



From the Master Elect

Dr Peter T J Rumley
MA DPhil MA FSA MCI/A



To be elected Master of one of the ancient and distinguished City of London Livery Companies for the ensuing year is, indeed, an outstanding honour; particularly one which has its roots stretching back beyond 1365. As an historian, I value our Company's illustrious heritage, and one which I will certainly uphold during my year as Master. My wife, Bridget, and I very much look forward to the pleasure it will give us in advancing the aims of the Company and sustaining good companionship throughout the Company and the wider Livery during our progress.

There has been a series of celebrated Masters many of whom have been Serjeant Plumbers to a succession of Kings and Queens since the fourteenth century. Certainly, one Master, John Embree, became Surveyor of the King's Works in the seventeenth century, the only craftsmen ever to do so. No Master Carpenter, no Painter-Stainer, no Mason, no Tyler and Bricklayer, no Plaisterer or Paviour ever achieved it, but a Plumber did. Mind you, he nearly had his head chopped off!

But of course, our most recent eminent Master is undoubtedly our present Master, Dame Fiona Woolf. The second ever lady to serve as The Right Honourable Lord Mayor of the City of London in its 700-year-old history and second lady Master of the Plumbers' Company. I suspect no one will ever achieve that distinction again! It is a tough job for me to follow in the footsteps of such a distinguished Master. I thank Fiona and Nicholas, her Consort, most sincerely, for being thoroughly supportive in guiding me through the vagaries of the City and providing solid advice. They have had a bountiful commitment to the Company and for that we, as a Company, are truly appreciative. I could not have had a better Master to follow.

In the past year we have had inspiring visits from the depths of the London Underground, to the magnificence of the Chelsea Flower Show to the delights of York and a splendid dinner between the Royal trains, not to mention the glorious Summer Festival in the gardens of Stationers' Hall. Highlights for me in the past year were to see my good friend Jools Holland admitted as an Honorary Liveryman by our Master and then our Almoner, Caroline Walsh, abseiling down a city skyscraper. What a Year! The Senior Steward, Daniel Flowers, and other hard-working Stewards of the Social Committee have served the Master radiantly. We thank them for the pleasure they have given the Livery in the past year.

I am also fortunate to have had an excellent Renter Warden, Nick Jones, whose company I have enjoyed, especially his accountant's droll humour which keeps one sane. We have had much reorganising of the office in recent years and it is my aim this year to see a period of stability and consolidation with our new learned Clerk, Adrian Mumford, with whom it is an absolute delight to work. Adrian is already a great asset. Our own Court Assistant Paul Nash has held the office together in a time of difficult need and we are truly grateful for his powerful work – thank you. Sharon Sibthorpe equally works with invaluable commitment and dedication, as does Debbie Abergil, who is excellent in keeping the books in order.

Our Beadle, Peter Thompson, preserves us in order as a Whiffler. He is the Commanding Officer of our processions executing his duties with aplomb – what would we do without you? We thank you all deeply for the work you have done over the year. Other climaxes of the year included the recognition by the Court of Past Master John Rae for his distinguished service to the Company, Peter Cheesman receiving the St Michael's Medal, the move to Amberley Museum of the Plumbers' Workshop and Paul Nash developing the amazing website.

We are as relevant today in our relationship with the plumbing industry as we were in the fourteenth century in all its related guises in the transference of water. Wood and stone have given way to lead, lead has given way to cast iron and copper, and copper to plastic. Perhaps there is another material that could be discovered which is not so harmful to the environment as plastic. Our Technical Committee chaired by Richard Soper is committed to the dynamic landscape of the industry, education and apprenticeships, with WaterSafe going from strength to strength. Of note, our Charity's name has received record donations: a greater focus on giving has followed, such as Bursaries to help the training of young plumbers (sponsored by Monument Tools) and to assist with the drainage and plumbing in Africa through Village by Village; and there are still more specific responsibilities to do, such as funds for a new roof for our Company church St Magnus the Martyr. It's our church so please give - however little will be highly valued. Further details to be announced.

The Membership Committee, chaired by Assistant Paul Flatt, has seen the Livery membership grow, and we have our Corporate members nurtured through Past Masters Nick Gale and Steve Hodgkinson, who have proved this to be an impressive success. We also very much welcome our Corporate Members to be integrated into Company. Our Strategy meeting earlier in the year proved the Company to be A1 and started to formulate plans for the next five years, but we must not be complacent.

The year inexorably moves on. The Master's 2020 weekend to The Cornish Riviera, St Mawes, starts on the afternoon of Sunday 10th May with a visit to the enchanting Hotel Endsleigh (Olga Polizzi) in the Tamar Valley and the finest example of a Humphry Repton garden followed by afternoon tea. Then onto the magical fishing village of St Mawes and two nights at Olga Polizzi's other boutique Hotel Tresanton (for our exclusive use), leaving on Tuesday 12th May 2020. We will visit the gardens of Caerhays Castle, its National Collection of Magnolias, and a tour of the house followed by a drink's reception with the owner. We will also be sailing on the Duchess of Cornwall to a destination to be announced.

Further visits are planned in the year to the Royal Chapels at St James's Palace, The Society of Antiquaries, Saltwood Castle, The Royal Gunpowder Mills and Restoration House with its Renaissance Water Garden, Rochester. Also, our Hon. Liveryman Jools Holland has invited us to his private residence Cooling Castle and garden, Kent. And finally, there will be a private visit to the State Rooms at Buckingham Palace around Christmas. I much look forward to working with my Senior Steward, Clive Sofaer, and his merry band. It is an exciting and varied programme and not to be missed.

Above all, it is our comradeship, giving and working together that counts. And don't forget to check the smart new website regularly – there is much going on and things you can join in as a Liverymen and get involved! A thousand-mile march starts with one step.

To all the Livery, both Bridget and I wish you a thoroughly joyous and fun year to come.

Peter