

**Ladle Dinner
Cutler's Hall
21st November 2017**

Speech by Past Master Stephen Hodkinson for the IPM Brian Wadsworth

Chairman, Stewards, members of the Livery

The Ladle dinner provides an opportunity for the Livery to say "Thank You" to the previous Master for his year of office.

In the case of our Immediate Past Master Brian and Mistress Plumber Anne it is particularly appropriate to offer our thanks to them both for their enthusiastic commitment to their roles and for enhancing the reputation of our Company during this past year.

Brian joined the Company only in 2013 but he **came** with Livery experience having been Master Carman in 2010. He enjoyed, at least by our standards, a meteoric rise to office neatly filling a gap in our succession of Masters, for which we are very grateful.

Brian has described his Master's year as a kaleidoscope of experiences, evolving at a bewildering pace – and when you look at his programme of over 200 engagements I do think we can all relate to that.

I'm sure Brian and Anne will have many of their own highlights but for us in the Livery the Installation of her Royal Highness The Duchess of Cornwall, as an Honorary Liveryman will rank at the top of the list. Of course, for Brian and Anne to use the occasion to host a Lunch, which raised nearly £22,000 for our Charity, was just the icing on the cake of a perfect day.

Unfortunately I was unable to make the Master's mid-week break this year – the small matter of my daughter's wedding – but the visit to Lincolnshire was a great success and how clever of Brian to tie it in with the Heritage Skills Festival at Lincoln Cathedral on the following two days.

The event had thousands of visitors, was supported by 25 City of London Livery Companies and gave our company a great opportunity to promote the work we do in preserving Historical Lead Craft. We also managed to raise a considerable sum for the Cathedral's Charity. All in all it was a big success for the company.

There were a whole range of other very interesting social events during the year from Bletchley Park to the Magic Circle but I very much enjoyed lunch at Westminster Catering College where we had a gastronomic treat prepared by the third year students and served by some very capable second year students...and talking about capability - the college's alumni include Jamie Oliver and Ainsley Harriott. This was a good lunch.

Having access to Brian and Anne's expertise in the Charity world has opened up some excellent opportunities for our own charitable activities.

The introduction of the charity "village by village" three years ago has meant that over that time we have contributed to reducing needless suffering and deaths of children living in poverty in remote villages in Ghana. The hygiene and sanitation focus of their "Clean Hands - Saves Lives" programme is a brilliant 'fit' for our Company.

With the appointment a new Clerk at the beginning of his year, we really threw Brian in-at-the-deep-end. So Brian, who had had only a few years' experience with the Company, did not have the benefit of the continuity of the Clerk. This is not to be underestimated and credit should go to both Brian and Pieter for the excellent way the year progressed. We know it would have been a steep learning curve for both.

The office tells me that Brian was very 'hands-on' – not in any inappropriate way you understand – this is not Westminster – but of course in the organisation of functions, events and so on. I know the office were very thankful for your support.

There is one final thing that we shall remember Brian for and that is his introduction of the elegant, stylish, tasteful and functional Plumbers' Candelabras! These were individually hand crafted, no two are the same and are cherished by those who were lucky enough to receive them!

Perhaps we'll see them on the website soon!

Once the year is over it's a fairly abrupt change from being Master, some say that there is nothing so past as a Past Master, but Brian, I hope you and Anne are adapting well and picking up where you left off with your varied interests, travel and cruising the world's oceans, music, opera and your passion for classic cars – at least you'll have some time to polish the Rolls.

However Brian, please remember that there is still 'lots-to-do' with the Plumbers' Company!

So THANK YOU to yourself and Anne for a wonderful year you should both be delighted with all that you have achieved.

Please be upstanding to drink a toast to the Immediate Past Master Brian Wadsworth coupled with Past Mistress Anne. **"Brian and Anne"**

Response by IPM Brian Wadsworth

Mr Chairman, Master, Wardens, Members of the Court, Stewards and fellow Liverymen,

This will be a speech of many thank-you(s), the first of which is to you, Steve, for your very kind remarks upon my year in office – a year of many good memories, created at breakneck speed.

I have said before that no Master serves alone. Throughout my year I have never wanted for good fellowship or good counsel – as our late Lord Mayor recently observed, including when I have asked for it. And I would add, sometimes when I did not think to ask, but needed it.

The journey I reflect on this evening began long ago and far away (or so it seems), near a rural bus stop somewhere in the Ribble Valley. I saw no bus. Instead, Past Master Gale took me on one side and popped the question. Never volunteer, they say. As you can see, I do not always take advice.

Past Master Paterson-Fox very kindly agreed to act as my mentor and has discreetly intervened from time to time to help deliver the well-rounded product you now see before you. With Nick's finger on the starter button and Antony's hand on the wheel, I set off in stately convoy following Steve and Erica – what better guide could anyone have? You all deserve my warmest thanks for your example and good guidance, both en route and during my year in office.

Of course, the time arrives when the L plates are discarded; potentially a heart-stopping moment. I have been very lucky to serve with two outstanding Wardens; Robert, now our Master, and Fiona, our Upper Warden. You have both supported me unstintingly and we have worked together as a team during my year. Thank you for your good fellowship and encouragement, which I have greatly valued.

A Livery Company is defined by active participation. Our Company sets a great example, led by our team of Stewards. While serving as Senior Steward, Ian has somehow managed to morph into a Master Distiller – a worrying development. We shall soon taste the latest products of your labours, I believe. During my year, you and your team organised a succession of enjoyable visits – to the Royal Mews, Apsley House, Bletchley Park, Henley, Hampshire and one or two little extras, like the Catering College in Westminster and of course our rendezvous at Cannon Street and lunch nearby at The Banker. Nor shall I forget, Ian, your little conjuring trick at Brizzi's restaurant, following our visit to the Magic Circle in September. The benign influence of our Stewards is on display once again this evening, as at every formal Company event. Ian, thank you for your year of service as Senior Steward and thank you Daphne, Clive, Danny, Damon, Ian and Michael for your important roles in delivering the late Master's programme.

Keeping our Company on the straight and narrow wherever its Master may be inclined to roam is of course the function of our Court. All our Past Masters and Court Assistants have been most helpful throughout my year and indulgent of my little innovations from time to time, including our Charity lunch in January, our Masters and Clerks luncheon in May and adapting the Company schedule to feature a Summer Festival in July in place of the Autumn Festival of recent years. It has been a pleasure to Chair our Court meetings and to serve with such convivial, wise and flexible Court members, thank you. I am very pleased to have admitted before the end of my year not one; not two, but *three* new lady Court Assistants, two of whom have impressive career backgrounds in our industry and one a distinguished record in the field of public health.

I see in the Hall this evening many who kindly joined the Mistress Plumber and I for three happy days in Lincoln and Lincolnshire in June. Among you is our Junior Warden Peter Rumley, who together with Peter Cheesman and his wife Debbie and Allan Andersen and Paul Lovett put on such a splendid demonstration of traditional lead-work skills on the green of Lincoln Cathedral during the Heritage Skills Festival which ran on from my Master's mid-week break, filling the vast Cathedral and the green outside with a stunning and diverse display of ancient Livery crafts and trades. You did our Company proud: our exhibit was second to none and drew crowds of interested

and admiring visitors from far and wide. I even had the chance to burnish my market trading skills. Thank you!

Every year brings a new Master. Few bring a new Master and a new Clerk together. As fate would have it, mine was such a year. Thankfully we had continuity as well as change: Sharon, Debbie and our Beadle Peter put their shoulders to the wheel as they have always done. So much of what our Company is and what we do draws upon their knowledge, enthusiasm and unfailing helpfulness. Thank you Sharon, Debbie and Peter once again. And Pieter our Clerk – I need no longer say *new* Clerk – has worked far beyond the strict call of duty, to master his brief and then to command it. Pieter, all of us – and the Immediate Past Master most of all – have good reason to be thankful for your great endeavours since you took the helm last October.

One very special person is with us here in spirit this evening but dines not far away, in style, with our consorts. The Immediate Past Mistress Plumber has not so much contributed to my year as pervaded every aspect of it. To mention one or two highlights would be to cast a shadow, undeservedly, upon others, but I think it right to say that we *all* have good cause to thank her for her part in securing a very rare honour for our Company and boosting our charitable resources too, on a memorable day at Skinners' Hall in January.

Speaking of memories, as Past Masters do, I have been asked from time to time to name the memory which will burn brightest and longest, now that my year is over. This is a good time to give you my answer. The greatest highlight of my Master's year is... not a memory at all. It is something that grows and strengthens and will accompany me through life, long after the Master's jewel has been handed on. I refer to the many, enduring friendships formed within the warm fellowship which is the very essence of our Worshipful Company. From London to Lincoln; from Henley to Hampshire; from the Ribble Valley to the Reform Club and from Vintners' Hall just over a year ago to Cutlers' here tonight, the greatest highlight of my year is all of you, my fellow Liverymen and friends. My final thank-you goes to you for sharing my journey, past and yet to come.