ATT Welcome: That Was The Week That Was!

Welcomes

24 February 2022

At last! I now have some actual face-to-face events in my diary, which I am seriously looking forward to. My North East branch issued its education programme for 2022 and it includes a mix of both ‘virtual’ and ‘live’ events with an afternoon in the presence of Mark Ward planned on 12 May. Before that I will take the train down to London for the first time in two years to attend our current President’s Reception on 28 April – an event on its third rescheduling.

Looking back at my diary to see when I last attended a CIOT or ATT branch event reveals that it all happened in the same week, one year ago – no, two years ago – in March 2020. How can it be two years ago? That is the pandemic effect for you: think of a number and add a year to it.

Monday 2 March 2020

I travelled down by train from Hexham to Coventry to attend the Annual Branches Forum event held over two days at the Warwick University campus every spring. It is an event not to miss in my opinion because it is a gathering of branch officers from around the country sharing ideas and experiences, and an opportunity for Head Office staff to outline plans and developments for the year ahead.

Before joining the Forum, I had another event to attend at the same venue – the Joint Officers and Senior Staff Forum. We meet twice a year to discuss matters which are relevant to both the CIOT and ATT, and the event comprises the officers from both organisations joined by the Chief Executives and Directors.

Warwick University is a splendid place to host these events and the campus provides the perfect setting to contemplate academic matters – especially from the Scarman House Bar.

Tuesday 3 March 2020

The conference winds up around lunchtime and the delegates head off to various parts of the country. I had two meetings in London the next day and I decided to stay over in Birmingham that night – a decision heavily influenced by my procurement of a ticket to the Hawthorns where, by coincidence, West Bromwich Albion were hosting the ‘mighty’ Newcastle United in the Fifth Round of the FA Cup!

Wednesday 4 March 2020

And now down to London from Birmingham via Virgin West Coast and across town to Monck Street for a full day of finance, wearing my ‘Treasurers hat’, with the CIOT Finance and Operations Committee in the morning and the ATT Finance Steering Group which I chair in the afternoon. Both meetings were primarily to discuss the audit and the presentation of the annual accounts for approval by council later. Then back onto the Tube and across town to catch the 6pm East Coast mainline train back up to the North East.

Thursday 5 March 2020

I actually did some client work today, but the main event was the North East England Branch Annual Dinner at the Baltic Gallery on the historic Quayside. There were now significant rumblings about attending such events and one or two last minute cancellations, but enough members of the local tax community were able to support the event, which each year allows local tax practices to bring clients and staff to celebrate the profession. I am glad to say that both presidents Jeremy Coker and Glyn Fullelove were in attendance.

Friday 6 March 2020

We are not finished yet. There is one more event to attend – the Joint President’s Luncheon held in the Signet Library in Parliament Square in Edinburgh. Back on the train again to attend this important showcase event to acknowledge the work done in Scotland to promote the profession. In the company of both presidents again!

And that was that: I flew off to Geneva for a bit of skiing – the pistes closed on my last day and I returned to Newcastle just in time for the shutters to come down. By 23 March, we were ordered to stay at home, assured that we could turn the tide on

coronavirus in 12 weeks and told to leave the house just once a day for exercise – that was a proper lockdown, that was.

So how on earth, with a week like that, travelling the length and breadth of the country, attending events and standing amongst 5,000 inebriated fellow northeasterners, did I emerge unscathed? Perhaps I was the first to invent the concept of involuntary superspreader!