



Contract
Flooring
Association
Member

**Contract Flooring
Association**

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The president: John Alcock

'There are challenges ahead, but firstly let me introduce myself'

WELL I'd like to start off my column by saying it is both an honour and a privilege to take over as president of the CFA, as well as thank those who thought I deserved another challenge.

Of course with such responsibility comes the opportunity to fill this space and put my slant on some of the issues facing the industry, as well as promote the excellent work of the CFA.

I can also discuss some of the challenges of the future, be they regulatory or environmental, but on a practical level I'd like to initiate some debate about problems like declining site conditions, which impact on a contractor's day-to-day working.

But as this is my first column, I think I should start off introducing myself and telling you about my background. I joined Laybond back in 1982, although it wasn't called that at the time, but that does give me 26 years in flooring.

I actually started out working in the oil industry where I got my degree in chemistry.

Unfortunately, the oil company I was working for became one of the rare companies in that sector to go bankrupt, but I would add its demise was not the consequence of my employment there.

However, this did leave me looking for a new job so I took a position in what is now Laybond, as the works chemist, which was a position I enjoyed and gave me a good grounding in flooring, excuse the pun.

From this position I moved onto the manufacturing side, but still in a technical capacity. It wasn't long though before I moved back into the pure technical side where I ran the R&D / QA before coming into a more technical support roll,

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assisting sales where I still am to this day.

I have to say I took to this position like a duck to water as there are so many aspects of the job I like - not least the fact that there are so many characters out there and on the whole it is a nice industry too. In fact I'd say there are not many bad people in the flooring industry.

There are lots of things I would like to change about the flooring industry. One of my big bugbears is the issue of the site conditions under which contractors have to work - no easy solution there. I'd like to continue encouraging the greater involvement of the contractor to get them engaged and promote a dialogue. It is my firm belief that most contractors want to do a good job, but they are sometimes forced not to.

I enjoy the getting out and about aspect of the job and particularly helping people with problems, and of course the processes involved in coming up with solutions to those said problems.

I've seen quite a lot change in the flooring industry over the years and most has been good.

'In the old days' there were just a few standard products that contractors would use almost religiously, but now there are a

multitude of products, which I sometimes think is too many.

Granted most contractors would like one adhesive that does everything as they would one smoothing compound and many of the new products on the market do address some quite important issues, but I can't help thinking some of the new products are driven more by marketing and cost.

For large contracts the PFI has changed the way the industry performs, where there is a tendency towards maximising profits with margins squeezed, often to the detriment of quality.

At some point cutting corners is almost a necessity rather than any wilful desire to do a job incorrectly and this is not a good trend.

A good flooring installation does look good and one of the better changes I've seen is the ever improving quality of materials.

Carpets and vinyl's are not boring anymore - the visual affect designers are now able to bring to the floor form an integral part of the construction.

A floor now needs to be more than just functional. Training is still lacking in the industry, but where it is provided it so often comes into conflict with what happens in practice and I'll be talking about this later too.

But it's not all work. I enjoy reading all sorts and I quite like the odd drink too. I'm a big fan of rugby, although now as a spectator rather than a player. I still do a lot of walking to keep the body active and for the mind there's Sudoku.

So that's me. All that remains is to for me to get out there and start meeting you all and hopefully provoking some thought here over the coming months.

CFA comment



The chief executive of FICER: Richard Catt

Successful CFA meeting proves to be a top 10 hit

AS you will no doubt imagine, my working week still regularly includes first time events. And Thursday April 10 certainly sticks out in my recent top 10 of good experiences.

Through the efforts of Peter Gregory, of STS Flooring Distributors, (our chair man for the Anglia region) ably assisted by Jonathan Ardley of Ardex, I attended my first regional meeting and I have to say it was superb. A full meeting room of over 30 people.

I am told that there are various formats that go together to produce a good regional meeting, but the recipe for this one was as follows.

Take a warm welcome from Ardex, a good pinch of other manufacturers, a VERY liberal sprinkling of contractors and garnish with a lively debate generated by two excellent presentations from Alan Jackson of Lafarge and Jonathan Ardley from Ardex and the result is a wonderful mixture that seemed to be enjoyed by all.

To expand a little on my woeful attempts at creative writing, the event began with a lunchtime buffet to ensure we all made the maximum benefit from the networking opportunity and time.

We then moved in to the excellent conference facility at Ardex where Peter and I made short welcome speeches and were put at ease by all those who attended. Some friendly banter ensued!

We were then treated to an excellent presentation by Lafarge who was very informative about the benefits and challenges related to Lafarge Gyvlon, answering all questions posed to them. Jonathan then gave a generic presentation relating to subfloor preparation of anhydrites.

Both very informative and underlining my view that, love them or hate them, the industry needs to be prepared to deal with anhydrite screeds as indications are that the market is growing.

Anhydrites: Of course the CFA does provide guidance relating to installation on to anhydrite materials (see the members area of our website), but we hope to publish some further information in the members area shortly,



Some of the people who attended the CFA East Anglia regional meeting recently

including a summary of Alan's presentation.

Golden reminders for me included specific advice relating to the use of hygrometers to establish if the screed is dry (or not) and thus avoid issues with subsequent floor coverings.

Seek guidance: The overriding advice seems to be to always seek guidance readily available through the CFA, companies like Lafarge and of course underlayment manufacturers.

But back to the regional meeting. My introduction to regional meetings could not have been more positive and I really do look forward to others that with the help of our regional chairmen we are beginning to plan.

What about you?: Would you like this format in your area? It can be arranged. All regional chairmen are listed in the front of our member's handbook, but please also call the CFA offices if you need further information.

Chairman needed: We do actually need a new chairman for the Yorkshire area, Dick Thomas formerly of F M Birch having retired at the end of last year.

A public thank you for Dick's many years of service and support is in order, but looking to the future we would welcome nominations for someone to take on the role.

Could you help? If you think you can, please contact me at the CFA offices on 0115 941 1126 or

send an email to info@cfa.org.uk. There is a wealth of help and support you will receive, with new ideas always welcome.

The Anglia regional meeting reflected a fantastic mix of contractors, manufacturers, distributors and consultants. What more could I ask? Oh ok, even more contractors!

(See also page 50)

CFA meeting in Scotland on the trot

THE venue for the next CFA regional meeting in Scotland is Hamilton Park Racecourse near Glasgow on Wednesday **August 13**. Gates open at 3.50pm, an early evening three course meal will be served at 4.30pm and the first race will be at 5.50pm.

The cost of the evening is £55 (plus VAT), which includes entrance to the course, the three course dinner, tea or coffee and a race course. The last race is at 8.25pm and the bar closes an hour later.

CFA members wanting to attend, should please contact the Nottingham office. **T: 0115 941 1126**



Flooring industry Training Association



TEXTILE

- Essential carpet fitting:** Jun 16-20 (L); Jul 14-18 (N).
- Intermediate carpet fitting:** Jul 7-11 (L).
- Advanced carpet fitting:** Jun 23-26 (L).

WOOD & LAMINATE

- Laminate/Floating wood fitting:** Jul 10-11 (N).
- Essential wood fitting:** Jul 7-9 (N)

- Intermediate wood fitting:** Jun 9-11; Jul 21-23 (L).
- Sanding & sealing:** Jun 12-13; Jul 24-25 (L).
- Estimating & Planning:** Jul 1-2 (L).
- Understanding moisture:** Jul 28 (L).
- VINYL FLOORING**
- Domestic vinyl fitting:** Jun 19-20 (L); Jul 17-18 (N).
- Safety & solid vinyl fitting (commercial)** Jul 14-18 (L).
- Design vinyl tile fitting:** Jun 30-Jul 3 (L)

UP-SKILLING COURSES

- Stairs, subfloor preparation, joins, dual stick, str etching: On request.
- Ardex presentation days** TBA Contact Ar dex T: 01440 714939
- Parador presentation days** TBA Contact Gordon Collier of Parador. T: 07917 543259
- (N) Nelson (L) Loughborough

Early booking for FITA courses is recommended to ensure you have a place.

■ **T: 0115 950 6836**
■ **www.fita.co.uk**

More training on page 16

Register now for your free ticket www.floorstyle08.co.uk