

This section contains the contributions of each president since the amalgamation in 1986 until 2008. It concludes with two overviews, one from an insider and one from an outsider.

The professional initials and local authorities shown at the end of each contribution are those which were applicable at the time of each presidency. However, the photographs used were mostly taken in November 2008. In this section ACES is taken to include the Association under its earlier name of LAVA, the Local Authority Valuers' Association.

1986/87 - Remo Verrico

The Scottish Branch asked me to contribute an article for the special ACES centenary history and gave two reasons for this, one because I was the first President of LAVA and the first Scottish member of ALAVES. Being responsible for setting up the Scottish Branch was another. You will have noticed that I have already used three different acronyms for the Associations and there is one more to come.

When I was appointed as the City of Glasgow Estates Surveyor in 1962 the Council had just announced its redevelopment plan. This involved 29 areas, some as large as 200 acres and included several in the town centre. A new urban motorway and an inner ring road were also in the scheme. The City did not have a property department and had made do until then with input from various departments such as Housing Manager, Rating Assessor, Engineer, Finance as well as the District Valuer and private surveyors. The Council felt that this arrangement was not suitable for carrying out the tasks which would arise from its redevelopment schemes and decided that a new property department was required.

Having come from the estate office of a large Scottish estate and the IR Valuation Office I was inexperienced in the ways of local authorities. I found that London had a large property department so I contacted William Webb of LCC in the hope that I could gain from their experience. He agreed to meet me to discuss the issues involved in a property department. He also introduced me to other senior heads of section who were also very helpful. This was the start of my involvement with ALAVES and since joining in 1963 I have gained much from the experiences of others.

Glasgow was the first local authority in Scotland to have an estates department and while we trained many of our own apprentices we also became involved with the RICS

and universities and colleges to encourage and recruit new entrants to the profession. We also felt that with reorganisation of local government looming in 1975 there was a need to promote the case for surveyors and property departments in the new authorities. With the help of some senior staff in my department and a few from other authorities we set up a Scottish Branch to pass on our experience. Unfortunately it seems the minutes of these meetings cannot be found so I am having to rely on my fading memory. Our meetings were held mainly in Glasgow and Edinburgh.

When we became a full branch within the Association in 1979 we had five members in ALAVES. Because of the different circumstances of estates and valuation departments in Scotland it was agreed that appropriate officers who were not chief officers or members of the main association would be accepted in the branch.

I was elected as the first Chairman of the branch and served for four years. Walter Murray was the Secretary/Treasurer, other members were Neil Macfarlane, Bob Simpson, Alastair McColl, Jack Simpson, Jim Wood, John McConnell and later, Colin Bradford. Neil Macfarlane succeeded me as Chairman in 1983 followed by Jack Simpson in 1985.

We had a considerable spread of professional items on the agendas with town centre development schemes, Waverley Market, rating revaluation and many others and Jack Simpson's summary of Land Tribunal decisions. The Branch were advisers to COSLA and made submissions to the Scottish Office and RICS.

In 1986 membership had risen to 24 of whom 10 were in ALAVES. The Scottish Branch was well represented on the national Executive Committee over the years and has provided a number of Council members and Presidents. I think that there are now 27 Scottish members in ACES and I am pleased to see that Glasgow continues to play its part in the Association through Willie Martin and Tom Fleming.

The highlight of my time in the Association was of course being appointed the first President of the combined bodies under



Remo Verrico

the title of LAVA in 1986. In my Presidential address I said that we were witnessing the joining together of two organisations, CLAVA and ALAVES, both with a considerable history into one single association, one influential group of senior officers representing over 150 local authorities who were responsible for the valuation, management and development of land for public purposes. CLAVA was the older having been founded in 1908 hence our current centenary whereas ALAVES was founded in 1949 following the Local Government Act 1948 and was more closely linked to urban authorities.

Although the two had close links and worked together for many years I took the opportunity to pay tribute to those on both associations who worked very hard, accepting compromises in the process to bring it about. Names I mentioned at the time were Gordon Smith and John Cook, recent officers of the two Associations, Arthur Tindall, Harvey Cox, Tim Foster and Brian Garrett.

The history of ALAVES has been very well documented by Ken Blessley (with the benefit of the Minutes) in addition to all the contributions, work and support he gave the Association over so many years.

My first Presidential function in November 1986 was held at County Hall, London when the Executive Committee was addressed by the Secretary General of RICS, Michael Pattison, on the Structure and Chartered Designations Review 1987 showing once again the close liaison between us and the RICS. At the conclusion of the business the Annual Lunch followed and was attended by many distinguished guests including Donald Troup, President RICS, Michael Pattison, Alan Martin, Senior Partner of Montagu Evans. Also attending were representatives from local authority associations and other professional bodies as well as national and technical press.

On 1st May 1987 I attended the provincial meeting of the new Association which was held at the Peveril Peak Hotel, Thorpe, Derbyshire. The evening before we had a conducted

tour of Chatsworth followed by dinner in the hotel and a folk singing session. After the business meeting in the morning which included a talk by the Chief Executive of the Derbyshire Enterprise Board we went on a conducted tour of the Royal Crown Derby Porcelain works. An alternative was an underground tour of Bolsover Colliery.

My Presidential Meeting was in Glasgow on the 9/10th July. On the afternoon of the 9th the members had a guided tour of the Glengoyne Whisky Distillery. In the evening the Presidential Dinner took place at the Lomond Castle Hotel at Loch Lomond. The Association's guests included the Lord and Lady Provost, Robert and Mary Gray; the Town Clerk and Chief Executive, Steven Hamilton and Mrs Hamilton; the Director of Planning, James Rae and Mrs Rae; and Mr Gerald Louthin, the Deputy Chief Executive of Municipal Mutual Insurance Company. Before dinner Mr Louthin presented the President with the new badge of office which his company had kindly donated to the Association.

On the morning of the 10th the Association meeting was held in Glasgow City Chambers and after the formal agenda an illustrated talk on the Merchant City was given by planning and estates officials followed by a walkabout.

There was a civic reception and luncheon in the Council Chambers hosted by the leader of the Council, Patrick Lally. In the afternoon the meeting continued with a visit to the new Exhibition Centre and a presentation by the Commercial Manager. There was also an illustrated talk on the forthcoming Glasgow Garden Festival.

The evening consisted of a private visit to the Burrell Collection which included a buffet.

The following morning some members dispersed while others attended a reception given to the Association by Strathclyde Regional Council hosted by the Convenor, James Jennings.

As President I attended a number of meetings including:

- March - Rod Hackney, RIBA President
- April - CoPROP and other associations
- May - Donald Troup, RICS President
- June - County Branch, Somerset
- October - RICS Conference, Gleneagles
- Lunch with Mr Clark, President RICS
- RICS Dinner General Practice Division

It was a memorable year for me and I believe a good first year for the new Association. As one who gained great professional benefit from membership of the Association I would urge all current and future members to give all the support they can to help keep the Association as the first choice for local authorities when recruiting staff for property matters in whatever new form they may take.

Remo Verrico FRICS
Glasgow City Council

1987/88

- Alan Darg

1987 was a year of expectation for our members. Some of us had been working with Doug Edmonds of the Audit Commission on a report on the future of property management in local authorities. The Association scored a first by organising a seminar in London at the Civil Engineers' Institution on the 1st of March within days of publication and secured Howard Davies, who was then Head of The Audit Commission as the keynote speaker. We also had Doug Edmonds (dressed in his usual leather bomber jacket), Colin Whent who was Chairman of SOLACE Property Management Sub-Committee and our own Brian Standivan. The seminar was a great success and over-subscribed so it was a nice little earner for the Association. That day we learned that the report was to have far-reaching consequences across authorities and the ongoing development of its principles would occupy us for many subsequent years. It prompted some interesting actions among our professional colleagues in other disciplines.

The various professional societies agreed that a co-ordinated approach covering all the component activities in managing the property assets of local authorities would enable the professions to talk with one voice to central government not just about implementation of the Audit Commission Report but also in providing an interface for the discussion and development of the introduction of CCT. The new organisation which embraced LAVA, SCALA, SCQS, SCBS, SCEME and CoPROP gave itself the title of Federation of Property Societies (FPS) and had its first meeting in the summer of that year.

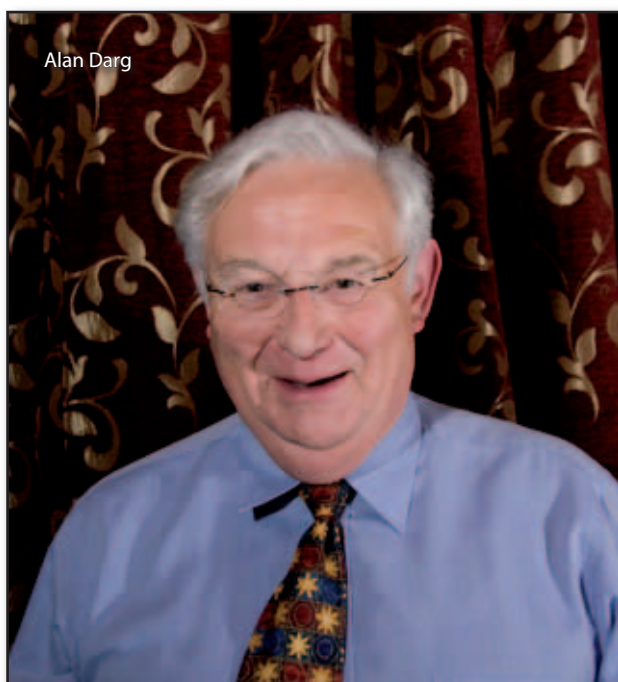
The county councils and unitary authorities continued the process of amalgamating departments which resulted in loss of chief officer status for more of our colleagues and this and the changing scenario for property management and valuation led the Association's Executive Committee to set up a working group to suggest "the way ahead and a new direction for the Association".

CIPFA were also continuing their deliberations on local authority accounting arrangements and working up a major report on arrangements for capital accounting. We were to discover these quite by accident through our RICS connections. Betty Albon and I were, over subsequent years to spend many hours in my case, and years in hers, arguing the toss with CIPFA and Treasury colleagues on the practicality of implementing their proposals. I see from The Terrier she still is. Ah the price of fame!

During the year I visited the Scottish Branch and very much enjoyed the hospitality of Walter Murray, the Chairman who introduced me to *Glayva* a fine Scottish liqueur which I still enjoy to this day. The provincial meeting was held at Salford Keys at the then new Copthorne Hotel right on the keys. I also went to Heart of England and Essex Branches as well as my own South West Branch.

The Presidential Meeting was held in Bristol at Redwood Lodge. We had a talk by one Bristol City's Development Officers on the "Waterfront and Harbour Development" and a boat trip to see the site for ourselves. He didn't foresee that it would take 20 years to complete and some of it is still isn't finished.

Alan Darg FRICS FBIM
Avon County Council



1988/89

- Richard Miller

My path to the Presidency was not a smooth one. In the continual reorganisations of local government in the seventies the chap who was due to come on to the ladder suddenly found himself without a job qualifying for ACES membership. Everyone was very sympathetic but there was really nothing to be done. Peter Leigh proposed my elevation, Remo Verrico seconded it and I was on the greasy pole.

I wanted three things from my presidency. The first was to raise the profile of ALAVES. This was easily done by including a reference to possible corruption in local government in my presidential address. The reptiles all leaped on that with lines like "Corruption warning by top valuer" (I loved that one!)

Secondly, I wanted a conference that people would remember for many years to come. I know, and support, the reasons for cutting the conference in effect to one day with little or no social contact. However, I just yearn for the days when we went to one of the finest houses in England, visited behind the scenes of an international airport, had a presentation by the head of a National Park, had dinner at what was then a First Division football club which beat Bayern Munich and held its own at the San Siro and finally had an afternoon's boat trip on the Norfolk Broads. At the meeting I managed to convince members that the President and Secretary should attend the first MIPIM conference – which happened to be held in Cannes! Unfortunately the arrangements came apart but MIPIM is still going strong and I still think it would have been an absolutely cracking opportunity to really raise our profile.

Thirdly and last I wanted to recognise the help and encouragement given to me by Past and Honorary Members of the Association. This one was not going to be as easy as the other two.

I joined the London County Council in 1959 and left the successor GLC in 1967. During that time I, and everyone else in the department tiptoed (quickly and quietly!) along the third floor of County Hall, genuflecting all the way for this was the floor of the Valuer and Deputy Valuer. You have to remember that this was in the days when these people wielded very real power dealing with huge schemes which we today can really only marvel at. The LCC Valuer's Department had 600 staff and the GLC well over a thousand.

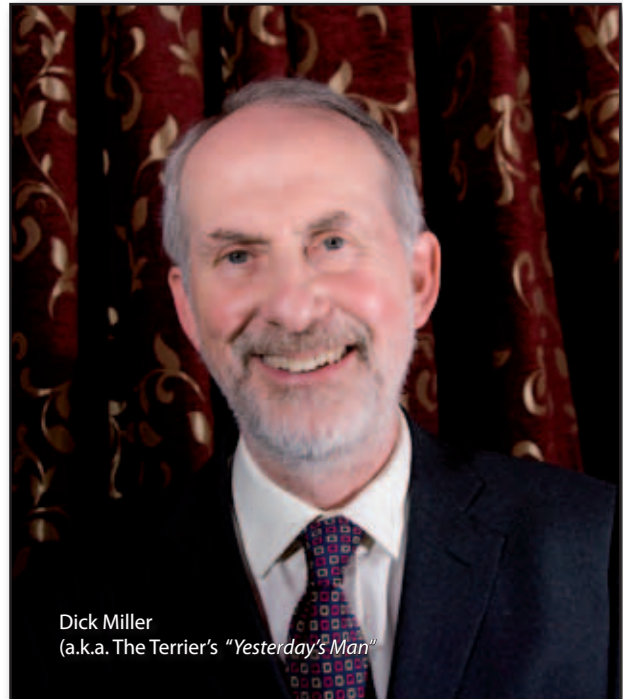
For all this power they had a very humble sign on the door. It was hand painted in yellow on a piece of old hardboard but it still held people in awe if they needed to visit the occupants. Many just avoided this floor completely.

Ten years passed and I was visiting County Hall on business. I had a job to get to the lift as the landing was piled with rubble. I was just about to get in the lift when out of the corner of my eye I caught a glimpse of yellow sticking out of the heap. I kicked about a bit but no one came and it gradually came loose. It was indeed the sign. What to do? I could not just leave it to be dumped. Out of respect to all the unknown characters who had stood outside, quaking, I determined to liberate the sign. But how?

Whatever I was to do I needed to do it fast. I dived into the nearest loo and arranged my clothing so that my shirt held it in place on my front. I was dreading being stopped as I could not imagine any way of explaining a dusty old sign pulled out of a rubbish heap and stuck up my shirt. I have a feeling that Mr Plod might have become involved at some stage in the proceedings.

I survived and put the old sign, cleaned up, in my bottom desk drawer. I didn't feel I could show it off as it would only mean something to ex LCC/GLC people. Anyone else would assume I was nuts.

Fast forward to 1988, my Presidential year. I was stuck with the problem of thanking my friends. It came to me in a flash. Ken Blessley had not only been a distinguished Valuer to the GLC earning a well deserved CBE along the way but was also a



Dick Miller
(a.k.a. The Terrier's "Yesterday's Man")

very staunch supporter of ALAVES, having been one of only a handful of men who held the Presidency more than once, and wrote the official History as well.

I decided that I was sure that Ken would be prepared to accept my thanks on behalf of all the Presidents who had helped me. So, halfway through our boat trip we moored up and like a rabbit out of a hat I produced his old sign. Knocking down and feather were the words that sprang to mind. I pointed out that that was the first time I had ever seen Ken actually speechless. But it didn't last long. A growled "Watch it!" and we were back off to our berth.

So, to all those members who have helped me over the years thank you again and "This is your sign."



Ken Blessley and Dick Miller

Richard Miller FRICS
Norfolk County Council

1989/90

- Jack Simpson

In the last 18 years or so my only connection with ACES has been through reading *Per Annum*, *The Terrier*, and the minutes of meetings etc sent to me by the Secretary. Although no longer involved in the property profession I continue to find it all most interesting. It is clear to me that ACES has changed significantly from the days I remember it as ALAVES and LAVA. This no doubt reflects changes in the way property is dealt with in local government. I am very impressed by the standards of the professional productions which find their way to me. When I was asked to make this contribution the next thing that struck me was how much more demanding the role of President appears to have become than it was some 20 years ago.

My presidential year began in November 1989 but my story starts more than ten years earlier. This was when I first became a member of ALAVES. I was in my mid thirties and had just become a Chief Officer in the third largest local authority in Scotland. It was a big step up and initially I was somewhat in awe of the very distinguished company I was joining when I attended my first meeting at County Hall. However, I was soon to realise what a friendly and helpful association of fellow professionals this was. In no time at all I was made welcome and soon I was on first name terms with the top valuers in the world of local government. I looked forward to my regular visits to London for perhaps three things. Firstly, I was enjoying the company of my peers. Secondly I learned a great deal from what others were doing and I was able to introduce many of these ideas into my own department for the benefit of my own authority. Thirdly, and very selfishly, I discovered colleagues with problems against which mine paled in to insignificance. Somehow this made the Friday rush hour Underground trip to Heathrow and the flight back to Edinburgh seem almost pleasant.

After a few years on the “back benches” I found myself on the Executive Committee as a representative of the small Scottish contingency. These were the days before there was an established branch network and there were about four or five of us who attended regularly from north of the border. In October 1988, during a break in the Executive meeting, I was having lunch with Dick Miller and Barry Searle then respectively the Senior and Junior Vice-Presidents. They asked if I would allow my name to go forward as the next Junior Vice-President. I heard this with a mixture of astonishment, apprehension, and awareness of the honour that it would be to become eventually the second Scottish President of what had by this time become LAVA. (I had worked for five years for Remo Verrico, the first Scottish President of LAVA and before that he had been for a short time a colleague of my father in the Valuation Office). My nomination was approved at the subsequent AGM and I looked forward to having a two year apprenticeship watching and learning how it should be done.

Those who were around at that time will remember that changes were happening quite rapidly in local government and about four weeks before the AGM at which I expected to become Senior Vice-President I received a telephone call from Barry Searle to say that he had been made an offer he could not refuse outside local government and consequently I could expect to be President a year earlier than I had anticipated. Maybe it was just as well I had virtually no time to think about it, but Barry assured me that everything was in place for the AGM and the lunch to follow although I imagine that Eddie Turner, the Secretary, had his work cut out to produce a new printed programme and menu in time. All I had to do was prepare a Presidential address and the toast to the guests. To make it even more daunting the principal guest was to be the former Prime Minister, Sir Edward Heath. This was some act to be following! I felt in the circumstances that it all went remarkably well. The 4th November 1989 will stay in my memory for ever.

As I suggested at the beginning the role of the President seemed to be more relaxed than nowadays. In my first three months all I did was attend the ISVA Hampton Lecture in London, write an article for the *Municipal Journal* and send a letter to the *Estates Times*. So you can see that it was not at all demanding.

My next visit to London was in February 1990 for an Executive Committee meeting followed the next day by a “Study Day”. This was a conference aimed at councillors and senior local government officers and I chaired this and made a brief welcoming speech but the hard work of organising the speakers and the venue was undertaken by others. Perhaps the mark of a good leader is the ability to delegate!



Jack Simpson

Some six weeks later I was back in London for a meeting of the Federation of Property Societies which, if I remember correctly, was very much in its infancy. April saw the LAVA provincial meeting being held in Cardiff and one of only two branch meetings which I attended. What is now the Rural Practice Branch (then called the Counties Branch) was holding its meeting as part of the proceedings and consequently I did not have very far to travel. What I remember most about that meeting was that they seemed to speak another language and I don't mean Welsh! Rural matters were a total mystery to me, even although I was responsible for some 12,500 acres of agricultural land in Lothian Region, but the branch was clearly an influential group among county councils.

At the beginning of June I attended the Scottish Branch meeting in Glenrothes in my formal capacity as LAVA President and received excellent hospitality from Fife Regional Council.

About this time I also submitted an article for the Municipal Yearbook. I am sure it was not because I was any kind of author; I think they just felt obliged to ask the President to do it.

The end of June saw the highlight of my year in office, the Presidential Meeting in Edinburgh. There was little opportunity to delegate any of the organisation of this to anyone although my wife, Betty, was very much involved during the two days of the meeting itself. The professional content of these meetings was assuming increased importance and I was lucky that I was able to persuade a member of my staff and two other professional colleagues to "volunteer" to present papers. On the social side I was delighted to be supported by my authority, who at a time of increasing restrictions on expenditure, provided a small pre-dinner reception. The Council's Deputy Leader and Chief Executive both made excellent speeches at the dinner. The Scottish weather was at its kindest for the trips organised both for the ladies and the delegates. Only after it was all over did I realise that I had enjoyed it as much as all the other Presidential meetings I had attended!

As things stood at that time I thought that all I had to do was await the AGM in November and hand on the reins to the Senior Vice-President. Then it happened almost like it had done a year before but only worse. Two telephone calls within days of each other confirmed that both the Senior and Junior Vice-Presidents were retiring from local government. I telephoned Eddie Turner and we arranged to meet halfway between Manchester and Edinburgh in Chris Rowley's office in Carlisle at the beginning of August to decide what to do. By the time of the Executive meeting in London on the 7th September everything was in place and we were delighted that Roy Gregory accepted the nomination as the next President. He had even less time to think about it than I had!

In September I attended a reception at the RICS Headquarters and during October I attended a SCEME Conference in London, the dinner at the IRRV Conference in Scarborough and a further meeting of the Federation of Property Societies in London; again not a particularly demanding schedule.

In November it was back to where it all started at Lords and I was happy to pass on the responsibility to Roy Gregory. At

the time I imagined that I would have a lengthy period as an ordinary member again but things turned out differently. Within a year the changes in local government to which I referred earlier caught up with me, my department was disappearing and I was on the road to early retirement.

Much to my own surprise I discovered that there was life outside property. I gained a Commercial Pilot's Licence and I am a fully qualified flying instructor. Some of my students have even gone on to fly for major airlines.

However, my interest in property which started when I was just seven years old and taken on a survey by my father has never truly gone away. I have retained my RICS membership and, although I have played no active part in recent times, I still value highly my honorary membership of ACES.

Jack Simpson LIB FRICS FRVA
Lothian Regional Council

1990/91 - Roy Gregory

You know how it is ... something really significant happens in your life and forever thereafter you can remember where you were and what you were doing when you got the news. Although it was some time in early 1990, I remember it as if it was yesterday. For me it was a telephone call, or two actually – from Eddie Turner, the then Hon Secretary of the Local Authority Valuers' association (LAVA). The first call was to ask whether I would be willing to be nominated as Junior Vice-President. I asked for time to consider. All the 'Why me?' questions came to the fore but, after a day or two's reflection, I said I'd be honoured to accept the nomination.

So, I'd made my decision, I could now wait to see if there were any more worthy nominations at the AGM in the following November and get used to the idea of being President in a couple of years' time.

But things didn't quite pan out as I expected. As I recall it now, nearly 18 years later, it was only a few weeks after the first call that Eddie Turner was on the phone yet again, with more disturbing news. The situation he outlined can best be summed up by the immortal words of the imperious Lady Bracknell in the Importance of Being Ernest "To lose one parent may be regarded as a misfortune; to lose both looks like carelessness."

Let me explain... In the intervening period between the two telephone conversations the Association lost both the senior and junior vice-presidents, who rendered themselves ineligible for the office of President by leaving local government. This

meant that with effect from November 1999, I was catapulted into the hot seat with the minimum of time to get used to the idea.

I think that, with hindsight, it all worked out for the best. But it did mean that all those logistical issues like “Who should I invite as my guest of honour for the AGM?” to “Where shall I hold my presidential conference?” had to be compressed into a few weeks rather than a year or two.

In those days, the AGM was held at Lords Cricket Ground in St Johns Wood. My good friend, fellow Chartered Surveyor and local Member of Parliament for Ilford South, Neil (now Sir Neil) Thorne graciously agreed to be my guest of honour.

That year was the first occasion of bestowing fellowship of the Association on a Chartered Surveyor who had attained high office and had been a good friend of the Association. The recipient was Christopher Howes, described in Wikipedia as “a leading surveyor in the world of land and buildings with a career in the public, private and academic sectors”. Having been Director of Land & Property in the Department of the Environment, in 1989 he was appointed Chief Executive of the Crown Estate, thus becoming responsible for probably as much real estate as the whole of LAVA members put together, a worthy recipient of the first award of Fellowship of the Association.

During my year, I focussed on training in the profession, something I still believe profoundly in, as a long standing RICS APC Assessor. One of the training seminars was in the Council Chamber of the RICS in Great George Street. I had arranged a fairly impressive array of speakers including one who shall remain nameless to avoid causing embarrassment. He was



due to address a packed Council Chamber at 10:30am as the second speaker of the day. As the due time approached, I asked someone to check whether he had arrived. As he was nowhere to be seen, my colleague had the presence of mind to call his office in Surrey and was surprised and alarmed when he answered the phone himself (This was before the days of mobile phones)!

Profusely apologetic, he jumped into his car and drove up to Great George Street as quickly as normal suburban and central London traffic allowed, and arrived as the after lunch session was about to start. He apologised (sincerely but briefly) and got straight into his lecture, which was inspirational (just the sort of presentation for the after lunch “graveyard” slot). And he taught me a lesson. One, always check your speakers have the date in their diary, but two, and much more importantly, when you mess up (and we all do) deal with it and move on.

As I think back over almost 19 years, the most positive memories are of the people I met during my presidential year. The visits to the branches proved hugely enjoyable and stimulating, and the chance to slip the bounds of a London borough and travel the length and breadth of the UK was a bonus in itself. Thankfully, my Council was delighted that I was given the opportunity to be President, and was very supportive of the need to attend to ACES business during my year.

As always, the Presidential conference was the highlight. It was also a significant milestone in the history of ACES, as it marked the commissioning of our first paid secretary, Chris Rowley, an experienced and well respected former ACES member. That role has gone from strength to strength in recent years with the subsequent appointment of Tim Foster, and it is increasingly evident that the Association could not function as it does nowadays without that resource. Well done, Tim!

I agonised long and hard about a suitable venue for the Presidential conference and eventually decided on a very liberal interpretation of my authority's geographical boundaries. This led us to London Docklands and a riverside hotel right opposite the newly opened Canary Wharf tower. We used river buses to convey delegates to various locations, including the House of Commons for a tour and tea kindly arranged by Neil Thorne, MP, and much enjoyed by the partners.

The guest of honour at the Presidential Dinner was Baron Jenkin of Roding, formerly the Rt. Hon. Patrick Jenkin, Secretary of State for the Environment, and I recall feeling rather overawed sitting at the top table next to a peer of the realm.

All that is a long time ago now, but the memories are good ones, and I would encourage younger members (as a sort of elder statesman with nearly 30 years' membership under my belt) to get involved in the Association and aspire to election to the ACES Council and – who knows – perhaps to the office of President. You won't regret it!

Roy Gregory ARICS IRRV
London Borough of Redbridge

1991/92

- Iain MacDonald

When I was asked to outline some reminiscences of my ACES Presidential year, I had two initial thoughts, firstly that reading a collection of reminiscences of former Presidents' years in office might not be the most exciting read and secondly, whether I had actually retained sufficient information regarding my ACES Presidential year to enable me to write anything meaningful or interesting.

When I started to search for information, I quickly realised that my task was complicated by my ACES presidency overlapping with other president and chairman appointments in consecutive years. In 1990/91 I was President of CoPROP, which overlapped with me being President of ACES in 1991/92, which in turn overlapped with me being Chair of the Federation of Property Societies (1992/94) and which also overlapped with me being Chair of the RICS Local Government Panel (1992/94).

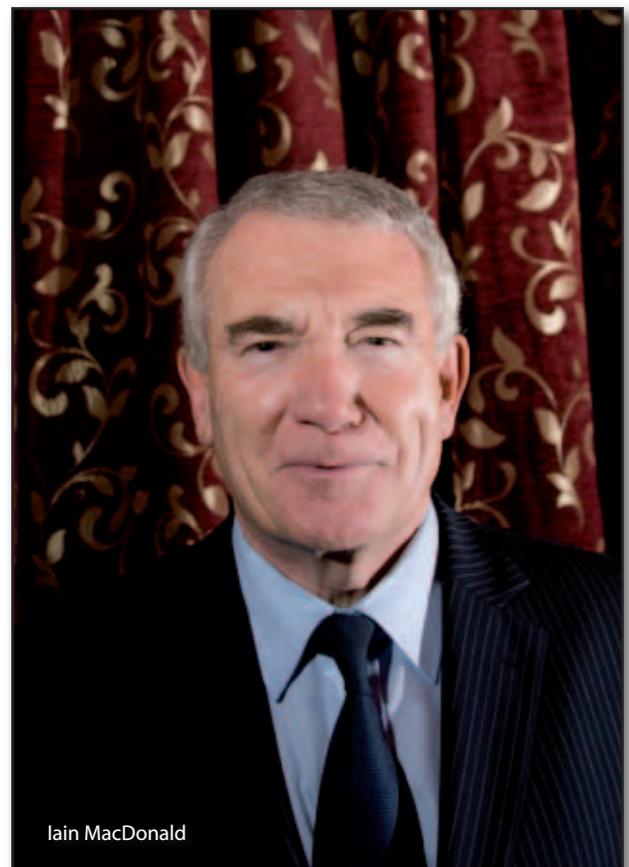
I discovered that I had kept very little information or records and, although I was able to identify some events I had attended, spoken at or chaired, I was unable in many cases to be clear whether I was there in my ACES, CoPROP, FPS or RICS capacity – thus making it difficult to write specifically about events attended as ACES President only.

When I was reflecting on my lack of records and about what to do regarding this article, I began to think how fortunate I had been in the early nineties to have been elected to national President and Chair positions and how having held the position of President of ACES and the other appointments most certainly helped my career and had facilitated my appointment in 1993 as the chief executive of a large city council. By comparison, obtaining a local government chief executive post is so much more difficult for ACES members nowadays because current departmental structures commonly have the most senior property post in the council at third or fourth tier level, whereas when I was President it was quite common for ACES members to be department directors often in charge, as I was as Director of Property in a county council, of large multi-disciplinary departments comprising architects and all the other construction-related professions as well as all the property professional staff and in addition with a seat on the Chief Officer Management Team. Slimmer structures and executive directors in charge of multi-functional clusters have certainly reduced promotion opportunities for ACES members.

However, becoming President can still lead to the opening of doors to opportunities. In 1999 I had left my city council chief executive post and had moved into interim management and consultancy work when I was approached, in the immediate aftermath of the Yugoslavian wars, to go on assignment to work for the United Nations as the Chief Executive of Pristina, the capital of Kosovo. When I arrived, there was a fair measure of chaos and confusion, a massive number of refugees, a cash economy as there was no banking system or credit cards

because bank governance had been withdrawn to Serbia and all the records of land registry/property ownership and of births/deaths/marriages had also been withdrawn to Serbia by the Milosevic government. In order to fill the vacuum caused by the lack of property ownership records the UN decided to set up the Pristina Estates Commission to evaluate priorities and to requisition and allocate buildings and land for United Nations agencies, international aid agencies, for industry regeneration, for NATO army units and to try to deal with claims on property ownership from citizens (Many refugees had simply returned to Kosovo and taken over and occupied houses and buildings they had no connection with). A sharp-eyed member of the UN human resources team noticed from my CV that I had held senior property-related posts in the UK and had been President of ACES as well as the CoPROP/FPS posts etc, as a direct result of which I ended up in 1999 and 2000 being the Chair of the Pristina Estates Commission as well as being the Chief Executive of the Pristina City region, a truly interesting and fascinating experience.

However, back to ACES and being President of ACES. Having also been President/Chair of CoPROP and FPS has given me an insight into the ways of working and the social interaction of the other professional associations. While all of these bodies are well organised and businesslike, ACES is by far the most friendly and sociable of any of the professional groups with which I have been associated. Attending ACES meetings has never ever been a chore for me and has always been something to look forward to. In the past six years, including currently, I have held a succession of interim head of service consultancy appointments in London boroughs and have been a regular



attender at the London Branch which epitomises ACES friendliness and high professional standards.

When I started to write this short article and discovered that I had retained very few records or photographs regarding my year as President, I realised I would have to look well out with my Presidential Year, as indeed I have done, in order to write an article to contribute as part of the ACES Centenary History. I am proud to have played some small part in ACES history to date and I wish ACES and all members, past and present, well for the future.

Iain MacDonald FRICS MBIM IRRV
Leicestershire County Council

1993/94 - Alan Powell

When I received Bob Perry's request for a few words on my year as President, I wished that I had not had my clear-out of old papers a year or two ago. Therefore, I must rely upon my now somewhat hazy memory of events some fifteen or more years ago. A few issues are, however, still clear in my mind.

At the time that I had the honour to serve as President of LAVA, as it was then, the Association had just agreed to take the first tentative step towards appointing a paid secretary in its drive to become a more efficient and professional organisation. That initial move did eventually pave the way for the hugely successful appointment of Tim Foster as Consultant Secretary, an appointment that continues with complete success to the present day.

I also recall the welcome given to me on the various Branch visits that I managed to make during my year, that to the Scottish Branch being particularly memorable. It seemed to me that the elected members of Scottish councils were rather more appreciative of the efforts and involvement of their professional staffs than were some of their English counterparts at that time.

There was the usual plethora of meetings with, amongst others, the RICS, the DofE (late lamented), the Valuation Office and CIPFA, some of which meetings, I hope, strengthened the Association's contacts with those bodies.

The most important issue by far that I had to address was the impending imposition of compulsory competitive tendering. I remember the prophets of doom predicting that in a few years time there would be no estates function left at all in local government and thereby no need for an association such

as ACES. Their view seemed to be that the mighty god, the "Private Sector" would sweep all before it and take all estates and valuation functions unto itself.



Although now fully retired for several years, I like to keep vaguely in touch with current events, The Terrier is most hopeful in that respect, and it seems to me that a reasonably harmonious co-existence has developed between "them and us" over the years. Certainly, ACES is in no way diminished in importance and value, and may that be the case for many years to come. The fellowship, advice and "familyness", if there is such a word, between members were, and remain, huge advantages of membership.

Alan Powell FRICS IRRV
London Borough of Havering

1994/95

- Colin Bradford

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Inauguration – Lords Nov 1994

In 1993 and 1994 while at Tayside Regional Council I found myself on several occasions being asked to advise and brief the veteran Scottish MP, Tam ^[1] Dalyell ^[2] on property transfers and the forthcoming local government reorganisation. I came to appreciate his interest in local authority property and I was therefore delighted when he agreed to be my guest of honour for the Association's Annual Meeting in November 1994.

Problem No 1:

Tam Dalyell should have been in London on the Friday of our meeting so I didn't expect any problems over him getting to our venue, the Lords Conference Centre. However, unknown to me he had gone back to Scotland the day before for a meeting. On the Friday morning he set off to catch the plane to London at Edinburgh airport only to get stuck in traffic following an accident at the Newbridge roundabout. The result was that he missed his plane and had to wait for a later flight.

Problem No 2:

Tam had prepared a speech as principal guest proposing the toast to the Association and he brought it with him on a sheaf of A4 pages. On the tube from Heathrow he laid the speech on the empty seat beside him. Somewhere near Hounslow another passenger, having placed his morning paper on top of TD's notes, picked up both by accident and left the tube. So by now TD was late for the meeting - and he had lost his speech.

At the Lords Conference Centre the AGM part of the proceedings was over, the pre-lunch drinks reception with the great and the good had finished and the formal Lunch had commenced. I was sitting on the top table in a state of disquiet and increasing panic, with a conspicuously empty seat on my right hand side. Earlier in the day I had made a quip to RICS President, Roy Swanston, that this was one function where he was not expected to sing for his supper: he could just relax and enjoy himself, having no formal responsibilities. As we came to the end of the main course and the seat on my right was still empty, my stress levels rose and I had to ask Roy if he would be prepared to act as TD's understudy. Thankfully he agreed which at least meant that I could enjoy the next few mouthfuls of food.

And then in came TD, unruly hair, tweed jacket and big smile. All was saved. My spirits rose. At least for a while - then

¹ *He of the West Lothian question and a thorn in Mrs Thatcher's side over the Belgrano*

² *Pronounced "Dee-ell".*



Colin Bradford

my heart sank again as he explained how his speech had disappeared at Hounslow. After coffee I duly delivered my Presidential Address, an earnest homily on residuary bodies based on my experiences during the 1986 reorganisation ^[3] and my concerns or predictions about the forthcoming 1996 reorganisation which was to make the whole of Scotland unitary. Then it was TD's turn. With no notes to follow, and ignoring the microphone he stood in front of us and grabbed his audience's attention with a single pithy sentence expressing his belief in strong local government. For the next 30 or 40 minutes he took us on a non-stop circular tour (with the occasional scenic detour) around politics and principles, anecdotes and examples, descriptions and declarations, and then with skill and craft he finished his speech by bringing us all back to the initial statement where he had started. We all felt privileged and honoured to hear and feel the power and skill of such rhetoric, to see such a master orator at work... but I just felt like a wet rag wearing a badge.

Spring Meeting - Bristol, 1995

My first big engagement after the AM, the Spring Meeting took the form of a series of papers and workshops on CCT held in a hotel just outside Bristol. For me, especially after the stresses of the previous meeting at Lords, it was a wonderfully relaxing introduction to the duties of a President. Someone else had organised the venue, the speakers, the bookings and all the finances. All I had to do was put on the President's Badge, introduce the speakers and open and close each session.

³ *When I was obliged to work for the Tyne and Wear Residuary Body - and ALAVES shamefully decided to kick me and other residuary body pressed men out of the Association because they didn't like the Greater London Residuary Body!*

I do have a personal memory of one member I hadn't met before who turned up very late for dinner on the first evening. His very slow cross-country journey had almost taken as long as my journey south from Perth. He introduced himself as Paul Over from Chichester and later was to become Junior Vice-President just as our centenary year came to an end.

Summer Meeting – Pitlochry, 1995

With very few exceptions (e.g. Roy Gregory in London Docklands) Presidents hold their own conferences within the geographical area of their own authority. We had already had two presidential meetings in Scotland (Remo Verrico in Glasgow and Jack Simpson in Edinburgh) but Tayside Region was much further north again and I did have concerns about my ability to entice the average member to travel so far. I decided on a multi-pronged marketing approach:

- High quality product
- Enhancements
- Effective advertising

Tayside's main centre is Dundee but it was only one of several good options in Tayside. Perth is a wonderful city but if you travel a few miles north to Dunkeld you cross the Highland Line into some of the best scenery in Scotland. I decided to hold the conference in Pitlochry, the northernmost location ever used for an Association conference. The focus was to be on property management in the leisure and tourism industries and I managed to persuade some fascinating speakers to commit themselves. I also found a magnificent Victorian hotel for the venue, the Atholl Palace Hotel where members booking in at Reception were delighted to be greeted with a glass of Drambuie. I also scheduled the conference for June when the weather might be better; this turned out a very fortunate choice and we had good weather for the whole of the conference.

To enhance the product, and to make it worthwhile for people to travel so far north, I decided on some add-ons. We had the usual Wednesday afternoon golf match on Pitlochry – with the very unusual sight of me playing golf. I also asked the Scottish Branch to organise a Thursday morning session focussing on economic development and regeneration. Assuming that many people might want to stay for one or two additional nights I organised a group trip to the Pitlochry Festival Theatre on the Friday evening and on the Saturday we had a coach tour of the scenic delights of Perthshire ending with a visit to the RRS Discovery in Dundee. Dundee looked marvellous with bright blue skies, a few fluffy white clouds – and a very colourful yacht race taking place on the River Tay.

One of the most effective strategies in marketing is repetition. I started writing to ACES members in 1994 telling them to get the Pitlochry conference dates into their new 1995 diaries as soon as they got them. Regular reminders went out from Tayside House (We had no LAVA Secretary for most of this time) so that no-one in LAVA could claim ignorance of the forthcoming event.

The outcome of all of this was that:

- most of my conference organising work was done before I became President so I was able to devote my time as President to other matters (and maybe that was just as well. See below).
- the longest ever ACES conference programme extending without a break from Wednesday lunchtime to the end of Saturday afternoon^[1];
- very good attendance levels over all and a successful conference

There was one disappointment to the Pitlochry conference. The Atholl Palace is built on a small hill on the south side of Pitlochry with commanding views in all directions. The hotel is topped by two great Scots Baronial towers, each containing a two storey suite.



The Atholl Palace, Pitlochry

On the lower floor there is a bathroom and bedroom but on the top floor there is a wonderful circular living room with 360 degree views. As conference organiser and President, I allocated one of these to my wife and me. The other I allocated to our new secretary, Tim Foster (and his wife, Sue) in recognition for the excellent work he was already doing for the Association. In the end neither of us enjoyed these rooms as much as we would have wished.

As we gathered on the Thursday evening for dinner, Tim was approached by hotel staff with the news that a water leak had sprung in his tower and with a request for him and Sue to move their belongings to a replacement room. So the Fosters only spent one night in the great tower suite, but that didn't stop them enjoying the after-dinner conference ceilidh.



Conference Ceilidh

¹ For many years afterwards Tim Foster took every opportunity he could to tease me about my timetables for this event. Apparently he thought it amusing just because they were worked out to the nearest minute!

For my part, Kathleen and I did manage to spend three nights in the suite, but on the Saturday morning I realised I had been so busy with conference activities that I had spent no “quality” time in the suite – and I certainly hadn’t had a chance to show it off to any of my colleagues. To redress this I ended up scurrying around the hotel corridors to find a few ACES members who could be invited up for a quick cup of tea and a look at the view before we all left on the final coach tour.

PRESIDENTIAL ACTIVITY

Activity expected by the Association

The expectation by and of most incoming Presidents is that, in addition to organising the presidential conference, the new President will busy himself or herself on three main activities

- a) **External representation** - representing the Association externally, in meetings with government departments, the RICS, sister organisations, the LGA, property press etc.;
- b) **Internal representation** - visiting branches to reinforce internal links in the Association and to encourage the faithful;
- c) **Administration** - taking lead responsibility for the administration of the association.

External representation

I do remember with pleasure representing the Association at the SCALA and SCQS conferences and I also attended a meeting of the DoE/LAVA working party. I also became involved with the early meetings of the FPS (Federation of Property Societies) and served as their Treasurer for a while.

However, because I worked for a Scottish local authority (Tayside Regional Council, based in Dundee) I knew that the external representation role would be a bit difficult for me, partly because of the time and cost involved in travelling to the southern half of Britain and partly because as a surveyor working in Scotland I was not up to speed on the latest English versions of circulars, consultation document, regulations etc. I fully expected therefore to take a lower key role on external representation in England – but then that was so much easier to do with the support of Immediate Past-President, Alan Powell (London Borough of Havering) and the two Vice-Presidents, Derek Rowell (Bedford) and Ted Hartill (City of London).

Internal representation

I did intend to visit as many branches as I could. I managed visits to the London, North East, North West, Scottish, Welsh (of which more below) and Counties Branches but, during 1995 I was promoted to the post of Director of Property for Tayside Regional Council and, with reorganisation to single tier status planned for the whole of Scotland in the following year, visits to the other four branches regrettably became impractical.

Administration

By a mixture of chance and design the administration of the Association came to be the activity which took most of my

time and attention. My year as President did involve quite a few changes for the Association and some of these, I freely confess, I had thought about beforehand and hoped to be able to implement. Other changes arose or became necessary during the year and were not foreseen by me but, taken together, they amounted to the largest group of changes for the Association since amalgamation.

Activity expected/planned by the President

Before I became President, there were several things I had in mind that I would like to try to change, based on my own views and experiences of the Association. These included:

- The name of the Association
- Publications
- Executive Committee/Council
- The Annual Meeting

The Name

The name chosen in 1986 for the newly amalgamated was LAVA and by all accounts it had been a difficult task to achieve consensus. I disliked the name for several reasons:

- a) It made no reference to “estate” or “property”;
- b) It didn’t include the word “chief” or “head” or anything which indicated that it represented the most senior property professionals;
- c) It did include the word “Valuer” but that meant little outside the profession. For many of us inside the profession a valuer was someone who walked up to a problem, gave his erudite and professional opinion, and then promptly walked away again, whereas an estates surveyor or property manager was someone who had a much longer term interest in and responsibility for a property, its problems and potential;
- d) The acronym of LAVA was usually pronounced as “LARVA” but in Scotland the pronunciation was more like “LAVVA”. A paper produced by the Scottish Branch for the Scottish Office and COSLA was widely referred to, and without any irony, as “the LAVVA paper”. Unfortunately the connotations of this were less to do with serious thinking from a “learned institution” and more to do with torn up newspaper on the back of a netty door!

By 1995 nine years had passed since the amalgamation. I thought that the time might be right to change the name and I started a consultation exercise. At the 1995 annual meeting in the last few minutes of my presidency somehow or other I persuaded the meeting to approve on the nod the change of name to ACES^[1]. Derek Rowell stood up shortly afterwards to say that he had turned up expecting to become the newest President of LAVA only to find that he had become President of a totally different organisation altogether!

¹ As is often the case one small development leads to more developments. The change of name to ACES necessitated a new presidential badge. That in turn led to the assembling of all the old presidential badges and the creation of the ACES lectern (See Section 3 - Artefacts).

Publications

The Terrier

LAVA had always sent out a great deal of information to members, mostly as photocopies of supporting documents for Association OGMs and the like, but there was no regular format for exchanges of information from top to bottom, bottom to top or branch to branch. For some time I had felt that an Association quarterly journal could fulfil this role and be useful to all members as well as an attraction to potential new members. However, to start such a venture needed some infrastructure in place, i.e. a worker and a format.

The first step was to write the production of *The Terrier* into the job description of the newly appointed Consultant Secretary. Then I set up a MS Word template, gave it to Tim Foster along with an initial article and a few weeks later the very first edition of *The Terrier* (reproduced herein – see Section 9) appeared – and *The Terrier* has continued ever since.

Asset

Although I had been a member of the Association since Len Humphries' day, I had only been an occasional attendee at conferences. Those few attendances made me realise that there was some excellent material presented at conferences by highly qualified speakers – but that material only rarely got into the hands of the members who were not able to attend the conference. This always struck me as a doubly unfortunate shortcoming of the Association. The speakers who gave their time had only a limited number of members to hear their messages – and only part of the membership benefited from all the work put into a conference. I decided, as an experiment, that I would publish the papers from the Bristol and Pitlochry conferences to all members to see what was involved and how much members might welcome or appreciate the compilations. For the next couple of years many of the talks at subsequent conferences were reproduced in the pages of *The Terrier* until John Arnold's far-sighted move in 1998 in bringing in sponsorship to cover the cost of producing *Asset* as separate stand-alone publications after each conference.

Executive Committee/Council

The old LAVA Executive Committee had a potential membership of 16 but the number present at meetings was often 10 or less. We were meant to be making decisions on the direction of the Association but on many of the matters that arose the relevant people weren't there or weren't represented. The various co-ordinators on specialist matters were not included as of right and, much more importantly, there was no automatic right of inclusion for a representative from each Branch. I felt strongly that if ACES were to be managed effectively then the managing committee:

- had to be fully briefed and advised by the various liaison officers, spokesmen and co-ordinators;
- had to be fully representational with delegates from each and every branch

The result was the change from the old Executive Committee to the new ACES Council. One of the advantages of the wider

forum provided by the Council was that OGMs at Association meetings could be kept to the bare minimum, leaving time for more professional content.

The Annual Meeting

The Annual General Meetings of LAVA were very comfortable social affairs. The morning was easily filled with a long formal meeting which lasted several hours until the guests arrived for pre-lunch drinks. The formal reports of the officers and the handover to the new incumbent took only a certain amount of time but the remainder was filled with verbal and seemingly impromptu reports from the branches, from our representatives on other bodies and from LAVA spokesmen. After lunch we would have an address from the new President and then a speech from the principal guest which might be serious and professional in tone but which might also be more of an after-dinner speech than an after-lunch speech. All of this was fine and made for a very comfortable social occasion but some of us were concerned about the very small professional content. For a few years Ted Hartill, supported by me, took the lead in pressing for a greater professional content – so that members could justify the time and cost involved in attending the AGM. During those years nothing changed – so when I became President I took the chance to repackage the AGM as the Annual Meeting. The formal AGM was to be kept to a minimum, we would have two professional speakers before lunch (including where possible one from the growing number of property academics like Professor Virginia Gibson and Professor Sarah Sayce) and the principal guest would not focus on entertainment to the exclusion of professional issues. By and large the Annual Meeting pattern has continued since then, albeit with the added feature of rotation around England, Scotland and Wales.

Activity not expected by the President

New Secretary

One of the first of the unexpected challenges to face me was the decision of Chris Rowley, the consultant secretary, to retire from that post. This meant that for some months I had to operate as Secretary as well as President. I drew up a job specification for the post and took the opportunity to write in some of the new tasks I was keen to introduce, such as *The Terrier* and the database. We trawled the past members to see who might be prepared to take on the role and received a reasonable number of financial bids. After careful analysis of the bids (using all our CCT experience), the highly experienced Tim Foster emerged as the successful candidate. Little did Tim know how much he would have to expand his skills to cope with databases, websites, conference booking systems etc.

New Treasurer

Don Davis of Nottingham had been Treasurer for the last couple of years but the demands of office life meant that he had not been able to attend the Executive Committee very regularly. Eventually a new treasurer was identified and appointed, Mike Robinson from Oldham. Mike realised that many of the changes I was introducing would increase the expenses of the Association and he therefore argued for

greater limits on expenditure and/or increased subscriptions. My counter argument was that many of the changes would in time lead to increased income, principally by helping us to recruit new members. That difference of approach was never totally resolved between us and I went to the 1995 Annual Meeting unsure whether caution or enterprise would win the day. In the event, Mike Robinson's train was late and by the time he got to the meeting I had already reported on the financial situation and secured agreement to proceed. Such chance is often the steersman of men's affairs.

Welsh Branch

When I was trying to organise my visits to Branches I found it difficult to find who was chairman or secretary of the Welsh Branch. After a little research it turned out that there was no Welsh Branch. The Welsh members of CLAVA had met together informally on occasion but nothing similar had happened with Welsh ALAVES members. Since amalgamation, Welsh members of LAVA had tended to attend the North West Branch if they were in North Wales or the South West Branch if they were in South Wales. At that time the Scottish Branch was very usefully involved with the Scottish Office and COSLA over the forthcoming reorganisation of local government and I could see corresponding benefit in an ACES Welsh Branch. I got in touch with Alun Jones of Caernarfon and John Markwick of Powys, a venue was picked in Llandrindod Wells, a date was picked and invitations were sent out. And so it was that the first ever meeting of the Welsh Branch came about - after the efforts of a Geordie working in Scotland!

Membership records

We are all very used to the rapid march of technology nowadays and it is very easy to forget just how much some things have changed from fifteen years ago. Chris Rowley as Secretary was managing the membership records and, apart from paper files, the main tool was a word processing program which could produce a set of mailing labels for all members. However, there was no easy way to apply database filters, maintain additional information or do any of the other tasks which are necessary in large membership databases. I had already had some experience in setting up relational databases in Tayside so in the gap between secretaries I took the first steps to create an ACES database using Microsoft Access and Tim Foster was eventually trained to use this (although not without many fraught or frantic phone calls between Bramhall and Bridge of Earn). In due course it was the creation of the ACES database which made it possible to start the publication of Per Annum in 1996.

The ACES database is still going strong and has recently had an Events Management System developed so that we can manage bookings for ACES conferences and other events.

Colin Bradford FRICS MIMgt
Tayside Regional Council

1995/96 **- Derek Rowell**

When I was honoured to have the presidency of the newly named Association of Chief Estates Surveyors bestowed on me in 1995 I expected an interesting year, particularly as my wife, Margaret, was eight months pregnant at the time. What I didn't expect was that within three weeks of the Annual Meeting I would be stood in Great Ormond Street Hospital sporting a lead-lined apron hoping my newly born son, Leo, would come back to life after an exploratory x-ray investigation caused his heart to stop. As I stood there the seconds seemed like minutes and I started to wonder how I could explain my failure to "bring him back home" to Margaret who was still recovering from a caesarean in Bedford. Well, it all turned out okay and after spending a week sleeping by his side in that wonderful hospital, Leo was discharged in time for Christmas - what a relief!

So after a tricky start and with the support of Tim Foster and Colin Bradford, I got back in the saddle again in the New Year. My theme for the year was "Managing to Find the Market" and after my challenging address at our last Annual Meeting at Lords, I was unexpectedly invited by the RICS President, Simon Pott, to join the Commercial Property Policy Panel. It was a treat to get involved in commercial policies of the day and through this position as well as my co-ordinating role for the



Derek Rowell

DTLR/ACES Working Party, I was invited to join a small group to lobby the minister, Nick Raynsford about the benefits of REITs in the UK property market. The political response at the time was not unexpected, but now that they are part of the system, I feel vindicated for our approach and now realise that the problem was we were just ten years ahead of our time.

Early in my year I also took up the concerns raised by John Shaw at Colin's superb conference in Pitlochry about the legal ability of Councils to enter into Joint Ventures as a creative way of partnering with the private sector. This involved a visit to the Scottish Branch so that John and I could collaborate on a paper to the DTLR/ACES later in the year. It was a pleasure to meet such a cordial bunch, but what I didn't expect was to find six of the very distinguished members all retiring at the same time due to reorganisations. It was an honour to wish them well, despite my worries at the loss of such talent from local government. Little did I know that they were also talented accordion players, drummers and singers? What an unexpected night of celebration! The paper from this sober collaboration proved interesting to senior civil servants and I have always hoped that our contribution supported the wider powers granted in the 2000 Act and the range of companies now used in regeneration.

During my visits to the branches I had the good fortune to visit the East of England. The meeting was hosted by Betty Albon at the beautiful venue in Bury St Edmunds. Lulled into a false sense of security that the Branch had already invited a speaker I trundled over straight from the office. True to form, Betty introduced me by explaining that they had tried to book a speaker, but he was going to charge £300 and as she knew I "could talk a bit" I was the alternative! Whilst this was an unexpected pleasure, to say the least, I focused on widening the role and responsibility of property surveyors and managed to get away with it. Just!

As all Presidents do, I arranged a bit of a do known as the Annual Presidential Conference in Bedford. As part of the arrangements I had tried for months to entice some live fire jugglers we used at the River Festival to fill a slot at the conference dinner entitled "a bit of light entertainment". Let down at the last minute, I entrusted a local street entertainer to get the brave from each table to get up and juggle. I will never forget the sight of Tim juggling scarves or Paul Orchard-Lisle being outdone by local authority valuers. "It's all in the wrist action," was the instruction, regrettably to no avail. An unexpected night of mayhem and golden memories, as everyone wanted to have a go.

For a 40 year old surveyor from a small borough council who had a lot to juggle throughout a busy year, my handover of the presidency at the first AGM in the Guildhall to Ted Hartill came as a relief. The feelings of pride and honour in serving the Association were not unexpected, but the pleasures along the way were and for that I will always be grateful. It also gave me the confidence to turn again to London – but then that's another story.

Derek Rowell BSc ARICS MILAM
Bedford Borough Council

1996/97 - Ted Hartill

Having spent the first twenty one years of my career in the private sector it was a surprise and shock to be unexpectedly appointed as City Surveyor to the City of London in 1985. Life at Guildhall was pretty demanding. The "Big Bang" had occurred and the Lord Mayor, City of London Corporation and the City business community had just become involved in a fight to the death for world supremacy of the banking, financial, business and marine services industries. Property formed a huge proportion of the Corporation's capital asset base and through the collection of rent produced much of the income used to provide facilities and services. In this cut-throat environment colleagues and I needed all the help we could get!

From the very beginning the friendship and support offered not only by my new colleagues at Guildhall but by other chief officers and staff throughout the local government empire was superb and greatly appreciated. The new boy was approached with great tact and courtesy to become a Member of LAVA. This kind invitation was accepted with alacrity and my subsequent attendance at events made me increasingly aware of the size and complexity of the operation surrounding the public ownership of assets throughout the United Kingdom.

At that time the great thing about LAVA was the solid support for the organisation from well educated, well trained,



experienced and able professionals who were well aware of the dramatic changes taking place in society and willing to respond quickly and positively. This gave the organisation an unusual power base and influence throughout the United Kingdom. Subsequent reform and change reinforced this very heavily which is why ACES is so well known and respected today. We dealt successfully with many different types of issue all of which helped to cement the bonds of friendship and co-operation and take our messages to a wider and wider audience.

We changed the name. We widened the membership. We extended the dialogue with other organisations representing staff in local government. We reinforced contact with Government. We recognised the importance of really good PR and started to issue a number of new publications. We brought in money from advertising. This gives a flavour of the momentum achieved year on year.

Many people were involved in this process over a long period of time and it is difficult to decide who had the most influence. In my judgement it would be wrong not to mention Tim Foster, our Honorary Secretary and subsequently Consultant Secretary, who has been the fulcrum of the administrative operation for so long. Mention should also be made of Colin Bradford for his willingness to develop better and better publications for ACES which are widely disseminated and read.

It was my privilege to be President of ACES in 1996/1997. The experience was interesting, enjoyable and rewarding particularly as I was working with an ACES Council which was intent on achieving specific and clear objectives. It was a great team.

In the following years I was fortunate to be able to embrace many other new opportunities to help the profession particularly in the field of education but this meant that time was limited and I was forced to reduce my involvement with ACES. On reflection that is probably a good thing. Once one has been President it is important to relinquish the reigns of power and hand the baton to others.

Today I am semi-retired but still follow your activities with great interest. I wish you future good fortune

Ted Hartill BSc FRICS FRSA
Corporation of London

1997/98 - John Arnold

My presidential year ran from 1997 to 1998 and I was credited by the Secretary (Tim Foster at the time) of ACES with starting the concept of sponsorship from commercial organisations to support the conference and also the work of the Association. This type of sponsorship continues. During the year I was welcomed at all the branches that I was able to visit and greatly enjoyed these occasions. I was particularly warmly welcomed by the Scottish Branch at Kilmarnock football stadium and I recall having a budgie and various other pets in the car, much to colleagues' amusement although the reason for these complicated domestic arrangements is lost in the mists of time.

The conference held in Oxford in September 1998 was a great success and was noted particularly for the return of the black tie dinner at presidential conferences. At the time of my year of office a new labour government was finding its feet and the membership was coming to terms with a whole new concept and vocabulary, best value, benchmarking etc. However at that stage the dreaded CCT was still with us and public private partnerships were under way. My conference was entitled 'Finding the Money' and I guess that issue has been ongoing



John Arnold

ever since and will get worse with the economic situation as it is, particularly with a tight election looming.

The evening of the dinner at the Presidential conference was held in the historic dining hall of Exeter college and the setting was the reason that it seemed to me to be right to have the occasion as black tie. It was just as well that there were numerous dinner suit hire shops in Oxford for all those members that hadn't read the conference details before they left home. We were treated to an after-dinner speech by Colin Dexter who wrote the Morse detective novels set in Oxford. The evening was also very notable personally in that the ruling group at the Council decided in a meeting that evening on a reorganisation of Council Departments that led to the opportunity for me to take the 'early bath' although I did not leave the council until a year later. The planned reorganisation involved me taking on a new larger department without property, a direction in which I didn't want to go.

I have to say that I am grateful to the Council for the opportunity to take early retirement. The reason for that is we bought a croft overlooking Loch Morar on the west coast of Scotland. So I now spend time looking after sheep, chickens and ducks and all that that entails. Property development has not been lost to me altogether as we have renovated a barn for agricultural use, converted an old byre to living accommodation and a shop and have planning consent for a dwelling on the land for the future. I have also helped out a local Church with some property issues. I started a second career as a photographer and picture framer and we opened a craft shop. You can see some of my work at www.lochmorarcrafts.co.uk.

John Arnold FRICS
Oxford City Council

1998/99 - Charles Coats

It's now nine years since the presidential chain of office hung round my neck, but the memories are still vivid, suitably aided by a flick through the yellowing pages of long dormant files.

My theme for the year was: "Maintaining the Property Profile" with three accompanying key issues: securing best value in property management, monitoring the introduction of asset management planning (whatever happened to that!), and tackling rural deprivation. Simon Kolesar, RICS Senior Vice-President, was the guest speaker at the Guildhall lunch following the AGM and spoke about forging closer links between the Institution and the Association. The occasion provided me with the opportunity to make the first ACES Award for Excellence to Julian Hepburn, Principal Land Agent with Norfolk County Council, for his work in the development

of the Fenland and Rural Norfolk Alternative Crops Technology (FACT).

The spring conference, organised by the Scottish Branch, took place at the Marine Highland Hotel, Troon, Ayrshire, coordinated locally by one Malcolm MacAskill (obviously the experience spurred him on to higher things!).

Unfortunately this proved the year of the expanding waistline from which I am still trying to recover. Attendance at glittering dinners hosted by august bodies such as ISVA and the British Council for Offices, to name but two, were all in a day's work – well someone had to do it!

During the year we contributed to the RICS "Agenda for Change" debate, culminating in a deputation meeting Louis Armstrong, Chief Executive, in his penthouse suite overlooking Parliament Square. Looking back, I'm not sure it did us a great deal of good, but at least we tried. A DETR major research project was launched: "Measuring Performance in the Management of Local Authority Property", contributions to which formed a major part of our work throughout the year and a constant topic of discussion at Council meetings.

I am sure all other Presidents would echo my sentiments about the pleasure derived from meeting the membership, seeing at first hand the sheer variety of issues with which the Association gets involved and, of course, attending Branch meetings. Regrettably, diary clashes prevented my attendance at Heart of England and North East Branch meetings, but I did get to



Charles Coats

chair the Association's Mock Lands Tribunal Seminar held in the Council Chamber of Durham County Council, so perhaps that should count as a partial visit.

The highlight of the year, for me at least, was the Presidential Conference in July, held at the Cheltenham Park Hotel, Cheltenham. So great was the attendance that I had to book overspill rooms at two nearby hostelrys. The event had two themes: "This Green and Pleasant Land?" on the Thursday. Speakers included Jeremy Worth, Head of Planning at the Countryside Agency; Stephen Wright, Director of the Gloucestershire Rural Community Council; and Tim Key, a past President of the RICS Rural Practice Division. The Friday morning session saw a return to more familiar territory with a theme of: "Property Performance" with presentations from Stephen Clark; Keith Jones; Christopher Hedley, Head of the Occupiers Databank, Helen Oxtoby, Author of the Audit Commission's National Value for Money Study, Local Authority Property Management; and Roger Messenger, partner with Wilks Head and Eve, who spoke on rating issues. The presidential lectern also saw the light of day for the first time being presented to the President by Colin Bradford at the evening dinner. The social itinerary included visits to Gloucester Docks, a coach tour of the Cotswolds and a tour around Sudeley Castle, Winchcombe.

All too soon the year was over, but not before presentation at the annual dinner of the Association's third Fellowship award to Martin Leigh-Pollitt, Chief Estates Surveyor at the DETR and a loyal friend to the Association over many years.

Happy memories, ably abetted and supported by my Senior and Junior Vice-Presidents, John Morris and Alun Jones, not forgetting, of course, the ever present Tim Foster.

Charles Coats BSc FRICS
Gloucestershire County Council

1999/00 - John Morris

The road to the ACES presidency began for me through being propositioned in a pub in Bloomsbury. As it happens this was in 1997, during Ted Hartill's presidential conference and the overture was strictly for business, not pleasure - or so I thought at the time. I later discovered just how pleasurable and rewarding the Presidential year of office can be.

Later in 1997 the presidency passed from Ted to John Arnold. The Nolan Committee on Standards in Public Life had recently reported its findings and Lord Tope, Leader of the London

Borough of Sutton (the council I worked for) was a member of that Committee. Lord Tope kindly agreed to speak on the subject at the ACES AGM which saw the transition of presidential responsibilities from Ted to John. Lord Tope was obviously impressed by the Association during his visit and was very supportive of my becoming President in due course.

The AGM at which I was installed took place on 5 November 1999 which happily meant that my term of office coincided with the celebrations for the new millennium. Principal Guest at the Annual Lunch was Dr Wendy Thomson, then Director of Inspection at the Audit Commission. I suppose that it must have been a token of the friendliness and good humour of our members to have one come up to me whilst I was talking to Dr Thomson and say "It's good to see an old drinking companion being elected as president of the Association". Maybe that's why it took two attempts to obtain a "Good" assessment for my council's Asset Management Plan.

At the Lunch I had the happy task of thanking the City Corporation for their hospitality in providing accommodation for ACES meetings at the Guildhall since 1996. In recognition I presented the Chief Commoner of the City Corporation with one of our magnificent ACES wall plaques.

I was also delighted to award the ACES Prize for Excellence to Barry Austin of Cornwall County Council who was lead officer for a successful Public Finance Initiative to replace 11 fire stations, manage the remaining 20 and to improve 20% of the schools in the County. Barry was an excellent example of how public sector property professionals can make a massive difference to our communities.

My chosen theme for my year in office was "Improvement and Sustainability". The improvement aspect was adopted because:

- the concept of Best Value had just been embodied in the Local Government Act 1999,
- the Audit Committee had embarked on their study which was to produce the "Hot Property" report, and
- the Department for Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) was developing performance indicators for property management.

I chose to highlight sustainability because of the growing concerns about environmental issues and particularly climate change. This was to be the theme of my Presidential Conference in September 2000.

I am yet to meet a former President of ACES who has not enjoyed visits to the various ACES branches. I am also absolutely convinced by feedback that branch members appreciate and value a visit from their President. It is my only regret during my presidential year that I was unable to visit two of our branches. However, two branches could not confirm dates of their meetings in time for me to fit them into a congested diary (I was simultaneously President of the Federation of Property Societies, which didn't help in this respect).

During branch visits I found out about much good work being carried out locally. Ground-breaking stuff in some cases. It remains a concern of mine that not all of this gets to be shared across the whole Association and I hope the ACES website, recently revamped, will be a valuable tool in remedying this.

The Spring Meeting 2000 was hosted by Eastern Branch in Bury St Edmunds. ACES spring meetings normally clash with another commitment. Since about 1982 I had been meeting with a group of mainly public sector surveyors in the Lake District in mid May for a long weekend on the fells, travelling up Thursday night. As a compromise this year I planned to travel up Friday afternoon and join the rest of the gang (collectively known amongst ourselves as the Cragrats) that evening.

On the Friday morning of this meeting I was pleased to award a Fellowship of the Association to Martin Leigh-Pollitt, head of the property and land division at DETR who had been a supportive voice and receptive listener within the Civil Service for many years. Martin duly rewarded us with a long presentation on the coming impact of IT on working practices. At the coffee break, which had been delayed somewhat, Bert Marshall requested that he chair the remaining sessions, which then proceeded to overrun by at least as much again.

So it was that I got away for the journey north a bit late and without changing out of my suit. By the time I arrived at Cragrat Central, a climbing hut outside Grasmere, the others had descended from the hills and had the chance to slake their thirst. As I joined this merry crew in their fleeces, walking trousers and boots the cry went up "Where have you been, the twit of the year show?" At which point I took the Presidential Chain of Office out of the pocket into which I had stashed it, held it proudly aloft and said "Wherever I've been, look, I got first prize!"

During my visit to the North West Branch I noted that including myself, there were four Cragrats present.

It being the Millennium I canvassed opinion where to hold my Presidential Conference in September 2000, either Sutton, South London, where I worked or at Greenwich. The latter was the firm favourite. One of our past members, Ralph Luck, at that time English Partnerships' Development Director for the Greenwich Peninsula had agreed to be one of my speakers. Ralph kindly offered free entry to the Millennium Dome celebrations on the Friday afternoon. This sealed it.

All was organised around my Property and Sustainability theme, for 14 and 15 September. Sylvia Pickering, my PA, who sadly has since passed away, seemed to especially enjoy making the arrangements. She was simply tremendous. When I arrived nice and early on the Thursday morning at the Clarendon Hotel, Blackheath, it was to find that Sylvia had brought along her husband Wally as an additional pair of hands. It was also good to see 1978 President of ALAVES Brian White, formerly of LB Lewisham, who showed me the papers for his Presidential Conference, also held in the Clarendon Hotel.

However what was not so good was that fuel delivery workers had decided to strike that week and cause what became known

as the Fuel Crisis. Train operators were telling candidates that they could probably get them to London but would not guarantee getting them back home again on Friday night. Across the country petrol filling stations were closed and those that were open had queues of vehicles snaking down the road outside. Consequently a number of candidates pulled out at the last minute and some sought a refund of the conference fee. Despite this we had a respectable turn-out and managed to make a very small profit even without the sponsorship levels we have come to experience more recently.

The other spot of ill-luck at the conference was that one of my speakers had diarised the event wrongly despite the welter of information provided. Fortunately other speakers were flexible and made some amendments to their sessions to cover.

The professional content covered

- Sustainability and its impact on value
- Greening industrial estates
- The new contaminated land regime
- The Greenwich Peninsula - planning for remediation and regeneration
- The Millennium village - design for a sustainable lifestyle, and
- Sustainable solutions for commercial buildings.



The social agenda benefited from the location in Greenwich, with visits to the Cutty Sark, the Old Naval College and the Royal Observatory.

On the Thursday night the Presidential dinner was held in the historic Trafalgar Tavern on the Thames waterfront at Greenwich. This is about a mile or so from the Clarendon Hotel. However it took the coach ages to manoeuvre through the gridlock caused by vehicles queuing for fuel and blocking the roads. Once we reached the Trafalgar all went smoothly.

The after dinner music was provided by a friend of mine, John Curtiss, together with Don Partridge and Mark Yeats, all from Seaford, East Sussex where I live. Folk may recall Don's name. He had a Number 4 hit in the Top Ten with "Rosie" and a Number 2 with "Breakfast on Pluto". So we had a top recording star at an ACES conference. I wonder when that will happen again.

My year in office was certainly busy, varied and interesting. I found that the hard work, deadlines and concern that all goes well soon fade from the memory. What remains however is the pleasure it brought me, through personal contacts made, the kindness of others, the challenges and sheer fun of much of it.

It would be impossible to thank everyone who helped make my year as ACES President a success and so enjoyable. I would however wish to say a big thank you to all the officers of the Association for their support, companionship and good humour. Also I would like to express my sincere thanks to Sylvia and Wally Pickering who happily went that extra mile. Last but not least my wife Sue for support throughout, and for having to re-type all the place settings between the close of the Thursday session and the departure of the coach for the Trafalgar Tavern, thanks to the fuel crisis.

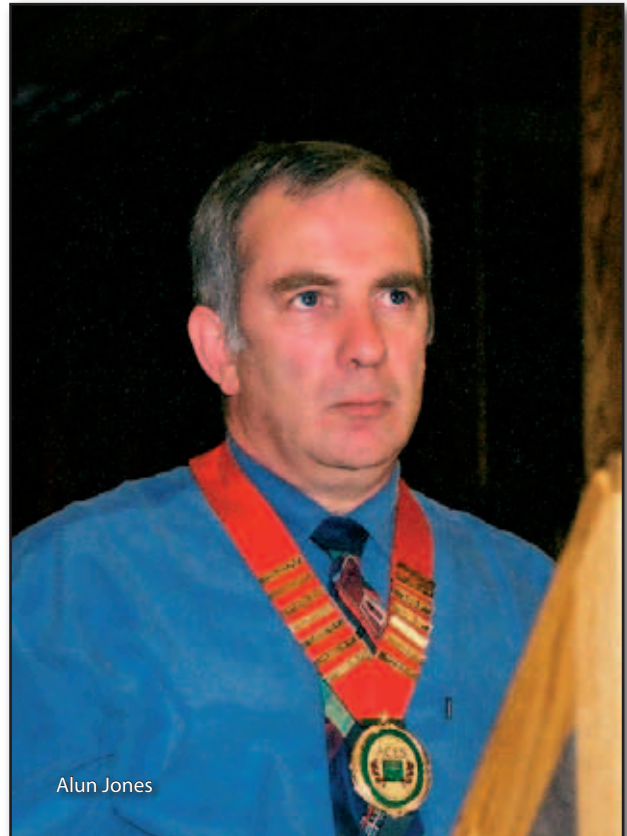
John Morris BSc FRICS
London Borough of Sutton

2000/01 - Alun Jones

Pitlochry (Extract from *The Terrier* - Summer 2001)

All the signs looked promising from the very start as I was handed a free car park ticket, without explanation, at Bangor station at the start of the scheduled eight hour trek to Pitlochry in Perthshire to attend the Scottish Branch meeting scheduled for 10:30 on Friday 18 May.

The long first leg of the journey to Edinburgh just flew by after I stuck up a conversation with an Irish mature student



of marine engineering who was on his way back to University in Scotland after taking a short break to attend the previous evening's UEFA Cup Final in Germany from which his heroes in red (and mine) from Liverpool Football Club emerged worthy winners.

As I then waited for my connection in Waverley Station, my mobile phone rang with Colin Bradford on the line keen to escort and accompany me by car on the last leg of my journey north to his old stomping ground with the former Tayside Regional Council.

Our accommodation for the night had been selected with Colin's customary care and we booked into the splendid Moulin Inn and settled down to a convivial evening of banter in the bar in front of an enormous log fire. Now, the Moulin Inn is the only hotel I've ever heard of that can boast to brew four beers on the premises ranging from the "smooth and easy" right through to the proverbial firewater. As ambassadors of the Association I can assure all colleagues that we gave a good account of ourselves as we progressed to sample all available options before retiring to prepare for business the following morning.

Up early on the Friday to be greeted by a glorious spring morning in the Highlands, I was ushered to the car immediately after breakfast "to see a little gem from amongst the area's many attractions before the start of the Branch meeting" said Colin. The "little gem" turned out to be Edradour, the smallest distillery in Scotland, where the previous night suddenly caught up with me and I sheepishly declined the wee dram enthusiastically thrust into my hand at 09.00 in the morning. Mr Bradford had one last surprise in store when he invited

me to pose for a photograph with my head inclined inside an open and fermenting vat of whisky which, when I sniffed at his insistence, nearly knocked me out!

With no lasting damage done, it was time to get down to business and wind our way along the glen to the Fishers' Hotel in scenic Pitlochry. There, my celtic cousins under the able chairmanship of David Francis made me feel immediately at home and after the usual preliminaries we sat down for the remainder of the morning to concentrate on the many varied and topical items that appeared on the agenda. With delegates present from as far afield as the Borders on the one hand and Shetland on the other, I could not fail to be impressed by the strength, commitment and professionalism of the Branch.



After a convivial lunch and some excellent hospitality from the Branch we had a "photo-opportunity" in the hotel garden, by which time the effects of the visit were taking their toll on my delicate constitution. I could have sworn I started to see double... but perhaps it was just those whisky fumes!

Eventually it was time to pick up my bags and head back to Wales and I wouldn't put it past him if it was Colin Bradford who somehow, just short of divine intervention, arranged for me to sit on the train south opposite a young Aberdeen University student returning home to Gloucester who, when I asked for his chosen specialism, replied "Brewing and Distilling" – déjà vu?

Caernarfon

I had the honour of welcoming ACES colleagues to Caernarfon for the 2001 Presidential Conference held on 20th-21st September and I now look back on the event with some proud memories though I suspect, like all other Presidents, I was too busy and involved during those two days to really relish the occasion.



Alun Jones and the Scottish Branch - Was the President seeing double by this time?

My conference theme was "Principles into Practice" and my objective was to arm delegates with practical and useful tools to take away which were in tune with the then latest Government initiative of Best Value which was looming large on everyone's radar at the time.

The weather stayed fine (as it always does in Gwynedd !!) which played its part in enhancing the enjoyment of the social programme which included visits to Portmeirion and Porthmadog and a coach trip around the Isle of Anglesey.

Colleagues will perhaps recall my passion for choral music and at the formal dinner on the Thursday evening I wielded presidential privilege and arranged, for the first and only time in ACES history, for entertainment to be provided by a male



voice choir who if my memory serves me right performed in front of an enthusiastic audience who even joined in the rendition of "Bring Him Home" from Les Miserables!

Alun Jones FRICS
Gwynedd Council

2001/02 - Jill Bungay

I was very proud to be the first woman President of ACES and had a wonderful year. My first Branch visit was to my own North East Branch where the meeting was held at the Stadium of Light (Sunderland FC's ground) on a bitterly cold November day so I was grateful to receive my first Presidential gift - a Sunderland supporter's scarf (as modelled in the photo).



My main recollections during the year were that it was during my presidency that the membership rules of the

Association were changed to admit public sector members from organisations other than local authorities. During that year, ACES really started building bridges with the RICS and I believe my Presidential Conference was one of the first, if not the first, which the great and the good of the RICS attended, in the shape of Graham Chase who at that time was Chair of the Commercial Faculty and went on to become RICS President (see what association with ACES can do!)

I have fond memories of my conference, especially the guest appearance of David Blunkett MP, who at that time was Home Secretary but still found time to call in at our Conference dinner.



Editor's Note

The paragraphs above are a typically modest contribution from Jill Bungay. The following paragraphs (taken from the Summer 2002 edition of The Terrier) give a much fuller impression of the vast amount of work undertaken by Jill during her presidential year.

President's Diary - Summer 2002

"With hindsight, Spring was a quiet time! Once Easter was over, activity seemed to start in earnest. I had been asked by Sheffield Hallam University whether I fancied doing any lecturing, and I had said "Yes". That much was OK, as I had said I could not make any regular commitment, in view of the day job, but that I would do an occasional guest lecture on "Business Property Management". However, I was then asked if I would mark some final year theses on the issue of "The property profession increasingly needs to understand and respond to change. Discuss this in relation to property management". In view of the theme of my presidential year (All Change) I felt I should not refuse. So I had 90plus 2,500 word essays to read, mark and give constructive feedback on, and two weeks to do it in! Nevertheless, as delegates to the Worcester Spring Conference subsequently found out, one essay did give me one of my best lines ever in "Property managers should never rest on their morals". As if we would!

London - 1

Mid-April saw the first of many trips to London, on the Tuesday for lunch at Great George Street, together with Andrew Day and Malcolm MacAskill, as guest of the Director of the RICS Commercial Property Faculty, who was keen to discuss with us the opportunities for closer working. One of the outcomes of that meeting is that Graham Chase, the Chair of the Faculty, is coming to speak at my Presidential Conference. Later that afternoon found me in Eland House (home of DTLR) for a meeting with Martin Leigh-Pollitt (one of the ACES Fellows) and Paul Sanderson of the VOA about

liaison between them and ACES in the proposed "Right First Time" approach to rating revaluations. Jim Olford, our trusty ACES rating rep, will be keeping you up to date on progress on this. The next day was ACES Council, and it was gratifying to see several new faces there, including that of my own NE Branch Chairman, Austin Brown.

Stirling

The following week found me up in Scotland (sunny Stirling) giving a talk at an IPF seminar on asset management planning. Scottish authorities do not have to prepare AMPs in the way that we English authorities do, but IPF advice, with which I concur, is that they ought to be doing it even if it is not obligatory as it is good estate management. It was nice to see our ACES member from Edinburgh, David Cownie, showing that his authority is already getting in on the act.

Worcester

Early May was of course the ACES Spring Conference, which was hugely enjoyable, as they always are. I was torn between listening to the speakers and trying to observe what it needs to run a successful conference, since it is my turn next. More time needed for coffee breaks was one thing I learned! I stayed on after the conference for my first branch visit to the Counties Branch meeting. I had to apologise to Brian Reeve-Fowkes afterwards for my lack of contribution to the debate as I knew insufficient about the technical issues under discussion. However it was clear that they were matters near and dear to the hearts of our Counties members.

Newtown St Boswells

Mid-May saw me in Scotland again, this time for the Scottish Branch meeting at Newtown St Boswells. This was very convenient for me, as most of my relatives live up in the Scottish borders, so I was able to stay the night with them, and drive to NStB in the morning. It was really nice to see both old friends and new at the meeting, at which there was a very interesting presentation by officers from the VOA. This was followed up by a delightful lunch at a local hotel, and then a cross-country drive home. I have tried to persuade the Scottish Branch to encourage Malcolm MacAskill to wear the kilt at his inauguration at the Guildhall: that should pull the crowds in. Or perhaps not?

London - 2

The following week saw me in London again doing another IPF seminar, this time on area asset management. It seemed to be quite successful, if only for teaching Ian Doolan where Sheffield actually is so he can come to the Presidential Conference without getting lost now.

Sheffield - 2

At the beginning of June I had a new experience; doing a newspaper review live on BBC Radio Sheffield! When I had been there a couple of months earlier doing an interview about the great Sheffield auction, I had unwisely said I fancied having a go at the newspaper review for which they have guest reviewers every day. I was introduced as the President of ACES, and actually quite enjoyed the experience. It must have been OK because I have been asked back later this month!



St Helens

June has seen me doing quite a bit of travelling. It started with a follow-up to the meeting with the RICS Commercial Property Faculty. They have decided to promote a Commercial Property Management Award next year and I was invited to represent the public sector on the award steering group. There's also to be a public sector award category. Watch this space! The same week I visited the North West Branch at their meeting in St Helens. I shall gloss over the journey there; suffice it to say that I did not get the same journey times/route advice twice, and none of it proved to be right. I ended up being given a lift into St. Helens by a friendly passer-by, despite the fact that my mother told me never to accept lifts from strangers.

It was a very enjoyable meeting, particularly so because there was a good turnout of both past and new members there. After lunch we had a most interesting visit to the Pilkington Glass Factory, and I was spared the rigours of an arduous journey home by our trusty secretary who gave me a lift to Stockport station, from where it was just a 40 minute train journey home.

Harrogate

Mid June was another NE Branch meeting, this time in Harrogate. With a bit of swift last-minute rescheduling, we managed, via my colleagues at regional HQ, to arrange for a visit by Peter Faulkner, the (then) President of the RICS, who was given a formal reception by the Lord Mayor and then joined us for lunch. He made a point of talking to everyone over lunch, and then, much to the consternation of the Regional Board administrator who was trying to keep him on

schedule for his next appointment, he stayed and gave us a brief talk about the RICS and its public sector members.

London - 3

The end of June has been fairly hectic. It started with the launch at Great George Street of the RICS/Reading University report "Whose property is it anyway?" which those of you who were at Worcester will have heard Ginny Gibson preview. The launch was well attended by many ACES members as well as representatives from the ODPM.

Just to show there is no favouritism, I had reluctantly accepted an invitation to the IRRV President's reception that evening, held on the HMS Belfast. It was a glorious summer evening, and an excellent networking event, well-attended by representatives of both the RICS, the ODPM and the VOA. It's a tough job being President, but somebody has to do it!

Yorkshire

And finally that week, I was asked to step into the breach at the RICS Yorkshire Property Conference when, at a few days' notice, their keynote speaker dropped out. Since regional HQ had pulled a few strings to get the President to our ACES meeting, I could hardly say no, but I did have to rewrite David's speech somewhat. Well, I've never been Boots' property adviser so some of his comments wouldn't have sounded right coming from me. It seemed to go down all right however, despite a number of NE Branch members of ACES heckling from the front rows of the audience!

The next couple of months will see another two branch visits and final preparations for the Presidential Conference. See you all in Sheffield!"

Jill Bungay BSc MRICS MIMgt
Sheffield Council

2002/03 - Malcolm MacAskill

I became President of ACES in November 2002. Normally you get a couple of years' lead-in time to become accustomed to the heady atmosphere of working with the giants in the property profession. Not me. Six months into my stint in 2001 as Junior Vice-President, the Senior Vice-President, Andrew Day, announced he was leaving the good ship "Local Authority" and was swimming with the sharks of private practice. I therefore had six months as Senior Vice-President before getting a hug and kiss from the outgoing President. Luckily for me it was Jill Bungay. (Not so lucky for her!)

It was an exciting time for ACES. After years in the wilderness, Jill had forged strong contacts with the RICS and IRRV. I had to keep the momentum going. I was fortunate that the RICS President was Nick Brookes, who was pushing through changes in the RICS and was eager to ensure that the public sector was properly represented. He also made a charming IT assistant at my presidential conference in Troon in 2003. The sight of him peering backwards underneath his arm, while trying to fix a PowerPoint presentation for another speaker, was somewhat amusing. While there is still some friction with the RICS, we do work more closely with them and with central government in moulding how councils use their assets to benefit the communities they serve.



The President of the IRRV was Tom Dixon, who frankly is almost as mad as me. I'm glad that ACES don't expect their incoming president to undertake a "forfeit". The IRRV does and Tom's was a cracker. He had to have lunch with Paul Sanderson of the DV's office while dressed in drag. (Oh, I don't know though, maybe we are missing an opportunity!)

The comment that you will see repeated in a large number of the recollections of ACES Presidents is the sense of family. I have found ACES members and partners welcoming from my first appearance at a conference in Oxford in 1998. I believe that comes from the strong support many of our members get from their partners who attend the conferences. But that flows from the fact that ACES as an organisation believes in creating

a family atmosphere by encouraging partner attendance with a series of exciting, entertaining, informative and picturesque social itineraries. Many is the time I have envied my wife, Susan, visiting places that the delegates don't see. In fact, in many cases they are given privileged access to properties which are not open to the public. Susan and I have made many close friendships during my time in ACES.

Another aspect, which will be echoed by others, is the opportunity to visit the branch meetings. Not only do you get to visit places you may never otherwise visit, you get the opportunity to meet many of the members who don't get the chance to attend conference. Agendas may follow very similar lines but you realise very quickly how hard working the branch officers and members are throughout the country.

A note to members:

- Attend the branch meetings. It is a great chance to network, share experiences and share good practice.
- Attend the ACES conferences. They are excellent value for money and cover the major issues affecting the local authority surveyor. They also just happen to be very good fun.

In closing, I was extremely proud to have been elected as President. ACES has earned its place in the property profession and I believe will continue to go from strength to strength, backed by the support of the members.

Malcolm MacAskill BSc FRICS
South Ayrshire Council



Malcolm MacAskill

2003/04 - Malcolm Dawes

It is Thursday the 16th September 2004 at West Ham Football Club grounds in the Hotel and Conference Centre. I am exhausted; is my conference going well? I hope people are enjoying it.

For the past few months Barbara, my PA, and her assistant, Daphne, have spent long hours in organising this conference as well as continuing their "day jobs", this being the climax of my ACES Presidential year, and I must admit the most exhausting part.

The conference seems to have started well and everything is in place for the formal dinner that evening. Keith Jewsbury's subsequent report in *The Terrier* recorded that; *"Immediately before dinner the Godwin Junior School choir entertained*



delegates to a medley of songs including a newly composed Olympic song. I must say that the enthusiasm of the children was a delight to watch. The after-dinner speaker was John Ringwood who has had a varied career in and around the Royal Docks site and he entertained us with tales of life in the East End".

Tomorrow's programme continues the theme of Stratford, its development, transport links, and its potential as allocation for the 2012 Olympics which, at that time, had not been decided. That afternoon's final tour to see the potential Olympic site would include a trip to the roof of a 22 storey block upon which, in time, my team would in one complicated crane lift, place a large portacabin which many politicians and other dignitaries would visit including Her Majesty.

The end of my year would be in two months' time at the Guildhall where I would hand over to the next President. The year had not been all plain sailing; business had to be done and, despite many attempts, one thing I was not able to do was to sort out a Treasurer (fortunately since resolved). I do feel however that I was able to continue Malcolm MacAskill's progress in raising the profile by capturing the attention of the press, in particular but not only, in the form of the Editor of "Property Week". I was also able to move the Association forward by bringing Phase 2 of the ACES website.

Now wind back some two years or so to circa 2002/3... I was speaking to Malcolm MacAskill, at the time Junior Vice-President, about some ACES matters and we were discussing pleasure at his Presidency coming up in 2004 and what it would be like, when we suddenly heard that the forthcoming President (the then current Senior Vice-President) was to leave local government and therefore could not continue. The result of this was that Malcolm was catapulted forward by one year and I was asked, and agreed, to take on the role of Junior Vice-President which very shortly afterwards was moved forward to Senior Vice-President when Malcolm became President.

These thoughts, coupled with the sad death of Andrew Day around the same time, filled me with mixed feelings.

Malcolm MacAskill's year was a hard act to follow. His theme was to put into place processes for raising the profile and name of ACES, in which he was very successful.

The handover to me was in the splendid and awe inspiring environment of the civic premises in Edinburgh. My year, it seemed, started slowly but soon gathered pace when the dates of the ACES branch meetings and other organisational dates became settled. It was obvious I was going to be, and duly was very busy, dashing around the country. I was pleased that I visited all branches and was given excellent hospitality and made very welcome wherever I went. I began to understand what a wide area of the property profession that we in ACES cover. From major development deals involving tens of millions of pounds, to equally important, but vastly different, property transactions and related issues, covering such matters as milk yields, crop rotation, and EEC farm subsidies. It also made me feel very honoured and proud to have been given the opportunity to be President of such an august body.

It was not all work I must admit and I remember a few evening of extended "meetings" with some simple refreshment one in particular that comes to mind was with the Scottish branch where we had a couple of nips and a discussion about a pole that seemed rather unnecessarily to be supporting the ceiling of the central dance area.

The North West branch worked very hard to produce a magnificent spring conference in Windermere where excellent weather, excellent hotel facilities and conference programme, came together to make a truly eventful few days. An experience, as was the whole year, one I shall remember many for years.

Malcolm Dawes FRICS
London Borough of Newham

2004/05 - Richard Allen

My inauguration took place in the City of London Guildhall on 5th November 2004, celebrated in the evening by the whole nation holding a fireworks display!

My chosen theme for the year was 'Profile and Pride'. I adopted the theme because the profile and influence of chief estates surveyors had declined and the role had changed since I joined local government in 1973. Estate management was no longer a core service in most authorities as had clearly been identified by the Hot Property: getting the best from

local authority assets (Audit Commission, 2000) report. But central government's requirement for all local authorities to produce 'asset management plans' identified a new strategic role for property professionals, that of dynamically managing property as a resource that can add value and be used as a change vehicle to support local authority service delivery.

The aim of my theme was, therefore, to encourage ACES members to raise their profile and rise to this challenge, to use the property resource in their authorities to help to influence and shape their communities, thus leaving a legacy for their community of which they could be proud.

The guest speaker at my inauguration was David Edwards, the new Chief Surveyor and Head of Land and Property at then Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. He also complemented my own address by explaining that his role was to develop and promote the sustainable development agenda and raise the profile of property so that it could inform government policy.

One way that I was able to promote my theme was through being invited to become an occasional columnist for Property Week. Through my column I was able to comment on topical public sector property issues, which I continued to do until my retirement in 2008. The feature of my page was that it was supported by a full-length photo of me. Great for raising my own personal profile and ego!

During my term of office I visited every branch, with the exception only of the South West. These visits demonstrated the diversity of the branches from which I concluded that there was a real need for branches to exchange good practices and promote activities through the new website and exchange visits. I also encouraged branches to produce regular reports for the Terrier on their meetings and activities.

The main Council business conducted during the year was the stabilising of the financial position. Ian Doolan of Westminster Council had just taken over as ACES Treasurer and identified that as ACES was growing it was becoming heavily reliant on advertising and sponsorship revenue, with the two conferences being the high-risk areas. A small finance/sponsorship group was set up to address and clarify the ACES financial position and produce a financial plan and advertising/sponsorship strategy. In particular the resultant strategy provided that both conferences should aim to break even (including covering the cost of producing 'Asset'), be managed financially through the ACES national Treasurer and any surplus would go to central funds to recoup losses of previous or future conferences.

My term of office also saw the completion of the excellent work undertaken by Steve Howe with the development and launch of the new website 'Try it, use it, improve it'.

The launch took place at the Newcastle spring conference where the main theme for the conference organised by the North East Branch was 'Culture and Heritage as part of the Regeneration Process'. But the conference will undoubtedly be remembered for the Thursday evening cruise. Setting off at sunset on a fine and warm spring evening the boat passed under the award-winning Millennium "blinking eye" Bridge

down to the mouth of the River Tyne. It then returned to be greeted by the spectacular lighting of the majestic new bridge, flanked either side by the equally brilliantly lit new Sage music venue, Baltic Arts Centre and other developments, which made up the highly impressive regeneration of the Newcastle and Gateshead quaysides.

For my own Nottingham Presidential conference I adopted the theme "Delivering Good Asset Management and Sustainable Regeneration". I used "good" rather than "excellent", a more obvious target, because at the time "good" was the highest grading that any authority could be awarded for its asset management plan by the government regional office.

Upon my retirement I was pleased to receive a letter from the Leader of Nottingham City Council thanking me for the contribution I had made over my 35 years service to the city. But I was particularly pleased that his letter acknowledged how by using the Albert Hall for my conference, I had highlighted it as a good example of a property much loved by the community and operated in partnership with the Council as a private sector business enterprise and community facility. The acquisition and refurbishment of the former Methodist mission by the Council, and subsequent transfer to the private sector for future management as an entertainments and conference centre, had been one of my major projects in the 1980s. As one that went beyond the vision of the 'Quirk' review, it showed how community assets can also be transferred to the private sector, as well as the third sector, and return a profit to the public purse.

My conference coincided with a PropertyWeek survey showing that, in a poll conducted to find the property industry's 50 most influential professional figures, the President of ACES had come out as number 38 (with the President of the RICS



only at 41). I was pleased to determine from this that my Presidential theme was getting through.

Externally there were two very well attended and successful meetings of the ACES/ODPM working party. The RICS Public Sector Advisory Group acknowledged that the public sector was downgrading the role of surveyors. Recommendations were made by the RICS to promote the role of chartered surveyors in the public sector. Needless to say having taken the initiative they have never followed up.

The AGM report that I gave at the end of my term in office concluded and recommended the following: -

- ACES was in a healthy position and clearly changing to address future challenges.
- The strength of ACES was in the Branches but they need to share their good work with the whole of the membership.
- The financial position had been clarified and was sound but needs managing – biggest risk being the conference organisation.
- The website was up and running but it was now up to members to “use it or lose it”.
- There was a need to continue to develop relationships with ODPM, RICS and other related organisations – they were listening to us.
- Promote the “family” ethos of conferences as the unique selling point.
- Continue to build on and improve marketing and quality of publications such as The Terrier.
- Future Presidents should build on the Property Week status findings.

At the end of the AGM I handed over the Presidency with a mix of both relief and reluctance having very much enjoyed my year as President. It was undoubtedly the highlight of my professional career and had been an honour and a privilege for both myself and my authority, Nottingham City Council.

Richard Allen BSc (Est Man) MRICS
Nottingham City Council

2005/06 - Betty Albon

President's Themes

In true local government tradition of not being able to make a decision, I set out not with one theme for my year of office, but with three.



1 Have fun

Being elected as ACES President is the greatest honour. It is also an opportunity to have fun, in the company of some of the country's most important public sector surveyors and private sector friends. I certainly had fun and applaud the membership of ACES in our capacity to act professionally while still largely enjoying ourselves.

2 Books for Africa

My request for surveying textbooks and old Estates Gazettes to send to two universities in Africa gathered momentum through my year. Approximately 75 boxes were sent via the RICS, who launched the appeal in 2005. The letter of thanks which I received from the universities was poignant, for those of us who have such easy access to knowledge.

3 Public Service Surveyor as Business Manager

What I realised is that we need to increase our influence and I concentrated in doing this at the national level, so that ACES became a 'household name' in central government, other agencies and in the property world. I was very pleased with the proactive role ACES was developing and the framework established, so we are seen as an Association worth seeking our views or involving in making government policy, presenting at conferences, writing articles and participating in research groups.

However, this comes with a health warning – unless the membership is willing to contribute on a consistent basis, we will fail to deliver.

A Few Statistics

My year as ACES President was extremely busy. I was able to take advantage when travelling around the country to make each trip a mini-break with my husband David, who supported me throughout the year. Some statistics:

1 Places visited

I'm pleased to say that I visited all the branches and kept a diary of my trips in The Terrier. I was made welcome everywhere and visited places I would never have thought of going to, by tapping into local surveying knowledge.

2 Train tickets used

My tally of train and reserved seats tickets was 70!

3 Emails sent and received

A rough estimate of the year's email traffic was 7,500.

4 Events attended on ACES behalf

I felt a real sense of pride representing the Association at CIPFA and IRRV functions and the like, at professional meetings at the government offices, RICS, FPS & others.

5 Consultation responses

I believe that on behalf of ACES we made around a dozen written responses to consultation papers and sat on numerous working groups nationally. Many of these working groups are continuing. In my opinion, this is one of the most important roles of ACES, to have a strong national public sector voice. Thanks to my successor, Ian Hay, we have now set up a consultation structure for ACES.

6 Councils & conferences

I have no need to extol the virtues of our national events – you are all cognisant of our unique 'family appeal' and all round value for money. One trend which continues to grow is the involvement of our private sector colleagues at our conferences, as speakers, exhibitors and as delegates. If we are not to be outnumbered (and how embarrassing would that be?) we must encourage some more ACES members to participate – and attract some younger blood into the Association – we are all ageing gracefully, have you noticed?

This is true not only at national level, but also at our branches, joining in on the web Forum and in contributing articles to The Terrier.

Concluding remarks

I received so much support during my year. My husband David I have already mentioned; special thanks to Bert Marshall, who dubbed himself "The President's Little Helper". Also thanks to the ACES Secretariat, ACES Council and Branch Secretaries, who made my year so enjoyable.

The most daunting moment of my year as President was in giving my inaugural speech at the Annual Meeting in the Marble Hall, Cardiff. When that moment came, though, it was

made so much easier by the warmth of feeling of friends and colleagues around me. It is hard to describe, but I could feel a force of support, of my friends wanting me to do it well. I will never forget that feeling – and I hope that I didn't let them down on that occasion or at any time during my wonderful presidential year.

Betty Albon BA MCD MRTPI FRICS
St Edmundsbury Borough Council

2006/07
- Ian Hay

A letter from Bob Perry, the Junior Vice-President. The excitement was tangible. What could he want? Nothing too much – it was an invitation to past Presidents of the Association, in this the centenary year, to write an article on our recollections as President. At first I suspected a cunning plan to get written material to fill the Terrier, after all Colin Bradford and Tim Forster are forever asking members for articles and so they should because there is a huge amount of good work done within the Association both at national and branch level and unfortunately much of it goes unrecorded. I then told myself off for being so cynical as I realised that the articles were to help to form a history of the Association.



Ian Hay

So what of my year as President? Well the main memory is one of having a very enjoyable but extremely busy year. My enduring memories are undoubtedly the Branch visits and my Presidential Conference. I managed to attend every Branch during my year and for one reason or another, some good and some not so good, they all proved to be highly entertaining.

First prize for the most interesting venue must go to the Welsh Branch for organising the meeting at the Centre for Alternative Technology at Machynlleth, Powys. Not only was the drive through the Welsh countryside in June stunning, but the venue was extremely interesting and unique being situated in a disused slate quarry which was accessed by a cliff railway powered by water. It was an excellent meeting and I enjoyed the Welsh hospitality.

The award for the "Most Gruelling Journey" is a much more difficult decision and after careful consideration there are two strong contenders.

Firstly, there was my trip to the South East ACES Branch during September. The great British rail network conspired against me and almost beat me into submission. I had organised my travel arrangement to arrive at Reigate, Surrey for 11.30am in plenty of time to enjoy a leisurely stroll through Priory Park which was undergoing a Heritage Lottery Bid Funded Restoration Project, including a construction of a circular glass pavilion. Unfortunately, just north of Peterborough, the train ahead of me decided to catch fire and the whole of the East Coast network ground to a halt. However, all was not lost as I managed to arrive just in time for the buffet lunch followed by the more formal Branch meeting.

The second contender for the award must be my ambitious, or should that be foolish, plan to attend the Heart of England Branch meeting in Mansfield on Thursday 21 June followed, the next day, by the South West Branch meeting in Barnstaple, North Devon. For this trip I decided there was no alternative but to drive and stamp my carbon footprint across our green and pleasant land. Had I decided to take public transport I would have probably missed the AGM in November. The journey down to Mansfield was uneventful. The Heart of England Branch meeting was memorable not only for the excellent presentation on the Community Transfer of Assets, but also because Malcolm MacAskill was welcomed as a new Branch member. Rather bizarrely my previous Branch meeting had been to the Scottish Branch which happened to be the meeting which bid Malcolm fond farewell as he left for pastures new south of the border. I did begin to wonder if Malcolm was going to follow me around the country and appear at any other Branch meetings. On leaving Mansfield I could see the storm clouds gathering in the distance and the journey down the M5 was more like being in a powerboat race than driving down a motorway and I seriously considered if I would ever get Barnstaple. However, my journey on the M5 was made all the more interesting because it coincided with the annual migration of those fun-loving, mud-loving music fans to the Glastonbury Festival. Some of the vehicles I passed looked as if they would never make it to the Festival. I passed one Ford Transit Van, its outside panel work painted to represent the internal crypt of a church, towing a trailer which consisted of a bright purple coffin on wheels complete with brass handles. I had to smile. I finally arrived in Barnstaple at

9.30pm, some 14 hours after leaving home, only to find that the Royal Hotel had finished serving dinner one hour earlier. Those North Devonshire fish and chips were delicious.

On a serious note, the privilege of being able to serve the Association as its President gave me the opportunity to visit some wonderful places and experience venues that I would not, ordinarily, have been able to visit, and, more importantly, it afforded me the opportunity to meet some very interesting people and develop professional relationships, which will benefit the Association and hopefully my employer in the future. However, that is not just the privilege of the President but something that can be achieved by every member who plays an active part in the Association.

So what of milestones in the history of the Association? Well, I suppose I'm most proud of being able to have led the Review Team which recommended that the Association change its name to the Association of Chief Estates Surveyors and Property Managers in the Public Sector. I believe the Association is stronger for making that decision and that partnership working is the way forward in local government and the wider public sector as we continually strive to improve the services we deliver. ACES has travelled far and the journey continues – here's to the next 100 years.

Ian Hay BSc (Est Man) FRICS
Northumberland County Council

2007/08
- Jim Ross

History will probably show that 2008 was the year in which terms such as toxic debt, credit crunch, and sub-prime loans, became commonplace in the English language, as the precursors to what is now being hailed as the worst recession for over 100 years. However, for me it will always remain the year when I had not just the honour of being president of ACES, but also the honour of holding that post in our Association's Centenary Year. It is for this reason that, perhaps somewhat unusually, I would like to begin my recollections of my year of office with an event which took place on the evening prior to the Annual Meeting at which my term of office ended. The occasion was a dinner to celebrate our centenary at which I had the pleasure of joining with other officers of the Association in hosting an event to which all surviving Past-Presidents and their partners were invited. The event, held in a delightful restaurant in Bleeding Heart Yard, close to the City of London, typified all that is so good about our association. From the minute we all gathered until the last stragglers left as the restaurant closed, the room was full of conversation and,



Jim Ross

as always whenever I attend any gathering of ACES members, I know that I left the room a considerably wiser and more knowledgeable person than when I entered. Proof indeed,

if ever needed, that an event does not have to be a formal occasion to gain from the experience and wisdom of others. (See photograph below)

My year commenced though in the grandeur of City Chambers, Glasgow and in my opening address, I announced as my theme for the year, "Celebrating Success". While in part, this was to use the year to celebrate our centenary year, it was also to encourage more of our members to share details of some of the excellent, frequently highly complex, and often nationally significant work they are undertaking. I chose this theme for two reasons. Firstly, so that we can all benefit from the experiences, good and bad, of others, but secondly, and more importantly, to raise the profile as much as possible of the public sector surveyor. Too often, we all work extremely hard to often achieve seemingly impossible targets and deadlines and, because we do not have to sell ourselves and our services, we move onto the next set of tasks rather than telling the world what we have achieved. I hoped to try to generate a culture which might encourage our members to be a little less shy.

It was therefore with great pleasure that early in my year of office I had the opportunity of helping to launch the RICS public sector Asset Management Guidelines, a publication which a number of our members contributed to, and for which the Royal Institution and government departments acknowledged the assistance given.

I am hopeful that as a result of this theme, ACES has managed to raise its profile too, both in government circles and also within the surveying and other professions. However the recession or credit crunch remains the main event of the year



Centenary celebrations - Bleeding Heart Yard

and this in turn had a huge impact upon the workloads of all our members as they struggled to meet capital receipt targets, keep regeneration projects moving forward or close down PFI schemes and other major procurement projects all of which had begun in the heady days of 2007 just prior to my term of office commencing

Jim Ross MRICS
Basildon District Council

AN INSIDER'S OVERVIEW - Tim Foster

To give a wider perspective than is possible in any individual annual report, we conclude with two overall views of ACES. The first is from Tim Foster who is in a unique position to be able to do so, having been Secretary of ALAVES and of ACES for a total of eighteen years.

REFLECTIONS FROM A SECRETARY OR TWO

I first became aware of ALAVES in 1969, when I joined Salford Corporation as a valuer dealing with their massive slum clearance programme. It was however in 1973 when I moved to Bury, home of the "Black Pudding", to take charge of a small estates team that I became more involved for a short period. We were dealing with, amongst many other things, the vexed question of the "The Property Transfer Order Regulations" which followed on from all the smaller authorities amalgamating to form the ten unitary metropolitan authorities in the Greater Manchester area.

We all used to meet on many occasions, mostly in Frank Longdon's office in Manchester or, less frequently, when we exchanged ideas with our Merseyside neighbours in Tony Ryden's office in Liverpool. These people were legends and there I was rubbing up against them so to speak. It struck me then that to be a member of ALAVES would perhaps enable me to learn just a fraction of what these people knew and by doing so might help my career. So it proved but more of that later.

It was to be another six years before I became eligible even to submit an application for membership let alone be confident of having it approved; such were the stringent membership criteria at the time. I was a Chief Officer with a seat on the management team and a staff of 40 but still it wasn't a formality, although my application was approved.

Because I had already booked my holiday before my application was submitted and approved, I missed Dick Luff's conference in 1979, when, by all accounts, the formal dinner at the Mansion House was a particular highlight. I have however managed to attend the next 28. Those of you with a head for maths will doubtless be saying, "But there have been 29 Presidents since then". Suffice it to say I haven't missed a Presidential conference. A bottle of bubbly awaits anyone who can say likewise.

Some great times followed with many fond memories; the highlights for me being the community singing on the coach to Blenheim at Gordon Powell's conference in 1980, after a particularly good lunch and the shared bathroom facilities at Bishop Grosseteste University College in Lincoln (*It's not what you're thinking: Robert Grosseteste was an English bishop who worked on geometry, optics and astronomy and made Latin translations of many Greek and Arabic scientific writings but I do have it on good authority that it wasn't only the size of his head that he inherited from his father*). So, with these as my highlights and not the professional content of the meetings, why I was approached one day by the Honorary Secretary Gordon Smith to succeed him in the job, I know not. My wife, Sue, always says that I'm either thick or deep and she's still trying to fathom out which after more than 41 years. There followed a three day interview (I exaggerate. It was only two) and lo and behold there was a unanimous vote in favour at the AGM and I was in.

First time around

The major differences for me from then on were that I had to listen at meetings and that Sue and I had to sit at opposite ends of long top tables at conferences, usually next to a leading civic dignitary. This is a major contributing factor, for those who know me well, for my profound deafness in one ear.

Most of the clerical work was carried out by my secretary, Elsie Spendlove, a name which still invites nudge, nudge, wink, wink comments from my two sons. The biggest part of the job in those days was envelope filling and filing. There was no day-to-day involvement such as there is today, except for occasional replies to correspondence. I can't remember with certainty but I think my authority even paid the postage for distributing agendas. How times have changed! In recompense for all this extra work done by the officers' secretaries ALAVES used to pay honoraria to them, a practice which regrettably has ceased after one member, who shall remain nameless, thought the money was for him personally.

Within a couple of years I learned how much I owed to ALAVES. I was in the best-but-worst-paid job of my career but needed to move to something which paid a salary commensurate with my mortgage. The job of County Estates Officer at Derbyshire County Council came up and I attended the two day interview with trepidation. Most of the other candidates were people I knew from ALAVES and instead of being nervous of the

unknown I thought at least it was a level playing field. My main concern was that the only thing I knew about milk quotas was learnt from my mother. Luckily for me, the conservative administration had sold off the County Farms Estate in 1979 so they were free to offer the job to a "townie". It turned out to be the worst-but-best-paid job of my career, but a great career move nonetheless, largely due to eventual early retirement. It was even better than those double glazing offers; work one, get one free.

Most of the secretarial duties merely transferred to my new secretary at Derbyshire where the office even had its own franking machine, which provided a really professional look to the envelopes. The transition was seamless.

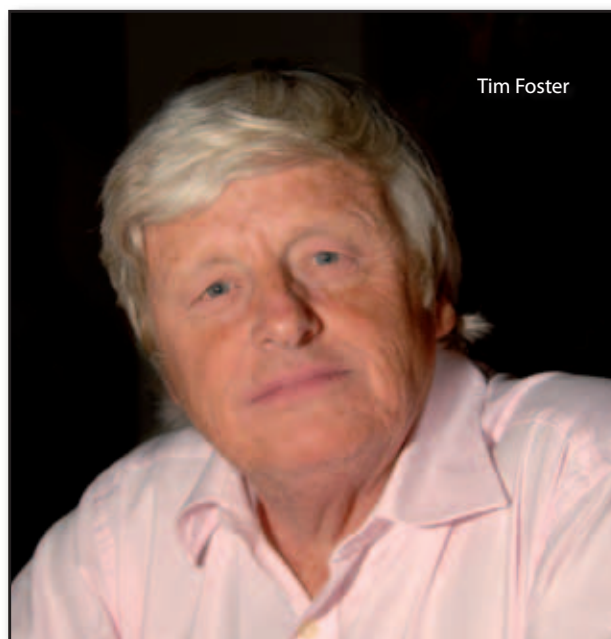
Presidential conferences at Newcastle, Leicester and Glasgow followed, all different but all hugely enjoyable. People sometimes ask me why I never became President; the slick answer is that I was never asked, because at conferences I always made sure I was in bed by midnight. The reality was simple; it was political. Councillor Bookbinder, the leader of the Council, not the beast of Bolsover as some of you may think, realised how much time officers in all departments were spending away from the office on "jollies" as he called them. I did manage to retain my position on the Executive Committee but the secretary's job had to go and with it any prospect of being able to accept a place on the Presidential ladder. ALAVES had a lot of reasons to thank Councillor Bookbinder and to be honest I never sought the limelight, much preferring to put what skills I have to work behind the scenes.

My job at Derbyshire also made me eligible for membership of CLAVA which I joined in 1984. The contrast with ALAVES was quite profound. Nearly all the members were at that time chief officers in their own right but change was on its way. The meetings, which were spread over two days, the same as ALAVES, had two 3-hour professional sessions to the ALAVES one. All the discussions took place in the main meetings, whereas the real work of ALAVES was thrashed out in the privacy of a small Executive Committee and the decisions reported to the membership the next day. CLAVA was more egalitarian.

At around this time both ALAVES and CLAVA, possibly because a large part of the membership was common to both organisations, realised that having two Associations made little sense, particularly as CoPROP had already been formed and was growing in size. There was also wholesale reorganisation taking place at county level. The hitherto separate estates and architects departments were being swallowed up by large property departments and people were losing their chief officer status.

As is very common in these situations the hardest thing to agree was the name of the new amalgamated association. LAVA was chosen, not because it was everyone's first choice but because it caused least offence all round and so the Local Authority Valuers Association was duly formed in 1986.

The nearest I got to the feeling Presidents must have at organising their own conferences was when I offered to host the spring conference in 1987 at the Peveril of the Peak Hotel in Thorpe, Derbyshire. The conference produced the story



Tim Foster

of a new member at his first meeting who caught the train to Thorpe in Lincolnshire. He only realised his mistake when he caught sight of the sea out of the right hand side carriage window. You may well smile but I know many who would not have realised even then that Derbyshire is landlocked. The intriguing thing is that he told me the tale, approaching midnight, after I had ordered him some sandwiches from the kitchen. Most of us, including myself, would have casually said we'd been called to the leader's office. Anyway his secret is safe with me, unless of course...

I know that I'm probably biased but on the Friday afternoon, a dozen to fifteen of us (a prize to anyone who can provide a complete list of names) went on what was to be, in my opinion, if not the best, then certainly the most unusual ALAVES trip of all time; a trip down Bolsover colliery. We were each kitted out in full miner's regalia, knee pads, helmets, boots, lamps; the only thing missing was a caged canary. I thought the whole thing was a great joke until I banged my head four times in the space of the first two minutes on four almost invisible projections. Without the right equipment I would have been unconscious at the very least. It took us over an hour to reach the 18 inch high coalface by a combination of walking and, taking one's life in one's hands, by jumping on the man rider conveyor belt. What other job in the world would you clock on and then take 75 minutes to start work? Come to think of it, quite a lot; most of the jobs I've had fall into that category.

My overriding memory is seeing members and partners alike in a line crawling on all fours, sometimes dragging themselves on their elbows when the seam reduced to less than 18 inches, all the time with the cutting gear roaring in our ears and coal dust everywhere. The sight still brings to mind those apt words by the American poet Ogden Nash:

*"Sure, deck your limbs in pants;
Yours are the limbs, my sweeting.
You look divine as you advance;
Have you seen yourself retreating?"*

I swear even to this day that, when I shower, I come across bits of coagulated coal dust, hiding in the crevices.

Reflections

What kind of organisations did I join and did they change during those years?

- ALAVES was predominantly a chief officers' group administered by a small, highly motivated, immensely talented group of people, who were in total charge of their own working environments or so it seemed. I got the impression that they almost told, not advised, their politicians what was best.
- They exerted huge influence in the profession and elsewhere, not through being members of ALAVES, but because of their own personal standing in the profession. Their job responsibilities were massive by anybody's standard and I got the impression that the pay was also commensurate with that responsibility. I suspect that private sector pay at that time was comparable for jobs of equivalent standing. The buyouts of large firms of

Chartered Surveyors by banks and insurance companies had not yet gathered pace.

- The focus of ALAVES was largely inward looking and introspective and failed to embrace some of the challenges looming on the horizon. The meetings largely concentrated on ALAVES internal business and the social side seemed to take precedence over professional content. CLAVA on the other hand recognised some of the threats to their "Gentlemen's Club" status and took decisive action by agreeing to the merger with ALAVES when it would have been easier just to carry on in the old established way.
- The biggest single catalyst for change was the expansion of the branch network coupled with the relaxation of the membership criteria. The emphasis became more on the help LAVA could give its members rather than the other way round. Small estates sections were being formed and they needed to be able to talk directly to colleagues rather than continually having to reinvent the wheel. It was still important to retain membership at the highest possible

ACES Timeline

PRESIDENT

1986/87	Remo Verrico	Glasgow City Council
1987/88	Alan G Darg	Avon County Council
1988/89	Dick Miller	Norfolk County Council
1989/90	Jack Simpson	Lothian Regional Council
1990/91	Roy Gregory	London Borough of Redbridge
1991/92	Iain MacDonald	Leicestershire County Council
1992/93	Edward Turner	Manchester City Council
1993/94	Alan Powell	London Borough of Havering
1994/95	Colin Bradford	Tayside Regional Council
1995/96	Derek Rowell	Bedford Borough Council
1996/97	Ted Hartill	Corporation of London
1997/98	John Arnold	Oxford City Council
1998/99	Charles Coats	Gloucestershire County Council
1999/00	John Morris	London Borough of Sutton
2000/01	Alun Jones	Gwynedd Council
2001/02	Jill Bungay	Sheffield Council
2002/03	Malcolm MacAskill	South Ayrshire Council
2003/04	Malcolm Dawes	London Borough of Newham
2004/05	Richard Allen	Nottingham City Council
2005/06	Betty Albon	St Edmundsbury Borough Council
2006/07	Ian Hay	Northumberland County Council
2007/08	Jim Ross	Basildon District Council

MEETINGS

Spring	Presidential	Annual Meeting
Derbyshire	Glasgow	LONDON - Lords
Salford	Bristol	LONDON - Lords
Coventry	Norfolk	LONDON - Lords
Cardiff	Edinburgh	LONDON - Lords
Maidstone	London	LONDON - Lords
Torquay	- -	LONDON - Lords
Durham	Manchester	LONDON - Lords
Nottingham	Dartford	LONDON - Lords
Bristol	Pitlochry	LONDON - Lords
Bournemouth	Bedford	LONDON - Lords
Harrogate	London	LONDON - Guildhall
Chester	Oxford	LONDON - Guildhall
Troon	Gloucester	LONDON - Guildhall
Bury St Edmunds	Greenwich	LONDON - Guildhall
Woolacombe	Caernarfon	CARDIFF - City Chambers
Worcester	Sheffield	LONDON - Guildhall
Portsmouth	Troon	EDINBURGH - City Chambers
Windermere	Newham	LONDON - Guildhall
Newcastle	Nottingham	CARDIFF - City Chambers
Bath	Bury St Edmunds	LONDON - Ironmongers' Hall
Cardiff	Morpeth	GLASGOW - City Chambers
Birmingham	Basildon	LONDON - Guildhall

level but not if the top jobs were continually going to other disciplines. LAVA needed wider representation.

I handed over the secretarial reins in 1987 to Eddie Turner who, incidentally, was the last of the breed of Honorary Secretaries. After Eddie's election to the Presidential ladder Chris Rowley was appointed as the first paid secretary, reflecting the increasing pressures building in local government where the day job was becoming ever more demanding. An interesting point here for other branches to note is that since my appointment in 1983 all the secretaries of the Association have been from the North West branch. We either come from good stock up north or else "It's not what you know..."

In between jobs

Between 1987 and 1993, although I retained my position on the executive committee, I had no specific responsibilities, as LAVA continued to wrestle with the big issues of the day. These were compulsory competitive tendering, the increasing involvement of elected members and the perceived loss of influence of the Association, with the growth of CoPROP and

the FPS. Successful seminars for officers and elected members were held every other year which not only helped to bolster the finances but also gave members access to their elected members away from the office environment. The next step of inviting them to the conferences never quite gained approval despite the heroic efforts of Eddie Turner both as Honorary Secretary and as President. One of the highlights of Eddie's Presidential Conference was tuning in to the television only to witness the Olympic Games being awarded to Sydney. Manchester did however get second prize, some years later, when their bid for the Commonwealth Games was successful thus smoothing the way for London's winning Olympic bid in 2005.

Retirement came swiftly for me in 1993; the final committee decision was made at 8 pm on the 7th April and my final day at work was the 8th. Obviously I had to resign my position on the Executive Committee and that, I thought, was that. I used what transferable skills I could muster and became a lay inspector for the FEFC, inspecting the quality of the learning experience on building courses at Further Education Colleges

ACES Timeline - continued

OFFICERS				PUBLICATIONS			
Secretary	Editor	Treasurer	PRO	The Terrier	Per Annum	Asset	
Tim Foster		Bert Marshall	Don Davis				1986/87
Eddie Turner							1987/88
Chris Rowley							1988/89
							1989/90
		1990/91					
		1991/92					
Tim Foster		Don Davis	Derek Rowell				1992/93
							1993/94
							1994/95
							1995/96
	Colin Bradford	Mike Robinson	Andrew Day	1996/97			
				1997/98			
				1998/99			
				1999/00			
		Adrian James	Jill Bungay	2000/01			
				2001/02			
2002/03							
2003/04							
2004/05							
2005/06							
Alun Jones	Jill Bungay	2006/07					
		2007/08					
		Betty Albon					

and I set up my youngest and dearest (sorry, most expensive) son in the fish and chip shop trade.

More reflections

- There were many good things taking place during this period such as the introduction of topical professional seminars for officers and elected members alike. How we need these back today, particularly with the new style “cabinet” run authorities.
- The two conferences and the Annual meeting all contained much more professional content than previously.
- However, from my new position, akin if you like to a Minister without Portfolio, it often seemed to me that we became a trifle paranoid during this period. Some of it obviously stemmed from CCT and an initial genuine fear for our jobs, but we never really fully addressed or took sufficient action to face the underlying challenge brought about by the changing face of local government, which was here to stay. The world would be different for ever but one of our prime concerns was to retain the work in-house. We did make part of our agendas “confidential” but this was like rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic.
- We agonised over our image, trying to artificially engineer ways of promoting ourselves. We were obsessed with the perceived growing influence of CoPROP and the FPS, instead of embracing them whilst still trying to improve our own performance.

The second coming

Chris Rowley was standing down as paid secretary in April 1995 and a replacement was needed fairly quickly. No one could be found from the ranks of the ordinary members so it was decided to put the job out to tender. I cannot recall exactly how I got on the short list but my job application stressed my previous experience and although, I understand, my tender wasn’t the lowest, it was nevertheless accepted. I have always held the view that we get the infrastructure we deserve, largely because every single building or civil engineering project goes to the lowest tenderer. LAVA knew better or so they thought.

Colin Bradford was President at the time and, knowing Colin the way I do, it still seems strange to me that he, a man who considers 99% to be a bit of a failure, should pick a non-academic Liverpudlian who doesn’t know whether “The Apostrophes” come before or after John in the New Testament and who has always thought 50% was virtually unachievable. I could however think on my feet, which perhaps explains why I always used to stand up to present Committee reports.

In his year of office Colin got the Association to agree to completely rewriting the constitution, to abolishing the executive committee and replacing it with the present much more democratic Council. He introduced The Terrier, Per Annum and the membership database and, with the help of his new Consultant Secretary’s advanced minute writing ability, changed the name of the Association to ACES (The Association of Chief Estates Surveyors and Property Managers in Local Government). His biggest regret was that, if he’d gone that extra 1%, he could also have introduced a new financial management system.

The Presidents who followed Colin give their own versions of their year in office as part of this history, and I don’t want to prejudge what they will be saying, except that they were all able to build on the solid foundations Colin had put in place. John Arnold was the first to attract a sponsor to his Presidential conference thus paving the way financially to produce “Asset”, the publication containing the conference papers.

Others have moved this concept forward and the conferences are now open to private sector colleagues who are actively engaged in public asset management work and these are proving to be a great success.

I have often thought at Presidential installation ceremonies, “that will be a hard act to follow” but I can honestly say that every new President has taken up the baton and left the Association in a stronger position than when they took the job on. Was it only seven years that we celebrated our first woman President and then, just like London buses, another followed close behind with a third waiting in the wings.

I have seen ACES grow from strength to strength over this period, both in terms of increasing its standing and influence in the profession and in government circles, and in providing an improved service to its members. That’s not to say we haven’t much more to do if we are to put property higher up on the political agenda. James Grierson in his speech at Jim Ross’s inauguration summed it up. We need to broaden and widen our membership; we need to get the membership we have to become more active; we need to cooperate more with other property-related organisations and we need to communicate the message of how much added value there is in effectively managing the public property estate.

Tim Foster
ACES Secretary 1983-1987
and 1995-ongoing

AN OUTSIDER'S OVERVIEW

- James Grierson

This article is an extract from the speech given by James Grierson of DTZ when he was the principal guest at the 2007 Annual Meeting in Glasgow. It previously appeared in the Winter 2007/08 edition of The Terrier.

I would like, if I may, to say a little bit about what ACES looks like to an external friend of the Association and compare it with other networks that I have been involved with. Like most of you here I have been involved with various professional groupings over the years and I think you learn something from each of these bodies. Like most people in the room, I am a member of the RICS and in a very minor way I have played a little bit of a role in the background and that has been quite interesting. But like many of you here today I would suspect, there is a certain dissatisfaction I sometimes feel about what the RICS delivers. The problem they have got is that to be powerful, to be authoritative you need to be very big and you end up representing such a broad church that it is quite easy to lose the focus of the views that you are trying to get across in the lobbying that you are trying to do. And I think that is why sometimes many of us feel that we don't quite get out of it exactly what we want.

BCO, BCSC and BPF

I have attended many occasions of the BCO (the British Council of Offices) and the BCSC (the British Association of Shopping Centres). Those, in their way, I think are both powerful groups, good groups. They are well supported, well funded and they are very single industry specifically focussed and they have quite a significant lobbying role. My personal view of the British Association of Shopping Centres is that you can actually get it into a room, albeit a jolly big room, but it does represent a community. You do have a sense of the industry in one place and it is also an organisation that people belong to for a long time. So my former partner Martin Chase who is taking over as president next year has probably been involved in it for 25 years and sat on various working groups and it is the kind of organisation where you get that sense of a long term network generating value for its members.

The British Property Federation is an organisation which, to be honest, was not really strongly on the radar screen for me until about three or four years ago when Liz Peace was appointed as chief executive. Now, I think, she has done a fantastic job in lobbying for the causes that the BPF represents, most effective lobbying and persuasion and communication. As an organisation, of course, it is not really an organisation. It is a small number of big property companies who fund a lobbying campaign to serve their interests but it does that extremely



effectively. What it does not add up to is a membership organisation in the way that ACES is.

CoreNet

I also belong to something called CoreNet which, for those of you who don't know it, is for corporate real estate specialists and particularly for end users, big corporate occupiers. And that is a bit like ACES in some ways because it is quite small. It is very friendly. It has a sort of long term character in the sense that people's careers entwine and they separate and they come together again over a long period of time and it is a friendly network. It is a group that is very much a mutual support organisation and people are constantly ringing each other up for tips and suggestions and can you check out this person and all that sort of thing. It works very well in that sense. It chooses not to be a campaigning organisation but it is a good social network. If there is a risk that it faces, it is that its reach, its ambitions, are to go very global and in doing so there is the potential to leave some of the UK membership behind.

CoPROP

There is CoPROP. I am not a member of CoPROP, of course, but I do attend some of their events and I think they have done some very good work in recording examples of best practice. It is hard work but it is important work. But that said, I have never personally had that sense of a CoPROP community like I have a sense of an ACES community.

Other Bodies

I also get involved with a few other organisations in a small way – the Institute of Directors and the CBI and also for my sins the British Institute of Facilities Management. And I say for my sins because on occasions one spends an evening, as I did a couple of weeks ago, and it does seem like a very long evening, sitting in the Grosvenor House at some interminable award ceremony to celebrate the achievements of "Award No.

27 – the Flat Roof Contractor of the Year”. It is quite hard work but I think it is quite important for us. For people like me and people like everybody here in fact, there is a temptation I think sometimes in the estates world to get bit snotty about the FM community. But I have to say, I do think that some of the very interesting things happening at the moment are taking place in the FM space and I think we ignore it at our peril.

Now I could go on and I am sure that you have many others that you would add to that sort of list. But the conclusions I draw from my personal experience with these sorts of groups add up I think to a very strong accolade for ACES as an institution.

Professional organisations that are huge do suffer from a problem with diffusing and diluting the message and I think they can sometimes leave their memberships rather unmoved. I think professional organisations that don’t campaign, well there is something ultimately a bit sterile about organisations that don’t really try and change the world and I think that the extent to which ACES has revved up its game in recent years in terms of lobbying and representation is to be commended. Of course there is tons still to do, but I do think it is greatly to be commended.

Strong Focus

The organisations that seem to me to deliver the most bang-for-the-buck are the ones that retain a strong degree of focus whether that be a market or a sector focus and I think that is very characteristic of ACES. In fact, that focus provides a platform for the Association’s greatest strength, in my view, which is its sort of warmth and collegiality. It is a self-help group in the very best sense of the word and also, especially in the last few years, has extended a warm welcome to interlopers like myself and, believe me, that is very much appreciated. I started coming to ACES events some years ago and, in a sense, it is part of my job. I think I am now at a point where, even if I stopped doing the sort of job I do, actually I would still quite like to come to ACES events because they are just good fun.

SUGGESTIONS FROM A FRIENDLY EXTERNAL PERSPECTIVE

I hope, however, you will permit me to make a few suggestions from the perspective of the outside observer and that is either me as a critical friend or as a cheeky sod, depending on your point of view.

1 Membership

First of all I find it amazing that there are people, quite high numbers of people, who could be ACES members and who aren’t. And I find it even more amazing that quite a lot of people who are members choose not to participate. Quite a number of clients of mine fall into that category and I am constantly telling them that I think they really miss out by not participating actively in the Association. And of course the Association itself would benefit greatly, I think, from a

wider participation and I am sure that some of the friends the Association has in the private sector would be more than willing to contribute some sort of time and energy to help spread this message. I would hope this argument might be advanced because I think it is everybody’s interests.

2 Subscriptions

The second point is a related issue and is that, frankly, I think it is scandalous that so many authorities, probably the great majority, don’t pay for ACES membership. I am sure every member in the room would confirm that the benefits that you get from ACES membership in terms of all the stuff that comes out of the network, all the tips, the suggestions, the shared experiences, delivers a level of value to your authorities probably greatly in excess of what you get and can bring to your organisations out of formal training courses and external conferences, all of which cost far more money. I dare say that there has been quite a lot of lobbying for this in the past but it seems to me really well worth making the point very strongly. It seems to me also that many organisations struggle to spend their training budget and frankly that is where I would be inclined to push.

3 CoPROP

The third suggestion, CoPROP. The CoPROP world I know sometimes seems a little bit more interested in school building programmes and the kind of physical side of the property agenda and, as far as I know, there is no intention to join forces or anything like that, but I do think you would be more powerful articulating a joint voice a little bit more often. I think the existence of two distinct organisations inhabiting the same sort of community can be quite confusing for outsiders.

4 FM

Fourth then, Facilities Management. I have touched on it before. I think this is one area where ACES and ACES members in my view need to take more interest. It is the heart of everything related to your operational portfolio and improvements to the performance of your operational portfolios translate directly to improvements in the performance of your organisations. I think it is an area where good management, frankly, can yield tremendous benefits and, as I said earlier, there is some really innovative stuff going on in the FM arena at the moment and my thought would be that you could do a lot worse than establish an FM group, maybe you already have one, and to develop some sort of organisational relationship with BIFM because I think that would be in everybody’s interest.

5 Procurement

The fifth area concerns procurement. Clearly there has been a strong mood in recent years to say “Look! Procurement needs to be professionalised in the sector” and I think probably we would all agree that this was needed. That said, there are some barmy things happening at the moment in the name of procurement and there are situations, I am sure many of you have seen them, where some of the so called procurement experts – you know you are just sitting there waiting for

somebody to say “This person is wearing no clothes!” If you actually go beyond the basics of competent and informed procurement you’ve also got the Roanne case which, I guess, many of you are dealing with at the moment and there is a lot of serious head scratching going on at our end as well, I can tell you, on the implications of that.

We also have the competitive dialogue process which is beginning to settle in now. It is a process that the people in my team have been quite involved with over the last year or eighteen months and actually I think it is a better process for complex procurements and developer selections. I think in terms of entering into serious commercial relationships on complex and large scale projects it is a better process, at least it can be a better process, but it is very complex and it needs organising extremely well if it is going to deliver an improvement.

And I just thought to myself that perhaps something around the competitive dialogue process, procurement, Roanne and so on - if you group those activities together, is there some sort of working group around that where there is a real value in disseminating and generating further insight? In a sense it is the kind of stuff that everybody in the sector, whether you are on the private sector side of the line or within local authorities, we are all dealing with this kind of issue at the same speed and I think there is a real need to share perspectives.

6 Other Organisations

The sixth point. In my opinion ACES would benefit from planting feet in one or two other organisations. My personal pick would be the BPF, CoreNet and for those people who are concerned with the world of shopping centres, the British Council of Shopping Centres. I think it is quite easy to get a bit silo-ish, not a comment about people in this room necessarily any more than it is about people in the shopping centre world or people in the office world, but I think there is something about connecting horizontally across vertically focussed organisations where there is some benefit to be delivered.

Now Jim Ross has spoken very eloquently about the continuing importance of the work of surveyors in local government. My own experience is that for the last twenty years or so I have been working, amongst other things, with a lot of estates teams, property teams, on how to improve effectiveness. I have to say I am constantly astonished by the sheer breadth of knowledge and expertise that so many of you, and so many of my clients, have, and for those of us in the private sector where there are a lot of forces encouraging people to specialise from really quite a young age it is amazing listening to this huge panoply of knowledge spanning things that you can vaguely remember hearing about as a student but actually have not been part of your professional life. I do sometimes wonder whether your authorities recognise what a jolly difficult thing it is to maintain and develop that kind of expertise and the sheer challenge of retaining such a wide professional expertise.

7 Communication

That brings me to my last suggestion which is to do with communication. Jim Ross made the point that if you are in the consultancy world you have to get your message across and communicate and perhaps it is more obviously natural: it’s a greater career-imperative perhaps. I have to say I think people in local government in the property sphere are pretty appalling at getting the message across about how much value is added to your authorities and to your communities by smart property work and I think that many of your authorities rather take your expertise rather for granted. I think it is all very well doing good work in the background within a technical space and remit but I think there is a tremendous number of positive stories that are really not articulated as strongly or as forcefully as they could be. And that is why I think celebrating achievement in the Association’s centenary year is really bang on - just the right note at the present time.

James Grierson
DTZ
