President's Page, September 2015

Welcomes

01 September 2015

Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose

I’d no sooner stored away my quill and closed my ink well and here I am again to assail you with some news and thoughts.

I have recently signed all the ATT exam result letters; and what a pleasure it is to congratulate the successful candidates and prizewinners. May I encourage you all to join as members? The next admission ceremony is on 15 October in the House of Lords and this time it will be me shaking hands rather than doing the master of ceremonies role which, according to the etiquette, I now hand over to Ralph Pettengell, my worthy successor. The feedback suggests new members value this ceremony and we all enjoy it too.

My ‘Meet the President’ lunch at Artillery House in July was great fun. It was a chance to say ‘hello’ to some of the ATT/CIOT staff members that I didn’t know and for them to meet me. Thank you very much to all who organised this. I appreciate the effort.

We are also putting together the ATT/AAT Mastercourses for this autumn’s tax skills series. This is a premium event and is a chance to discuss day-to-day tax issues that members of both bodies encounter. There is an advert in Tax Adviser and on the website with the details. Last year we had excellent numbers.

My diary is filling fast with visits to branches, following some kind invitations. The first sees me going up to the East Midlands’ branch this month. I hope to shake hands with as many members as possible. Do come and say ‘hello’.

The first of my presidential receptions will also be in September, this year on HMS Belfast. In both the branches and aboard Belfast, I shall be reminding everyone that

my presidential theme is ‘Occupying the responsible centre ground of tax planning’, something that statistics show our members grapple with everyday. Just what sort of tax planning advice can our members give? Should we give them a range of options from low risk to higher risk? How does this fit with the Professional Conduct in Relation to Taxation (PCRT) and HMRC’s latest stance on ‘avoidance’?

This is an important area and my job is to make sure that the ATT takes its rightful place at the table to debate this.

The July Budget reminds me that, again, tax never stops; it’s a permanent rollercoaster ride. I’ve lost count of the number of consultations to which our wonderful technical officers have responded and on which our ever-busy Technical Steering Group (TSG), ably led by Paul Hill, comments.

Still, you should not have joined up if you didn’t have a sense of humour.

It is with some sadness that we say goodbye to Paul at the end of the year, as he moves into the broad sunlit uplands of retirement after years of exemplary service. We wish him well as he hangs up his tax books for ever. He has done a great job and he will be hard act to follow.

This summer, we’ve also said goodbye to Stuart McKinnon, Simon Braidley and Simon Groom from ATT Council. Stuart and Simon Braidley ably led us as Presidents and Simon Groom has given us years of high-quality advice – always thoughtful, always pertinent.

When big hitters like these leave, there’s always a gap, but we have some excellent Council members with a good range of skills and we are actively looking to add to the skills sets of our trustees with new members too.

I hope to see you soon.