

# CONNECT

November 2022

Newsletter of AIACE-UK

## Message from the Chairman

*Tom Kennedy, Chairman AIACE-UK*

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Dear Members

### Swings and roundabouts

Despite the fact that the worst of the COVID-19 Pandemic with its associated lockdowns and frustrating social distancing seems to be behind us, we are still reminded from time-to-time of its virulence and capacity to disrupt. In recent weeks most of us will have been called to receive an autumn booster vaccination which seems likely to become an annual event. The protection and reassurance provided by effective vaccines has given us the confidence to resume most normal activities and social contacts through sport or going to theatres and pubs as well as using public transport.

In the case of AIACE-UK, the national Committee held an in-person meeting at Europe House in London on 27 September (with two members joining via Zoom) at which, *inter alia*, we confirmed the arrangements for our Autumn General meeting held in Newcastle-upon-Tyne on Thursday 28 October. Unfortunately, just a few days before that meeting, our speaker, Michael Clarke, was stricken with COVID but, since his symptoms were not severe, he kindly offered to present his lecture to the meeting via Zoom. Having ascertained that that would be technically possible at our chosen venue, we were able to go ahead with the meeting more or less as planned.

Our Secretary, Alan Huyton, circulated a report on 6 November summarising Professor Clarke's presentation as well as the AIACE business meeting together with links to the Zoom recordings.

This unexpected 'hybrid' meeting (i.e. simultaneously in-person and remote) proved a great success despite using somewhat improvised equipment. At our subsequent committee meeting we therefore decided to make all such member meetings hybrid wherever possible. In addition to the conviviality of an in-person meeting, this will enhance the inclusivity and transparency of such meetings to the benefit of the branch as a whole. We will acquire additional equipment to improve the sound and visual quality of the remote links and of any recordings. It will also be necessary to examine ways in which votes can be taken or committee elections organised so that both in-person and remote participants can vote under equivalent conditions.

### Composition of the Committee

Since our AGM last April was held only via Zoom, it was not possible to organise a formal election in accordance with our Constitution. Exceptionally, to ensure continuity, that meeting allowed the current members of the committee (including co-opted members) to continue in office. Notice of an election was given in due time prior to the autumn meeting and twelve candidates presented themselves for election to the twelve posts available. It was not therefore necessary to hold a formal vote: however, the meeting approved the composition of the new committee by a show of hands.

At our committee meeting on 16 November we assigned members to the various offices and tasks as necessary and the list is included in this issue of Connect. At the same meeting we decided to additionally co-opt Gail Kent who has recently retired after holding several senior management positions in the Commission's Human Resources Directorate General. Her knowledge and experience will be invaluable to our work.

## **Andy Simpson**

Last August we were very saddened to learn of the untimely death of our longstanding member and former Chairman of the branch, Andy Simpson. He served as an MEP from 1979 to 1994. An appreciation of his life is elsewhere in this issue.

### **Annual Pensions Update**

The scheme for updating the remuneration of officials (including the pensions of retired officials) is laid down in the Staff Regulations and is known as 'The Method'. There is a clear summary of the Method elsewhere in this newsletter. As mentioned in the note, the Method is not just a simple indexation of remuneration linked to some sort of prices or inflation indicator. Its aim is to ensure that the remuneration of EU officials evolves in line with the purchasing power of civil servants in the Member States, including, where necessary, reducing officials' remuneration.

The result of the 2022 update (covering the twelve months up to 1 July 2022) will be known by about mid-December. It is not possible to speculate as to the amount of any increase that may be payable as this year's update is complicated by exceptional factors included in the Method. The two principal components are the inflation rate in Belgium and Luxembourg (just below 9% for the period concerned) and the purchasing power of civil servants in a sample of 10 Member States representing 75% of the EU GDP. We believe that this year, that figure will be negative and so the amount will be deducted from the inflation rate.

There are further complications. First, in 2020 because of the financial crisis caused by the pandemic, a part of the increase payable in accordance with the Method was deferred. That part will be added to the 2022 settlement. Second, we received an interim payment in July of this year based upon the criteria measured up to the end of June. That will therefore be deducted from the total reached as above. Third, for pensioners whose entitlements are based in whole or in part on contributions made before May 2004 that part of the pension is subject to a correction coefficient, currently 128.3. That coefficient is likely to be reduced this year. Finally, there will almost certainly be a change in the exchange rate between the Euro and sterling which is fixed annually w.e.f. 1 July each year.

We expect that those 'swings and roundabouts' will result in a modest net increase in pension payments the exact amount of which will be determined for any given pensioner by the proportion of the payment that is subject to the correction coefficient. If our assumptions are correct, the resulting sum will be added to your pension payment for the month of December and the increase for the months of July to November will be paid at the same time.

It remains for me to wish you and those closest to you a peaceful and happy festive season and, above all a healthy year in 2023.

## **Editorial**

*Belinda Pyke Editor CONNECT*

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Welcome to this edition of CONNECT, the new name for CONNECT- contact. We used the latter name for the version we started issuing once lockdown started. That new version replaced the printed biannual issue with a more frequent one sent by email with paper copies to those who don't have easy access to email. This version has become the 'new normal' and, as we move to quarterly issues, it seems time to simplify the name. We will continue to send paper copies to those without easy access to email.

Caring is something that preoccupies us all, whether as future or current caregivers or care recipients, so we are pleased to publish an article from Philippa Russell on social care. Philippa, who is Vice President of Carers UK, concludes it with some suggestions on what AIACE-UK can do to support carers. Do let us know what you think about these ideas at [connect@aiace.uk](mailto:connect@aiace.uk). We will certainly come back to this important subject in future issues.

As the chair says in his piece, news about the uprating of our EU pensions is imminent (and may even reach you before this issue) so we've included a reminder of how the Method for uprating salaries and pensions works.

We do hope you will enjoy the other articles in this issue. Let us have your feedback and ideas for what you would like to see in future issues of CONNECT.

Best wishes for the New Year

## **Social Care – Partner or poor relation of the NHS and why it matters!**

*Philippa Russell*

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In September 2021, Boris Johnson stood on the steps of 10 Downing Street and announced that his government would finally 'fix social care once and for all'. A long-awaited government commitment to social care reform was a historic moment. But those of us who depend upon it knew that we were at the start of a very long journey.

Social care is poorly understood, badly funded and under-valued as the cornerstone of the NHS. Often seen wholly in terms of crisis care, care homes or dysfunctional families, it can offer a life-support system for people like myself and my family and it is grossly undervalued. The NHS is in theory free at the point of delivery. But social care is strictly means tested, expensive and the Autumn Statement pushed into the future a promise to 'cap' individual care costs at £86,000.

Good care costs. I am a 'veteran carer', with an adult disabled son. My severely disabled son gets some care for free (albeit heavily subsidised by myself). But my husband (with dementia, cancer and heart failure) did not. His care – the quality of care that I wanted – cost £8,000 a month during his last year of life. This was money well spent but behind the cost I saw the stark reality of the challenges for anybody needing care in the UK today. Finding carers was a nightmare – Brexit resulted in the departure of one third of the existing care workforce in my part of Sussex! One local carer left in tears – even with generous subsidies from myself, Aldi offered more financial security. With the cost-of-living crisis, the care workforce is in an even worse state – 165,000 vacancies at present and up to a third of care homes saying they have empty beds and cannot meet demand because of staff shortages. An ambitious workforce plan is part of the promised social care reforms, but the future looks bleak.

Social care is not necessarily long-term care. It could and should support people to live well at home and in their communities. It also plays an important role in rehabilitation and recovery from NHS treatment and major health episodes such as stroke or accident. But currently an estimated 13,000 patients are 'stuck' in hospital because they cannot be safely discharged home without some extra care and support. 'Bed blocking' is now a major NHS preoccupation, not surprisingly because the inability to safely discharge someone from hospital may mean another patient waiting far too long in a parked ambulance. The Government has pledged new money to enable the NHS to address the 'home from hospital' challenge, and we are seeing the first 'virtual wards' (i.e. patients discharged for care and what at one time would no doubt have been called convalescence at home). But there are big questions about who will provide this outreach care.

As we get older, we (or our families) are all likely to need social care at some point in our lives. Even if eligibility for actual services is being tightened and any support is means tested, understanding the system matters. Local authorities differ greatly in how they organise support (whether for care homes, respite care or day services or for support for the community activities that increasingly provide a range of advice and practical help). As the Nuffield Foundation, the King's Fund and many others regularly point out, the UK has never had the 'big conversations' which have taken place in many of our EU neighbours as to how we pay for care and support and the balance of responsibility for care between individual, family, community and state.

The Government's proposals for social care reform [as set out in the 2021 White Paper 'People at the Heart of Care'] envisaged 'investment and innovation' as a priority. But Government proposals for a national

insurance increase, the 'Health and Social Care Levy' to kick-start such investment were exceedingly unpopular and promptly abandoned. Although social care would have received the smaller share of the proposed levy, this modest funding stream could have helped local authorities begin to recover from covid and address escalating needs and demographic change. Council tax plays an important part in social care funding and local authorities are likely to be given new powers to raise local taxes to help pay for social care. But local willingness to pay more for services which most council tax payers suppose they will never need is already highly unpopular and may never happen. The need for an urgent debate about how we pay for social care (or care and support as many of us would prefer to call it) is all the clearer when we hear that Hampshire and Kent County Councils say that they are on the verge of bankruptcy. The Association of Directors of Adult Social Services tells us that three quarters of County Councils are now tightening their eligibility criteria and support.

If the future looks even bleaker for social care than for health, there are still opportunities for the future. Understanding the system and having the right information can still make a difference and, for AIACE members returning to the UK, knowing where to go for support is vital. The UK health and social care systems are full of anomalies. Few of us can understand why the NHS refuses to regard dementia as a medical condition alongside multiple sclerosis or motor neurone disease (where NHS Continuing Care may contribute to the costs of home or care home support). Personal Care Budgets through a local authority are means tested, Personal Health Budgets are not.

Currently 540,000 people are waiting for social care assessments – whether for information and advice, for direct services or to support discharge from hospitals. Many are on protracted NHS waiting lists and need assistance with daily living. But perhaps the most important step anyone with family needs for care and support should take (now or in the future) is to remember the Care Act 2014! The Care Act 2014 gives people needing support and their family carers new rights to an assessment, and to a personalised care plan for any further support regardless of income. Even if any proposed support is means-tested, assessments offer a 'care pathway' and very importantly they can open doors to local community support, the carers' centres, the dementia cafes, the volunteer drivers which can make a difference and of course offer crucial advice on local care homes.

We are living amid a digital revolution and my son has a 'smart house' with sensors, alarms, cameras to help him be as independent as possible. But at the end of the day, I am the person who goes out in the dark and rain when the alarm goes off. As the Japanese have found (in their well-developed strategy for '100 year lives'), new technology can transform lives, but we also need hybrid existences with real people. We are not robots!

And a final personal comment, caring can be very lonely – if AIACE can help members to make contact with their local carers' community, then we will have made a difference. I remember the challenge of finding a nursing home to meet my husband's quite complex needs and the value of my local carers' centre in 'matching' me with other carers and local sources of advice on where and how to make my decision. For better or worse, I and no doubt many other AIACE members have become 'experts by experience' and I hope that we can agree a way to share that experience when and where it would be useful.

Next Steps: So what can AIACE UK offer to members who might need information or advice on care and support?

1. Firstly, we could offer a contact or contacts (in the regions) who could 'signpost' members to local sources of information and advice on where and how to get support.
2. Secondly, I have suggested regional contacts but perhaps there could also be a national observer to collect, collate and disseminate relevant information – I use the term 'observer' as I am not suggesting a new formal committee member, rather a reference point and a provider of relevant information to the regions.
3. Thirdly, interested AIACE members could and should contribute to the ongoing national discussions about policy (and funding) for health and social care. I have early sight of most consultations or opportunities

to comment and contribute and am happy to share (and to alert members to events which might be of interest).

4. Fourthly, we should organise a discussion about social care and support with interested members (an agenda item or a special zoom session).

Contact details: Dame Philippa Russell (Vice-President Carers UK) at [philipparussell118@gmail.com](mailto:philipparussell118@gmail.com)

## **Bruges-Natolin UK European Scholarship Fund**

*Moya Denman*

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Nick Heenan's article in the January edition of CONNECT-Contact resonated with me. Unlike him, I have never been directly employed by one of the Institutions, unless you count seven years as wife of the Head of the EC Delegation in Washington in the 1980s. But for the 40 years of our married life European matters dominated the Denman family's existence. My late husband, Sir Roy Denman, having studied French and German as a scholar at Cambridge University, started at the Board of Trade. When we met, he was working in Geneva on the Kennedy Round of tariff negotiations, struggling to achieve for the British government concessions from on the one side the United States of America and on the other the European Commission representing the six member states of the European Economic Communities. He was convinced that the United Kingdom, if it could join the EEC, would to its national benefit be able to play a constructive role in a uniting Europe. Subsequently he was honoured and gratified to play a significant role in the negotiations that eventually secured our membership.

He died in 2006, leaving me in a situation not unlike that of a recent retiree. A chapter in one's life has ended, but the book continues. How to write it? Without a professional background, was there anything I could do to further Roy's aims?

Then, in 2009, I was dismayed to read that the British government had cancelled an annual programme of 27 scholarships to the College of Europe. I knew that the College was a valuable university-level institution that prepared high-flyers for work at an international, pan-European level. Seventy percent of the students, drawn from some 50 countries, are supported by scholarships, and the loss of future expertise that this represented for our country was shocking.

Soon after, at an AIACE meeting, I learned that campaigners had succeeded in the reinstatement of a very few scholarships, but they were limited to serving civil servants. Since Roy had left me financially secure, thanks in large part to his EU pension and JSIS health insurance, I saw an opportunity to do something EU-related, to fill the scholarship gap.

With the assistance of the late Alan Forrest (one of the very earliest 'Brussels Brits'), the Bruges-Natolin UK European Scholarships Fund (Brunat) was created to help UK-based non-civil servants study at the College of Europe. Former Commission Secretary-General the late Lord (David) Williamson was the first Chairman; Professor Dame Helen Wallace has succeeded him. In our first year (2010/11) we paid tuition fees for three graduate students from diverse backgrounds. To date, with generous help including from some members of AIACE, we are proud to have sponsored a total of 40 scholars.

The UK still has a huge stake in being able to engage effectively with the EU. This depends on having UK citizens who have deep understanding and direct experience of the EU's functioning. Brexit does not negate the facts of geographic proximity, globalisation and 46 years of close economic partnership: close links between the UK and the European Union will inevitably continue and have to be nurtured.

Some of our politicians have wilfully attempted to destroy the bridges built between the UK and the EU, and Nick Heenan is right to contribute to the European Movement's bridge-reconstruction efforts. We like to think that Brunat is in the business of supplying rivets for bridges.

Why do we focus on the College of Europe, with its two campuses in Bruges, Belgium and Natolin, Poland (close to Warsaw)? The existence of the College of Europe is not widely known in the UK, and it is forgotten that it was at the College of Europe in Bruges that Mrs Thatcher made her famed speech in 1988.

The College of Europe was the world's first institute of postgraduate studies and training in European affairs and is unique in providing a very special – and intense – experience for students living and working together in an international social and cultural context, challenged and instructed by senior academics and visiting practitioners from over 25 different countries and professional backgrounds. Alumni include Nick Clegg, former Deputy Prime Minister, Stephen Kinnock M.P. and his wife, the former Danish Prime Minister, Helle Thorning-Schmidt. The College of Europe is recognised as a key 'feeder' for the European institutions; even if Brexit means that traineeships or internships may no longer be open to recent scholars without dual nationality, it does not mean that Britons will not have valuable roles to play with other entities engaged in dialogue with the European institutions: lobbyists, lawyers, multinational companies, environmentalists, aid organisations and other non-governmental organisations. There are still Britons who seek a wider perspective, for whom links to the continent of Europe can offer new and exciting opportunities.

We have seen increased interest in the European Interdisciplinary Studies programme offered at the Natolin campus due to its proximity to Ukraine and other eastern European states. College of Europe's MA programmes also cover European Law, Economics, International Relations & Diplomacy and European Politics & Governance.

Admission to the College is highly selective; applications can be made online between October and mid-January (January 18, 2023 for academic year 2023/4); shortlisted applicants are then interviewed by national panels in mid-April. And the Bruges-Natolin UK European Scholarships Fund is ready to help with tuition fees for the impecunious. The number of scholars we support each year depends on how much money we can raise: the family of the late Lord (George) Thomson, one of the first two British Commissioners, generously donated a Brunat-Thomson scholarship for nine years.

Apart from our scholarships, Increasing the number of British graduates from the College is essential if we are to grow British expertise and strengthen links so far as Europe is concerned. Word of mouth is the most effective means to recruit applicants. AIACE members might be in touch with academics teaching able students who could qualify for admission to the College. As well as linguists, lawyers and economists, that might include graduates in history, public affairs, social science and other related disciplines. One of our former scholars' first degrees was in Zoology and Life Sciences.

Brunat is a registered charity and depends on voluntary contributions.

How you can help:

1. Find out more about the College of Europe and share your knowledge with other interested parties. <https://www.coleurope.eu/>
2. Look at the Brunat website, [www.brunatscholars.org.uk](http://www.brunatscholars.org.uk)
3. Support the Bruges-Natolin UK European Scholarships Fund with a donation or a bequest: the bigger the better. <https://brunatscholars.org.uk/contacts-donations/>

*Brunat scholars at Natolin, October 2022 (right)*



## A United Kingdom?

*Grant Lawrence*

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Although this article shares some thoughts on the UK from its northerly part, it begins on a cruise liner in the Panama Canal. I am chatting in the swimming pool to a lady from North London (by her accent) with what my late mother used to call 'suicide blonde hair' (dyed by her own hand – geddit?). She asks me where I come from. "Aberdeen in Scotland", I reply. "Oh, I've never been in Scotland but I hear it is beautiful", says she. Bear in mind that we are both thousands of miles and a transatlantic flight away from our respective homes but this lady has never bothered to take the flight from Heathrow to Edinburgh which lasts just over an hour. This is the first time (but not, alas, the last) I have faced this situation. My reaction is to ask where she comes from. The reply, not totally unexpectedly, is "London". "Oh", say I, "I have never been in England but I hear it is beautiful". Her mouth opens and her jaw drops – faced by someone who has never been in England. How is that possible? "You see how stupid that sounds?" say I. Relations are frosty, to say the least, for the rest of the cruise.

Of course, I have been in England, indeed I have spent some of the happiest years of my life in England (and, yes, I can tell a North London accent from a South (aka sarf) London accent). Despite being a barrister entitled to practise there, I know Wales less well but, at least I have been there on several occasions, as I have been to Northern Ireland. I love the diversity of the UK and its peoples. Working in Brussels meant that I encountered and worked closely, not just with continental colleagues, but also with a diverse bunch of my own compatriots. It was a colleague from Devon who told me I eat my cream tea the Devonian way (cream on the scone first, then jam) and not the Cornish way (jam first then cream). Working closely with Northern Irish colleagues, I picked up some of their phrases. I am met with furrowed brows when I say "me too neither" in Scotland and many a non-Scottish colleague has been heard to use the phrase "she's nae bonny" picked up from me.

In these days of relatively cheap and rapid travel, it might be expected that a stronger appreciation of the diversity of the UK would develop. Despite the post-Covid popularity of staycations, many of the younger generation know Magaluf, Faliraki and Orlando better than they know their own country. The impression gained from the UK media is that viewers/listeners are really only interested in their own immediate problems. Some cases (for example the 'Budgets', mini or otherwise, of 2022) are of genuine national interest. In other cases, such as transport, we are well informed by national media of the problems of HST2 or Crossrail/the Elizabeth Line but only the Scottish media report on problems such as the dualling of the A9 (shorthand for making the whole of the road from Edinburgh to Inverness and north dual carriageway) or the worsening state of the ferries to the Western Isles. We Scots regard 'the North' as Thurso, Wick and Caithness and 'the North East' as Aberdeenshire and Moray. We are always surprised to discover that the levelling-up is, in fact, for the likes of Bradford and Newcastle. And my own personal bugbear – the reference to King Charles III as 'King of England'. He is, indeed, King of England in the same way as he is King of Yorkshire or Carlisle. He will be crowned as 'King of the United Kingdom' (and many other realms besides) next May and his right to the throne flows from Sophie, Electress of Hanover, a grand-daughter of James VI, the Stewart King of Scotland.

These may seem minor, even purely semantic, niggles but major problems can arise for Scotland when a particular policy does not take into account the effect, sometimes major, that it can have on the Scottish economy. Take immigration, for instance. The demographics of Scotland are different from those of England and we rely to a greater degree on immigrants to staff our care and health services. In the same vein, the hospitality industry (which employs large numbers of immigrants) plays a larger part in the Scottish economy than elsewhere and we have a soft fruit industry that relies on seasonal, usually immigrant, labour to survive. But all we hear about is how best to get rid of immigrants – even to a different continent. Another example is the energy industry. Whole swathes of eastern Scotland have come to rely on the energy industry – not just oil and gas but also wind and wave power. An ill-thought-out windfall tax could have the effect of sending research and manufacturing (and thus jobs and revenue) away from Scotland.

The elephant in the room in this situation is, of course, Scottish independence. It is, in fact, a tale of two referendums. In the 2014 referendum on Scottish independence the country voted against independence. One of the main arguments of the “No” campaign was that an independent Scotland would have to leave the EU. No less a figure than President Barroso was wheeled out to make the point. Many of us, even those of us who voted “No” at the time, considered this position to be wrong. It was based on the idea that Scotland was ‘seceding’ from the UK whereas, in fact, it would have been a case of one sovereign state dividing into two sovereign states in full accordance with their constitutional rules (the closest recent example is former Czechoslovakia). The normal rules on the succession of states would have applied. Fast forward to the EU Referendum in 2016. We are told that the British people voted to leave the EU. Wrong. Five regions and nations voted that day and, of the five, three (Gibraltar, Northern Ireland and Scotland) voted to remain. Every constituency in Scotland voted to remain but Scotland was hauled out of the EU against its will, prompting the Nationalist community to ask what is the point of the UK if the sheer size of England’s votes will always win the day, whatever Scotland thinks or wants. The repercussions of those votes are still being felt in the northern part of the UK today. In the Scottish Parliament at Holyrood the SNP is one seat short of an overall majority and governs with the support of the Greens. Both parties are in favour of an independent Scotland within the EU but both acknowledge that the path, at every stage, will be a rocky one. The other three parties (Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat) remain committed to a United Kingdom although, in private conversations, some Lib. Dems will admit that the party will at some point come out in favour of re-joining the EU.

The argument is presented as independence or not. So far public discussion of alternatives (for example a federal solution) has been limited, with the most prominent voice being that of Gordon Brown. The Scottish Section did have a most interesting (Zoom) discussion on the subject with fascinating insights into the federal solution from Sir David Edward (former British judge at the Court of Justice in Luxembourg). On the federal solution he pointed out that no functioning federal state has one constituent element (in this case England) which is almost ten times larger in population terms than the next largest (here Scotland). Nor did he think that England could just be divided up into several different federal regions. With the possible exception of Cornwall, there is no carve up of England into regions which would have the same cohesion as Wales and Scotland. If, for example, the North East of England was to become a federal region, where would the boundaries be drawn?

With a Supreme Court decision pending as I write, the matter will clearly not go away. Will the Scottish people be asked one day to decide between two Unions? How are we Scottish Remainers to vote?

## **Moving back to the UK post-Brexit**

*Gail Kent*

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Oh, for the days of free movement of goods, services and people when moving back to the UK. During my 28-year EU career I have moved from the UK to Luxembourg, then to Belgium, back to Luxembourg and then back to Belgium again. Of course, there were the usual EC Administrative forms to fill in to get your move refunded. But I was totally unprepared for the return to the UK after Brexit. I received the estimate from the removal firm and had it approved by PMO. I provisionally fixed the removal dates in August 2022, just before my retirement on September 1<sup>st</sup>. However, I was then contacted by the Administration Manager of the Removal firm to point out that I need to apply for Transfer of Residence relief from the UK government, (to avoid import duties) and that in her experience this could take several weeks. Panic! Fortunately, this exemption is easy to apply for online through gov.uk website. (The UK’s digital systems are rather impressive I must say <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/application-for-transfer-of-residence-relief-tor1>).

To apply for the ToR exemption online you need to be prepared. You will need a list in table form of all items you are bringing to the UK, proof of your UK address, proof of your non-UK address, copy of your passport photo page. You would also need full car details and animal details but luckily, I owned neither!



Despite the warnings I received the ToR relief approval within days. (Although perhaps I am a good Eurocrat and am good at completing forms!) I thought this was the end of the torture until I received another call from the Removal company. In order to transit customs physically, the Removal firm needed proof I had already deregistered from my Belgian commune – the famous ‘Modele 8’ form. This really irritated me as I had intended to move to the UK around the 20 August and then return for my last week of work and deregister on the last day. This was because I used my E-card from the commune a lot and it linked to my Covid vaccination certificates and App. Also, my commune is notoriously unfriendly if you struggle with Dutch – even if you are making an effort to learn it – so I did not dare leave requesting it until the last moment. This meant I needed to ask for it a good week before my removal to be on the safe side. In addition, I needed either proof of registration at my UK commune (ha! not so easy in ID free UK) or copy of the proof I had bought the property (ditto – I got a letter from my lawyer as it takes months for the title deeds to be registered).

In addition, (again) a list of all my goods with the present value if I had to sell today (as opposed to the insurance value which is for replacement) and again a copy of my UK passport.

In the event, I miraculously managed to bring all the correct papers to the commune, so I received my annexe 8 a few days before I moved. I felt totally bereft without my E-card though, and I had to remember to photocopy all my Covid certificates as they would disappear online with me.

Oh, and you can't include food or alcohol in your exemption list, so I gave away many bottles of wine and spirits and cleared out my herb cupboard – probably long overdue anyway.

After all this, the lorry containers are checked with the paperwork at the port, usually the day before UK delivery. Everything went well in the end.

Having said that, falling and breaking my arm one week before retiring did not make things easier. I had to reschedule the move the day before as I was in hospital having my arm pinned. As if the procedure was not complicated enough!

## **The Chatsworth Players**

*Lindsay Jackson*

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I'm Lindsay. I took early retirement in 2018 from ECHA in Finland, where I was Head of Communication. I started my Commission career in the late 80s in the Small Firms Task Force, subsequently working in the HR Task Force, DG XXIII and the ETF, before spending nine years in Helsinki. I retired to take care of my mum, Sylvia Jackson, who had been diagnosed with dementia. Very sadly she died of Covid in April 2020. In fact, our departure from the EU coincided with my retirement and my mother's death, so it's all felt like one big bereavement to me. I'm currently a member of the Covid Bereaved Families for Justice group, seeking to hold the government to account for their handling of the pandemic.

I'm spending my retirement running the theatre group that Sylvia established – the Chatsworth Players – in Bakewell, Derbyshire. The group was formed in 2007, to perform in the newly re-opened private family theatre at Chatsworth House. The theatre at Chatsworth is unique – a ballroom that was converted into a theatre in 1832 in order to provide entertainment for the family and royal visitors. For many years, the theatre had been out of commission and used as storage space. In the early 2000s, Sylvia was asked to advise on bringing it back into use, and she formed the Chatsworth Players to perform there. She was a professional theatre director and actor who had retired to Bakewell and was well known in the area. You can see images of the theatre and our work on the website <http://www.chatsworthplayers.com>. We bring together ambitious locals to perform three times a year, choosing plays that are in keeping with the wonderful theatre. We perform to packed houses and routinely receive fantastic reviews from the National Operatic and Dramatic Association – you can read them on our website. Our members range in age from 16 to 86 and all of them have a love of the theatre and get a kick out of working together to present something excellent and entertain our patrons.

I loved my working life, and thoroughly enjoyed playing my part in the European Union's development. I thought that I would really struggle with retirement and so I decided to do a third degree and studied performing arts in Sheffield. Having loved my work, it's actually come as a big surprise to learn that I don't miss it – at all! But I do miss the people and feeling part of a common endeavour. And that's where theatre comes in – there's a tremendous sense of teamwork and pride in accomplishing something together that we'd be unable to do alone. I can thoroughly recommend it. If you love theatre, why not locate your local groups and see if you can help. Groups always need people to help, and not just onstage. In fact, it's often the backstage helpers that groups lack – administrators, treasurers, set builders, costume makers, movers and shakers... You'd certainly be welcome and make friends, as well as being part of the creative fabric of your community.

And if you're based in the East Midlands, or fancy a visit to beautiful Derbyshire as a tourist, the Chatsworth Players would love to welcome you!

## **Lessons taught by having room at the Inn**

*Jill Hanna*

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If any of you remember a piece I wrote for this newsletter shortly after I retired from DG Environment in February 2018, you will be aware that I had decided to embark on a major project: renovating a 1780 partly timber-framed town house in Leominster, Herefordshire. Those who know me will not be surprised to learn that nearly 5 years later it is not entirely finished, and that chaos still reigns in my study. I continue to maintain that it will all be shipshape by Christmas, but I no longer specify which one.

However, this article is not about the joys of building a solid-oak table with 4 legs of different lengths to produce a flat surface above a curved floor or the pitfalls of installing a charging point for my newish electric car. Instead, it reflects on my new major project which was not really my idea but an inevitable reaction to 24<sup>th</sup> February.

As we all looked in horror at that 40km of lethal weaponry heading towards Kyiv, like many I assumed that the war would be over quickly and felt that it would be impossible to help in any meaningful way. I knew I had space to offer but I feared that events would unfold like Hungary in the 1950s or Czechoslovakia in 1968, with relatively few managing to escape.

It didn't take long to show that the invading forces had grossly miscalculated and refugees started streaming across the borders. Then I remembered my parents and the emphasis they put on how the arrival of German Jews in 1930s Manchester had fundamentally changed their understanding of the connectedness of Europe and enriched their lives.

So, with space and optimistic memories I responded to the war by enrolling in the Government Homes for Ukraine scheme, filling out a form explaining I could provide two bedrooms, was indifferent about the ages or language skills of my guests but would not accept smokers or pets.

And then I waited...

And waited...

And waited.

By mid-May I still had had nothing but a reference number. At that point Guy Wilkinson, a friend in 'Herefordshire for Europe' and another AIACE member, mentioned that the Hereford Diocese were being very successful at placing Ukrainian families and needed more hosts. No religious affiliation was required on either side.

Things then started to move. The team leaders of the Leominster Support Group for Ukraine (one of several Diocese-led groups in the County) came round to visit me and explain what hosting involved. They quizzed me about whether I would really cope without a common language and I recalled how I had learned French

fast when thrown in at the deep end by a move to Geneva aged 4. I also muttered about my bare pass in Russian O-level and was astonished to recall it was 51 years old. I have been even more astonished since by how words have surfaced from the bottom of my memory.

Later I was inspected by the County Council whose minimum standards turned out to be minor patches of damp on the walls (my builder would have been horrified) and separate bedrooms for girls and boys. A Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check was also required but this proved much more simple than I imagined and in my view not a safe basis for supervising the children of strangers.

I was driving back from Somerset one evening in June having not read any emails for days, when one of the leaders of the Leominster Support Group rang to ask if I could talk to a family and an interpreter on WhatsApp in 10 minutes time! I pulled into Cribbs Causeway shopping mall and for the first time in my life voluntarily entered a McDonalds, knowing there would be good Wifi. Fifty minutes later I had said yes to hosting Tamara, and her children Maksym, rising 14 and Nastya, rising 7. They wanted to come to Herefordshire because Tamara had picked crops there many years ago with her best friend from school who had stayed and married Ilya, an Estonian. The couple live just outside Hereford, 15 miles from me, with their children and now her refugee sister-in-law and her children. Ilya, who seems to understand everything about helping Ukrainians, had already arranged visas for Tamara and family.

Just days after that, the Russians sent some of the first cruise missiles to flatten a shopping mall in Kremenchuk, the industrial city on the Dnipro River in the middle of Ukraine, where Tamara and family lived. Fortunately, the children were doing zoom lessons at home while Tamara was working in a basement, so all were untouched. A few days later they were less lucky as Tamara's workplace was bombed and her hopes of being able to work remotely in the UK as a qualified Ukrainian book-keeper, evaporated.

Despite the dangers Tamara understandably wanted to visit her parents and other family members, some of whom live far to the east, before leaving. This meant they did not actually arrive until 27<sup>th</sup> July, when Ilya collected all three from Luton Airport and deposited them plus one suitcase at my front door at 6am. I had expected that after a 24-hour bus journey from Kremenchuk, a 12-hour wait at a Polish airport and a midnight flight they would all be exhausted. Tamara was and gratefully retreated to a hot bath and the room she now shares with Nastya. However, the children were far too excited for such mundane pleasures. We did a simple map jigsaw of the UK and they located Luton, Leominster and London. Eventually sleep overcame them but their energy has remained fairly boundless ever since. Having never had my own children it took me a long time to accept that they are never tired!

In retrospect it was a shame that they arrived after the end of the school summer term because it made it much more difficult to spark any interest in the local secondary school about Maksym's arrival. Indeed, although the County Education Office were helpful, the school was resolutely shut for the whole holiday, and I didn't finally manage to get him into the building until the afternoon before the autumn term started. I understand there are at least 10 Ukrainians in the school, but we are still battling to arrange a face-to-face meeting to discuss progress. It is difficult to know what Maksym thinks about all this as, like many 14-year-olds, school is not his favourite topic. He is not lazy and puts a lot of effort into the zoom classes from his school in Ukraine that he still follows. Perhaps he hopes that the war will soon be over and there is not too much point in investing in an English education. He is enthusiastic about the local boys' football club and very proud of the Manchester United sports bag he got when he made the team. While I worry about him, he is a pleasure to host, always affectionate, keen to help and determined to keep my new car cleaner than any of its predecessors.

The experience with Nastya has been quite different with her teacher effusive about what a pleasure she is to teach. This is a huge credit to her as in Ukraine children don't start school until they are 7 so although she had been to an advanced nursery school by zoom, she had never been in a classroom before. Her English is making huge strides and she is now confident in both Cyrillic and Roman script. Her only lesson from home is her weekly one-to-one gymnastics session by zoom where her splits and contortions make me wince.

While the summer holidays may have delayed integration, they did allow the family to de-stress. When they first arrived the few vapour trails in the sky filled them with dread, now they are just pretty. Car alarms are

still frightening as are ambulance sirens. There must be lots of trauma buried but it rarely surfaces in the children although it horrifies me that Nastya knows how to use the App on her mother's phone to follow the pattern of air-raids across Ukraine in real time and tell me which of her relatives is being bombed.

Tamara is understandably much more anxious and spends hours watching the news from home on her phone. I am very aware that I am older than her mother but not in a position to provide much advice so am hugely grateful that WhatsApp seems to work much of the time. Everything is a challenge and I admire how Tamara rises to each hurdle. She is taking many hours of English lessons a week but progress is slow. Sayhi, the instant translation App we use to communicate is a god-send, but also a brake since she is too shy to put it away and make the mistakes she would learn from. She is very grateful for the Universal Credit she gets and amazed by the amount but of course she has not yet had to pay for utilities or rent and clothes are available from the well-stocked depot for Ukrainians in Hereford. I have learned a lot about Universal Credit and am pleased that in a rural market town at least the staff treat recipients with respect. I have also learned about living on less by eating what she cooks and now understand the centrality of soup in peasant diets. She is determined to work and is enthusiastic about the cleaning jobs she fits around the Primary's requirement that parents rather than siblings walk kids to school.

I intend to offer to extend my initial 6-month commitment for the rest of the school year. But I still do not know how to answer the inner voice that asks why the Government has this scheme for Ukrainians but not for Afghans who helped our forces or Syrians who are also the victims of Russian bombing. Nor can I imagine the soul, if any, of a politician who thinks Rwanda is the answer to refugees.

## Poems for Ukraine

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Steve Gospage has drawn our attention to a publication 'Poems for Ukraine' by Poetry Performance (ISBN:9781800689831) to which he has contributed. All profits go to British-Ukrainian Aid, a charity providing humanitarian and medical aid to Ukraine, as well as supporting Ukrainian refugee artists.

## Jacobs' EU Guide Book: The Landmark Sites of European Integration – a review

*Michael Shackleton*

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Many EU civil servants are tempted to write about the world in which they worked once they retire. Francis Jacobs, a former official in the European Parliament, now living in Dublin, is one of them. However, that is where the likeness ends. This is not a standard account of the growth of the powers of the Parliament and of its role inside the EU. Instead the author devotes the bulk of this book to a walk through all the buildings, institutions and houses across Europe (inside and outside the EU) that play or have played a part in the life of the EU.

It is not a dry list of addresses and phone numbers, though they are there if you need them. The places are brought alive by a host of pictures, more than I have ever seen in any book on the EU, and plenty of useful information about which places you can visit. If you are going to Brussels, the book will direct you to the House of European History, if you are travelling near Paris, you can pop in to Jean Monnet House in Bazoches in the Île-de-France, with the added attraction of bottles of Monnet family brandy available in the shop, and if you are travelling between Rome and Naples, why not take a boat trip to the island of Ventotene, where the ashes of Altiero Spinelli are buried?

I was struck by how wide the book spreads its net. I discovered that Karlsruhe is home to the enigmatic European Institute for Transuranium Elements (ITU, for short, apparently) and learnt that there are 25 Havel's Places across Europe where you will find two chairs linked with a table, stressing the value of conversation and exchange. On your next visit to Oxford, go into the University Parks and find the one Havel Place in Britain. All-in-all, a truly distinctive way of presenting the EU: an ideal Christmas present!

For full details of Jacobs' EU Guide Book and where to buy it, visit <https://www.johnharperpublishing.co.uk/jacobs-eu-guide-book-the-landmark-sites-of-european-integration/>

## A brief explanation of the Method

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***The salaries and pensions of EU statutory staff are never automatically indexed.***

1. The Method accurately reflects the evolution of salaries in the national civil services of the main EU Member States. Whatever the level of inflation recorded in each of the reference Member States, the updating of the remuneration and pensions of several thousand civil servants and agents calculated by the Method cannot in any way methodologically or quantitatively increase the average level of inflation in the EU.
2. The Method is based on the principle of parallelism, the aim of which is to ensure that the purchasing power of EU officials and other staff develops in parallel with the purchasing power of officials in the central administrations of the Member States. This evolution can be positive or negative.
3. To this end, each year, on a precise statutory basis and in collaboration with the national statistical institutes, Eurostat:
  - a) measures the changes in the remuneration of national civil servants and then subtracts inflation in each Member State concerned, which gives the net percentage change in the purchasing power of those civil servants;
  - b) weights these changes according to the relative weight of GDP of the EU Member States;
  - c) establishes this weighted percentage, known as the 'global specific indicator', which constitutes the 'purchasing power' component of the annual or biennial salary updates;
  - d) then calculates the inflation rate in Belgium and Luxembourg according to the consumption patterns of EU staff and weights these percentages by the number of statutory staff in post in both countries. This is the inflation component of the updates;
  - e) combines the inflation and purchasing power rates to obtain the rate that will allow the net update of the statutory basic pay scales.
  - f) calculates the evolution of prices, again according to the specific patterns of consumption, in the various places of employment other than Brussels and Luxembourg, in order to determine the correction coefficients which will ensure that all EU officials and other staff, wherever they are posted, have the same purchasing power.
4. Eurostat produces a detailed report of the calculations and results for the attention of the EU legislators and the Commission. The Commission takes note of the results of the update and publishes the new pay scales in the Official Journal of the EU.

*AIACE: P. Blanchard, Gérardon, Martin Clegg*

## **Andy Simpson**

### *Obituary*

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Andy Simpson, who was Chair of AIACE UK from 2004 to 2009, died unexpectedly in August. Andy's first love was his family, as they movingly showed at the service of thanksgiving and farewell held for him. Europe was the second. Trained as a lawyer and after practising at the Bar, Andy joined the Commission's Legal Service in 1975, was a Member of the European Parliament for 12 years from 1979, and then returned to the Commission. There, notably, with his 'can do' drive, and his refusal to be bound by traditional procedures, his persistence and respect for others helped get agreement for the DAPHNE programme which seeks to combat violence against women and children. Andy loved to travel to unusual places, and wherever he was he was never bored. In AIACE, he was liked and respected across the international Sections, and in the UK he encouraged the spread of our regional groups which others had begun and fostered.

## **Jo Carey**

### *Obituary*

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Jo (Charles John) Carey CMG, British Member of the European Court of Auditors 1983-92, died on 8 August aged 88. In the course of his previous career in the Treasury he served as Economic and Financial Counsellor in UKREP 1974-77, and subsequently as Treasury Officer of Accounts. During his time in Luxembourg he was particularly instrumental in getting rid of abuses of the Commission's export refunds regime, and thereafter he was Chairman of the panel appointed to resolve disputes between the Commission and national agricultural paying agencies. Away from work he had a gift of friendship based on his love of music, Italian art and landscape, and mountaineering. Marrying late in life he proved to be much appreciated as a wise and empowering step-father. Until the pandemic, he came to AIACE UK meetings in Europe House and elsewhere in London.

## AIACE-UK committee

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Following the General Meeting in the October, the Committee met in November and agreed the following officers and branch roles:

Chairman	Tom Kennedy
Vice-Chairman	Robert Hull
Treasurer	John Wiggins
Secretary	Alan Huyton
Membership	Jane Cornelius, Emanuela Savoia
Connect	Belinda Pyke (Editorial), John Claxton
Vox	Belinda Pyke
Web/Email/Zoom	Alan Huyton
JSIS ambassadors	Michael Hocken, John Claxton, Brian Porro (IT)
Pensions ambassadors	Martin Clegg, Pernille Andersen, Alan Huyton

### **AIACE International:**

Delegates	Robert Hull, Tom Kennedy
Suppléants	Alan Huyton, Belinda Pyke

Alan Huyton plans to stand down as Webmaster in the spring so we will be looking for someone to take this on. The person does not necessarily need to be on the Committee. Contact Alan at [webmaster@aiace.uk](mailto:webmaster@aiace.uk) if you would like to know more about what is involved.

## AIACE-UK Regional Convenors

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## AIACE-UK Ambassadors

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## AIACE-UK Office

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## CONNECT

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We welcome short paragraphs or full articles, even your poems or photos. Help us share experience, advice and reflection – [connect@aiace.uk](mailto:connect@aiace.uk)

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## AIACE-UK

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For more information see the AIACE-UK web-portal: <https://www.aiace.uk/>