President’s page

Welcomes

06 May 2021

Heroes

As I write this President’s page, the country has just been informed of the sad news of HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh’s, death. He has served our country in many admirable ways and, perhaps most important of all, he has been an indefatigable consort to our Queen. Our thoughts are with the Royal Family at this difficult and mournful time.

There are many lessons that we can all take from Prince Philip’s long and remarkable life. One of these must surely be how he faced and dealt with the awful tragedies in his formative years. That is a truly inspirational story of triumph over adversity.

Prince Philip was also famous for his sharp incisive wit. My personal favourite was his advice on giving sermons that overran – ‘The mind cannot absorb what the backside cannot endure’ – tax lecturers and speakers take note!

Inspiration, hard work and courage During the Covid-19 pandemic, we have all been inspired by the courage of the many heroes who have been a beacon of light and lifted our spirits. These include the late Captain Sir Tom Moore, Marcus Rashford MBE, the NHS and other front line workers and many others. We have also seen many great acts of generosity and kindness.

Closer to home, in my previous President’s pages, I have praised all our hardworking and wonderful team at the Institute. They have superbly steered us through Covid-19’s choppy waters and have delivered great services to our members and students. We are also very grateful for the dedicated support of our impressive army of volunteers. All this is a great example of the importance of tireless work and dedication behind the scenes.

First President’s Virtual lunch

Thanks to the imagination and determination of our events team, we were able to deliver another CIOT ‘first’ during Covid-19 – our first virtual President’s lunch. I was very impressed that we were able to deliver individual buffet lunches to our 50 or so guests across the breadth of the country – a huge logistical challenge. And continuing my theme of heroes, we were absolutely thrilled and delighted to have Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson deliver our keynote address and take part in an enjoyable ‘Q&A’.

Tanni’s story is also hugely inspirational. Despite her disability, she became one of the most successful Paralympian athletes as a wheelchair racer, winning 16 medals (11 gold, four silver and a bronze). She also took 13 World Championship medals (six gold, five silver and two bronze). I am sure that we all admired her gritty and determined performances on the racetrack. After retiring, she has also carved out a successful career in politics at the House of Lords.

Tanni went down an absolute storm with our (virtual) guests and she certainly gave all of us a huge psychological lift. This was the point. During successive lockdowns and the Covid-19 disruption, we have all had to deal with many personal and professional challenges – and we continually need to remind ourselves to keep carrying on regardless.

Positivity and mental health

We can learn a lot about ourselves during these difficult times. We can take great comfort in our little victories. We also recognise the importance of supporting each other – striving to become a ‘rainbow in another person’s cloud’. I do hope we can take these positive aspects forward as normality slowly returns.

Looking after our mental health is also crucial and it is wonderful that we are now able to see our friends and family outdoors. We can also look after ourselves by taking time out to walk, run, cycle, relax or even dance to David Bowie’s ‘Heroes’ at full volume!

Remember to look after yourselves and stay safe.

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