

## **General Secretary's Report**



A warm welcome to you all.

Once again, I find myself writing this report whilst the Nation is in a state of lockdown due to the ongoing Global pandemic. However, with the current progress with the National vaccination program, and the recently published Government roadmap, perhaps finally we can see a gradual return to a more normal way of living.

Currently we are still hoping that our 56<sup>th</sup> seminar will go ahead as usual at Harper Adams University, over the weekend of September 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>, and I hope to be able to meet up with friends old and new once again. The Trustees are working tirelessly to prepare a great line up of speakers, and be ready to work with the University staff to keep everyone safe.

One event which has unfortunately fallen victim to the current restrictions, and the timeframe it will take to allow public gatherings, is our National Annual General Meeting. This usually takes place in April, but we had already taken the decision to put the date back to June 12<sup>th</sup>. However, with the differing speeds at which the devolved Nations are easing restrictions, it has proven impossible to meet in person. As is usual with the Annual General Meeting's, we had been making plans to meet in Edinburgh, as since the Association was formed by the amalgamation of the various Associations North and South of the border, this forms part of our Articles of Association. Consequently, we will now look to meet at the Kings Manor Hotel in April 2022.

Elsewhere in this edition you will find details of how to register to attend the National AGM in June. We plan to hold the meeting online using Microsoft Teams, as this format is familiar to many of our members, and is quite straightforward to use.

You should also soon be receiving invitations from your Divisional Secretaries to attend your Divisional Annual General Meeting. Once again these will be online via Teams, and are a great opportunity to catch up on both what the Association is involved with, and to agree any resolutions you would like discussed at the National

AGM. Could I take this opportunity to ask you to ensure that you have provided our Registrar Michelle Barrett with up-to-date contact details, especially if you have changed your email address, as these are necessary for the Divisional Secretaries to keep in touch.

The last few months have unfortunately been saddened by news of the passing of a number of colleagues, including John Malone and Gary Cook. John was well known throughout the Food Standards Agency, both as a Meat Hygiene Inspector, and through the time he spent working with Internal Comms. He was a member of the Midlands Division, and would often attend local meetings. John had spent his working life in the Meat Trade, and there is an obituary to him included in this edition. Gary was a well respected Inspector working in the Midlands. Our thoughts are with their families and colleagues.

A couple of very topical subjects the Association is involved with at present are the changes to Inspection detailed in the Official Control Regulations and the Operational Transformation Program.

Since the announcement of the move towards a more risk based approach to some aspects of post mortem inspection, we have constructively engaged with our senior managers to raise the concerns we have on our members behalf. One particular concern involves the detection of diseases such as *Bovine Tuberculosis* and parasites such as *Fasciola Hepatica*. Whilst the discussions are still ongoing, it would be wrong to pass opinion on the outcome, but I would thank the Food Standards Agency for listening to, and replying to our letters, as it is only through dialogue, that we can try to make effective change. Our aim, as always is to promote the highest possible standards of Public Health, Animal Health and Animal Welfare, which means the accurate identification of conditions, and the communication of our findings to the consumer and producers. With the increasing reliance for the data, we collect to be accurate, we need to be able to precisely detect disease conditions through effective inspection.

The Association are also involved as a stakeholder in the ongoing Operational Transformation Program, and we had hoped to bring you an update in this edition. Unfortunately, as has been widely reported via the National Staff Engagement sessions, the paper which was going to be presented to the FSA Board this month has been delayed within Government. Once this has been published and discussed by the Board members, we hope to bring you the delayed article in a future edition. The team are keen to engage with the Association, which we welcome as an opportunity to put our thoughts across.

Whilst the United Kingdom has now left the European Union, the Association will continue to work with our European colleagues through the EWFC. This coming together of likeminded organisations, ensures that standards are consistently maintained. Like everyone working to maintain Food Safety, their members have been putting themselves at risk to continue the vital inspections necessary to protect

populations across the European Union. They are all 'Hidden Heroes' and should be applauded for the work they do, just as we have all been doing in the whole of the United Kingdom. Through our continued membership, we can keep informed of any proposed changes in the future to Food Regulations, that might, for example, affect exports.

Hopefully, subject to a return to more normal ways, the EWFC are hoping to organise a congress in Kilkenny, Ireland in October to mark their thirtieth year. Further details will be made available once it's known if it can go ahead.

As always, if you wish to keep updated on the work of the EWFC, please visit their website at [ewfc.org](http://ewfc.org).

Finally, I would like to end my report by sharing a couple of articles that I have been sent by my great friend Colin Wellington, that were originally published in the Meat Trades Journal in 1991. I would like to acknowledge their rights to the original work.

The first is a couple of articles including a report from our own seminar, when the then Government's Chief Vet, Keith Meldrum said that the Meat Industry needed a comprehensive Meat Hygiene Service, that looked beyond just meat inspection. We all now know that this eventually led to the formation of the Meat Hygiene Service where many of us began our careers. The other article concerns greater powers for both Veterinary Surgeons and Meat Inspectors to deal with casualty animals.



The final clip is about Colin when he had a successful butchery business in Falmouth in Cornwall. Colin had diversified his business by opening a bakery side to sell pies, pasties and bread.

## BUSINESS PROFILE

FALMOUTH butcher Colin Wellington was thinking of quitting the meat trade but adding a bakery has injected new life into his business.

"The meat side I didn't really hold a very rosey future for," Mr Wellington said. However, after getting the idea from a friend, who was also a butcher, he added a bake-off system in May and since then turnover in the shop has been up by around 50 per cent. He sells pies, pasties, which he buys in, and brings in raw dough which is proved and baked into bread.

Selling filled rolls and other bakery products has attracted a lot of new customers into the shop as tourists and office workers buy their lunches. "When I had just the meat trade I had mainly middle-aged or older customers. Now we have the rolls we get all ages."

The bakery equipment is worth about £6,000 and rather than outlay the money Mr Wellington leased the equipment for three years. So far the investment has paid off but Mr Wellington thinks it needs more time to prove itself.

"It's early days yet, we haven't had a winter with it." The fall off in tourist numbers after summer should be made up by

two butchers while his wife Stephanie and a part-timer run the bakery operation. He sells a side of beef, half a dozen lambs, two to three pigs and about 30 chickens a week. On the beef side the shop sells a lot of chuck steak as the locals make a lot of pasties. All beef from the forequarters sells well all year around.

The better cuts of beef have not been so successful this year and wholesalers have been stuck with rumps, fillets and

sirloins. People seem to be trading down, especially for barbecues. "This year we have sold a lot of sausages and burgers where in other years we sold a lot of steaks (for barbecues). I don't know whether that is a sign of the times."

The recession has helped sales of bakery products. Instead of going to a restaurant for lunch and spending £20, families are buying rolls and pastries — getting a lunch for £5.



Colin Wellington, using bread to help bring home the bacon.

Mr Wellington has been a butcher all his working life. His family owned a shop in Newquay, Cornwall and he went into the family business after two years at Smithfield College and a year working at J H Dewhurst in the early 70s. Looking back Mr Wellington said he wished he had stayed at college for three years. "At that time the shop was doing really well. I didn't do another year. I wanted to get out and earn some money. Now I wish I stayed another year and did something like meat inspection." He moved across the Cornish peninsula from Newquay to Falmouth six years ago.

The shop is on a high street position which is good for passing trade, but causes problems with car parking. "Falmouth is crying out for a carpark," and an out of town Co-op store attracts a lot of custom because of its car parking. In the town there is a Marks and Spencer and a Gateway supermarket. "They bring people into town, I wouldn't want to see the supermarkets go." His shop is competitive on price and he sells cuts that the supermarkets don't carry. "I am the only one in town who sells a rolled sirloin. I can get just about any price I like on that."

"People look around for bargains and that. If someone wants a crown roast, they come

Best wishes to you all, and continue to stay safe in these difficult times.

Regards,

*Jeremy*