

New President John Taylor talks about challenge!



Here we see Mike Ward (Immediate Past President) congratulating new President John Taylor (right)

In his home town of Coventry, newly installed national president John Taylor MBE delivered his inaugural address to the AGM on 8th June at the Britannia hotel. This was John's second term in office, the first being 15 years ago when he was installed in Harrogate and he highlighted the different challenges then compared to now.

He said, "the meat industry is hard work but the trade is in our veins and the way we cut the meat now and the numerous ways that we sell it is far more interesting than when I started 51 years ago behind the counter. A lot of this is down to world travel and the change in the way the customer will eat all the flavours from the spice, herbs and marinades. For example, shoulder of lamb was sold as a whole shoulder or cut in half but now it is boned and rolled and or cut into cubes or made into kebabs or many other products."

John also referred to the butcher being able to control food waste by the way the products are prepared and by the fact that customers need only buy the required quantity. The new president paid tribute to the work of some of his colleagues and particularly to William Lloyd Williams who had been awarded an MBE for services to the meat industry and especially for his excellent work in our slaughtering members defence on the over manning and excessive charges of the Meat Hygiene Service.

As John said, "many meetings have taken place over the six day rule from the EU on mince and although the butcher is exempt from this ridiculous rule it is still a big issue for cutting plants and approved premises. All meats in the UK are cooked so are safe."

John added that rules on game now very often make the product totally different from the taste it used to have, being shot, dressed and packed within a short time.

The new president referred to the arrangements made for the Spring Council meeting of the International Butcher's Conederation in London in April previously reported in Food Trader but he said it was good to hear of the IBC's efforts in Brussels to ensure that loose foods are not over regulated leading to over the top labelling. He likewise referred to the IBC's Young Butcher Competition held in Frankfurt and congratulated the youngsters on their impressive skills and the range of outstanding products.

John then mentioned the Federation's attendance at the BPex roadshows which he felt provided a good opportunity for members to speak personally on a range of issues. Training has always been high on John's list of interests and he made mention of the Master Butcher Qualification launched by the Meat Training Council. This he said will define what a master butcher is from the purchase of food animals through to understanding and overseeing the slaughter of animals, holding and maturing carcasses and preparing them for the retail trade.

Reference was made by the president to the Pennington Report following the South Wales e.coli outbreak and in particular to the over zealous demands of some EHO's over the use of two vac-pack machines. As John explained, the butchers licensing requirements that ended in 2006 did not require separate machinery for raw and cooked foods but the HACCP requirements have been retained in EU hygiene law as an essential part of food safety.



Mike Ward (left) receiving Immediate Past Presidents Jewel from President John Taylor



One for the album - President's Lady, Agnes Taylor, and Mike Ward)

John finished his address by saying "It is good to be in one of the top positions in the meat industry as president of the National Federation of Meat & Food Traders. It is always nice to be important but I promise I will remember it is also nice to be nice."

A gala dinner was held in the evening at the Britannia Hotel, Coventry to celebrate John's installation as President. The occasion also saw those present, including Executive Councillors and Honorary Vice Presidents bid a fond farewell to Graham Bidston, Chief Executive, on the occasion of his retirement. In recognition of his long service

with the Federation, 27 years to be precise, Graham was awarded the honour of Elected Vice President and presented with an engraved pewter salver.

Celebrations for Graham did not end here as, a few days later, he also enjoyed a farewell lunch together with his wife, staff both past and present, as well as local business associates. Graham's association with the Federation has not come to a complete end, but you can read more about this in Graham's official 'Goodbye' opposite

More about the issues raised and discussed at Conference will appear in the next issue of Food Trader!



John Taylor (right) awarding Graham Bidston his Elected Vice Presidency

Goodbye and Thanks



Graham Bidston, the Federation's Chief Executive retired on 11th June and left the following farewell message to members and others in the Industry.

The Federation I have left is

quite a bit different from the one I joined in 1983. Times change and the Federation has changed with it. In the eighties it was all about legislation, legislation and legislation but most of that is now dictated by the EU and we

have all become smaller fish in a bigger pond. So, over the years, the organisation has become more focussed on the direct services it offers to its members such as daily advice on food and employment law, marketing regimes and disseminating information.

Lobbying will still be an important part of what the Federation does but most likely there will be greater emphasis in the future on helping members by introducing more services aimed at promoting butchers alongside other independent food retailers.

During my time there have been ups and downs, the downs being BSE, foot & mouth and Chernobyl but the good things have far outweighed the bad. The independent food retailer has learned how to survive alongside supermarkets and there is something of a renaissance going on.

For my part I have enjoyed the challenges that the industry and members have thrown at me almost incessantly it seems and

have deemed it a privilege to have represented members' interests on many different forums and with many other industry organisations.

Particularly, I have been proud to have been the editor of the Federations magazine Food Trader for fifteen years and have always tried to be informative and even controversial where necessary, but hopefully, never ungentlemanly.

Through contact at conferences, Federation meetings and talking to members daily I have made many friends and that is the hardest part of retiring. I will miss them all but wish the Executive Council, members everywhere and the staff at Tunbridge Wells together with my successor, a healthy, prosperous and most importantly, a happy future. Goodbye, thanks and good luck to you all.

For a time via the Federation, Graham will still be available to deal with member's employment calls.