

COLLEGE OF ESTATE MANAGEMENT, READING

Diploma Ceremony, Saturday 11 July 2009

**Madam Chairman, Delva Patman,
Madam Principal, Dr Ann Heywood,
Past-Principal and immediate Past-
President, Peter Goodacre, academic
staff and, particularly, diplomates, your
relations and other supporters.**

I am very honoured to have been invited to be with you today and to have presented your diplomas. It has been one of my very first duties as incoming President of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. I succeeded Peter Goodacre as President only four days ago. Peter had a distinguished career as Principal of this College and he has had an equally distinguished year as President. Under his guidance RICS has become established in India – yet further evidence of the global reach of our profession – and as the first President, at least in modern times, from an academic background, he has focussed very successfully throughout the past year on nurturing and extending RICS's relationships with higher education establishments in the UK and worldwide.

It is also a particular honour for me to be here because few have the opportunity of doing so for a third time. Let me explain. Like you, I qualified through the College of Estate Management, and by distance learning. Mine was however a full time course and the distance was between London and Reading. When I applied for entry in 1967 to the Estate Management degree it was a London University degree but by the time my application had been

accepted I was informed that the College would be moving from St Alban's Grove, Kensington to the Reading University campus.

It does look as though a few of you present today remember the Swinging Sixties. However, the fashions of the Kings Road did not reach St Alban's Grove and the dress code for students, whether taking the urban or the rural option, was typically tweed jackets, ties and cavalry twill trousers. A certain Peter Goodacre was at the College at that time. He will be able to testify not only to dress standards but also to the very high academic standards set and maintained to this day by the College, whose staff are recognised as experts and leaders in their field. Throughout its 90 years' history a qualification from this College has always been held in the highest regard by the world of property.

So, when I graduated in 1970 I had never been to Reading. The night before graduation I was at a 21st party in South Wales for one of my room mates. The following morning his father drove us to Reading. We did not know our way around and had to ask passers by 'where is the Great Hall please because our graduation ceremony is being held there?' They looked at us in some amazement because we were supposed to have been here for three years. Some of you may well have been in the same position today but I hope not too many of you have had the same difficulty.

My second visit some seven years ago was as a parent. Our son, Edward, decided that he would follow in my footsteps. I can truly assure you there was no family pressure to make a career in property, even though my wife Angela, who is here today, is an architect. But having graduated he decided he would follow the example of one of his sisters and his brother-in-law and join the police force. He is now a traffic officer with Thames Valley Police, often patrolling the A34 and M40. I always drive through that area extra carefully but I do not think he is on duty today so you will not be running the risk of being stopped and receiving a second address from another Crofts on your return home.

So, I have sat in this Great Hall as a graduate and as a proud parent and now I stand here as the representative of all chartered surveyors.

In 1970 almost all chartered surveyors were UK based. A few were expatriates working mainly in Commonwealth countries with a few venturing forth to work in France and Belgium. Now, of some 90,000 qualified members, 17% are outside the UK. They are not just expatriate British surveyors, they include nationals of many countries for whom English is not their first language. There are chartered surveyors in 122 countries around the world and in 23 of those countries there are more than 100 members. The work of this College and its distance learning programme has contributed to that expansion and there will be much more to be done in the future.

During my career not only has the profession grown geographically but also in status and in influence. The range of work undertaken by surveyors has extended considerably, as evidenced by the specialist high level qualifications you have earned. No longer do the words valuer,

quantity surveyor and building surveyor encompass virtually the entire profession. And it is no surprise because our profession is a fundamental one. On any significant property decision or transaction there will be a lawyer and probably an accountant but if there is a surveyor, and there ought to be, the surveyor is probably the only one of those three to have actually seen the property – to have inspected it or valued it or considered its development potential or assessed the cost of construction and so on.



There is enormous potential for growth in the influence of RICS internationally. In France this year 100 newly qualified members brought our numbers to 700, but still just 1% of the UK membership. In the Netherlands I have seen for myself how the integrity, professionalism and

ethical standards of RICS members are positively welcomed by the property sector – especially following several pension fund scandals. These fundamentals really register when you hear a Dutch chartered surveyor telling a pan-European audience in Italy that the UK property market is the one Europe should aspire to because it is the most transparent, the best informed and is founded on integrity and professionalism.

So just as the RICS qualification is truly a global passport and represents the gold standard, the College diplomas are equally recognised as gold standard qualifications and I congratulate each and every one of you on your achievement.

It will have taken all of you a certain level of determination to get to the end of your course. Even so you may not have matched the determination shown by my late senior partner of JP Sturge, now King Sturge, Philip Franklin, who was RICS President in 1975-76. As a young Army officer he

was evacuated from Dunkirk. He had to choose whether to abandon his CEM notes or his rifle. He left his rifle behind as his notes would be of greater long term benefit. His qualification, when he eventually received it, like yours was hard earned and well deserved.

But let me turn to the other side of the Hall [family and friends]. You have no doubt provided vital support and encouragement when spirits were flagging and you may perhaps have had to stay at home when you would have preferred not to have given up an evening or weekend to ensure an assignment was completed in time. You too are to be congratulated upon your contribution to today's successes.

And so I say to both sides of the Hall – very well done.

Max Crofts 11/07/2009

