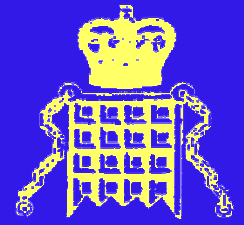


The Bond



NEWSLETTER OF THE
FEDERATION OF CUSTOMS AND EXCISE RETIRED STAFF ASSOCIATIONS
AND THE
RETIRED MEMBERS SOCIETY

March 2008

Special

Modern Times

I received my copy of the February issue of The Bond today, 8th March; which is a great disappointment, as I sent it to the printer on January 15th. At one time, Erith could print and despatch in 2 weeks.

I believe the printing was executed promptly, but that the delay occurred due to constraints at Erith, who pack and despatch for us.

This delay was caused by stringent “cuts” which have been imposed once again at that unit, with great staff reductions last year; and the low priority we have in their high workload. Not the fault of the staff.

Should there be anyone out there who might suggest that this situation will improve in the future, I am afraid my reaction would be hilarious disbelief. The future, as far as support from HMRC is concerned, appears to be bleak. The scuttlebuck is that all in-house printshops will soon be privatised, and that no funding for The Bond is guaranteed.

It is therefore necessary to consider the future of the newsletter. There is no difficulty in continuing with electronic distribution, and those who are happy to receive it in this format will not be affected by loss of the printed version. However, a great number of the readership do not have access to the internet and from their reaction and comments, they would be distressed to lose this means of communication.

The AGM - which unfortunately I cannot attend this year - is just a few weeks off, and I would hope that this matter will be discussed with some urgency and with a positive outcome.

The printed version could be maintained by subscription. A rule-of-thumb calculation suggests that an annual membership subscription of £12 would enable the production of 4 and perhaps 6 issues per annum. (The VAT experts would have to give advice as to whether we would be liable to tax on such an enterprise). I would suggest that a charge be made for the emailed version also, to keep the overall cost well spread out.

The Waterguard website hosted by Trevor Tomasin is proving a great success, judging from the buzz of emails it generates. Long may it prosper! However, it must again be pointed out that many are missing out because they have not access to it, and The Bond is losing some of its input, understandably, because of this new facility.

Peter Trevett indicated that I would like to “retire” after 9+ years as editor. I would clarify this statement by confirming that I believe I have put my time in, and that out there will be someone who can take over and perhaps bring with them some fresh air! Be assured, however, that I will not abandon the job until such a replacement comes forward.

Because this “special” issue is restricted to the emailing list, I would be pleased if those receiving it could print it off and pass copies round to those in their circle who might be interested in my comments.

Well ... it is Saturday afternoon; the sun is well over the yard-arm; I’m off for a couple of pints while the little woman is out shopping!

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any constructive comments ... or perhaps an eager desire to become editor.

Best wishes,

Dave Taylor

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