



# 10 years – the story so far

**Well, where do I begin? A bit of a cliché, but here goes...**

Once upon a time.....some time early July 2000, a conversation ensued between Brian Hay of Cardinal Maritime (who had become one of my clients) and I, in which he put it to me if I had ever thought of starting my own business. Having been in the industry for many years (since 1978 in fact), it had crossed my mind, but for one reason and another, it never happened, and the opportunity never arose. It was agreed that a meeting could be beneficial, and so some days later, at the Higher Trapp Hotel in Simonstone, Cardinal's then three Directors (Brian, Rob Cross and David Garratt) and I met, with pencil and paper in hand to crunch some figures. The result was that Ital Logistics was incorporated on 10<sup>th</sup> August 2000 and Roberto Tagliareni of ITX Cargo made up the 3<sup>rd</sup> party.

So a fortnight after that, I found myself sat in one of two seven foot square un-rendered brick cubicles at the back of a warehouse in Rochdale, ready for action. To my pleasant surprise, my former employer (with whom I had introduced ITX Cargo to some two years prior), decided to forego the Italian service which I had introduced to them, and sent letters to all clients whom I had brought to the Company informing them of my new venture and that they should deal directly with me in future. This meant that the prior two years had not been in vain, and it was indeed a good start.

After a couple of weeks, I employed my first member of staff, and a couple of months later another. Come the end of this 'partial' year we had turned over £400,000, and had established the Italian service to a minimum of twice weekly in each direction, a promising start indeed.

In April 2001, we moved from Rochdale to reside in Cardinal Maritime's facilities at Eccles, and my wife Dianne joined us managing accounts, having assisted part time during the previous months. In September of this year we started a service with Turkey, which we terminated in March of 2002, just in time before our partner ceased trading. And also at the back end of 2001 we started to work with Alie S.A. of Barcelona as distributor in Spain, whom had become ITX Cargo's Spanish partner some months earlier. The year concluded with an audited 17 months turnover of just over £1.8million, with a small profit, and all invested monies repaid, this despite a couple of bad debts which served as an early lesson in commercial industry hazards.

In May 2002, we partnered up with ITX's Portuguese partner, which was our next hopeful link into blending Italy

and Iberia as these markets do interlink. However, this failed to reap rewards and by May 2003 it fizzled out - right idea, wrong partner.

But on the up side, during the latter part of 2002, we entered the British International Freight Association (BIFA) Awards, and to my surprise were shortlisted as finalists in the category of "Best European Forwarder", pitched against some fairly big giants of the industry. Come January 2003, when the Awards Day came, we were announced as winners of the category, and so notched up our first of two such awards. Quite amazing considering we had only been in business for just over two years, and even more so against such competition. On a humorous note, we had opted to fly down to London for this day, and trying to get the chunk of metal I had been presented with back through customs and onto the plane was no mean feat at all – it was scanned so many times it probably still has some traces of radiation!

Anyhow, year 2002 concluded with a turnover of £1.5million, which was up on the previous 12 months, and again with a small profit.

Tony Burrows joined us at the start of the 2003 with a target to focus on general forwarding. I hadn't looked seriously at general forwarding before as I was always concerned that a 100kilo job to France, for example, could go wrong and jeopardise our regular Italian client. But with a dedicated person managing this addition to our business, and increases on the Italian line, we increased turnover to just over £2million with greater return. And it was in February 2003 when Kurtis joined us, replacing Filippo (remember him??) who returned to his homeland near Venice. I guess we cannot criticise him for choosing Venice over Whaley Range! (I should add that during this time a few people came and went, some jumped, some pushed, but nevertheless, the company was growing). One person who joined us in September 2003 was Francisco, initially as junior clerk, who developed extremely well and eventually took over the Italian exports role. Sadly, come March 2005, he too decided to return to his homeland, from Manchester back to Madrid. He has since become Branch Manager of a company in Madrid, testament to his abilities, and hopefully also to the grounding he had at Ital Logistics.

At the end of 2003, David Garratt stood down as a prelude to his well earned retirement, Dianne and I taking his shares with Dianne becoming shareholder. At the same time, Roberto took an additional 3% shareholding.

Following the opening of a Verona branch by ITX (spanning 2002/3), we commenced a direct line Northbound between Verona and the UK early in 2004, gradually separating the North Eastern cargoes and the Milan cargoes. Also at this time, as one of our niche areas of the transport of dangerous goods was becoming ever so prevalent, I became a Dangerous Goods Safety Advisor, replacing our previous consultancy arrangement. Having the on-site knowledge was, and has since proven to be, integral to the development of Ital Logistics' specialist area of expertise.

October 2004 saw us move, with Cardinal, to our current site at Sharston, a 30,000 square foot modern facility which provided the next platform for development. So, all in all, 2004 was an interesting year, and even allowing for the expense of moving, we returned a turnover of just shy of £2.6million, but with an even greater return close to our industry sector average.

2005 saw the start of our Greek service, again teaming up an ITX partner; then named Interdromon, and a year later with the Manager migrating - Hellas Logistics. This is a service that has become consistent throughout, and has provided a twice weekly service with monotonous consistency. Overall there was no real change to turnover or profit by close of play 2005, but we continued to maintain stability and consistency. During 2005 we also acquired the Investors in People Standard.

It looks like it is all statistics, but carry on reading, there is more to tell.

2006 became an interesting year in that I placed an operational presence at our Romford warehouse facility with the intention of increasing our presence in the South of the UK. We already had business down there, and with a little push in the right direction, I saw an opening. During the following 3 years, I increased the workforce in Romford, but eventually was forced to close the operation office mid 2009, as after 3 years, not for want of trying, it was just never going to 'cut the mustard'. But if I hadn't tried, I'd always have wondered. Maybe this is something for the future...

But back to the statistics, 2006 ended with a £3million turnover, and a profit, albeit a smaller ratio.

As we can only keep the BIFA award winners logo on our stationary for 5 years, I thought that we should enter again into the awards for 2007. Uncannily, we were again shortlisted for the finals, and quite unbelievably picked up the winners trophy a second time. BIFA liked the fact that we were not a 'serial entrant', and that we had maintained our steady progress, provided a reliable and honest service, and continued to grow at a measured pace. I must add that I am pleased that we have maintained this steady growth by organic means and not by acquisition (not that there is anything wrong in the latter method), just damned hard work and determination.

In September of 2007, we were joined by Mike Whitney, whose Eastern European knowledge has propelled us into these markets. During the last 3 years we have found that we are becoming more recognised in Eastern Europe, and I expect this to be an area which we shall continue to explore.

Statistically, we ended 2007 on £4million turnover with an increased return of almost one percent above the industry norm.

Doing nothing new, but just carrying on in the same vein, 2008 returned us a turnover of £4.8million as we increased, in particular, our Spanish and General Forwarding lines, as well as growth in the Italian lines. And despite the economic doom and gloom of 2009, our turnover again increased, this time to £5.25million. Profit in 2009 was minimal, but still positive, and our consistent development in Spain is firmly placing Iberia high on our agenda. 2009 saw me renew my DGSA qualification, and Derek joined me as secondary DGSA. Our continued niche specialisation in the movement of Dangerous Goods is expanding - even our competitors are using our services for such movements!

So this brings us fairly up to date. At the time of writing, we have a 16 strong team, and are expanding our office created with additional building works by Cardinal Maritime. This will increase our capacity to allow for continued measured growth. To the end of June we have cleared £3million turnover, and the profit is starting to step back up again. Our Italian service is running well (at around 50% of our total income), Spain is on the increase, especially having started a new line to and from Madrid with MZ Logistic at the start of this year, Portugal has interesting potential, Greece is consistently maintaining the status quo, and the general forwarding is flying along quite nicely.

All in all, our first decade has shown that with the right team of people (eventually!), always intent on providing an honest service, and always to the best of our abilities (even if we do fail occasionally), anything can be achieved.

To all our clients and suppliers who have come, some stayed, and some gone, in these last ten years, may I say thank you. Moreover, let me give praise to my team of people who are repeatedly praised by our clients for their good work. Here's to the next ten.

**Phil Denton**  
**Managing Director**



AWARD WINNING LOGISTICS  
2000-2010



INVESTORS IN PEOPLE