

# The Society of Light and Lighting

## Presidential Address 2017

**Richard Caple MSc MSLL**



### Lighting as a Profession

Past Presidents, Members, ladies and gentlemen; I am truly honoured to be standing here tonight as your new President of the Society of Light and Lighting, and I thank you for giving me this opportunity. I recall as a young designer, flicking through a copy of the CIBSE Building Services Journal, and reading about the inauguration of the then SLL President Mike Simpson, I could not have possibly imagined that it would be me standing here today!

Like most “lighters” I accidentally got into the industry about 18 years ago. Having finished college, I realised that I needed to get a ‘proper’ job, so having studied Design Technology and Graphic Design at A-Level I set about finding something that utilised the skills I had learnt. I applied for a job at Thorlux Lighting who were advertising for a Trainee Lighting Design Engineer. At the time of course, I didn’t have a clue what one of these was, but the job description sounded quite interesting. To my surprise they offered me the job and, unbeknown to me at the time, my lighting career had started. I went on my first lighting course in 2001 with the LIF (as it was named then) with Dr John Frost who on the first day was explaining trigonometry and Pythagoras and why they would be important over the next few days. Now, bearing in mind I hated maths at school, I did wonder what on earth I had done, but thankfully (and with the added incentive of keeping my new job) this time it made more sense! I worked my way through all of the LIF courses, taking a particular interest in the photometry and testing, something that would later define my role in Thorlux. I then completed the LET Diploma, the SLL Lighting Diploma, and finally culminating in my Lighting MSc at the Bartlett in 2012. Today I still work for Thorlux and I’m lucky enough to be involved in a number of different areas of the business. My passion is not only to design high quality, energy efficient lighting solutions, but to educate, train and provide best practice guidance in our changing and fast moving market.

Looking back, in one sense you could say I was lucky that I had joined a company that was willing to invest in me and my education, but of course, all of this would have not been possible had these lighting qualifications not been available to me. I think that in the UK we should be proud that we have such a wealth of education and knowledge and I consider myself lucky that I have found, all be it accidentally, a job and industry that I am interested in and passionate about. However, it seems a shame that I stumbled across this by accident. So the question has to be asked, why shouldn’t and doesn’t lighting be a more obvious career choice? As a key part of my year as President I wish to continue the work that Jeff has done by promoting lighting as a career and a profession. I therefore look to inspire through working with STEM, but also wish to engage with a slightly older age group, those in higher education as well as young engineers already in the building services industry. I also hope that over the course of the year we can publish a career pathway document to help those seeking or considering a career in lighting to see what options, routes and qualifications are available to them.

Our industry has undergone radical change over the last decade, primarily driven by the LED revolution of course. I think it is recognised by most that the LED revolution is over, but I still think there is a legacy of misunderstanding when it comes to this technology, and greater clarity is needed from manufacturers and suppliers, as well as improved standardisation. I still feel there is a knowledge gap between end users and professionals. This is, of course, where the Society can and does help. Our Technical and Publications Committee goes from strength to strength, and over the next 12-18 months there is a vast amount of new guidance to be published in the form of Fact Files, updates to existing Lighting Guides as well as completely new editions. The Code and Handbook will also be updated. As a young engineer the Code was something that was always on the end of my desk, and to a certain degree, still is today.

I do find it interesting just how technical and involved our industry has become, even during my short time. I also have concerns. If we compare a modern luminaire today with one of 10 years ago, the two are very different animals. They are different because not only do today's luminaires provide light, they are also a platform for other embodied technology's, such as Wi-Fi, Li-Fi, Bluetooth, and sensors which can monitor CO<sup>2</sup>, temperature, humidity and so on. While I am not suggesting this is necessarily a bad thing, I think crucially we must not forget that first and foremost, a luminaire is exactly that, a device to illuminate our space. While we must embrace new technologies and our ever greater connected world, we must never forget that quality lighting within space is fundamental to our health and wellbeing. I would hate to see good lighting take second place to a good internet connection!

I'm also concerned that far too much emphasis is placed on the energy saving potential of LED technology. While this is of course extremely important, not least from an environmental perspective, it is just one factor in the overall consideration. I see whole projects being based on energy, CO<sup>2</sup> and maintenance savings with not a single lighting calculation being made to check that the proposed replacement will meet the requirements of the space and its users. Return on investment and paybacks seems to rule over all else. This is where the SLL provides a wealth of education and guidance on best practices, and we must continue to keep banging the drum on quality lighting. As Iain Macrae discusses in his recent Newsletter article, staff costs far outweigh any capital or maintenance costs for a building. If the new lighting is not fit for purpose and fails to meet the basics such as light levels, uniformity, colour performance, and compliance with glare and luminance, then the 'investment' may end up not being so wise.

While on the subject of wellbeing, Human Centric Lighting, or however you wish to term it, seems to be the current 'in vogue' topic. While it is generally acknowledged that changes in the colour and intensity of lighting can affect our mood, wellbeing, alertness and productivity, I feel it is still unclear as to how we actually apply this. Do the needs change if you are working in an office compared to a hospital? We can of course talk passionately on this subject, but at the end of the day much more independent research is needed, and importantly I think, we must never forget that there is no substitute for daylight. The SLL is working on a position paper around this topic, and I hope that over the course of the year it will be published.

Our industry faces a number of challenges in the future. Our Government has recently invoked Article 50 and started the count down to the UK leaving the EU. No one knows yet what this means for any of us, let alone the impact it may have on our industry, and for many who do business throughout Europe it will no doubt be an anxious time. From an industry perspective we need to make sure that our voice continues to be heard to ensure we are best placed to deal with whatever the outcome is. Through working with other organisations and bodies the SLL can play its part in

helping. This is something that I am very mindful of as I go through my year, particularly as more information becomes available from Government, whatever Government that may be after June 8<sup>th</sup>.

The SLL is growing every year, we have well over 3,500 members worldwide and as a result we are doing more than we have ever done before. Events such as Ready Steady Light, the Masterclass series, Young lighter of the Year, industry trade shows, and many regional events name just some. The newest edition to the calendar is the Night of Heritage Light. The multi award winning event that took place originally in October 2015 was phenomenal, and although I only played a very small part, I was proud to be at the Ironbridge site and experience what took place. I think it was a great reflection on how passionate our industry is and how well we can all work together. The same was also true of Night of Heritage Light 2 which took place in October last year as a part of the illuminating York festival. Once again a huge amount of time and effort was given by our volunteers to deliver these amazing events. Both have raised the profile of not just the SLL, but our industry as a whole; we have captured imagination and helped inspire those normally outside of the industry to become involved. I am keen therefore to ensure we continue this momentum and I am working with Simon Fisher on some pretty exciting plans for Night of Heritage Light 3, which will take place later in the year, so do watch this space!

All these events would not be possible without the support of CIBSE and the hard work of the Balham staff, Brendan and Juliet in particular. So I would like to thank them for everything they do, and I very much look forward to working with them and the wider CIBSE team over the course of my year. My congratulations also to the new CIBSE President Peter Wong and President Elect Stephen Lisk, Stephen being a Past President of this Society of course.

I would also like to recognise the work that is undertaken by our Regional Lighting Representatives. Having been one myself for the best part of 10 years, I fully appreciate the work and effort that goes into running lighting events at local level. I hope that over the course of the year I will be able to visit some of our regions and also get involved in their events, but I would like to take this opportunity to thank all them for their hard work.

May I also thank Past President Jeff Shaw for very ably steering our ship over the last twelve months, and I look forward to continue working with Jeff. As mentioned in his Presidential address, 12 months is actually a very short amount of time to realise a vision, and I hope that I can carry on some of the things he has started. I also cannot do this alone, and look forward to continue working with President Elect Iain Carlile, and Vice Presidents Jim Shove, Bob Bohannon and Ruth Kelly-Waskett.

So in summary, my main aim for the year is to promote lighting both as a career and a profession. I hope that I can inspire more people to pursue lighting as a career choice. I think one of the great things about our industry is how diverse it is, from lighting designers to product designers, electrical and mechanical engineering, testing, research, the list goes on. Our industry never stands still, there is never a dull moment (pardon the pun!). There are also many different levels you can join, and hopefully, as I have demonstrated, you can start at the bottom and work your way up.

Finally, I was asked recently what it meant to be a member of the SLL and why should someone become one? So the only way I could answer this is by saying what being an SLL member means to me. I said that the SLL is a professional body representing all interests in light and lighting. The SLL is one of the oldest professional lighting bodies with a worldwide reach and a growing membership. Between us all, we have thousands of years of combined lighting experience, be this in artificial light, or daylight. The SLL offers me guidance and support through technical publications and events, and as my career progressed has offered me professional recognition for my efforts through their

different membership grades. But more than anything the SLL is a home, a home for my interest and passion for lighting. As a social society I can discuss, engage and interact with other likeminded "lighters". The SLL do some truly great things, and I'm sure there will be many more great things to come in the future. So, who wouldn't want to be part of this?

Thank you.

Richard Caple

May 2017.