Mr President. Past Presidents. Distinguished guests. IIMS members. Ladies and gentlemen.

I hate my job - sometimes. Fortunately, however, I love my job most of the time! After more than five years at the helm, I have learnt a considerable amount about this remarkable and vital profession in which most of you are engaged and earn your living from. But did you know I am the least qualified person who now has the most amount of surveyor training possible gained over that time, which potentially makes me the worst kind of surveyor imaginable! Yes, we all know they are out there working in the field. You’ll be pleased to hear I open for business next week!

What I now realise and firmly believe is that IIMS has a louder international voice than ever before. We can and do articulate opinions and concepts that are increasingly heard both in the UK and on the world stage too - and not just by marine surveyors, but also by those who instruct and engage marine surveyors. Our network and reach as an organisation have vastly widened.

It is for these reasons, coupled with the backing from the membership, that I feel IIMS is perfectly placed to develop and launch a minimum worldwide standard for marine surveyors. I refer of course to the Marine Surveying Practitioner accreditation scheme, voted in favour of by members at last years AGM. We have been working hard on it over the past year. The clock is ticking and roll out is approaching.

These are bold statements to make and a massive project to deliver. Yet as I gaze back with pride at the huge strides we have made in recent years, and when I look ahead to the opportunities before us, I believe I can make these statements with a degree of comfort, if not certainty. Yes, a degree of comfort. IIMS is not frightened to lead in these vitally important, challenging and difficult areas; we seek to take the initiative and to break down barriers leaving others to follow in our wake. The impending launch of the Marine Surveying Practitioner Accreditation scheme is all about improving standards – nothing more, nothing less. Many will have heard me talk about the importance of standards before. But they really matter in an ever evolving world where we are all expected to be able to prove our competence in something or another by verification, certification, examination or accreditation. Even coffin makers in the UK are subject to formal accreditation! Reassuring to a point I suppose.

The institute helps those entering the surveying profession through our education distance learning programmes. But that’s just the start. Additionally, we provide opportunities for journey men and women surveyors to become better at their job helped by our regular training activities around the globe; and I believe we help good surveyors to become true professionals. That in my opinion is what the role of the Institute should be as the leading professional worldwide body for marine surveyors. Marine surveying is not a profession for incompetent fools who are long on promises, but short on detail. We must take the initiative in driving standards ever upwards and we are.

This year like no other, we have pushed ahead with an aggressive strategy on many fronts, including expanding our digital platform, as we continue to grow our footprint in the sector.

I suspect most of you have little idea of the full extent of the Institute’s business activities. By way of example, let me give you a flavour of some of the things we are currently involved with:

Currently with Adam Brancher’s help we are deeply immersed with the Australian government’s enquiry and review into the performance of AMSA, the Australian maritime regulator. We have made our detailed submission to the enquiry on behalf of our Australian members and it has sparked considerable media interest.

Fraser Noble is playing a leading role as part of a technical committee chaired by the MCA with the aim of agreeing common understanding of terminology for coding examiners and to assist with the redevelopment of the various colour codes.

I have continued my work as Chair of the Certifying Authority Professional Standards Working Group within the MCA. We are now making progress and expect to be announcing a common standard for all coding examiners leading to a certification process, backed by a specialist training module soon.

Our Registered Marine Coatings Inspector standard has been written into the recently published superyacht coatings ISO.

IIMS continues to play a leading role within the Small Craft Surveyors Forum, a group of professional bodies, including the Nautical Institute, RINA, SCMS, YDSA and IMarest.

Through our eCMID accreditation scheme – all about driving standards ever higher in the offshore inspection arena I might add – we have run several in-house training programmes for Bureau Veritas surveyors and inspectors at various international locations. Quite remarkable.

Our involvement with the development of the marine surveying apprenticeship trailblazer scheme, of which I am one of only two people from those initial meetings still standing, is now well documented. The programme is set for sign off with government approval and funding.

The Institute of Diagnostic Engineers, whose president is none other than our very own Jeffrey Casciani-Wood, has hit hard times. IIMS has been advising the 40 year old DIAGS on how to implement a turnaround plan. We have built a new website for them and rebranded their logo.

Finally I have left the most exciting bit of the lot until the end of this list. IIMS is set to complete the purchase of Murrills House as its permanent headquarters early next year, something unthinkable just a couple of years ago.

I told you we have been active!

And in terms of member benefits, in the past year alone we have launched the new Marine Surveyor Search app, a copyright free photobank, a podcast page with access to over 40 audio presentations and have created a safety briefing page dump on the website with access to hundreds of incident and accident reports.

All of this activity requires some financial investment, but more importantly, it requires good people to make it happen.

I am lucky to be surrounded by a dedicated, first class team at head office. Some of my colleagues are here tonight to hear me personally praise them for their considerable efforts and talents. It is at this time of year that the job description and contracted hours simply go out of the window! Organising a London Conference is exhausting. My thanks particularly to Camella Robertson, Membership Secretary and Office Manager who has done so much to make this event work, supported by her team Lorna Robinson, Craig Williams, Tania Bernice and Dave Parsons. Jen Argent, Financial Controller is currently on maternity leave. Thanks to her and Elly Bryant who run the accounts department. Additionally, Hilary Excell representing our subsidiary, the Marine Surveying Academy, is here this evening. She is supported by Pui-Si Chung and Sharon Holland back at base. They are doing fabulous work in the area of accreditation schemes. I would like to ask my colleagues present to stand up now so you may show your appreciation for their unstinting dedication in all they do to support me and you the membership.

I’d like to tell you something about President Zarir Irani’s charity which we are accepting donations for this evening. Zarir has chosen the Jubilee Sailing Trust, based in Southampton. To give you some idea of their work, I have taken some words from their website as follows:

In a wild, unpredictable and challenging environment, people discover new personal depths. That is true for everyone, because the sea does not discriminate. We give everyone responsibilities that have real consequences. People learn that risky activities can be safe when managed responsibly. Our tall ships are uniquely accessible and are crewed by a diverse community of mixed abilities, circumstances and ages. On Jubilee Sailing Trust voyages social, demographic and physical barriers are broken down and disability and disadvantage fade into the background.

There are some envelopes on your table. Please donate as generously as you can to this most worthwhile cause. One of my colleagues will collect the envelopes shortly. And IIMS will match the value of what is donated this evening by you.

Now I am quite sure that like me, Andy Moll also has days when he hates his job. The MAIB perform an amazing and essential service. We are always quick to publish and notify our members through our various communications channels when a new report is released, because we value the content greatly and know how important it is. Andy, I am most grateful to you for speaking this evening and for sharing your considerable knowledge with us. Please accept this small token of my appreciation.

Tonight gives me the chance to recognise and thank those members who do so much for the organisation behind the scenes and who give of their time freely. I refer initially to the executive and management boards and President Capt Zarir Irani. My thanks also go to Capt John Noble, my boss, Chairman of education and administration, whose visits to the office are much looked forward to and not simply for the quality of biscuits he brings with him. Sadly I have to inform you that tomorrow’s AGM will be John’s last official function as a board member and committee chairman for he is standing down. John, you have given unstinting support to the organisation over many years and to me personally. I thank you for that and for your friendship – and especially your biscuits. Fraser Noble, backed by a committee of experienced coding examiners, continues to give excellent service to the Institute as Chairman of the Certifying Authority. John Excell leads as Chairman of small craft surveying and runs our brilliant tonnage measurement training programme. The enduring Paul Homer who really has his work cut out at times as the long suffering Chairman of Standards. Captain Chris Kelly continues to perform the most valuable of roles as chairman of the professional assessment committee, who with his fellow colleagues ensures we keep out unsuitable members, or as he puts it – the riff raff. My thanks also to our Regional Directors, branch chairmen and committee members around the world for all they do.

I would like to make special reference to Capt Bertrand Apperry, President from 2014 to 2016 and to mark his retirement from Institute duties. Bertrand has decided to stand down as an executive and management board member after many years’ service. We will miss him and wish him well.

Talking about having good people around us, I am also reminded that we have some brilliant partners and suppliers who we work with and they with us. Outsourcing is a buzz word these days and we outsource to some excellent organisations. One of our key partners who we have developed a solid relationship with going back five years is IMCA, the International Marine Contractors Association. We entered into dialogue with IMCA back in early 2014 and the result is the now acclaimed eCMID Accredited Vessel Inspector scheme. I am proud that we have been able to play a vital role in cleaning up what was once an unregulated offshore inspection sector. Vessel operators now know who is boarding their ships and boats and where the inspector’s competencies lie. It is testament that organisations such as Siemens, Vattenfall and Orsted, to name but three, have publicly backed the scheme. 600 people have come forward for accreditation.

So it is fitting that Mark Ford, IMCAs technical director, is with us tonight; and he has been alongside us since those early days when the scheme was but a mere pipe dream. From time to time we present a Blue Water Award to people who have helped make a difference to our business. It gives me great pleasure this evening, therefore, to present an IIMS Blue Water Award to Mark Ford.

Earlier this year we launched the Marine Surveyor Search App, the fabulous next generation search tool for finding a surveyor. It’s a really neat App, which continues to evolve and elevates our digital activities way ahead of other surveying organisations. This was a long and challenging project and is our third App after the launch of Continuing Professional Development apps for IIMS and MSA. Building apps is a specialist and complicated skill. Fortunately Capt Ruchin Dayal, a fellow of the Institute, and his team at eDot Solutions based in Goa seem to do it with consummate ease. Ruchin and some of his team are here tonight. I am most grateful to you. Two years ago I recognised the achievements of some of Ruchin’s colleagues by giving them a replica of a London bus – yes random I know. But this year I would like to make a Blue Water Award to Michelle D’Silva and Shreya Shirodkar, who have project managed things for eDot Solutions and who my colleagues and I have met virtually online at regular intervals over the past year as the project has come to fruition.

Before I close tonight, I am delighted to be able to announce three honorary memberships. Carey Golesworthy is perhaps a name not known to many of you. Now in his eighties, and sadly not here with us this evening, Carey trained and qualified as a naval architect. For many years Carey has been a stalwart on the Education Committee. Additionally, he has authored a number of modules for the distance learning programme and has acted as a marker and assessor. Carey has been made an Honorary Member.

I am pleased to welcome Peter Harris here tonight. Earlier this year, as part of the ongoing investigation into our certifying authority by the MCA as a result of the Clipper fatality back in November 2017, IIMS was in need of some legal advice. Most helpful advice was forthcoming to the Institute by Peter Harris and the Management Board wishes to recognise his contribution by making him an honorary member.

Captain Nick Sloane will be known to many of you not least for his great success in leading the project to raise the Costa Concordia. Nick has spoken at conference before on that subject as well as here today. He is a great friend of the Institute and advocate for all that it does and stands for. For these reasons, the management board wishes to award an honorary fellowship to Captain Nick Sloane.

My thanks to you all for coming tonight. I look forward to seeing many of you who are at Conference tomorrow and at the AGM too.

I would like to conclude by saying to those Institute members present and to absent colleagues and surveyors in general around the world - your professionalism and dedication continue to make a major difference to the safety of life at sea. Survey well; but please stick to your areas of competency and stay safe always.

I wish you all a safe onward journey. Thank you and good evening.

Mike Schwarz  
17 June 2019