

The Royal Institution of Naval Architects

The President's address to the 2015 AGM

When I read how my predecessors described their feelings on being elected as the President of the Institution, words such as trepidation and honour featured frequently. And those are the same words which describe so well my own feelings as I speak to you for the first time as the President of this fine Institution with its rich history. History is something which we ex colonials sometimes envy, although the Chief Executive has informed me that America is not old enough to have history, but for now just has habits!

And for me, that feeling of trepidation and sense of honour are all the greater for being the first President to be elected from beyond the UK's shores. A further indication - if one were required - of the internationalism of the Institution.

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the Institution's new Headquarters, and present my first report as the 31st President of the Institution and Chairman of its Board of Trustees. As is customary, my report will reflect on the Institution's achievements over the past year, and will look forward to what changes and activities members can expect over the next twelve months.

Although not easy for a trans-Atlantic commuting President, I have nonetheless had the opportunity to meet with members of the Institution and others in the global maritime industry. That opportunity has only served to remind me of the standing and respect which the Institution enjoys throughout the international maritime industry. Whilst the Institution should always be proud of its roots and what it has achieved over the past 155 years, there is no doubt that today the Institution is truly an international organisation, and that internationalism is reflected in its membership and all its activities.

Membership over the past year showed a modest increase, and it is again standing at its highest in the Institution's history. The growth continues to come mainly from countries other than the UK, demonstrating that the Institution does indeed reflect the international maritime industry. Seen in the context of the challenges which the maritime industry and therefore members of that industry continue to face, this increase is all the more commendable. Once again, the increase in the number of Associate Members and Student Members – those at the start of their careers – was particularly pleasing, reflecting as it does the continuing priority which the Council gives to encouraging the younger members of the profession to be involved with the Institution.

However, I make no apologies for reminding you that the Institution cannot be complacent over these increases in membership. The Institution cannot take it for granted that those individuals who are today involved in the design, construction or maintenance of marine vessels and structures will become members of the Institution. The Institution must constantly show the value of membership

and that it does indeed demonstrate an international recognition of the achievement, or intention to achieve, the highest standards of professional competence - and that membership will benefit a member's career. – With apologies to the late U.S. President, John F. Kennedy, membership is an area where I would urge members to “ask not what their Institution can do for them, ask what they can do for their Institution.” If you have engineering colleagues who are directly involved in the design, construction and maintenance of marine vessels and structures, regardless of whether they are naval architects; or if you have colleagues who are not engineers, but who are involved or interested in the design, construction and maintenance of marine vessels and structures; and if any of them are not yet members then please contact the Chief Executive who will do the rest. His offer of a free journal subscription in return still stands! It is vital that the Institution maintains its membership growth if it is to maintain its international appeal and influence.

Over the past year, the Institution has maintained its priority of encouraging the involvement of the younger members of the naval architecture profession in its activities. This is achieved through student membership at many universities world-wide and through the prizes and awards which recognise the achievements of the students. Many of these awards are co-sponsored by companies, serving to demonstrate the valuable link which the Institution provides between universities and industry. These awards are presented to first year, third year and final year students, reflecting the continuous engagement which the Institution has with the universities.

Once again, and thanks to the generosity of some companies, students have been able to attend the Institution's conferences - but demand always outstrips the number available and more places are always sought. If your company would be interested in sponsoring a place, at a very modest cost, again, please contact the Chief Executive. He may even offer you a free place at a conference! Another opportunity for members to put something back into their Institution.

For many members, one of the greatest benefits of membership is the opportunity to meet other maritime professionals at local Branch or Section meetings. This has been apparent to me as to date I have visited nine different Branches and Sections in four different countries. All the Institution's Branches and Sections have had full programmes of technical meetings and other activities during the year, and I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Institution, to thank those members who give willingly and freely of their time to serve on the Division Councils, and Branch and Section Committees. Without their efforts and contribution, such activities would not take place. It is due in no small part to their efforts that the Institution enjoys its international standing. I would particularly like to thank the members of the Institution's newest Branch in Cochin, who held their first meeting earlier this month.

However, thanks to the pressures of work and tempus fugit, there is always a demand for members prepared and able to contribute their time as members of committees. Again, an opportunity to put something back.

But of course many members also make their contribution in other ways, for example by refereeing papers for conferences and publications, acting as Professional Review Interviewers for those members seeking registration, promoting the Institution and encouraging membership wherever they are, or simply by maintaining their membership. If I may return to what appears to be becoming a

theme of my Report, these are all opportunities for members to put something back into their Institution and their profession – nothing is more valued and appreciated than their time and enthusiasm

As it was in 1860, “promoting and facilitating the exchange of technical and scientific information ... thereby to improve the design of ships” has continued to be the aim of the Institution over the past twelve months, which it has successfully achieved through its publications and its conferences.

All the Institution’s journals have continued to enjoy their well-deserved reputations as the leading technical journals in their fields, appreciated for the quality and scope of their content in the 100 and more countries in which they are distributed. This reputation has helped to maintain the attraction of the Institution’s journals to advertisers.

However, maintaining the journals commercial and editorial success does not come easily and the Institution is very grateful for the work of the advertising, editorial and production staff in achieving that success.

Many members have opted to only receive the digital versions of the journals, which they can read on their iPads and other tablets as well as their PCs. This results in a significant saving in postage and printing costs, allowing a reduction in membership fee to be offered, as well as making a contribution to saving the rain forest. I would urge members to consider this option, but I would also reassure them that the Institution will continue to give members the choice of digital or printed editions.

The Institution has maintained its reputation for the quality of its international conferences. In the past twelve months, it has organised or co-organised a comprehensive programme of conferences and courses in the UK, China, Korea, Italy, Indonesia, New Zealand and Japan. As always, the Institution’s conferences have reflected developments in the maritime industry, with marine renewable energy and the environment again featuring strongly in its conference topics.

The Institution’s conferences continue to attract papers of the highest quality, but the pressures of work, in many cases resulting from increased activity with reduced numbers, does impact on the number of delegates attending conferences. I would urge those of you in a position to do so to promote the value to their companies of their engineers hearing and discussing the latest developments in the maritime industry, as well as the invaluable networking opportunity which conferences present

The Institution is grateful for the efforts of both the Institution’s conference staff and those members who referee the papers and chair the conference sessions.

The Institution has continued to encourage high standards by recognising the achievement of both those young - and not so young - members of the profession and industry. It was a great pleasure to present the Institution’s medals and prizes a few moments ago. At the Institution’s Annual Dinner this evening, I will be announcing the winners of the Institution’s Maritime Safety Award, which has now been running since 1999, and the Maritime Innovation Award, now in its second year.

These two Awards are perhaps all the more valued since they reflect the recognition of the industry, as well as the Institution, of these achievements. The Institution is grateful to Lloyd's Register and QinetiQ for their continuing support of the awards.

As I said, it will give me great pleasure to present this year's Awards at the Annual Dinner this evening but I would invite you – even now - as members of the global maritime industry, to be giving thought to, and forwarding your nominations for next years' Awards.

The 2014 President's Invitation Lecture was presented by Dr Bas Buchner, President of MARIN, whose presentation "Research for Future Ships and Offshore Structures: Bridging the Gap between Design and Operation" addressed an issue of the utmost importance to the global maritime industry and once again filled the venue at One Whitehall Place. The continuing ability of the Institution to attract such leading members of the industry to present this Lecture is, I believe, a further indication of the Institution's standing. The Institution is most grateful to ABS for their continuing support of this event.

The Institution's links and standing with industry were maintained through its Corporate Partner members, the sponsorship of awards and activities, and the many visits to companies made by the Chief Executive.

As I announced at the start of my Report, I present it as both the elected President of the Institution and as the appointed Chairman of the Board of Trustees, providing a link between those two bodies.

The Board of Trustees is now in its second year as the Institution's governing body, and during that time has completed its review of the Institution's policy with regard to such key matters as its investments and risk management. As a smaller body of 12 members of Council, it is better able to focus on governance matters, and ensuring the proper management of the Institution in accordance with the requirements of the UK Charity Commission. The Institution's status as a registered charity provides significant benefits, particularly financial.

This has allowed the larger Council to concentrate on the professional, technical and learned society affairs which are at the heart of the Institution. In that respect, the Council of today is fulfilling the role of the Council in 1860. That role of Council is principally exercised through the Institution's standing committees – the Membership, Professional Affairs and Publications Committee - and the Technical Committees, which include the IMO, Safety, Small Craft and High Speed Vessels Committees. I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the work of all the members of all the Institution's standing committees, as well as those on our Council and Board of Trustees.

The Technical Committees provide the means by which the Institution makes its collective expertise available to such forums as the International Maritime Organisation, where the Institution continues to make a significant contribution which is recognised and valued by both the members and Secretariat of the IMO. The Council has formed a Working Group to review the structure and responsibilities, to ensure that they reflect the developments in the profession and the maritime industry since they were formed.

I hope you will agree that this report on the Institution's activities over the past twelve months is very encouraging and describes an Institution which continues to go from strength to strength. I said at the beginning of my report that I would also look to the future, at least over the next twelve months. In short, it is expected to be more of the same with regard to its membership and activities, always seeking to respond to the changing needs and priorities of its members, the profession and the maritime industry.

In completing my Report, I would like to pay tribute to two people. My first "thank you" goes out to our Chief Executive, Mr. Trevor Blakeley. In the case of Trevor, I am reminded of the job description of a conductor, that is, someone whose primary duties are to unify performers, set the tempo, execute clear preparations and beats, and to listen critically and shape the sound of the ensemble. Although these words are not usually used in our industry, they are not a bad example of what Trevor so masterfully does for RINA. I can assure you that for this rookie president, the job would be significantly more burdensome without his tireless efforts.

My second "thank you" is offered to my predecessor, Mr. Peter French. Peter's term of office, lasted a record 4 years and coincided with a period of particular challenge in both the maritime sector and the affairs of the Institution. These challenges included the move to the Institution's new Headquarters, in which we meet for the second time, and the formation of the Board of Trustees. I recognise that both the Institution and I will face challenges during my term of office, and for those I will rely on your support. Having said that, we're all better off because of Peter's leadership for those four years and it is my intention to leave Peter with the record for the longest serving President.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your attention. The floor is now yours, to comment on or query the content of my report.

Bruce S. Rosenblatt FRINA
President