

The Master's occasional Blog

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.