



A letter from the Master

October 2020

In the ordinary scheme of things this would have been my final Report to the Court. Clearly, unprecedented tragic world events have overtaken my year, and, by the courtesy of the Court, I have been elected for a further year for which I am most graciously thankful. Given the vagaries of this pernicious Covid-19, I am uncertain how next year will unfold. It could be as barren as the past year.

I have had regular meetings with our learned Clerk, Adrian, to keep the Company business ticking over, Sharon has been furloughed, but is due back shortly, and Debbie keeps on top of the finances. Our Renter Warden, Paul Nash, continues to develop our website assuredly, and our Upper Warden, Nick Jones, provides us with dry insights into life.

There have been next to no events for me to represent the Company, and certainly no social events. This is not only true for our Company but all the Livery Companies. Even if there were events arranged very few people would attend given the risk factor of congregating.

The election of the Lord Mayor at Guildhall was the first event I attended since lockdown. It was an extraordinary event. I felt I was making history. Only about sixty Livery Companies were present, although all were invited. Chairs were spaced out at intervals like an examination hall. Everyone wore a face mask. The only gowns worn were by the Lord Mayor and Sheriffs. They processed down the centre led by the Sword Bearer in a suit. The sword and mace were already in place on the dais in front of the Aldermen. Sadly, no grand procession of Masters and Ward Beadles and City officials in their colourful robes. And certainly, no celebratory Livery lunches. The election was over very quickly, and we were all instructed to leave immediately and not to meet outside. I exchanged pleasantries with a few Masters I knew and then passed on to Carpenters' Hall to meet our Clerk for a working lunch at the George and Vulture, a chop house that had been on the site since 1144. The City was empty and only two tables were taken in the whole time we there. It reminded me of the disturbing 1966 documentary film *The War Game*, portraying the aftermath of a nuclear attack with eerily empty streets. It was screened in our local church hall at the time.

Other events included the virtual, delightful and jolly wine tasting evening. What fun that was! This was followed by the unveiling of the Plumbers' Company lead planter at RHS Wisley. The planter was made by Liveryman Peter Cheesman and Liveryman Eddie McCourt. The idea came from Past Master John Lockyer, who was also in attendance along with Andrew Jasper and Emma Allen of the RHS. The IPM, Dame Fiona Woolf, who facilitated the idea with the RHS, made a separate visit given the C-19 rules.

We now look forward to the virtual Cheese tasting and the Company Lecture. So far over 200 people have signed up for the lecture and I am grateful to Court Assistant Richard Soper for arranging this with the CIPHE. And there events planned for 2021 on the Calendar of Events card enclosed with this letter.

We are unable to plan with firmness for future events and there appears to be little on the horizon. One glimmer of hope is a gala dinner in March 2021 with our Liveryman Jools Holland at Fishmongers' Hall. This is a joint effort, to raise funds, in the spirit of the Livery movement, for a new roof for our Company church St Magnus-the-Martyr. Whist planning is progressing, the evening is more than likely to be postponed until later in the year, providing all the planets are in line.

Mistress Plumber had only two events. Bridget's highlight was a visit to the Clink Restaurant at Brixton Prison for afternoon tea and later a City Consorts' virtual lunch of 70 and attended by the Lady Mayoress.

There is no doubt this had been a remarkable if somewhat sober year. However, how the winter will unfold is anyone's guess as we are all on shifting sands.

I am sorry not to be able to provide you with a thrilling statement of what a fabulous year I have, but sadly that is not the case.

I wish the Court and the Livery a joyous Christmas and a happy New Year. Keep safe and secure, and do not risk travel unnecessarily. As one well known person said, 'tomorrow will be a good day'.

Peter