The 6.5 Special’s steamin’ down the line

Welcomes

24 May 2022

I am writing this Welcome page at approximately 125 miles per hour – now that would impress even Don Lang and his Frantic Five.

I am heading south on a LNER train, again. It is always a delight both for the views of the countryside and for the anticipation of what is to follow. There is a little Bradshaw heritage on this line as another branch of the family pilot these magnificent pieces of engineering up and down the country. Indeed, my grandfather Bradshaw was a well-known mainline driver in the days of the Flying Scotsman and the Mallard. For those of you who are speculating about the connection to Bradshaw’s Guide and Michael Portillo, I can confirm that has nowt to do with us northern Bradshaws.

To function as Honorary Treasurer of such an august body you need to practise what you preach. On this journey the splendours of First Class were a ridiculously reasonable £27.50 (you will need a full search of the LNER website and a senior railcard to achieve that glory).

Another memorable trip was from Newcastle to Cardiff to attend a Joint President’s Luncheon at the Town Hall. Faced with an extortionate direct flight from Newcastle, I discovered a cheap ticket flying from Edinburgh for £20. I hopped on a train north and flew from Scotland to Wales. The problem was that the return journey required me to travel back to England by train and bus to Bristol to hop on another £20 flight back to Newcastle. *Trains, Planes and Automobiles*. Bargain. The only moment of doubt was when I boarded the airport bus to Cardiff city centre, and the driver addressed me in a broad Scottish accent.

Anyway the reason for my trip south was to represent the ATT at the Tolley’s Taxation Awards 2022. I would like to congratulate Peter Rayney, the CIOT

President, on receiving the award for Outstanding Contribution to Taxation 2021-22 by an individual. This was very well deserved.

At the beginning of May, we hosted another of our ATT Fellows' Webinars. Like the previous two, the event was led by ATT's three technical officers and again it was very well received. After the President's welcome, Emma Rawson gave a presentation on basis period reform. Fellows then had a choice of three discussion groups, 'The Trust Registration Service', 'The future of tax in a digital world' and 'Why don't we make better use of Statutory Reviews?' The feedback from Fellows at these sessions will be passed on to HMRC.

I was also delighted to attend Richard's President's Reception at the London Postal Museum, which was a glorious evening and as always targeted primarily at rewarding the many volunteers and supporters of the association. Among the highlight was a not quite white-knuckle ride on the Mail Rail, a subterranean network of tiny trains that used to deliver mail beneath the feet of the residents of the capital. Not one for the claustrophobic and we somehow emerged where we started without changing direction?

There is still work to do in my dual roles as Deputy President and Honorary Treasurer before handing over to Simon Groom and Katharine Lindley respectively.

Firstly, Katharine, my apologies for not explaining fully the many and various duties of the role of Honorary Treasurer. You might never have accepted the position which you are uniquely qualified to hold if you had known, but you will steer the finances with admirable caution.

And Simon, time to sharpen your pencil. This is my last welcome page as Deputy President, and I hope you have not minded my habit of reminiscence. Mine has been a long (and not necessarily illustrious) career starting in January 1974 listening to Arnold Homer explain the vagaries of the tax system in the early seventies and culminating in the massive honour of becoming the Association's President in July – 48 years later. I am quietly confident that I have two or three years left in me to make 50 years. I was recently bequeathed a gold watch from an uncle who ascended to a higher place last year. Perhaps I can present that to myself in 2024.

Or should I wait until 2026 to mark 50 years since I pitched up in the Birmingham office of KPMG in my gloriously flared trousers and jacket with massive lapels – think Noddy Holder only without the sideburns.