

Trip report E.W. Dijkstra, London, 12-14 June 1984.

On Tuesday I was picked up at 6:30 by Netty van Gasteren and her husband, who saw us to Eindhoven Airport. At 8:00 (local time) we landed at Gatwick; a BP driver was waiting to take us to the city.

Netty and I had gone to London in order to attend a seminar of the BP Venture Research Unit. It started on Tuesday 15:30 and lasted until Wednesday 18:00; there were - I guess - about 100 people in the audience.

Once in London, Netty and I went to Britannic House - BP's HQ - to prepare our visuals as I would be the first speaker that afternoon. (J Strother Moore of UT at Austin would be the other one.) We were joined by David Gries who had come down from Oxford. At 15:00 we met Wlad M. Turcki who also had been invited to attend my talk.

I had essentially been asked to present a progress report on our work, but to do so to an audience of natural scientists (chemists, biologists, etc.) and a few managers. I did not fully succeed. Technically my talk was correct and I had been fortunate in the choice of my two examples (which were nontrivial, yet understood by a major portion of the audience). But

I should have spent more time on mathematical methodology in general. Then J Moore showed in very general terms the mathematical verification of circuit designs; I think he was more successful in reaching his audience - he had cartoons - .

The following dinner - still on BP premises - was very good, by British standards probably excellent. Before and after it I talked with Wlad and we arranged to meet the next afternoon.

Netty attended all of the next day's performances, I only from 9:00 to 12:45 and from 17:00 onwards. I went to my hotel where I was joined by Wlad, whom I had planned to offer lunch. He agreed to my proposal that we should do some mathematics first (though he knew that then the restaurants would be closed). In his inspiring presence, I found a proof we liked very much. At 15:30, the food facilities were indeed very limited: we had to make do with a sandwich shop around the corner. At five, he saw me off at Britannic House. After the last lecture, the seminar was closed by a farewell cocktail party.

Netty and I returned to the Great Eastern Hotel, where we foolishly tried to have dinner.

Netty and I remembered that at a previous occasion - in the company of C.A.R. Hoare - I had had there a very acceptable Dover Sole. But the dining room was now a help-yourself carvery in which the food had reached a rare degree of inedibility. I had taken only a modest amount but even that I could not finish. We left the place in disgust and went to my room, where we worked. (There was, of course, no decent table to write at; we sat at the dressing table, where I wrote EWD891 under Netty's supervision.)

At 10:50 the next morning, I took leave from Netty, who stayed another week in London; a BP car took me to Heathrow. Having been booked on a later flight than I had asked for, I missed an appointment in Eindhoven. But I did return in time for bringing out my vote for the European Parliament.

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