



Published on *Phil McKerracher* (<http://www.mckerracher.net>)

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Welcome!

I'm a professional electrical engineer specialising in real-time embedded software development in the telecommunications industry. I live in [Carshalton](#), south London with my wife Amanda, who is a history teacher at [Putney High School](#).

🔊 The surname McKerracher apparently comes from the Gaelic name MacFhearchair or [Farguharson](#), pronounced like [this](#) and meaning (son of) "very dear one". We pronounce it to rhyme approximately with "America".

My interests



My main hobby is playing the [violin](#) in amateur orchestras and chamber groups such as the [Bromley Symphony Orchestra](#). I started learning when I was 8 and still have lessons occasionally. Not surprisingly, I also like listening to [classical music](#). I also play the piano.



I'm also interested in [theatre lighting and sound](#). I have recently designed and operated lighting for the [Spring Park Dramatic Society](#), Croydon Operatic and Dramatic Association, and [The Barn Theatre](#), Oxted. My wife acts with some of these groups. I enjoyed operating cameras, mixers and other equipment at public access cable TV studios in [Mountain View](#) and Hayward, California, when I was working there a few years ago. They even had me hosting a half-hour show live because of my "posh English accent", which was strange considering that I still speak with a noticeable Australian accent!



Photography has always interested me, and you can find some of my most interesting pictures in the [album](#) here. Don't miss the ones of the [Grand Canyon](#), [Great Wall of China](#), [Space Shuttle launch](#) and the "[Road Ruiner](#)".



I have travelled quite a lot for business and pleasure, attending standards meetings, adapting products for different markets and on holiday. I travelled all around Europe by bus and campervan in 1984 and have enjoyed holidays in China, Southeast Asia, Poland and cruising around the South Pacific. I would still like to visit Africa, South America and Russia. I attended evening classes in German for several years, eventually gaining an Intermediate Diploma from the [Institute of Linguists](#). I also speak some French.



I am one of the least superstitious people I know, and for many years have been interested in [paranormal phenomena](#) from a skeptical point of view. I share the fascination many psychologists and [magicians](#) have for the ways in which we can be deceived and the insight this gives into how we think and what we are. I look after the web site of [The Skeptic](#) (UK) magazine and was a committee member of the [Australian Skeptics](#) and Australian [Humanists](#) for a while. [Prometheus Books](#) publish many interesting books in this field, and good skeptical magazines are available in [Australia](#) and [America](#).



I stay in touch with developments in my industry and in science generally by reading [Spectrum](#) (the journal of the [IEEE](#)) and [Scientific American](#). [The Register](#), [Electronic News](#), [Electronics Weekly](#), [Computing](#), [Slashdot](#) and [Wired](#) are my main online sources of industry gossip. I like the comic strip [Dilbert](#), especially since the author, Scott Adams, was formerly an engineer in the ISDN industry.

I also support the [Brights](#), [Amnesty](#) and [Mensa](#).

Brief biography

I grew up in [Melbourne, Australia](#) and worked on radio navigation systems for the [Department of Aviation](#) there before seeking fame and fortune in Europe in 1984. I married my wife Amanda in 1997. She studied at [Bristol University](#) and is currently head of the history department at [Putney High School](#). My parents and brother still live in Melbourne.

My main areas of expertise are in embedded real-time programming and communications systems, in particular [ISDN](#) signalling protocols, having been an active member of the various [ETSI](#) committees which developed the European standards and tests. The [ISDN tutorial](#) and [Home Highway tutorial](#) here are an attempt to pass on some of this knowledge. I also have considerable experience of designing modems to connect to analogue networks worldwide. My software was inside the network termination unit used by the [BT Highway](#) service.

There is a copy of my Curriculum Vitae with more details [here](#) (PDF, view with free [Adobe](#) reader).

This site was created in April 1997. There is an archive of an early version [here](#).



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