

Ben Beaumont is the chairman of the management committee of the Dispute Board Federation. His journey to this post was long and interesting. Ben was born at the height of the Blitz, although he cannot claim any part being played in the defence of Fair Albion in 1940. His role was merely that of being an annoyance to his mother. After early schooling he joined Marlowe House of Kings School Canterbury. As the tallest at just under 2.00 m, combined Cadet Force member Ben initially was required to be right marker, which is the key person when the Corps was on parade, then subsequently became a leading Seaman instead.

Following his early schooling, Ben obtained a place at Pembroke College Oxford and St John's College Cambridge. Since after school employment opportunities in the late 1950s were limited, and being a bright young fellow with an ambition to go far, he joined a local building company as a bricklayer's labour. Money was now coming in and he was swiftly mounting the ladder to success. His start in construction began carrying bricks and cement up the two or three stories necessary to supply bricklayers, followed by his joining a piling company. From there Ben expanded his construction career and became a steel fixer where he led a team of steel fixers building the now famous building known as the Department of Trade and Industry.

Quantity surveying came next in his career and in 1972 he was invited to have a project to scope and develop a marina in Lagos, Portugal. It was to be built and designed on the same lines as architect Francois Spoerry's Port Grimaud. As a result of the contacts he made during this venture, he was encouraged to set up a housing association, now known as an RSL. He was founding chairman of the Dickensian Housing Association. That association was shortlisted together with Paddington Housing and the Mulberry Trust as possible candidates for development of five acres in Paddington.

By the early 70s Ben decided to become a barrister, so at the age of 34 he applied and was accepted to study at the Bar Council. His companions in study included a doctor, (now coroner), and a soldier on active service said to be a member of the SAS, (one of the two is still alive and well!) Ben managed to pass each of the examinations thanks in part to the considerable help from both tutors and fellow students alike. One student especially who springs to mind was Rusheen Wynne-Jones. Lady Wynne-Jones became a very important campaigner for the preservation of all things artistic and beautiful in Chelsea. As a result of her influence, Ben was invited to be Secretary of the Pheasantry Preservation Trust chaired by Sir John Betjeman. The aim was to save the Pheasantry building and restore it as a club.

Ben having been called to the Bar needed the mandatory training before he could practice. He was very fortunate in coming to the attention of Neal Kaplan QC, SC who took him under his wing and he became a member of Chambers in Temple Gardens. At that time however, chambers which were interested in using Ben's basic construction skills were few, so it was Colin Reece QC who directed Ben to obtain a proper qualification to place an academic stamp on his manual work. As a result, Ben studied for a BSc in Estate Management at Oxford Polytechnic. It was also during this time period when Ben became fascinated with alternative dispute resolution.

Ben could not understand why parties were not communicating prior to the trial in an attempt to settle, and as a result he applied to become a member of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators. It was at this stage that his obsession with methods of dispute resolution other than litigation came to the fore. For years he played a leading role in the Chartered Institute, and was an elected trustee for 19 years. He was also the founding chair of the Thames Valley branch. Ben was very fortunate as the Chartered Institute at that time had small value arbitration schemes. He was appointed as an arbitrator under such schemes as the ABTA travel scheme, various professional negligence schemes, and with the financial services scheme known as FIMBRA. As a result of this experience, he eventually was appointed as sole arbitrator as well as a member of a three person tribunal in larger arbitrations.

In 1992 Ben moved to Hong Kong. There he practiced not only as a barrister; but also became involved as an arbitrator, mediator and conciliator in all manner of construction and non-construction disputes. It was at this time that he started to become involved in project management. His work on project management eventually took him away from Hong Kong to Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam. For a while he had an office in Hanoi on the same street as the American Embassy. At the time Ben first worked in Vietnam, the United States had yet to lift its economic embargo and he understood how one could lose a war but win the battle.

After working on various projects, he started to focus mainly on hydro power developments. It was during this period that he became a member of the Chinese International Economic Trade Arbitration Commission which is based in Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen. He worked with Chinese colleagues in drafting what became the Arbitration Law of China in 1995. Prior to the return of Hong Kong to China in 1997, he was a member of three delegations which went to Beijing to discuss various legal issues with the Ministry of Justice in China.

In 2000 Ben was invited by Professor Alan Jeary (formerly of BRE and now Queensland Uni) to form a company to measure the algorithms of tall buildings in order to test their risk of collapse in certain circumstances. Together they published *Dynamic Considerations in Structural Monitoring*.

Ben eventually returned to England in November 2004 where he has continued both at the bar and as a Fellow of RICS. He is currently at Thomas More Chambers, Lincoln's Inn and has written and spoken widely on all aspects of ADR. He was honoured to be chosen as a member of the Marriott committee which produced the first drafts of the 1996 Arbitration Act of England and Wales. He represented, along with another colleague, the Hong Kong government in its negotiations on certain aspects of the WTO arrangements. He has been a Fellow of the Singapore Institute of Arbitrators and is still a Fellow of the Arbitrators and Mediators Institute of New Zealand where he is also an accredited trainer.

In addition to all of these activities, Ben is internationally known for his work on Dispute Boards, and has active dispute boards in the Middle and Far East. He also sits on various three-person arbitration tribunals and currently is a member of the ICC's working group drafting consortiums/joint venture contracts for SMEs. He is a trainer for the various courses run by the Dispute Board Federation including the FTIP (FIDIC Contracts *Total Immersion* Program), and has been accepted onto the FIDIC President's of Accredited Adjudicators. Ben is also a non-executive director of RIBA Enterprises.