

News from the Master

I had the pleasure to attend The Broad Street Ward Club's Annual Civic Luncheon at Mansion House on Monday 20th November. As residents of the Broad Street Ward the Plumbers are invited each year to this large-scale event, with a seat on the top table for the Master!

Normally held at Guildhall, this year it took place in the splendid surroundings of Mansion House to commemorate Prof Michael Mainelli, Alderman of Broad Street Ward, becoming Lord Mayor on 10th November. Professor Mainelli spoke at the lunch with great good humour on the pre-eminence of Broad Street Ward Club amongst all the Ward Clubs!

Other attendees from the Plumbers included John Wilson, Piers Mizen (both members of Broad Street Ward Club) and Mike Patton. Piers and his partner Sharon Stockdale were accompanied by my wife, The Mistress Plumber Kathy, as their guest. The Plumbers' Clerk, Adrian Mumford, also attended this memorable event. We were all welcomed with great fellowship by the Ward Club members.



I was very pleased to attend The Plastering & Interior Trades Training Awards luncheon on 21st November hosted by The Plaisterers' Company at their impressive Hall. On a relaxed but memorable occasion with a mix of livery and non-livery people (many of the latter being practicing professionals) it was warming to see the pride felt by Award Winners Of The Year in categories such as Apprentice, Student, Mentor, College/Training Provider, and Lifetime Achiever.

These are such important occasions for trades like plastering and plumbing where the craft can be promoted and great performance amongst practitioners, many of them early years of their careers, can be celebrated. All those present who had reached the shortlists will have been excited to see the awards being presented by the new Lord Mayor, Alderman Professor Michael Mainelli, attending with the Lady Mayoress, Elisabeth Mainelli.

Speeches were made by the Plaisterers' Master, Tony Mitchell and by the President of FIS (Finishes & Interiors Sector) Philip Brown. The two organisations collaborate to manage and judge the awards programme that aims to recognise achievement and excellence in plastering and interior systems. In their speeches they spoke about the importance of giving recognition (including in the City) in areas of expertise that can take years to acquire, at a time when bringing sufficient people into the industry is a challenge.

Also at the lunch were the Masters of the Engineers, Paviers, Tylers & Bricklayers, and the Chief Executive of the Federation of Master Builders. Alderman Alison Gowman was also present, a Past Master of the Plaisterers. We took an opportunity to talk about the Plumbers' future contribution to the Livery Climate Action (LCAG) which she leads; a photo of the two of us is attached.



I had the pleasure, alongside our Renter Warden, Sandra Raine and our Clerk, Adrian Mumford to attend the moving Festival of St. Cecilia Service, a 'Celebration of Music', at Westminster Cathedral on 22nd Nov 2023 in support of the charity Help Musicians, to which the Plumbers have made a donation. This saw Masters, Wardens and Clerks from about 40 Livery Companies process into the Cathedral to join a packed congregation.

We heard a beautiful series of musical contributions and Bible readings, and joined in congregational hymns and prayers. The service was led by Fr John Scott. Some highlights included The Combined Choirs of Westminster Cathedral, St Paul's Cathedral, and Westminster Abbey singing a stunning motet composed by Joseph Phibbs especially for this service; the Prelude from JS Bach's Cello Suite No. 1 played by the young soloist Margarita Balanas; a Testimony by actor and singer Miriam-Teak Lee on the support she has received from Help Musicians; and the address by Monsignor Philip Whitmore. The three of us were honoured to be present for this special annual event.



Joined by our Clerk Adrian Mumford, I attended the 'Lord Mayor's Annual Address to the Livery' at Mansion House on 22nd November. This was the formal opportunity for the new Lord Mayor, Alderman Professor Michael Mainelli, to set out his plans for the year ahead, in front of a large audience, including the great majority of Livery Company Masters.

In an engaging speech the Lord Mayor spoke about success in recent years to promote cross-livery initiatives in areas like communications, philanthropic endeavour, and knowledge sharing. He gave examples: the Lord Mayor's Appeal, City & Guilds of London Institute, Livery Companies Skills Council, No Going Back, Livery Climate Action Group, Pollinating London Together, Livery Charity Chairs Group, and Pan Livery Pro-Bono Interest Group. The Plumbers Company are involved with several of these presently and we work to raise our involvement.

Prof Mainelli also spoke about the 'Connect to Prosper' theme for his year and the many initiatives it comprises, including the Knowledge Miles Lecture Series, the Coffee Colloquies (workshops linked to the UN's seventeen Sustainable Development Goals), and Ethical AI. He aims to promote London's unique position as 'The World's Coffee House' where exchanges on key global challenges (including climate change) can be debated and solutions found. The Plumbers are involved with both the Lecture Series and the Coffee Colloquies.

Finally, the Lord Mayor spoke about the challenge for the Livery movement to expand its reach to a younger more diverse membership, supported by better communications and technology. He believes the City and the Livery need to work on "how we present ourselves", and to be on the front foot in projecting our uniqueness and value in uncomplicated ways.

After the address there was time for refreshments and animated discussion on the year ahead.

I was pleased to attend the Water Conservators' thought provoking 'City Water Debate' at Bakers' Hall, 22 November 2023, alongside two of the Plumbers' Court Assistants, Michael Cooper and Martin Shouler, and our Clerk, Adrian Mumford. Around a hundred people from the water and environment sectors, and the Livery movement, attended this discussion on the financing of the water sector titled "Water Liquidity – How to Finance the Required Investment in the UK Water Sector to 2050". The six speakers gave a powerful perspective of the huge challenges we face in the UK.

Key points of the presentations and the subsequent discussion included:

- huge investment in the sector is needed to meet our environmental and water supply targets (perhaps £600bn by 2050).
- whilst private sector funding has historically been available, recent uncertainty in the sector means this is no longer the case. This is aggravated by the recent steep rise in interest rates
- government funding is limited and the water sector will have to compete with other priorities (notably health and possibly defence); hence the water sector will be reliant on significant private investment
- all of us must work to reduce per capita water consumption from 145 to a projected 110 litres per day
- there is some scope for more 'nature based solutions', that are less carbon intensive, centred on river catchment areas
- the sector can compete for government funding but significant private investment is required
- there is a need to change the governance and regulation of the sector
- the sector needs more pricing stability and consistency
- all parties need to provide more, better and open communications
- the current structure/governance of the water sector is a product of the 1990s; this construct may need to change to meet future challenges

The speakers were:

- Baroness Brown of Cambridge DBE (Chair - Adaptation Committee of the Climate Change Committee)
- Graham Edwards (Founder and Director of Castle Water)
- Dominic Nash (Equity Research - Barclays UK)
- Cathryn Ross (Interim Co-Chief Executive - Thames Water)
- Colin Skellett OBE (Chief Executive - Wessex Water)
- Tim Williams (Director - Stantec)

The first 'short social' of my year as Master saw 27 Company members and guests join Kathy and me on a visit to MCC's Lord's Cricket Ground in St John's Wood on 30th November.

On a crisp morning our day began with warming coffee & pastries in the Lord's Tavern, just outside the famous Grace Gates. The Tour began in the Pavilion Long Room, instantly recognisable to cricket fans around the world. With a magnificent view of the pitch as our backdrop, our Guide entertained us with a short history of the Club, touching upon the architecture of this Grade II listed building and highlighting the pictures of famous cricketers lining the walls. He described the cauldron of noise that greets players as they make their way through the Long Room, packed with members, on their way out to the field of play down the Pavilion steps.

We then went upstairs to see the Home and Away players' dressing rooms and the Honours Boards that record players who have scored over 100 runs, or taken 5 or more wickets, in an innings. Whilst many legendary names are listed, our guide pointed out that some of the great players never managed this feat such as Tendulkar, Warne and Lara. We were then given access to the players' dining room where the opposing teams sit either side of the Umpires, in a relatively small space, over the whole course of a match!

After a walk to the opposite end of the ground, we went up to the iconic Media Centre and inspected the Sky and BBC Test Match Special studios, as well as the banks of desks that can accommodate over 140 journalists. We then walked back, past the Father Time Wall which chronicles major moments in the history of the ground, and ended our tour in the Lord's Museum to hear how 'The Ashes' came about and to see the famous Ashes Urn, the contents of which remain a mystery!

After thanking our excellent guide, we returned to the Lord's Tavern to enjoy a high quality and leisurely lunch. I took the opportunity to say a few words, recalling my first visit to Lord's 55 years ago and becoming an MCC member 30 years ago. It was a memorable day, full of fellowship, smiles and animated conversation. May I express sincere thanks to Steward John Wilson for making all the excellent arrangements for the visit.



Kathy and I were delighted to represent the Plumbers at the Brigantes Winter Gathering in northerly Carlisle on 15th December. This major gathering of the Liverymen of the North (with a few Southern interlopers) saw over 100 people come together for seasonal fellowship and fare.

There was a fascinating afternoon lecture at The Tullie Museum about northern artists including LS Lowry. In the evening there was a drinks reception in the Regimental Chapel, a warming supper and speeches in the Fraternity, and a Carol Service in the Cathedral Nave. The service was of the highest quality with the boys and girls choirs singing together to raise the roof and reach the stars! The evening ended with many of us having a couple of winter warmers at the rather unique Station Hotel.

The Plumbers were also represented with flair at this lovely occasion by IPM Paul and Sue Nash and by PM Nick and Debbie Gale.

The following day Kathy and I explored Hadrian's Wall for the first time on a bright, cold day. The days are short in December so at half past three we started our drive back to Surrey and made it home in about six hours with one short break.



Kathy and I were delighted to entertain the hard working Plumbers' Office Team at Balthazar restaurant in the West End just before Christmas.

Everyone was able to attend - Adrian Mumford (Clerk), Sharon Sibthorpe (Clerk's Assistant), Debbie Abergil (Accountant), and Peter Thompson (Beadle) - and we enjoyed a good meal and a few drinks in a lively atmosphere. Lots of animated and amicable conversation took place!

Kathy and I were so pleased to have the opportunity to thank our wonderful staff at this special time of year, both on our behalf and on behalf of everyone at the Plumbers' Company.



I was happy to attend, with our Clerk, Adrian, the Masons' Court Luncheon on 9th January at Mercers' Hall. A friendly and intimate event for about fifty, I was honoured to be sitting next to The Master Mason, Alderman Alastair King.

Subject to election, Alderman King will be Lord Mayor from November 2024. Thus we had an early opportunity to hear about his thinking for his mayoralty in an interesting speech and in conversation over lunch.



With our Clerk, Adrian, I was honoured to attend the Myddelton Lunch of the Worshipful Company of Water Conservators in the beautiful surroundings of Trinity House on 25th January.

We worked closely with our friends at WCWC for the Coffee Colloquy on 'Clean Water and Sanitation for All' on 16th January, and it was most fitting to be with them. Indeed, Plumbers' Court Assistant Martin Shouler and Walbrook Warden Tom Flood of WCWC, who worked together with great cooperation and skill to create the Coffee Colloquy, were both guests at the lunch.

I was privileged to be at the top table sitting next to the Master Water Conservator, Prof Martin Bigg and to his Consort, Mrs Eileen Bigg.

The guest speaker was Tony Juniper CBE, the noted environmental campaigner, who offered some powerful messages on climate change and pollution.



Adrian the Clerk, and I, attended a special luncheon at the Chartered Accountants' Hall on 26th January 2024 - The Senior Liveries' Float Lunch.

This was to celebrate the fellowship amongst the senior and ancient Liveries who came together to form a shared 'walking float' at the Lord Mayor's Show last November. Over fifty people from about twenty Livery Companies attended; it was hosted by Clive Grimley, Master Glover and Float Master.

The guest of honour was Alderman Alastair King, who is expected to become the next Lord Mayor of London, subject to election.

In his speech Alderman King outlined his thinking for his year as Lord Mayor.

The theme will be Growth and Renewal.

The areas of activity will include:

1. International - maintain London's competitiveness by engaging with fast growing economies e.g. Indonesia.
2. Technology - ensure we are early adopters of the latest technologies to keep London ahead, especially in professional services
3. Networks - build networks that cross cultures and boundaries; engage with all types of communities in London for the greater good.



The Mistress Plumber, Kathy, and I visited the Worshipful Company of Gold & Silver Wire Drawers' excellent exhibition at Guildhall in late December. It showcased a wide range of royal regalia, theatrical costumes, military attire, ecclesiastical artefacts, and beautiful modern jewellery, silversmithing, and embroidery. It was the finest collection of gold and silver wire objects ever to be brought together.

Highlights include garments worn by Queen Elizabeth I and Queen Elizabeth II, Queen Mary's Coronation Dress from 1911, the court suit of Charles Dickens, the Silver Jubilee Cope of the Bishop of London in 1977 made to commemorate Queen Elizabeth II's reign.

We also saw the robe and crown worn by actor David Tennant as Richard II. the crown and gold robe worn by Dame Helen Mirren as Cleopatra for the RSC, and the television costume worn by Matt Smith (as HRH Prince Philip) in the Netflix series 'The Crown'.

It was an amazing exhibition, as our I pictures show, and we were very pleased to see it.

