

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 Enginuity [sic]. Here we were able to play with some fun machines whilst we had a pre-supper drink. I was told that



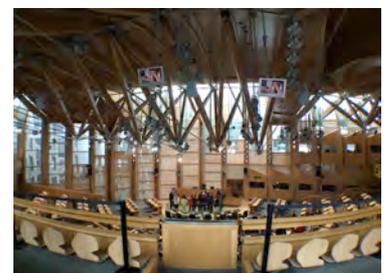
we would be more successful at them if only we were well under 20! After an excellent meal, it was back for bed. The following day we were divided (randomly) between 4 buses which went round the various sites on our agenda in different orders. Ours started at the Iron Bridge itself, after which we went 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.

Master's Blog 26

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.

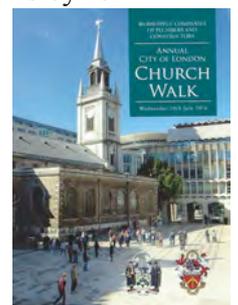
The tidying up involved trips to Peel, Laxey, a pub by the quayside in Douglas and another restaurant in Douglas to settle the timings and arrangements for lunch and/or dinner and pay deposits; to Manx Inspirations from whom I had ordered some commemorative mugs (several times as there were a number 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.



Master's Blog 27 Here's what I have been up to since the return from the IOM. We started with committees and also several sessions with Paul on various admin matters, then a court meeting – this was the Election Court, and as a result we now have a Master Elect – Brian Wadsworth, Upper Warden Elect as Robert Burgon and Renter Warden Elect, Fiona Woolf. So I see the end of my year is looming rapidly! After the end of the court meeting we held a court dinner at Pewterers' where our principal guest was the Non-Aldermanic Sheriff, Christine Rigden. Christine is also an aleconner, and I persuaded her to do an ale con as well as a speech. I had bought beer especially from the IOM for this purpose, and Paul borrowed a backless bench from her (essential, as the beer needs to be poured onto it before she sits in it for a while to see what the results are). Fortunately it stayed fine that evening so we were all outside in Pewterers' garden to watch the procedures, which she also explained, giving also the historical background. Other events include my regular date with other Masters in 2016 at the City Livery club for the table d'hote lunch and exchange of views, and attending speech day at St Paul's Cathedral School where the pupils played and sang brilliantly, as well as winning lots of prizes. I was also invited to Sandhurst, which we visited via Bisley for lunch in the Artists Rifles Clubhouse. It was a very hot day but really interesting to make the visit – the Master Glover is a former lecturer at the Military College. I later discovered that a PM Fueller had been shooting in the competition being run that day at Bisley. We had seen them in the distance and had wondered what was happening. The Plumbers' and Constructors' city church walk for fellow Masters and Clerks has also now taken place – again a very hot day. We visited 10 churches in two groups (the 11th elected not to be open, despite having assured our guides that it would be – another time perhaps). Our guides were very good indeed, and we also



had an excellent lunch at St Lawrence Jewry. I have had two visits to the Old Bailey, both of which were essentially as the guest of the Non-Aldermanic Sheriff, Christine Rigden. The first was an



excellent small dinner and the second was a sabrage event – you will have seen the picture of John Carnaby decapitating a bottle of champagne with a cork – well, lots of others there did the same, including yours truly. It makes drinking champagne even more fun! I enjoyed another alcohol-based session this time at Vintners, courtesy Distillers, where I attended an excellent Master Class on Armagnac, and then was let loose on some 171 bottles of various spirits all of which had won gold medal awards for 2016. There were some 250 of us there, mainly Masters and IPMs plus other halves and clerks. Most interesting event and I learned a lot - and no, i didn't try all of them, suspect if i had i would not

be here to tell the day! The final two events to report were first the 4th in the series of lectures organised by the Chartered Architects on rebuilding London which in this lecture concentrated on rebuilding since WWII and second the Plumbers' golf day at New Zealand Golf Club. The golfers had arrived early in the morning for their rounds of golf and I arrived around lunchtime. They had all had a very good time and it is even possible that we will have some new members as a result. All credit to the organisers. I am now in the country for August, when by and large little happens in the City, though there are at least 3 installations – Carpenters, Tylers and Bricklayers, and Wax Chandlers. So back in September for the final six weeks before I hand over. Have a very good summer everyone.

Master's blog 28

Summer is over! After a jolly month in the country, I returned to Town for the Great Fire anniversary weekend. The first event was a reception organised by Artichoke (which laid on the spectacular commemoration events over the weekend) at the Royal Exchange. Here they outlined the excitements to come, which included tea at the Mansion House, courtesy of the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress, the following day. There were then street events over the weekend, including the ceremonial burning of a model of old City buildings, including Old St Paul's, as the last event on the Sunday evening.



I also had fish and chip lunch with my regular group of other Masters on the Friday and was treated to lunch at Ironmongers on Monday by the Stewards, a most noble and generous gesture, which was much appreciated. I was even given a splendid bottle of gin from Ian Puddick's Old Bakery which we sampled at the weekend – mmmm -- excellent!

I was treated to two lectures – the first a brilliant talk on energy from Steve Holliday now retired from being CE at the National Grid, arranged by the Fuellers, and the second a fascinating evening at the London Museum where we first went round the Great Fire exhibition, which is on till April and is well worth a visit or two (I shall probably go back later in the year), and then had a talk from one of the Museum curators on glass, especially glass recovered from the fire, and on display at the exhibition. That was organised by the Glassellers and I discovered (but you probably know already) that lead glass was promoted and developed by Ravenscroft in the 1600s in Henley on Thames and sold exclusively to the Glassellers.

I also went on another Great Fire Walk, arranged by my Past Masters' group.

That apart, I have been getting ready for the next round of committees, been into the office, and also attended a meeting at the Tax Advisers.

5 more weeks to go, then we have a new Master – something to which we should all look forwards.

Master's Blog 29

This week I started with an Ironmongers' lunch where I met up with a number of past masters from other companies. Then we had a classic committee Tuesday with meetings all day, but fortunately I did not need to be at the first one which deals with next year's social events. I gather there were some celebrations there as empty champagne bottles emerged....

On the Wednesday I went with my ward club for a tour of St Pancras station, ending with a splendid afternoon tea at the hotel. I didn't need to eat anything for the rest of the day! In fact, we nearly all took doggy bags with us. Despite not needing to eat I then attended a really interesting event at the Lancaster Hotel, courtesy our liveryman Prem Goyall, where awards were made to those who had made outstanding contributions in the charity area over the previous year.



My week ended with an escape to Guernsey for a long weekend, this time as a guest of the After 8 group of Past Masters. The weather stayed fine, we toured the island, ate extremely well (and often – I think diets of bread and water are called for in a few weeks time), took a boat to Sark where we (inevitably) travelled round by horse and cart, visiting beautiful gardens, and a museum of artifacts collected from the occupation during the 2nd world war. We also visited an alleged hospital facility which the occupying forces had built, largely by slave labour, underground in the hard rock of Guernsey – it was cold and damp, it is impossible to imagine that anyone might get well in there. Rather sinisterly, the records on the reasons for its creation are being withheld till 2045. A good time was had by all and I have returned refreshed for the final onslaught before handing over on October 19. Don't forget to come to the installation....

Master's Blog 30

The main events have been the Autumn Festival and the Lord Mayor's Election. A huge amount of work goes into planning and organising livery functions starting with the Hall booking many months before. Menus have to be agreed, speakers have to be found, guests have to be decided and then invited, prices have to be negotiated, table plans arranged, flowers to be organised, pour memoires sent out and so on. The list is endless. I decided we should have a pianist I have been watching for some years so I arranged that but we had to structure the timing carefully. The Festival being a family event, on finding our speaker's wife was unable to be present, we asked if there was anyone else he would like to bring. The rabbit he pulled out of his hat turned out his co-sheriff from his shrieval year whom he persuaded (with my agreement having sworn me to secrecy) to share the billing. Those who were there will agree that it produced an excellent result. And our pianist was superb. You could have heard a pin drop from the audience which was spellbound with her wonderfully commanding playing.



The Election Day started for me at Guildhall at 8am where I joined other Masters, Members of the Livery Committee and others for a splendid breakfast organised by the Chef and Butler. Shortly before 10 I went down to the Crypt to meet Peter our Beadle who helped me with the gown and badge. Then we were

lined up in reverse order of precedence and walked to the service at St Lawrence Jewry. After we had been settled in, the City Dignitaries arrived and the service took place. Then it was time to go back to the Guildhall for the Election, etc. Afterwards we, the Plumbers, lunched at Painter-Stainers with some 9 livery companies. Yours truly gave the speech of thanks and toast to our hosts. A very happy event.

This week has also been the 1st week of Goldsmiths' Fair. If you've never been you've missed a real treat and there is another week to go of 75 more jewellers and silversmiths - including some very affordable items. It is fascinating to see the wonderful designs and workmanship.