



## The Master's Blogs 2017 - 18

### BLOGS 11 –

#### BLOG 11

##### **FUNERAL OF LIVERYMAN RICHARD MURDOCH: 23 JANUARY 2018**

Although I don't think I ever met the late Richard Murdoch, his was a name that I have always associated with excellence in the use of lead sheet. Richard worked for the Lead Sheet Association and helped to form the Lead Contractors' Association in 1984. He had been a Liveryman of the Plumbers' Company since 1980 and was awarded the Company's St Michael Medallion in 1996. He was a very loyal and active demonstrator of leadwork at the Weald and Downland Museum at Singleton. There were many references to the Company during the funeral service at Guildford Crematorium, with one of the tributes being paid by Liveryman Phil Mead (who worked with Richard over many years at Singleton).

##### **PLUMBERS' COMPANY COURT MEETING AND LUNCH: 24 JANUARY 2018**



As Master, I have to chair 4 Court meetings and today sees the first of these, which takes place in Furniture Makers' Hall, one of the more modern City Livery Halls. The Court meeting discusses a wide range of issues and approves the Annual Accounts for the year to 29 September 2017. It is a privilege to see six new Liverymen being clothed as of the Livery today. This is really encouraging and is a positive move in the Company's current recruitment drive.

After the lunch which follows the meeting, we hear from the Master Furniture Maker, Dr Tony Smart, MBE who outlines the history of his

Company and pays tribute to the support which he and his Company received from our Past Master, Geoff Marsh in relation to education, training and qualifications.

##### **COACHMAKERS' AWARD TO INDUSTRY DINNER: 24 JANUARY 2018**

As seems to be so often the case, lunch today is followed by an industry dinner and tonight sees me at Vintners' Hall for the Worshipful Company of Coachmakers and Coach Harness Makers' Award to Industry Dinner. Granted its Royal Charter in 1677, the Coachmakers was originally the sole governing body of the coach making trade. When the horse drawn coach

was replaced by the motor vehicle, enterprising artisans transferred their skills to fashion the curved ash wood frames for cars. When aircraft burst onto the transport scene, Coachmakers again transferred their skills to the fashioning of wood in well-defined curves for aircraft.

Tonight's award, which is presented by Master Coachmaker Tony Edwards, is given to British company Dowty Propellers Ltd which has a long and proud history and whose products are used in many aircraft today.

## **BLOG: 12**

### **CITY UNIVERSITY GRADUATION: 29 JANUARY 2018**

It is some 40 years since my own graduation ceremonies (two in consecutive years) from Heriot Watt University. Apart from a couple of subsequent graduations of friends and family, today sees me at a graduation ceremony of the City University, London in the magnificent setting of the Barbican Centre.



After a delightful lunch in the Barbican's Garden Room (an oasis on the third floor of the centre), the Livery Masters in attendance are gowned and chained and lined up in order of precedence for the procession through the gathered company of students and their families onto the stage. After seeing the installation of the Lord Mayor, Alderman Charles Bowman, as Rector and the conferment on him of an Honorary Degree, we witness the joy on the faces of almost 400 graduands as they cross the stage to receive their degrees from the newly- appointed Rector. Although I have to "shuffle" my position on the seat on the stage several times during the two-hour long ceremony to remain comfortable, I have to say that it was a huge honour to witness so many young (and not so young) people being recognised for the hard work they have undertaken during their period of study.

### **OFFICE CATCH-UP: 31 JANUARY 2018**

After last week's Court meeting and Luncheon, the attention of the Plumbers' office now moves to the Annual Banquet- one of the premier events in the Livery year. This year's event will take place in the Mansion House (the official residence of the Lord Mayor of London) on Wednesday 21 March 2018 and today sees me in the Company offices with the Clerk discussing the details of that event in order that the invitations and flyers can be issued. During our discussions, we also review a number of other future events.

## **BLOG: 13**

### **VISIT TO TRELOAR'S SCHOOL, ALTON: 5 FEBRUARY 2018**

Established in 1908 following a mayoral appeal by Lord Mayor Sir William Purdie Treloar, Treloar's School and College in Alton, Hampshire has become one of the country's leading providers of education, care, therapy, medical support and independence training for disabled young people. Today sees us both making the train journey from Clapham Junction to Alton to join the annual visit to Treloar's by the Lord Mayor, Sheriffs and Livery Company Masters. There is apparently a record attendance by some 50 Masters, their consorts and other supporters of the School. We are introduced to the concept behind Treloar's (the first specialist college to have been awarded "outstanding" for the quality of its provision, leadership and management by OFSTED). We have a guided tour and get to chat with staff and students, all of whom give us the impression that this is a special place undertaking really valuable work.

The visit concludes with a musical concert by students and staff and the Master Plumber was seen to participate in a bell-ringing rendition of "Greensleeves" along with students, the Lord Mayor and several other Livery Company Masters. He came in on cue (as indeed did everyone else!).



Chatting with several other Masters on the return train journey, we all agree that we have been fortunate to witness something rather special today.

My diary already includes attendance at an event in London in support of the School on 28 March 2018 and I arrange on my return to promote this event to our Liverymen as a way of raising awareness of Treloar's. Details of the Treloar Talks now appear on the news section of the website and it would be good to meet up with fellow Plumbers that evening.

### **MEETING AT THE HOUSE OF LORDS: 6 FEBRUARY 2018**

After a brisk walk along the River Thames, I arrive in time for my meeting with Lord Martin O'Neill of Clackmannan at the House of Lords. Martin, with whom I worked on the Specialist Engineering Contractors' Group, is to be my guest speaker at the Plumbers' Annual Banquet in Mansion House on 21 March 2018 and our meeting today is to discuss that role and the likely content of his speech. It is lovely to have coffee and cake in the Pugin Room in the House of Commons (and hard not to "spot" well-known politicians both there and in the corridors).

### **MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING: 6 FEBRUARY 2018**

The Plumbers' Company's Membership Committee plays a key role in ensuring the ongoing development of membership, both through the recruitment of new Liverymen and the retention of existing members. Today's meeting receives reports on current initiatives and makes plans for the future.

### **RECEPTION FOR NEW LIVERYMEN: 6 FEBRUARY 2018**

Some time ago, the Membership Committee decided to arrange a drinks reception for new Liverymen who have become part of the organisation over the last year. Tonight, members of the Committee and Officers of the Company meet a number of these people in the magnificent setting of Carpenters' Hall. It is a good opportunity to get to know some of our

Liverymen better and to encourage them to play a full part in the organisation which they have joined.

### **MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS' TECHNICAL SYMPOSIUM: 6 FEBRUARY 2018**

Having made an early exit from our new Liverymen Reception, I make the short walk to Middlesex Street to the University of Coventry's London Campus where I attend the inaugural Technical Symposium organised by the Worshipful Company of Management Consultants. The title of the event is "Is your organisation predictably vulnerable?" and Anthony Fitzsimmons delivers a thought-provoking talk on reputational risk. The talk, which is attended by members of the Livery Company, a number of visiting Masters and University students, gives rise to many questions from the audience and is followed by a reception during which the discussion continues.

### **PLUMBERS' COMPANY ADMISSION INTERVIEW: 7 FEBRUARY 2018**

As Master, I help out with an interview of a prospective new Liveryman at Carpenters' Hall today. It is always encouraging to meet the people who are likely to become a future part of the Company and today is no exception.

### **IRONMONGERS' COMPANY CITY DINNER: 7 FEBRUARY 2018**



The Worshipful Company of Ironmongers is one of the Great Twelve Livery Companies (number 10 in the order of precedence) and the Clerk and I are guests tonight at their City Dinner in Ironmongers' Hall. It is indeed a City function with the Lord Mayor, Sheriffs, several other City officials, the Acting Bishop of London and the

Dean of St Paul's Cathedral among the guests. I am seated between two ladies deeply involved in the almshouse movement and learn a lot about this form of housing, about which I knew relatively little. The music is excellent (the Brass Quintet of the Band of the Grenadier Guards) and there is a particularly interesting after dinner speech by the CEO of the London Symphony Orchestra, Mrs Kathryn McDowell. The LSO is due to move in the future to a new home virtually next door to Ironmongers' Hall, which makes her contribution all the more relevant.

## **BLOG: 14**

### **14<sup>TH</sup> SHROVE TUESDAY PANCAKE RACE: 13 FEBRUARY 2018**

Organised by the Worshipful Company of Poulterers (in collaboration with "The Cook and Butler"), the Inter Livery Race was something that the Mistress Plumber and I were looking forward to. However, it was only a few weeks ago that the organisers confirmed that the Plumbers could enter a full team this year (we had not participated last year).

Unfortunately, the weather forecast proved to be accurate this morning and we arrive at the Guildhall Yard in rather damp and extremely cold conditions to be advised that there would be no running this year. For the first time in the history of the race, the "British Weather Clause" is invoked and the race around the Guildhall Yard is replaced by the alternative competition of seeing how many pancakes can be tossed in a fixed time.

The Plumbers' team is ably led and organised by Clerk's Assistant Sharon Sibthorpe and consists of the Master, the Mistress (who participates in the ladies' event), Assistant Janet Rivers, who competes in the Liverymen "race" and Steward Damon Reynolds who bravely agreed to participate in the Novelty Race. Damon offered a choice of costumes (which either had to reflect the Lord Mayors' charities or his Livery Company, both of which are shown in the photos attached. Damon is shown in the group photo as the most famous plumber in the world, Super Mario. His other outfit, which he wore in the competition, represents the "Sugar Plumber Fairy".

It is good to report that all members of the Plumbers' team demonstrate appropriate skill in the art of tossing pancakes (some of which disintegrate during the competition). None of us are winners in our respective groups but we all have a great time and are glad that we have had the chance to participate. It was also good to be cheered on by Past Master Antony Paterson-Fox and his wife, Diana, Steward Clive Sofaer and his wife Sheila, our Clerk Pieter and Liveryman Joe Sibthorpe.

The "Race" is followed by a lovely buffet lunch in the Guildhall Crypts.



## BLOG: 15

### MEETING WITH WARDENS: TUESDAY 20 FEBRUARY 2018

It is good to have a lunchtime catch-up with the Upper Warden and Renter Wardens today during which we have a useful discussion about future plans.

### CHARTERED ARCHITECTS' LECTURE: WEDNESDAY 21 FEBRUARY 2018

The title of tonight's Lecture is "Heritage and Modernity- War of Peace" and we hear a fascinating range of views on architecture in the City of London by the distinguished trio of Peter Luscombe, Annie Hampson OBE and Paul Finch OBE (who don't all have the same view on the role of modern buildings in the City). Master Chartered Architect, Stephen Wagstaffe, kicks the proceedings off with an interesting illustrated talk based on his impression of buildings in the City over the last 60 years, including some excellent photographs taken from the top of The Monument in 1955, in 2000 and recently.



As someone who thinks that there are some lovely old and modern buildings in the City of London, this is a good evening and I leave with notes of a few more buildings which we really must visit during our time here.

### 31<sup>ST</sup> WORLD TRADERS' TACITUS LECTURE: THURSDAY 22 FEBRUARY 2018



Filling the Guildhall to capacity, the Worshipful Company of World Traders' Annual Lecture has become one of the key events in the City of London calendar. Tonight's lecturer is introduced by the Lord Mayor Locum Tenens, our Upper Warden, Dame Fiona Woolf. Described as "one of the world's great polymaths", Dr Nathan Myhrvold served as Chief Strategist and Chief Technology Officer of the Microsoft Corporation and is now involved in patent portfolio development, nature and wildlife photography and writing cookery books. The title of his address is "Cyber-Trade: Will AI (Artificial Intelligence) Displace or Enhance our Work" and Dr Myhrvold delivers a witty and upbeat address which is appreciated by the large audience. In summary, his view is that we should welcome rather than fear the growth of intelligent computer systems.

The Lecture is followed by a reception during which we have the chance to meet with other Masters and guests.

### MANSION HOUSE TASTING: FRIDAY 23 FEBRUARY 2018

Food is again on the agenda as we visit Mansion House at lunchtime today. I have been to Mansion House on many occasions over the years (including a few times already in my year as Master) but today is a little different as the Mistress and I are shown into a small dining room on the ground floor where we sample possible food and wine for the Annual Plumbers' Banquet which will take place here in the Egyptian Room on 21 March 2018. It is a very pleasant experience and I am pleased to report that we are unanimous in agreeing on each course and the wines.

## BLOG 16

### PRESENTATION OF MASTER CERTIFICATES: MONDAY 26 FEBRUARY 2018

Inspired by the development of a Master Plumber Certificate in 2001, the Master Certificate Scheme has now been developed across a range of Livery Companies and at today's presentation of certificates in Glaziers' Hall by the Lord Mayor Alderman Charles Bowman no fewer than 38 individuals are recognised.

As Master of the Worshipful Company of Plumbers, I have the honour of introducing the three candidates to be awarded Master Plumber Certificates- David Gammage, John Hamilton Murray and Tyrone Tash- and asking them to accept the charge which accompanies their awards before they step forward to receive their framed certificates from the Lord Mayor. It is also an honour to see one of the people behind these awards in the audience- Past Master Geoff Marsh and his wife Ann- and to hear the reference to the plumbers being the instigators of this scheme.



It is good to read the short CVs of all the candidates today- including those involved in trades such as masonry, wax chandelling, joinery and plastering. There is an incredible array of talent in the room this morning!

### VISIT TO THAMES RIVER POLICE MUSEUM: MONDAY 26 FEBRUARY 2018



This is one of those days where one event runs into the next and a quick departure from Glaziers' Hall is necessary for me to get to Wapping Police Station to join the first of this year's programme of social visits arranged for the Plumbers' Company as we visit the Thames River Police Museum. Not many people will know that the world's oldest organised police force was set up on the River Thames to tackle

the large amount of pilfering which was taking place in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Established at a total cost of £4,200, it is estimated that within 6 months the force had saved more than 25 times that amount of cargo and were so effective that the criminal fraternity organised a riot. Our guide at the museum (which is only opened by arrangement), Rob Jeffries, is an amazing storyteller and enthrals our group for the duration of the visit (which is followed by a lunch in a restaurant close by). Steward Clive Sofaer has done an excellent job in organising this trip and receives the thanks of those who attended.

### FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING; TUESDAY 27 FEBRUARY 2018

The Company's Finance Committee meets today, and the principal item of business is reviewing the Management Accounts for the first quarter of the financial year against budget. No major concerns!

## **ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY WATER GROUP: TUESDAY 27 FEBRUARY 2018**

Although I have been on the mailing list for meetings of this group for several years, this is the first time that I have been able to attend a meeting. The group, which meets in one of the Committee rooms at the Houses of Parliament focusses on the importance of water as a resource- something which is important to plumbers. Tonight's meeting focusses on water infrastructure and the National Policy Statement for Water Resources and is chaired by Baroness McIntosh of Pickering. A distinguished panel consists of the CEO of the Environment Agency, the Director of Regulation and Corporate Affairs, Affinity Water and the Chair of Future Networks Group, Future Water Association. It is an interesting hour from which I take away a strong message that there needs to be greater consumer awareness of the value (and finite availability of water) as well as increased attempts to reduce wastage through leakage.

It is good to meet a Liveryman of the Plumbers' Company on the way into the meeting who introduces me to the current Renter Warden of the Worshipful Company of Water Conservators (with which the Plumbers have good links).

## **BLOG 17**

### **CITY GUIDES' LECTURE: MONDAY 5 MARCH 2018**

There are some magnificent buildings in the City of London- both old and new. Tonight, I attend the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Derek Melliush Memorial Lecture organised by the City of London Guide Lecturers' Association in the historic Church of St Lawrence Jewry, has the title "Ancient Monuments for a Modern City". Dr Jane Sidell, Inspector of Ancient Monuments, Historic England, is the lecturer and she gives both a fascinating and entertaining talk about magnificent buildings- some with a history of some 2000 years- which can be seen today. This is yet another fascinating and educational evening and I add a few more buildings to my "Must Visit" list.



### **TECHNICAL AND EDUCATION COMMITTEES: TUESDAY 6 MARCH 2018**

Some years ago, the Company decided that the agenda for its Technical Committee had grown unmanageably large and the decision was taken to split the work into two separate Committees- Technical and Education. It is always good to review and reform and we are currently considering whether it might be better to revert to a single Committee, with clearly defined objectives. Today, as part of that review process, we have arranged a joint meeting of the two Committees which takes place in one of the Committee rooms at Mansion House.

The joint meeting is taking place during National Apprenticeship Week and we have invited several guests, with an interest in apprenticeships to join us. Neil Weller, a partner in the building engineering services design firm Troup Bywaters Anders, talks about his firm's approach to the recruitment of engineers through an apprenticeship, rather than a graduate route and the considerable success which this approach has brought. One of the firm's apprentices, Pierce Ronan (now an Engineer) talks about his experience from joining the firm at age 17. We are left in absolutely no doubt that the apprenticeship approach works well. We then receive a presentation from Paul Johnson, Chief Executive of BPEC, on the new "T" level qualifications and some members express concern that this latest Government

initiative might have a negative, rather than complimentary, impact on apprenticeship training at craft level in the industry. All agree that we hope this proves not to be the case.

The consensus as the meeting ends is that the experiment to combine two Committees in one meeting has today worked well and the focus on apprenticeships was an excellent way for the Company to acknowledge National Apprenticeship Week.

### **SOCIAL COMMITTEE; TUESDAY 6 MARCH 2018**

A short walk from Guildhall to Carpenters' Hall (and after a quick sandwich lunch) I attend the meeting of the Social Committee which reviews Company events since the last meeting and reviews progress and plans for forthcoming events including the Annual Banquet on 21 March, the Annual Lecture on 21 May and the programme of social visits which has recently started.

### **MANSION HOUSE RECCE: WEDNESDAY 7 MARCH 2018**

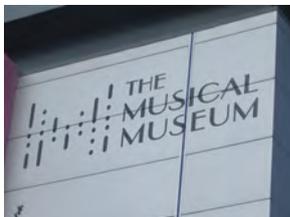
Although I might have attended more than 20 (maybe even more than that) Mansion House Banquets over the years, this year will be the first (and only) occasion that I will attend Master. This morning, the Clerk, one of our Stewards and I visit Mansion House for a meeting with Mansion House staff to discuss arrangements in advance of our visit for the Plumbers' Annual Banquet in two weeks' time. It is a useful visit and I am sure that all arrangements on the night will be up to the usual high standards.

### **DINNER WITH THE PRESIDENT: WEDNESDAY 7 MARCH 2018**

Many years ago, when attending a European meeting in Paris, I was invited to "Dinner with the President". Noting the raised eyebrows on the faces of those to whom I mentioned this, I had to admit that the meal was with the President of the French Building Federation rather than the President of the country. Tonight's delightful "Dinner with the President" is hosted by the President of the Chartered Institute of Plumbing and Heating Engineering (CIPHE) and takes place in the lovely setting of Founders' Hall (near Smithfield Market). The principal speaker this evening is CEO of Worcester Bosch, Carl Arntzen, and he refers to many issues currently facing the plumbing and heating industry, particularly those relating to skills.

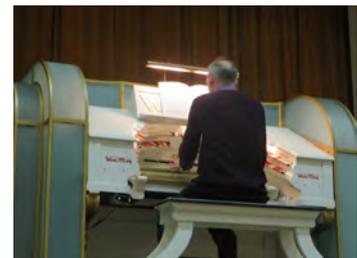
It is good to meet some people whom I have known for many years and to meet some new people. In an unexpected turn of events, towards the end of the evening, I am asked if I would be willing to propose the Toast to the CIPHE and I accept this invitation.

### **THE MUSICAL MUSEUM, BRENTFORD: THURSDAY 8 MARCH 2018**



The second of the Plumbers' Company social visits this year takes place today and a group of Liverymen and friends gather at the Musical Museum in Brentford, north London. This contains an amazing collection of mechanical musical instruments and guide Marcus demonstrated several of them on our guided tour. The

collection includes a Wurlitzer organ which was formerly in a cinema in Richmond and at the end of the visit, I am allowed to play it. I described it as transitioning from a pushbike (my usual 2 manual instrument) to a Harley Davidson motorbike and it would have been good if I had several hours to work out all of the sounds which this amazing instrument can produce.



### **FURNITURE MAKERS' ELECTION COURT DINNER: THURSDAY 8 MARCH 2018**

A return visit to Furniture Makers' Hall this evening where I am one of several Livery Masters attending as guests of the Furniture Makers' Company whose Spring Election Court takes place immediately before Dinner. This is Master Tony Smart's last Court Dinner before his term ends and I am pleased to hear him pay tribute, during the Toast to the Guests, to the role of the Plumbers' Company, and notably Past Master Geoff Marsh, in setting up the Master Certificate Scheme. Liverymen of this Company must have an involvement in the furniture or furnishings industry and it is fascinating to chat to a few their Past Masters at Dinner about the work which they have done in that field.

### **LIVERY HALL RECCE: FRIDAY 9 MARCH 2018**

One of the advantages of being a Livery Company without its own hall is that we get to meet and dine in a variety of the Livery Halls in the City. This morning sees the Mistress and I on an early morning visit to check out one of the Halls which is being considered for a future event.

### **FIREFIGHTERS' COURT LUNCHEON: FRIDAY 9 MARCH 2018**



It was lovely to be invited to join the Firefighters' Company Court (and one other Livery Master) at their lunch today in the Aldermen's Dining Room at Guildhall. While a small function, it is a delightful event and it is good to chat with members of the Court of another Livery Company. A new Liveryman of the Company was clothed today and I discover that he is a Registered Plumber with a long career in public health. As a regular attendee at the Society of Public Health Engineers' Annual Dinner, he recognised me from the evening I was presented with the Honorary Fellowship of that organisation several years ago. Another of those small world coincidences!