An obituary for Robin Williamson

General Features



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The CIOT and ATT are extremely saddened at the death on 4 September 2022 of Robin Williamson MBE CTA (Fellow) MA(Oxon), former Technical Director of the Institute's Low Incomes Tax Reform Group (LITRG). It is no exaggeration to say that tributes have been pouring in from across the tax community at the loss of a highly respected and dedicated colleague.

Career

Robin took great pride in his work for LITRG and the success of the group as a whole. There is not enough space in one article to list all of Robin's remarkable achievements but, for example, he stood up for 'digitally excluded' taxpayers; fought for safeguards to protect those in tax debt; and was instrumental in achieving reforms that have benefited disabled people and carers.

Robin was an early LITRG volunteer, working with the group's founder and first Chair, John Andrews OBE. He played an instrumental role in setting up the charity Tax Help for Older People in 2001, then went on to become LITRG's first Technical Director, serving in the role from 2003 to 2018. This was not the end of his

contribution, with the group welcoming his reappearance at the very next meeting as an active volunteer.

Before working for LITRG, Robin trained as a solicitor and worked as Senior Technical Editor for tax publishers CCH, where he helped to develop and then edited the Red and Green tax legislation books. He wrote and lectured extensively on personal tax matters throughout his career and took a keen interest in the interaction of tax with the welfare benefits system.

Robin enjoyed his retirement from full-time work, but he did not retire from tax. Latterly, he worked as a senior policy adviser for the Office of Tax Simplification as well as writing a book, *Taxpayer Safeguards: Rights and Protections for Individuals* (published by Claritax books) and started to pen another, on disability and the tax system.

Recognition

Quietly influential, Robin was not one to seek praise or reward for his endeavours. He was nevertheless extremely gratified when in 2015 he was awarded the MBE in recognition of his work for low-income taxpayers.

In 2020, he was presented with the Lifetime Achievement award at the Tolley's Taxation Awards. His typically humble acceptance speech sought not to focus on his own endeavours, but instead praised colleagues in the profession and government for their help and collaboration over his 'fascinating' 40 year career.

Personal life

In some respects, Robin's private life was inseparable from the professional as he and his wife, Jane Moore, were a 'tax couple'. They met through LITRG in 1999 when Jane was technical director at TaxAid. In his Taxation Award acceptance speech, Robin said that he owed more to Jane than he could ever say and fondly recounted their initial meeting 'in the committee room at 12 Upper Belgrave Street, and immediately afterwards in the Plumbers Arms down the road' – clearly a *coup de foudre*! Robin and Jane celebrated their 20th wedding anniversary in July this year.

Something of a polymath, Robin's general knowledge was encyclopaedic. This meant that he was always excellent company and never short of interesting conversation. Coupled with his great sense of fun and humour, Robin was someone to be sought

out at events and functions – colleagues describing him as a ‘hoot’!

Music was a great source of joy for Robin. An accomplished amateur viola player, he played in the Sevenoaks Symphony Orchestra. Robin’s passion was shared with Paddy Millard MBE, co-founder of Tax Help for Older People and himself a former professional musician, who described Robin as a ‘very talented player’.

Having read classics at Oxford, Robin retained a lifelong love of Greece and Rome. He was also interested in theology and a parish council member at his local church.

Future influence

Many years before he stepped down as Technical Director of LITRG, Robin began the invaluable task of mentoring his staff so that the group could forge ahead with the work that he, together with others, had started.

Robin’s approach to encouraging and developing others was subtle, yet effective. He might, for example, make a suggestion to read his favourite author, Graham Greene, as a means of honing one’s own writing style. Or perhaps he would use a particularly apt classical quote to make or emphasise a point, thus helping the idea stick in his protégé’s mind.

Through passing on some of his wealth of knowledge and experience in these skilful ways, Robin’s legacy will continue via LITRG’s future successes. In a last email to colleagues, he said, ‘It is good to see the team still ploughing on with things as we used to do – in fact, better if anything. Continued good luck to you all.’

Robin touched many people’s lives and those of us that knew him count ourselves lucky – we are all the better for having done so. He will be greatly missed.

Kelly Sizer, 15.9.22

Image



Robin with John Andrews, Founder of LITRG

Image



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