

Chairman's Bytes – November-December 2016

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What Next?

The end of one year and the beginning of another always provide an opportunity to ask “How did we do, and what next?” The Annual General Meeting, held this year in November, asked the same questions. My Chairman's Report, printed in this issue I hope, gave some answers, but “What next?” remains firmly on the agenda.

The monthly meetings in London, including the mini-conference and the AGM every year are what keeps the club going, and will continue so long as we have a place to meet, and a group of people who want to come. It has always been an aim of the club to organise meetings in other places and at other times too, but these occur only sporadically. A second place and time for regular meetings would be wonderful, but I believe that would need a regular meeting place, and a group of regulars who come to each meeting. We had that for a time in Leeds, and later near Southampton, and the club committee would gladly help anyone willing to try again, but it does need someone to start it.

The other main activities of the club are communications with members by means of the web site and the publication of Datafile. The question has been asked before, and was asked again at the AGM – should we stop publishing Datafile? The Editor is willing to continue, and a few members are happy to continue submitting articles – but too few. One option would be to extend the range of subjects covered in Datafile – just as the range of subjects discussed at meetings long ago became much wider than just HP calculators.

To that end, what classes of articles, and what kind of readers, do we have? First, given any article, some readers will ignore it, thinking “that's just not my thing”. Secondly, a broad spectrum will read the article in some detail, from those who are vaguely interested to those who are fascinated by the topic. Thirdly some articles will be studied intently by readers who may think “I must try that”, or “I must go and get one of those”. In the early days of the club, the last was the dominant class – a new trick to program the HP-41, or a new add-on for the HP-71B, or a new calculator. These days, I think and hope most articles will fit the second class, rather than the first. Unfortunately, many club members fear that what they write will be treated as being in the first class, so they do not write anything. If that is so, should Datafile be replaced by more use of the club discussion area on our web site? Naturally, a web discussion is more immediate, needs less work than writing an article, and gets much more rapid feedback. I would prefer to try that but to keep Datafile going too, especially for members who cannot get to meetings, and because clubs without a journal turn into just a local meeting group. Comments?

Season's Greetings?

I'll finish this on an optimistic note, wishing everyone, but particularly our Editor, a joyful Christmas (or midwinter festival of your choice) and a very Happy 2017, with lots of Datafile articles written and published.