

## NEWSLETTER EDITOR, MEMBERSHIP & SOCIAL SECRETARY – PAMELA AUSTIN

Having left grammar school with no ambitions other than to join the RAF and be a pilot - which, for a girl in 1965, was a non-starter - I followed a bizarre and tortuous working life, which could in no way be described as 'a career'! Initially, I joined HM Inland Revenue in the Tax Inspector's office, where I worked for four years, in Newbury and then Oxford. Next, I applied for a job in the art department of a marketing research company, but 'Personnel' decided that I was better suited to the statistical analysis department, and I thus spent seven years there, enjoying many opportunities and projects, before moving on to work in service/sales with Alcan Aluminium at their extrusion plant in Banbury. After three years, I decided that I wanted to be one of their sales reps, but sexism was rife, so I left Alcan and instead became a rep selling hygiene products, first in Oxfordshire and then Middlesex as well.



After a couple of years, Terry popped the question, and I decided that doing admin every evening wasn't a good start to married life, so I joined a company in Ealing which sent mailshots on behalf of drug companies to every medic in Britain. I enjoyed the work as an account executive, but I didn't get on with the boss, who sacked me after six months.... another great start to married life with a mortgage! Then followed ten years in the City with KPMG, one of the largest firms of Chartered Accountants and management consultants: I began as their seminar and publications organiser, and having managed to ditch the publications quite early, ended up managing the organisation of, on average, 100 seminars, conferences and exhibitions per annum. Can you believe that they still managed to find me 'redundant'? All my staff found other jobs within the firm, but none was available, allegedly, at my level of seniority.

So, sadly, despite making many dozens of job applications during the next year, I never worked full-time again - at least, not until I retired...!! However, I joined a group of out-of-work sales reps, and working independently, we researched potential clients and tried to sell an excellent sales training aid, but in the grip of the 1991 recession, we sold nothing for a year, and I then baled out. I responded to an advertisement, and became an interviewer at Heathrow, for the Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys. That was a summer contract, so when it ended, I became instead an interviewer with BAA. The following year, OPCS invited me back permanently, and so I did both jobs simultaneously for three years. I next became a self-defence instructor, training British Airways' cabin crew to restrain difficult passengers! Redundant again after a year (courtesy of BA), I became a medical centre receptionist, and later I was asked to transcribe all the patients' notes onto the computer (I never finished it, but someone else did!) In all, I worked there part-time for eight years, however I decided to follow another ambition, so simultaneously I qualified as an Approved Driving Instructor, and taught part-time for four years, finishing after Terry retired in 2000. During this time, I also worked occasionally as a 'mystery shopper'! I had passed the car and motorcycle advanced driving tests some years previously, and although not paid work, I was an 'observer' for other candidates for four years following our move to Norfolk.

I enjoyed sixteen years' spare-time voluntary service in the Royal Observer Corps prior to operational stand-down in 1991: my final two years with command of some 400 personnel as Group Commandant of Bedford Group, only the third female of four ever to attain the rank of Observer Commander. I subsequently enjoyed eleven years in one of the RAF Reserve Intelligence Squadrons, which included four months' full time called-up service at RAF Marham in the 2003 Iraq war. During those years, I also spent eight very interesting years serving as a JP on the East Berkshire bench. I had a bit of time left for some long-term hobbies and interests, among them horse riding, photography, motorcycling and Scottish Country dancing; in 1987, I also sat and passed the Mensa IQ test, so am a certified "Brainiac" with an IQ in the top 1% of the population - and I'm sitting writing this, instead of formulating a new theory on quantum physics, or something! Sad or what?