



# FINDING NEMO!

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A few things happened in quick succession in October 2006. Someone mentioned that, after our 2002 re-union for the circa 74-77 students, we had promised to do it again. I was in UK for a short visit and bumped into **Graham Clampin** (74-77) on the M11 near Stansted. Then the strong catalyst was my mother moving house and the boxes I had sent home in 1977 from Wye were given to me to "sort out".

In the boxes were the roll of members for '74 and '75 – a full list of students covering intake years '72 to '75. In a fit of nostalgia I decided to see how many I could "find". We had the reunion list from 2002 with 60 email addresses, and so I had a good database to start the search. Now we get to the scary bit – I live in Uganda and have done so since leaving Wye in '77, but the one thing I learnt to do was find goods, services and people on the internet. I also use email, Skype, mobile sms and gprs and maintain and handle several thousand contacts throughout the world as part of my business. The first email went out to the original 60 email addresses that we had from '02. Within two days I found **Steve Le Feuvre** (76-79) who had a roll of members from '76 – that completed the five years of students from intake '72 to '76. My secretary inputted the names and after the initial flurry of contacts, the real search began - 499 undergraduate students in 5 years.

After the roll of members, the Agricola Journal list was the bible, not any one particular year, but a collection of Journals over 25 years, this could give an impression of any one person's movements. The main problem was that the list was shrinking as Agricola members went "missing". In Nov. 06, I believed that if I could find 50% of the students, I would consider it a success. To begin with, I had exponential growth with contacts from contacts and the list growing 5-15 contacts per day. Christmas also helped, with the message spreading in the round-robins.

The exciting bit was the speed of finding contemporaries on the internet, for instance putting in "John Magnay" (in inverted commas) will find me including an email address. However when you get 167,000 hits on Google UK for "**David Lewis**" (including on [www.sheepgame.co.uk](http://www.sheepgame.co.uk)), your heart sinks and you need other strategies. David was a contemporary of mine who lived opposite me in C block in 74-75. He was quiet, but always good for a philosophical chat on a Monday night with or without a beer. He was an Agricola club member, but the address never changed and then he became a "missing" in the late 90's. I had tried to find him for the 2002 event, but failed miserably. This time I believed if I could find him, then anything was possible. After finding 50% of the '74 intake, I spammed them for clues. It seems no-one had heard from him for over 20 years, but I received obscure clues like – moved into nursing - possibly in the Crewe – clues from **Martyn Hartwell** (74-77) & **MaryAnne Bickers** (74-77) did not bring immediate success except eight references on BT online with five D Lewis (without a middle name). I sent them all to **Mary Alcock** (nee Parr 74-77) and asked her to be brave enough to call them. Luckily Mary

found him on an old email address list before making the calls, but Dave was second on my BT list. Others were easier; a clue like **Tom Hickman** (72-75) had moved to France as an artist was less than ten seconds on Google France.

The ladies were a different problem, how do you find someone who may have changed their name? The Agricola Journal lists (old copies) at least cross-referenced some, but Agricola only records about 30% of students and has several wrong contacts and missing persons. **Isabel Jones** (nee Carter 72-75) gave me a clue for **Cecile Murray** (72-75) and **Jeremy Jackson** (72-75) to say they left Wye together to go traveling. "Cecile Jackson" found her in less than a minute as a Professor at UEA, Norwich. Cecile was able to give me Jeremy's contact in France and another two were off the missing list. I found **Julia Boniface** (72-75) and **Pippa Dakin** (nee Northover 74-77) in Australia and **Simon & Gillian Pontin** (nee Russel 75-78) in New Zealand. I am also grateful for all those ladies who did not change their names!

In all, I probably sent 11,000 emails (including, received 2,000 replies and spent 40-50 hours (in my tea breaks) doing searches, including Friends Reunited. Apart from name searches, I also used post code searches and parent name and address searches. A picture search for two early 70's students found them both finishing the Jersey Marathon in 2006 on a BBC news website, a subsequent call to them on Skype, told me "we are not interested! – too long ago!". Other chats on Skype (2p per minute from Uganda) found me contacts in USA, Holland, Australia, Ireland and Norway. I even SMS text people from Uganda if a mobile number was available.

The searches also brought some sadness, 16 deaths based upon the roll of members 74-76. **Ian Archer** (72-75) despite being on the Agricola Club list, seems to have died up to ten years ago.

As of Mar. '07, I know where 90% of the undergrads from intakes '72 to '76 and hope to see many of them at the '70s reunion – 8<sup>th</sup> July at Rupert Burr's Farm near Swindon. A spin-off is the new "**Wye-to-Wye-to-Buy-by-Web**" section, with website addresses, and the [www.wyecollegereunion.org](http://www.wyecollegereunion.org) website to coordinate details and memorabilia from the 70s. There are 58 couples still together, over 40 websites offering goods and services and wide range of careers in Wye and non-Wye related industries. A comment for those of you who have websites, it is the personalized ones that attract clients. Not having a contact name and a bit of background history makes the web searcher think twice about doing business. In my case, I often knew an ex-Wye person was behind the website – by doing post code searches, but could not get any personal information from the website.

I am very grateful to **Lizzie Hughes** (nee Petrie 74-77), **Mary Alcock**, **John & Christine** (nee Ashley) **Gatenby**, **Alison Wright** (nee Gunner) , **John & MaryAnne** (nee Bickers) **Pardoe**, **Dermot Cassidy** (73-76) and **Nicky Deakin** (76-79) who all helped with searches and follow-ups. Also to **Colin and Sue** (nee O'Farrell) **Speller** who built the new website. I thoroughly enjoyed all the dialogue and chats and hope that it has put old friends back together. I have already seen two extra people in Uganda, who would have passed through without knowing I was here - two great evenings with "old" friends – even though we never met at Wye. Eight months ago I had lunch at the British High Commission in Lilongwe, Malawi without knowing **Dave Temperely** (72-75) was in the same building.

What's the next challenge?, in the same boxes I found an address list for 21 students from 11 countries who joined me on a student exchange in Finland in Sept '76. A smaller list, but possibly more challenging – try finding a "Virpi Hannenen" in a haystack.....again.