

Oddments from my 1997 diaries, written as if I'm talking to my daughter Barbi who's typing them up for me. Comments where a bit of background seems necessary have been enclosed in square brackets []. Any ordinary brackets were there in my original scribbles.

BTW Whenever I mention Berko, it's short for Berkhamsted, which is where I live. This short form is how I, and others who know it well, refer to it.

### 7.31pm Monday 7th July 1997 Euston Station

I'm on the 7.34pm waiting for it to leave the station and boy am I glad to be on my way home. Today has been absolutely horrendous. It started in the usual way when I go out to teach, with having to get up early. That was not pleasant, but it was no real problem. I was quite organised and made myself scrambled egg in the microwave to go with some roast pork we had in the fridge. All very civilised you might say. Nigel [my husband] drove me down to the station, then went back home for a bath and breakfast and to print out and look through some macros for the new job he was starting today at a company which buys and sells aircraft. [In 1997 Nigel was working for our company, NS Enterprises.]

I bought a weekly season ticket to take me to White City, then got the train to Euston, got the Victoria Line and changed at Oxford Circus and then changed again onto the Central Line for White City. No problems. I walked the short distance from the station to the BBC TV Centre and got a one day pass from the receptionist. Soon afterwards someone from the ENPS support team came down and took me up the same room on the 3rd floor where all the trainers had been shown the system last week. [ENPS is a system developed for the BBC by Associated Press (AP) and freelance trainers like myself have been called in by a company called Comtec, to teach to the BBC staff.]

I'd been told that the course was starting at 9.30am, so I'd arrived at TV Centre about 5 to 9 to make sure I could check out everything before I started teaching. That was where the problems started. 7 of the 8 students I was scheduled to teach, had been told the course was starting at 9am so they were all there waiting for me. At that point I had no idea how many students to expect, so when those that were there assured me that everyone would have been given the same start time, I (foolishly perhaps) believed them. Of course the other student had been told 9.30am, so after I started the course early, he arrived. We had to wait for him to get comfortable and sign on, then I started again. (I hadn't covered much.)

Two of the students on the course were very concerned with lots of details and persisted in not only asking questions, but labouring each point to make sure they had everything absolutely clear. They effectively stopped me from being able to go through the curriculum at a reasonable pace. The other students asked reasonable questions too, but the overall effect of that many students combined to make it impossible for me to get through everything. To make matters worse, they told me they were scheduled to come back again in the afternoon for their Module 3 training. As I was supposed to be doing 4 one hour sessions of Module 2 in that room, and they had been told their afternoon course was in the same room, I was confused.

I contacted Evelyn, a woman who'd introduced herself earlier to give me some forms to hand out to the students, to ask her what was happening. She said that the training I was doing had been divided into Modules 2a introductory, and 2b advanced levels, which I knew, and that I was taking both, which I didn't know. I'd only been taught the introductory level myself, so didn't stand a hope in hell of showing anyone else the advanced stuff.

By this time, students for my next session had started to arrive, so I didn't have time to even get a coffee. There were only 3 of them for the second session, one of whom said he 'd already got the system and was using it and carried on his own sweet way whilst I was showing things to the other two. He too was expecting advanced training in the afternoon.

Of the appraisal forms I got completed from the 1st two sessions, the only really good ones were from the two girls in the 2nd session. At lunchtime a man by the name of Charles came in to find out how it had gone. I told him some of the catalogue of disasters. He wants me to do an appraisal form for him, but I'll write out a brief overview. It'll be easier. I managed to get back in touch with Evelyn, who told me someone from Comtec was coming to take the advanced session, so I 'phoned Comtec. They knew nothing about it, so got in touch with someone at the BBC. I got a call back saying Evelyn had got it wrong and I had another beginner's course scheduled for that time-slot.

So come lunch time I spoke to Evelyn who told me that the advanced course was definitely on. She added that she didn't have anyone for the 2pm course, just after a man had turned up for it, so I told her who he was. I was able to give him a one-to-one session which he appreciated and gave me Excellent on everything on the appraisal form. Whilst I was teaching him we kept getting interruptions from the 'phone, sorting out the last session. We eventually established that Mark, one of the support team, would take the course, whilst I

sat in on it to find out what he would cover. (I've got to take it tomorrow, but Mark will sit in with me.)

9pm (ish)

The session started on time, but because not only were the 2 troublesome students present but also the know-it-all from the 2nd session was with them, it carried on and on and on..... It should have finished at 5.45pm, a long enough day anyway from a 9.30 start, but it didn't actually finish until 6.35pm.

One of the students left at 5.45, another soon afterwards, then gradually they all went excepting the 3 who I mentioned at the start of the previous paragraph. They were telling Mark what they did and didn't want on the system and in the screen layout until at least 25 past 6. Mark finally managed to cover most of what he wanted to show them.

After all the students had gone Mark told me that it had been one of the worst courses he'd done because of these 3 students. He also told me that Associated Press (AP - who'd written the system and who he works for) had contracted to teach all the BBC journalists how to use the system at no extra cost. That's why AP are insisting on this impossible schedule of so many students on 4 sessions a day. Oh, I forgot to tell you, that when Charles had come in after lunch, he'd told me they wanted to get a 9th student in the room for future courses. I didn't exactly laugh in his face, but I almost did. It would be ludicrous.

I finally left TV Centre at 5 to 7pm and had a (fortunately) uneventful journey home. I've 'phoned Brian and told him about the day. He asked me to fax him some of the appraisal forms which I did. Now my supper is ready and I'm going to stop writing to eat. Bye for now. XXXX

6.49pm 8th July 1997 Tuesday, Just leaving Euston Station

As you probably gathered from the above, I'm on the train on my way home. My second day's teaching on the ENPS system was not perfect by any means, but it was a lot better than yesterday's.

Brian told me last night that the courses run last Friday by one of the other trainers, another Suzanne, were as disastrous as my first day. He even said that if I give the word he would pull his entire team off the project. My self-respect wouldn't allow me to quit though, so I said I'd stick it out.

The morning class didn't start till 11.30am, but I got in at 9am so that I could type up the notes I took yesterday afternoon during the advanced session that Mark took. I had them typed and checked before the morning class was due to start. This morning session was 2a, basic stuff only and it went well, even though the class of 8 was still too big. We didn't get through as much as we should have, but the same group were scheduled to come back again for 2b, the advanced course, in the afternoon.

The first session of the afternoon was again 2a, but this time I only had 2 students, so we covered virtually everything. It was the 2b session afterwards that caused problems. It started late 'cos not only one of the students was late, but also 3 of the other PC's wouldn't let their users sign on successfully. At one point there was even a mention of postponing the course altogether. However the problems were (mainly) sorted out and we got going.

Everything was fine until I started showing them how to use something called Running Orders. These are basically lists of what's going to be read out on the news broadcasts. There's a lot of necessary information included with these, and manipulating it includes understanding a lot of terminology which obviously was all double-dutch to me. I called Mark in to help and he was able to give the students answers to their questions.

Unfortunately I hadn't asked the group to fill in Appraisal Forms at the end of their morning session, so those that completed them marked my knowledge on my afternoon performance. A couple of students took their forms and left earlier than the scheduled time I was given, saying they would give them to me tomorrow. (I doubt that they will. From experience I've learned students rarely do bring them back.) Anyway, apparently the groups have been told the sessions are shorter than they really are so they didn't think they were leaving early.

We're nearly at Berko now, so I'm going to stop writing. Bye for now. XXX

#### 6.45pm Wednesday 9th July 1997 Euston Station

I've come to the end of my 3rd day at TV Centre and my feet are killing me. If I was a cartoon they'd be getting alternately bigger and smaller and steam and loud noises would be erupting from them at regular intervals in time with the throbbing. I'm only glad I'm now sitting on the train waiting for it to start. I've just been asked to move my poor feet because they were in the way of the guy who wanted to sit in the seat opposite.

A lad just got on and asked another passenger sitting nearer to the door than me, if he knew where this train was going. My first thought was that he must know, otherwise he wouldn't be on it. His answer was "Various places," at which the boy looked rather taken aback. Then the passenger continued "Hemel, Watford" which seemed to satisfy the lad. If I'd been closer I might have added Berko and Tring which weren't mentioned. It doesn't make any difference now 'cos the driver's just announced all the stops over the speakers prior to departure.

Today hasn't been easy. Several of the PC's kept crashing and the server they're using went down a couple of times. I thought I would have an empty session to go through 'running orders' in more detail with Mark (the PA techie) before taking 6 students for a 2b advanced session at 4 o'clock. Things didn't work out quite like that. I had 8 people for the 2a first course at 9.30am, some of whom were scheduled to come back for the 2b course. All those that weren't supposed to be coming back, wanted to. As I only had 6 names on my list for the 2b course today and 4 for the one tomorrow, I said I'd find out if they could come to one or other of them. When I 'phoned Evelyn she said she'd check with their managers and 'phone them and let them know. However when I relayed that to the waiting students, they said they weren't contactable by 'phone. I told them to OK it themselves with their managers and come back if it was OK. I added 2 of the names to those I already had down for today's course and put the other 3 down for tomorrow.

At that point I still thought I had an empty 2pm slot to use for revision. By the time I'd sorted out the new schedule I'd used up my precious 15 minutes break time and I was bursting to use the loo. I ran upstairs, did a wee, went to the water fountain and filled my drinking water bottle, then came back down and started teaching again. This time I had 5 students turn up, even though there were only 4 on my list.

As lunch-time approached I wound up the course and gave out the appraisal forms. Evelyn told me yesterday she needs to know who'd attended to activate the system for their log-ins, so after the students left and I had my lunch, I 'phoned to tell her. She then told me that I had a student for a 2a course at 2pm. I was devastated as that meant I had no time for revision, but there was nothing that could be done.

My one-to-one student was very bright and very computer literate and I got through everything in double-quick time, including showing him what I know about 'running orders.' I told him what had happened yesterday and asked if I'd missed out any essential elements of that feature. He didn't think so, which

reassured me for the next course. I had asked Mark if he would be around as back-up if I needed him, so I thought "what the hell" and carried on with it myself. Do you know what? It wasn't nearly as bad as I'd thought it would be. I must say that I made it quite clear to them all before I started that there might be gaps in my knowledge of that part of it, and also of the 2b curriculum. When they asked questions I didn't know I either wrote their question down to ask Mark at the end of the course, or else said it would be part of their Module 3 training. Passing the buck worked and they weren't too unhappy judging by the appraisal forms.

11.13pm

I told you about Brian's bombshell. The PA don't want me to do any more training for them because I couldn't do the impossible and teach 8 students that entire system in 1½ hours. Brian has agreed that I should invoice him for the full 5 days, so I will. I must remember the point you made of adding extra, which I'll have to agree with Brian, for the extra time I did on Monday evening.

0.15am Thursday 10th July 1997

I've told students that the reason we haven't completed the course is because not enough time had been allocated per session. I probably even told the big boss himself, Mark's boss's boss Keith, who showed me upstairs yesterday morning when I got to TV Centre. (Someone usually comes down to reception to escort visitors up. Trainers are still considered visitors.)

I've just realized, or rather I realized a little while ago, (I've just thought of writing it down) that over the past 3 days (72 hours), I've had a total of 15 hours sleep maximum, more likely less. That's not even as much as I feel is necessary for me for 2 days (48 hours). I'm giving myself a night off.

Night, night. XXX

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