

THE MASTER'S BLOG 19

CHARTERED SURVEYORS' DINNER: MONDAY 19 MARCH 2018

My first engagement of the week is to attend the Worshipful Company of Chartered Surveyors' Spring Livery Dinner in the magnificent setting of Merchant Taylors' Hall on Threadneedle Street. It is a very happy occasion with many members of the Chartered Surveyors Company and their guests (including several members of the Master's family, one of whom is his mother who has travelled from the west of Ireland).

Merchant Taylors' Hall has a large bell and it is rung several times during the evening to herald an announcement from the Company's Beadle.

An excellent meal is followed by superb entertainment by the Meraki String Quartet who play a beautiful setting of Saint Saens' Danse Macabre followed by a medley of Scottish tunes.

SCIENTIFIC INSTRUMENT MAKERS' LIVERY LUNCH: TUESDAY 20 MARCH 2018

Today, I make my way to Glaziers' Hall on the south side of London Bridge to attend the Scientific Instrument Makers' Informal Lunch. I meet several familiar Livery Masters and Clerks and enjoy the company of members of the Company, including their Master, Professor Ron Summers at lunch.

After the professional musical entertainment last night, today's lunch is followed by music performed by pupils from the Charles Dickens Primary School, none of whom has been playing a musical instrument for more than 1 months. Their performance is simply charming, and all the pupils look as if they are enjoying the experience.

PLUMBERS' ANNUAL BANQUET: WEDNESDAY 21 MARCH 2018

Having attended many Plumbers' Banquets in the Egyptian Room at Mansion House over the last 25 years or so, tonight it is my turn to greet the guests at the head of the receiving line and to take the central spot at the top table. This event is always one of the highlights of the year and I am not disappointed with the outcome.

In the absence of the Lord Mayor (currently in Hong Kong), the Lord Mayor Locum Tenens is Dame Fiona Woolf who does a double shift in responding to the Civic Toast and then proposing the Toast to the Guests in her role as Upper Warden of the Company. Fiona likens the principal guests to different fish, much to the amusement of the assembled company and the guests so being described. My principal speaker is Lord Martin O'Neill of Clackmannan who delivers an amusing yet challenging speech which includes a reference to the challenges facing SMEs in the building engineering services sector.

I am particularly pleased to be surrounded by members of my family at the Banquet and I believe that they all enjoyed this rather special occasion.

There is a positive buzz in the air as Liverymen and guests chat over the stirrup cup at the end of the evening and I depart with a good feeling about the Banquet.

PRISON ADVICE AND CARE TRUST RECEPTION: THURSDAY 22 MARCH 2018

I am in the Judges' Dining Room of the Central Criminal Court (The Old Bailey) tonight for a reception honouring volunteers for the charity PACT, which assists those involved in court proceedings and their families. The evening is opened by His Hon. Nicholas Hilliard, QC, the Recorder of London and we hear about the valuable work undertaken by the PACT team of

volunteers (and professional staff). The mother of a young man who was facing charges (and is currently in prison) spoke movingly of the help she and her family had received from PACT. Some of the long-serving volunteers receive special awards.

After the presentation we are split into groups for guided tours of The Old Bailey. The Master Water Conservator and I are in a group led by His Honour Michael Topolski QC who provides a fascinating insight into the workings of this important Court. As well as being shown Court rooms, we see part of the original Roman Wall, a shard of glass embedded in a concrete wall to mark the bombing of the building in 1973 and the incredible Great Hall with the domed ceiling which is underneath the iconic statue of Justice on top of the building. The Court in which we spend most of the time will, we understand, be the room in which the "Parsons Green bomber" is to be sentenced tomorrow.