NEWSLETTER May 2020

Gentlemen, welcome to another publication of our Newsletter in its new form. Hopefully, according to the news, we have reached the peak of this nasty pandemic and we can look forward to a bit more freedom.

I have managed to keep busy, and the odd thing I have needed has been sourced off the internet.
I have been off on some fascinating tangents looking for information on the web. If anyone is bored and want to watch an amazing man produce projects in his small shed/workshop look up Allen Millyard ** on YouTube. He is a motorbike man, but he will take a hacksaw to an engine or two and end up with a working vee 8 or something, or an engine based on two *Pratt and Witney* cylinders. He does not use drawings much and relies on his imagination.

Being retired I have got used to not rushing and enjoying a slower pace, but now I think my pace is getting even more slower! I do miss the social workshop mornings but we will have to wait for a while before considering starting up again.

Club News.

Thanks to David Proctor. David has been in correspondence with *Walker Midgely*, the Club insurance providers, and has secured a reduction in premium, reflecting our clubs enforced inactivity this year.

David said it is also worth reiterating that there is currently, no extension to the validity of boiler test expiry date, regardless of Covid-19 lockdown and the consequent difficulties in undertaking tests.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this newsletter and we would welcome anything for inclusion in the next one. Keep safe.

Jonathan Milner

** Allen Millyard is a 'Man In A Shed" sensation and should be much better known. If you want to see all his videos they are at this link: https://www.youtube.com/user/millyardviper

Below is an example where Allen converts two four-cylinder blocks into a six-cylinder block with a milling machine, hacksaw, coarse file, Tig welder and a barbeque!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GhrLg6mZQIo

After clicking on the links, to return to the newsletter click the back arrow at the top left-hand side of the screen.

- **A *Myfordboy* Single Cylinder, Double Acting, Reversible Engine.**

  The *Myfordboy* engine, was designed by David Abbott and as described at:
  https://myfordboy.blogspot.com/p/the-myfordboy-steam-engine.html

  In summary this is a single cylinder, double acting, reversible engine with bore 0.5" and stroke 0.625" using slip eccentric valve gear.

  The attached overleaf shows how my version is today. Had Doncaster happened it would have been fettled, polished up, painted and fitted to a decent (oiled oak) base. However, given the lockdown (and the good weather in April) the garden, a little regrettably, moved up the priority list.

  Whilst I have not been able to fully test it with compressed air, if I blow with all my might (could this be offered as a Covid-19 test?) it just turns over - with a bit of a helping flick - in each direction. I am reasonably confident therefore that it will work to a greater or lesser extent.

  This is my first model engine and the building objective was to see if I could resurrect and acquire the tools and skills to progress to something more demanding - a marine triple expansion engine for example.

As for lessons learnt there have been many. A few are:

1) However long you think a build will take double it - at least.

2) Do not assume drawings are perfect - check before you cut metal.

3) Have the courage to make changes to the published design or construction methodology if you need to –there is more than one way to 'skin a cat' as they say.

4) Use a tap steady to get threads vertical.

5) Don't trust castings. I had two flywheel castings from the vendor both of which were flawed.

6) You Tube is a great learning resource - if used discerningly.

Of course, I would never have been able to get this far without the encouragement and inspiration of my fellow PEEMS members. In particular many thanks to George for tuition and help with the early milling operations on the frame. I was so enthused I ended up buying my own mill!

Thanks too to Mike for his support, use of his mill and donating a lump of aluminium which, when bushed with a brass core and machined up, became the flywheel.

As for future work I am flirting with the idea of building a brake dynamometer for the engine to measure its power. This would use a load cell configured to measure the torque which, when combined with RPM in a PIC or *Arduino* or similar, would provide an electronic display of RPM and Power. If this were to be successful maybe thoughts would turn to a torsion meter for in line power measurement.

And of course, it needs a boiler!

David Proctor

- **Lathe Alignment**

  This is an answer to Colin Bainbridge's problems with lathe alignment as described in the April Newsletter. Colin seems to have done the usual remedies.

  Having had a *Super 7 Myford* for forty-three years, I came across similar problems. The usual problem is the saddle is freer at the headstock end due to wear, because that is where most turning is done. When I had the bed ground, I was told that there was 5 to 6 thou wear at the headstock end.

  Later on, I was having trouble when drilling; holes were tapered or were over-sized. Using the time-honoured method of nipping a *Gillette* razor blade (remember them?) between two morse taper (mt) centres, there was an alarming tilt. On clocking the tailstock centre, I found it was 7 thou below the lathe centreline. A new base plate was obtained from *Myford*s, and measuring the new against the old, showed there was a 7 thou difference Reclocking after the new base plate was fitted brought the tail stock to the lathe centreline.

  As recently described in last year's *Model Engineer*, there can be another problem when turning. A taper can occur instead of being parallel. This could mean the headstock bearings are loose, causing the mandrel to be pushed out of alignment, or the lathe bed is twisted. On the *Myford*, there are four adjusting screws to level up the lathe longitudinally and laterally. While levelling longitudinally is not really critical, lateral levelling is vital because it means the bed has a twist in it.

  To illustrate this, think of the saddle and also the tool point, tracing a very slow helix as it moves along the length of the bed. If the tool point is exactly on the lathe centreline when starting its cut at the tail stock end, at the headstock end it will have rotated up or down a small amount, thus moving the tool point in or out, giving a taper.

  I also had this problem on my *Boxford,* and checking the lateral levels at the headstock and tail stock ends, I found over a bubble difference with a precision spirit level. Adjusting to give no difference in the bubbles cured the problem. With the regard to the tail stock and drilling, the longer the drill, the more the tip is off centre ~ see Diagram 1. This could be the problem Colin is experiencing.

  To sum up: Wear is the most obvious cause when using a second hand lathe, but lack of a solid fixing and twist of the bed can be an insidious problem. It is well known that in a wooden floored shed, the position of the turner can cause a noticeable difference in parallel turning,

  Note: With milling machines, the spindle needs to be absolutely square to the table in the X and Y axes, otherwise a tapered hole or a 'ripple effect' can occur when milling large surfaces with small cutters ~ see Diagram 2.

Diagram 1

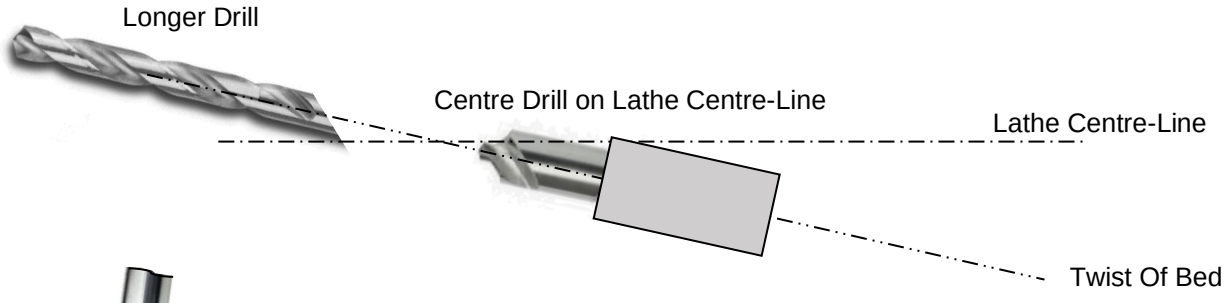
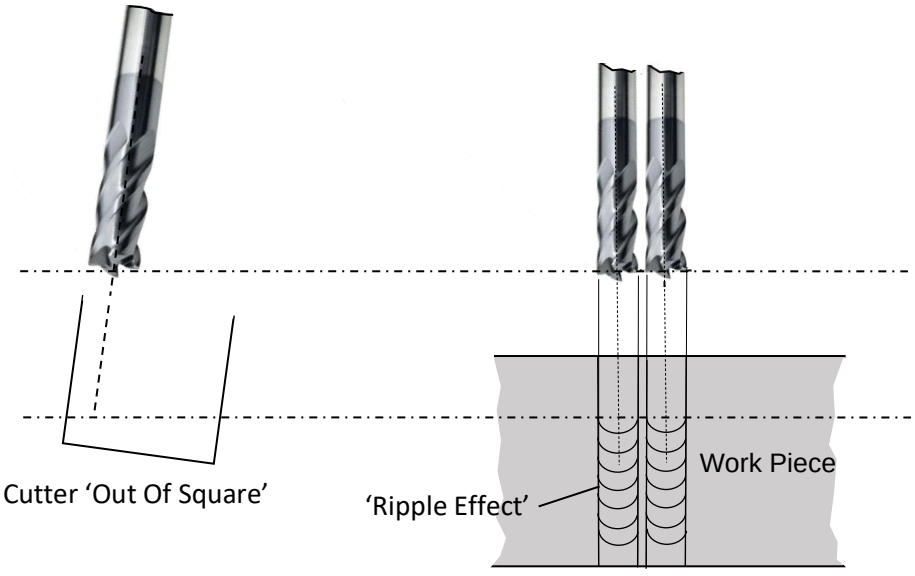


Diagram 2



Peter Bramley

- **How long should it take to drill and tap two 7BA holes?**

One of the few advantages of this dreadful lockdown is that it is giving us a bonus of time to spend on our hobbies (or in my case, my obsession), though I have to admit that now I am in the fourth month of machining the same two blocks of aluminium to make the *Delage* upper and lower crankcase. Things are getting a bit fraught.

The photos 1 to 6 will give an idea of the complexity of the machining operations, and the more I progress, the more I worry about a major mistake. However, sometimes it is the most simple bits that cause a headache.

You will see on photo 7 that the overhang of the bellhousing at the top (sorry for the blurred photo), prevents lining up the drill to drill and tap two of the 7BA holes that attach the bearing housing. Even if I rotated the hole pattern, I could not avoid the problem. Lots of thought and a chat with friend Pete (who is always able to come up with an ingenious solution to these knotty problems), produced an interesting and entertaining conversation, but the eventual solution was to make an offset gearbox.

To call it a gearbox is to give it a rather grand title as you will see from photo 8. All it consists of is a bit of 8mm aluminium plate with three holes in it, and three small gears:

- the first *Loctited* to an input shaft that is extended by 7" to reach the chuck,
- the second to an intermediate shaft, to both extend the reach of the offset, and to keep things going in the correct rotation and,
- the third *Loctited* directly to a 2.1 mm drill.

The overall offset is 10.8 mm. Photo 9 shows the setup ready to drill. The aluminium block needs to be held firmly to prevent the whole thing rotating about the input shaft. I used a tool maker's clamp to give me something to hold on to. I have to say that it worked a treat.

After drilling, I had hoped to tap the holes using the same device, but that did not work so well, and these were done by hand using a guide block to keep the tap upright. I will have to repeat all this rigmarole as the same problem exists on the bearing cap on the other side.

To answer the title question I would think about five minutes should be enough. These two problem holes took a total of twelve hours. !!!!!!!!!

If there is anything to be learned from all this, it is:

a) to make sure you avoid such design flaws in the first place and,
b) if any bright spark knows how I should have tackled the problem and taken only a few minutes, can I suggest he or she waits for a week or two before they tell me about it, or they might not receive the grateful response they expect.

Photo 1: Crazy Setup On Aciera Mill No.1. Feed Handle And Table Removed And Replaced With Large Angle Plate, To Give Enough Space To Mount Crank Case On A Rotary Table And Still Be Able To Operate. This Job Is Way Outside The Original Capacity Of The Machine.

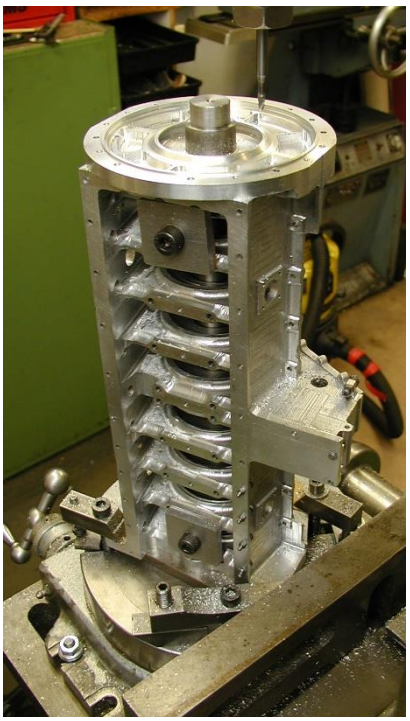


Photo 2: Still A Long Way To Go!

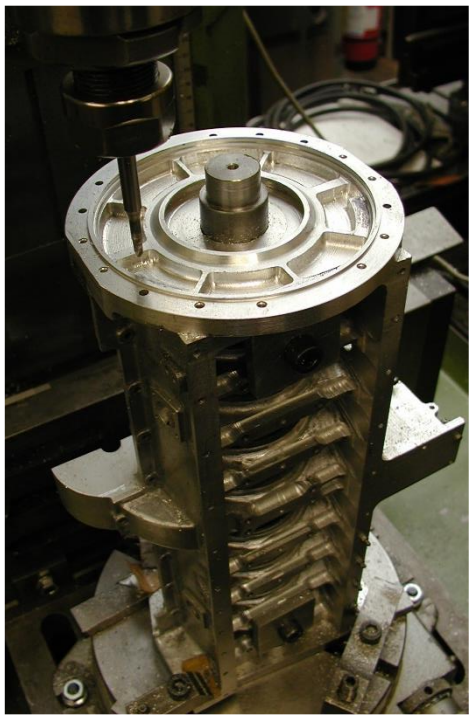


Photo 3: Machining The Detail Within The Gearbox Mounting Flange

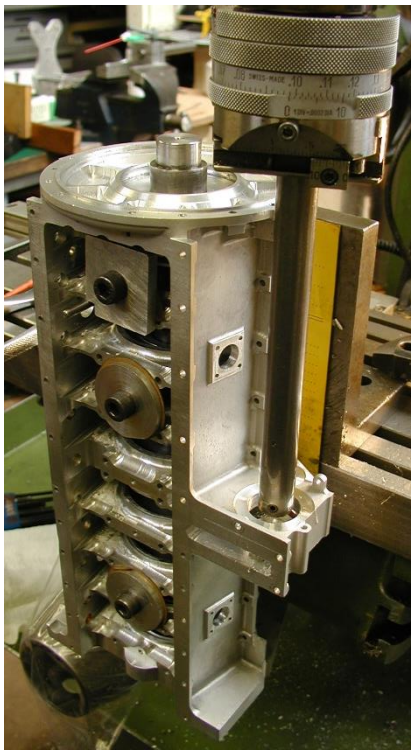


Photo 4: Boring The Gear Housing

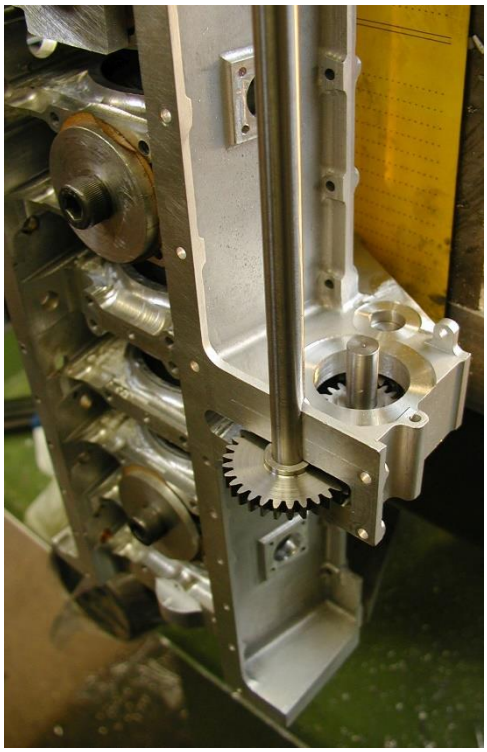


Photo 5: Checking Gear Centres

Photo 6: Tapping 6BA Holes For The Large Bearing Boss. A Near Miss In This Case!

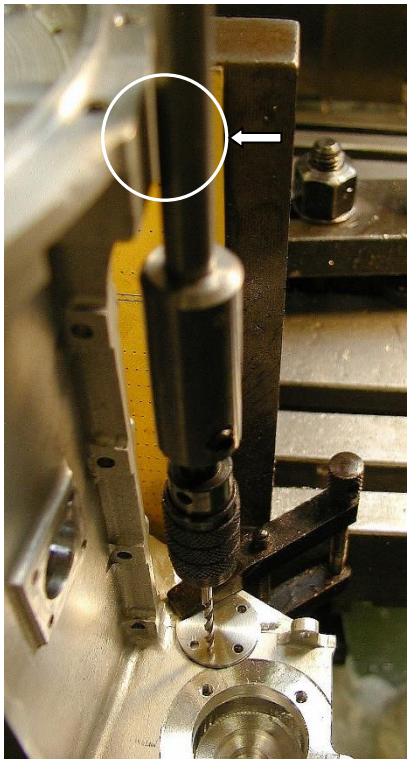


Photo 7: The Drill Cannot Be Positioned Correctly Because Of The Overhanging Bell Housing

Photo 8

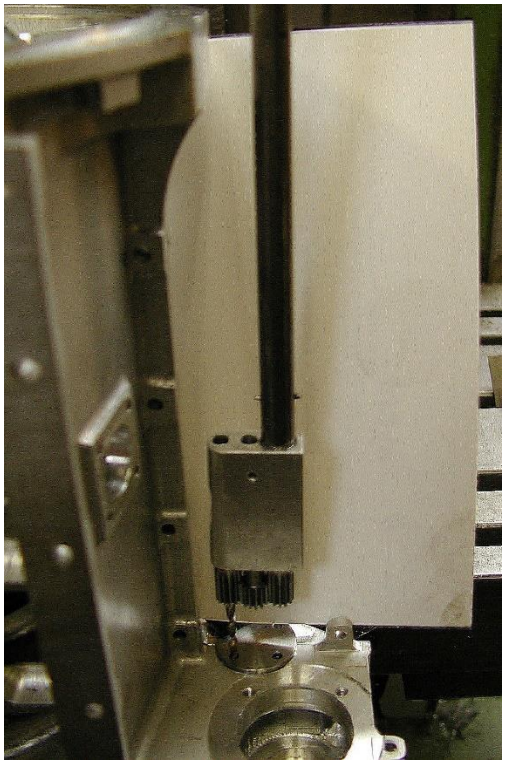


Photo 9

I am in trouble with the powers that be!

A few days ago, I had a fall from a high stepladder whilst searching for a box of spare parts for a vacuum cleaner, supposedly stored above my drawing office. I fell from the top step!! Fortunately, I have not suffered any injury except a severe shaking up.

BUT - I am now banned from trying to access anything stored in that area so it is to be cleared. Therefore, all my model aircraft, radio gear, kits and materials are to be disposed of - BY ORDER. Anyone wanting to present grandchildren with an RC electric aircraft, please form a queue after lockdown!

You might have to climb up the ladder yourself, though.

Contact Mike for more details.

Mike Sayers

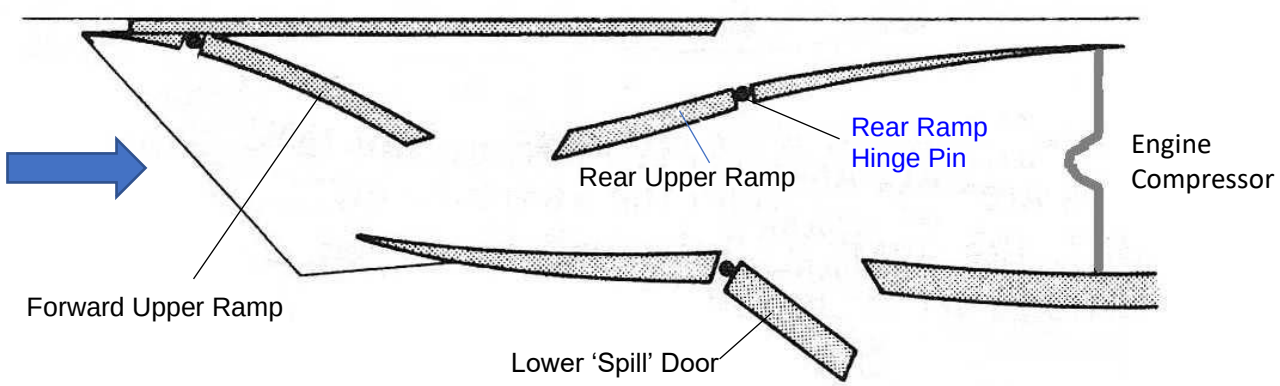
- **Some Historic Experimental Engineering**

  I thought that people may be interested in two engineering experiments I was involved with in the 1970s, the first I hope will be informative, and the second you may find amusing.

  a) Acoustic Fatigue Test Of Concorde Rear Intake Ramp Hinge Pin (December 1975 to January 1976).

  As a supersonic airliner, Concorde has an interesting intake, which reduced airflow from supersonic speed (Mach 2) to subsonic (Mach 0.5) before entry to the engine compressor. The consisted of upper forward and rear ramps and a lower 'spill' door. A more detailed explanation of the function of the various ramps/doors can be found at the following link:

  https://www.heritageconcorde.com/air-in-take-system



  During development of Concorde, in order to achieve certification, many mechanical and vibration tests were carried out on the various intake components. However, an additional test needed to be carried out.

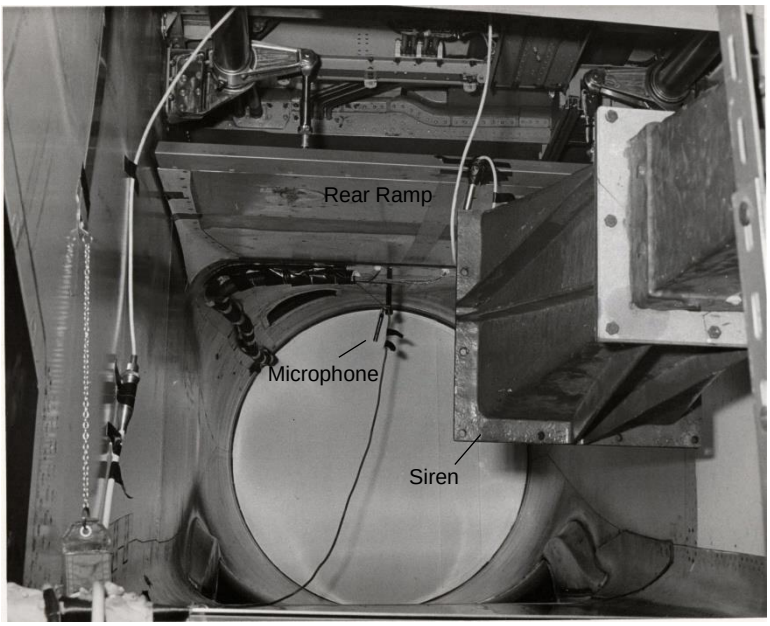
  It was found during flight test, that the rear ramp hinge pins were suffering excessive fatigue damage due the acoustic vibrations caused by the incoming air. A ground test was therefore set up to reproduce the noise characteristics measured in the air. The door's modes of vibration could then be ascertained, as well as the stress levels in the hinge pin. This would then allow the boffins at BAC Filton to redesign the pins for an acceptable endurance.

  A microphone was fitted in the intake of a flight test aircraft, and the noise level and frequencies were measured. in flight. The recordings were then analysed, to determine the noise level (dB) and the frequency spectrum.

  The BAC Acoustics Department's mobile test lab was then parked next to the second British prototype 101 (G-AXDN) in a hangar at the flight test centre at RAF Fairford for six weeks.

  Accelerometers were attached to the rear ramp to measure modes of vibrations, and the hinge pin was strain gauged to measure stress levels. A lot of time was spent crawling around in this the outer starboard intake, fitting the microphone, strain gauges and accelerometers.

  The noise level recorded in flight was around 120 to 125 dB just due to airflow! This was reproduced on the ground with a siren, and with the frequency spectrum tailored to that measured in the air. Fortunately, the mobile lab was well insulated for sound as the experiment carried on through each working day for four weeks !



Siren in the outer starboard intake.

These two photos ~ copyright of BAC Flight Test Department (Fairford)

Acoustics Department measuring Concorde noise during taxy and take off.

b) Further Tales From The Lab ~ An Unofficial World Record and Legends (Unsung) In Their Own Lunchtime.

I worked in the British Aircraft Corporation Acoustics Lab in 1974 -1975. At the time, articles appeared in the press of very loud rock concerts and the world record in terms of decibels.

In 1972, *Deep Purple* were recorded at 117 decibels (dB) at London's *Rainbow Theatre*. This was registered in *The Guinness Book Of Records. The Guinness Book of Records* stopped doing this a few years later, because it was seen as an encouragement for rock groups to break the record, resulting in hearing loss for both the band members and their eager fans.

In the Lab we had a *Reverberant Chamber*, amplifiers which produced high decibels to represent jet engines, high tech microphones to measure aircraft noise, speakers which could generate the equivalent noise levels, and state-of-the art *Revox* tape machines.

Trevor**, one of the Lab's "sparkies", was a drummer in a successful local rock trio, and so we decided we would set up one lunchtime in the reverberant chamber, with my keyboard and his drums. This would be a 'matinee performance' to try and break the current record.

The music was basically progressive/experimental (that is, atrociously terrible), but we were 'unofficially' recorded hitting 121 dB^{++}. This performance was strictly *'verboten',* because it was against company and union rules and 'good taste', and so has been a secret for forty-six years. The performance may be on a tape somewhere out there…….but who cares? The record didn't last long anyway, as *The Who* were recorded in *The Guinness Book Of Records* at 126 $dB^{\#\#}$, having been measured 32 metres (105 feet) from the speakers during a concert in London at the Charlton Athletic Football Ground on 31st May 1976.

** Trevor once received “drumming instructions” from the legendary rock drummer Ginger Baker. His rock trio somehow ended up supporting *“Ginger Baker’s Airforce”* at a concert. During a quiet period during setup, when everyone had gone for their “drinks and smokes”, Trevor thought he might try out the “Great Man’s” drums. He was enjoying himself when Baker suddenly appeared and told Trevor to kindly refrain from using his kit, and please go away….. ……. or words to that effect.

++ The photo is just a ‘publicity shot’ and we did wear ear defenders during the “performance” if anyone is concerned……

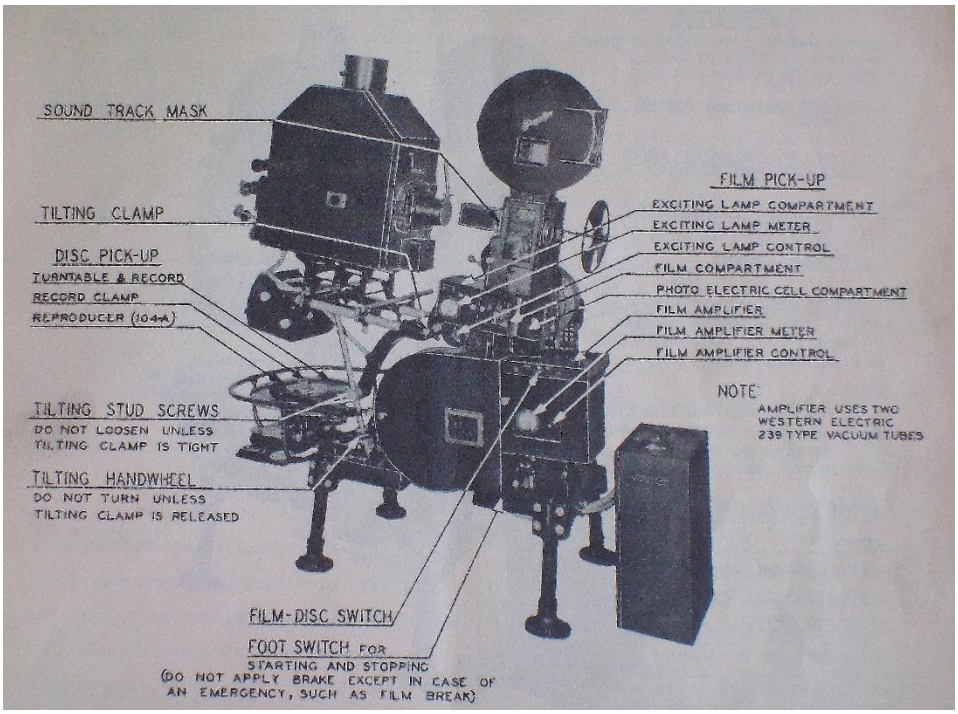
It should be noted that decibels are recorded on a logarithmic (not linear) scale, so the difference between 126 dB and 121 dB is much greater than 4%

Nevile Foster

This leads us nicely into:

- **Sound for Cinema - Part 1**

As there is a ‘sound theme’ in the previous article, I thought members might be interested in how sound has changed in the cinema over the past 50 years. When sound was introduced into cinemas in the late 1920s, two systems competed to become the main format to accompany the 35mm film format. Both were mono, one used a large shellac record synchronized mechanically with the picture and the other made use of a photographic image of the sound photographed onto the same strip of film as the picture and was replayed by shining light through it onto a photo-electric cell.



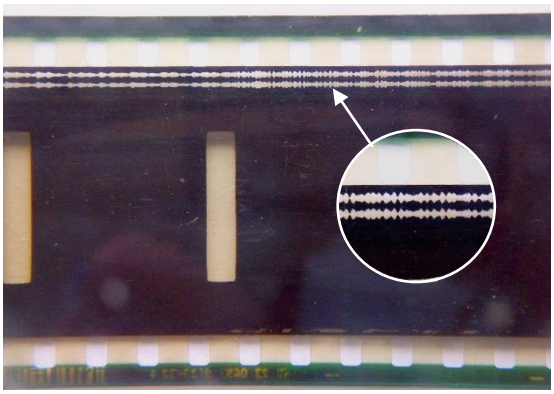
Early sound projectors were capable of playing sound from disc as well as from film.

The photo-image sound track system won the day for various practical reasons, not least because it stayed in synchronism with the picture whenever it was shown. It was also less cumbersome. ‘Optical sound’ (as it became known), was henceforth adopted as the world standard. This spawned an off-shoot industry devoted to the manufacture of sound equipment for both cinema and film studios. *Western Electric* and *RCA* in America, and *Gaumont British* (British Acoustic Films) and *Sound Equipment Ltd* (BTH) in this country, led most of the developments in optical sound at this time.

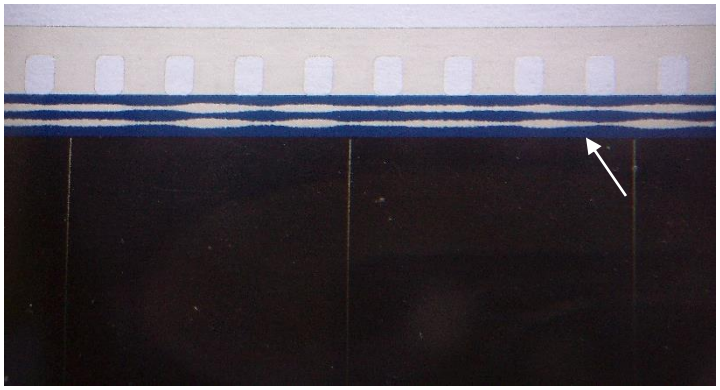
When it came to the reproduction of optical soundtracks, because the soundtrack was a photographic image, it suffered from the same drawbacks as the picture. That is, it could be scratched and collect dust and dirt which when replayed, produced crackles and pops on the audio. In a bid to overcome some of these early drawbacks, the

frequency response of the replay equipment was set to severely roll-off the (then) upper frequency range over 4khz. It was to stay like this until the 1970s when, in a bid to modernize and bring back audiences to the cinemas, the industry looked again at the poor quality optical sound track. They looked at how to improve sound track performance – remember by this time FM radio and Hi-Fi stereo was becoming common in most homes.

Whilst improvements were a result of collaborative effort within the whole industry, one name, that of *Dolby* was to feature prominently from this point on. From the mid-1960s, *The Dolby Company* under the leadership of Ray Dolby, had become a world leader in the provision of noise reduction to the professional analogue audio recording industry (the record industry). Over a period of time *Dolby's* influence was to bring about nothing short of a miracle. Their proposed improvements sought to introduce noise reduction from the studio floor, through the laboratory process, to the theatre. Perhaps more importantly the potential of the existing optical soundtrack was reinvestigated in order to utilise it for the reproduction of quality stereo sound – whilst still making it compatible with existing mono equipment.



Mono Optical Track

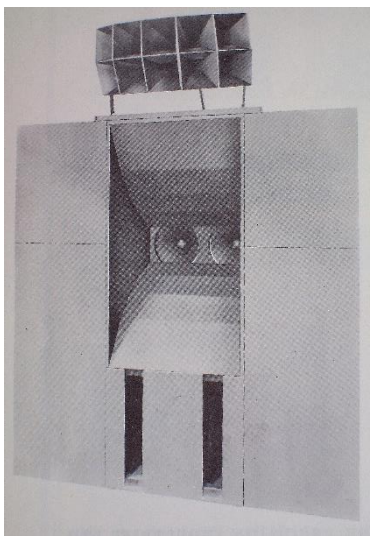


Stereo Optical Track

From its first involvement, *Dolby's* influence on cinema sound was to be one of continual improvement leading to the introduction of stereo sound in the average cinema. Eventually this went further by facing, then meeting the next big audio challenge, that of digital sound.

Alongside the changes to the optical sound track, the cinema industry perhaps reluctantly, looked to invest in new equipment to do justice to this improved performance. In the 1970s many cinemas were still using (mono) valve amplifiers and loud speaker systems whose designs were firmly based in the 1930s. The old names, *Westrex*, *Gaumont-Kalee* etc. were still in-situ. Even though some transistorized amplifiers for new theatres were made, most research and design of amplifier and speaker systems for cinemas had pretty much been wound down by the major companies; so the valves stayed.

At a time when cinema lacked investment in its sound equipment, another industry, that of 'POP Music' continued to invest. During the 1960s and 1970s, bands were touring and giving concerts in ever bigger venues, where both quality and power of amplification were required. It is therefore not surprising that when the need arose for the new multi-channel sound systems in cinemas, names associated with this market started to be used. Amplifiers from companies such as *H/H*, *Electro-Voice* and *Crown* started to appear in racks within the projection room, ousting the old names. Similarly, speakers that had at one time been considered good because they were efficient 'air movers' were considered to produce a 'cosy' and flabby sound in the modern era. Other speaker manufacturers such as *Altec Lancing*, *Tannoy*, *Electro-Voice*, joined by newer brands such as *JBL* (whose products had worked well in recording studios and quality PA systems), started to appear behind the screens of many cinemas.



Odeon Stack

Typical JBL Speaker Stack

Not long after the introduction of the stereo optical sound track (known as SVA track), *Dolby* introduced a package of improvements by providing cinema with a 'one box' solution in the form of the *CP50* and *CP100* sound processor. This along with its later descendants, provided all the pre-amplification and processing required to supply the 'improved' amplification systems and the much anticipated noise-free quality stereo sound.

Dolby CP 50 Sound Processor

Mention should be made at this point as to what exactly is meant by the term *'Dolby Stereo'*. Stereo in cinema is not the same as stereo for Hi-Fi, records, CDs etc. Many years ago, in the very early days of stereo for cinema, it was found that straight left/right stereo didn't work. This was because, with an audience spread over a large area within an auditorium, dialogue coming from either extreme of L or R was distracting for anyone sitting on the opposite side to its origination. It was therefore deemed better to always put dialogue in the centre of the sound stage (picture) other than for effect. Unfortunately, with the wide spacing of the two speakers behind the screen, the conventional way of producing a 'phantom' centre sound (co-incident phase and volume in both speakers) would not work, and a third channel of sound was required. To enhance the experience further, it was also decided that a set of speakers on the walls of the auditorium creating background 'atmosphere', made the sound more 'immersive'. So a fourth channel was introduced. *Dolby Stereo (SVA)* on 35mm film is therefore a 4-channel system but originating from only two tracks on the film.

As the 1980s gave way to the 1990s, the quality of analogue audio was being challenged once again with the introduction of 'Digital' sound recording. As with all audio improvements, things didn't change overnight, and the change-over whilst slow to start, once established was the next big innovation for recorded sound. This was another big step in the ongoing 'Industrial Revolution'; that of replacing man's labour by machine or in this case more often by computer.

Dolby noise reduction for film was the same type as used by the wider audio industry. Whereas the aim of noise reduction in tape recording is to reduce the level of background hiss, in optical sound its equivalent is to reduce the optical noise caused by the granular structure of the film base. In both cases the dynamic range is improved as a consequence of lowering the noise threshold. Think of noise as being like a very thick carpet under a doorway. If the thickness of the pile is reduced, then taller items can pass unhindered under the doorframe. The doorframe analogy also holds true in describing distortion as well. If too tall, an item will have its top chopped off, but if either the ground can lowered or the height of the item compressed down, it too will pass without the top being chopped off. As a way of competing with the emergence of digital sound, and to give existing analogue equipment an extended lease of life, in the early 1990s *Dolby Laboratories* introduced a much improved version of their noise reducing technology. This was called *Dolby SR* which did more than just reduce hiss. In a much more sophisticated approach, the usable audio spectrum was split into various bands and each band processed individually. This provided a better and smoother operation and also increased the available headroom of the existing medium than had previously been possible. This then was to be the final improvement to analogue audio, both for cinema and for the recording industry, as digital sound would be the next big step forward for both.

Dolby SR Card

Just to finish, I would like to put into context what all of this means for the cinema audience.
If one accepts the cinema experience as being an attempt on the part of the film maker to take its audience on a visual and auditory journey, then it follows that what is presented should be as realistic looking and sounding as possible. As technology improves, the perceived ''realness'' of this experience changes. Picture content when improved, is like a window being made bigger, cleaner and clearer, and the sound experience ever more 'life-like'. When I worked latterly in cinema, I used to explain to trainees that the average person visiting the cinema probably didn't understand how stereo worked, but if their ears told them the sound they heard was like being in the picture they saw, then the system was working correctly. If on the other hand, a speaker was sounding dull, distorting or worse, not working at all, then they instinctively knew something was wrong and the experience was spoiled. Some people find modern cinema too loud, but as cinema sound has improved and the background noise has been reduced, the 'average' sound level can be lowered and still leave large dynamic space (headroom) to exist for high peaks for dramatic effect (think doorways again). As cinema has moved into the digital era this dynamic range has become even greater, much to the discomfort of many patrons, so if as a member of an audience you wish to limit the volume, your only recourse now is to take ear plugs!

Next time I will bring the sound story up to date and describe the introduction of digital sound in cinema and talk a bit the demise of 35mm film and the start of Digital Cinema.

Colin Bainbridge

- **A Holiday With A Difference**

Being at Her Majesty's disposal, I found myself in Egypt for two years ~1953/55. Like many others, I flew out on a converted Lancaster, with no meals, just a drink of water and some sandwiches distributed by an RAF sergeant. We droned on for hours on end, until we located a very small island called Malta. There we refuelled before heading to North Africa and Fayid airfield in Egypt. The journey took 13 hours.

Well, due to on-going hostilities, I never got the opportunity to see the archaeological sites in Egypt. I was an electrician and was eventually posted to the electrical motor repair shop. Before the army, I had wired up motors as you do as an electrician, but had never dismantled one, or even thought how I might repair one. Well, it was almost trial and error, and I learnt a lot and got there in the end. The other lads were 'pucker winders' in civilian life and they weren't divulging secrets to me. We repaired anything with a coil of copper wire; armatures for vehicles big and small, single and three phase motors, and alternators. We worked with the local Egyptians who came in the workshop every day. Us lads picked up a lot of Arabic, all with a local accent, and never ever spoke to a woman or child as we rarely saw one.

Outside The Bakery

Inside The Bakery

In about 1980 or 90, windsurfing was all the rage and living where we do (Scarborough), I got myself a board. Well, to really enjoy the hobby you need to be very fit, so I went running up the coast most days. One Sunday evening it had been raining hard but I went out anyway, and on return was having a shower, whilst listening to Radio 4. This was in a foreign language which I recognized as Arabic, and I thought "I understand a lot of this". The announcer said that this is part of a language course for English travellers to the Middle East. There would be a book, and two cassettes available from *WH Smith's*. I was hooked. Mary went to *Smith's* on Monday and bought the tapes and book. I copied both tapes, so we had them in the car and around the home. We listened to them four times a day for four months, and responded as and when called to do so. During this time, we decided we would have a holiday in Egypt, visiting the archaeological sites.

We located a "BUCKET "shop (remember them) in Leeds, who did very cheap airline tickets. Two return tickets Heathrow/Cairo were £200 each with no accommodation, just a seat. We flew with *Balkan Airways* via Sofia in Bulgaria. Well, the plane was safe enough but extremely basic, smoking on the right, but no smoking on the left.
We left Heathrow on time and arrived on time in Bulgaria, which was still under the influence of the USSR. The plane was also Russian. We all got off the plane at Sofia airport and were soon joined by lots of young Africans who were studying at Moscow University. They were taking freezers, fridges and TVs back home as hand luggage.

Back on the same plane we had just got off, the aisle was full. It wasn't possible to get to the toilet via the aisle, and you had to climb over the seats as best you could.

We landed at Cairo at 04.00 and changed some money at one of the desks. A man made a rude remark (in Arabic of course), about Mary to which I replied in Arabic. He was so ashamed and embarrassed in the company of other Egyptian men, he apologised and was extremely helpful from there on. I told him we needed a quiet clean hotel as we hadn't anywhere to stay.

The man got us a taxi and told the driver to go to *Hotel Noran*. We had a suite of 4 rooms for £11 a night, including breakfast, colour TV with '*Tom and Jerry'* in Arabic.

Later that day, we were in Cairo by the railway station, intending to buy tickets down to Luxor and Aswan on the overnight train. We were approached by a guy (a tout) who claimed he had a minibus, and could/would take us to Memphis, the Pyramids and other sites which we already knew of. We had done our homework before departure, so knew where we would like to go and visit in the Cairo area.

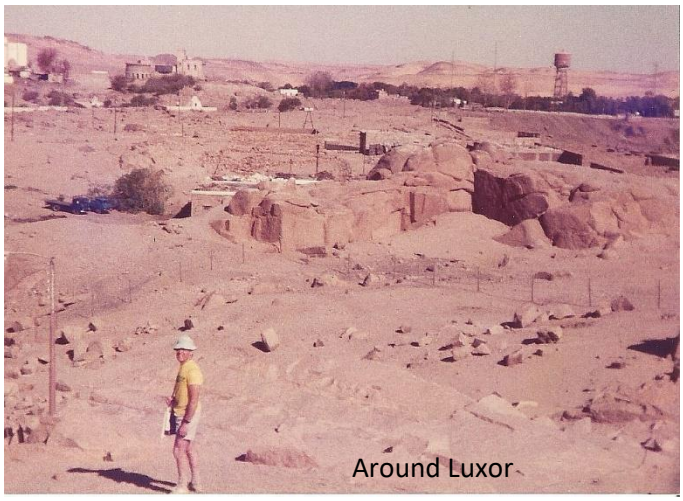
Now, in every country in the Middle East you haggle on the price of almost everything. We did on the minibus as well. Once we came to an arrangement on the price of the minibus, it was up to you/us to fill it. So on the street, I/we located a French couple, a young lady from the US, and four from Italy. And there was us two. The driver didn't speak English at all, but he had cassettes in the front of the minibus for us in all languages. He had photocopies of up market tour guides of everywhere we went. I was 'The Captain'. We had a wonderful day for £4 each, including a splendid meal.

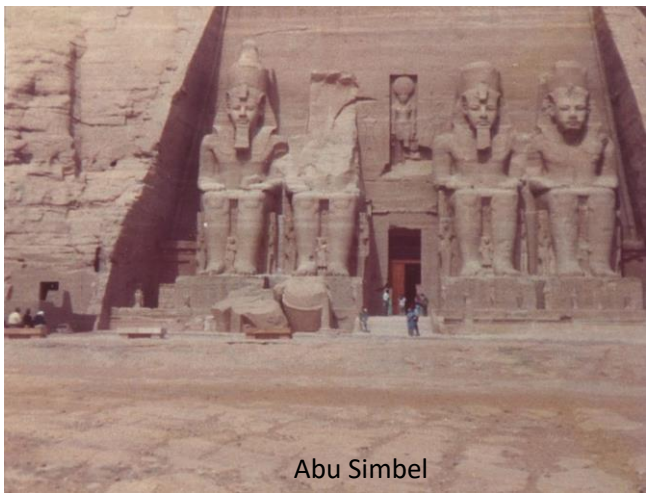
Two days later we bought overnight train tickets to Cairo, Luxor and Aswan on a dream of a train ~ *Wagons-Lits* (a French company). There was an attendant by our compartment door supplying all our possible needs, including making the beds. At the end of the train was an observation car, which had armchairs with waiter service. To see the Nile as the sun goes down is something most people dream of, a wonderful sight. This is a long slow journey of around 18 hours. Just as it was getting dark, we arrived in Luxor. By this time we were getting a bit more familiar with life in Egypt, the smells and the sounds. The train was met by a pack of touts, either wanting to carry your bags, offer you a hotel for the night, or sell you something you really don't need….. and you haggle. Well, a guy said his cousin, who had just returned from the US, made some money and had a good clean hotel. Well, after about ten minutes of much discussion we settled on a price of £2 a night for two beds and hot showers, with no food.

The "owner ??" could speak good English as many Egyptians can. We told him we were going to the *Valley of the Kings* early in the morning and that we were going to hire two bikes. We had brought two bike locks and a torch from the UK. We decided to have a shower. A young Dutch couple got there before us, so we had to wait. Mary was in next. Mary said the water is building up in the shower tray, and she couldn't locate the plug hole. By the time, I had a shower, the water was at the top of the tray and trickling down the stairs. I got dressed and went to see the "owner". He said "no problem" as he opened the door onto the street, to let the water go out. I had a look at the hot water system, it was two 40-gallon barrels on the roof, and the sun did the rest.

Luxor is a small town, and it was easy for us to find our way around. We located a bike rent shop and arranged (haggled on the price two bikes to include a pump for £3), to be collected at 05.00. Next morning at 05.00 we collected the bikes as arranged and it was already hot.

We crossed the Nile on the ferry, and followed the road to where we knew there was a site where the artisans and nobles lived. It was the artisans who made the temples. This is well away from the normal tourist sites, and we had to push the bikes across the desert area. The temples were just so magnificent. Using the torch light, we were able to wander at will, just us two. What a privilege! From there we went to the *Valley of the Kings and Queens*. By this time, the air-conditioned buses were starting to arrive, and it was very hot. So back to the hotel, have a shower and have a sleep to recuperate.


Around Luxor


Abu Simbel

We spent another day in Luxor as they were rehearsing for the forth-coming celebration of 100 years of the opening of the Suez Canal. An Italian opera group/orchestra were practising '*Aida'* (Princess Di and Prince Charles were the Guests of Honour). Later in the evening as it got dark, we wandered along and sat on the empty seating area, which was wooden boards, listening to the wonderful opera singers. We didn't realise that some of the other seated persons were part of the act, and when the director spoke to them in Italian, they stood up and started to sing. We didn't. What a laugh. We disappeared quietly.

Next day we caught the train down to Aswan, another small town, where the Aswan dam is located. This is the location of the *Cataracts Hotel* where '*Death on the Nile'* was filmed. Again, we stayed in a cheap but clean budget hotel, maybe £2/4 a night for two. We booked two seats on an express luxury bus down to *Abu Simbel*, which is

south towards Sudan. Many years ago, when they were building the high dam, many very old Nubian archaeological sites were submerged. *Blue Peter* helped along with other organisations for one to be raised up and preserved for posterity. We went there.

This was a long journey across the desert, where we saw many camel skeletons laying around. I asked about them. A man said that the area is part of a six week walk from Mali. Apparently, the camels are walked from Mali to Aswan, where they are put on trains taking them to Cairo for the meat trade.

After several days, we decided to return on the overnight train to Cairo, as we had the Cairo museum to visit. We found *Hotel Tulip* (a strange name), which was a real old colonial building with a lift attendant who opened and closed the door, just like they did in the 1940's films. The man had a white jacket, black trousers, no socks and different shoe on each foot. If you ever think you are hard up, go to the Middle East for a day.

Back in Cairo we went along to the museum and saw all the usual well known artefacts such as Tutankhamun masks and many other lesser well known ones. There is just so much to see, and after several hours the mind needs a rest. So back into the city. I cannot describe just how busy Cairo is, the buses never actually stop as they are so overloaded. They wouldn't get going again if they did stop. We used the buses, and we thank the Egyptians who pushed us to the front of the queue and told us where to get off, otherwise we might still be there. Next, we ventured to *Khan El Khalili* which is an absolutely huge market. It is well known that visitors wander in and get so disorientated that the locals charge a substantial fee to guide them out. Clothing, carpets, brassware, pottery, food, vegetables, chickens and other live things are all for sale, dangling from the walls and hanging from somewhere or another. I was in the Scouts as a boy, and had my small pocket compass with me, and when approached by a local who thought we were lost, I showed them the way out, and much laughter ensued.

The Egyptians are a likable people. They like to have a laugh, joke and practise their English. English is so important to them, as it is a means of making a living in the tourist industry, which the country relies on. Like us, they have their villains which give the people and country a bad name and reputation.

One very hot afternoon we visited *Muhammad Ali Mosque*, a wonderful building, with a huge chandelier, and carpeted throughout, as all mosques are. On entry to a mosque, you remove your footwear, and for us, sit quietly, before falling asleep. Children go in and do their homework. I was chatting to a man, his wife and family, and was curious why the men are in the front at Friday prayers, and ladies at the back. After some deliberation he said, if the ladies were at the front, perhaps the men would think of other things than Allah. We all laughed together.

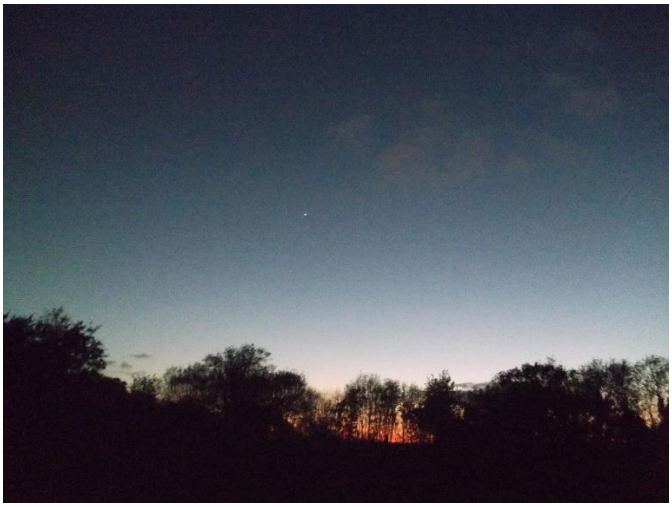
Back to the airport, ready for a 03.30 departure to Heathrow. Seventeen days away, with change from £600 from door to door, including train fares and flights. No tummy upset or problems whatsoever. We left the car outside Scarborough police station whilst we were away.

We enjoyed it so much, we went again the following year. This time, we went down to Luxor, across to Hurghada, down the Red Sea to see dhows being made, back up Suez, under the canal to the Sinai desert and Mount Sinai, and then Sharm El Sheikh, Ismailia, Alexandria, Cairo, and the UK.

Ted Fletcher

Finally, the month of May has borne witness to two interesting celestial events that could be seen locally:

A Super Moon Photographed By Ivan Shaw Over Hutton-Le -Hole



Venus In The Western Skies Over Pickering

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