

## BERTIE VIGRASS 1921-2020

Bertie was a remarkable and remarkably modest man who would only recall his early wartime exploits when pressed, which would then reveal not only his exploits flying Swordfish Biplanes from the deck of an aircraft carrier but his personal record of being the last man ever to have launched a torpedo in anger from one of those early flying machines. His intended quarry apparently escaped harm and, fortunately for us, so did Bertie. All that was, however, long before my time and was but a distant memory by the time Bertie moved into the final stage of his long career holding a number of pivotal roles in the development of international arbitration in London.

I first recall meeting Bertie in the late 1970s when conducting an arbitration in the then offices of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators in their rather modest offices in Canon Street. A neat, small, but fast talking and energetic man with greying hair would emerge from behind a door labelled in large letters REGISTRAR (now given the much more grand title of Director General). I was intrigued as the door also had a second, smaller label announcing the occupant as Registrar of the London Court of Arbitration. What I was subsequently to discover was that at that very time Bertie was in planning, (i) the expansion of the Chartered Institute with the appointment of Lord Diplock as President, the first of a distinguished line of judicial appointments to that office, (ii) in collaboration with Sir Michael Kerr, recently retired from the Court of Appeal, the addition of the word "International" to the London Court of Arbitration to re-launch it as the LCIA, with Bertie taking the additional role as its first Registrar (now also elevated to Director General), and (iii) the imminent launch of the Worshipful Company of Arbitrators as the City of London's link with the world of commercial arbitration, in which Bertie would become the founding Clerk (happily still today call the Clerk). Remarkably those three bodies have, since that time, each prospered and expanded to represent, today, the public face of arbitration in the United Kingdom. Of equal significance, all three have expanded their reach overseas and have ensured that, as a result of Bertie's vision and unrelenting work, UK arbitration is seen as pre-eminent throughout the world.

I have been proud to serve in different capacities in all three of the bodies that Bertie promoted and led for many years, latterly as a past-Master of the Worshipful Company of Arbitrators. I salute his contributions to that body, which now represents one of the modern professions supporting the Lord Mayor and the City of London. Bertie's life has been one of continuous and dedicated service which, to our benefit, has paid off handsomely and now forms a permanent and growing monument to his memory.

John Uff CBE

Past Master Worshipful Company of Arbitrators

Former Vice-President London Court of International Arbitrators.