

Association Award

Mr John Coke



I am delighted to write this citation for John Coke, a Chartered Accountant, friend of the Association of Anaesthetists and of mine. John joined the Association's Finance, Investment and Audit Committee as one of two lay members in 2015 when I was taking over as the Honorary Treasurer. Although the Committee had had external support in the past, no-one was sure quite what our two new colleagues would bring to the Committee or what they might make of us and our finance practices. It's fair to say that at that time there was a need to modernise financial practice in line with the needs of a growing organisation. We were changing and had a great deal to learn; the Association hoped to benefit from John's willingness to give his free time, experience, insights and necessary external scrutiny.

John's background in finance covers a range of disciplines from strategy and performance, budget setting and audit, to risk management and change management all undertaken in a variety of roles from managing consultant to chief executive officer.

Recruited to the Committee through open competition, what we asked John for was external review and close scrutiny of all finance committee functions, from accounting to investment and audit. It wasn't long before John showed us his skill. For those of us who manage home finances and perhaps even stretch to a Treasurer's account for the local club or society, the complexity of building and maintaining a stable finance function suitable for the Association is mind-boggling and out of our league. Of course, it was John's to understand but he provided, gratis, the review and support that the staff and Board members needed. We appreciate this outstanding contribution.

As anaesthetists and not professional accountants or financial advisers, we are challenged by the governance processes underpinning big business finance. We need to trust and rely on the professionals to keep us right and informed. As Honorary Treasurer I am very grateful to John for fulfilling this role par excellence.

I am less familiar with the personal traits of accountants than I am of those of anaesthetists, but I'd describe John as being like a *dog with a bone*; a trait I feel that all good accountants must surely have. If the detail, or the reasoning behind any aspect of our accounting or audit, risk management or budgeting wasn't quite what was expected, then staff and Committee members needed to address this challenge. Debate was often robust but always rewarding and constructive.

The not-for-profit sector appeals to John which meant that the Association was an attractive prospect for his attention. Amongst his many skills, John brought his knowledge of charity law, his ability in risk management and his experience of leading two major head-office relocations. These have proved an invaluable skill set to offer us at a time when the Association is taking the necessary but still very scary steps of renewing its membership database and website. John's attention to detail and scrutiny of these two projects in particular will stand us in good stead for the future.

The Association Award rubric states that a recipient should have made significant contribution towards the Association and its objectives. At all times John has acted to protect and support our organisation and to ensure the best interest of us, its members. I am very pleased to present John Coke to receive the AAGBI Award.

Dr Kathleen Ferguson
President-Elect