



# News

Fortnightly Journal of the Culham/Harwell Sites of the UKAEA

## CHEMDATA answers SOS

**WHEN a chemical cargo breaks lose in severe weather at sea, the ship's crew need to know what action to take.**

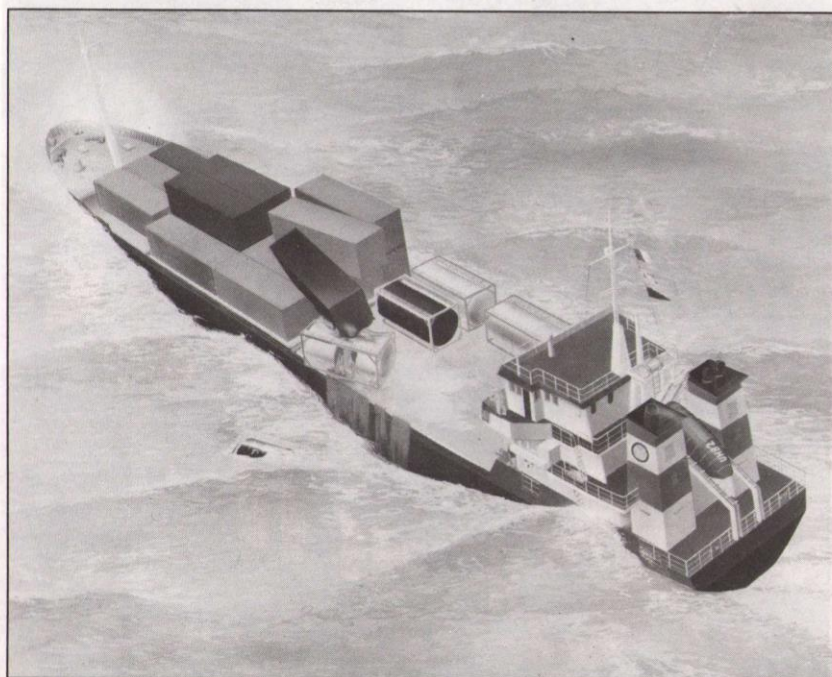
There are no emergency services on hand and to avoid serious marine pollution and loss of life, clear information is rapidly required. CHEMDATA's new expansion to include the full text of the International Maritime Dangerous Goods (IMDG) Code Emergency Schedules (EMS) can offer the answers.

The database can be run onboard ship or operated from a shore-based shipping company linked via fax or radio. Crews can directly access IMDG EMS information

from the main CHEMDATA menus and use IMDG code page numbers for rapid correlation with shipping documents.

The database provides advice on chemical hazards, protective measures, fire extinguishing media and first aid.

The National Chemical Emergency Centre (NCEC's) stand at MARICHEM '91 in Cologne last month received a lot of enquiries about this latest version of the database. Bob Cumberland, Manager of the NCEC said 'Inclusion of the IMDG Emergency Schedules means that shipping companies handling potentially hazardous cargoes cannot afford to be without CHEMDATA'.



An Early Gothic Psalter dating from the last quarter of the 12th Century which formed part of a special exhibition of Trinity's Old Library manuscripts held when it was restored and reopened in 1988.

### Books from Fellows' Library salvaged

InTec's Drying Restoration Service (DRS) has helped salvage 68 vellum-covered books badly damaged in the Old Library at Trinity College Oxford.

The library holds about 10,000 books, all pre 1850, which form an historic collection of classics, theology, history, biography, geography, scientific and medical material.

Water left running in a bathroom seeped into the library. The Bodlian Library conservation team wrapped the damaged books in polythene and promptly put them into deep freeze until DRS transferred them to their cold store at Harwell.

The vacuum setting of the drying chamber was adjusted to prolong the time needed to dry parchment.

### Staff Talks open to all

Tickets from your Business Admin Office.  
**Speakers:** Dr Peter Iredale, Culham/Harwell, Director, and Dr Chris Wright, Chief Executive, INTEC

### Harwell:

Cockcroft Hall All grades  
Thursday 6 February at 9.15 am and  
Friday 7 February at 9.15 am  
The gate to Cockcroft Hall will be open

before and after the talks.

### Culham:

John Adams Lecture Theatre. All AEA staff at Culham  
Wednesday 12 February at 9.15 am





### Computer Group numbers change

Please note that Culham Computer Group is no longer on extension 4136. This extension has been taken over by MaTSU, now located in Building C2 at Culham. If you wish to contact staff in the Computer Group please use the following extensions: R A C Hurst - C 4387, J K Kanani - C3724, N A Benterman - C3707 and N J Denton - C 4387.

### Sale of found property

Items of found property held by the Police for the statutory period of time and not claimed by the owners or the finders declined them, are to be sold by the silent bid method. Items will be on display at the A.E.A.C. Police Station, B.1, Harwell from 1200hrs on Monday 3 February to 1600hrs Thursday 6 February 1992. The sale will take place on Friday 7 February 1992.

### Exhibition

#### TLR Technology, Tuesday 18 Feb:

10 am - 4pm. JET/Culham Labs, The Gallery, E3 Main Entrance — special valves (including cryogenic and high pressure) from Battig AG, Switzerland.

## Studies on Workers' Health

On Friday 24 January the National Radiological Protection Board published a report setting out results of their analysis of mortality data of employees whose radiation dose record is stored in the National Registry of Radiation workers.

In the next issue of C H News we hope to publish a summary of these results and comment on them. This study is only one among a number of epidemiology studies now in progress dealing with Nuclear Industry workers and their children. There are several which concern Harwell and Culham directly:-

### 1. AEA Mortality Analysis

An analysis of the mortality of workers in the AEA to 1980 was published some years ago. Since then there have been many more recorded deaths and the data re-analysed. These will be published in the next few months.

### 2. Nuclear Industry Combined Epidemiological Analysis (NICEA)

This is a larger study than the above and encompasses workers in the Authority, Sellafield and Aldermaston since 1946. The results of this detailed study will appear later this year.

### 3. The AEA Mortality Review

We continue to collect information on the employment and radiation history and mortality of AEA workers for future analyses. This study is ongoing.

### 4. The Nuclear Industry Family Study

This is an in-depth study into the overall health of the children of nuclear workers. It will be carried out by a team from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine from London and the Imperial Cancer Research Fund at Oxford. Information will be obtained by questionnaires sent to individual workers, past and present. A pilot study will begin at Harwell next month.

*Should you wish for any more detailed information on these or similar studies, please contact Dr Graham Green, Chief Occupational Health Officer at Harwell on extension H 5542 or Len Salmon of the Computing & Epidemiology Department, Harwell, extension H 4661.*

## About turn for Con-struc-tion

THE building of 392.10 was finally completed this month, after just a few hiccups — none the fault of AEA Engineering.

The first sketches of the proposed new building were produced by Engineering Division five years ago. Numerous schemes were produced and eventually the scheme proceeded to tender in the Spring of 1989.

Work started on the site in August that year. However, during preliminary excavations numerous unrecorded cables were discovered in the ground causing complications with the proposed foundations. In addition the planned route for diverting large drains which cross the site was affected. So, it was back to the drawing board!

As a result it was decided to turn the building through 90° in order to avoid the cables altogether and allow the building to bridge existing drains.

Work restarted in November and continued — that was, until the main contractor went into receivership in February the following year.

After some delay, a second main contractor was appointed and work recommenced in May 1990, but not for long — seven months later this contractor also went into receivership!

After yet more delay, a third main contractor was appointed in June last year and at last, some three years from the beginning of the project — during which time two major sub-contractors also went into receivership — the building was ready for hand-over.

The final 'receivers' are AEA Petroleum Services, who are now in the throes of moving in to its 38 offices, conference room and ancillary accommodation.







### Holiday Clinic

As you will know, the Occupational Health Department at Harwell has offered an advice and vaccination service for business travellers abroad for many years.

They are now pleased to offer the same service to individuals travelling abroad on holiday with comprehensive advice and guidance on travel related health matters. In addition, the clinic is a registered Yellow Fever Vaccination Centre and can provide you with all your holiday vaccinations for any destination worldwide at very competitive prices.

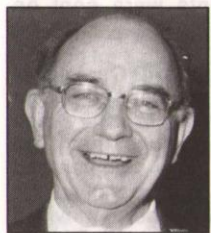
For further information, ring ext. H 4283.

### Acknowledgements

**Tony Parsons** would like to take this opportunity to thank the following who helped to make the Art exhibition such a success. Heather from the Harwell Restaurant, Mike Smith and staff from the Design Services department, and all the people who visited the exhibition held in Harwell Restaurant during the middle of December. The total amount raised which will be split between the British Diabetic Association and St. Thomas's Hospital Renal Unit was £150.

**Ray Taylor**, Station Officer, would like to thank all the people who assisted, collected and contributed their time and money to the sponsored climb of 'Mount Everest' in aid of the Children in Need Appeal. The final amount raised was £2385. 'Thank you all' he says.

### Leading light Philip retires



LAST month, Dr Philip Little of Culham/Harwell Safety Division retired after 32 years service.

After taking his first degree at Oxford, Philip served in the RAF, returning to Oxford

to do research for his DPhil under Dr Hans von Engel, a pioneer researcher of ionisation phenomena in gases.

Philip joined the AEA in 1959 working firstly at Harwell and later at Culham in discharge and plasma physics. From 1969 he spent four years at the University of Texas, Austin, becoming an expert in linear discharge. Later, Philip changed direction becoming a group leader in Culham's Lightning Studies Unit. In 1982 he joined Joint Safety Services covering the Culham site and JET. In September 1990 he amalgamated the Safety Secretariat at Harwell with Joint Safety Services to form Culham/Harwell Safety Division.

In addition to his work, Philip was a leading member of the Culham Christian Fellowship. As well as his retirement present of a compact disc player, he also received a copy of the Book of Kells — an illuminated manuscript — from the members of the Christian Fellowship.

## Heard but not seen

**Don Brown** has worked for the AEA for 35 years, currently for E&E in the Analytical Sciences Centre in Building 551. He has been registered disabled since he was six years old and went to a special school for the deaf in Newbury because he suffers from considerable hearing loss and needs to wear a hearing aid.

He is skilled at communicating one-to-one and has found his way round most hearing problems with the use of lip reading and a special telephone amplifier, but a discouraging problem arises in large groups. Don finds it difficult to follow lectures, to hear speakers from the audience or to take part in a discussion group, when sound is lost in space and it takes him time to locate a new voice.

Back in June last year, during a training course at work, Don felt so discouraged about missing information when the lights were dimmed or when the speaker walked away from the mic, or turned his back to the audience, that he lost heart and left the course. He was offered some one-to-one training to meet his immediate needs and was issued with an A4 size conference folder containing two small mics which can be fed directly into his hearing aid for use in 'table-top' groups of up to 12 people. Don's wife Margaret, an ex AEA employee, is deaf and is employed as a Social Worker with the hard of hearing. Their appreciation of special hearing systems in public buildings like Oxford Playhouse, and their contact with the Oxford Deaf Centre, encouraged Don to request special facilities here, through the Equal Opportunities officer.

Towards the end of the year Audio Frequency Induction Loop Systems (AIFILS) were installed in the large conference room in Building 551 and in three of Harwell Training Centre's rooms, also in the Cockcroft Hall. Costs were shared between the Employment Service, AEA Environment and Energy and Estates. Don is delighted with the new clarity of sound, and so are several other hearing-aid wearers who work here and came to a testing session soon after installation. Many people who wear a hearing aid do not feel they need to be registered disabled, but will undoubtedly benefit from these facilities.

Loops provide hearing aid users with the ability to hear sound transmitted directly from its source, uninterrupted, into their hearing aids switched to the 'T' position.

The wiring loops cannot be seen. Microphones at the front of the room feed a speaker's voice into the loop and, in the ceilings, boundary mics pick up sound from all directions. Video sound can also be fed directly into the loops.

In the Cockcroft Hall four Shotgun microphones pick up sound from the platform and from all over the auditorium, and again, video



Don Brown

and cine sound can be fed directly into the loop. Non hearing aid wearers will be unaffected by the system, hearing aid wearers switched to 'T' may find it useful to know that because of the sensitivity of Shotgun mics, a certain amount of 'air noise' may be heard during silent passages of, say, a film. This is the Shotgun automatically switching from sound on the video or film to pick up any sound which it 'thinks' is about to come from the audience!

Thanks to Don it is hoped that the loops will provide better sound for many employees and visitors who come to meetings, seminars, training courses, or to see a film at Harwell.

NB. Building 551, E&E's Large Conference Room can be booked through Jenny Mason on ext. 4286.



### Out & About

#### Wantage Cancer Research Campaign

5,6,7 & 8 Feb: Present — Music Hall, in Wantage Civic Hall. Tks: Adults £3, OAPs & Children £1.50, Wed & Thu. Fri all £4.50. Sat all £5. Tks from Iris Baker, ext. H 2918, Bretts - Grove, Millers - Wantage, Green Co - Wantage.

#### Isis Chamber Orchestra

Sat 8 Feb: Concert at 7.30pm, Marcham Parish Church. Conductor: Nicholas Barton, Leader: Faye Dunmore, Overture: The Barber Of Seville — Rossini, Siegfried Idyll — Wagner, Petite Suite — Debussy, Symphony No 100 in G (Military) — Haydn. Tickets: Adults £3.50, Concs. £2, Children (under 16) free, available at the door or from Pat Field, 0235 531735.

#### The Didcot Rotract Club

Mon 10 Feb: A new members evening is being held at the White Hart, Harwell starting at 8pm. Details, Didcot 812003. The Club is open to young people in the 18 to 29 age group.

#### Wantage Male Voice Choir — Annual concert

22 Feb: Due to unfortunate circumstances the above concert advertised in the Xmas edition of C/H News has had to be postponed until the Autumn.



# D-Day means Demolition Day



*An Airspeed Envoy of the Kings flight which brought King George VI to the Harwell airfield in May 1938. Fairey Battles of No.226(B) squadron are in the background.*



*Hangar 9 in the 1950's.*



*A suspended ceiling of perforated metal tiles with an insulated backing had been fitted in an attempt to cut down the heating bill for Hangar 9 — it nearly cut down the workforce instead when, one day in 1959, it collapsed and they all had to dive for cover!*

**THE grinding that you may hear from Hangar 9 now is not the engine of an Albermarle belonging to No. 38 Group, 105(B) Squadron or an engineering workshop lathe, but the demolition gang at work.**

The first ever demolition of a Harwell Hangar began on 6 January, so, before Hangar 9 is finally no more, C H News charts its life:

Construction of the Air Ministry's Expansion Period bomber station at Harwell commenced in 1935 — the 220 acres reported in 'The Times' as costing £11,650. In true RAF tradition the buildings were numbered in their order of construction, so began Hangar 9. Built mainly of brick around a steel frame with a close-boarded and tiled roof and steel doors — its first aircraft tenants were Avro Ansons, Hinds and finally Fairey Battles. At the start of the second world war, Wellington 1's arrived at RAF Harwell. In the spring, more Wellingtons and Ansons arrived and an Operational Training Unit was formed. In August 1940, the station received its first air attack — four bombs destroyed three aircraft and a petrol tanker; later in the month there were two further attacks but the Hangars remained intact.

Wellington bombers from Harwell took part in the 1000 bomber raid on Cologne in February 1942 and later that year the station was an advance base for raids on Italy.

The great doors of the RAF 'C' type Hangar opened in deadly earnest on the evening of 5 June 1944 beginning the D-day assault when six Albermarles took off from the Harwell airfield carrying parachute troops as pathfinders for the 6th British Airborne Division's landing in Normandy. A few hours later ground-crew in the Hangar watched as an armada of aircraft, many towing Horsa gliders packed with men and equipment, took off from Harwell early on 6 June in support of the sea borne landings on the Normandy coast. Reinforcements were sent on successive days.

In October 1944, the station reverted to its Operational Training Unit status with Mosquito, Mitchell and Boston aircraft. Then in October 1945, Prime Minister Attlee announced in the House of Commons that 'The Government have decided to set up a research and experimental establishment covering all aspects of the use of atomic energy. Accommodation is being provided for the establishment at Harwell airfield, near Didcot'. The RAF moved out in December and AERE Harwell came into existence on 1 January 1946.

Hangar 9 became home to Harwell's main Engineering Workshop, which in its hey-day housed a close community of over 200 skilled craftsmen. Craft Apprentices were trained in the first Electrical and Mechanical Training Workshops there where, due to the workshop's size and the volume of work passing through, supervisors could control the range and degree of difficulty of work issued to apprentices. With the workshop sub-divided into Turning, Milling, Fitting, Instrument Making, Toolroom, Sheet Metal and Welding Sections and the 'Model Shop' or Woodworking Section, a programme of training was developed so that apprentices benefitted from the experience of working with the wide range of craftsmen it was possible to place them with.

In 1951 extensions 9.2, 9.3 and 9.5 were added, constructed of brick with flat felt covered roofs. B.9.2 housed the Inspection Department and B.9.3 was used to provide a Non Destructive Testing Service and a Welding Shop. B.9.5 began life as an Engineering Laboratory.



# for Hangar 9

The Hangar nearly became home for yet another aircraft when, in April 1957, a U.S.A.F. jet trainer aircraft crashed less than 100 yards away from it. The plane, a Shooting Star, was attempting a rocket-assisted take-off from the disused runway after it had landed the previous night when the pilot's radio-navigation equipment broke down. The aircraft's tyres had burst on landing. Scores of Harwell workers who were outside the hangar watching the proceedings saw the crash. The plane rose only a few feet in the air, travelling at 140 m.p.h. when it went out of control. It is believed there was a fault in the rocket mechanism. The left wing dipped steeply and the plane smashed through the airfield perimeter fence and across a roadway, taking parts of concrete posts and wire netting with it. It stopped 15 yards from a 20ft hole workmen were digging.

In 1975 Apprentice training moved out of Hangar 9 and into B.501 and all engineering and manufacturing work was brought under one roof in the Hangar.

Over the years a lot of excellent engineering work has been produced by the Hangar 9 community, from precision instrumentation to general engineering up to 25 tons. Prototype and experimental work has included projects in support of the Van de Graaf accelerator, the atomic pile in H10, reactor rigs and modifications, mock-ups for the active handling wing of B.220 and PWR test-piece nozzles, to name but a few!

Gradually over the years the need for heavy engineering on site has dropped and some of the machine tools have been sold — some abroad. B.9.5 became a Graphite Machining Workshop and in 1986 it was taken over as a workshop by Amersham International. In 1987 the Welding Shop moved into the main hangar to make room for the Sheet Metal Section which moved in from B.341.

Time marches on and needs change: with the bell tolling for hangar 9's demise because it was not readily adaptable for office accommodation, it needed extensive roof repairs and it was expensive to heat, it seemed a stroke of irony that one of the last jobs the Hangar staff undertook was the repair of the striking mechanism for Big Ben! Machines still in use have either been re-housed in the Engineering Workshop at Culham or smaller workshops around the sites and the last team finally moved out of the Hangar in 1990.

Demolition is expected to take 12 weeks and includes the two main overhead cranes in the building, one 30 ton capacity and one five ton capacity — the latter capable of travelling almost the complete length of the north side of the hangar.

And so ends the story — or does it? High up in the south west corner of the hangar, where the steelwork forms an 'X' in the 400 ton roof, it is rumoured that an RAF airman lurks. He used to sneak up there for a 'kip' and even now, strange noises can be heard from that end of the hangar at night. Whilst on the spooky-story trail, you've no doubt heard of the headless airman who is reputed to walk the hangars at night and then there's the tale of the airman's leather leg-brace — in a locker in Hangar 9 — which should not be removed under any circumstances . . .

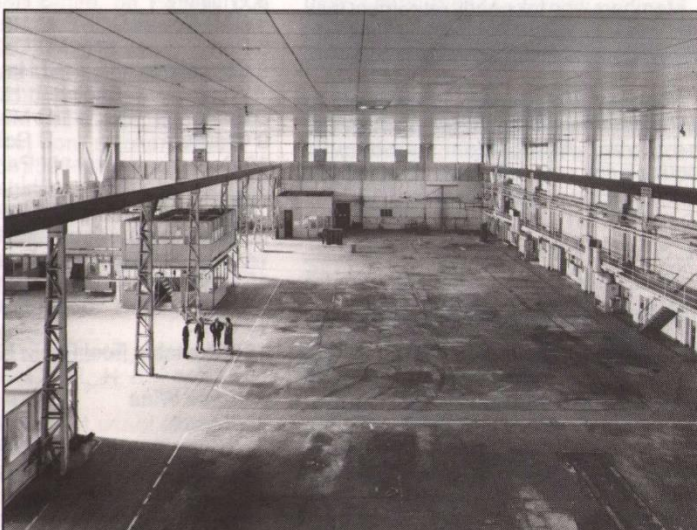
*This article was compiled with the help of Gordon Dean (retired), Dennis Neale (retired), Roland Wise, Terry Cox, Pete Johnsey, Eric Jenkins, Adrian Purvey and Geoff Barton. If you have any information about Hangar 9, spooky or serious, please contact the Editor.*



*The Shooting Star which came to rest 100 yards from Hangar 9.*



*Hangar 9 in its Hey-day.*



*All gone — but not forgotten.*



## Safety Facts

### Radiological Incidents

6 January 1992—19 January 1992

There were no radiological incidents that were designated at category 2n or above during this period.

### Accidents in December 1991

Lost time accidents

	Harwell	Culham
No. in December	0	0
Total No. in '91	10	4
No. reported in Dec	0	0
Total reported to HSE in '91	8	3
Total days lost in '91	88	123

Minor accidents (no time lost)

	Harwell	Culham
No. in	42	6
Total No. in '91	380	81

## Harwell Recreational Association

### Subscriptions

At the AGM held on 14 Jan 92, a subscription increase of 7p per week was approved.

Members are advised that the increase was necessary due to falling income, resulting from capital expenditure and a declining membership, coupled with increased overheads.

The increase will become effective on March 1 1992, the new rate for Ordinary Members is 47p per week for weekly paid staff and £2.04 for salaried staff.

The new annual rates for all membership categories will be as follows:

Category	Annual Subscription
Ordinary	(1) Weekly paid.....£24.44 (2) Salaried..... £24.48
Adult Family	.....£12.24
Junior Family	(1) Under 18yrs.....£6.12 (2) Over 18yrs.....£24.48
Associate (Club-sponsored)	.....£30.00
Reciprocal (Culham Rec Soc members)....	£15.12

Members who take early retirement may continue Ordinary Membership until age 60 on payment of the annual subscription.

Honorary Membership is available to retired Ordinary Members who satisfy the the 3-year Association membership requirement and who have reached the age of 60.

## CSMA/Frizzell Insurance

Application forms and other literature for CSMA and Frizzell Insurance Services are available from the Rec. Assoc. Office, open 8.00am—4.30pm (Mon-Thurs) and 8.00am—4.00pm (Fridays).

Brian McNamara, Frizzell Regional Manager, visits Harwell Social Club on the first Monday of each month from 10.00am until 12.00noon. Topics covered include Motoring, Holiday, Bldgs and Contents Insurance, CSMA membership and Personal Loans. **Appointments for his next visit on Monday February 3 '92 through Rec. Assoc. Office ext H 3296.**

## Rounders

The AGM of the Rounders Tournament 1992 will be held in on Wednesday March 25 in the Harwell Social Club Function Room at 12.30pm. The present Chairman and Committee hope enough people turn up to make a 1992 Tournament possible.

With luck, enough volunteers and good weather—not forgetting the good services of Fred Burnage and that smashing chap Tony Betteridge—it may be possible to start the tournament in May. Anyone interested in participating is urged to please turn up!

Due to organisational hiccups last year, no late entries will be allowed and team fees will be payable with applications. The all encompassing talent of Grahame (modest) Murphy will be rolled out again this year for his 24th consecutive season (will his star never dim?). Such are the embarrassingly large numbers already rushing to join Murphy's squad that he has had to issue the statement 'Don't call us, we 'll call you'.....



*Pictured are four of the girls lucky enough to have received the call 'You're in!' Clockwise, from top left; Carol Lloyd, E&E; Rachel Morley, FS; Marion Sharp, D&R; Carol Smallbone, D&R.*

## Harwell Lunchtime Quiz League

12.45pm—13.45pm in the Social Club for 10 Tuesdays starting on 4 Feb.

There are still a few places left for new teams who wish to join.

Each week there are 50 General Knowledge questions. At the end of the season prizes will be awarded to the winning team and the runners-up. There is also a mini-quiz for a spot prize each week. Entry fee: £6 per team payable on or before the first quiz. Captains of teams who competed in the last league will be contacted soon, anyone wishing to enter a new team should ring Richard Bull on H 6348 or Ian Adsley on H 5717.

## Culham Rec Soc Christmas Draw

Prize No/ Prize	Winner
1 £20	M Russell
2 £10	L Svensson
3 Whiskey	S Haig
4 B&D Power Drill	G Hatt
5 Port	D Campling
6 Chocolates	J Hawes
7 Wine	Englebutt Humpdink
8 Book	D Mace
9 Crackers	B Robertson
10 Beer	M Partridge
11 Tool Set	Shirley c/o Nina
12 Bianco	M Partridge
13 B&D Torch	C Faulkner
14 Chocolates	D Edgar
15 White Wine	D Baynes
16 Nuts	R Bemrose
17 Cider	Paddy
18 Adjustable Tool Rack	Marjorie
19 Coffee	K Luker
20 Rose Wine	Mike Hart
21 Biscuits	Trevor
22 Sherry	M Woodbridge
23 Ham	Val Buckingham
24 Xmas Pudding	Andy Whitby
25 Biscuits	Julian Humm
26 Chocolates	M Watson

Contact J Davies for prizes: ext. C 4607

## Film Society

*Celia*

4 Feb at 7.45pm in the Cockcroft Hall

This imaginative and original film subtly examines the fears and prejudices of the post-war era, seen through the eyes of a child. Melbourne 1975: nine year old Celia decides to take matters into her own hands with startling consequences when adult concerns start to interfere with her safe little world.

Guest tickets available at £2.25 from Angela Bell ext H 4326.

## Harwell Charity Ball

**In aid of local Charities**

Harwell Restaurant  
Friday 21 February 1992  
Hot Buffet (8pm)/Jazz Band/Disco  
7.30pm-1am  
Formal Dress only please  
**Tickets £10 from Lynda Thomas, Abingdon**

## Culham Rec Soc St Valentine's Ball

Sat 15 Feb 8pm - 1am  
Culham Restaurant  
7 piece dance band/Disco/Hot buffet  
Free wine and beer  
Dress: Black tie or lounge suit  
**Tickets: £10 from:**  
Dick Walker ext. C 4837,  
Dave Codling ext. C 3464 or  
Andy Miller ext. C 4927

## Institute of Physics

*The Beauty of Physics Photographic Competition: Call for Entries.*

**Submit a photograph taken in 1991 with a caption explaining it in less than 200 words**

Contact: Public Affairs Dept, Institute of Physics, 47 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8QX  
28 February 1992: closing date





# GOSH



Not a keyboard mouse, but keyboard hamsters—these are the small Chinese variety! Lorraine gets a kiss from a chap with 'dominant spot' (mainly white) marking.

Lorraine Hurst, who works in Purchasing and Supply at Harwell, was not able to keep house pets because a member of her family is allergic to fur. So when she left home Lorraine bought herself two hamsters. They bred, she kept one of the babies and bought one more, they bred, she kept one and bought one, they bred she kept, she bought; fascinated by the variety of types and colours.

She became a member of the Southern Hamster Club, and has since taken on the job of Club Publicity Officer, edits the newsletter for GOSH, (the Group for Other Species of Hamsters), is currently acting as Joint Publicity Officer for the British Hamster Association and has qualified as a judge of Dwarf Hamsters.

How big has Lorraine's menagerie grown in the eight years since she fell for Pogle and Scruffy, her first hamster pair? She now has over 144 hamsters, plus their 86 babies!

Lorraine's kitchen is lined with shelves which hold hamster boxes. Three to four hours every weekend are needed to clean them out and £80 is spent on food for them about every six weeks, depending on how many babies there are. They have occasional treats of greens and vegetables, but their staple diet is cereal. Lorraine buys grain, seeds and oats in bulk and mixes the food herself. Fortunately she has a free supply of sawdust for their bedding. However, the long-haired hamsters need it teased out of their coats with a tooth brush!

Lorraine names and labels all her hamsters, keeping a record of their parentage, mates and litters. The newborn hamsters are only about 15 centimetres long, pink, with no hair and closed eyes, and at two weeks they have doubled in

size, opened their eyes and are displaying the colours and markings which will either make them ideal exhibitors, perhaps an uninteresting mix which will be sold, or even an exciting new colour to be added to the collection. At three to four weeks the sexes are separated. They are inclined to squabble, so need a home of their own. Some of the dwarf varieties can live in twos or threes, the largest colony Lorraine has is twelve, some of them are pictured with her above.

Lorraine takes her hamsters to at least 8 of the 12 shows a year held by the Southern Hamster Club. As many as 400 hamsters may be entered at a Show, supported by professional breeders, as well as children and families. The animals are marked out of 100 points for colour standard, body type, fur quality, size, condition, and healthy eyes and ears.

Lorraine also holds displays for the club at Agricultural Shows when, to publicise the club, a selection of the more 'dopey' natured hamsters can be handled by the public. Lorraine will answer questions and sell some of the stock. Up to 50 hamsters can be sold at a big show and cost around £3 each to buy. (Although in some parts of the country up to £30 is apparently being asked for newly imported colours, which Lorraine says is outrageous.)

The Dwarf varieties are more inclined to nip than the Syrians but a placid nature is passed on genetically, so after eight generations of selective breeding, and as the hamsters have been handled from an early age, a new owner can feel fairly confident about making friends without being bitten.

The Dwarf variety lives for 18 to 24 months and the Syrians between 24 and 36 months.

One of Lorraine's hamsters found its way into the ceiling! Another got into the back of the sofa and had to be cut out. Most famous of all was aptly-named Samson who managed to open his cage door at nights but was still to be found snoozing in the bottom of his three-tier cage in the mornings. Samson left chewed record covers as evidence of his journeys, although how he got back up the smooth pole which held his cage, no one could fathom. His final adventure found him inside a cavity wall, packing his pouches with tiny pieces of polystyrene installation for nesting. He had to be coaxed out of the specially made hole in the wall with temptingly torn toilet tissue for the more up-market bed. After that, his cage door was tied down.

I don't see the collection ever stopping,' laughs Lorraine, 'if I had a bigger house, it would certainly increase!'

## Hamster History

Early this century the Golden Hamster was thought to be extinct, until a female and her litter were discovered in Syria in 1930.

In time, through selective breeding and natural mutations there are now around 50 different colours such as Smoke Pearl, Yellow, Lilac, Blue Mink, Chocolate, Copper, Ivory, and three new colours imported last year from Scandinavia: Melanistic Black, Silver Grey and Black Eared Black Eyed White. The Golden Hamster is therefore now more correctly referred to as the Syrian Hamster.

The Southern Hamster Club holds regular shows mainly in the South of England, including Newbury in June '92 and Burghfield Common near Reading in July. Membership is open to adults for £6 a year and to Children for £4.50. It includes a free monthly journal with poems, puzzles, stories, articles and letters on all aspects of keeping Syrian Hamsters, such as welfare, hamster products, breeding, genetics and new colours.

The Group for other species of Hamster call themselves GOSH. They keep Dwarf Hamsters which originate from parts of China and Russia, and include the Chinese Hamster, the Cambells Russian, and the Albino Campbell's Russian, which has a recent mutation called the Piebald. The Winter White Russian has the unusual characteristic of turning white in the winter.

GOSH is affiliated to the Southern Hamster club and produces a newsletter for items related to solely to hamsters which are not Syrian (ie Dwarfs). Membership is £4 or is automatically included in the Southern Hamster Club membership.

A new central body, The British Hamster Association, is in the process of being set up and any group or organisation with an interest in hamsters will be eligible to join. For further details, contact Lorraine on ext. H6682 or Wantage

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