

Where power is not all that it's cracked up to be

THEY say that two of the secrets of running a successful business are knowing the right people and being in the right place at the right time.

I was wandering through the hallowed portals of 116 the other evening when it struck me how very fortunate the IoD must have thought itself to have had a ready vendor on hand as it was about to take its giant leap into the world of computerisation.

I refer, of course, to the plethora of power desks that have been springing up around the building, secreting away the awesome power of those thinking machines in the comfortable and familiar exterior of a reproduction antique desk.

I suppose it's a bit like a crusty old gentlemen's club having electronic bell pushes masquerading as bell pulls, hanging beside a portrait of one of its founding members.

Well, there I was on the first floor (with Charles I staring down his proboscis over my shoulder) deep in conversation with a gentleman who was obviously being stoic in the face of adversity.

This poor man, it appeared, was suffering from back pains and this had not been improved one iota by the fact that he had been working for a while at one of these new-fangled workstations.

The problem, he explained, is this. In order to fit everything away so neatly that no one would suspect for one moment that the room housing 20 desks also contained 20 computers (an strange concept, I would have thought, for a room devoted to computer workstations) certain compromises had to be made.

The keyboard fits into where the central drawer should be, but in order for it to be at the right height when you start typing (or should that read keying-in?) a certain trade-off has to be made with how much you are allowed to adjust the height of your chair in order to sit comfortably.

Those that the good Lord has not seen fit to create regulation height and width will have to compromise with their sitting position at the power desk and that, as we all know, can lead to problems.

Perhaps that accounted for the knowing look on the monarch's face - though it can't be much fun for him, either, having to stare for eternity at his dour arch rival across the sea of Trojan Horses.

Maybe the IoD should think about

installing speech recognition software and then they could offer nice comfy arm-chairs from which those without the foresight to bring in their own laptops could work in comfort.

But, hey guys, why not get rid of those oversized vanity

accessories and go back to having good old-fashioned workstations with adjustable typists' chairs? They may not look so pretty, but they sure would be a great deal more practical for what purports to be a working environment.

And if you compare the cost of a powerdesk against a brand new state of the art workstation, well, perhaps our subscriptions wouldn't need to be hiked up by so much again next year!

I handed out sympathy in time honoured fashion, and wafted down the great staircase like a bit-part character out of *Gone With The Wind*. Mr Bryan would have been proud of me (not to mention Cecil B de Mille).



□ Another whimsical look at our revered establishment.

By Pandora Bryan.