



The Master's Blogs

2015 - 2016



Mrs Erica Stary
LLM CTA (Fellow) Hon ATT (Fellow) TEP solicitor

Master's Blog 1



Attended to St Paul's to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Royal Engineers Bomb Disposal unit. We were seated under the dome with many other Masters, Prime Wardens, liverymen and service personnel. The event was very moving. After the procession of the dignitaries, who included HRH Prince Harry, the Lord Mayor and the Sheriffs, two George Crosses were laid on the altar. These had been won by two brave soldiers who had risked their lives to remove a large bomb and thus save St Paul's from major damage during WWII. The service included several details of instances where the Unit had saved lives, also stories

of heroism and a wonderful tribute from a father whose son, in the Unit, was killed in Afghanistan. St Paul's was well fenced off. It was not only difficult to find one's way in, but also out again - security was, not unexpectedly, very tight. Prince Harry spent quite some time talking to members of the Unit after the service. Then many of us repaired to the Guildhall for a finger buffet. The Lord Mayor gave an excellent speech extolling the Unit, and the Duke of Gloucester replied, with some personal family reminiscences included in his speech. Afterwards, there was a display in Guildhall Yard of the types of scenarios the Unit would have to deal with - such an unexploded bomb in a London house living room during the Blitz, and from many of the other major skirmishes in the last 75 years including Bosnia, Iraq and Afghanistan. The servicemen told those of us there about what was in each tableau. The bombs, many of which are homemade, have become much more sophisticated over the years, and there are now robot machines which can survey the bomb and even in appropriate circumstances shoot it! But, these sadly don't stop the deaths, merely reduce the percentages. A thought-provoking day.

Master's Blog 2

This week's outstanding event for the livery (and others) was the Agincourt 600 service at Westminster Abbey. There was somewhat of a panic over getting the entry tickets as they only (I learnt later) arrived on Monday, Paul is away on his well-deserved holiday, and Sharon is, sadly, sick with a lung infection and so confined to barracks (sorry, home). So I had to learn how to get into the offices and was ably assisted by Stanley, the beadle at Wax Chandlers. Here, after much searching, I found them. Phew! I also discovered that our special label whisky had arrived, and am looking forward to helping to drink it.



Off to the Abbey to meet our beadle, Peter, in the Lady Chapel, for robing. But before then there was the queue to get in. Amazingly, I found that the chaps behind me, who were keen churchgoers, had actually wandered into St Magnus the Martyr last week for the installation. They also told me about going, the week before, to the Lion Sermon at St Katharine Cree – this has been ongoing for 373 years and is funded by an endowment from Sir John Gayer, who, as a Merchant Adventurer with the Levant Company, was miraculously saved from death by lion in Syria, and became Lord Mayor in 1646. For those interested, it happens around about October 16 each year.

The Lady Chapel was quite full, and those trying to organise must have thought they were herding cats. There was much chitchat, whilst at the same time trying to find those Masters of companies in the name number area as one's own - ours of course being 31. In due course, we were settled in reverse number order, so that I had the Master Innholder (32) in front and the Master Mason (30) behind. Our instructions were to process at speed as there was not much time for dalliance. In theory, what should then happen is that the seating starts at the back of the block allocated so that the Great 12 have the best places – but this time, due presumably to error, 110 was in the front and, apart from one Great 12 luminary who spotted a more suitable seat where s/he would have a much better position, the rest were apparently well at the back of the North Transept. Fortunately, there

were many TV screens round the Abbey showing what was happening. – extremely useful when they went to lay the king’s sword on the altar and when an actor was declaiming down the aisle. The service itself was marked by a distinct lack of singable hymns. I always find that puzzling. If you want to have a particular hymn, why not choose a hymn tune that everyone knows. We had three, and, although the soprano (or tune) part was printed in our programmes, and although I was surrounded by excellent singers who, like myself, could read music, we descended into silence as each hymn progressed. However, the lack of decent tunes to sing was countered by excellent speeches out of (Shakespeare’s) Henry V (it was after all his battle) and a stunningly excellent sermon from the Bishop of London. We also had a Frenchman reading the account of a French soldier in WW1 on the 1915 anniversary of joining with the British division stationed near to his own battalion. Il a dit “Mais ces Anglais et nous, nous sommes de deux races fortes et loyales, qui ne se méprisent pas quand elles se combattent.” Good to know that we are sometimes appreciated.... The Arts Scholars held their annual Mithras lecture at Goldsmiths Hall, and this year the talk was on detection of art crime. The speaker, a detective sergeant from the Metropolitan Police, charmingly explained how she was drawn to the police after being given a Ladybird book on being a policeman, when aged 5! Her talk was extremely interesting and she brought exhibits – such as signature practice books with pages and pages of attempts to produce such signatures as Charles Dickens or Winston Churchill (Winnie’s was then stupidly written in a book which had a barcode: alas for this forger, bar codes were not used until the seventies and WC died in 1965) also sculptures, “antiquities”, and other forgeries.

I also attended the Mansion House for a reception for the recipients of Awards from the Lord Mayor’s 800th Anniversary Awards Trust. The winner of the first prize, who reported back to us, had chosen to go to Panama where he had researched Antillean manatees on whether modernization in the country was affecting their survival rates and whether there was any area which might prove suitable for a sustained revival. The young people present were so very impressive, it was a real pleasure to meet them and to discuss with them their passions.

Finally, and most interestingly, an ad hoc trip to Lambeth Palace, arranged by our very own archaeological Court Assistant, Peter Rumley. He had discovered that one of the rooms in the Palace had been “painted” in MDCXCI. The room was entirely paneled in wood and originally all the walls would have been painted, with the frames of the pictures likewise painted – a trompe l’oeil effect. Alas, there is now only really visible the painting over the fireplace also some of the painting on the mantelpiece above and either side the fire, but fascinatingly the camera was able to pick out shapes which the eye could not. We were a small group of 5, including two who are restoring another house containing painted rooms of the same vintage. It was their considered opinion that at least some of the “lost” painting could be recovered by experts. Afterwards, we went to admire the splendid hall with its gothic roof, and on leaving were entranced to find the old Royal Doulton HQ premises designed by R Stark Wilkinson and built in 1878 in Black Prince Road with its beautiful ornate tiling and brickwork – a veritable “riot of polychromic brickwork and terracotta gargoyles”. The pièce de resistance must be the frieze above the HQ entrance by George Tinworth, showing the artist himself centre stage, and with Sir Henry Doulton, a potter, Hannah Barlow, on a chair with a cat below, and various products.

Master’s Blog 3



November 2 saw the livery massing in the Garden of Remembrance outside St Paul’s for the annual planting of poppies on crosses ceremony. We were lined up in precedence order overlooking the sward where the planting takes place. Attending also were the Lord Mayor (locum tenens) and his wife, the Sheriffs and other city dignitaries. It was cold and damp, but the threatened rain stayed away, at least for the necessary hour or so. As we (Paul and I)

arrived, the band of the Coldstream Guards were practicing and once the ceremony began, they marched in with members of the British Legion. Also present were the City of London Schools

choir and the ceremonial squad of the London Ambulance Service. It was impressive and sombre. The processional hymn sung, the Dean led the prayers, followed by a further hymn and the Last Post. Then it was time to plant the crosses with the poppies on them. After the officials and other dignitaries had laid theirs, we went up in groups of 3. Fortunately, someone had already prepared the hard ground so it was relatively easy to put the cross into place – each one was named, so ours was for the Plumbers. When all was done, the service finished with the Kohima Prayer (When you go home, tell them of us and say, For your tomorrow, we gave our today), the National Anthem and the Blessing, after which the Band played the dignitaries away and then left themselves, and we all went on our way leaving the poppies standing bravely.

Tuesday was a splendid Carpenters' court luncheon at their Hall. I was warmly welcomed, and made strongly aware of how delighted they all are that we will be moving there shortly, and I also met the Master Clockmaker, whose suite of offices are to be next to where ours will be. The food was delicious.... I am sure we will settle in well there once the legal niceties are completed. The Carpenters have a special link with the 4th Battalion Rifles, which has recently been deployed in Afghanistan. The Company makes an annual award, which was presented at the lunch, to an outstanding rifleman, chosen by their Commanding Officer, who gave an excellent speech telling us about the exploits of his brave young men.

Wednesday evening I attended the Gardeners' Autumn Court dinner at Fishmongers Hall. Again, really warmly greeted. The Gardeners always give their guests (and maybe the livery as well, not sure) a flower to wear. Mine was a beautiful white rose, which is now happily surviving at home. Those of us in the procession also had posies of sweet smelling herbs and flowers to carry – this, as I am sure you know, harking back to the time when it was believed that disease came from foul smells and if you were able to avoid the smell by the sweetness of your bouquet, you would be kept healthy. The guest speaker was Roy Lancaster, who was absolutely entrancing, his enthusiasm for his plants undimmed after a lifetime's work. The dinner was also an occasion for many other awards being presented by the Gardeners.

Thursday saw me at the 12th Annual Dinner of SoPHE, which was held at the Royal Garden Hotel in Kensington. It was another occasion for awards, including one to our own liveryman Chris Northey for the work he has done over many years for the Society (he is now, as you know, president of IHEEM). There were, of course, several of our livery also present, and I was able to chat to many of them. I also had a fascinating discussion with David Harper about his work round the world in helping to find the sources of waterborne diseases, and with Nick Mead, CIBSE president, over a wide ranging set of topics. It was with difficulty I tore myself away at just before midnight, so it too was a very good event, and it was noticeable that the wine and beer were flowing with abandon – there is a two hour reception period to get people in the right mood!

After all that, you might have thought I had had enough, but I also took myself off to an fascinating and, as it turned out, emotional seminar and discussion which took place at Great Ormond Street Hospital on the topic of donor-conceived children. It had not occurred to me before (because I had never stopped to think about it) just how much these offspring, many of whom are now in their late 30s, desperately need helping to come to terms with their conception methods. Some, but clearly not many, parents tell them all about it, others let slip snippets of information, whilst others say nothing at all and their children find out when they find paperwork on clearing up their parents' estates, or have major suspicions when they look like no-one in the family grouping. They want to know about the relevant donor, (some information is now available to those born after 2005), and also about their genetic makeup, which is quickly becoming more important medically with advancing science. Much food for thought there.

Master's Blog 4

Monday, a gathering for splendid lunch at Plaisterers' for their Training Awards. If you haven't been to Plaisterers' Hall, and the opportunity arises, do take it. They have, as you would expect, the most fabulous plasterwork in their dining hall. Well worth seeing. The aims of the awards are to encourage excellence in training, supporting and promoting heritage and modern plastering skills, and generally recognising excellence in the art and craft of plastering. They also, like ourselves, have bursaries to encourage the young to educate themselves further in the craft. It was a very good opportunity to discover much more about the art of plastering - I was told (not yet sure whether this was with tongue in cheek) that the mix of plaster will be ready for use if you can lift it over your head and pour, but nothing comes out (my husband always averred that this was a test of a good pudding)! Also, that it takes about two months practice for a student to learn how to get the plaster to stick on all the wall, though it won't necessarily look good at that stage. One of the winners was Lewisham Southwark College, about which more anon. There was also a Student of the Year award (with 3 finalists from round the country) which was awarded to Robert Johnson who represented the UK at WorldSkills 2015 and achieved the highest marks ever achieved by a UK competitor. The awards were presented by the Lord Mayor and the event was extremely well staged.

Tuesday was a visit to the Guildhall for the City of London Girls' school prize day. The school orchestra played for us whilst we waited for the dignitaries to arrive, we also had some excellent singing and piano playing by individual students. The prizes were presented by our very own late Lord Mayor, standing in as locum tenens, Fiona Woolf. Fiona, as we have come to expect, gave a stunning speech to the girls, praising those who had won, but even more importantly encouraging those who had not with examples of those who had likewise failed to come first and yet had done so well in their later lives. There were indeed many prizes, and as is so often the case, multiple award winners. Finally, our afternoon was enhanced by a brilliant speech from the Head Girl. Afterwards, of course, there was our Ladle Dinner and I hope you enjoyed that as much as I did. It was so good to see our IPM honoured for all the wonderful work he did in his year.

Wednesday saw the annual lecture from the Horners'. This year the speaker was the enthusiastic chemist and Royal Society Foreign Secretary, Sir Martyn Poliakoff. If I recall correctly (it was not announced on our invites) he termed his lecture "Horn, Polymers and Polymaths" but I suspect there was an alliterative term for horn. He took us on an engaging romp through his life, showing how the enthusiast cannot be deviated from his course by bad or indifferent teaching. It was fun and illuminating. As indeed also are his university's series of videos on YouTube entitled Periodic Table. Google, watch, see and learn. I have. Martyn expressed a wish to film one of his videos surrounded by diamonds (he managed one in the gold vaults belonging to the Bank of England) – so if you can help, let me know as I have his details. Afterwards there was a buffet supper and chance to meet and talk to the others there. I persuaded myself to buy the latest version of the Horners' history, just published, and am looking forward to reading it.

Thursday was a trip to Lewisham Southwark College (Lesoco) for their annual awards evening. I did a vague look at a map and thought it would be fun to get there by DLR. Maybe I got off at the wrong station, but I ended up with a 15 minute walk through relatively dark streets to get there (thank heavens for a smart phone and its map app). Coming back I used the overground to Cannon Street and it was much quicker. Our reason for going was to present the Plumbers' award for excellence in NVQ3, which was awarded to Martin Shirlaw. Martin was "gobsmacked" he had had no inkling that this was to happen and was really thrilled. He is currently thinking about earning money before restarting his training to go higher, and I extolled to him the virtues of further education and where it could take him. Chatting to the staff, they were still excited about the



award from Plaisterers' received the previous Monday.

Friday is a relaxing, catching up day before the Lord Mayor's Show tomorrow. I have been advised to take waterproofs as torrential rain is threatened. Keep your fingers crossed.

Master's Blog Lord Mayor's Show

As expected, the skies were grey and it did not look promising which is a shame. Still, the four of us – Steve, our IPM, Brian, the UW, Paul, our clerk, and me - gathered at Wax Chandlers and put on our Plumbers' overalls. PM John Lockyer, who is the current president of the Ward Club whose float we were supporting, also arrived and took his stored champagne and bucks fizz to the float for lunchtime morale boosting (in the unlikely case that we needed a boost). I decided that as it would be wet it would be better if I too wore overalls, rather than the Master's gown. We were at the float, parked just north of the roundabout by the London Museum and Barts Hospital, before 10. The road was dense with floats so it was difficult to get good pictures. But there was good camaraderie.

The theme was the marketplace, Cheap being, as you know, the early English word for market. So the various float members had different items, such as eggs and even live fowl (for Poultry), bullion (no, not real) for the Goldsmiths, wood, bread and milk for Wood Bread and Milk streets, etc. The Plumbers carried gutters (for Gutter Lane). We had several Masters duly dressed in their own gowns, a lot of Goldsmiths with banners, several Chartered Secretaries, two Bee Farming apprentices duly protected from bees, and so on. The rear of the float had a mockup of the cistern which used to be at the west end of Cheapside, and which the Plumbers would have put up, having piped in the water from the Tyburn.

We began to make our way down to Gresham Street at about 1040, and after a 2 minute silence for the Paris Massacre, set off at 1102 on the usual route. Lots of people to wave to, children to clap hands with as we passed, great music from the nearby marching bands. As float no 6 we appeared to go at a cracking pace, and at times almost had to run to keep up with the lorry.

We arrived for our break on the Embankment about 11.45! that shows you the speed we went. And in due course had our buns, champers, and time to wander round the nearish floats to us and chat. One of those I spoke to was Henry V – well preserved, you would say. He was dressed in partial metal armour partial well padded doublet (didn't check the hose) and was with the Agincourt float, produced by the Bowyers, Fletchers, Armourers, etc. They had had a good battle with the French this summer in the 600 replay.

Then it was back along the Embankment, up to the Mansion House, back along Gresham Street to London Wall where we left, I to Moorgate. When I got back to Kings Cross, it was throwing it down. So all was timed, for us, very well.

Master's blog 5

The Actuaries' lecture this year was by the former MP and now peer, David Willetts - he who wrote the book "The Pinch: How the Baby Boomers Took their Children's Future - and Why They Should Give It Back." For the first time, I understood the magnitude of the numbers born during the postwar baby boom. The lowest annual birth numbers during that period were or exceeded the highest achieved in non baby boom years with most non boom years being considerably lower! No wonder that my generation (I am a war baby) also lost out! Sheer force of numbers dictated that they won everything. Gone, when I reached the right age, was the cult of the older and more experienced, it was replaced by the younger baby boomers, and, as they grow older, they also deny those younger than themselves as they take the power (and the money) with them. Completely fascinating. We had the graphs, the percentages, the money movements, the lot. I have not read his book but I expect it is equally as lucid as his exposition. Afterwards, a convivial meal at the venue which was at Staple Inn - a quiet enclave close to Chancery Lane tube. The current Inn, which dates

from 1585, was one of the old Inns of Chancery (and would have been a student lawyers' training school, like the other Inns of Court) and its name comes from the Wool Staple (being originally a place where wool was weighed and taxed, wool being very important to the English economy, as you probably know, and is why his Lord Chancellor was ordered by Edward III to sit on a wool bale now known as "the Woolsack" - I am told it's very uncomfortable...). The Merchants of the Staple were granted a charter by Edward II in 1313 and became a livery company after a further charter in 1319, and were still meeting in the 19th century. The company was revived in 1948, and, according to its website, meets in Yorkshire and London. The Institute and Faculty of Actuaries now have their HQ at the Inn.

The clerk and I were invited to my Mother company's livery dinner at Haberdashers' Hall - it being the Solicitors, the current Master is none other than our own Senior Court Assistant, the late Lord Mayor Ald Dame Fiona Woolf. It was an event where the Wig and Pen prize was also handed out for pro bono (ie free) work by young recently qualified solicitors working in the City (this livery company was created out of the local law society for the City and members must work or have worked in the City, and/or also now Canary Wharf). In assessing who wins, the judges take into account the amount of time spent on the particular project, the candidate's involvement in setting up innovative projects, a breakdown of time spent during working and "non working" hours, and that the client would otherwise have failed to obtain access to justice. An excellent meal followed plus three good speeches, including from the Master and from the guest speaker Sir Peter Hendy, CBE, chairman of Network Rail who gave an excellent outline of the Capital's and commuters' needs for better travel facilities and what was being done to ensure they got them.



Friday saw me travelling up to Edinburgh for the [SNIPEF](#) annual awards dinner. It was well attended and I was made very welcome, so welcome in fact that I did not manage to leave till about 2 am! Fortunately, I had arranged to stay at the venue. Again, there were prizes. Many of them. I was fascinated by the [Jompy](#), which was invented by David Osborne, who was presented with the 2015 SNIPEF Merit Award. If you've not come across a jompy, it's a gadget originally designed for water-purifying in the Third World (but is also brilliant for intrepid campers in the wild). It is, as good designs often are, deceptively simple. It's a circular, thin, disk 29cm across, comprising a long



aluminum tube which lets water in when attached to a water source, holds over 1 litre at any one time, and, if heated over a fire, the water which emerges at the other end is purified and boiling. Its design lets one use it as a stand for a pan so that one can simultaneously heat one's water and cook one's food. It can boil a litre of water in as little as 45 seconds. In the tests they did in Kandago, Uganda, there was only one case of a waterborne disease by the test families (49) over a three month period, as opposed to the non users (50) who reported many. It was also shown to save 3kg firewood per day and the consequential wood collection time. Very impressive. The other prizewinners were Richard Wilson who won the SNIPEF SkillPlumb Apprentice Competition 2015; Michael Fraser (employed by William Wilson Ltd) who took the SNIPEF Merchant Customer Care Award 2015; and L W Haddow Ltd of Perth was awarded the SNIPEF Business of the Year 2015/2016. Many congratulations to them all.

Master's Blog 6

A quieter week. Monday was a discussion lunch between 12 metal companies. This was hosted and organised by the Goldsmiths who want to see whether there is any merit and advantage in having a metal grouping, rather in the same way that we have the Wet 10, some of the modern companies have the Financial Services Group, and there are doubtless others. It was clear that there is a lot of common ground. Many ideas were put forward, some shelved almost immediately as being either

too costly or time-consuming, but there are certainly possibilities and we have adjourned to consider how, if at all, to take it further forwards.

Wednesday was the AGM for the Plumbers Museum and Workshop Charity at Singleton. The workshop continues to be a popular exhibit, especially when the experts are there to show how it's done. The charity now has its own video and we discussed how to make this more widely available – one suggestion was YouTube, and another to have an old laptop donated so that the video can be on permanent display – so if



you have one you would like to donate, please let me know. We will also be looking at “pull ups” which are displays you can pack away very easily. The trustees would like to upgrade their furnace to a completely failsafe one and thus improve safety. They have made inquiries but there are no off-the-shelf furnaces of the right size available, so it must be bespoke. Donations for this would be very welcome. The Weald and Downland Museum representative told us about the new entry area and other facilities they are about to start building, thanks to a serious contribution from the Lottery Fund. This will allow them to have better (less soggy) parking facilities, a café, improved lavatories, etc. There will also be much better displays, including space for the various trades there, such as ours – this area could be an ideal place for showing a permanently rolling video. The W&DM also run various craft courses. The relevant one for lead work next year is on May 19 from 9.30-5.30 and is an “Introduction to Lead Work”, price £110. If you would like to attend (it has been found useful for people who would like to know more about repair and renewal of old and/or listed buildings leadwork) please contact them at courses@wealddown.co.uk or phone 01243811021.

If you would like a trip to see our exhibit and watch the demonstrators, the next time they are there is December 4. So please go along to support them.

The planter which was presented to Fiona to mark her Lord Mayoralty has now arrived at the Guildhall where it will go on permanent display, and it is hoped to organise a special "opening day" event in the new year.

Finally, our IPM has just become a trustee, and will join other luminaries such as Edward Hopkinson (chairman of the trustees), David Hamilton and John Lockyer.

At the end of the AGM a vote of thanks was made to those hardworking leadworkers, Phil Mead and Peter Cheesman and their team who worked so hard to produce 65 lead planters for our 650th year and made some £9600 profit for our charity, and for their and the trustees' dedication and hours of dedicated work to keep the Court Barn project such a success.

Finally, not strictly livery events, I attended the end of term concert by Opera students at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, in particular to watch and support a New Zealand singer known well to members of my family, and who has Kiri Te Kanawa as a mentor. It was a most impressive evening. There is such talent out there. It was also good to hear how good the acoustics are in the Milton Court studio theatre which was opened by the Lord Mayor in 2013. And I also went to the TV/E global sustainability film awards 2015 at BAFTA – its theme was “inspiring change” and the overall winner was HSBC with its work on “Troubled Waters” – a film about what has been done to help give safe lavatory facilities to an Indian family where in the past they had a dangerous journey over busy railway lines to get to bushes. The project they have in India is similar to that we support in Ghana.

Master's Bog 7

December opened with committee meetings, the last at Wax Chandlers, where we learnt that our membership had increased to 346, discussed further ways of encouraging students to apply for our awards and bursaries, set out the process for acquiring our new clerk, and generally had very

fruitful discussions on a wide range of topics pertinent to the relevant committee. We started at noon, and finished just after 4.30. We are very lucky to have members who are prepared to give us their time, knowledge and experience, and hard work.

Wednesday was a real pleasure – dining with the Constructors’ Court and their Past Masters – who include the "lay" Sheriff Christine Rigden and her husband – in style in the judges’ dining room at the Old Bailey. I was invited by their Senior Warden. The evening was such a treat and we all had a wonderful evening.

Thursday, I lunched at Goldsmiths. This is strictly nothing to do with being Master and everything to do with having attended (and bought odd bits and pieces at) Goldsmiths’ Fair virtually every year since they started it some 30-35 years ago. Somehow, I was selected a couple of years ago with a few others to be a Goldsmiths’ Ambassador, the aim being to widen the net by getting us to encourage our friends, clients and others to attend the Fair – and, who knows, perhaps even buy something? We met the new clerk-in-waiting, who is our former Ambassador in Turkey, and after lunch some of us visited the Assay Office in the back of the building. That is a fascinating trip where they show you how they use touchstones and other mechanisms to ascertain the quality of metals, and what they do with substandard items – in short, destroy – and how they hallmark.

Friday was my first Carol Service – this being at St Lawrence Jewry with Candlewick Ward Club and thus also with our very own Alderman and Court Assistant, the late Lord Mayor Fiona, and her husband Nicholas. Afterwards we lunched in the Guildhall where Fiona and Nicholas gave another of their brilliant double act speeches. It may be a small ward, but that Ward Club is certainly thriving. I was invited by fellow Plumber, Barbara Abraham.

As a Northern lass, (who has lived down south for many years) I decided to support the northern initiative, Brigantes, and trained up to Howden (where I was met by livery friends) and chauffeured to Ripon. There was much water in the fields.... At Ripon, we were warmly greeted by the organisers, who include our own PM Nick Gale, fed well, and then bussed to the Cathedral. If you have not visited this, it is spectacular. Founded by St Wilfrid in 672, it still has its Saxon crypt with a stunning 14th century alabaster carving of the Resurrection, but the main building was rebuilt/added mainly



between the 1100s to 1500s, and, as part of the works were interrupted by Edward VI dissolving the Chapter, it ended up with mismatched arches under the central tower. In the ceiling at the end of the south transept is a 19th c Cheshire Cat - a link to Lewis Carroll’s father (onetime canon there). The 15th c carvings in the choir stalls and of the misericords are exquisite (and include a rabbit being chased down a hole by a griffin, believed to have inspired “Alice's” white rabbit). The evening event was a carol concert, with wonderful singing from the Cathedral choir, supported by fabulous organ playing (loads of the stops pulled out here), and the excellent Lowry Brass Quintet. Amongst the 100 or so livery and guild members from 37 companies and 2 ward clubs who attended there were three Plumbers.

That apart, I indulged myself with my old passion by attending the Addington Society on Monday – this is a tax dining club (named after Addington who revised Pitt’s original income taxes brought in to pay for the Peninsular Wars), where (four times a year) there is a talk and discussion before dinner. The topic was in essence how to tax the rich effectively. It seems there is nothing new here. We defined what “rich” meant, compared different countries’ approaches, asked what levels of tax produced the most tax – it is 40% top rate or less by the way – (research shows that once you take the level over that the tax take falls because many people would rather earn less than pay the higher figures in tax), and looked at so-called popular and unpopular taxes. Stamp duty and inheritance tax fall well inside the latter category.

Master's Blog 8

Our carol service was at St Magnus the Martyr on Tuesday evening. We had over 60 adults attending and several children as well, which made it very special. Father Philip's sermon focused on the importance of Mary, and reminded us that this was not always so – eg the Oxford area church where the church elders had clearly at some time determined that it was not appropriate to have Mary sitting at her son's feet (despite the scriptures) at the Crucifixion, due to the Catholic connotations she had acquired, so replaced her face with that of a bearded man (but not her clothing which made it rather incongruous!). It reminded me of the renovations which took place some time ago at York Minster, and which included replacing a boss in an intersection of the vaulting. The original had been Mary suckling the babe, but our forefathers determined that that was too rude (despite the detail being seen with great difficulty with the human eye, the boss being so very high in the ceiling) so gave her a bottle with which to feed the child! The service was a very happy occasion, and many people lingered for quite some time afterwards over the mulled wine and eatables.



Then I attended a meeting of APHC at Millbank House (an offshoot of, and near to, the House of Lords) with Kevin Wellman and several other luminaries from our profession and craft. Here we discussed how to progress on representations to government on the need to enforce building regulations to ensure proper standards are kept and there is a fair playing field for those complying with the requirements. There are to be further meetings. So watch this space.

Another carol service, not livery, was for the Mission to Seafarers in the Wren church at St Michael Paternoster Royal, on College Hill. I was invited by my brother-in-law, a Master Mariner, who has spent his retirement years working for the Mission in various parts of the world, latterly New Zealand. The service was excellent, and was attended by the Princess Royal who stayed on afterwards to talk to everyone.

Finally, a fish and chip lunch at the City Livery Club with several other Masters in various areas of the building trade to discuss commemorations for the Great Fire 400th next year (did you know that following the Fire, the City Corporation issued the first ever set of building regulations imposed by a city (at least in modern times), and thus led to the creation of the profession of surveyors?), whilst I also emphasised the importance of ensuring that historic leadwork requiring repair should be just that – repaired by skilled plumbers, and not stripped and replaced, as happens far too often. The Architects and others are producing talks and walks, and we have our own walk scheduled currently for June 5. There was a suggestion that we might look at a discussion evening. A couple of the interesting things I learnt was just how useful it was that Canary Wharf allowed tall buildings, which impelled the City Corporation to change its views as to building height; and that all City new builds have to produce wind funnelling reports as part of their planning applications (you will be aware that tall buildings have the effect of disturbing wind patterns which may then result in draughts of colder air being wafted down to the street). I also learnt how lucky we are that we have a situation where there is regular renewal – compared with, say, New York where their buildings are seriously outmoded and unsuitable for modern business use and would be extremely difficult to demolish in the space available.

Master's Blog 9

A relatively quiet week. Two carol services.

The first was the multi-livery carol service at St Bartholomew the Great, West Smithfield. The church is the oldest surviving church in London and is much larger than St Magnus. It's been in continuous use since the mid 1100s! And is well worth a visit. The Tax Advisers (the company of which I was a founder court member in 1995 and which acquired its livery status in 2005, the year in which I became its master) use the church as their livery church. The Rector, Martin Dudley, runs two or three carol services (which are also open to the public) each December. Ours this year was the first, and it was the traditional 9 lessons and carols. Each lesson was read by a different livery master or the Rector (who is also active within the livery). So we had the Tax Advisers, Farmers, Public Relations, Hackney Carriage Drivers, Builders Merchants, Founders, Woolmen, Fletchers, wonderful anthems and a jolly good sing. If you are free and want to visit for one of these services, there are unticketed carol services on 20th December at 1830, December 21 at 1800, 22nd December at 1300 and 1800, 23rd December 1800, and Midnight Mass at 23.45 on Christmas Eve. There is also some stunning art work at the church, including a Damien Hirst "Exquisite Pain" depicting the flayed St Bartholomew holding his skin. When it was first there it was ungolded, on its return it has been fully covered in gold. It a remarkable piece which I much admired in its pre-gilded state and it is even more arresting now.

The second was the joint carol service of the Arbitrators and the Solicitors (my Mother company). The Master Solicitor is, of course, our Court Assistant, Fiona Woolf. This service was held in St Mary Le Bow on Cheapside. The readings were most interesting – not the usual tracts from the Bible at all: they included Edwin Muir's poem "One Foot in Eden", an extract from the Treatise of St Irenaeus (d AD 202) "Against the Heresies", and an extract from John Betjeman's poem "Christmas" (he lived in Cloth Fair for a long time) as well as other Biblical readings. The church itself was destroyed in the Great Fire and is now a fine Wren church, though its steeple and its historic bells were badly damaged in the Blitz. The original Norman church had Romanesque arches, hence its name – le Bow is a corruption of "de Arubus". It is this church's bells which are the Bow bells within the earshot of which Cockneys are born and the current bells are the successors to those which caused Dick Whittington to turn back when he heard them. They were ringing joyfully as we arrived. On display in the altar area at present are two Coptic icons as well as a nativity display. In his sermon, the Rector told us that the Copts in London meet to worship at the church once a month, and he had recently visited the Copts in Egypt and many historical sites there. Of course, the Copts, being Egyptian Christians, are the successors of those Egyptians who gave succour to Mary, Joseph and their child when they fled to Egypt fearing the anger of Herod, so they are very special.



This is my last blog before the New Year. The office is now closed. Paul, Sharon, Debbie and Peter are having their much-needed and well-deserved breaks over Christmas before they return to the organisation which needs to take place in the new offices at Carpenters' Hall in Throgmorton Avenue. I am taking myself off on a cruise up the Norwegian coast in the hope of seeing some Northern Lights and in the meantime I wish all of you a very Merry Christmas, and a wonderfully happy and prosperous and healthy New Year. And I look forward to seeing you in 2016.

Master's Blog 10

Back from the frozen north and its northern lights and into the fray with a bang this week.

First, a visit to our new home at Carpenters' Hall. Inevitably there were glitches in getting our area ready including being unable to get back in over the Christmas break after a key broke in the lock.... But we are nearly there and Carpenters have been wonderfully helpful in giving us different rooms for the meetings we would otherwise have had in "our space". The real reason for the visit on Monday was to continue our discussions over the job description and advertisement for our new clerk and to finalise that documentation. It was a good meeting and we will be commencing the processes shortly.

Next, lunch and dinner with our clerk at Mercers and Plaisterers. Mercers is a hall I have rarely had the pleasure of visiting – it is on Ironmongers Lane off Cheapside. The current Hall is the 3rd, the 2nd having been destroyed by enemy action in WW2. The new building was based on the style of the 2nd save for the ceremonial entrance and grand staircase, which were moved from Cheapside to Ironmongers' Lane, and reopened in 1958. We were there as guests of the Masons at their Court Lunch. Plaisterers is another lovely hall, as you probably know it is in the lower ground floor at 1 London Wall and was opened in 1972. It is beautifully decorated with wonderful plasterwork (as you would expect), in the neo-classical style of Robert Adam. In creating it, they were able to use some of the original moulds. It is always a joy to be there, and this visit was no exception. The occasion was their dinner for Masters and Clerks of Livery Companies. We were extremely well looked after on both occasions.

Then there was our visit to St Brides and to the City Gin Distillery. At St Brides we were told about its very long history. The saint herself was a by-blow from an Irish chieftain and a Christian slave. At the age of 10 her father decided to marry her off, but she managed to get herself into a monastery instead. In due course she founded (in about 470) Kildare Abbey. It is believed that when she was created Abbess, she was accidentally read the rites of consecration as a bishop (which once read were irrevocable – so she could be said to be the first female Roman Catholic bishop?). Whilst there are actually arguments about whether she ever lived or whether she was invented as a ruse to obtain the conversion of pagans, the church off Fetter Lane is a wonderful example of Wren's. We were told that the first religious community on the site of the old Bride Well was 410 and the first stone church finalised in 590, some 104 years before St Paul's. It was enlarged by the Saxons and then destroyed by fire in 1135, rebuilt and again destroyed in the Great Fire, the rebuilding commencing in 1673. A 3rd fire engulfed it in 1940 making it a roofless shell. This enabled much research to be done which uncovered the foundations of the 6 previous churches. The church reopened in 1957. There are many interesting features at St Brides, making it well worth a visit – we saw the charnel house, went into the undercroft where you can see different displays, some of the old foundations, a charnel house, and learn about the work done on the bones of the dead buried here. The tower is responsible for the current vogue in tiered wedding cakes as one William Rich, a baker, was inspired by it for his cake for his wedding to his Master's daughter. St Brides, as well as being the journalists' church, has a special area dedicated to those captured and/or killed in conflict. We moved from church to mammon, just round the corner, for what was intended to be a hour's discussion on gin making and what was so special about the City's distillery but which we had to bring to an end after 90 minutes. It was fascinating and many of us came away clutching beautifully-packaged bottles of gin.



Finally, I went to a discussion meeting with Shami Chakrabarti, organised by the Master Solicitor, Fiona Woolf. Here we discussed the rule of law, the importance of human rights and the independence of the judiciary, why we should celebrate the brilliance of Mary Wollstonecraft (author, inter alia, of *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* and whose daughter Mary Shelley wrote *Frankenstein*), gender inequality, and the passion of the ordinary citizen for the plight of refugees.

Master's Blog 11

After committee meetings on Tuesday, Wednesday was a feast day. Paul and I went to Mansion House for a tasting lunch to try out food and wines for our banquet in March. I think we have chosen a great menu for you and hope you will come to sample it. In the evening, I found I had become an honorary Chartered Accountant for the evening as, with Paul, I was wined and dined at Chartered Accountants' Hall with a select gathering of other Masters who are also qualified accountants – apparently it was not my plumbing skills which led to this, but rather tax. I was also rather spoilt by the Master, who had discovered it was also my birthday so presented me with a wonderful bottle of champagne, but saved my embarrassment by not requesting everyone sang Happy Birthday!



Thursday was a great lunch day at Innholders, with the Blacksmiths. It was their Epiphany lunch and there was in addition to fabulous food from the in-house Michelin starred chef a delicious slice of Epiphany cake to eat. Friday I had lunch to discuss various aspects of being an officer in a livery company with a friend who is expecting to become Master of her company by 2020.

Master's Blog 12

On Monday, I attended an enthralling lecture on the Great Fire by Adrian Tinniswood (author of *By Permission of Heaven*) organised by the Chartered Architects livery. It was wonderful to listen to, he could barely get his words out fast enough, he is so enthusiastic and knowledgeable



about the subject matter: how it started, what the background was (we were at war with Holland and people thought the Dutch had started the fires, we were in any event about to have a naval battle against them, we had just about settled down after the civil war), how it spread – there was a furious gale which had wrecked the two fleets and sent them limping home after no battle at all and had caused major devastation in Kent, and continued to blow for 3-4 days from east to west. How fire-breaks were installed (following the insistence of the then Duke of York, later James II/VII) despite the objections of one barrister (whom the Duke apparently knocked out, if I recall correctly, in order to put in the break to help stop the fire). Our speaker also showed us some of the many plans which were suggested for the rebuild of the City, and told us how the polymath Wren who was no architect at all at the time managed to obtain the work which resulted in not only the new St Paul's but also 50 other churches. Also the deviousness of Wren in getting the shape and structure he wanted, when his employers really wanted a traditional shape, not "foreign" as his plans were perceived to be.

My first court meeting as Master was on Tuesday, so much of the weekend and Monday was spent on ensuring everything was ready for it. It seemed to go well. Afterwards we had our first court lunch at Carpenters' where we entertained seven other Masters/Prime Wardens, including the

Master Carpenter. Our main speaker was David Harper, who specialises in tracking down water-borne diseases. He told us how he got into the business – he was an electrical engineer working in the Kingston hospitals. There were two outbreaks of legionnaires, the first in a cooling tower, and the second in the hotwater system in a surgical unit. He explained how he found the sources, what he did, and what he sought to do to stop it happening again. It was very interesting. His paper on how to prevent repeats is the standard used around the world. We also swore in two new assistants and 3 new liverymen – they bring our current numbers up to 349. Afterwards, I wrote the letters you will all have received with your charity information leaflet. That took me till about 8pm! But I hope you think it was worthwhile and that you will continue to encourage the charity trustees with your donations. We have definitely received one more donation, so are very excited.

We also finished the documentation necessary to advertise for a new clerk – you will recall Paul wants to retire this October. So now the advert is out and the job spec on the website.

On Friday, I attended the City University graduation ceremony where, *ia*, the Lord Mayor was sworn in as Chancellor. You may not know – certainly I did not – that under the University's original charter the Chancellor has been the current LM so that a new one is installed each year, very unlike other universities where the Chancellor is appointed and normally stays with a guiding hand for many years. This is about to change, as City is joining the other London colleges to become part of London University, so will acquire the Chancellor for the larger grouping (currently HRH the Princess Royal – I recall those standing again her when she was proposed for the post which became vacant when her grandmother, the Queen Mother retired in about 1980 included one Robben Island prisoner Nelson Mandela, to the shock-horror of the university establishment despite his having an external London LLB degree – I still have some “Vote for Mandela” yellow stickers!). So it is expected that the link with the LM in future will be to give him/her some other official recognition, eg as Rector, but the title has not yet been determined. It was an inspiring occasion. Many of the graduands we were told came from backgrounds where they would be the first ever to attend a university. The atmosphere was happy and joyful with many shrieks of approbation as the names were called out, and loud applause. The University should be, and I believe is, very proud of what it does.

Master's Blog 13

On Monday some 40 of us attended our first Plumbers' lunch of the year. This time it was organised by our most recent Steward, Clive, who joined the Social Committee last year. He tells me he loves the job and that it is a great way to get to know everyone. You may have seen the latest email from Sharon or the advert on our website where we are looking for a further recruit. Do please apply to the Office if you think you would find fun and have the time to give. The lunch went very well – Ironmongers produce some very good food, and some of us stayed probably longer than we should. It's a very convivial occasion. Some of those attending on this occasion were the Water-Safe board. Do come along to the next one and bring your friends and colleagues.

I went back with Paul to Ironmongers' the following day for their City Dinner. This is a splendid white tie occasion to which a number of other Masters and Clerks are invited. We ate in their Banqueting Hall, which is where the lunches also take place. The Hall was built in the 1920s and it has lovely stained glass windows and panelling with many (if not all) of their Past Masters' coats of arms. I always think it is a real treat to go down their alleyway off Aldersgate Street to find them tucked away. There are rumours going round of major redevelopment in the area though....

Before the dinner, I had a committee meeting with the Tax Advisers – I sit on their Membership committee (very largely because I am responsible for their Archives, something which I acquired when I was their Master some ten years ago). I particularly mention it now as, due to my link with that company (and also Fiona's as Nicholas is also a Past Master and she is an honorary liveryman), we have been invited to join them for a merry evening at the Players' Theatre. This is an old-time music hall event with plenty of opportunity to join in, and I do hope you will come. The leaflets are even now (Feb 8) being prepared.

Finally, on the general Livery front, I went to the House of Lords for dinner with the Lady Masters' Association. It is an enormous place...we seemed to walk for miles to get there (once we had found the right entrance and negotiated the heavy security). The event was organised through Baroness Garden of Frognall who was Master World Trader in 2008-2009. It was a very jolly occasion held in one of the private dining rooms.



On the support front, I think it is highly likely that we will be looking for help on some of our committees in addition to the new Steward currently being sought. Paul has slowly become the "maid of all work" due to his generous nature and commitment and really is doing far more than he should. So we are discussing ways of cutting down his time by passing down delegatable work to volunteers. Watch this space.

Master's Blog 14

First, a meeting at Skinners' Hall in the company of many other Masters and Clerks. The invitation related to the Great Fire anniversary proposals in the City over the weekend of September 2-4. You may recall the light, etc, show in the West End in mid January. This was organised by a charity (Artichoke Trust) which specialises in spectacular events of this nature and they are proposing to do similar for that weekend. They outlined the possibilities, assuming they obtain the funding, of what they would like to do over the anniversary weekend. Unfortunately, their brief to us did not give any detailed information of what was hoped to happen where and when so I am not able to tell you now. But, on the assumption that the relevant funding is forthcoming from various sources, keep the dates free in your diary so that you can be in the City over that weekend.

Then there was the Pancake Race in Guildhall yard. This has been running for 16 years now and is very popular with the livery, unsurprisingly as it is such fun. Yours truly elected not to risk her pelvis (last time she slipped, she broke 5 bones in her pelvis and didn't think this was a suitable year to tempt providence – and there were a couple of falls by others, fortunately, no-one appeared to be hurt) and so walked tossing the pancake. But our Clerk, wearing his Liveryman hat, did extremely well and our Steward, Ian Puddick, was in the shortlist for the fancy dress prize – though quite what a bishop (for such was his outfit) had to do with the Lord Mayor's charities (which was the theme) was a little difficult to fathom!

Finally, in my official capacity, two evenings at educational establishments – one at City University where the format is that the winner has the opportunity to chat to the representative of the awarding body, and the other at the City of London Boys' School, where we had the opportunity to be taken round the school by senior boys. It is an amazing place, overlooking the river, and has wonderful facilities. Our City University winner was an Ecuadorian, Miguel Telenchana, and we had a long conversation about his studies and what he hopes to do next. He was thrilled to receive the award. It seems likely that he will stay in Europe because he has now married a Pole, and also says that the prospects are much better in Europe than in South America.



We had a wonderful visit to the Pepys' exhibition at the Nation Maritime Museum, ably organised by Michael Cooper, where we wandered at will round the excellent exhibits and finished with lunch in the bistro. Well worth visiting. The exhibition is on till the end of March.

I also attended a History of Tax lecture evening – this is a twice-yearly event organised by the Tax Advisers. The discussion this time ranged over the extent to which exemptions in grants such as Royal Charters can be overridden by statute, and involved the old charters and rights granted to the Stannaries in Cornwall – the Cornish litigator inter alia arguing that they gave members of the Stannaries freedom from UK tax, and that Cornwall was a separate state. He lost, by the way, but

in the process an enormous amount of fascinating and arcane law from the 12th century to the 20th was arrayed, discussed and considered.

Master's Blog no 15

Monday found me at the Livery Companies Skill Council awards which took place at Fishmongers'. This is a splendid occasion where people who have attained the appropriate level are awarded certificates. This year 12 livery companies had awards to give. The certificates are handed over by the Lord Mayor, but each award is announced by the relevant Master of the Company concerned. The Master Certificate scheme has been in place since 2001, in part thanks to the huge amount of work put in by the livery companies to get it set up and in



Liveryman Kevin Wellman, John Pashley, The Master, The Lord Mayor, Lay Sheriff, Dr Christine Rigden, Shaun Burrows, Past Master

particular our own PM Geoff Marsh was deeply involved, and was singled out to be thanked for his work. We had two Master Certificates to be awarded, the Masons 6, and others had mainly 2 or 3. Five journeyman certificates and one apprentice certificate were also awarded. After that there was not much going on for the rest of that week, which is worth reporting.

So the following Monday I was at the City Water Debate, along with a significant number of fellow Plumbers – we made up over 20% of the audience. The topic related to the problems of drought and how to circumvent them. There was much reference to the summer of 1976 where, I recall, not a cloud in the sky from the beginning of April to the end of August (when the heavens opened with enthusiasm). We saw pictures of empty reservoirs, etc. Interestingly, our speakers told us that 2012 threatened the same and there was deep concern for how we dealt with the influx of the Olympics, but fortunately we got the rains just in time. In London, we only have 100 days of average use at the maximum, compared with about 600 days in part of Wales (the average consumption per person is about 160l per day). There is great need for more reservoir resources but the problem is that it is a rare occasion that would (on current weather statistics) pull it into use. The evening reminded us yet again, of how our country is run by short-termism, and how difficult it is to persuade the “powers that be” to get enthusiastic about long-term essential projects.

On Tuesday I spent the day at Carpenters, where our committee room is now fully operational. Committee days – this time, education, technical and freedom and livery. Much useful ground was covered.

Thursday we spent at the smoked salmon factory down the East End. It is now on Fish Island, most appropriately. It used to be on the site of what is now Olympic Park and there is a very good view of the stadium out of the factory windows. We had some delicious smoked salmon as part of our lunch, and watched the Guinness record-holder cut up a salmon into slices – he has a top speed of 1 minute 11 seconds! All in all a very enjoyable occasion and many of us came home with purchases.

After that, I caught the train to Chatham where Paul and I were guests of the Royal Engineers, along with two other Masters and their clerks. We regularly present prizes to their Plumbing trainees, the other companies have similar linkages. We were there for a regimental dinner – The Corps Guest Night and 173 RE TCC Batch Night, to give it its full title. It was a really good occasion and we were made very welcome indeed. It is clear that they hold us in high regard. We were fortunately given beds for the night too, which meant we didn't have to turn into pumpkins, and left after breakfast on Friday morning.

Master's Blog 16

The 29th February found me lunching with the Old Bailey judges, courtesy of the non-Aldermanic Sheriff, Dr Christine Rigden. For those who don't know about this, the judges at the OB meet for lunch every day for the hour between 1 and 2. Part of the Sheriffs' responsibilities is to provide them with a range of different people to chat to over lunch. The guests are invited for 12.30 and enter via the back entrance to the courthouse. There



they are introduced to each other in the Sheriff's flat (each Sheriff has a small one bed flat in which they live for the duration of their office). Masters of the livery companies are normally, but not always, invited once during the course of their year in office. Shortly before 1, we move into the luncheon room anteroom to meet the judges then, armed probably with a stiff tomato juice laced with Lee & Perrins (at least I was), we go into lunch, and sit in prearranged seats. My close neighbours included the Sheriff herself, the Common Sergeant (who explained that he was a freeman of the Cooks – the Cooks have a very small livery entitlement, only about 75, so freemen wait for “deadmen's shoes” or for existing liverymen to be sacked from the livery for failing to support it, if I have understood correctly), and a couple of recorders (a recorder, who is not, eg, the Recorder of London, is a part-time judge who otherwise will be a barrister or solicitor in practice and who gives so many days a year to HM Courts Service, they normally help out during the usual full-time judge's vacations or illnesses or training periods). After lunch, there is usually an option to go to sit in to listen to one of the trials. As I had a lot to do for the Plumbers, I decided not to on this occasion.

The following day found me at a working party discussing how best to process the many applications we have received for our new clerk's appointment. The preliminary mechanism was agreed, and we all went home to print out copies of all the applications and study them, etc. We will be meeting again shortly.

We had hoped to go to Lancaster House on Wednesday, but the visit was sadly cancelled at short notice. Fairly inevitably, the premises were wanted for Government purposes. I hope we can get back there. It is beautiful inside. I visited once several years ago as a result of my involvement with the Czechs in the period leading up to their accession to the EU, but only for dinner, and tantalisingly no trip round.

For the rest of the week, much time was devoted to our Banquet, the job applications, drafting suggested revisions of the booklet we give to Assistants and Officers, and further time being spent on other matters relating to our Company.

Master's Blog 17

A very busy week. We started with the Banquet at Mansion House. There are loads of things the Office, the Upper Warden and the Master have to do in preparation. For UW and M there is of course the speech they have to give, but generally the things which have to be done include choosing the meal – Paul and I had done that sometime earlier when we went on a tasting at the Mansion House one lunchtime a few weeks ago; then there is the table plan and the printing thereof along with the pour memoires for everyone who is coming; the musicians and the stair guard from Richmond Sea Cadets need their instructions; Paul did an amazing almost minute by minute

timetable we had to adhere to and we had been to the Mansion House the previous week to go through it with our stand-in Toastmaster (whilst our beloved Beadle was off sick, we hear he is now beginning to get better, which is good news) and the Mansion House staff – the timetable is critical as if the event goes over, there are potentially swingeing additional payments to be made to cover,



eg overtime payments to the staff. There were discussions as to what to give the guest speakers, to say thank you; and so on. I was at our office before 9 on the Monday to make sure that if the Office still needed help I was there to do it, and I know that Steve, our IPM, did the same during the previous week. And then different people come to the MH at different times to get our contribution to the event organised. The tables have to have the name cards set out, the presents must be checked with the relevant speaker and the toastmaster, our guests are allocated members of the court to ensure that they are not left stranded, and the stewards and some of the Sea Cadets take the guests (whose pour memoires have been prestamped so they are easily identifiable) to the relevant person, and the meet and greet team of your officers are put into place. Phew, I hope you all enjoyed it as much as we did.

There was a further APHC meeting at an offshoot of the House of Lords discussing enforcement of building regulations. We agreed the format of a Freedom of Information questionnaire to be sent to local authorities and the timetable to go with it. Our next meeting is roughly scheduled for July.

Paul and I had dinner with the President of CIPHE on HQS Wellington. That was a very warm and friendly occasion with about 50 people there, and we sat on round tables which I always think makes for a really good chat. We also had a meeting with the President and Chief Executive of IHEEM earlier in the day.

Then there was the Lord Mayor's Banquet for the Masters, etc, of the livery. We more or less sit in order of precedence, and the Plumbers' place is usually at the top of the central sprig. This year we were opposite the Masons and had a very merry chat. The speeches are from the Mercers, Grocers and of course the LM himself. The Mercers presented a gift of roller skis with a suggestion that they might be useful for getting round the city! Watch this space, it may be that that dare is taken up for charity. It was a very good occasion and I eventually tore myself away at about 11.30 but I know others stayed for far longer.

The LM's Banquet is the day before United Guilds Service. Paul had been invited with guest (he asked me) to breakfast at Stationers for 0830 which I managed despite the shortish night, and I found him having his shoes polished by a boot black – he did a wonderful job. Breakfast was amazing. After that, Paul went back to Carpenters for our gowns and I met him in the crypt at St Paul's for the service. Super hymns, wonderful music and a very good sermon from the Bishop of London. All followed by lunch at Carpenters with about 24 of us mixing with the other liveries also there.

My week finished with a trip to Hackney Empire to see one of our former students at GSMD sing in Don Giovanni. It was terrific. Very well done, she sang beautifully. It was a real treat to be there.

Master's Blog 18

This week started with another lunch at Ironmongers, not with us but with the Lady Masters' group, which was set up a little while back to support Fiona in her Mayoralty and which now has Aldermanic Court backing (if that is the right expression). A good chat was had by all, and I particularly enjoyed hearing about the PM Turner's new book on marriage bureaux (Marriages are made in Bond Street) from which you may have seen extracts in some of the papers or on line. Tuesday was a super dinner at Apothecaries with the Tinplate Workers alias Wire Workers, and on Wednesday, I was at the Mansion House celebrating with the Solicitors, of course Fiona was in the chair as the Master Solicitor (and also stand-in Lord Mayor). All excellent events. Thursday saw me at the Reserved Forces and Cadets Association Lord Lieutenant's awards event at Yeomanry House which is just off the Brunswick Centre in Bloomsbury. This was a super event and it was particularly pleasing to see just how well the cadets have done and to hear about their exploits and derring do. Afterwards



Reserve Forces and
Cadets Association
for Greater London

there was a curry supper.

That apart, I have been working on various admin matters for the Plumbers whilst Paul was away enjoying a much-needed skiing trip.

My next blog will also be short as I have events Monday to Wednesday and am then away for Easter.

Master's Blog 19

We had a wonderful holiday in Beirut, visiting, ia, archaeological sites such as Baalbek, wineries such as Ixsir and Belle Vue, museums including a fabulous minerals museum, and of course family, and delicious food from the Beka'ar valley.

So now I am back and up to my eyes in various Plumbers' activities. Before I went, I did not have time to tell you details of my doings in those last 3 days before Maundy Thursday, so this blog will include those too.

First, there was the Spring Livery dinner in Merchant Taylors' hall with the Chartered Surveyors. A very happy and warming event. The Master is Lady (Jenna) Davies whom I first met at a livery dinner at my Club last summer. We agreed, with others, that it would make our respective years much more enjoyable if we started to get to know each other earlier and so it has, as a group of us meet regularly for a light lunch and exchange of views. One of my dinner neighbours was a PM from my PM year group in 2005-6 which was a real treat for me, and my other neighbour was equally good company.

Then our clerk and I attended the Scientific Instrument Makers' informal livery lunch at Glaziers. Alas, the Master had been taken ill, but in his stead was the Senior Warden, and we discovered we had lots of common contacts. It was strictly a no speech event, but the two visiting Masters (Firefighters and self) and the SW made short off the cuff speeches, in part because it was the Master Firefighter's birthday.

We also had a long day at the office in further discussions over the new clerk interviews.

Since my return from Beirut, I have attended the 2nd of the Great Fire Rebuilding London lectures organized by the Chartered Architects, this particular one was at Carpenters Hall, and I went in to the office beforehand to deal with those matters that were waiting me on my return. I also took the staff out for their somewhat belated Christmas lunch (at my club). Why so late? Well, we were in the throes of the move just before Christmas, also Sharon was ill, and after Christmas Peter our Beadle became ill with his back and has only recently been able to start work again. I enjoyed it, and I think the staff did too. And it's a lovely way to say thank you to them for their hard work.

I couldn't make the Big Curry lunch as I was handing out prizes for achievement in last year's diet of tax exams, but the IPM and the clerk did. I understand a most enjoyable time was had, and presumably a suitable amount of money raised.



I was invited to the "Cheesegrater" in Leadenhall Street for the City of London Building of the Year award, which was awarded for the building itself. After the short reception and speeches, we were allowed up to the 42nd floor from which we were able to look over the "Gherkin" and had spectacular views on a sunny day over the London scene.

Finally, there was the first Fish & Chips City Livery Club lunch. There is a full report elsewhere from our steward Clive Sofaer, but suffice to say that those of us who went had a good time, and have agreed to go back again on

June 3. Why don't you join us?

Master's Blog 20

A busy Plumbing week, much of which was connected with the processes of choosing and appointing our new clerk. Meetings for that (and work before and after) were on Monday where we discussed in depth the types of information we wanted to extract at interview and who would do what, and Wednesday was devoted to the interview process and the before and after, with several further discussions. I also had a day of committee meetings – membership, investments, finance), and was invited to sit in on the Charity Trustees' committee.



We also had an excellent wine tasting of Loire wines at Davy's Wine bar which is just off the rear of the Guildhall. You will see the report elsewhere on this site.

On Thursday I went to the offices to assist in the swearing of a new international freeman, and then went to my Club for lunch where they had a talk on the City Churches and music. The main speaker was former Sheriff Alderman Andrew Parmley. There were many people from the Livery there, including our very own PM John Rae who was in fine form. The talk was interesting and relatively light-hearted. Afterwards I went to Insurance Hall for a meeting, ostensibly for clerks, organised



by the Ironbridge trust designed to encourage clerks (a) to attend at least once especially during the early years of their clerkship (b) to enthuse about the annual trip of the Masters (etc) which takes place each June. I went because it was, at least in theory, Paul's day off. I met a couple of other Masters there too.

In our Membership Committee we studied the responses to our Members' survey. One of the many pleasant items to emerge was just how many of you are prepared to give time to the Company. If you were one of those who volunteered, would you please email the clerk as not everyone who volunteered gave their name so whilst we know who some of the volunteers are we don't know all of you.

Master's Blog 21

Another busy week. Monday was a two event day (as also was Tuesday). At lunchtime I was to be found at Innholders' for the AGM of my past masters' association from 2005. An excellent occasion. I left there in the company of the PM Tyler and Bricklayer to go to the Guildhall School of Music and Drama for the Tylers and Bricklayers 600th anniversary of the appointment of the first recorded Master of their Company in 1416. The School organised the concert at which the players were students. It was a well-balanced musical evening, all were good and I was particularly impressed with the pianist and the violinist both of whom performed incredibly difficult pieces extremely well. After the concert there was a reception which gave a great opportunity to meet friends old and new.

Tuesday saw the clerk, Paul, and I on the train to Chatham just after 9am. Why? It was the day appointed for the award given to the best student in the plumbing department at the Royal School of Military Engineering. We were treated to a wonderful tour and explanation of their model bridge museum, which is also a working tool. The various styles of bridges are there to be taken apart, practised with, and so on order to make errors (if any) whilst learning and not out in the field. We looked at an old Roman bridge which had straddled the Thames, then moved to a model Inglis bridge, before moving on to Bailey bridges which were an adaptation of



in

Inglis to enable heavier machinery to be transported. I found the prefab mechanisms, which were essentially simple but tough in structure and the way in which they could be doubled or tripled in width and/or height to accommodate different levels of weight and gap to be covered, fascinating. I learnt that some of our Bailey bridge pieces were used after the war by German farmers, and we used some of ours as the rocket bases at Woomera. We also saw a gift by the Tsar to Wellington following the defeat of Napoleon.

For the ceremony of the award itself, the students were called in and the winner called up. Paul and I gave a little history of what livery companies were, why they were still needed and linked them to the specifics of the Plumbers' Company and the benefits of belonging. The student concerned, Lt Cpl Freemantle, was handed his medal, a cheque and sworn in as a Freeman of the Company.

After the ceremony, we were treated to a buffet lunch and then given a tour of the Plumbing section of the college. I was very impressed to see that they teach the old-style leadwork and have all the



old tools there, in addition to the standard items one would expect to see for modern plumbing qualifications. Each student has access to a specific space for practice – we watched some fitting out a men's toilet facility with basin, lavatory, urinals, etc. They were being timed, and had 19 hours to complete the work having started with the units to be installed laid out in a heap on the floor, together with relevant pipework. There are also facilities for learning about plumbing and wiring in air conditioning, central heating,

tracing faults, etc.

Wednesday was a workday catching up and preparing for the following week's court meeting, whilst Thursday was spent mainly at Charterhouse (see report elsewhere). Friday I had been expecting to enjoy the Master Mariners' curry lunch with my brother-in-law (a liveryman of that company) but he was suffering from food poisoning so instead I spent a long time with him over coffee at the Victory Services Club near Marble Arch.

Master's Blog 22

Two weeks to report this time. The first week opened with enthusiasm! Lunch with the Founders' Court and dinner with the Glaziers. Both were super events which I attended with Paul. We had our April court on the 26th and, ia, approved the appointment of the new clerk Pieter Cox; and swore in four new liverymen. After the meeting, we had a splendid lunch at Carpenters to which we had invited liverymen on a more general basis than hitherto, because Carpenters' is so much larger than Wax Chandlers' where numbers perforce had to be severely limited. Our speaker was the Queen's Remembrancer who gave us an excellent outline of the many arcane areas of her post and how they came to be lodged in the hands of one person.

Then some 26 of us joined a group of Tax Advisers (and three judges) at the Players' Theatre for an evening of great fun, much singing, lots of innuendo, a brilliant illusionist, etc. I think it fair to say we all had a jolly good time there.

On the Wednesday a group of us visited Lancaster House, extremely well organised by our steward Daphne and you will have seen the report elsewhere.

Thursday was "catchup" day until the evening when Paul and I attended the Paviers dinner at Fishmongers'. And on Friday I was lucky enough to have been invited to the conclusion hearing of the Trial of the Pyx (which trial had been started in February when a selection of our coinage had been handed to a jury of assayers to test), at Goldsmiths'. The Queen's Remembrancer having been read the report of the jury declared the coinage met (more or less) the standards laid down but in doing so gave a splendid peroration linking the testing of the coinage with



Shakespeare and his anniversary. Afterwards we were treated to an excellent luncheon and speeches from the Prime Warden and the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The second week has been quieter and sadder. I travelled down to Shaftesbury on the Tuesday to attend the funeral of Jim Guyton., a long-term liveryman It was extremely well attended, and easy to work out why. Jim was generous with his time and skills in all walks of his life, be it family, the Plumbers, the college where he taught, Singleton. There were three moving tributes to him, including one from our own Phil Mead. Several of our colleagues were in attendance.

I also had an invite from the Tax Advisers' clerk (who happens to be a PM Cook) to the Cooks' dinner at Innholders'. Since their Hall burnt down (for the 3rd time) in the late 1700s, the Cooks determined not to rebuild (cooking clearly being dangerous) but instead to let out the land which they retained. They currently live at Innholders', an obvious choice since the two liveries are very closely related in terms of the provision of hospitality. Plus, the added attraction of a Michelin-starred chef. It was an evening where some of the Cook apprentices have also worked in the kitchens to gain experience, then come out to chat to the livery in the reception – I found that fascinating. The Cooks wine and dine in style and we were rather late in leaving.....

My last item to report was a wonderful visit to the Mansion House to view the Dutch and Flemish paintings bequeathed by the late Harold Samuel (he who founded Land Securities). Our guide was one of the Guildhall team from the Gallery there. Normally, when one goes to the MH, one is at a function and there is little time, or space, to view the works of art on the walls. But they really do deserve attention, and they were extremely well described to us.

Master's Blog 23

The week started with a visit to Wilton's Music Hall, courtesy of PM Lockyer who invited me to join the Actuaries' trip. A fascinating place set in the East End close to the docks and Commercial Road and in the liberty (that is free of the jurisdiction of the local Lord of the Manor, in this case the Bishop of London) of Well Close. Definitely well worth a visit.

Then I had a meeting to discuss possible designs for new badges for the Assistants, Stewards and Consort (ie a male mistress which we are likely to have when Fiona takes over in a few years' time). Inevitably, these cost money so I suspect there will be much scratching of heads over them. But the designs look super and are a considerable uplift from the current scruffy bits of felt behind our livery badge. So, fingers crossed, money will be found for them. Our new clerk, Pieter, also came in to chat to Paul about various aspects of the job.

I have been to two services this week, one at St Paul's for the Sons and Friends of the Clergy and the other at Barts, for the Barts View Day celebrations. Our preacher at St Paul's was no less than the Archbishop of Canterbury and at Barts the Bishop of London. So we were treated to two exceptional and thoughtful sermons. We were clearly luckier than Samuel Pepys in 1669, who commented "a dull sermon". We also had good hymns and thus good, rousing singing. The Masters, etc, of the Liveries attending, are part of the procession at the SFC event which has been on-going for 362 years and was started in order to find funds to support those of the clergy who lost their livings due to having supported the wrong side in the Civil War. It is an event I love attending and have been several times. Barts View Day has also a long history going back to 1546 following the refoundation of the hospital by Henry VIII (this was after he had sacked the monasteries there). Afterwards, there was a reception in the magnificent Great Hall at the hospital and a limited opportunity to view which I eschewed.



I also attended a Sheriffs' and Recorder's Fund reception (at Rothschilds' Sky Pavilion in St Swithin's Lane) which was held in conjunction with the Worshipful Company of Needle-makers.

The views from the building were wonderful, but alas not photographable as there are mechanisms to stop the sun coming in and whilst I tried to take photos they are messed up by the screening. I was lucky enough to be introduced to the Royal guests who tried to work out the livery from our badge and recalled our statue at Cannon Street. The S&R Fund is a small charity which helps former prisoners following their release, and is a charity very worthy of support.

There was also a dinner at Skinners, for the Tin Plate Workers als Wire Workers (they have a joint charter, hence their name). A good evening, where those with strong heads apparently stayed till about midnight quaffing champagne before moving on elsewhere – oh to be young and foolish again!

I also spent quite some time in preparing for next week's committees and putting some of the finishing touches to the weekend in the Isle of Man,

Finally, I dragged myself out of bed on Friday morning to get to Fishmongers, begowned and badged, by 7.15am in order to collect money for Red Cross. My bus journey which usually takes about 50 minutes to get there, lasted a mere 12 – it's amazing how quickly one can get around before the traffic begins to build up. I did my stint outside London Bridge station. It is quite interesting to see just how invisible one becomes when holding out a charity bucket, also there are fascinating dynamics – it is clear each does better if there is more than one collector at the same place as the second emphasises and encourages giving. We were rewarded with bucks fizz and a belated breakfast.

Master's Blog 24

There has been a lot happening in the last couple of weeks, hence no blog last week. We started our work on revising and updating the website and its facilities - a working party with two very good liverymen, Dusan Hamlin and Paul Roche, to assist.

Then the Solicitors had their annual Saint's Day (St. Yves) service at the Chapel Royal of St Peter ad Vincula in the Tower, followed by a meal at Trinity House. The chapel is well worth a visit. It has two saints (Thomas More and John Fisher) buried there along with three queens (Anne Boleyn, Jane Grey and Catherine Howard) and other historically important persons, and the choir and music are sublime.

We had one of our regular committee days - that is several different committees meet at different times throughout the day. We also had a WET 10 committee.

I've been to two lectures, the first with the Marketors at the Shard where the lecturer was the chairman of, ia, B&Q, who gave a brilliant talk, and the second at the Leadenhall Building was organised by the Architects. That topic was essentially about planning in the City, sightline protection and the City strategy relating to skyscraper buildings. It was fascinating.

Four of us had lunch (courtesy PM Charles Yuill) as a pleasant way of discussing ways of enhancing our charitable activities and encouraging the young.

I dined at Pewterers' where, ia, the late Lord Mayor, Sir Alan Yarrow, spoke about his year in office, attended an excellent lunch at Armourers with the Environmental Cleaners, also a superb dinner at Fishmongers with the Joiners and Ceilers.

Finally, on the eating front, I was invited to help celebrate the Guild of Young Freemen's 40th Anniversary at the Mansion House. So it has been a good time for cementing our links with other liveries and guilds.



In addition to all of the above, I spent a splendid afternoon at a Buckingham Palace garden party. We made it even more fun by lunching at the Athenaeum with several other Masters and their consorts and we finished our day with a civic reception at Pewter Live, which is the Pewterers' annual exhibition of modern pewterers showing their craftsmanship. There were some really stunning items there and I succumbed to temptation with two or three purchases.

The Royal School of Military Engineering at Chatham held its annual reception and beating retreat. We are invited because of our links with the plumbing section where we present an award each year. The ceremony, on the parade ground, was stunning: precision marching and beautiful playing. We were made extremely welcome.

Finally, there was the joyous weekend in Cowes for the Inter-Livery Yacht Match. Our arrangements are organised by PM Mike Swallow. Our entry this year was skippered by the grandson of our PM Chris Sneath, who very creditably pushed his crew into crossing the line second (though we were not in the top three places on handicap) and a cup was awarded for his efforts. It would be good if he were to return to join us next year with his beautiful yacht.



Master's Blog 25

During the course of the last 10 days, the main event must be our lecture. Held at the Royal College of Physicians, it was well attended, though it would have been nicer to see more liverymen there.... The speaker was superb and you will have seen the report elsewhere on this website. Those of you who did not go missed a real treat. We are hoping we might be able, in due course, to visit the 8.5m diameter tunnels (before they are put to use, you will be delighted to hear) once they are built.

Another great event was the Livery Masters' weekend in Ironbridge. We drove up on the Friday, taking care to ensure we were north of Birmingham before 1pm. As a Northerner, I know only too well how congested the M6 gets on a Friday, as, even if you use the toll road, you don't avoid the jams either side. The hotel was just off the M54 at Telford. There we found others had already arrived so we settled in for a convivial afternoon before going to get dressed for dinner. We were then coached to the venue, which was at the Coalbrookdale Museum of Iron and Enginuity [sic].

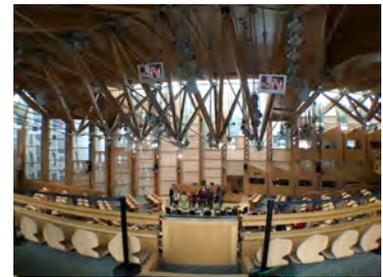
Here we were able to play with some fun machines whilst we had a pre-supper drink. I was told that we would be more successful at them if only we were well under 20! After an excellent meal, it was back for bed. The following day we were divided (randomly) between 4 buses which went round the various sites on our agenda in different orders. Ours started at the Iron Bridge itself, after which we went to the Iron Museum and the first furnace where the iron was smelted. Later we visited the china and porcelain museum, the tile museum, and Blists Hill was where we finished our day of sightseeing before changing for our evening meal. Some of us stayed up afterwards till 3 or more in the morning.... One said in the morning "my head is ok, but my body definitely is not"! (And, no, it wasn't me.) After breakfast, the first item of the day was meet up to organise our year group and elect its first chairman and a basic starting committee. Then it was either return home or make one's own way to the costumes museum before lunch and return home. A great weekend. And well worth a visit (or several).



Paul and I have also been guests of the Painter-Stainers' Court for dinner. A most convivial and relaxed and happy occasion; also of the Livery Committee, which held its friendly function at Trinity House (with its marvellous views of Tower Bridge and the river).

I also went to the Tax Advisers' civic and charity lunch at Armourers', had a working lunch with Paul and the Upper Warden to discuss committee makeup for the following year, attended a Livery education conference at Staple Inn (courtesy of the Actuaries) where we had some excellent talks and discussions about the different ways the livery can help schools and young people prepare for life. We were seated at round tables with a mix of livery people and school staff for discussions. A most interesting and informative morning. Another lunch was at my club, which runs 3-4 livery events each year. Most of my spare (?) time seems to have been spent chasing up people and information for our IOM weekend.

Finally, I spend Friday and Saturday in Edinburgh for Fiona's Master's weekend for the Solicitors. It is the last item for her year as Master Solicitor as the AGM was a few days ago at Tallow Chandlers' Hall. We had a very good timing visiting Holyrood, Scottish Parliament, Signet Library, Museum of Scotland, as well as more general sightseeing, and had a very interesting whisky tasting at the Scottish Malt Whisky Society. And on Sunday it appeared to be Plumbers' day at Glyndebourne. I went with PM John Lockyer and Anita, and we also met the UW Brian and Anne. I remain unsure as to how I kept awake for the opera, which was the *Meistersingers* (and for those of you who don't know Wagner's prolixity, very long), having risen at 4.30 am to catch my flight to Gatwick. But we agreed it was a very good way to spend a Sunday afternoon and evening.



P.S. I must be going mad, or something. I managed to fail to tell you about the Sheriffs' and Recorder's Fund fashion show at the Old Bailey to which I went last week. This took place in the evening after the courthouse had closed. We started with a champagne reception kindly funded by the Aldermanic Sheriff. It enabled us to look at other work done by the prisoners. Let me explain, all the work on display was created by prisoners - fine embroidery on silk clothing, fine cell work creating items such as bags, cushions, aprons, clothes. The work is all done during their prison sentences and gives them a huge sense of pride and self-worth when they see the beautiful things they can create. They are taught by experienced volunteers in groups and then do the bulk of the work when they are back in their cells. It enables them to earn money and acquire basic skills they can build on when they leave prison. The clothing then shown on the catwalk was stunning - from beach clothing to evening wear and in a wide variety of textiles including leather. There was a raffle for several prizes none of which I won, but the Master Pewterer did, amongst others. There are over 30 prisons and 500 prisoners taking part in the various projects supported by this fund-raising event, and it has been shown that this support significantly reduces recidivism following release. In addition to the S&R Fund, the other charities were Blue Sky and Fine Cell Work. After I left, the taxi driver taking me home jokingly asked me if I had just been released (!) and, on telling him what we had been doing, proceeded to tell me all about the work his brother does in Bristol in the prison there. So there is a lot of volunteer support helping prisoners up and down the country.

Master's Blog 26

The last fortnight has been a busy one, which mainly involved ensuring that the weekend in the IOM worked well. However, that was not everything....

I attended a jolly party on HQS Wellington to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Figaro Past Masters' group. Amazingly, in this rainy summer, it was fine so our barbecue went well.



Jailed and bailed also occurred – this involved turning up at the Mansion House for an apparently relaxed drink with convivial company, which was invaded by the sheriffs and various other officers. The sheriffs then charged each of us with various heinous offences and we were each wrist-chained and “dragged” to the Tower of London. The ball and “chain” are now in the offices. At the Tower, the visitors were clearly



puzzled at the sight of some 25-30 people strangely-clad in middle ages garb and badges being abused by apparent police officers – several of us are now on various selfie pics! Once installed in the Tower, we were called up one by one to be told we would be freed if the bail were sufficient – fortunately mine was, thanks to various liverymen and friends. Overall the event raised some £34-35k for the British Heart Foundation in a hugely fun way.

Several of us attended the GSMD end of year gala at the Barbican (attendance was organized by Paul) which not only gave us an excellent dinner but also allowed us to see a really slick production by the boys and girls. A super evening.

I also went to the exhibition of work from the Building Crafts College, which was at Carpenters. A really excellent exhibition. And I did enjoy being able to chat to the students about their work and why they had chosen the particular field they were specialising in.

After that I went to the IOM. In part this was to tidy up all loose ends (and there were several) but also to attend the annual Tynwald Day ceremonies on Tynwald Hill (an artificial mound in St John’s). In essence, the objective is to tell the public what laws have been enacted over the previous 12 months, but the event also gives an opportunity to present petitions, and several were. It is attended by all the members of the Tynwald legislature together with the Deemsters (judges) and other important officials including the Bishop. The day starts with a church service in a charming little church, and then there is a procession to the Hill, the legislation is read out, the petitions (if any) are presented and then they process back again to a meeting where the Acts passed are now finalised with the appropriate assents. It was, fortunately, fine and that certainly helped the fair which sprang up for the day’s celebrations. I bought home-made fudge as part of my presents to those coming on the trip.

The tidying up involved trips to Peel, Laxey, a pub by the quayside in Douglas and another restaurant in Douglas to settle the timings and arrangements for lunch and/or dinner and pay deposits; to Manx Inspirations from whom I had ordered some commemorative mugs (several times as there were a number of problems attached mainly concerning breakages due to the way they were packed); arranging taxis for groups of people arriving at the same time; endeavouring to pin down the timing of and the tickets for our trip on the



electric tram up to Laxey, and so on. Finally, all was done and I awarded myself a trip on one of the trikes which, ia, take you round the TT race course with full commentary en route. Super fun. Then the party started and the report has been made elsewhere.

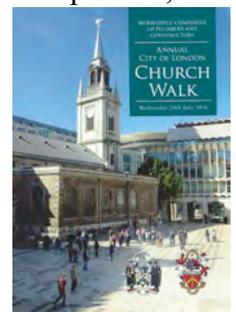


Master's Blog 27

Here's what I have been up to since the return from the IOM. We started with committees and also several sessions with Paul on various admin matters, then a court meeting – this was the Election Court, and as a result we now have a Master Elect – Brian Wadsworth, Upper Warden Elect as Robert Burgon and Renter Warden Elect, Fiona Woolf. So I see the end of my year is looming rapidly! After the end of the court meeting we held a court dinner at Pewterers' where our principal guest was the Non-Aldermanic Sheriff, Christine Rigden. Christine is also an aleconner, and I persuaded her to do an ale con as well as a speech. I had bought beer especially from the IOM for this purpose, and Paul borrowed a backless bench from her (essential, as the beer needs to be poured onto it before she sits in it for a while to see what the results are). Fortunately it stayed fine that evening



so we were all outside in Pewterers' garden to watch the procedures, which she also explained, giving also the historical background. Other events include my regular date with other Masters in 2016 at the City Livery club for the table d'hote lunch and exchange of views, and attending speech day at St Paul's Cathedral School where the pupils played and sang brilliantly, as well as winning lots of prizes. I was also invited to Sandhurst, which we visited via Bisley for lunch in the Artists Rifles Clubhouse. It was a very hot day but really interesting to make the visit – the Master Glover is a former lecturer at the Military College. I later discovered that a PM Fueller had been shooting in the competition being run that day at Bisley. We had seen them in the distance and had wondered what was happening. The Plumbers' and Constructors' city church walk for fellow Masters and Clerks has also now taken place – again a very hot day. We visited 10 churches in two groups (the 11th elected not to be open, despite having assured our guides that it would be – another time perhaps). Our guides were very good indeed, and we also had an excellent lunch at St Lawrence Jewry. I have had two visits to the Old Bailey, both of which were essentially as the guest of the Non-Aldermanic Sheriff, Christine Rigden. The first was an excellent small dinner and the second was a sabrage event – you will have seen the picture of John Carnaby decapitating a bottle of champagne with a cork – well, lots of others there did the same, including yours truly. It makes drinking champagne even more fun! I enjoyed another alcohol-based session this time at Vintners, courtesy Distillers, where I attended an excellent Master Class on Armagnac, and then was let loose on some 171 bottles of various spirits all of which had won gold medal awards for 2016. There were some 250 of us there, mainly Masters and IPMs plus other halves and clerks. Most interesting event and I learned a lot - and no, i didn't try all of them, suspect if i had i would not be here to tell the day! The final two events to report were first the 4th in the series of lectures organised by the Chartered Architects on rebuilding London which in this lecture concentrated on rebuilding since WWII and second the Plumbers' golf day at New Zealand Golf Club. The golfers had arrived early in the morning for their rounds of golf and I arrived around lunchtime. They had all had a very good time and it is even possible that we will have some new members as a result. All credit to the organisers. I am now in the country for August, when by and large little happens in the City, though there are at least 3 installations – Carpenters, Tylers and Bricklayers, and Wax Chandlers. So back in September for the final six weeks before I hand over. Have a very good summer everyone.



Master's blog 28

Summer is over! After a jolly month in the country, I returned to Town for the Great Fire anniversary weekend. The first event was a reception organised by Artichoke (which laid on the spectacular commemoration events



over the weekend) at the Royal Exchange. Here they outlined the excitements to come, which included tea at the Mansion House, courtesy of the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress, the following day. There were then street events over the weekend, including the ceremonial burning of a model of old City buildings, including Old St Paul's, as the last event on the Sunday evening.



I also had fish and chip lunch with my regular group of other Masters on the Friday and was treated to lunch at Ironmongers on Monday by the Stewards, a most noble and generous gesture, which was much appreciated. I was even given a splendid bottle of gin from Ian Puddick's Old Bakery which we sampled at the weekend – mmmm -- excellent!

I was treated to two lectures – the first a brilliant talk on energy from Steve Holliday now retired from being CE at the National Grid, arranged by the Fuellers, and the second a fascinating evening at the London Museum where we first went round the Great Fire exhibition, which is on till April and is well worth a visit or two (I shall probably go back later in the year), and then had a talk from one of the Museum curators on glass, especially glass recovered from the fire, and on display at the exhibition. That was organised by the Glassellers and I discovered (but you probably know already) that lead glass was promoted and developed by Ravenscroft in the 1600s in Henley on Thames and sold exclusively to the Glassellers.

I also went on another Great Fire Walk, arranged by my Past Masters' group.

That apart, I have been getting ready for the next round of committees, been into the office, and also attended a meeting at the Tax Advisers.

5 more weeks to go, then we have a new Master – something to which we should all look forwards.

Master's Blog 29

This week I started with an Ironmongers' lunch where I met up with a number of past masters from other companies. Then we had a classic committee Tuesday with meetings all day, but fortunately I did not need to be at the first one which deals with next year's social events. I gather there were some celebrations there as empty champagne bottles emerged....

On the Wednesday I went with my ward club for a tour of St Pancras station, ending with a splendid afternoon tea at the hotel. I didn't need to eat anything for the rest of the day! In fact, we nearly all took doggy bags with us. Despite not needing to eat I then attended a really interesting event at the Lancaster Hotel, courtesy our liveryman Prem Goyall, where awards were made to those who had made outstanding contributions in the charity area over the previous year.



My week ended with an escape to Guernsey for a long weekend, this time as a guest of the After 8 group of Past Masters. The weather stayed fine, we toured the island, ate extremely well (and often – I think diets of bread and water are called for in a few weeks time), took a boat to Sark where we (inevitably) travelled round by horse and cart, visiting beautiful gardens, and a museum of artifacts collected from the occupation during the 2nd world war. We also visited an alleged hospital facility which the occupying forces had built, largely by slave labour, underground in the hard rock of Guernsey – it was cold and damp, it is impossible to imagine that anyone might get well in there. Rather sinisterly, the records on the reasons for its creation are being withheld till 2045. A good time was had by all and I have returned refreshed for the final onslaught before handing over on October 19. Don't forget to come to the installation....

Master's Blog 30

The main events have been the Autumn Festival and the Lord Mayor's Election. A huge amount of work goes into planning and organising livery functions starting with the Hall booking many months before. Menus have to be agreed, speakers have to be found, guests have to be decided and then invited, prices have to be negotiated, table plans arranged, flowers to be organised, pour memoires sent out and so on. The list is endless. I decided we should have a pianist I have been watching for some years so I arranged that but we had to structure the timing carefully. The Festival being a family event, on finding our speaker's wife was unable to be present, we asked if there was



anyone else he would like to bring. The rabbit he pulled out of his hat turned out his co-sheriff from his shrieval year whom he persuaded (with my agreement having sworn me to secrecy) to share the billing. Those who were there will agree that it produced an excellent result. And our pianist was superb. You could have heard a pin drop from the audience which was spellbound with her wonderfully commanding playing.

The Election Day started for me at Guildhall at 8am where I joined other Masters, Members of the Livery Committee and others for a splendid breakfast organised by the Chef and Butler. Shortly before 10 I went down to the Crypt to meet Peter our Beadle who helped me with the gown and badge. Then we were lined up in reverse order of precedence and walked to the service at St Lawrence Jewry. After we had been settled in, the City Dignitaries arrived and the service took place. Then it was time to go back to the Guildhall for the Election, etc. Afterwards we, the Plumbers, lunched at Painter-Stainers with some 9 livery companies. Yours truly gave the speech of thanks and toast to our hosts. A very happy event.

This week has also been the 1st week of Goldsmiths' Fair. If you've never been you've missed a real treat and there is another week to go of 75 more jewellers and silversmiths - including some very affordable items. It is fascinating to see the wonderful designs and workmanship.

Hot off the Press - The Wilkinson Shield Award

The Wilkinson Shield prize for 2016 has been awarded to Daniel Gowland, an apprentice at Mears and Gateshead College, in a ceremony at the college. He has been also recognised by the Chartered Institute of Plumbing and Heating Engineering (CIPHE) for his hard work and expertise in his field. Mears and Gateshead College won the college shield.



The award was created by John Wilkinson and first awarded in 1914. John was a well-known plumber in the North East who trained many apprentices in his time and was the Master of the Plumbers' Company in 1922-23. His vision produced a prize which combines the teaching skills of the college with its best pupil for the year. Up to 12 colleges in the north of England region qualify - they have to be in Cumbria and the North East.

Those attending the ceremony included the current Master of the Plumbers' Company, Erica Stary, the President of CIPHE, Paul Williams,

representatives from the college, and members of the local CIPHE branch.

Daniel, the award recipient, is now studying for NVQ3. He is clearly thrilled to have had his hard work recognised. The college has won the award 4 times, the last time being two years ago.

The college authorities kindly provided the venue and reception. Many local senior members gave freely of their time to enable the award to be competed for. Our deep thanks to them.



Master's Blog 31

The major Plumbing event of the week was the visit to Gateshead to present the Wilkinson Trophy and Award, which was reported here in full last Thursday. The other events were livery company functions. I was invited to a splendid Mansion House banquet with the Glovers who managed to capture not only the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress, but also the two Sheriffs. Secondly, I attended the installation of the Master Constructor at St Lawrence Jewry and later at Grocers. This was a very happy relaxed event, where the Late Sheriff Christine Rigden, a Past Master Constructor, gave an entertaining speech about her wonderful year as sheriff. I was particularly impressed at how much the Sheriffs raised for the Lord Mayor's Charity at their ball - £94000 (you may be interested to know that the two bottles of Plumbers' 650 anniversary whisky I gave sold for £500). They also raised over £20,000 for the Sheriffs' and Recorder's Fund in their ride round Livery Halls. The third livery event was a Masters and Clerks luncheon organised by the Lightmongers at Tallow Chandlers Hall. This too was a joyous event. The Lightmongers have a very close relationship with the Tallow Chandlers and have given much assistance on lighting updating at the Hall.



Apart from those events, I have been updating the advisory booklet we have for those aspiring to join the Court or become a Steward, and generally dealing with queries from the office, and attended the Goldsmiths' Fair again (and spent too much money again).

Master's Blog 32

The week started with committees in our offices at Carpenters. Then we went to St Magnus to rehearse the swearing in of the new Master and Wardens. After a couple of runs through I wouldn't say we were word perfect, but at least we know what we have to do! The Turners have had a wonderful exhibition "Wizardry in wood" at Carpenters this week and I was invited, with many other Masters to a reception to celebrate its opening. The workmanship is absolutely stunning – it is not just the skills with the lathe and various tools, it is also the eye to make the piece artistically pleasing. The exhibition is run every 4 years, and this year they had specialist museum items on display, some from Kew. I went back again later in the week looking for presents (and found them). I was invited to a very interesting session at DEFRA where the speakers were Therese Coffey, who is, ia, DEFRA's parliamentary undersecretary. She spoke about the 25 year plan they are writing to ensure that water is in the right place at the right time despite population shifts, and weather pattern change. We also had a talk from a Scottish civil servant who told us how they were focusing on obtaining a better share of the £500bn world-wide water industry work by using small focused specialised groups in their carefully targeted overseas visits. Finally, Judith Bachelar from Sainsburys gave a fascinating talk on how her firm is using green methods worldwide in order to cut down on fuel and water consumption whilst at the same time ensuring the product is good and the workers have guaranteed work. One example was the Kenya rose growing industry – apparently it used to take 20l water to produce each flower but with new methods the rose now only needs 8l.

The Master Chartered Surveyor and I went, on our own initiative, to St Katherine Cree for the annual Lion Sermon. If you have not heard of this, the background is that John Gayer, a merchant adventurer, found himself without his companions in the Syrian desert where he met with a lion, but his prayers to God resulted in his surviving the night unscathed. Much later, he became Lord Mayor (1646). In due course, he set up a fund for an annual service to commemorate his escape. The service this year was attended by some 60 people, the choir was from Lloyds, the readings inevitably included Daniel in the Lions' Den, an excellent sermon was given an invited speaker, and there were lots of jolly hymns. Afterwards we celebrated with wine and sandwiches.



The week finished very busily. First there was my abseil for the Lord Mayor's charity down the tower at St Lawrence Jewry. Whilst I had a somewhat shaky start (I have never abseiled before) and the wall down was full of pitfalls, such as ledges, a clock face, and baffles from the bell tower, it has to be said that the most difficult bit was climbing the 171 steps up the tower to get to the jump-off point. Once back at the bottom we were handed generous libations of gin and tonic!

Secondly, I went to the City of London Girls' School prize day at the Guildhall (having changed out of scruffy jeans, etc) where the girls played beautiful music, there were excellent speeches and clearly the girls had done very well during the year. Finally, I went to the Richmond Sea Cadets' Passing Out Parade evening. It is wonderful to see what the volunteers for the Sea Cadets do by way of enthusing, teaching and encouraging the young. Richmond has been doing extremely well –



it seems that most regattas and competitions they enter they either win or at least take a place. Some of them have also taken exams in powerboat driving this year. One of the older cadets told us that the training had enabled him to qualify to teach other people how to sail and how he gives back by helping in the summer at Welsh Harp with the training of other sea cadets. They are very grateful for our support and have just celebrated their 100th birthday.

The last Stary Master's blog

Well, at the time of writing it is all coming to an end in about 15 hours' time and this week has in part been spent on preparation for the handover to the new Master at St Magnus around about noon. Before that, we have a court meeting at which some 14 of our Past Masters are expected to be present in addition to officers and assistants. I have today spoken to or left messages with all those unable to come; at least one is, alas, not well so best wishes have been sent for a speedy recovery, and another is working hard at a conference. We will be swearing in two new court members and 6 new liverymen, which is very good news indeed.

The rest of the time has been spent in part in first attending the Plumbers' lunch at Ironmongers, where there was a good attendance and good discussions with fellow liverymen and their friends; secondly, I went to Furniture Makers Hall where their IPM gave an excellent lecture about furniture before and after the Great Fire. Of course, so much was lost in the fire and as people were rehoused they needed new furniture to replace that lost. Previously it would have mainly been in oak, but after there was competition for the Carpenters from the Joiners and Ceilers who began to use lighter wood, such as walnut. The speaker's erudition and enthusiasm has whetted my appetite and I will be going to the Geffrye Museum in the new year, probably with the current Master Chartered Surveyor, for more in-depth study.

As you are probably aware, our clerk Paul retires tomorrow and will be replaced by Pieter Cox, whom I know some of you have already met. Please give him and our new Master, Brian, a rousing Plumbers' welcome and all your support. Paul has done outstanding work as clerk and we have persuaded him to come onto the Court, so that we won't lose sight of him, which is very good news.

I have had a really enjoyable, if hard-working, time as Master, and I would like to thank all of you for your support in making this a really memorable year.

