**David Henderson**

Earlier this year, we received the frightening news that Dave had gone into hospital on 15 February with a suspected stroke, this came as a shock as Dave was such a robust character and seemed invincible.

During Dave’s short illness, we were in frequent contact with Mary and are thankful that we were able to speak with Dave briefly too. We were devastated to learn that Dave had passed away on 5 April and only now do we feel able to write our recollections of the good, funny times spent with Dave.

Tim, Mya & Wafler

***Some happy memories of our dear friend - Tim & Mya***

I met David for the first time in early June 1984, the day before we flew out to Baghdad together. It was my first trip outside Europe so David seemed very worldly wise to me and he was happy to share his experiences.

David’s time in Baghdad got off a memorable start. We arrived late in the evening and had a gentle introduction with a stay at the Palestine Meridien. When I saw David in the hotel the following day, he advised me to be careful not to close the sliding door if I went out onto the balcony. I thought, very helpful, I wonder why he’s telling me this. David later confided that, earlier that morning, with just a towel wrapped around his waist, he had stepped out in the warmth of the Baghdad June sunshine to survey his new surroundings from the balcony of his 12th floor room, overlooking Saadoun Street. To keep his room cool, he had closed the sliding door behind him. To his surprise, when trying to get back into the room, David discovered that the door was locked and couldn’t be opened from the outside. For more than an hour, he’d been stranded out on the balcony trying to attract someone’s attention, shouting for help and leaning over the railings to bang on the doors of adjacent rooms, whilst trying to keep the towel securely in place. Eventually, someone had called the hotel staff who then came to his rescue. I suggested that the authorities might have come to his ‘rescue’ more quickly if he’d let go of the towel!

Fortunately, David thrived in a crisis and always remained very calm and collected. Another early recollection was a road rage incident within the first few weeks of our arrival in Iraq. I was driving back to Karkh camp on the elevated section of the Baghdad expressway, in a very old, clapped-out Toyota Crown, with David in the passenger seat to my right. I could see flashing headlights in the rear view mirror and soon after a car drew alongside us. I recognised the vehicle because it had pulled out in front of us a few minutes earlier so I tried to ignore the driver hoping he would soon get bored and accelerate away. But he didn’t so, eventually, I glanced across to my left to see what his problem was, only to find myself looking straight down the barrel of a revolver aimed at my head. Feeling more than a little concerned, I said to David, ‘He’s pointing at gun at me, what are we going to do now?’ and David calmly replied, ‘Just keep driving; anyway, knowing my \*\*\*\*\*\* luck, he’ll miss and shoot me’.

David grew up in Wolverhampton and, after leaving school, joined the Merchant Navy, spending many years travelling the world as a Ship’s Engineer.

After joining Paterson Candy, David worked as a Site Supervisor and then Site Manager on a wide range of UK and international water and wastewater projects including Nigeria, India, Iraq & Turkey before moving to Birse to take up a Site Project Manager position. In the latter part of his career, he worked freelance in a mix of Site Management and Site Health & Safety Management roles and became a Health & Safety specialist on Wind Farm construction sites.

David was very conscientious and diligent in his work, with sound technical knowledge and a practical aptitude.

Rugby was David’s sporting passion and he made many lifelong friends from his playing and touring days with the Wolverhampton Rugby Club. He liked to keep himself very fit and many of us will remember his gruelling circuit classes at Karkh Camp.

He met Mary, his beloved wife, at a dinner party we hosted in Baghdad in 1987. We are not sure why Mary was attracted to David though we should mention that, during the evening, he and Phil Murray dressed-up in nurses uniforms taking great care to smooth out all the wrinkles when they put the stockings on.

At home, David loved to cook and entertain but, according to Mary, kept his practical construction skills confined to the workplace.

One of David’s favourite pastimes was fishing, or, as we preferred to call it ‘casting’, because he rarely seemed to catch anything. Undeterred by our lack of enthusiasm, he would give us detailed instructions on how to fly fish and would very carefully choose and explain what flies we should use to suit the local ecology, the time of day and the weather conditions… …we still never caught anything!

We will miss his helpful, practical advice, such as how to avoid athletes foot by using the corner of the towel to dry in-between the toes. What will we do without all those golden nuggets?

David liked to chat and could strike up conversation with anyone, including unsuspecting passers-by in the street. After initial looks of mild concern and bewilderment, they would soon start to relax and by the end would usually be sharing a laugh and a joke with David.

We feel grateful and privileged to have had David as our friend, always loyal, ever generous, fully engaging with the banter and mixing some mean martinis.

We go back such a long way and fully expected to have many, many more years of friendship and epic travel adventures together. Looking back over the last 35 years, we realise that so many of our fondest and funniest memories are from times spent with David and Mary and it was his larger than life character that made him such great company. That’s why he had so many friends.

***Wafler’s recollections***

My first encounter with Dave was in Hereford where he attended a job interview for a senior position in PCI, Dave pitched up as usual, impeccably dressed, but with a huge blackeye turning yellow around the edges, a large graze on his cheek that had scabbed over and a split lip,…..Dave got the job.

Reading Tim’s recollection of Dave’s introduction to life in Baghdad, I recall collecting Dave and Tim from the Meridian Hotel the following day after their arrival, to take them by car to the PCI camp in Karkh. Dave, being teased by Tim, was quite indignant at the gestures he had received from the other guests at the hotel, whilst stuck on the balcony and trying desperately to attract attention. Dave soon became known around the PCI camp as Captain Chaos.

Being a sportsman Dave joined the Hash around the time when a fair number of Australian’s were in the pack, including HMV’s successor John “Cringer” Coleman. Amongst these Aussies was a really loud, coarse chap, whom I will not name, but coincided with the Hash Master HMV’s opening address at the start of the Down Downs being changed to “Ladies, Gentlemen and Australians of the Hash”

You will recall at the On After the format was you BBQ whatever meat you had brought and collected Hash supplied bread and salad, you plonked yourself down somewhere and ate. The first run Dave attended he followed the procedure until there was a loud outpouring of verbal abuse echoing around the venue that went on and on. Dave had apparently asked the coarse Aussie where he would find the knives, forks and condiments!

It was clear from the start that Dave and Tim had become good friends and the pair shared an office next to mine on the water treatment site. One day there was a loud commotion from next door so I went to investigate only to find Tim wedged in, what they used for a litter bin (a metre high round container, approx 60cm in dia. The top edge of the container edge was under Tim’s armpits and under his knees, leaving his arms and the bottom half of his legs dangling over the sides. Apparently, Dave had picked Tim up, bent him double, pushing his backside down inside the container and in Dave’s words “ready to go out with the rubbish” apparently Tim had “dissed” him.

When Tim went on leave, Dave, as a prank, had all the inside of Tim’s accommodation unit painted bright pink, walls, ceiling the lot. Not to be outdone, when Dave went on leave, Tim had mirrors screwed to the ceiling and the walls of Dave’s accommodation so Dave could see and flex his muscles from all angles. I understood that it was not true that Dave had a bulldog clip on his scrotum to push his chest out!

Although Dave was called Captain Chaos on camp, as soon as the Hash found out he lived in a house called Cherry Cottage, he immediately became known as Cherry Boy and more latterly The Hobbit.

Dave was truly one of my best mates, a true gentleman, kind, considerate and caring, I know he shielded me from the worst excesses of happenings at the Karkh Camp knowing I would have no choice but to take action, he was a man’s man and my right hand man at the Down Downs cool, calm and never criticising, God I am really going to miss him.