



Report from the Court meeting on 23rd January 2024 at Mercers' Hall

Members Attending: The Master (D Adams), Upper Warden (C Brooks), Renter Warden (S Raine), Immediate Past Master (P Nash), Past Masters Rae, Brunner, Lockyer, Cartwright, Sneath, Paterson-Fox, Gale, Stary, Woolf, Rumley and Jones, Senior Assistant Rivers and Assistants Rao, Shouler, Wheeler, Cooper Reynolds and Wellman

In attendance: The Clerk.

Apologies: Past Masters; Moir, Alexander Hamilton, Hodkinson, Wadsworth and Burgon, and Assistants; Wingrove and Poulton

Item 1: Matters Arising [from minutes of last meeting]

- **Coronation Planter:** The planters are substantially complete and anticipated delivery to Sandringham is in the Spring.
- There will shortly be a flyer to members for the sale of a small [replica?] lead planters.
- **Cadet Affiliations:** In November the IPM visited 23 Army Cadet Detachment (Royal Engineers) based in a deprived part of Islington. There were around 25 cadets many of whom come from difficult backgrounds, so that the contribution from the Plumbers Charity would be really valued. A visit to No 1147 RAF Cadets in Barking is expected to take place in February.
- It is anticipated that the Army and RAF Cadets would form a joint Carpet Guard for the Summer Festival and at the same time an annual prize and cup will be presented to their best respective cadets.
- **Company Treasures:** Photographs have now been taken all significant treasures. And Hon. Archivist will be captioning them with a view to a new section on the website.

Item 2: The Master's Report

- The Master summarised his list of engagements and drew particular attention to his first day in office, dining at the Mansion House in the company of the King and Queen, the winter gathering of Brigantes in Carlisle and contribution made by members of the Company (offering thanks to Asst. Shouler and Liveryman Dr Surman-Lee) to one of the Lord Mayor's Coffee Colloquies entitled, "Clean water and Sanitation for all" (UN SDGE). He also thanked Asst. Shouler, Lvy Tranter and friends in the CIPHE, in particular Tim Sainty, for their work over the last two years to launch the Plumbing Professionals Development Scheme (PPDS) on 17 January 2024.

Item 3: Committee Reports (see separate individual Committee Reports but of particular note):

- **Freedom and Livery Committee**

- In respect of mentoring of Court Assistants, interviews have been taking place or are planned.
- Updates to the Job Description for a new Clerk have been made and the panel is making progress in respect of making a new appointment.
- A paper had been circulated, prepared by the Hon Archivist, Asst. Cooper and the Master, proposing the commissioning of a blue plaque to commemorate the site of the Company's first (possibly second) hall. The Court approved progress on this project, in principle.

- **Finance Committee**

- The main points relating to the Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 29 September 2023 were
 - (i) the reduction in the value of investments was a 'book' loss, not a crystallised loss.
 - (ii) PM Jones (as Chairman of the Investment Committee) noted that the value of investments had strengthened from £944k at the year end to £997k at 31 December. Nevertheless, PM Gale expressed concern that another loss had been made, weakening the Company's financial position and asked the Finance Committee to seek ways of ensuring there is tighter financial control.
 - (iii) The Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 29 September 2023 were formally approved by the Court.
- After a brief discussion on the draft paper 'Policy on management and retention of Capital Reserves', it was quickly evident that both clarification and more detail were needed. So, it was agreed that a small working party would be established, either at, or not later than the February meeting of the Finance Committee to address points made at the Court. So, a policy could be agreed at the April Court meeting.

- **Membership Committee**

- There has been a recent surge of applications, 20 coming from one Liveryman who had simply circulated his LinkedIn list. While enormously welcome, it presented a challenge to the Admissions Committee and while there were concerns about integration and long-term commitment the UW (as Chairman of the Admissions Panel) reported that all been individually good candidates. It was expected that as many as 15 clothings could be scheduled for April which would need an earlier start: the Clerk would ensure all new members were well mixed on the table plan.
- There was discussion around potential members first being expected to attend one or more events as is customary in many other Companies: while it has always been encouraged, the question as to whether it should be a requirement would be taken back to the Membership Committee for discussion.
- 'Women in Livery (WIL)' –8th March is International Women's Day which will be recognised by WIL.
- Asst. Shouler announced that the Plumbing Professionals Development Scheme (PPDS) was launched 17 January after two years work. There are 10 (mostly) young award winning plumbers in this first cohort who all embarking on careers. An early priority is a mentoring workshop and webinar.

- **Education and Technical Committee**

- There have been 178 applications for 2024 bursaries – a record number, up from 49 in 2023 and single figures before that. It is hoped to be able to announce the Award Winners on World Plumbing Day (11 March). Thanks were recorded to Monument Tools who are taking a lead in the process and will, once again, make the award of tools.

- The Trailblazer scheme is up and running although there are concerns around its future for reason of funding and lack of completeness in teaching plumbing skills. However, there is support from industry and conversations continue to ensure its future.
- The Company will have a stand at the Installer Show at the NEC Birmingham again this year (25-27 June) then the UK will be hosting the World Plumbing Conference in 2026. The committee will be considering how the Company can have a presence at this significant event.
- The Annual Lecture on Monday 13 May is near both the Annual Banquet and April Court lunch. So, it was felt that this 'flagship' event should be available at a lower cost. The Court agreed for it to go ahead at Carpenters Hall most likely at a cost of around £40 [for the lecture and drinks after]. There will be a reduced rate for students.
- **Social Committee:** The success of the Carol Service was noted and numbers for the impending January Court lunch (95).
- **Investment Committee:** The main point from Cazenove's presentation at the last meeting were that although there is still volatility in the market, the value of investments had strengthened since the financial year-end.
- **Charity Trustees**
- A total of 54K was paid in grants, donations and bursaries in the last financial year to 25 organisations and 2 individuals. The amount proposed for distribution in 2023/24 was £76k.
- A new leaflet 'leave a lasting legacy' had been printed and copies will be provided to all at the [January Court] lunch. PM Hodgkinson and Lvy Dalton were thanked for producing it.
- There are two vacancies for Trustees: one has to be a member of the Court and the other vacancy filled by a non-Court Liveryman

Item 4: Plumbing Museum and Workshop Trust (PMWT), Amberley:

- The main update is that all remaining material at the Singleton site has to be moved to Amberley which is representing a challenge.
- In discussion it was noted that demonstrations are given every Wednesday when the site is open. These will recommence after Easter.
- A report from PMWT will become a regular agenda item.

Item 5: Any Other Business

- The Master asked members of the Court to consider names of potential Court Assistants. A letter would soon go to all Court members.
- Our representative on the two following Pan-Livery working groups will be; Asst. Reynolds for Climate Action Group and Asst Cooper on the Pan-Livery Pro-Bono Interest Group.
- Following discussion about rushed timetables for Installation Court and reception, it was agreed this would be reviewed at the next meeting of F&L. The social committee has already been considering ways to make the reception seem less hasty.

Item 6: Livery Admissions

- The following Freeman were approved for clothing as Liverymen: Martin Abbot and Duncan Whitfield
- Leading Engineering Technician Sam Whitehouse was awarded the Freedom of the Company for receiving the 2022 best trainee qualifying in Metalwork at HMS Sultan.

Janet Rivers

Senior Court Assistant

8th February 2024