



IESIS
A MULTI-DISCIPLINARY
ENGINEERING INSTITUTION

Obituary

Philip Godfrey Preston - President 2014-15

Phil Preston was a professional engineer with wide ranging experience in transportation in Scotland. He was born and brought up in Glasgow and attended Hillhead school. In 1978 he graduated BSc in Civil Engineering from Paisley College of Technology (now the University of the West of Scotland).

He was inspired to seek a career in the maritime sector by reading about the Stevenson family of Lighthouse engineers. Robert Louis Stevenson wrote (in *Records of a Family of Engineers*, 1896) "Being an engineer takes a man into the open air; it keeps him hanging about harbours sides, which is the richest sort of idling ; it carries him to wild islands, it gives him a taste of the genial dangers of the sea; it makes demands on his ingenuity; it will go far to cure him of any taste (if ever he had one) for the miserable life of cities"

His first appointment was with consulting engineers Crouch & Hogg with whom he worked on a variety of design projects mainly associated with ferry services for the west coast mainland and islands of Scotland. He also worked on shipyards on the lower Clyde and on ports projects. In 1987 he opened a regional office in Oban for Crouch & Hogg.

In 1993 Phil joined Caledonian MacBrayne Ltd as the Superintendent Civil Engineer. He was responsible for all of their shore infrastructures such as piers, linkspans and port offices. In 2003 he was promoted to Deputy Technical Director and for a while was in charge of all the technical activities of the business including the ships whilst the Technical Director was on medical leave. His next step up the ladder was to Operations Director where he was accountable for delivering the demanding lifeline services to the Western Isles. It was in this position and later as Managing Director that Phil excelled. He had a fantastic knowledge of the network and the ships as well as the staff and many of the local people. He was brilliant at FUG (Ferry User Group) meetings, bringing calm order to sometime rowdy gatherings.

In November 2011 he joined Loganair as Chief Operating Officer. The switch from a long career in the maritime environment to the world of aviation was a demanding challenge but one Phil undertook with great enthusiasm despite many long hours learning the intricacies of aviation safety legislation. Phil's intimate knowledge of the island communities was of great help to him in his new role as he was well respected wherever he went. Phil oversaw the successful introduction of the larger 50 seat Saab 2000 aircraft to the Loganair fleet.

Despite his busy workload Phil was very active in other organisations. He became president of the Institution of Engineers and Shipbuilders in Scotland in 2014 and had a very successful first year of



presidency, but the sudden appearance of a brain tumour in 2015 prevented him continuing into his second year. He was keen to encourage future generations of engineers and as President of IESIS he worked to promote engineering. His wide ranging engineering experience in the civil, maritime and aero sectors made him a very worthy president of a multidisciplinary institution.

While he was MD at CalMac he was appointed Chairman of the Loch Lomond Steamship Company that is restoring the paddle steamer *Maid of the Loch* on Loch Lomond. He steered this company through some stormy waters - and low bank balances - and launched the *Maid's* 60th anniversary public appeal in 2013, which raised more than £120,000. He was also to the fore in promoting such diverse events as a Maid of the Loch Ale, championing the ship at the Great Scottish Swim, and taking the charity to be short-listed at the first ever Scottish Heritage Angel Awards in 2015. The greatest achievement under his chairmanship was undoubtedly the successful bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund in 2015. His support and encouragement throughout this tortuous process was invaluable, and it is a huge sadness that having succeeded in taking the project forward, he will not be around to enjoy a sail on her.

He was a keen sailor and for many years was part of the Race Team for West Highland Yachting Week. His colleagues in that team remember him as a great guy who was permanently cheerful and kept them all amused, even when conditions afloat were miserable and technical difficulties were giving problems. Skippers of racing boats, calling up the Committee Vessel on their radios were somewhat surprised to hear a cheerful reply to their query -"Don't go away ... your call is important to us!"; not the usual nautical jargon they were expecting. On another occasion as a race was finishing, always a tense time for the race officials, the Race Officer, not understanding the laughter behind him, turned to find Phil busily timing the in-coming boats wearing an elephant hat with enormous flapping ears! And he got all the times right.

Behind Phil's quiet demeanour was a highly competent engineer and manager, a person who inspired affection and loyalty in his colleagues. He would often find a way to get the job done that nobody else would have considered. He was innovative and liked to explore new technologies and had a great capacity for absorbing and retaining technical information. But what really 'floated his boat' was meeting people. He has made friends all over the West Coast and far beyond. He was known for his calm approach, his unflappable nature and his ability to see the other person's point of view - even when he did not agree with it. He had a quick wit and a lively sense of humour. He was patient, helpful and positive and was a good listener. It was said of him that he 'had time for everybody'.

News of Phil's untimely death came as a devastating blow to all who knew him. He is survived by his wife Allyson, daughters Ruth and Rhoda and stepson Grant.

Phil Preston born 11 May 1956, died 15 May 2016