

Members' Dinner Jan 27 2022

Good evening again and I hope you have availed yourself of the opportunity to catch up with old friends and make some new ones this evening.

I am almost exactly at the end of the first quarter of my year as Master, although I'll confess to having taken the best part of a month out for Christmas, New Year and a two week cruise round Central America! But having done 36 events in the first month and a half, I felt like I needed a rest!

Life has been busy.

You will recall last summer we reported on the results of the strategy review and the new committee structure. We have recently had the second round of committee meetings and they are all beginning to get into their stride.

The Company is only as strong as the people who support it, whether simply by paying their quarterage and being members, by taking it a step further by attending events, by joining a Committee or by going the whole hog and becoming a Court Assistant and eventually Master. We will all move up and down that continuum as life and careers progress - so where are you on that continuum at the moment? Is it time to move up another level?

You don't have to be on a committee to make a difference, you could help with a project, organise a one off event or become a Liaison Officer with a school or one of the world trade associations we are looking to build relationships with.

The new Professional Development Committee is putting together an exciting series of monthly events starting in February Topics will focus on expanding awareness of important issues facing world trade. Perhaps you could share your expertise and volunteer to be a speaker?

If you do have some time available and would be happy to help, the relevant Committee Chair, the Clerk or I would be delighted to hear from you.

Our membership, which is counted excluding journeymen, currently stands at 278 and we have a number still waiting in the wings to be admitted as freemen and journeymen following a recent round of interviews and some from last year waiting until they can be admitted in person rather than virtually. Moving Open House drinks to Tuesday rather than Monday, recognising that people are more likely to be in the office that day, seems to have worked and they are busy. Another way you can help is by coming along and talking to prospective members.

The Livery is getting busy too. You'll have seen from my newsletter that I have already attended events organised by ten different Livery Companies and looking ahead there are six other invitations in the diary between now and

Easter. And I have had to decline three. So I think it's safe to say the Livery is back!

I thought I'd also look ahead to key events coming up in our calendar.

It took a year, but I eventually got a Tacitus speaker. Professor David Olusoga OBE seems to be proving popular as we already have over 400 attendees registered and all the schools accepted the invitation by return.

We have a confirmed date of March 3rd for our visit to RAF Benson. Limited numbers for this, but I know those who attend thoroughly enjoy it.

Arrangements for the visit to Yorkshire are well in hand and I am aiming to get the details circulated so you can sign up in the next couple of weeks. Here we are in Cutlers' Hall today and we will be having lunch in Cutlers' Hall in Sheffield in May. And in another connection, our Election Dinner in April is in Merchant Taylor's Hall and we will be having a dinner in Merchant Taylor's Hall in York too!

The City walk last week went very well and we have another three planned during the year with the next one on April 7th following the route of the Great Fire of London.

And another confirmed event is a reception at the Tower of London followed by the Ceremony of the Keys on September 29th. Many thanks to Past Master Sue Hughes for using her contacts to arrange this for us.

Please do keep an eye on Clerk's notes as we go through the year for details of these and all the other events we have planned and the booking links.

When Mark was Master, seven years ago – and by the way research indicates we are possibly only the third Livery Company to have had husband and wife as Master – he always included an 'on this day in history' moment. So I thought I'd continue the family tradition! Don't worry, the family tradition stops after this year as we don't have any children!

However, when I looked at today the anniversaries all seemed to be of dreadful events. But then I looked again and realised the liberation of Auschwitz and the end of the Vietnam War, whilst marking the end of some terrible periods in history, also marked the start of new beginnings. I would not presume to compare the last two years to either of those events, but I do hope what I've outlined as activity in the City and our Company, counts as our new beginning as we emerge from what has been, and in some ways still is, a challenging period for all of us.

Thank you