ATT welcome, November 2016

Welcomes

01 November 2016

ATT recognises contributions of volunteers

So to Drapers Hall in the City of London on 29 September where after a meeting of ATT Council did dine most convivially in the Livery Hall at the President's Luncheon (with apologies to Samuel Pepys).
Why Drapers Hall for a gathering of tax people you may ask, wouldn't Tax Advisers Hall be more appropriate?

Unfortunately, there isn't one as the Worshipful Company of Tax Advisers is a modern Livery Company having been granted its Royal Charter in 2005 and ranking 107th in the order of precedence. The Drapers Company on the other hand received their first Royal Charter in 1364 so have been around a little longer and are at the opposite end of the table in third position behind the Mercers and Grocers. All of this aside Drapers Hall is a truly magnificent building and their third hall on the site. The original hall had been the house of Thomas Cromwell which was forfeited to the Crown on his execution in 1540 and bought by the Drapers Company in 1543 for what now seems the bargain price of about £1,200. This was destroyed in the Great Fire of London and the current hall was built after a second fire in 1772. You may have seen the Livery Hall on TV; the 2015 Great British Menu banquet in honour of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Women's Institute was held there last year; but the small screen really cannot do the place justice.

Although we cannot run to four of the country's top chefs to cook for us the President's lunch is an important way in which the ATT interacts with key influencers in the tax and professional world. The guests included Members of Parliament, representatives from the judiciary, the tax bar, HMRC and HM Treasury, senior tax partners from the major accounting and legal firms as well as the presidents of other professional bodies. The conversation over lunch was therefore interesting and varied. Brexit, tax avoidance, the way in which the tax system might change in the

future and the advantages of training an ATT student all featured on my table in addition to the usual topics of holidays, hobbies and families.

While we normally say thank you to the many volunteer branch committee members, lecturers and others who make the ATT work at the President's Reception in March there are some special awards that we present at the lunch. I am delighted to say that this time all of the awards went to some old friends. I originally met Paul Hill who received a Council Award and Margaret Ferguson a Certificate of Appreciation when I first got involved with the ATT as a member of TSG back in 2003. Certificates of appreciation also went to Billy Moffat, one of my successors as chairman of the Leeds branch, and Karen Eckstein a former colleague on Council. My warmest congratulations to all four of you. It was also a great pleasure to see two of our apprentices, Lauren Sparkes and Emily Phelps, honoured for their achievement in being the highest marked apprentices in their respective examination sittings.

For Jan and me November means bonfire night and the village firework party. This is always great fun with a huge bonfire on the wash lands down by the river, lots of fireworks, hotdogs, mulled wine and calling in at one of the village pubs on the way back home. Given all of the strange taxes we have had over the years (think windows, hearths, playing cards, salt, leather) it is surprising that there has never been a tax on fireworks, well not in the UK anyway. According to Google though there are firework taxes in the USA!

November also sees one of the ATT's twice yearly admission ceremonies at the House of Lords. These are very popular and enjoyable evenings finishing with the opportunity to join a guided tour of the Palace of Westminster. It is always a thrill to meet our new members and their proud families, plus this year I get to act as master of ceremonies so an added bonus – for me at least!

Next month being December Jan, aged (state secret) but probably about six and three quarters, is already getting excited and counting down the sleeps until Santa comes. Planning is well underway for the ATT welcome page Christmas special, so until then...