



Focus

Creating a sound basis for the next 50 years

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My thanks to Captain John Lloyd FNI for allowing me to take over the Focus spot in *Seaways* this month as the incoming President of The Nautical Institute. To be elected President is such an honour; even more so as we celebrate the 50th Anniversary of The Nautical Institute this year. 50 years is a fantastic achievement, and I am proud to be a member of an Institute that is as relevant today as it was in 1972, perhaps even more so.

For me it is quite surreal that I will be taking over the role at Plymouth University, where I was first introduced to The Nautical Institute during my two week deck cadet induction course at the (then) Plymouth School of Maritime Studies. Someone from the Institute came to talk to us about the value of being a member and, although I considered it too expensive to join at the time (my priorities and spending decisions were different then), I did join on my first trip to sea as Third Officer at the beginning of 1984. And here I am, still a member all those years later!

Gaining - and giving back

This is a time of celebration and optimism for The Nautical Institute, but it should also be a time of reflection both for us as an organisation and as individual members. Why am I still a member 38 years later? Although delighted to be in this position, I certainly did not join The NI because I wanted to be President! If I am completely honest, one of the main reasons I joined up was to have the letters AMNI after my name. At the time I did not have a degree and I thought having letters after my name would help as I progressed in my career. Over the years I have benefitted in many ways from my membership, particularly career development through networking, and now I am enjoying putting a little back into an Institute that has given me so much.

Please take a few moments to reflect on why you are a member of the NI, and share those gains by encouraging others to join us. We have set an optimistic target of 10,000 members by the end of our current strategic plan. Wouldn't it be great if together, we could achieve that target by the end of my Presidency in two years' time.

Ensuring the future

The theme of our Golden Anniversary celebration is *'Maritime Leadership in a Changing World'*. Our anniversary events have kicked off in true Nautical Institute style with a global mix of celebration and technical discussions at the highest level, looking at issues that affect our members both afloat and ashore. At The Nautical Institute we recognise that high quality leadership and excellent change management is essential in a time of accelerated development. To

develop and support the leaders of tomorrow we must give opportunity to the younger professionals of today, especially the cadets who are trying to get relevant sea time to enable them to become competent watch keeping officers.

We have seen some great strides forward by ship owners in developing 'greener' vessels that are more environmentally friendly and less polluting, but still commercially viable. These cutting-edge vessels require the very best seafarers to operate them, and this is where I believe our industry will struggle in the future. We must give cadets opportunities to sail and learn their trade. I know of cadets in North, Central and South America and India (to mention just a few) who are unable to find berths as cadets. This is so sad, as these young seafarers are keen to sail and gain that experience, but no one will give them a chance. If you want the very best operating your vessels, I recommend you train them yourselves and guarantee success.

Mentoring and support

Amid all the celebrations, please spare a thought for our many members, especially those at sea, who are still facing the challenges of Covid with lockdowns, restrictions in shore access, and ongoing repatriation problems. And then there is a war that is causing such hardship and emotional stress to seafarers both within their own country and when they are away at sea. My thoughts and prayers are with you.

Over the course of my presidency, we will talk a lot about mentoring but mentoring is not just about transferring experiential knowledge. It is about support, being a shoulder to lean on and about caring for each other. At the start of the Covid pandemic, I asked you to make a point of asking a seafarer "Are you OK?" and I think this helped. Please continue to do this at every opportunity.

I hope that I will meet many old and new friends over the course of the next two years starting with the AGM in Plymouth and on to Lisbon, Singapore, Karachi and, I hope, Hong Kong. Until then, be safe.

Andre