

MASTER'S BLOG #4

I was very pleased to attend The Affiliates' Day at HMS Sultan on 5th March at Gosport where the Royal Navy's primary Engineering School is located. Lieutenant Commander Rees-Hughes and Sub Lieutenant Sutton hosted the visit with skill, supported by a large team of excellent staff. We learned a great deal as we toured the facility including the gym and the engineering workshops. We even had a trip on public roads in the vintage steam lorry, despite regular downpours.

The guests, including a good number from Livery Companies, enjoyed a well-paced series of activities that provided insight into how young engineers are developed and nurtured. The focus on the 'whole person' was stressed. The Covid period made such occasions impossible, but HMS Sultan are now striving to establish stronger links with their affiliate Livery Companies, and to establish what activities will be mutually beneficial. We remember that LET Sam Whitehouse came to our Court Meeting & Lunch on 23rd January 2024. He was presented with The Plumbers' Military Award for 2022 and made an Honorary Liveryman of the Plumbers.

It was a very informative day, and I am hopeful that HMS Sultan's DSMarE School will now stay in good contact with the Plumbers' Company.



I was delighted to attend, with Adrian Mumford, the Worshipful Company of Furniture Makers' Dinner at their lovely Hall on the evening of 5th March 2024. Their Master, Amanda Waring (pictured below), made me and twelve other Masters very welcome; and her team of Wardens and Liverymen provided able support to make it a very enjoyable occasion. The Furniture Makers have had their own Hall only since 2005, and by all accounts would today not be without it!



With the Clerk, I was excited to attend The Mansion House on 11th March (World Plumbing Day, fittingly) for the **Master Certificate Scheme and City & Guilds Livery Company Prizes**. Eighteen Livery Companies take part in the programme this year; it is organised by the Livery Company Skills Council and the City & Guilds of London Institute

Joining the Lord Mayor, I presented the prestigious Master Certificate on behalf of the Plumbers' Company, to Nigel Baldwin and Adrian-Paul Liddell. We most warmly congratulate them for being recognised through this prestigious award.

Earlier in the Ceremony C&G Livery Prizes, and C&G Professional Recognition Awards (PRA) were presented. The Plumbers made PRA awards to two people, Conna Green and Ryan Moore. They receive the City & Guilds 'Licentiate LCGI (Level 4)' in Leadership and Management. Our warm congratulations to them.

A large number of Livery Masters were present to issue awards for high performance in their fields, reflecting the established status of this important annual event.



Kathy and I were fortunate to attend the Basketmakers' Company's Basketry Showcase bi-annual event at the Dutch Church on 12th March. Our Clerk, Adrian, was also there.

This was a vibrant, animated affair where basketry experts from all round the country showed off their workmanship and wares. There were some extraordinary pieces on display (some for sale) that beautifully illustrated the work of masters of this complex craft.

We were welcomed by the Prime Warden of the Basketmakers, Dorothy, Lady Lauriston, who made an excellent speech on the history of basketry but also stressed the importance of ancient crafts demonstrating that the skills of their trade are vibrant and healthy today.

Very many Masters and Consorts were present which made for a very sociable occasion.

Kathy, as a painter and printmaker, greatly enjoyed the occasion and chatted to many of the craftspeople; she came away with a lidded basket as a memento of the event.

The pictures show Kathy (and I) with her basket, and some of the displays and exhibitors.



On 14th March Kathy and I were honoured to attend a Dinner at The Mansion House for Masters, Prime Wardens & Upper Bailiff of the Livery Companies, as guests of the Lord Mayor, Alderman Professor Michael Mainelli. This was a grand, white-tie occasion, with much pageantry, and nearly all of the 2023-24 Masters and Consorts were present. We enjoyed an excellent reception & dinner and heard fine speeches on the Livery movement.

The Mayor gave thanks to the Livery Companies for their support in his year and praised their leadership of their trades, and their charitable activities. The Master Mercer spoke about the vital green initiatives in the City and the Livery to meet net-zero targets, highlighting the work of the Livery Climate Action Group. The Master Grocer spoke about the fine charitable efforts of the Livery Companies, and touched on the £75 mio of donations and the 22,000 hours of pro-bono work given by the City of London and the Livery Companies each year.

Kathy and I met up with many friends from our 23-24 year, and greatly enjoyed this special occasion.



Kathy and I, accompanied by the Renter Warden, Sandra and her Consort Ian, and by the Clerk, Adrian attended the 80th United Guilds' Service at St Paul's Cathedral on 15th March. We were joined by approximately 18 Plumbers' Liverymen and friends at this annual event.

This important religious service commenced in 1943 to lift the collective spirits of the City, the Livery and the Guilds following the Blitz. This year's service was as usual attended by all senior members of the Clergy and the City of London, and their officials, dressed in full ceremonial clothes.

A powerful sermon by the Dean, the Very Reverend Andrew Tremlett, suggested that the world's future is being mapped out in bombed out towns in eastern Ukraine and other arenas of conflict. He used stone as a metaphor - stone in its original form is unfinished or raw (petra); but for construction stone is finished, or dressed, for display (lithos). Over centuries of aging dressed stone reveals its origins and the source material can be seen again. The Dean asked whether the world understood the buildings it is constructing in today's strife-torn world, and what they will reveal once they have aged.

The Plumbers' party, following the service, walked to the Carpenters' Hall where about 80 people from 3 Livery companies and one Guild ate a hearty lunch as guests of our kind host, Dr Allen Zimble, Master of the Carpenters. We enjoyed excellent atmosphere and conversation seated at round tables.



I attended a first class City of London Chamber business breakfast on 20th March with Sir Paul Nurse. He is an English geneticist, former President of the Royal Society, and Chief Executive & Director of the Francis Crick Institute; he won the Nobel Prize for Physiology/Medicine in 2001 with 2 others. It took place at Guildhall, hosted by Alderman Prem Goyal OBE, Chairman City of London Chamber, and Plumbers' Liveryman.

In an incisive address and Q&A session Sir Paul said that there is a lack of investment in science R&D and Application in the UK today and that we are no longer a science superpower. We rank 27th for science investment in OECD countries which he described as "pathetic".

Sir Paul said that we need much greater political will backed up by a long term strategic plan for science. We can make it work if all key groups work together. Unfortunately we lack science capability in the central government and need a new cohort of politicians who take science seriously. He added that we need to look at the entire science 'ecosystem' - an integrated approach to science institutions, universities, innovation hubs etc. London specifically needs to see its 'discovery vehicles' operating together backed up by government support.

On private investment, Sir Paul observed that in the USA the climate is more risk tolerant, such that the UK is now far behind the USA in applying funds to science R&D. Consequently the UK tends to lose control of much of what it starts, to friendly nations, where there is a greater willingness to invest in science earlier and at higher levels. Yet research capability is very good in the UK.

Sir Paul spoke about the impact of Covid on UK science. The Covid Enquiry has not addressed one core issue: what was the source and how did we isolate people from it? The Crick Institute spotted early that there should be much greater cooperation between science institutes and hospitals to ensure much more rapid testing support. In the end a system did emerge but not in those early critical phases. He acknowledged that our vaccine programme worked well and praised the scientists. He feels that we have, at least, "ripped up the rule book" for future pandemics and will see hugely speeded up processes next time.

Other points made - we need:

- "anarchy" in the discovery phase, then guidance for the development phase, backed by the right levels of timely investment
- strategic decision making between government and the private sector and long-term plans that guide us
- scientists who "make friends" with politicians sooner, and not just go to them when they need money.
- to help politicians understand science and R&D and take a 10 year perspective

I asked whether the UK had lost its edge in long term planning, not just in medicine but in infrastructure - water, roads, housing etc. Sir Paul agreed and cited the HS2 "fiasco". He thinks that strategic planning has worsened yet believes that it is not difficult to understand - strategic skills can be taught and learned. He puts the failing down to UK political structures and to politicians' short termism. The photo shows me with Sir Paul Nurse at the end of the event.



Accompanied by Adrian our Clerk, I was pleased to attend the Blacksmiths' Company's Ladyday Luncheon at the Army and Navy Club on 22nd March 2024, as the guests of their Prime Warden, Mr Bob Tunks. In this fine setting we were made very welcome by all those present, about sixty, and enjoyed excellent fare and good conversation. The guests included two other Masters from the Founders and the Loriners.

I was honoured to speak on behalf of the guests and to propose the toast to the Blacksmiths. Like the Plumbers, the Blacksmiths are an ancient and modern craft, with traditions to be honoured, but with a vibrant future to be nurtured. I noted that 50% of the Blacksmiths' charitable spending is on young blacksmiths through bursaries (42 in 23-24), that they attend 12 county shows each year where blacksmith exhibit and compete, that they give annual prizes to celebrate work of the highest standard, and that they support at least 18 charities.

As examples of the work of the modern art-blacksmith, I mentioned Rebecca Knot's gates for the Losely Chapel, noting her reflections on the growing work of women in a traditionally male trade, and Liveryman Ian Parmenter's extraordinary sculpture for Hampshire Constabulary made from confiscated knives, to symbolise the fight against knife crime.

We enjoyed this excellent event full of good fellowship and common purpose. The photo shows me with the Master Blacksmith Mr Bob Tunks.



Accompanied by Adrian our Clerk, I was pleased to attend the Clockmakers' Company's Lady Day Lunch at the Ironmongers' Hall on 26th March 2024, as the guest of their Master, Mr Keith Scobie-Youngs. In this special setting we were welcomed by all Clockmakers present and enjoyed an excellent, informal atmosphere with good speeches in a gathering of about 120. The two other guest Masters were Alderman Sir Charles Bowman of the Grocers and Mr Nicholas Butterworth of the Founders.

I was fortunate to be sitting next to the Master's Consort, Mrs Lynn Scobie-Youngs who was able to tell me about their Cumbrian Clock Company. They restore major clocks worldwide and undertook the recent renovation of the tower clocks at the Houses of Parliament. Adrian and I both enjoyed this excellent occasion full of friendship and open exchange.

The photos show me with the Master Clockmaker and the Master Founder, the Master Clockmaker, and the lunch party in the Ironmongers' Hall.



Kathy and I were happy to attend an informal reception at the Old Bailey on 4th April, hosted by Sheriff Bronek Masojada and his consort Jane Masojada. This gathering was for Liverymen and partners from all Companies, as long as they live in east Surrey! There was an excellent turnout. We heard some informative words from the Sheriff about the Old Bailey, and the role of the two Sheriffs who live there for their year in office to take care of the judges. We were also given an insight into the workings of the Old Bailey through a talk in Court No.1 and a tour of the cells below. Everyone managed to escape at the end of the visit!

The pictures show me alongside Sheriff Masojada, and Kathy & I with our friends from the Painter-Stainers' Company, Master Ivor Macklin and Consort Wendy Macklin.



I had the wonderful opportunity to attend the 2-day 2024 Grand Final of the HIP 'Learner of the Year' competition for early-career plumbers on 11th and 12th April in Aston, Birmingham. After a series of heats around the UK this saw seven young finalists compete under equal conditions to complete a complex plumbing installation to drawings.

It was excellent to see on display the commitment and skill of such talented people at the start of their careers. Whilst there are many challenges at the 'macro' level on education, training, and recruitment in the plumbing sector, it was so heartening to see such next-generation talent showcasing high levels of planning and installation capability to successfully tackle the challenge set.

The whole programme is very ably managed by the HIP Magazine team, backed up by the expert competition judges, the Head Judge being Jerry Whiteley of CIPHE and WCP. I also mention the college lecturers present, from the FE institutions where these exceptional plumbers have studied. They provide dedicated all-round support to their students.

I also thank Julie Spinks, Chair of our E&T Committee, for catalysing the Plumbers' Company's active involvement in the HIP 2024 competitions. My thanks also to Jerry Whiteley for his major contribution to this initiative for plumbing excellence in the UK.

I applaud all the finalists who are in the vanguard of the future of plumbing. The trade is entering a critical period where green, low-temperature equipment and installation must come to the fore; this requires much change, where manufacturers, installers, educators, government, and customers need to adapt to deliver the low-energy era that net-zero targets are demanding.

