

Presentation of the Finlaison Medal to Brian Wilson

[The Institute and Faculty of Actuaries, Sessional Research Meeting, Staple Inn, London, 19 May 2014]

On the evening of Monday 19 May 2014, Mr Brian Wilson accepted the Finlaison Medal in recognition of his services to the actuarial profession.

Mr Fulcher, F.I.A.: Finlaison Medals are awarded in recognition of exceptional service to the profession, and, in Brian's case, that recognition is for his many years of distinguished service to the Continuous Mortality Investigation (CMI) Committee, the Pensions Board, and, more widely, the field of pensions.

On the CMI, in particular, Brian was instrumental in introducing the self-administered pension scheme mortality tables, as well as playing a role in mortality projections work.

He has also played a prominent role in public policy on behalf of the profession, including advising the Government on such issues as pensions splitting on divorce.

In his working career, he was a senior pension practitioner for Bacon & Woodrow, including, I am told, the interesting experience of being scheme actuary to one of Robert Maxwell's pension schemes.

Going back to his roots, Brian took his post-graduate diploma in theology and, post-retirement, volunteers for a Christian charity called Through the Roof, a reference to Mark, Chapter 2, I guess. He is also a Member of the General Synod of the Church of England, combining his two great loves, because I believe he is also a member of the Church of England Pensions Board.

Mr Wilson, F.I.A.: I am honoured and humbled by being awarded the Finlaison Medal. I am humbled, in particular, when I look at those whom I knew and worked with who have been awarded this medal before me, all of whom I looked up to, and two of whom, Sydney Benjamin and John Prevett, introduced me to actuarial science when I was very junior indeed.

The medal is given for furthering one or more objects of the profession, as set out in the Royal Charter. I have therefore looked at the Charter to find out what they are. There is one main object: in the public interest to advance all matters relevant to actuarial science in its application, and to regulate and promote the actuarial profession.

This is then amplified in 12 objectives. Of these, I think the following may have been in the award committee's mind, although I stand to be corrected.

Number Three: To advance the body of knowledge of actuarial science in its applications.

Number Nine: To provide advice on actuarial matters to government when requested to do so.

Number Ten – summarised: To consider existing and proposed legislation and make presentations and submissions to the relevant government or regulator.

On the first of these, I will leave others to determine. On the other two I plead guilty as charged, having looked in detail, on behalf of the profession, the Association of Consulting Actuaries and my firm, at just about everything that emerged from government over the period 1990–2010, which had anything to do with pensions.

I could not have done this alone. Actuaries take it as a given that all work done must be checked and scrutinised, where appropriate, before it is passed on to those for whom it is intended. I have sat on, or chaired, numerous committees, and all the work produced has been a joint effort of all the committee members and, in the case of the CMI, the committee secretaries as well.

I should like to mention in this regard Peter Tompkins and Gordon Sharp, as chairs of committees on which I have been privileged to sit, and Tony Leandro and Dave Grimshaw, as CMI secretaries, without whom the work of the CMI would have ground to a halt.

To those of you here this evening, who do not hold a medal from the profession, which must cover most of you, I would say that it is never too late to volunteer your services on behalf of the profession. You never know what may, one day, appear.