

Time to retire as Council member for the Liverpool Society

By John Tiernay



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I retire from Council in May 2017. I will have served as one of your Council members for 12 years.

Council members are appointed for a term of 4 years, so I will have won – and on one occasion just survived by 7 votes – 3 elections. The Society has a long history of elections for Council, something of which the Society can be quite proud. Too many Council members from other constituencies are elected unchallenged, sometimes evidence of apathy rather than that the incumbent Council member is the best person for the role. That said, even in Liverpool elections, the level of members voting in Council elections rarely rises above 9%. The Institute is keen to try to raise the level of voting, in choosing my successor, please do take the trouble to vote!

As a Council member, I am described by the Institute as an “active member”, along with all the other volunteers who serve on society and Institute committees, etc. Without the volunteer force, much of the work of the Institute would grind to a halt. The truth is that there are too few active members; those that there are tend to be drawn from more senior members of the profession both in age and standing. This is understandable. Younger members have to consider their careers, firms may be reluctant to grant time off to attend committee meetings, etc. There may not, at a younger age, be any particular motivation or desire to become involved in institute business. Why not, however, give it a go? You may be surprised by how stimulating it can be.

Like so often in life, I became involved simply because the opportunity presented itself. I must admit that I had not thought about seeking election, but the North Wales region of the Society had had a history of Council members: John Anderson, Aubrey Davies, and, depending on which part of his garden he was standing in at the time, one might even count Ian Morris, who, of course, went on to be National President. Some time previously, I had been Chairman of the Chester and North Wales Branch Society, so it seemed like a chance not to be missed. I know that some members of the Society who might be interested in putting their names forward for election are potentially

put off by the risk of failure. Nothing ventured, nothing gained, although I admit that I was always delighted to find that I had been successful at each election!

Was it all worth it? Absolutely! Ian Morris described joining Council as joining the best club in London. You make good friends certainly, but beginning to understand how the Institute works, the immensely hard work of the Executive, the challenges facing the profession and how they are met gives a very different view of our complex Institute. It works very hard on behalf of members, although it is still not terribly good at convincing us of that – or is it just that members are not very good at listening?

What can be achieved? It is a good idea, perhaps, not to throw one’s weight around as a new member of Council, but one should certainly not be a wall flower. Opportunities abound for committee work, which, if I am honest, is often much more interesting and challenging than Council business. I served for a number of years on the Technical Advisory Committee, arguably the Institute’s most interesting committee, among a long list of committees. Beyond committee work, there is always the opportunity to seek to join the Board or to go for high office as President, although competition among Council members is fierce. I threw my hat into the ring to be Chairman of Council – a far more modest role than that of the Office Holders, but challenging nonetheless and thoroughly enjoyable. The Chair is elected annually. I stood successfully for two years, the maximum number of years being three. The Council chamber, as it was then called, now The Auditorium, was renovated during my chairmanship. Charing Council meetings in the Great Hall at Moorgate Place kept one on one’s toes. I have to admit that now that I am on the “back benches” again, it is not quite the same thing!

So, the opportunity exists to put your name forward for Council or, if not that far, for membership of the Liverpool Society Committee, thence to committee work. There is no doubt that I shall miss being one of your Council members, but 12 years is time enough in my opinion.

A big thank you for all those good enough to vote for me over the years. Just make sure that you take the trouble to vote for my successor.

