

Brains

Brains is the little man who lives in my head, in the memory banks department. He has shortish legs, a bit of a paunch, a kind ruddy face, and a round head which seems disproportionately large for his body. He wears baggy brown trousers, slippers and a tartan cardigan which has seen better days.

Brains is extremely well organised with all the information he has collected on my behalf neatly placed in filing cabinets. Over 70 years, the number of cabinets has grown so now there is an upper level, as well as the one at floor level, that he reaches by a ladder attached to the wall which runs smoothly and noiselessly round the semi-circular storage area, not dissimilar to those seen in old libraries. Inside the cabinets are files of papers, tightly packed but all carefully indexed and cross-referenced. Some papers have yellowed with age while others have become faded and worn. I suggested computerising the whole memory bank to which he threw his hands up in horror at the thought of system upgrades, faulty disc drives and power surges. "No, no, no" he exclaimed, and I remember the look on his face very clearly. "If the system goes down, or there's no WiFi, then where will you be? Paper is much more reliable and lasts a lot longer. Just think, if you or rather I (he said with particular emphasis) had put everything on that initial BBC computer, you'd had have to changed, let me see how many times - from floppy discs to little square 3" hard ones, to memory sticks and goodness only knows what else in the future. Look at PCs today, they hardly have any storage as everything is up in the clouds".

Brains has slowed down a lot of late. He used to be pretty nippy when he received a message to produce information or find a particular word, but he has become a bit arthritic so his little legs take longer ascending and descending the ladder. He holds on tightly to the rail now which only leaves one hand free to balance the file on the rung to retrieve the piece of paper inside. Brains is short-sighted and often forgets where he put his glasses which further interrupts transmission, or they get steamed up which makes the writing somewhat blurry. Being sensitive about his age, upsetting him only leads to more delays. He has a very comfortable blue armchair to rest between searches, although the cushions are a little worn and the seat has the permanent contour of his bottom from years of service. But even when he is off duty, he remains alert to conversations and situations which may at any time require instant information retrieval.

Brains is a dear old chap really; he is kind and reliable as well as being a constant companion. All this new-fangled technology may have its place in widening the knowledge base but Brains was there first and will be to the end.