

From John O'Groats to Lands End-Rob's charity cycle ride

In the summer I undertook the challenge of cycling from John O'Groats to Lands End over a 10 day consecutive period raising funds for the Helen Rollason Cancer charity and Help for Heroes.

I'd like to say a really big thank you to all the individuals and companies who have been so generous in their sponsorship; between the seven riders that made up our team we have raised over £20,000.

As you can imagine our journey was extremely challenging both physically and mentally, covering predominately B roads, with the occasional A road when required, to get us from one end of the country to the other. We cycled over and through some spectacular scenery and landmarks, including the Scottish Highlands, Ben Nevis, Glencoe, Loch Ness, the Erskine bridge on the outskirts of Glasgow, the Kirkstone pass, the beautiful Lake District, the Forest of Bowland, the Severn Bridge, the Clifton suspension bridge, to name but a few.

Some statistics that may interest you are, that our journey covered 1,017 miles, averaging 101.68 miles per day, taking a total of 69 hours 16 minutes and 36 seconds, using 250g of Sudocrem healing cream!

Thank you for your support.

Rob Tate



All fresh and ready to go!

Appreciating the dangers of asbestos

Since our last newsletter we have held an in-house company training day where we received a talk on asbestos removal from Acute Asbestos and each of us was taken through the decontamination chamber. We have also held a refresher day on scaffold inspections. Various individuals are progressing their professional training with Paul Robins undertaking his SMSTS training, Peter Tamayo preparing for his professional interview for RICS and various members of staff taking NVQ courses.



A fish rots from its head

Our directors and office based management recently attended a day's training on health and safety which emphasised that good health and safety starts at the top of an organisation with strong and active leadership cascading down with good staff involvement and assessment and review of processes. We learnt much about good practice and the potential consequences of getting it wrong.

The cost to UK PLC of work related ill health and injury is a staggering £30bn per annum or 3% of GDP.

IT upgrade—keeping up to date

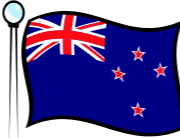
At Noble & Taylor we strive to be an innovative construction company with a policy of continuous development to meet both fresh challenges and new opportunities. A full review of our IT systems has recently been carried out and is being implemented in stages. We understand that in order to ensure our clients and business contacts receive the best possible communication and service we are required to keep organised and up-to-date, both commercially and technologically.



The rapid growth of technology including the much talked about cloud computing offers us more efficient ways of keeping in touch across our sites and how we use new software to speed up and streamline our information flow. We are confident that the IT upgrades will provide value for money, especially in these challenging economic times and offer our clients the greatest value service in the future.

Paul Fisher's emigration

Many of our readers will know Paul Fisher, our site manager who emigrated to New Zealand in the early summer. He wanted to be well settled there in time for the Rugby world cup!



He reports that he is enjoying life down under very much and has secured a role as a senior site manager. The photos he sends back shows him with his trademark cigar and cup of coffee, which those who knew him soon learnt belied his knack of knowing his jobs inside out.



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newsletter

keeping in touch with our clients and professional contacts

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Issue 9 - Winter 2011/12

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Learning and listening.....

For those of us as long in the tooth as I am, this is our third recession, and whilst I wish it was not, there are advantages which come from having been here before. One thing history teaches us is that inevitably the economic cycle will turn. Even in boom times one needs to be aware that a recession may be just around the corner. Experience reminded us at N&T to plan and ensure that the balance sheet was strong in order to give the company financial backing when the downturn came. Experience also taught us the importance of keeping together our strong experienced management team and our quality staff. Perhaps the most important thing is to ensure that financial pressures do not cause corners to be cut and our standards to slip.

So, as we often say in this newsletter, feedback is vital to us so that we can make sure that we are meeting and even exceeding your expectations. It is always good to hear from you. Please let us have your thoughts.

Patrick Foster, Managing Director

Further examples of N&T Projects can be seen on our website at www.nobleandtaylor.co.uk

St Peter's Church wins double award

We are delighted that our work at St Peter's Church, South Weald has been awarded a certificate of merit by the Essex Environment Trust as one of the best built projects in the last year. This follows on from the £50,000 design prize which the Architect (Fergusons from Chelmsford) gained as part of the Community Challenge Competition. The awards exemplify the winning approach of the design team and the contractor working together to achieve success.



A new innings for the Cricketers

25 pubs close each week within the UK, and the sight of one boarded up pub after another is causing a blot on our country's landscape. One such pub was the Grade II* Cricketers Pub in the small historic market town of Coggeshall, where Noble and Taylor are currently reconstructing the building following significant fire damage. Sadly changing social trends along with the tough economic times have led the Wellington Group, the owners of the Cricketers, to conclude that it was no longer viable as a pub.

Restoration was nonetheless essential and the restoration project is being led by Chris Barker of Barker Associates who specialise in, amongst other things, fire damage to historic structures. The client has been anxious to advance the restoration works while still applying for planning permission for change of use, so Barker Associates have had to adapt their designs to include flexibility for a range of final uses, whilst satisfying the exacting requirements of the conservation officers and planners.

We have worked closely with Barker Associates as the project has evolved drawing on their expertise and our own experience in heritage work. The project marries many traditional skills such as structural timber repairs, lime plastering, and clay tile roofing with more modern and up to date works like the mechanical and electrical installations. It is always satisfying to be a part of a scheme which poses and successfully tackles such challenges, and we are now beginning to see benefits as the finalised building takes shape.



Lime plastering to the stairwell



The refurbished roof

The new Act in Town

A new Construction Act came into force on 1st October 2011, and is radically altering the administration of the financial aspects of building contracts. It imposes new restrictions on the ability of employers and main contractors to hold back payments owed to those below them in the "food chain".



Firstly, employers (and their representatives) will have to be very transparent about their reasons for holding back any payments against applications for payment. Similarly, main contractors will not be able to hold back

payments to subcontractors without a full explanation of why, and will have to do so within a strict timescale.

Additionally, it will no longer be possible to hold back retention payment for indefinite periods, whilst certificates of practical completion, or of making good defects, are awaited. The *precise dates* of retention release will have to be incorporated into the initial contract agreement. This latter restriction will be the most taxing for main contractors.

There are strict timescales in place for dealing with contracts entered into after 1st October 2011, and those who do not meet them may well face expensive settlements. Contractors and subcontractors may suspend their work in response to non-payment, and if they are found to be "in the right" any associated costs of this could well fall to the payer. Not following correct procedures within the set timescale will automatically put the other party "in the right".

Main contractors and employers will have to look very carefully at their method of procuring building works, and the contract forms that are used for contracts (eg this will mean using the JCT 2011 suite from now on). They must also have an appropriate management system to ensure that they are not caught out by the rules.

The advice is to get familiar with this new Act before it "gets you"!

Lessons from Europe!

The Eurozone crisis seems to lurch from one missed deadline to another with political leaders "behind the curve" like rabbits caught in headlights. We know that a combination of events has caused this crisis. The reality that the Euro, as it has been set up, does not work across democracies hardly helps. It has been said that politicians could not be entrusted to organise a party in a brewery (or words to that effect!).



Are there lessons though for our own businesses and organisations? At a recent Institute of Directors seminar on governance we were reminded of the need for a clearly understood purpose of an organisation and to ensure that resources are directed to achieve that mission. All too often, especially at times of pressure, people retreat into their particular group and forget the primary task.

At Noble & Taylor we see our task as delivering outstanding customer service to our clients and their professionals by working as part of an effective overall team in the delivery of projects. In these tough days we are thinking outside the box to keep our N&T team together. As part of our commitment to continual improvement we welcome feedback - sometimes that is very welcome, sometimes it is less comfortable; the trick is to listen carefully to what is really being said.

We all wish our politicians well in finding a solution to the Eurozone woes but until our leaders can agree on their task and listen to the feedback of the markets and the voters this crisis will continue. Perhaps there are lessons in all of this to help us not only weather the current turmoil, but even help our organisations prosper!

Do the good guys come last?

Evidence is increasingly pointing to the advantage of contracts requiring a set amount (say 2.5% of the contract value) to be set aside for health, safety and welfare. As costs continue to be under pressure it is inevitable that some clients and contractors will allow corners to be cut on health & safety to save money, putting reputable firms who take their responsibilities seriously at a disadvantage. It would be good to see more clients requiring health and safety identified separately in the prelims of a project. It is encouraging to see that RICS have fairly recently (June 2011) brought out new guidance 'Surveying Safely' in a bid to raise safety standards.



"some clients and contractors will allow corners to be cut on health & safety to save money".

The problem has potentially been exacerbated by the recent closure of the HSE's telephone Infoline. The HSE claims this is a sensible response to budget cuts, with its website being a more cost effective way of disseminating information. However websites are notoriously complicated to navigate when it comes to a common sense solution to more complex questions, where the right approach is not obvious.

At N&T we still have the health and safety advisers at the NFB, as well as EBSG (our own independent safety group), to give us tailored advice when we need it. However, not all firms have such resources, or are as conscientious in their use of them. Let's all hope these cuts are not a false economy!



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Contrasting skills.....

As this newsletter arrives at your desk, we can report on two very interesting projects in the form of Glenlore and the Westminster Abbey Cellarium. Whilst the projects are outwardly very different they require similar levels of planning, project management and building skills.

Westminster Cellarium

Ever since April 2008 when Noble and Taylor began construction on the first phase of re-roofing the Triforium roofs' of Westminster Abbey we have continued to build an ongoing and strong relationship with the Abbey and their design team, led on all of the Triforium contracts by Purcell, Miller Tritton. More than three years down the line, and having successfully completed a total of five phases on the Triforium roof, we are delighted to have won a tender that continues our longstanding relationship with the Abbey in the



form of the Westminster Cellarium. The Cellarium is an exciting project designed by Panter Hudspith which involves creating a refectory on two levels (with a platform lift), a servery, a shop, as well as several ancillary areas within the confines of the 11th Century Cellarium and Misericorde. A key emphasis will be to provide up to date quality construction whilst maintaining the long running traditional heritage of the Cellarium.

The Cellarium will provide a number of challenges for the team, including the tight programme, working closely with the archaeologists and their concerns to maintain the original fabric of the building, whilst blending this in with cutting edge design. The project has significant contractor design portion, for instance with the structural glazing, structural steel frame and lift, and we have steered through the co-ordination of these elements alongside the remainder of the design team which includes Fluid Structures as structural engineers and Foster & Partners as services consultants.



Above: Archaeological excavations and the archaeologists recording their findings at The Cellarium. Below: The master bedroom, gymnasium and pool area at Glenlore

Glenlore

We have recently completed this project which has involved the demolition of an existing house and subsequent construction of a new regency style family home with 18th century orangery pool building based on a Palladian design. The project has included a number of complex high specification services including the latest audio visual systems, facilities for an altitude oxygen room, an 'endless' swimming pool, and quality finishes throughout.



A particular aspect of Glenlore has been the evolution of the design to meet the clients requirements which has required extremely detailed co-ordination between the Noble and Taylor team and the design team led by Jeremy Sheppard of Sheppard & Co, Bury St Edmunds. Our experience of highly complex projects enabled us to carefully interpret the client's needs as the design evolved. We believe that our 'team player' ethos, as well as our experience, particularly from the technically challenging Oak Hall project in Epping, was fundamental in enabling us to meet the rigorous demands of such a complex and fascinating job and which fully meets the requirements of the code for sustainable homes with the emphasis on energy conservation.

