

## Arrivals

When I first arrived at the Department of AI in Edinburgh, in 1984, Alan Bundy was the best-known of a range of strong academic talent. Because I was in the natural language group, on E-floor, and did not often reach the exalted heights of F-floor, Alan and his group always had an aura of unattainability, fostered partly by distance, but also, of course, by the enormous respect which was very apparent throughout the Department. Because of that aura, one felt that perhaps the Great Man was rather formidable, and perhaps even a bit unapproachable.

In 1989, I applied for a research post in the Maths Reasoning group-better known as the DReaM group, after the (very satisfactory) acronym of one of its funded projects. To my huge surprise, since my background wasn't in Maths Reasoning, I was offered the job. To my even greater surprise-and lasting pleasure-I immediately discovered that Prof. Bundy was not only a normal human, but also rather a modest and charming one.

## Sojourn

I was lucky enough to work with the DReaMers for six and a half years-an unusually long time for an RA. During that time, I learned, from Alan, pretty much everything I know about how to do research, and, in particular, how to manage people doing research, including PhD students. How much more effective it was to be told "No, that's OK.", with that slightly sad and let-down look in those very expressive eyes, than to be shouted at and told to do better next time; what an outstanding example of time- and life-management, apparently never being late, and always completing work to the highest possible standard.

Two pieces of direct advice particularly stick in my mind. One was "Never forget to thank your administrators."; that has served me very well over the past 10 years. Another was "Learn to walk away from the phone when it's ringing."; that one took a while to perfect, but, as a general principle of self-control, it has certainly helped me control the not inconsiderable stress of managing research projects at the same time as heading a large academic department.

To be honest, anyone as uniformly good as this guy would be pretty irritating, if it weren't, in Alan's case, for his self-effacing and down-to-earth demeanour.

I remember two particular occasions when this surfaced. One was when he arrived in the computer room, grinning broadly, to announce to us all that he had just written his first piece of working Prolog in 10 years; most Profs. I know would have told someone else to do it, and even if they'd done it themselves wouldn't have announced the fact with such obvious and uncomplicated delight. The other was when I was helping the pre-Professorial Alan with something computerish, in my alternative capacity as DReaM computing officer. I happened to notice a file entitled "chair". Being me, I cheekily asked "Is that what I think it is?"; Alan confirmed that it was, but, most charmingly, blushed modestly while doing so.

## **Departures**

When I left the DReaM group, there was the customary gift (well-chosen CDs, which I still listen to regularly via my iPod), and I made the customary impromptu speech. I said that the previous six and a half years had been the happiest of my life-and it was true. The DReaM group offered the most perfect combination of academic and social stimulus and support that I can imagine-and which I aim to foster in my own research group, now.

But the DAI couldn't get rid of me that easily. I took a lectureship the following year, and then departed again at the end of 1999, when the Department had been finally broken up. I did, rather half-heartedly, apply for a continuing post in the new Whatever-It-Was of Informatics, but, as expected, was not offered one; when that was announced, Alan kindly expressed his regrets. I was, however, able to tell him that, as a direct result of his intervention in my career, recommending me as a consultant to the Technology Foresight initiative in 1995, I had found an exciting post-and promotion-elsewhere. There is no doubt that Alan's intervention was pivotal in my trajectory towards my current situation, in a unique department which focuses on creative computing in the UK's leading creative University.

I owe-and every former DReaMer owes-Alan Bundy a very great deal. There's really only one thing left to say:

**Thank you.**

Geraint Wiggins