



The Master's Blogs 2017 - 18

BLOG 1

INSTALLATION: 24 OCTOBER

It was in early 2009 that I received a Sunday evening phone call from the then Master, Professor Rodney Cartwright, asking if I would consider going onto the Court of the Plumbers' Company. Although at that time, becoming Master of the Company lay in the distant future, it is amazing how quickly the time has passed.

My Installation in the Company church, St Magnus the Martyr on Tuesday 24 October 2017 was an occasion that I will never forget. In the absence of the Company Chaplain, Father Philip Warner, who is unwell, the service was led by my local Minister from Scotland, Rev Dr David J Graham. The church was packed and the singing could have lifted the roof. After processing back (in lovely, dry, autumnal weather) to Vintners' Hall, a large group of Liverymen and their guests enjoyed the Master's Reception and the luncheon which followed. It was great to see so many people that I have come to know over my years as a Liverymen and to meet some others for the first time. In recent years, the Company has invited family of any Liverymen who have died during the year to come to our Installation Service and Lunch and this year we welcomed family of late Past Master Jack Jeffrey (who was Master in 1995) and of late Liveryman, Harold Glover (who had been a Liveryman for an amazing 52 years). Lunch was a time for welcoming new Liverymen, new Court Assistants and Stewards and for honouring one of our longstanding Liverymen, Phil Mead, who was presented with the Company's new Heritage Award. Details of all of these are contained in my Installation speech which appears on the Plumbers Company website.

In the 652-year history of the Plumbers' Company there have been relatively few Scottish Masters. One, George Shaw, originally from Dalkeith, served on no fewer than 4 occasions in the late 19th century and another, my own proposer Bob Clephane, was Master in 1972. It is an enormous honour to be following in the footsteps of such people.

Although I don't have a theme as such for my year in office, I plan to encourage as many Liverymen as possible to engage in the life and work of our organisation. Like many membership organisations, we would also like to have new members and I am

pleased that our Membership Committee is about to initiate a recruitment campaign which I hope will lead to an increase in the size of the Livery.

TALLOW CHANDLERS' CONSORTS LUNCH: 26 OCTOBER

Interestingly, our first official engagement was for Sheila, as Mistress Plumber. She attended a lovely luncheon in Tallow Chandlers' Hall hosted by the Mistress Tallow Chandler, Kate Long.

CLARINET SERENADE: 27 OCTOBER

The Lord Mayor of the City of London, Alderman Dr Andrew Parmley is a talented musician and has demonstrated that skill on several occasions during his year in office. Tonight was the last of eleven concerts in St Stephen Walbrook (the church which is adjacent to Mansion House, the Lord Mayor's residence). Lance Corporal David Wong is Principal Clarinetist in the Band of the Grenadier Guards and he really demonstrated the beauty of the instrument in tonight's recital (including a lovely piece by Edward Gregson in which the Lord Mayor provided the piano accompaniment). Canon Roger Royle introduced the items in an informative and witty manner.



WORSHIPFUL COMPANY OF BUILDERS' MERCHANTS INSTALLATION DINNER: 27 OCTOBER

After crossing the pavement from St Stephen Walbrook, we enjoyed the Builders' Merchants' Installation Dinner in Mansion House at which the Lord Mayor replied to the Toast to the City. Newly installed Master of the Company, Brian Blanchard, hosted a lovely dinner and it provided us with a good opportunity to meet other construction industry-related Masters, their Consorts and City officers.

BLOG 2

This seems to have been a quiet week by City and Livery standards (which is probably just as well when I look at next week's jam-packed diary).

MEETING AT THE PLUMBERS' OFFICES: 31 OCTOBER

Although many people on the Tube and in the streets of London seemed to have taken Hallowe'en seriously (with some rather interesting outfits and make-up in evidence), fancy dress was not required for my visit to the Company's offices in Carpenters' Hall today. The office is generally manned between Monday and Wednesday and I spend a useful time with Pieter the Clerk and Sharon, his Assistant in reviewing my diary for the next month or so, discussing issues arising out of last week's Court meeting and planning future events.

MEETING THE SENIOR STEWARD: 1 NOVEMBER

Liverymen appointed as Stewards of our Company generally serve for 7 years, during the last of which they have the title "Senior Steward". This year's Senior Steward is Ian Smith (yes- his Christian name does suggest that he has Scottish ancestors). Today the Mistress and I (I am getting into the habit of describing Sheila in this way) travel to leafy Surrey to meet Ian and his wife Patience to discuss upcoming events, notably the Plumbers' Carol Service which will take place on Tuesday 12 December in St Magnus the Martyr Church. We meet at RHS Wisley (which I had often seen on Gardeners' World, but never visited). The weather is so good that we were able to have our snack lunch outside. We were impressed by Wisley and plan a return visit.

SoPHE ANNUAL DINNER: 2 NOVEMBER

The last time I was able to attend the Annual Celebration Dinner of the Society of Public Health Engineers was in 2011 when I was surprised and pleased to receive the Society's Honorary Fellowship. Although I have been invited back each year since then, the date has always clashed with business commitments in Scotland. I am therefore delighted to be able to accept the invitation which was issued to me in my capacity as Master of the Plumbers' Company. Over 300 people attend this dinner- most with an involvement in some aspect of public health engineering- and it is good to see the Society continuing to award its "Young Engineer of the Year" Award, this year in conjunction with Engineers Without Borders. The evening offered the opportunity to meet some people for the first time and others- including several Plumbers' Liverymen- whom I have known for some years.



BLOG 3

GARDEN OF REMEMBRANCE AT ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL: 6 NOVEMBER



Although my paternal grandfather returned from World War I and lived to a ripe old age, he lost a twin brother and an older brother in the same conflict and rarely discussed his experiences. I think of the tragedy of war as I participate in the opening of the Garden of Remembrance at St Paul's Cathedral- such a poignant event. The sun shines throughout the service and it is a real privilege to join in with the Lord Mayor, City officials and representatives of the armed forces in planting a wooden cross.

A delightful lunch at Watermens' Hall follows at which I have the opportunity to chat with several Masters of other Livery Companies and their Clerks.

SERVICE OF THANKSGIVING FOR THE LORD MAYOR'S YEAR: 6 NOVEMBER

With just a few days left of The Rt. Hon. The Lord Mayor Alderman Dr Andrew Parmley's year in office, I join other Masters and City representatives in St Stephen Walbrook for a Service of Thanksgiving. It is a wonderfully uplifting service with excellent music and an

address given by the Lord Mayor's Chaplain, The Revd Canon Roger Royle, who manages to entertain and pay appropriate tribute to the excellent work which the Lord and Lady Mayoress have done over the last year.

THE IRONBRIDGE LONDON LECTURE: 6 NOVEMBER

A short journey by Tube sees me at the Institute of Mechanical Engineers in Westminster for the first London Lecture organised by the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust. After an interesting introduction about the history, development and plans for Ironbridge, we are treated to a fascinating lecture by Sir Terry Morgan CBE, Chairman of Crossrail on this quite remarkable engineering project. Sir Terry said that the reaction of every visitor to the project is "Wow"! As well as providing considerable additional capacity to bring people into London by the end of 2018 when it opens as the Elizabeth Line, the project has, to date, employed over 700 apprentices, 30% of whom are female and 40% of whom were not in education, employment or training at the time of recruitment. These are encouraging statistics.



PLASTERERS' TRAINING AWARDS LUNCHEON: 7 NOVEMBER

I believe that it is important to take every opportunity to recognise excellence and hard work in relation to craft training. The Worshipful Company of Plasterers clearly know how to do that well as demonstrated by today's event in the magnificent Plasterers' Hall. After a lovely lunch, the voice of "Strictly Come Dancing", Alan Dedicoat takes to the stage and comperes



an upbeat presentation ceremony with the Lord Mayor congratulating the winning colleges and apprentices. It is particularly good to see the genuine looks of pride and happiness on the faces of the recipients. The challenges which had been overcome by the shortlisted candidates for the Student of the Year Award are significant and all present must have been moved by this award in particular (which was won by a refugee from Sudan). This event is apparently an annual fixture in the Plasterers' calendar. Well done- and keep up the good work!

HORNERS' COMPANY LECTURE AND SUPPER: 8 NOVEMBER

Before attending this lecture in the Royal Society of Medicine, I think that is fair to say that neither Sheila or I knew anything at all about the use of polymers in medicine. However, Dr Matt Burke of GSK quickly educated us as he addressed the subject "Polymers to Herald in a New Age of Medicine". Ranging from polymers in the containers for medicines, through their use in coating drugs to enable timed release within the body and in surgical implants, everyone attending must have left with a much clearer idea about both the current and potential future use of polymers. The lecture is followed by a buffet supper and an opportunity to chat with fellow Masters and guests.

BLOG 4

LORD MAYOR'S SHOW: 11 NOVEMBER

The Plumbers' Company isn't participating in the Lord Mayor's Show this year, but the Mistress and I have booked tickets for one of the three stands which are erected outside St Paul's Cathedral. We are aware that a flotilla will depart for Tower Bridge from the Westminster Boating Station at 0830 but it was nevertheless a huge surprise when I get up,



look out of the window and see the Queen's Royal Barge, Gloriana, passing just below our window. The weather at that time is not good- raining, misty and wet but we are nevertheless thrilled to see the flotilla gather and leave the pier en route for the City.

Thankfully, and possibly a little unusually, it doesn't rain for the whole time we are seated in the stand and we really enjoy the procession of military and other bands, City of London representatives, Livery Companies and charitable and commercial organisations. I recognise a few other Masters in the parade but sadly none of them look in our direction when we wave frantically at them. Thankfully, we are recognised eventually, and I am pleased that it was by my Upper Warden, Alderman Dame Fiona Woolf, who is riding in a carriage with three other Aldermen who have been Lord Mayors of the City of London.

It is good to see this excellent festival at close quarters and we have a good view of the Lord Mayor Charles Bowman as he exits the gold State Coach to receive a blessing by the Dean of St Paul's Cathedral.

MEETING TO DISCUSS APPRENTICESHIPS: 14 NOVEMBER

Today starts with a meeting in an office near Euston Station with the Chair of the London Apprenticeship Ambassador Scheme, Neil Weller. I had been put in touch with Neil by our Immediate Past Master who had met him recently at an event on apprenticeships hosted by Dr Andrew Parmley towards the end of his year as Lord Mayor of the City of London. Neil is a real enthusiast for the relevance of apprenticeships for all young people (and not only those who have demonstrated high levels of academic ability). We agree to explore the possibility of his attendance at a meeting of the Company's Education Committee in the new year.

I pop into the Plumbers' Company office for a quick catch-up and am pleased to meet a few of the applicants for Liveryman status who are being interviewed this morning.

PLUMBERS' MUSEUM AND WORKSHOP TRUST AGM: 15 NOVEMBER

Representatives of the Plumbers' Company have been demonstrating lead skills at the Weald and Downland Museum in Singleton for over 40 years and I have heard many good stories about the work there. Today, however, is my first visit to the facility as I attend the AGM of the Plumbers' Museum and Workshop Trust Managing Committee.

The Trustees and others involved at Singleton have had some challenges over the last year or two, the outcome of which will be a move of the practical demonstration of leadwork from



Singleton to another museum, at Amberley near Arundel. Despite these challenges, it is heartening to hear the positive approach being taken by all involved. Although the practical demonstrations will no longer take place in the Court Barn at Singleton, there will be a static display of the history of plumbing there and I get the opportunity to view this space (the Joiners' Shop) complete with excellent timeline display boards which have been developed by Past Master Edward Hopkinson, President of the Trust.

I look forward to visiting the new facility at Amberley and hope that this type of public display of the skills associated with our craft will continue for many years to come.

BLOG 5

LUNCH WITH WARDENS AND CLERK: 20 NOVEMBER 2017

During the last 12 months, the Master and Wardens along with the Clerk met about once a quarter over lunch and discussed issues relating to the Plumbers' Company. I found these really useful and plan to continue the gatherings during the coming year. Today was the first such gathering for the new "team" and we spend a useful time discussing plans for the year ahead and the future.

BROAD STREET WARD CLUB ANNUAL CIVIC LUNCH: 21 NOVEMBER 2017

As Master of one of the six Livery Companies based in the Broad Street Ward in the City of London, I attend their Annual Civic Lunch today in the Crypt of the Guildhall. Attended by Sheriff Neil Redcliffe and his wife Emma, this is an excellent occasion in a magnificent setting.

PLUMBERS' LADLE DINNER: 21 NOVEMBER 2017

The Ladle Dinner has always been one of my favourite Plumbers' Company functions and tonight is no exception as Liverymen gather to pay tribute to our new Immediate Past Master, Brian Wadsworth. It is a relatively "easy" evening for me with my only duty being to ladle soup to those sitting at the top table- thankfully, no spillages reported although we did have a bit of fun trying to get the lid off the soup tureen. After dinner, the Past Masters' ladles of those in attendance are represented to them in reverse order starting with PM Erica Stary (2015) and ending with PM John Rae (1982). PM Hodgkinson then makes an excellent address acknowledging the significant contribution which Brian and Anne Wadsworth had made to our Company during the year.



Brian is presented with his own Past Master's Ladle by new Liveryman Luke Peters. Brian thanks the Company for the support he had received during his year and for the excellent friendship which the Company offers. My measure of success of the Ladle Dinner is whether Liverymen leave having experienced a relaxed evening and this is certainly the feeling as we depart Cutlers' Hall.

PAN LIVERY BREAKFAST: 22 NOVEMBER 2017

A few of our Past Masters expressed surprise when I told them that the first of my four engagements today starts at 0800am but this is indeed the starting time for the gathering at Mercers' Hall which is attended by some 180 individuals representing over 100 of the 110 Livery Companies. The theme of the session is "collective activity" by Livery Companies and the Lord Mayor, Alderman Charles Bowman, expresses his wholehearted support for the work which is going on.

FESTIVAL OF ST CECILIA: 22 NOVEMBER 2017

A quick dash on the District Line from Mansion House to Victoria enables me to prepare to process with other Masters, Wardens and Clerks into Westminster Cathedral for a celebration of the Patron Saint of music, St Cecilia. This is one of the rare occasions when Masters process wearing their robes and jewels and it is good that once again we have favourable weather. It is good to spot the Mistress Plumber (and indeed a few other Plumbers' Company faces) as we enter the Cathedral. Arranged to support the charity Help Musicians UK, this service has the benefit of the combined choirs of Westminster Cathedral, St Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Cathedral, excellent organ music and a stirring rendition of John Stanley's Trumpet Voluntary in D by renowned trumpeter, Crispian Steele-Perkins (whose name is also likely to appear in next week's Blog!). The choir premieres an anthem composed by Michael Berkeley and British composer Sally Beamish (now based in Scotland) gives the address.

As we process out of the Cathedral, I have the feeling that we have participated in a most appropriate celebration of music.

LORD MAYOR'S BRIEFING: 22 NOVEMBER 2017

While the Mistress Plumber joins other Consorts for a Champagne Tea with the Lady Mayoress at the Guildhall Club, Masters and Clerks make their way to Mansion House for a briefing by the recently installed Lord Mayor. In an upbeat and encouraging address, Alderman Charles Bowman outlines his plans for the coming year and expresses his support for the City's Livery Companies (including reference to the initiatives discussed at the earlier Pan Livery Breakfast).

ACTUARIES' LECTURE: 22 NOVEMBER 2017

For the fourth event of the day, I (and several other Masters) have been at all three of my earlier engagements today head to Staple Inn Hall for the Actuaries' Company Lecture and Supper. This is a most enjoyable occasion with a fascinating lecture on "Dodgy data in the news: how to spot it, and how to stop it" given by Cambridge Professor, Sir David Spiegelhalter. I meet several Past Master Actuaries whom I have known from my working life and have the chance to meet a few other Livery Company Masters for the first time. Although this has been a busy day, the final function is a delightful way to finish it off.

MONUMENT TOOLS: 23 NOVEMBER 2017

Following a chance encounter with Andrew Weiss, Executive Chairman of the British Home Enhancement Trade Association, at a Livery Dinner shortly after my installation, I have the chance to visit the factory of Monument Tools in Hackbridge, Surrey. Taking its name from a family business which sold plumbing tools in the early 20th century from a shop near the Monument to the Great Fire of London, Monument Tools was a generous supporter of the Plumbers' Company bursaries scheme earlier this year



and undertakes many other activities in support of the industry and its training programmes. Today it manufactures a wide range of tools both for the UK and overseas markets. I am given an excellent tour of the factory by Chairman John Collier (who also showed me his incredible museum) and I have useful discussions with John's son, Jonathan (the Company's MD), Andrew Weiss and with the Sales Director, Jamie Fisher. A fascinating visit to a very impressive business.

TAX ADVISERS' MISTRESSES' AND CONSORTS' LUNCHEON: 23 NOVEMBER 2017

While I am in Hackbridge, the Mistress makes her way to Bakers' Hall, not far from the Monument after which Monument Tools is named, for lunch with the consorts of a number of Livery Companies. After lunch, the Beadle to the Worshipful Company of Bakers provides an interesting and witty presentation about the history of the Hall.

BLOG 6

VISIT TO HMS SULTAN, GOSPORT: 27 NOVEMBER 2017

The Plumbers' Company is proud of its affiliations with each of the three Armed Services and it is a pleasure today to visit our Royal Naval affiliation, HMS Sultan at the invitation of the Commanding Officer of the base, Captain Peter Towell, OBE.



We are one of 7 Livery Companies with an association with HMS Sultan and I am joined today by the Plumbers' Clerk along with Masters and representatives of other Companies. Responsible for the training of some 1300 students (in marine and aeronautical engineering), HMS Sultan is an impressive training establishment. During the day we have presentations about the work done here and get to see the training facilities. I even get to board not one, but two, Sea King helicopters! (admittedly, both were out of service and firmly on the ground but I am able to experience the tight accommodation space in which the crews must operate). The final presentation of the day is about naval air power in the context of the new Queen Elizabeth Carrier and it is given by a group of phase 2 students who demonstrate their knowledge and pride in the training which they are undertaking. We leave the base with a very positive feeling about the training which is undertaken here and a feeling that we have met a large group of people who are a real credit to today's Royal Navy.

RED CROSS CHRISTMAS MARKET AT GUILDHALL: 28 NOVEMBER 2017

Where in one place would you find Lightmongers selling torches and Christmas lights, Tallow Chandlers selling candles and nightlights and Gardeners selling plants and flowers? Well, these are just a small number of the stalls which are situated in Guildhall for the annual Red Cross Christmas Market. With over 100 stalls and a range of talks and presentations, this is an excellent event and we see a few familiar faces from the Livery circuit.

[Although the following two engagements are not technically "official", I record them as there are clear links with my role as Master Plumber.]

VISIT TO THE ROYAL HOSPITAL CHELSEA: 29 NOVEMBER 2017

I first met Chelsea Pensioner Ray Pearson when he was clothed as of the Livery of the Plumbers' Company and we visit him today at Chelsea. Providing accommodation and comradeship for former soldiers since it was established in 1692, the Royal Hospital is a wonderful place to visit. Today, Ray takes us "behind the scenes" and we see his berth (one of the relatively recently introduced en-suite rooms). Ray introduces us to his old school friend, John Denton, who is also a Pensioner and we enjoy a lovely lunch with them in the Hospital's Great Hall. This is a very special visit and we appreciate the opportunity which has been provided to us.



SCOTSCARE 352ND ST ANDREW'S DAY FESTIVAL DINNER: 29 NOVEMBER 2017

The Royal Scottish Corporation was established as a charity to assist Scots in London in 1603. In spite of its 400-year history of service in the capital, it isn't too well known and I was first made aware of it some weeks in a meeting with late Sheriff of the City, George Gillon, who has taken an ambassadorial role to raise awareness, especially among Scots living and working in London.

Now operating under the name "ScotsCare", we are guests tonight (with representatives of two other Livery Companies) at the charity's 352nd annual St Andrew's Day Festival Dinner in the Caledonian Club (the night before St Andrew's Day). It is good to meet trustees of the charity and its Chief Executive, Shona Fleming and to hear a progress report from the Chairman, David Guild. It is apparently traditional for the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland to spend a week in London in the week of St Andrew's Day and the current Moderator, the Right Reverend Dr Derek Browning, is the principal guest speaker tonight. It is good to meet the Moderator as Sheila and I attended the same school as him, although we point out to him that we didn't know him at school as he is a little younger than both of us!

MERCERS' LIVERY CONCERT AND SUPPER: 30 NOVEMBER 2017

We heard virtuoso trumpeter Crispian Steel-Perkins in action at Westminster Cathedral last week. Tonight, we have the joy of listening to him accompanied by Leslie Pearson, one of Britain's most distinguished keyboard players, in an excellent concert in Mercers' Hall. Crispian relates the history of the trumpet and demonstrates his skills on a variety of instruments in music ranging from Handel and Haydn to Bacharach and Glenn Miller. A musical treat! The concert is followed by supper at which we have the chance to get to know yet more Livery Company Masters and their consorts.

BLOG 7

COMPANY COMMITTEES: 4 AND 5 DECEMBER 2017

As Master, I am ex-officio a member of the Company's Committees and this week sees the start of the current cycle of Committee meetings. At the Finance Committee we review the draft annual accounts for the year to 29 September (which look to be in good order). The Education Committee continues its review of awards and bursaries and agrees a proposal to

put to the Court regarding the Company's silver medal (which has not been awarded for some time). The Technical Committee discusses the Annual Lecture and receives a report on the WaterSafe Installer Scheme. Finally, the Social Committee reviews recent events and discusses arrangements for forthcoming events and visits.

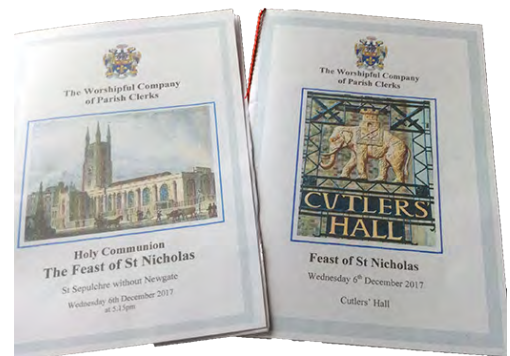
These are a couple of busy days, but it is encouraging to note progress on quite several issues.

ST MAGNUS THE MARTYR CHURCH: 6 DECEMBER 2017

In advance of the Company Carol Service next week, I pop into St Magnus the Martyr church this morning for a short practice on the organ. I am delighted to meet the organist, John Eady, and receive excellent guidance from him on the instrument.

PARISH CLERKS' ST NICHOLAS DAY EVENTS: 6 DECEMBER 2017

Although, by choice, not a Livery Company, the Worshipful Company of Parish Clerks can trace its history back to 1274. Its patron saint is St Nicholas and tonight, on the Feast of St Nicholas, we gather in St Sepulchre without Newgate for a moving service of Holy Communion conducted by Reverend David Ingall and the Right Reverend Ric Thorpe, Bishop of Islington. The church's choir makes a significant and very musical contribution to the service.



On conclusion of the church service, we process, led by the Psalm Drummers (who had also participated in the service) to nearby Cutlers' Hall for a reception and dinner at which I am one of only two Livery Company Masters in attendance. Bishop Ric is the principal speaker and gives a most encouraging report about the establishment of new churches in London. Master of the Parish Clerks, Steve Plumb, conducts the evening with both dignity and humour and it is absolutely fascinating to witness the Parish Clerks cross-toasting each other- something which I haven't seen before and which is probably unique to this gathering. I feel privileged to have been invited to this special event.

BLOG 8

MEETING WITH THE COMPANY ALMONER: 11 DECEMBER 2017

Having played a part in the introduction of the post of Almoner just over a year ago, it is good to meet up with our Almoner, Liveryman Caroline Walsh, for lunch and a chat at Woolwich Arsenal today.

Caroline was one of a number of Liverymen who volunteered to do something to assist the Company when we undertook a membership survey in early 2016. Her role involves keeping in touch with Liverymen who celebrate significant birthdays, are ill or have experienced

bereavement. It is an important role and one which is so much appreciated by the recipients of her messages.

COMMITTEE MEETING: 12 DECEMBER 2017

The Freedom and Livery Committee is the Plumber's senior Committee and today's meeting discusses a wide range of important topics including future succession and the badges which are worn by Liverymen and officers of the Company. It is good to see progress being made on several issues- including some which will be referred to the next Court meeting towards the end of January 2018.

COMPANY CAROL SERVICE: 12 DECEMBER 2017



The Plumbers' Carol Service has often been described as "the perfect start to the Christmas season" and, ignoring the fact that the Oxford Street lights have been shining brightly since last month, tonight's celebration of Christmas does seem to be appropriate. It is well attended by Liverymen, their families and some guests (including our two new Chelsea Pensioner friends, Ray and John who look resplendent in their scarlets).

It is lovely to see the Company Chaplain, Liveryman Father Philip Warner back in action after a period of ill health and we continue to wish Philip all good wishes in the recovery process. The Busheyhall String Quartet kindly offered to play as the congregation gathered (over glasses of mulled wine) before the service and again after the service during the buffet supper. Their contribution is much appreciated. Organist John Eady is in good form as indeed are the choir under the leadership of Lottie Bagnall. Their rendition of "Infant Holy, Infant Lowly" from the chancel (rather than their usual home in the organ loft) goes down well. The Master Plumber even played a short organ voluntary as the offering was being undertaken.



All in all, this is a very happy evening and a perfect way to round off 2017 for the current Master and Mistress, this being their last official engagement of the year.

This will be the last blog of the year and it is anticipated that the next edition will be posted on or around 12 January 2018 by which time the official calendar is due to have restarted.

BLOG: 9

MASONS' EPIPHANY LUNCHEON: 9 JANUARY 2018

After a break over Christmas and New Year, it is good to attend the Masons' Company Epiphany Luncheon today in Mercers' Hall (my third visit to this Hall since Installation). The Luncheon, which is attended by Court members and Liverymen of the Company along with only three visiting Masters (all from construction-related Livery Companies) is good and we hear a rather inspirational after-lunch address by James Timpson OBE (CEO of a well-known high street company) who talks about the company's approach



to its staff (known as colleagues), 10% of whom had been recruited from prison. This is a moving and encouraging address which makes a mark on those in attendance. This is my second Masons' Company event and I am impressed, once again, by their magnificent Company tie, which must be one of the most colourful examples on the Livery circuit!

PLASTERERS' MASTERS' AND CLERKS' DINNER: 9 JANUARY 2018



After my "holiday" from Livery meals, the year starts in earnest with lunch AND dinner on the same today. Tonight, I return to Plaisterers' Hall, near the Museum of London, for their Dinner for Masters and Clerks. If ever a Livery Hall showcased the craft of its Livery Company, then Plaisterers' Hall is one of the finest examples. During the evening, the Master, Richard Hanney, encouraged the large number in attendance to focus their attention on the beautifully plastered ceiling which was the focus of a light show.

This evening, representatives of the Plaisterers' Company are joined by no fewer than 51 visiting Masters/Prime Wardens/Upper Bailiff and other guests. An excellent after dinner address is given by the Prime Warden of the Goldsmiths' Company (and that Company's first lady in that post), Mrs Judith Cobham-Lowe OBE and we are entertained by the talented music quintet, Apollo 5 (which is supported by the Company). Add to the mix excellent company at the reception and the dinner and the feeling on departure is that the Plaisterers have heralded in the New Year in style.

LUNCH WITH PLUMBERS' COMPANY STAFF: 10 JANUARY 2018

The Plumbers' Company is served by a small, but dedicated team of staff and when we see them all together, they are usually busy at one of our Company events. It is therefore good today to meet them all over a relaxed post-Christmas lunch. The Mistress and I enjoy our time with Pieter the Clerk, Peter the Beadle, Sharon and Debbie.



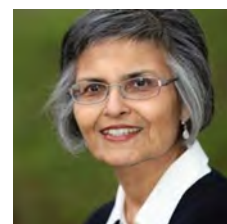
CATCH-UP WITH CLERK AT COMPANY OFFICE: 11 JANUARY 2018

Although it is possible to do most of the business associated with my role as Master by email and phone, it is always useful to have an occasional face-to-face meeting with the Clerk and I visit the office this morning to have a catch-up, including discussing the arrangements for the Court meeting which will take place on Wednesday 24 January 2018.

BLOG: 10

MEETING TO DISCUSS ANNUAL LECTURE: 18 JANUARY 2018

I first met Professor Mala Rao in her office in Hyderabad, India where she was the Founding Director of India's first Institute of Public Health. Mala, who is now an Assistant on the Court of the Plumbers' Company, has kindly agreed to deliver this year's Annual Plumbers' Company Lecture on 21 May 2018 and I meet her today at the British Medical Association's premises in Tavistock Square with Liveryman Graham



Setterfield to carry out some preliminary planning on the title and content of Mala's lecture. We have a wide-ranging and useful discussion which I am sure will lead to a good Annual Lecture.

GROCCERS' COMPANY LIVERY LUNCHEON: 18 JANUARY 2018

After a quick journey on the Hammersmith and City Line, I arrive in time for the reception prior to this event in the magnificent Groccers' Hall. When I first attended an event here, I noticed a preponderance of camels in the Hall and wondered what the link was between these ships of the desert and grocery. The answer was quite simple- the Groccers started as



pepperers or traders in spices and the camel was the usual mode of transportation. The Hall has been based on the current site since 1426 and at lunch the Master Groccer explained that the Bank of England (across the road) is built on what was once the Groccers' Company orchard! The event, which has been arranged to showcase the facilities offered at the Hall, is very enjoyable. I leave having noticed not only the camels but also the cloves which appear on the carpets!