



The Voice of the Industry for 40 Years

contribution of CO2 emissions towards it; and the recent rapid rise in fuel prices.

The intention of this commemorative issue is not to write a definitive history of the freight industry – that would represent an awesome task that could run to several volumes – although in some cases, the accounts included are pretty definitive.

It is fascinating, for many reasons, to look back across several decades in any field; at what people were doing, thinking and wearing, and at the old equipment they were using. After overcoming the initial shock of how different things looked – and at those extraordinary clothes and hairstyles – we are often left with a mixture of observations about how much and yet how little has changed.

Looking back at the first issue of IFW, this would initially, and superficially, appear to be true also of the freight industry, as we read how experts from the then UK rail operator, British Rail, believed that creating a system of robot freight trains was just around the corner.

Although this suggests that this industry has changed little over the last four decades, and failed to live up to the promises and the dreams of the 1970s, that is far from the truth.

Outwardly at least, one could argue that the evolution has been more one of size, scale and scope and refining systems, equipment and processes rather than a revolution in physical terms.

International freight transport is, at its core, a simple concept – moving items, usually in a box or container, from A to B – so evolution is inevitable, once a workable system of unitisation has been set up – at least until teleportation takes over.

The express industry has embraced fully automated sorting of shipments, but for heavy freight, even within the most highly automated warehouses and container terminals, there remain manual, or at least human-controlled, elements. It's far easier to automate the movement of small shipments.

Forwarding, to a large extent, remains a people and relationships business, involving bespoke rather than standardised solutions

and products, although even this is changing as technology evolves. And within freight forwarding, and the wider freight industry, there have been many, many mini-revolutions, which will be discussed on the following pages.

IFW has been fortunate to witness and report on an international industry that has participated in, and largely made possible, one of the most amazing stories of the 20th and 21st centuries – the globalisation of trade.

The failure to deliver robot freight trains, perhaps says more about the hazards of predicting the future than it does about the progress and development of this industry. But let's not let that prevent us from having and sharing visions of the future.

And now, of course, IFW itself has evolved: a year ago, we took the best aspects of almost 40 years' experience of communicating with the freight and logistics sector – the trust, the great reputation, the independent and high-quality content, the exclusives, the tip-offs, the IFW Awards – and combined it with demand for timeliness and ease of access to become an online-only publication.

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IFW's digital delivery channels allow us to provide the content readers need, when they need it, and, increasingly, in multiple formats.

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