

To The Docks And Back Again

From dealing with waste in the London docks, to helping write the Highways Act, to becoming director general of the ESA: **Barry Dennis** has been at the heart of the waste and resources industry for 46 years. **Ben Wood** introduces you to CIWM's latest President

Some CIWM presidents choose their time carefully, to tie in with the "quieter" periods in their working lives, or perhaps even as a means of kicking off their retirement. At 64 years of age, however, Barry Dennis takes over the role in what could be the busiest year of his working life... but he is most definitely up for the challenge!

He is definitely well known in the industry, having made his mark in the 1970s, helping write the Highways Act, which established legislation for skip companies regarding how and where they could be sited and the need for permits. He has been with the Environmental Services Association (ESA) for 18 years, becoming its director general in April 2010, and in terms of his Institution involvement, Barry has been chairman and treasurer of the London and Southern Counties Centre, is a member of the Executive Committee, Finance Committee and General Council, and he remains on the board of IWM Business Services.

If all of that wasn't enough to contend with, he is also due to be elected Master of the Worshipful Company of Water Conservators next year... by which time he'll no doubt be exhausted! But for a man who "grew up" in the industry working long and "unusual" hours dealing with waste in the London docks, the hard work won't be a problem.

Barry left school in 1964, going straight to work with the Deards group of companies – a family business – which ran a number of operations and subsidiaries to its core logistics business, including a waste management business. His involvement in waste only came about because a colleague was away on long-term sick leave and so Barry was

told to "get in there and get involved."

He explained that it was at this time that skips were starting to appear, he made the decision for the company to get involved and quickly built a container fleet and ultimately became responsible for running the department,

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which is where his first contact with "docks waste" came about.

"We had a contract with the Port of London Authority to clear all the waste arising from Tower Bridge to Tilbury," Barry explained, "operating incinerators at Millwall [the chimney of which still stands] and the Royal Albert Dock."

There was an incident involving the incineration of a cargo of "drowned" corned beef, and another regarding the supposed destruction of some imported Hawaiian shirts... which are tales probably best told over a beer or two in the club house, and not here!

His time on the docks "widened my experience of life greatly," Barry explained. "The hours were long but to get the orders you had to be there at any time of day or night."

Going Full Circle

THE DOCKS had closed by the early 1980s, but Barry's connection with the place strangely went full circle when CIWM and the ESA partnered on Futuresource – its home at ExCeL being the very same spot he got his first taste of

the waste industry.

Now a director of the company, the Deards group actually demerged in the early 1980s and, along with the builder's merchants business that his brother had been running, Barry took a couple of key waste contracts too, at Lords and

the Oval cricket grounds, meaning 4am starts when there was a test match on to get the ground cleared and the waste loaded and taken away before the crowds arrived for the next day's play! This also represents another quirk of Barry's career going full circle, as not only as a young man was he a playing member of the MCC at Lords, before taking on its waste contract, but now as a member of the MCC he held his presidential dinner in the world famous Long Room at the venue... but more of the sporting stuff later.

Back in the waste world, Barry became involved with the Sand and Ballast Hauliers and Allied Trades Alliance (SABHATA), chairing its container committee for 20 years and as overall chair for five, where he got involved in the writing of the relevant sections of the Highways Act – legislation that remains to this day regarding skip reflectors, for example.

"Local authorities began charging for skips at this time," Barry explained, "and I led the campaign to stop the illegal charging for permits". With charges varying greatly from one place to another, the law was challenged and you

probably won't be surprised to hear that Barry won, helping the waste companies claim back some significant amounts of money. Looking back on this time in his career, one magazine even christened Barry the "Skip Super Hero". He's certainly proud of his achievements, even if he visibly cringes at the sight of that particular headline!

A Craving For Waste

THE NEXT period of Barry's career was spent in property development, but he admits "waste was in my blood and I wanted to get back in."

He was alerted to a job at NAWDC and, though times, names and roles have changed, he is still there as director general of the ESA... which is most definitely cutting a long story short, but Barry admits he still loves it, adding "If you cut me in half you'd see 'waste' written right through me!"

He first became involved with the Institution in the early 70s, explaining that he just "wanted to be involved" and remembers his first exhibitions in the mid-60s; the rain at Scarborough; the vehicle processions on the greens; and, most importantly, the beer tent! "We worked hard and played hard," he recalls, before adding that the decision to leave Torbay was the right one... and it was a decision Barry was very close to.

Chalk And Cheese

"CIWM AND ESA were like chalk and cheese," Barry recalls, "and being at ESA and getting involved with CIWM, well it took time to convince people I wasn't a spy!" But he is keen to stress that he always been involved with the Institution as Barry Dennis, not as a representative of the ESA.

He was involved in the co-badging of the two organisations' training courses and, regarding the Futuresource developments, Barry says he always felt it was "right for the two lead bodies in the sector to work together" and that it "must be for the benefit of the industry," adding that it is unique in that it still achieves that aim.

His long established roles at CIWM mean Barry has seen many presidents come and go but, training and Futuresource aside, what are his

priorities in his one year as president, and what does the role mean to him?

"I see it as progressing the role of CIWM within the industry as a whole," he explained, adding that the industry has changed but we are still recycling. In fact, he once referred to it as the "second oldest profession in the world" during a radio interview, which they weren't too keen to leave in the final edit!

"What we do is nothing new, it's just been given a new name," he added, "and it's higher up on society's agenda. The waste companies form partnerships now with the waste producers to deal with waste... and to ensure that we extract the value from the resource... it's not a waste any more."

46 years in the industry means Barry has seen plenty of changes: he remembers having a horse and cart employed on one MoD contract until 1973! – but he feels planning, and the timescale surrounding it, are the biggest issues we face.

"We can produce power with environmentally friendly technology, but to meet targets we need the facilities to work in, which requires planning."

A level playing field for regulation and ensuring that the EA can still "deal with illegal operations, following the Spending Review," are Barry's other key concerns for the industry's future. On a personal note, supporting professionalism and forging partnerships with other organisations in the sector are his personal aims as President for the year, with an overall remit of

"enhancing the Institution wherever possible".

So with his CIWM hat on you can expect to see Barry at centre meetings, at CIWM HQ and, of course, Futuresource, but away from work you'll probably find him somewhere near a sporting venue.

"Sport has played a bigger part in my life than it probably should have," he smiled. There's his time as a player with the MCC, his footballing appearances for the FA English Schools team, two years as a youngster at Tottenham – often training alongside the likes of Greaves and Gilzean, and he has played golf off a handicap of just four. And if you do have a chat with him over a beer, ask him where he was the day his company offices were held up at gunpoint. I'll give you a clue: he has his pads on and a bat in his hand! [CIWM](#)

