

Susie Burrage:

# 'We are coming to the fore'

Susie Burrage's grandfather was a founder member in London of the National Federation of Scrap Iron and Steel in 1919. A century later, Burrage is the fourth generation in the family firm Recycled Products Ltd and is proud to be president of the British Metals Recycling Association (BMRA). She is also an active member of EURIC and BIR. At the recent BIR online convention she spoke about her career, the circular economy (CE) and a passion for encouraging young people.

## WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER

'I love meeting people in the other associations and hearing their ideas and so on. You realise we are all struggling with the same issues. Everyone in the industry around the world has very much the same sort of problems and looking for similar solutions. If we work together, hopefully we can find them. It's nice to be a united voice and not feel alone.

Recyclers have the right spirit. We're resilient - we've been through these things before; we've been through wars and recession. Most [BMRA] members come from family businesses and they will do all it takes to keep those businesses in operation. We may suffer some redundancies and a little consolidation but, on the whole people, will keep going. The industry seems quite buoyant.'

## ON WOMEN IN THE INDUSTRY

'I'm against promoting women if they are not capable of doing the job. But with Robin Wiener and Adina Renee Adler (both from ISRI) we've got two remarkable women, excellent examples of what women can do. I'm in

great awe of those two ladies; they are an inspiration. Women were always in the industry but we tended to do the office jobs. The industry's becoming more and more regulated and we are coming to the fore.'

## EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL

'I'm very concerned about this along with Emmanuel Katrakis at EURIC who I work closely with. The European Green deal in December had two pillars: the CE and being carbon neutral by 2050. They need to mandate green public procurement and have some recycled content targets. Ecodesign is going to be very important - as an industry it is something we need to push for. If you can't recycle it, then it's going to waste and that's not going to help the CE. We get other people's problems pushed onto us: how are you going to recycle this, they ask, when it should have been thought about in the design stage. Cars are a great example: there are 39 different types of plastics and polymers in a car. How are we supposed to sort that out? And we need to ensure recycled materials do not

count as waste. That's something we've been trying for in Europe for a long time and we are going to have to fight that battle.'

## YOUNG PEOPLE ARE THE FUTURE

'I feel passionate about bringing younger people into our industry. In the UK we have launched an apprenticeship scheme specifically for metal recyclers. We started in 2018 with the Metal Recycling General Operative - that's level two, for just after you leave school at 16 although it's open to any age. It's to give someone working in the industry a professional qualification. I'm delighted that this year we've launched a level five - which is about degree standard - for a metal recycling technical manager. I was really passionate about that because I would have loved to have had the opportunity to take that qualification myself when I entered the industry. It's a very complex industry. You have

to manage so much yourself: health and safety, environmental impact, financial responsibility, managing people on top of the actual operations and logistics - as well as dealing with the local communities.'

## EARNING TRUST AND RESPECT

'In my father's era you would get into the car to meet people. Or you would chat on the telephone. It's all too easy now to send an email but you don't really know someone from an email. You really need to press the flesh and look them in the eye. I've made great friends at BIR conferences who I now trade with. It's about having that time with people and getting to know them and earning your trust and respect. It's important to check that someone is actually a member of a national association and also an international one like BIR. It's a great positive that if you deal with another BIR member you have the option [of arbitration] if things do go wrong. But when it comes to meeting

people in the lobby outside the convention - if they are not willing to pay the minimum rate of EUR 2 100 [to take part] then really do you want to entrust them with thousands and thousands pounds-worth of metal? If you are sending them a container of copper halfway round the world, possibly EUR 100 000, and yet they won't pay that EUR 2 100 then you have to think very carefully.'

## TOUGH AT THE TOP?

'Especially for business leaders it can be very lonely. For me, being part of an association and federation and knowing other people are going through it all is so helpful because you can discuss matters. We tend to boost each other up and that's been a great thing for me.'

## SOCIAL MEDIA AND CE

'We really need to embrace this opportunity. We've been given a gift with the CE. I remember at school a teacher asked me what my Dad did and I said

he's a scrap metal dealer. They said: 'Oh don't say that, just say he's a company director'. Now they say 'Oh you're in recycling' and how fabulous is that? The public has a thirst for general knowledge about recycling and social media is a great way to raise public awareness and see we are a crucial element in the circular economy. We need to grab this gift with both hands. If we don't, someone else is going to grab it. The up and coming tools are Linked In and Instagram - it's the way to go.'

## LIFE CHOICES

'I made a personal decision quite a time ago. I don't have a family of my own so unfortunately Recycled Products won't be passed onto a family member. I'm passionate about the industry so I chose, rather than expand and have a huge company, I was going to put my energies into the industry as a whole. I'm a people person and the industry is a great bunch of people. I've loved every moment.'



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