

6 April 1984

Mike Ball
Science Museum
Exhibition Road
London SW7 2DD

Dear Mike

Thanks very much for your letters and the photos and information on the video disc.

The Disc unit in G46 looks spectacular! I always did think it would be a photogenic exhibit- perhaps it was a mistake to attempt to get some part of it working, but at least the extra information in the talking label was probably a good idea.

I'm sorry to hear about the PDP-8. Jane Bowen did indicate that it wasn't going to work - but I have yet to discover the real reason. After all the work that went into it, I think it did turn out to be a very interesting piece from many points of view; the program is the best piece of educational software at that level I have seen (forgive this self-aggrandisement). Temperature problems might be helped with a filtered fan.....

I shall get the video disc made up as per your information. We haven't got that far yet.

I have just signed and returned my acceptance of counteroffering; I hope this affair hasn't soured the Trustees - they probably think the staff are a load of truculent fogies. Have you had any contact with them at all yet? How was the party?

Progress is frustratingly slow over here. I have got a lot of potential help and support from industry, but no one is racing to deliver the goods. They all think that with an opening still months away they can wait. I have a nice scale model of my 4000 square foot gallery and am playing with model computers and people. It's good to have a chance to get your own ideas straight before getting involved with a designer.

I am still short of large 3D objects. I hoped to get a nice piece of wing from the Boeing people- they should be wanting to push their 757 and 767 in public - super-safe, all designed by computer etc, but instead they offered me a cruise missile! Though interesting, I had to say no- there'll be enough military stuff here as it is. I have a handful of equipment promised, but not enough 'soft' material- I mean something that is not a glass screen or a metallic printer. One good find is a woven silk hanging of Jacquard- along with some 19th century drawing instruments, this will be the oldest thing in the gallery. The

subject didn't really get off the ground till the 1960's.

We enjoy living out of town and near the sea. Although any thrill associated with giant malls and 10-lane roads has completely worn off, it remains a very comfortable life. Apart from a near-hurricane last week (which I missed as I was in California) the climate has moderated- today it's crept up to 60F for the first time. Not a green shoot in sight however. Apparently summer arrives from one day to the next.

I hope you and your family are well. I'd be glad to have news when you've got time.

Yours sincerely

Oliver

By air mail
Par avion



Dr Oliver Strimpel
300 Congress Street
BOSTON, M A
02210
U S A

From:

Mr I M Bell
The Science Museum
South Kensington
LONDON SW7 2DD
England

Code No. 23-152.





Se Mus

Thurs 1st March.

Dear Oliver,

Please excuse hand-written note but if I wait till I've time to ~~write~~ ^{type} it it'll never get done.
(touch of Irish!)

Many thanks for your card and letter.

With regard to the Magnetic Disc, you can see the whole story for your self, the brown panels are hard board! I had planned to give you a stage by stage report but the painters were so quick after the hard board panels were fitted I still had the film in the camera. It does look quite smart now so you can relax!

Now for the bad news (P.D.P.E)

You will see the pictures of the steps, well that's as far as we have got. The new owner (JB) has decided that the temperature requirements for the case are too low and she is considering replacing it with a BBC & new soft ware - it's some time now since I heard from her on the subject.

With regard to the Video Disc. The original information came from Steve Pizzey, I copied it and sent it on to York & they have now destroyed it. I have written to Steve to ask to borrow the paperwork again, and if I see it I'll send a copy. (Sorry about the writing but the paper slides on the glass top!)

I can give you a few tips on the manufacture which you may find useful. It was made from two pieces of flat aluminium, a plain and thicker



~~piece~~ disc section and a matching thinner piece into which we cut slots. The top face of each piece was then highly polished and then glued together under pressure. Finally the assembly was lacquered, and the edges painted to hide the join. This method was adopted as it would have been very difficult and extremely costly to polish the bottom of the slots after machining. Mounting bolts (the disc had to be displayed vertically) were secured to the rear, thicker section of the disc, the countersunk screw heads being concealed by the slotted plate.

Not a great deal to report from this end about general matters. The debate about contracts is still going on although most points are now agreed. 'A simple repast' is being organised for 30th

March to meet the Trustees, admission,
it says hopefully, is by contract.
Thank goodness some one has a
sense of humour.

I am one of the favoured
few who have met the great man.
He seemed pretty straight forward
to me but I'm afraid the Director
seems to be making 'very heavy
weather' of him. The other J.B hasn't
yet got in on the act.

This is where I finish
tonight,

Keep in touch

Mike.



Monday 5th March 84

Dear Oliver

I will have to take back my insinuation about Steve's tardiness in replying, I received the enclosed this morning!

He seems to think the information I referred to is somewhere in the Sc Mus, I haven't a clue to ~~st~~ where to start looking so I think we might as well forget about it.

The enclosed 'Aluminium rubbing' is from the one at Bradford, as the slots are of random length for the purposes of their exercise, and bearing in mind the scaling up involved you would be quite safe ~~st~~ in taking measurements from the rubbing.

Steve has also noted that the slots

are 2 mm deep and the plate is
15 mm thick over all. (If you have
seen my [just] earlier letter you
will understand there are two plates -
one 2 mm thick and the other 13 mm).

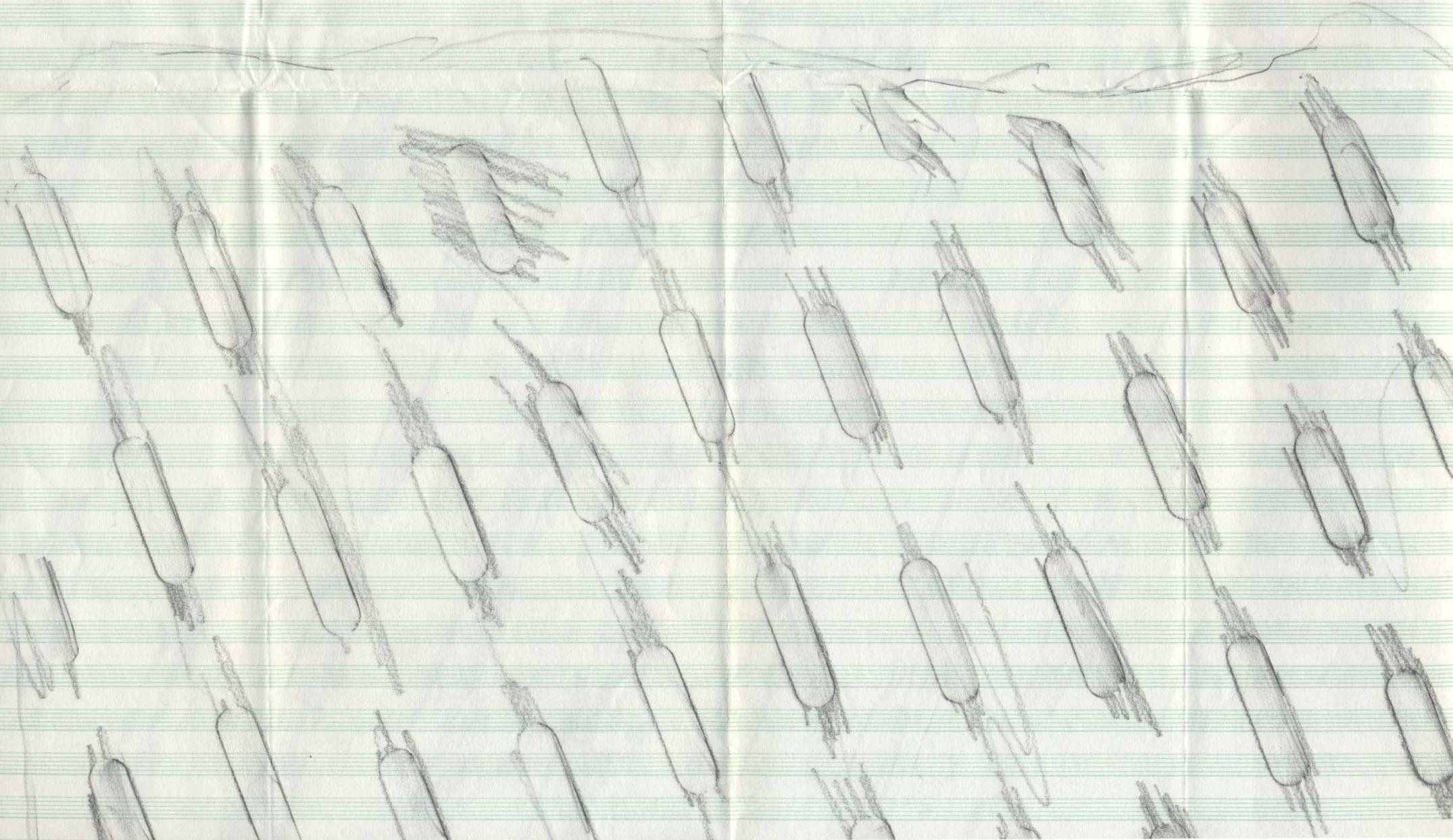
Best wishes

Mike

2mm deep pits in
15mm plate

102687592

2
4
6
8
10
12
14
16
18
20
22
24
26
28
30
32
34
36
38
40
42
44
46
48



DATA RECORD EMPLOYEE

Informational display panels with text and images, including a small photograph of a person.



MT-101



SPACE POWER

