

The Master's occasional Blog

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

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



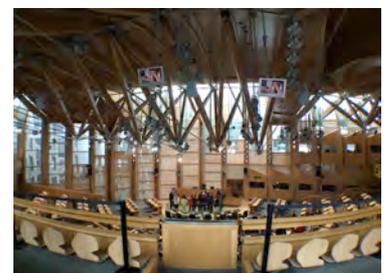
we would be more successful at them if only we were well under 20! After an excellent meal, it was back for bed. The following day we were divided (randomly) between 4 buses which went round the various sites on our agenda in different orders. Ours started at the Iron Bridge itself, after which we went to the Iron Museum and the first furnace where the iron was smelted. Later we visited the china and porcelain museum, the tile museum, and Blists Hill was where we finished our day of sightseeing before changing for our evening meal. Some of us stayed up afterwards till 3 or more in the morning..... One said

in the morning "my head is ok, but my body definitely is not"! (And, no, it wasn't me.) After breakfast, the first item of the day was meet up to organise our year group and elect its first chairman and a basic starting committee. Then it was either return home or make one's own way to the costumes museum before lunch and return home. A great weekend. And well worth a visit (or several).

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

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

Finally, I spend Friday and Saturday in Edinburgh for Fiona's Master's weekend for the Solicitors. It is the last item for her year as Master Solicitor as the AGM was a few days ago at Tallow Chandlers' Hall. We had a very good timing visiting Holyrood, Scottish Parliament, Signet Library, Museum of Scotland, as well as more general sightseeing, and had a very interesting whisky tasting at



the Scottish Malt Whisky Society. And on Sunday it appeared to be Plumbers' day at Glyndebourne. I went with PM John Lockyer and Anita, and we also met the UW Brian and Anne. I remain unsure as to how I kept awake for the opera, which was the *Meistersingers* (and for those of you who don't know Wagner's prolixity, very long), having risen at 4.30 am to catch my flight to Gatwick. But we agreed it was a very good way to spend a Sunday afternoon and evening.

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

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

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



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



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

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

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

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

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



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

