieces of equipment that he ever worked on.

This was followed by his first job after college when he worked in a cement production plant in the Chilterns. The largest of the 5 kilns was computer controlled. He had to visit different levels of the kiln and found walking on open mesh walkways high in the air was a scary thing for him. This was the last time David would spend all day on a production plant. Later jobs were usually office based.

Its one of life's finest experiences turns into a bond of friendship and love and this was to happen for David. When in his final year at college, David met Alison. Two years later they were to meet again. They fell in love and during Alison's final year at college they married and started making a life together.

Their first home was in the Hanover area of Brighton. However they didn't live there long as David was now working for a consultancy in London and they sent him on a contract to the European Space Agency in Germany. It was back to the ex-pat life-style of his youth and David loved it. He worked on the software for 3 satellites while there and thrived on the buzz and pressure, building up to the day of the launch.

After 3 years in Germany, David and Alison returned to Brighton and bought a Victorian villa with 4 bedrooms and a large garden in Ditchling Road. Here they lived happily for 40 years.

After 10 happy years on their own, they were delighted to welcome Eleanor into the world, four days after the hurricane in 1987.

David loved being a Dad. He took Eleanor on trips to London, where the Science Museum was a favourite. London Zoo, the Tower of London and HMS Belfast all allowed him to share his interests with her. He also took her swimming as all his time in Hong Kong had made him an excellent swimmer.

Once David was living back in England, he worked as a Technical Consultant. He worked with small teams of people from his employers and from the clients to create technical solutions using computer control.

One of his favourites was the conveyor belt system for the stored deeds held by the Halifax Building Society. The initial computer program was straightforward but then they found they had to cope when boxes fell off and the system became totally confused !

Another that he often talked about was a 3 month contract to the Ukraine to install the computers for a plastics manufacturing plant. This was in the days when you could book one telephone call home a week and even then it was liable to cut out ! It was a German plant being installed so David finally got to learn some German, 2 years after leaving Germany.

Later he became a management and systems consultant for Arthur Young which became one of the five big management consultancies in London.

This was a different role. It required large skills in questioning people to extract the facts about the work required. This then had to be analyzed and the solution written up in such a way that the client would hopefully take his advice.

His last job was as an independent consultant. He was part of a team encouraging European shipping to reduce the carbon emissions produced when fuel was burnt. This

involved several countries and some trips to Brussels to talk to MEPs such as Caroline Lucas who went on to become our MP. This stimulated David's evangelical ancestry and he became increasingly involved with Climate Change and the future.

Labour party + Green party + schumacher + Fabians

Life as a consultant often meant living away from home in hotels. David would telephone every day to talk to his family. It also meant that he ate and drank far too much good food and drink and was unable to take much exercise.

On the prompting of his younger brother Malcolm, David took up off-road cycling. He found this exhilarating after the initial fear of cycling straight down a steep track. He found many routes around Brighton on the Downs and on good days would travel 20 miles before arriving home extremely muddy and grinning from ear to ear. He even invested in a second bike so that he could have one when he was away on a long contract. And of course he needed all the clothes and equipment that went with it, he liked his kit and having the proper gear.

The final phase of David's working life was as an Inventor. From past projects, he realised that massive area-wide power failures could be managed if domestic fridges could be fitted with device to monitor the electricity supply and cut out if it was in trouble. He formed a company with 3 friends and started to get the idea developed. He was awarded a Patent and reveled in all the new areas.

Sadly the project never came to fruition. David had to accept financing from a Venture Capitalist group and they took over control and ousted him. He never got over the betrayal and had to be steered away from the subject from then on.

Retirement

His retirement has been enjoyable, and spent productively with several new interests.

He has used his technical knowledge at the library freely helping the public with I.T. issues and skills. He has also given time to Age UK offering technical help.

David, volunteered for the Brighton Conservation volunteers every week on projects like restoring chalk downland to encourage Butterflies and building paths and steps where requested.

It was during some such scrub clearance work that David learned how to use a Scythe and then had a course with Brighton Permaculture Trust.

Never one to do things by halves, David soon kitted himself out with all the necessary Scythe blades, there are more than one; along with a sharpening stone, an anvil and a hammer to whack the blade. He was a very enthusiastic teacher of how to use a scythe and used to demonstrate it at Stanmer Apple Day each autumn.

The final strand was as an Independent visitor for a child in the care system. This is intended to provide someone outside the system for the young person to talk to. He involved himself in decisions about the child's education and was very articulate in his discussions with authority. There were also regular outings, the favourites being to the cinema and to Newhaven Fort.