

Harry Greaves

I was born (a long time ago it seems) and educated in England, where I worked for some years before moving to the USA, and from there to Australia.

In England my first real job (vacationing student labouring doesn't count here) was at the Forest Products Research Laboratory in Princes Risborough, where I was lucky to be mentored by the person whom I consider to be the father of soft rot, John Savory. During my year at FPRL



John guided me in many things scientific, but not in finding the one great love of my life - my wife, Sandra. She was working at that time in the FPRL Pulp and Paper section, and our occasional meetings over morning tea in the laboratory canteen culminated in marriage, which, some 50+ years later, is still going strong – she has long since given up her interest in pulp and paper research though!

Working at FPRL led to my meeting the other great name in wood preservation research in England at that time, Professor John Levy of Imperial College. I think JFL, as we referred to him, has produced more researchers in the wood preservation and biodeterioration field than any other single great research leader. Indeed, without FPRL and JFL postgraduates the IRG would be very much the poorer! OK, that was a generation ago I hear you say, but you must allow a little licence!!



With Fulbright scholar funding, postdoc work with Professor Ellis Cowling at NC State, USA, followed my spell at Imperial College under JFL's tutorship. This in turn led to a job offer a year later at CSIRO Forest Products Laboratory in Melbourne Australia. We returned to UK from USA and after completing the Australian formalities in London sailed out of Southampton in a snow storm in February 1968 and arrived in Melbourne the same month to a 40°C day! What a shock to the system that was.



This was supposed to be a 3-year contract, but matured into a lifetime's role beavering away in all things wood preservation and forest products generally.

There have been spells back in Europe since we moved to Australia – 12 months at the BAM, Berlin, under Professor Gunther Becker in the early 1970s, and another year back at FPRL (then referred to as the Princes Risborough Laboratory, before they morphed into BRE at Garston) in the early 1980s, where I worked in Tony Bravery's programme. We also had our 4th son born in Yorkshire that year, so I still have connections with God's own Country



All in all, I have been very fortunate to have worked in the forest products arena for close on 50 years, both from the viewpoint of a working scientist and at a senior management level. In that time, I have met some great people from all over the world who share a love for timber, especially wood preservation. I guess the IRG was instrumental in this, having joined in 1974, and by my reckoning I have attended 36 meetings to date (I reckon my wife Sandra has “done” about 20) and still going strong! Think of that – 36 years of meeting people from all over the world, and in places that span the world; what a privilege, and long may it continue!



Just in case you're wondering about a life spent working, we do have other interests; with four sons and their wives producing 11 grandchildren to date, other interests are inevitable! Back in our youth, S and I fenced competitively – we ran a club called Sala Belle a Vista, and when living in Berlin during 1972 we joined the Weisse Bären club in Wannsee (do they still fence I wonder?). We fished in North Carolina and here too, but now only occasionally with grandchildren. We have more sedentary lifestyles these days (if you don't include world travels) featuring books, photography, good music (mostly classical and opera, but I'm not averse to trad jazz and musicals), food and wine. And, for me also, single malt whisky. I was an avid member of Yorkshire county cricket club in my younger days and played a little too for a team here in Melbourne. But these days my interest in cricket has waned in concert with the fortunes of England! Sandra paints and draws, and one of her creations was used on a well-known charity's



Xmas card a few years ago – you may have received one, it features her painting of a sprig of holly. We tend to get away from Melbourne more than we used to when work was a big driver, but it does depend still on what I have to do, work-wise – we have a place on Phillip Island about 145 km from home and this is a quiet haven for long weekends (and sometimes mid-week breaks). You'll note the use of CCA-treated pine in its construction – who says it's not safe!!

For the past 16 years I have run my own consulting business, specialising in wood preservation, standards, and quality control in the timber industry. I also provide expert witness and consultant services in Australia and overseas to chemical suppliers and treaters within the preservation industry, as well as to manufacturers of treated commodities, and government specifiers and regulators.



And finally, the IRG has certainly not seen the last of us!