

Master's "At Home", Museum of the Order of St John, Clerkenwell

October 3rd, 2019

Good evening everyone,

As World Traders will know, but guests may not, it is customary in our Company for the outgoing Master to hold a reception towards the end of their year in office. That point for me is now only two weeks away, when I will be handing over the Master's badge to Peter Alvey in the grand surroundings of Mansion House.

But this evening we are in equally historic surroundings: the Museum of the Order of St John is the original site in Britain of the Order itself. I hope you will have chance to look round the exhibition on the ground floor, which takes the history of the Order from the Crusades to the present day. The exhibition has been kept open late for us; but please remember, no red wine in that part of the building.

Despite its august origins, this site has over the centuries also done service as a coffee house and a pub—this is London, after all. But my favourite part of its history is in Shakespeare's day, when it housed the offices of the Master of Revels, the chief censor. No play could be performed on the London stage or the South Bank without that Master's say-so (Masters don't have quite that power these days!). So a number of Shakespeare's plays were licensed on this very spot.

This is a social evening, not a formal one. But I do have a few more things I would like to say.

One is to welcome some fellow Livery Masters amongst us:

Master Baker, Paul Morrow

Master Lightmonger, Stephen Thomas

Deputy Master Tax Advisor, Marcus Fincham

(And as of just a few hours ago) Deputy Master Tyler & Bricklayer, Lesley Day (over the past year, Lesley has been that company's first woman Master in 600 years! They are finally getting the hang of things!)

I also have a series of thank yous: among us this evening are just a few of the people who spoke at lunches or dinners, helped stage events, or hosted visits from World Traders over the course of the past year. They include Ros Pollock from Ottoman Silks who helped us raise funds for Anti-slavery International, the first event of my year; Sir Lawrence Freedman, who spoke at our Election Dinner; and Dr Yoge Patel, CEO of Blue Bear Systems Research, who kindly hosted a group of us on a visit this summer, to admire her drone collection. My gratitude to all of you for making this year so memorable for me, and I hope enjoyable for everyone else.

Thank you, too, to so many World Trader colleagues who have given me wonderful support over the year in many different ways: the Wardens; the committee chairmen and their teams (with a particular mention to the Tacitus team this year, who excelled themselves); and our two almoners, Mavis Gold and Peter Tennant, who have helped in inevitably unsung ways behind the scenes.

Many others have acted as Liaison Officers and mentors to schools and charities (with special mention here to Ben Pape, for co-ordinating work with schools on speaking competitions and debates). Others, such as Graham Booth, John Burbidge-King, Mavis Gold (again), Don Lawrence and Oana Lazar have organised events for me, both here and overseas. Just this past weekend, Chris and Corinna Edge organised a most enjoyable World Traders wine weekend in Kent, where we also visited Pat Alston's Romney Tweed project. Many other members of the Company have helped in different ways, large and small, along the way. Thank you, all of you.

There are a few others to mention by name in despatches too:

First of all, our Journeymen. We started the Journeyman scheme only 18 months or so ago, but they have been a wonderful addition to the Company. I believe Giulio, Simon and Tukeer are here. They and their fellows have helped with events, joined committees and generally taken as full a part in the Company as their work and study allows. Those paying attention will have noticed that all so far are young men. It would be lovely to have some young women Journeymen join us too, and I hope that will happen soon.

My thanks, too, to a couple of overseas-based members:

To Sarah Leonard, now based in Monaco, but still co-ordinating the packages for 1st Rifles, our army battalion, and still co-ordinating occasional drinks for the young and the young at heart before and after some of the Company's events. I think Sarah gets the title of E-Liveryman this year.

Sarah is not able to be here tonight, but another overseas member, Robert Pay, is with us. For those of you who do not yet know him, Robert is our New York-based World Trader. In the 18 months or so before the World Traders' trip to New York last May, Robert and I met a number of times for convivial glasses of nicely chilled Sauvignon. His advice and local intel was hugely helpful in many ways. But what earns him real World Trader hero status is that he took his life into his hands before the group arrived, by volunteering to stand in line at a subway ticket office while the ticket clerk punched out 36 pre-loaded subway cards, one by one.

My particular thanks also to another London-based World Trader: Lars Andersen. Lars as many of you know has a name-tag company. But he thoroughly deserves an honorary name-tag of his own: as World Traders' First-Responder-in-Chief. Without Lars at this time last year, my predecessor Michael Mainelli's dream of a Guinness World Record for World Traders would never have been realised. Similarly, in my year, without Lars stepping in to rescue it, the Young World Traders dinner after the Tacitus Lecture would simply not have happened. And thanks, too, to Lars for taking on our reimagined Events and Engagement

committee as chairman, despite himself being well on the way to becoming Master of the Guild of Entrepreneurs next year—congratulations, Lars, on that well-deserved honour to come.

I have another Company thank you that I will come to in a moment, but first I have an announcement to make on behalf of myself, the Wardens, Peter Alvey and Sue Algeo, and Warden-elect Mary Hardy (who is not with us this evening; she is watching the rugby in Japan).

It is traditional for each out-going Master to present a gift to the Company. Thanks to the great generosity of previous Masters (several of whom are in the room), the Company already has a number of fine decorative and practical things. So, what do you give a Company that has everything it can usefully use?

Peter, Sue, Mary and I have decided that our gift each year over the next several years will instead further the Company's educational and charitable aims: we are establishing a Master's Scholarship, to be awarded competitively among sixth-form pupils from the 4 or 5 state schools with which we have developed close ties, hoping to encourage the World Traders of the future. The details are still being thought through, in consultation with the schools. But we are looking forward to being able to help several students each year do something that will significantly enhance their life and career chances. We hope each recipient will become a Journeyman of the Company for a period of time. In future years, it will be for Peter, Sue and Mary to tell you who those young people are.

And now my thanks to our Clerk, Gaye Duffy. I am already enjoying not having a dozen of Gaye's emails in my in-box before breakfast each morning! That pleasure is now mostly Peter's. But, Gaye, you have given me and everyone else in the Company excellent support this year, as you have done in the previous ten years and we all hope you will keep doing for as long as possible. There has been much laughter along the way, but I have to say it has also been immensely reassuring to someone like me in this role (for whom the Livery is still something of a new world) to be able to have your advice—even when I haven't taken it! Everywhere I have been this year, your name has gone before me. Your fellow Clerks are quite simply in awe of you! That is something I have happily traded on. Thank you.

And one final thank you: to Past Master Cook, Mark Grove, and his team from The Cook & Butler, who are catering the event this evening. Mark's company has actually catered a number of events for us this year, including Tacitus. Thank you for all the good food and wine, but also for the fun along the way.

And on that note, please go back to enjoying yourselves. Thank you for coming along.