



Thanks to Carol

Richard Wilkins, a former ACT General Secretary, writes to mark the retirement, after nearly 23 years, of the Association's longest-serving employee, Carol Horne.

'Membership' was the core of her job as it has been the core of ACT's existence, and she tried to know as many of the members as she could, individually

Carol Horne started working in the office of the Association of Christian Teachers at the end of April 1987. At first sight, this might not have seemed a huge job. The only work she had to manage was her own. The General Secretary was the only other staff member based at the office.

Working conditions were not plush, and equipment was primitive. The office was a dimly lit room in a basement under a bookshop in St Albans. Carol received all telephone calls, opened post, typed letters from my ponderous dictation, circulated committee and other group papers, typed minutes, reports, press releases and articles. She issued requests for annual subscription renewals, and recorded and banked the returned cheques; similarly with occasional financial appeals. She kept the books and compiled financial reports for the Treasurer. She organised the termly mailing to ACT's members. She administered conferences and exhibition displays. These are just the tasks I can remember.

Ten years before Carol came, soon after I began working for ACT in the Scripture Union building, a senior colleague said to me 'The trouble with ACT is that it's the wrong size. It's too big to be run by teachers in their spare time, and it's too small to pay for an adequate number of staff.' The membership was the same size then, and the full-time staff equivalent of Carol was three. However, IT had entered our lives by the time Carol came. We had a BBC B computer, and our 2,300 membership records were kept on four 5.5 inch floppy disks. Searching and label printing were slow.

We moved quickly into the PC world, so to speak, and Carol has been superb at making a long succession of new computers and software do what we needed them to do. Thanks to showers of blessing that the Lord rained down on ACT in 1989-90, we were able to employ an additional part-time secretary. Nevertheless, significant electronic machines always far outnumbered staff, and this paradoxically focussed ACT's human interactions. If you telephoned ACT, Carol was nearly always the person you first spoke to, and she was very often the only person you needed to hear. We didn't do recorded lists of keypad options. Welcoming, caring, knowledgeable and laterally-thinking, Carol knew your question's answer or someone else who could answer it. Callers would frequently be surprised and encouraged to be recognised by name, sometimes only voice, by Carol whose memory for such attributes was outstanding. 'Membership' was the core of her job as it has been the core of ACT's existence, and she tried to know as many of the members as she could, individually.



Carol Horne, never keen on having her photo taken, at work in the office some years ago.

Carol and her husband Michael are deeply involved in the music ministry of their church. Songs of faith must have fortified her for some of ACT's anxious times, but the organisation for which she worked so hard provided experiences of faith's reward. 'The wrong size' it may have been, but God has kept it and its service secure through all 39 years of its existence. Carol's long service has been truly priceless. Her responsibilities were varied enough, and often heavy enough, for all of the three staff members who had once borne them together. But for 22 years she has carried the administration with unfailing loyalty to ACT, its members and the Saviour we all represent. She has routinely travelled second, third and fourth miles in their service. We owe her, at the very least, many thanks, and we wish her a happy retirement.

■ Richard Wilkins

Arthur Jones comments on the work of Carol Horne

When someone retires there is always a mixture of sadness when saying goodbye but joy in anticipating a well-earned rest.

This was the case when, at the 2009 ACT Day, we formally said goodbye to Carol Horne who, for 22 years, worked for ACT, managing the vital office operation. At times it was difficult to see where Carol ended and ACT began, such was her commitment to the Association. Over the years, she worked with four 'Directors' and a substantial number of Trustees. It was a delight to be able to acknowledge Carol's work for the Association of Christian Teachers at the ACT Day 2009 in London. Carol certainly has had to endure the ups and downs of office life, many a budget crisis, and a urgent move of premises, at the same time embracing new technologies. Indeed, there have been times when Carol has been the glue which held the Association of Christian Teachers together. And we have to thank Carol for working longer than perhaps she would have liked in order to see ACT through a period without a Director. Certainly we owe Carol a debt of gratitude. As you know, the Trustees invited ACT members to contribute to Carol's leaving gift. The response was fittingly generous and I was delighted to be able to present it to Carol on your behalf.

■ Arthur Jones, ACT Chairman of Trustees

Carol Horne writes to members after ACT Day 10 October 2009

Dear Members,

I should just like to thank those members who contributed to my retirement present which I received on ACT Day 2009. It was a wonderful surprise to receive such a generous gift and I will choose something which will be a reminder of my days with ACT. It has been a privilege to work for ACT all these years and I feel very humbled that God placed me there to support such an important organisation, and working with the membership I have got to know

many members through the years, and have very much appreciated the letters and kind words and support which you have given me.

I pray that ACT will go from strength to strength in the coming years and continue to be a voice for Christians working in education.

Again, many thanks for your most generous present.

God bless you,

Carol Horne

