

IRRV – London & Home Counties Newsletter

September 2013



David Graaff Elected as Association President

At the recent AGM, David Graaff, Customer Services Director for Elevate East London was elected as President of the IRRV London and Home Counties Association.

David writes - In my year as President I hope to build on the success the London and Home Counties Association has achieved in recent years. These are challenging times for our profession and as an Executive we are producing what we hope will be a valuable series of briefings and events for existing members and their guests (who we hope to encourage to become members!).

It's not all work though, and we look forward to some social networking too with golf, dinner and quiz events to come over the year ahead.

On a personal level I am looking forward to another exciting year working with the talented Executive to deliver a great programme for members. I will also be supporting a charity that I have been involved with for many years, the Friends of Matthew Rusike Children's' Home, by driving a very elderly Mercedes to North Africa where it will be sold for the charity.

To contact David you can e-mail him at;
david.graaff@ElevateEastLondon.co.uk



New President David Graaff

A message from our Past President

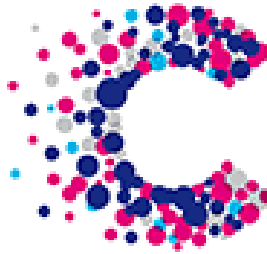
On the 9th May the IRRV London and Home Counties Association held its AGM which saw me step down as the local association President. While I had thoroughly enjoyed my year representing the Association, it was a tough year for all involved with the profession with some of the greatest changes being faced across all sectors since many careers began.

Once again, through the hard work of the L&HC Executive Committee, we hope we were able to offer not only a range of topical professional meetings but also a number of social events which enabled members to network and gain from each other's experience of the many challenges faced.

I faced my own challenge just a few days after stepping down! To support my charity for the year, Cancer Research, I had enrolled in the London 2013 Moonwalk which, in case you're not familiar with it, sees approx 18,000 people set off on a 26.2 mile power walk through the streets of London at midnight. Originally established to specifically support breast cancer research the other challenge is the outfit since they issue you with a bra (both men and women alike) and ask that you decorate it and wear it during the walk. By

comparison to the previous president's who had run the London Marathon, I had originally thought this would be quite a good idea since surely this was just a slightly longer walk than my usual amble round the Great Park with the dog. If I was in any doubt, the arrival of a 13 week training plan and my first "long" walk of 16 miles soon put paid to that idea! However, I'm pleased to say that I completed the challenge in 8.03 minutes raising £1,140 for charity. Many thanks to all of you who sponsored me but don't worry, I won't be asking you to part with any funds again anytime soon.....

This year's Association president is David Graaff and I'd like to wish him all the very best for his year ahead and look forward to continuing to work with him on the Executive Committee.



CANCER
RESEARCH
UK



Louise presenting the prizes at the Association Golf Day

IRRV Elections 2013

A number of London & Home counties members are standing in the current elections for IRRV National Council – please ensure you use your vote. An e-mail has been sent from Gary Watson with full details

Click Here to transfer to the Council Election site



November 2013

A number of London & Home Counties members will once again be growing ridiculous facial hair for the worthwhile Movember charity for the whole month of November. Last year many of our members willingly avoided shaving upper lips for the month to provide hours of entertainment for colleagues and loved ones as well as raising many thousands of pounds. To get involved this year please contact Andy Cummins -

andy.cummins@phoenixcommercial.co.uk



The Valuers' Association

This Association takes over the role of the former Valuation Faculty Board of the Institute with an enhanced comprehensive remit covering the professional activities of valuers of land and buildings for a wide range of purposes whether within, or outside, the public service. Whilst the primary focus must be on UK law and practice relating to the valuation of property assets for whatever purpose the Association intends to bring an unequalled international perspective to the art or science of valuation as practised in Europe and beyond.

With leading valuation practitioners amongst its members The Valuers' Association intends to grow from a strong base to become a significant and recognised source of expertise, guidance and advice to those presently engaged in commercial, retail, industrial and plant and machinery valuations (including land) whether for open market disposal, compulsory purchase, sales transactions, tax valuations or otherwise.

Members of the Association range from partners in the major practices in the UK to those providing significant advice or research conclusions to local and national Government at a high level.

Far from looking only towards the larger private practice or organisation, The Valuers' Association also includes some of the smaller niche advisers presently giving excellent service to a small number of – often specialist – clients in the leisure, local government or private commercial fields. These are professional people of long experience and standing whose expertise can be identified by their regional knowledge, connections to the legal profession or specialist legal advice and the provision of expert evidence through the Courts, and before Tribunals and arbitrators.

The Valuers' Association provides an avenue by which one can join with professional equals with a common interest without the all-embracing aspirations of some of the other UK based professional bodies. We exist –and will grow – because we are good at what we do and have common cause.

For further details contact either Gary Watson, Deputy Chief Executive of IRRV <gary.watson@irrv.org.uk> or Peter Scrafton, Chairman of the Association <jpscrafton@jpscrafton.com>

Golf Day

To continue a year of exceptional sporting challenges, may I remind you that the Annual IRRV London & Home Counties Association golf tournament will take place on Monday 9th September 2013 at the South Herts. Golf Club's Vardon course. Since the tournament's inception nine years ago, the day has continued to be generously sponsored so that entry remains at £35.00 which includes green fees, breakfast on arrival at 9:30am, dinner (tie required) and trophies. The format is individual stableford scores using full handicap (max 24).

The club is located in Totteridge North London and the course is renowned for its relatively small, often sloping greens, and the undulating nature of the land place a premium on intelligent shot placement. This, together with putting surfaces which are amongst the best in the south of England is why South Herts. has regularly been chosen as an Open Championship pre-qualifying venue and for the London & Home Counties tournament.

If you would like to join us, it is essential that you book a place urgently, please contact Andy Cummins on 07841995732 or by email andy.cummins@phoenixcommercial.co.uk

The Association's grateful thanks go to long time supporters Equita and Newlyn plc and to Phoenix Commercial Collections Ltd. for agreeing to continue to sponsor this event. Competition for the sponsors prize will be also hotly contested once again this year with holders Equita (shown below receiving the trophy from organiser Andy Cummins and President Louise Freeth) very keen to retain their trophy.



Meet the Executive – Christopher Grose

Chris is the Divisional Director (Rating) for Capita Symonds, here he gives some background to his career.

I managed to fall into being a rating valuer when in August 1988 I left South Bank Poly following my degree in Estate Management and joined GL Hearn. Many of you will realise that this was the same year as the Local Government Finance Act 1988 which introduced the current business rates system was passed. It rather amuses me that as a result of the proposed changes to the rating system approaching but the details being unknown there was only 30 minutes spent on rating on my degree course. Those 30 minutes have given rise to a 25 year career so far! At GL Hearn I dealt with all property types, but obviously (or at least for those that know GL Hearn) retail dominated, all over the country.

After a few weeks at GL Hearn I left and joined the VO based at Tunbridge Wells, exchanging a complicated time consuming commute for a short drive. My experience from GL Hearn meant that I worked in the rail team in Tunbridge Wells, although for some reason found myself also specialising in telecommunication masts. This did mean that on occasions I found myself negotiating appeals on properties where in previous Lists I had represented the ratepayer! My career highlight at the VO was probably the opening of Bluewater Shopping Centre. My line manager had rashly promised Dartford Council that we would assess the Centre within 2 months of its opening and I was targeted with delivering this promise. With hardwork and dedication shown by the team the target was met. At the time we were also hard at work preparing the 2000 revaluation.



Following the introduction of the 2000 revaluation and before I had to maintain (or was it defend) it I left the VO and joined Bisset Moffatt Hill based in Crawley, exchanging a 15 minute drive for one of just under an hour, across the beautiful Sussex countryside. I returned to dealing with rating appeals for all property types but predominately in London and the South East. I even found myself dealing with appeals on properties where I had already acted historically whilst working for both GL Hearn and the VO, it made challenging floor areas interesting! After a respectable period in Crawley I returned to London joining Sanderson Weatherall and working with Tom Dixon who many of you will know. This meant a return to the daily commute, but the train service had much improved in my absence and as a train passenger one can at least sleep which is not recommended when driving.

Finally in 2011 I joined the Capita Real Estate team. Well at the time I was interviewed I was planning to join NB Real Estate but in the meantime they were acquired by Capita Symonds. My role within Capita is to advise clients on their rates liability checking rate demands, appealing assessments, negotiating with the VO, appearing in Valuation Tribunal (and theoretically the Upper Chamber), advising on empty rates so all those things the rating valuer does.

I stood for the committee of London and Home Counties section of the IRRV because I believe the IRRV is a great body delivering value for money to its members, great meetings, informative magazines etc. Business rates come in for a significant amount of bad press, primarily as retailers seek to level the online retail playing field. The press ignores the great works done in collection, which make business rates one of (if not the most efficient) tax system in the country. I believe that as members of the IRRV rating valuers, (both in the VO and private sector) and those in collection and enforcement should be working together to ensure the system continues to work efficiently and fairly and remains providing us all with employment for many years to come."

Boat Party

The Boat Party/BBQ is quite a recent addition to the London and Home Counties Association calendar but it has proved increasingly popular. The location on board HMS President is second to none with a panoramic view along the Thames to the House of Parliament and the London Eye.

We have always been lucky with the weather and everyone has been able to enjoy relaxing in the evening sunshine on deck whilst enjoying the good food and a few drinks. When the sun goes down and the temperature drops people have kept up the heat below deck by busting a few moves on the dance floor late into the evening! Thanks to Equita's continued generous sponsorship we are hoping that the 2013 event will be equally popular so we hope to see you all there. At 4pm before the party there will a professional meeting on the Bailiff Act changes – this will include a presentation from Paul Sharpe with a response from local government representatives.



Enjoy a summer party and BBQ on the Thames on HMS President, moored in the City of London, amongst all the famous landmarks, and with spectacular panoramic city views. Free bar to a limit and a disco until late.

The party will start at 6.00 and will be preceded by a meeting at 4pm. The details of the meeting will be confirmed nearer the date but attendance at one event does not require attendance at both.

Tickets cost £25

Dress - Casual as you like

To book tickets please contact:

Paul McDermott at p.mcdermott@informcpi.com

or Phil Black at pblack@westminster.gov.uk



A Big Thank You



To all of our generous sponsors, without whom we would not be able to arrange so many events.

Sponsors in the past year include Civica UK Ltd, Equita Ltd, JBW Group, Liberata, Phoenix Commercial Collections, Rundle & Co Ltd, Newlyn plc

Thanks also to LB Westminster, LB Southwark and City of London for the use of meeting rooms

Meet the Executive – Dharsh Chander

Having worked in local government for several years and specifically for Liberata in Hounslow, I felt it was time to get into management to advance my career.

I believed that I had an opportunity to make a tremendous difference to the Recovery Team and took the Team Leader role. I have been able to make difference both in training & processing as well as the Arrears Collection Project which I have headed for the past two years in Hounslow which has been considered a great success. As a result I now advise other Authorities on how they can increase their collection of arrears.

In 2011, I decided to begin studying the IRRV Tech which I passed and then the IRRV Dip in 2012, after what seems like a never ending year of studying I took my exams in June and have passed with a Distinction in Management. As a student I felt strongly that I wanted to be involved with the IRRV and to make a difference to the Institute that I was studying with, it was not a matter of getting the results and a title and disappearing but in a small way giving something back and to keep the interest going in making the Institute a success in both local government and private sector. Hence after the exams in June I joined the London & Home Counties Association and look forward to a long relationship with the Association.



Dates for your diary

Quiz Night

This years Annual Association Quiz will be held on **Friday 26th November 2013** (date to be confirmed) at the Barley Mow in Horseferry Road.

The pub is a short walk from St James Park (District Line), 10 minutes from Victoria Station (Victoria and Main line) and a similar distance from Westminster station (District and Jubilee Line).

The coveted shield and prizes will be contested in the highly convivial atmosphere of this pub in the usual format of up to three members per team with proceeds to the President's charity.

Further details will be circulated shortly

Professional Meetings

We are looking to arrange a full calendar of professional meetings for all IRRV member. Proposed subjects include Bailiff Reform, Valuation and NNDR and Universal Credit. If you have any ideas of subjects to be covered please contact a member of the executive.

STOP PRESS – Meeting on Bailiff Reform on Friday 6th September at 4pm (HMS President)

Annual Association Dinner

Our Annual Association Dinner will be held this year on **Friday 7th February 2014** when we will be returning to the prestigious surroundings of the Innholders Hall, 30 College Street, Dowgate Hill, London EC4R 2RH (off Dowgate Hill, 50 yards from Cannon Street, 200 yards from Bank underground). This has proved very popular on previous occasions and the Innholders have a justified reputation for hospitality.

This really is an excellent evening of fine Wine and dining – a unique event in the IRRV national calendar.

Full details will be circulated shortly.

Many thanks once again to Gordon and Carla-Maria Heath for arranging this event.



Dining Room – Innkeepers Hall