

INSTALLATION LUNCH WELCOME SPEECH

Robert Burgon, Master

24th October 2017

Welcome

Wardens, Immediate Past Master, Past Masters, Assistants, Stewards, fellow Liverymen, guests and friends, I am delighted that so many of you have been able to join us on this special occasion at the start of our Livery year. I hope that you enjoyed the reception and lunch and I would like to extend a hearty thanks to the team at Vintners' Hall and Searcys for their excellent food and service today.

Church service and lunch

I think that there is something special about being able to hold our Installation in the Company church, St Magnus the Martyr, followed by a service of worship. As many of you are aware, our Chaplain, Father Philip Warner is currently undergoing medical treatment and on your behalf, I have assured him of our thoughts and prayers for a speedy and full recovery. It was an honour for Sheila and I to see our local Minister, Rev Dr David Graham conducting the service today- thank you David for making the long journey from Scotland and for your encouraging message this morning. Our thanks are also extended to the Verger, Nick Sargent, the organist, John Eady and the excellent choir, led by Lottie Bagnall.

IPM

Immediate Past Master and Mistress, Brian and Anne, what a hard act you are going to be to follow! In spite of the fact that you had a shorter than ideal journey to become our Master and Mistress, you have both been excellent ambassadors for our Company carrying out your busy schedule in such a dignified and enthusiastic way. One of many highlights of your year was our special Court meeting in January when Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Cornwall became an Honorary Liveryman and our charitable trust received a significant boost through the proceeds of the luncheon which followed. We also enjoyed the presentation of bursaries beside the Apprentice Statue in Cannon Street Station and this is something which we plan to repeat in the coming year. Brian and Anne- you have set a very high bar for Sheila and I and indeed for future Masters and their consorts and I would like to thank you for everything which you have done for the Plumbers.

New Liverymen

It is essential that any membership organisation looks to its future by continuing to welcome new members and this morning at our Court meeting 4 new Liverymen were clothed. I would like to introduce them to you all and would ask each to stand when I call their names and to remain standing until all five are on their feet and we can welcome them with our applause. Roland Bilson- Luke Peters- Lloyd Searson- and Anne Timpany. You are most welcome and I look forward to seeing you all play a full part in the life of the Plumbers' Company.

New Court Assistants

We were also delighted to welcome no fewer than three new Court Assistants this morning and it is an honour for me to introduce them to you now. Once again, please reserve your applause until all three are standing. Sandra Raine- Professor Mala Rao- and Janet Rivers. Ladies, I look forward to your active participation in the Court and Committees.

New Stewards

The smooth-running of Plumbers' events is due in no small part to our team of dedicated and hard-working Stewards. We start off a new Livery year with two new Stewards- Dr Malvern Tipping (who is unable to be with us today) and Tony Peters. This is the second time in a matter of minutes that I have asked a member of the Peters family to stand- Tony can you please stand so that we might all welcome you! Most of you will know our new Senior Steward, Ian Smith and I look forward to working with Ian and his supportive wife Patience in the year ahead.

Apprenticeships

It is quite possible that you may hear me use the word "apprenticeship" on more than one occasion over the next 12 months. It is a word that can be traced back to the earliest days of this Company and a word which I believe remains relevant today. I firmly believe in the apprenticeship system and think that it is the ideal method of preparing people to work in our industry.

I would describe my journey on the Plumbers' Court as an apprenticeship- I have watched, I have listened and I believe that I have learned from successive Masters, Past Masters, Court Assistants and yes- even gallant Clerks. Now, I have been installed as Master and I hope to be able to use all of the knowledge and experience I have gained over the last 7 years on the Court. I have, however, always believed that learning continues throughout one's life and I expect that I will still learn more in my new role within the Company.

Even although my title might be "Master" for the next 12 months, I recognise that this role will need active support from quite a number of people. I am privileged to have Dame Fiona Woolf as Upper Warden and Dr Peter Rumley as Renter Warden. The Company is fortunate to have the support of our office team of Sharon, Debbie and Peter the Beadle led by Pieter the Clerk. I look forward to working with all of you in the Plumbers' team during the coming year

WorldSkills

At the July Court we presented the Company's Gold medal to plumbing apprentice Dan Martins who had been selected to represent the United Kingdom at the WorldSkills event which took place in Abu Dhabi last week. I am delighted to report that Dan received a bronze medal at WorldSkills and I hope that we might have an opportunity to hear from Dan about his experiences at some point in the year ahead. Congratulations are also due to Dan's employers, Briggs & Forrester, who are Corporate Members of the Company.

Heritage Award

In a recent review of the awards which the Company presents, it was decided to introduce a Heritage Award which would be presented in memory of Lilli Sara Barber and would recognise a person who has made a significant contribution to the skills associated with this industry's heritage. I am delighted to announce that the first winner of this new award is Liveryman Phil Mead.

Phil joined the Livery in 1985 but has been deeply involved with our Plumbing Museum and Workshop Trust at the Court Barn at the Weald and Downland Living Museum at Singleton since the Company first established its lead craft demonstration facility.

The Company decided in 1972 that it would like to establish a Plumbing Museum and in 1975 a barn from Court Farm at Lee-on-Solent was identified as a suitable building for

erection on the Weald and Downland museum site. The Company immediately began to raise money to have the barn erected on the site. It also began to collect artefacts and exhibits for the Plumbing Museum and Phil Mead was involved in doing this from 1975.

The Court Barn was formally opened by Her Grace, Lavinia, Duchess of Norfolk CBE on 4th October, 1980. Phil Mead conducted the first Craft Demonstrations with students from Chichester College on that day and has been continuously giving, as a volunteer, craft demonstrations in the Court Barn to school children, students and members of the public ever since – a period of some 37 years!

Phil has also been instrumental in promoting historical lead craft work not only as a volunteer at the museum but also in the manufacture of many items cast in lead. These include lead planters for Her Majesty The Queen for her Golden Jubilee and her Diamond Jubilee (they are currently at Buckingham Palace and Sandringham), a lead planter to commemorate Dame Fiona Woolf as Lord Mayor (now at the Guildhall) and nearly 70 lead planters that were sold to our Liverymen to commemorate our 650th anniversary and raise money for our charities.

Phil Mead is a very worthy recipient and I would like to invite him to come forward to receive the Worshipful Company of Plumbers' Heritage Award.

The Year Ahead

My hope during my year as Master is that we will see many more of our Liverymen taking an active part in some aspect of the Company's work. For some that will be through membership of the Court and our Committees. For others it might be attendance at the Company's principal events such as the Annual Lecture and Banquet and the Ladle Dinner. For those who can participate in our programme of social events, we have arranged what I believe is an interesting range of social events both in London and further afield and next September, Sheila and I hope that a number of you will join us in a visit to another of the UK's capital cities, Edinburgh. I also hope to see the Livery growing and our Membership Committee is planning an interesting recruitment programme which should help us to reach our targets. Good communication is essential and PM Cartwright does an amazing job in posting items on our Company website. Sometimes, items seem to be on the site even before the events have finished. A new website is in preparation and when that is operational, Rodney plans to hand over the webmaster reins to Assistant Paul Nash. Thank you Rodney for keeping the current website so up to date and interesting. Paul- you will need some energy to follow Rodney in this important role! I would urge all Liverymen to keep an eye on this website for news of our activities and events.

In Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Court for the faith it has put in me to be the Master of this historic Company. The Mistress and I look forward to serving the Company to the very best of our ability and we look forward to enjoying the year ahead with as many of our Liverymen and their partners as possible..