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# A memorial tribute to Anthony E. Cawkell, 1920–2003\*

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On 5 August 2003, our beloved colleague Anthony E. Cawkell passed away from cancer. Tony was a long-time member of the Editorial Board of the *Journal of Information Science* as well as Honorary Fellow of the Institute of Information Scientists, now the Chartered Institute for Librarians and Information Professionals (CILIP). Before ‘retiring’ to a private consultancy, CITECH Ltd, he had been ISI’s man in London. For thirty years he not only directed their educational and marketing efforts in Europe but also served as a Vice President of Research and Development which was his forte.

Space and time do not permit me to provide an adequate treatment of Tony’s contributions to information science and technology. In a brief essay in *Current Contents* in March 1971, during the UK postal strike, I referred to him as our ‘Pony Express’ person in

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\*These brief remarks were read at a thanksgiving memorial service held at Breakspear Crematorium, Ruislip, UK, on 13 August 2003, and attended by Tony’s wife, Kathleen, and their children Nigel, Julie, Terence, Christopher and David, extended family and friends, and CILIP colleagues, including Julian Warner, John Myers and Martin White.

London, reflecting not only his pioneering spirit but also his reliability and availability in spite of the shutdown [1]. Later that year, I recalled how in 1970 the *New Scientist* had described him as the Information Detective, after he addressed a meeting of the Royal Institution of London [2].

Before I met Tony, he had a remarkable career as the head of Cawkell Research and Electronics Ltd, which specialized in scientific instruments. His decades of experience as a self-taught electronics engineer made him unique in our profession. He ably fulfilled the qualifications of both information engineer as well as information scientist. He was an expert on information theory and maintained regular contact with Colin Cherry, a pioneer in that field at Imperial College. He was a great admirer of Claude Shannon [3] and his classic work on the mathematical theory of communication.

As is often the case with genius, he was decades ahead of his time. Tony played a pivotal role in such ISI engineering-based projects as the *Copywriter* [4], a device for selective copying of texts on which we collaborated. His work on *SciTel* was a generation ahead of the Internet and cable TV. This was an early prototype of a daily science news service [5]. His knowledge of facsimile technology was important to these developments. He also played a key role in the development of PRIMATE [6] which then evolved into *Sci-Mate* [7], the predecessor of *Reference Manager*. During his tenure with ISI, he also found time to publish over 150 papers, reviews and book chapters.

It is to my eternal regret that I could not convince Tony to write his autobiography, but I hope, in the months to come, to write a more comprehensive account of his life and work.

At the age of 19 in 1939, he joined the Royal Navy, interrupting his plan to study medicine at Cambridge. He served throughout the war on torpedo boats. After World War II ended, he married Kathleen Powell in

1946. Then, a year or so later, he started his own electronic engineering firm.

Over a 35-year period, I travelled to London on dozens of occasions and never failed to spend time with Tony and Kathleen. That practice continued until the very last year of his life and often included a proper English breakfast en route to Heathrow. He first introduced me to Wheeler's Restaurant and the pleasure of plaice, turbot and a well-prepared fillet of sole. It was a privilege to have been able to share those wonderful times and the joy of discovery together as friends and colleagues – even brothers.

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