

1963 & 1973

- Ken Blessley

Foreword

I had some misgivings in agreeing to partake in this exercise as I had really withdrawn from all professional activity some twenty years back and although my recall is still quite good, I have to accept that with 95 on the clock the next month, there are inevitably some blurred areas.

I'll start with an unnecessary personal note. I was fortunate in many ways in my early local authority days as there was much activity for estate surveyors, especially with the GLC. At its peak, the departmental teams, which I headed as Controller, totalled 1,500 staff, 300 professionally qualified, in seven offices, three in the centre and four suburban. A kind report on my retirement in 1977 records that in my twelve years there, the Council had increased its landholdings by 8,000 acres at a cost of £450,000,000 and had advanced £650,000,000 on mortgage (contemporary values), and we had no computers!

All of which probably sounds somewhat pompous and arrogant, but it may help to illustrate the developing professional status enjoyed by estate surveyors in those days, hopefully still maintained in current different times

Perhaps, in future edition of the yearbook, Per Annum, Tim Foster should include a new section of Dinosaurs and I believe I would be Senior in that category. I joined ALAVES in May 1955 and, from then until retirement in 1977, I attended almost every meeting. I was appointed to the Executive Committee in 1957, was President twice: 1963 (Middlesex) and 1973 (GLC). Approaching retirement, I realised that I had a cupboard of ALAVES papers which would not be welcome at home and, with no willing recipient, it looked like the shredder. So, I worked through this mountain and, with the help of my secretary, Betty Clayden (who ought to have been made a Life Member), I produced a History of ALAVES 1949-77^[1] which (at my expense) was printed with a very limited circulation. Possibly one or two other survivors may have a copy, even one with Tim's archives.

¹ Reproduced herein as Section 7.

So, I relied on this History in responding to Bob Perry's invitation to supply a few Past Presidential "experiences and recollections". It was useful for names and dates and also for the record of memorable events – high spots and low spots!

My first meeting was in London 1955 – Joe Toole, LCC Valuer, was President and a major event of the Summer Conference was a Thames trip on the PLA yacht, St. Catherine, starting at Tower Pier and the Pool. We went as far as Greenwich, passing all the docks: St Katherine, Surrey, London, East and West India, George V and other smaller units. Every berth was occupied and working; our guide gave an excellent commentary with names of each ship, port of origin and cargo – oil, food, transport, cars, building materials. This really was London Docks – Tilbury a comparatively minor annexe, probably due to war restrictions. Today, a similar trip and guide might include a reference to historical buildings and events but more likely to concentrate on the extension of the City tower blocks – height, number of workers, name of bank!

In subsequent Summer Meetings in the city or country town of the President for the year, there were, of course, memorable incidents, some unintentional, but my other recall will be of names.

During the 1960s the Association grew in size and status and this is reflected in an Appendix of my History which set out the details of guests or speakers at meetings or functions during that period. Government ministers; Permanent Under-secretaries, chairmen of the local government associations; the professional societies, foremost the RICS with the President a regular attender. Names that stand out: Michael Heseltine; John Silkin; Graham Page; Peter Shore; Dame Evelyn Sharp; Lord Bernstein-Granada; Henry Wells; the Duke of Rutland. But, for my "recollection", I shall mention two from my Presidential years. In June 1963, the dinner for the Summer Meeting was at the Hendon Hall Hotel and the principal guest was the MP for Finchley, an attractive young lady, Margaret Thatcher, then a promising junior minister. As a side comment, I had one other link with her some years later when I was "instructed" by the GLC Leader to act as a professional adviser to a working party of which she was chairman dealing, I think, with the Community Land Bill. And very impressive she was.

My other chosen name was from the 1973 Summer Meeting in London when the GLC entertained the Association members and their wives to a formal lunch in the conference hall. About 300 attended and the principal guest on this occasion was Anthony (Baron) Greenwood, Minister for Housing and Local Government.

My final attendance at a business meeting of ALAVES was in November 1986 at London County Hall, which was to be the last before the setting up of LAVA, and the then President, Gordon Smith had asked me to make a few valedictory



observations which were really a brief summary of parts of my History. I ended by saying that I regarded my involvement with the Association as one of the more rewarding aspects of my professional life of which the outstanding memory would be the many lasting friendships which Gwen and I had made, many of which had still survived.

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to 1973. During that time I was Honorary Secretary of the Association from 1969 to 1972 which was a demanding but enjoyable responsibility, as it brought me into touch with all the members of the Association. Many personal friendships were established with colleagues from other local authorities, and some of those friendships still exist today.

In 1973, following local government reorganisation, I was appointed County Estates Surveyor for Leicestershire County Council, and was asked to form a new department to include the previous County Land Agent's Department. At the same time I was invited to join CLAVA and became an active member of the Association as well as of ALAVES.

Two years later I was installed as President of ALAVES and arranged the Annual Summer Meeting at Leicester. The guest of honour at the formal dinner was his grace The Duke of Rutland, who was Chairman of the County Council at that time. He kindly hosted a visit by members and their ladies the next day to his ancestral home at Belvoir Castle.

Some time afterwards, following a reorganisation of the Chief Officers' Management Team at County Hall, I was appointed Director of Property. The new department incorporated the former County Architect's Department, thus bringing together eight different property-related disciplines.

I was then invited to become a founder member of CoPROP which I was able to accept, thus finding myself a member of

1975 - Geoffrey Brigham

I have been invited to contribute an article on my involvement in the affairs of the associations prior to the establishment of ACES in 1986.

I became a member of ALAVES in the early 1960s and was the City Estates Surveyor of Leicester City Council from 1962



Geoff Brigham

three property-related organisations, with attendant demands on my time!

In 1985 the County Council celebrated the 500th anniversary of the Battle of Bosworth Field. The site is one of several county parks managed by the Property Department. We were honoured by a visit to the site by the Prince and Princess of Wales.

Later the same year I took early retirement from the County Council on health grounds. I accepted a part time consultancy with a local firm of Chartered Surveyors which lasted several years.

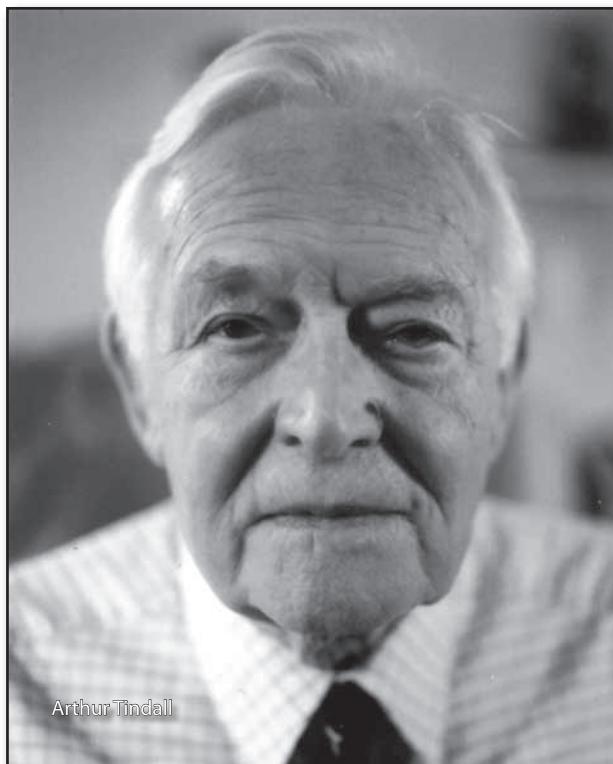
I still follow the affairs of ACES with interest and often wonder how I would have coped with all the further changes which have taken place since my retirement.

G D Brigham FRICS
Leicestershire County Council

1985

- Arthur Tindall

During my year of office the government instructed the Monopolies and Mergers Commission to report on British Rail property board. ALAVES was invited to submit a paper on certain aspects. Following our paper we were invited to attend a meeting with that body, so the Association Secretary and I went to the Commission's offices in Carey Street where questions were asked of us and a general discussion followed. I think there were four members of that body present together with clerical back-up. After some two hours or so we were told that a verbatim report would be sent to us within 14 days – to be returned with amendments also within 14 days (excluding spelling and grammatical errors which would be picked up prior to publication!). The end result was that one paragraph was our reward!



Arthur Tindall

On a lighter note at the meeting in Lincoln, after a tour of RAF Waddington, the City Council hosted a buffet supper in the Cathedral Chapter House – an interesting feature being the fact that the Chapter House was built with exterior flying buttresses. The following day members had a conducted tour of the roof space of the Cathedral and if they so wished had the opportunity of stepping out at "x" feet about ground level to admire the view.

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