ATT welcome

Welcomes

28 July 2021

Overjoyed my Tyne has come

It was 1974 in Birmingham city centre at the top of Corporation Street opposite Rackhams department store and in offices above a furniture store. I sat in a lecture theatre at the Aston University Business Center and awaiting the arrival at the lectern of Arnold Homer, lecturer in tax and the author of the newly published Taxwise – which he encouraged us students to purchase. I admit that I was more intent on establishing a recurring repeat in the pattern on the fold down table in front of me and writing begging letters to secure a ticket for the forthcoming FA Cup final between my Newcastle United and Liverpool. I was able finally to spot, and document via a series of dots, the pattern before the conclusion of the six-week optional course on taxation. The FA Cup Final, at which I was present, ended badly for me.

I duly get my degree and head off to be an auditor with what is now called KPMG. After qualifying as a chartered accountant, I return home to my beloved North East like a salmon returning to its native stream to reproduce (three actually, two boys and a girl). I joined what is now called Deloitte and, to my surprise, found it giving me corporation tax computations to do (no tax department in those days).

In 1984, I undertook financial training, sitting beside Stuart McKinnon (who was destined to be the first North East President of the ATT) on the inaugural ATII course in the North East. I do not recall if another North East tax legend Chris Siddle was involved in that course – but move on 20 years to 2004 and it was Chris who persuaded me to join the North East Branch committee.

I joined the joint CIOT and ATT North East England Branch in 2004 and hold the offices of Treasurer and Chairman. I am the current Secretary of the branch, as well as serving as the North East representative on the Joint Branches Sub-Committee.

In 2014, your then immediate Past President Stuart McKinnon suggested that I join the ATT Technical Steering Group (TSG). I head down to London to join my first TSG meeting – and sitting at the other end of the table was none other than Arnold Homer, lecturer in tax and author of the now long established Taxwise – around 40 years since our first encounter.

So, who am I?

I hail from the North East of England and I believe the second north easterner to hold the position of Deputy President after the aforementioned Stuart McKinnon in 2010. Stuart and I passed those exams and qualified as chartered tax advisers in 1984 and became proper tax advisers. We had done the knowledge!

I ended up working briefly also for PwC and finally at EY where I was a Director in the corporate tax practice – so that is the full set of the world's largest accountancy practices I have worked for. After serving my time as an auditor, I specialised in taxation for most of that time in both the owner managed marketplace and large corporate tax departments. I formed my own independent practice ten years ago and I am now providing corporate tax compliance and consultancy services for a number of North East businesses.

I was invited to join ATT Council in 2015 and I am currently also ATT Honorary Treasurer. I chair the Finance Steering Group and sit as the ATT representative on the CIOT Finance and Operations Committee.

I will not be the first grandad serving as an officer of the ATT. Despite my mature years, I am a keen cyclist both on the road and in the mud and am a veteran of many long distance adventures around France and Holland (gloriously flat) and riding from Land's End to John O'Groats (horribly hilly). Pre-lockdown, I regularly commuted from my office in Hexham to my Tyneside clients with my laptop strapped to my handlebars.

That, however, is not the end of my peculiar behaviours. Pre-lockdown I was routinely out on a Saturday night on the circuit with a well-known local covers band, where I have held down the bottom end (bass player) for now 20 years. Post-lockdown bookings are starting to roll in – better start rehearsals again! I have not let stardom affect my lifestyle – I am regularly ignored as I walk down Hexham high street.

And finally, I am a trustee of the Tyne Rivers Trust, proud guardian of England’s finest salmon river.

Who do I blame for my current predicament? Is it Arnold Homer for introducing me to the world of tax, Chris Siddle for enticing me onto the local branch committee or Stuart McKinnon for inviting me to join the TSG? Or was it my fellow branch chairpersons in 2008 respectively for London Branch and Northern Ireland Branch – the now Immediate Past President Jeremy Coker and the current ATT President Richard Todd?

Me, I guess? I have enjoyed every minute and recommend it to anyone. Get involved in your local branch – you never know where it might lead you.

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