

Guild of Mercers' Scholars



Newsletter for the Year to 31st October 2009

THE GUILD MASTER'S REPORT

As my year as Master of our Guild ends I am able to look back over a most enjoyable twelve and a bit months that started with my installation dinner at Tallow Chandlers Hall and finished as I handed over to Andrew McMillan, our new Master at the end of October at his livery company's hall – the Farmers and Fletchers.

In between we got a lot done as a guild and I was able to represent the Guild of Mercers' Scholars on a number of different occasions at different schools of the Mercers' cluster and to meet and get to know better many of my fellow guildsmen and women at the social events that were part of my year as Master.

I was very pleased that my fellow Old Abingdonian, the Rt. Hon. Francis Maude, who is MP for Horsham, the home of Collyers' School since 1540, was our guest speaker at my installation dinner. He talked about the importance of education but also the importance of learning – that is the ability to get your head down and study and consolidate and understand the knowledge that the excellent schools with which we are associated have sought over the years to share with us. I am pleased too that the choral scholars from my church, St Luke's in Chelsea, were able to entertain us over coffee with a selection of madrigals, superbly delivered. I chose as my charity *Families need Fathers* so I am very grateful to my fellow guildsmen for their generous contributions to the Alms Dish. I expressed my gratitude at the time too to Bob Smith who as immediate past Master took over as master again following the untimely death of David Harvey just a few months into his Mastership, at the end of 2007.

Just a few weeks later I was standing in the pouring rain looking at the Lord Mayor's show with other guildsmen admiring the massed bands, serried ranks and wide assortment of floats including the one of my own livery company, the Worshipful Company of International Bankers. A key objective of our Guild upon its foundation in 1947 was to encourage Old Mercers – and latterly former pupils of the Mercers' schools - to become Freeman and Liverymen of the City. So I would be delighted to talk to any of our members who are involved in financial services about the possibility of becoming members of the International Bankers.

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Officers 2008 / 2009

Guild Master	S M Hills
Renter Warden	A C McMillan
Junior Warden	R Allen
Apprentice Warden	M St John Parker
Honorary Clerk	N J Watson
Social Court Assistant	S J Aylett
Honorary Deputy Clerk	S Shilling
Honorary Treasurer	G A Goodeve

Walsall Academy

Through the good offices of Past Master and Apprentice Warden Michael St John Parker, who is a governor, the Guild has started on what we hope will be a long and happy association with Walsall Academy.

The Academy was opened in September 2003 by Sir John Blofeld, the then Master Mercer, and is sponsored by the Mercers' Company and Thomas Telford School.

We first met the students and Deputy Head Howard Barnes at our first ever Membership Court which was held in the Aldermen's Court Room in Guildhall on Friday 24th April. Prior to this we had met the prospective apprentices in the new Chamberlain's Court Room for the apprentice inrolement ceremonies and the freedom ceremony made by Howard Barnes.

Through the good offices of the Deputy Clerk, Sue Shilling, we enjoyed an excellent light buffet lunch and the opportunity to 'break the ice' with our new apprentices and their parents and hear more about the Academy.

On 14th July nine members of the Guild, led by the Renter Warden Andrew McMillan, visited the Academy. For most of us this was our first visit to Walsall and to one of the new Academies. What a revelation this turned out to be. The buildings are quite magnificent, excellent technical facilities, large airy class rooms, a magnificent theatre and some good sports grounds. For those of us educated at Mercers' in the forties and fifties (where we were most appreciative of what we had there) it was astounding and a visit to the Academy's web site is well worth while.

We toured the facilities with our apprentices and were entertained so well to lunch in a private room by Jean Hickman, the Head, Howard Barnes and Graham Jones, director of Careers and Industry Links that we had to scramble for the bus and only just made the train for London.

We wish Jean Hicknam, the founding head, a most successful and happy retirement and hope that the involvement with Walsall Academy will continue under her successor Vivienne Evans.

Our thanks also go to Sue Shilling who organised both events in her usual calm and efficient manner.

Neville Watson

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As the Lord Mayor passed by and the rain abated we repaired again to Tallow Chandlers Hall for lunch with members of a number of other guilds and livery companies, but this time in a rather less formal environment.

St Luke's Church again figured in the guild's schedule when just before Christmas I was able to entertain some of you to tea at my flat before going on to participate in the service of nine lessons and carols there – splendid music again and an eclectic mix of carols, old and new, some familiar, some not so.

A definite success as a social occasion (it was so popular we ran it twice) was the opportunity to take part in the Ceremony of the Keys, at the Tower of London which been a nightly event for the last 700 years. Every night the Tower is locked up by the Chief Yeoman Warder, who, dressed in a traditional scarlet coat, tudor bonnet, carrying a lantern and with foot guard escort, he makes his way to the gates from the Byward Tower at exactly 21:53, locking them as he goes. As he approaches the Bloody Tower a sentry challenges him:

'Halt! Who comes there?'

'The keys', the Warder replies

'Whose keys?'

'Queen Elizabeth's keys.'

'Advance, Queen Elizabeth's keys. All's well'

Once all the Tower gates are locked, the last post is sounded by a trumpeter and the guard detail returns to the guardroom, leaving the Tower and its crown jewels locked up for the night. It was a truly memorable experience to see such living history at close hand. And it didn't rain on either occasion. But it well and truly rained in early June when a number of us attended the Colonel's review on Horseguards' Parade, which is effectively the dress rehearsal for the Trooping of the Colour on the Queen's official birthday. The day dawned bright but others more experienced than I in these matters came fully armed with inflatable cushions to sit on and waterproof clothing in abundance. I had not been so prudent, equipped only with a small folding umbrella as I was, but nonetheless brother guildsmen rallied round (or more accurately their better halves did) to keep me as dry as possible as we enjoyed a truly magnificent and superbly coordinated military spectacle.

As the parade ended and the sun started to shine Bob once again impressively came to our rescue, having arranged for us to have a most convivial lunch afterwards at his Club, the Oxford and Cambridge, just a few steps away in Pall Mall.

The balance between events military and ecclesiastical was restored about the same time with a visit to the Clerestory of St Paul's Cathedral, which gave us a behind the scenes look at the City's Cathedral – its architecture, its method of construction and its library too. But the highlight of the visit, for me anyway, was seeing the massive model that embodied Sir Christopher Wren's third proposal for the new St. Paul's. The model, completed in 1673 is made of oak and plaster, cost over £500 (approximately £32,000 today) and is more than 13' tall and 21' long. But this Greek cross format was never realised, going through another two iterations before the more gothic inspired design was finally given approval by the King.

My final social event was a visit with picnic (and no rain to speak of) to the Shuttleworth collection of vintage aircraft for a flying display on a typically balmy late summer's Sunday afternoon, accompanied by picnic and, courtesy of James Aylett's organising and negotiating skills, parking spaces for

our vehicles front and centre of the flight line.

From a business point of view we have, thanks to Michael St J Parker's leadership of the Education committee, finalised our expression of what we believe the role of the apprentice master should be. I was delighted that at my last official event as Master at the end of October in the Guildhall I was able to see my first apprentice, Alex Husk become full member of our Guild and at the same time become apprentice master to his sister Florence. I do encourage other Guild members who have not yet considered putting themselves forward as apprentice masters, to consider doing so. The role is akin to a mentoring one and not too onerous but one that is ever more necessary as the flow of new apprentices is not slowing. So our guild is in rude health and continues to grow and I look forward to seeing it go from strength to strength under Andrew's leadership in his year as Master. I wish him every success – and enjoyment!

Simon Hills, Guild Master 2008-09

The Court in 2009/2010

At the Annual Meeting the following were appointed and elected to the Court:

- **Guild Master:** A C McMillan, Silver Trees, Park Lane, Ashtead, Surrey, KT21 1EJ, Tel: 01372 272276, Email: acjcmcm@btopenworld.com
- **Renter Warden:** R Allen, 22 Wyvern Place, Warnham, West Sussex, RH12 3QU, Tel: 01403 269491, Email: pruerobin@yahoo.com
- **Junior Warden:** G Niblett, Woodville Cottage, Woodville, Stour Provost, Gillingham, Dorset, SP8 5LX, Tel: 01747 838798, Email: georgeniblett@aol.com
- **Apprentice Warden:** M St. John Parker, Exeter House, Cheapside, Bampton, Oxon, OX18 2JL Tel: 01993 851219, Email: MStJP@exeterhouse.force9.co.uk
- **Honorary Clerk:** S Shilling, 14 Parkside Mews, Greatpark, Warlingham, Surrey CR6 9PU. Phone: 01883 627996, Email: susan.shilling@btinternet.com
- **Honorary Deputy Clerk:** N J Watson, 37 Barons Court Road, London W14 9DZ. Tel: 020 7385 8859, Email: baronscourt@talktalk.net
- **Honorary Treasurer:** G A Goodeve, 319 Outwood Common Road, Billericay, Essex CM11 2LT. Phone: 01277 653841, Email: grayello@sky.com
- **Social Court Assistant:** S J Aylett, 19 Cottrell Court, Southern Way, London SE10 0DW. Phone: 07976 212023, Email: jaylett@gmail.com
- **Senior Court Assistants:** B M Jones & H J Ball
- **Court Assistants:** E V Austin & H Price
- **Abingdonian Court Assistant:** S M Hills
- **Collyerian Court Assistant:** A K Barnard
- **Dauntseian Court Assistant:** J E Hughes
- **Peter Symonds College:** E V Austin
- **St Paul's Court Asst and (temporarily) St Paul's Girls' Court Assistant:** T J D Cunis
- **Walsall Academy Crt Asst:** H J Barnes

All Past Masters also serve on the Court

Membership

The Court was pleased to welcome the following to membership of the Guild during the year:

GUILDMEN

16th April 2009

Clive Richard Barham
Leonard Thomas Gardner

24th April 2009

Howard John Barnes

28th October 2009

Ray Anstis
James Bohan-Pitt
Frederick Edwin John Gedge Brackenbury CBE
Richard John Gregory Dyson
Philippa Lucy Hammond
David John Ernest Heard
Martin Richard Hine
Alexander Charles Husk
Victoria Louise Husk
Gregory Gilles Lemaire-Smith
Charles Peter Russ
Howard Anthony Womersley Smith

APPRENTICES

16th April 2009

Matthew Aneurin Jones

24th April 2009

Sophia Natalie Astbury

Louise Catherine Cox

Laura Jayne Goodwin

Nathan Michael Rochelle-Bates

Emily Louise Thompson

28th October 2009

Florence Juliette Rose Husk

Following the Michaelmas Day Court the membership of the Guild is:

Liverymen: 33
Guildmen: 135
Apprentices: 39
TOTAL: 207

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**Installation Dinner
Wed 20th October 2010
Glaziers' Hall**

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Livery

One of the main objectives of the Guild is to encourage Guildmen to become members of a Livery Company. Past Master Peter Clark has done a lot of work in establishing links with many of the Livery Companies which are prepared to welcome Guildmen into their Liveries.

If you are interested in joining a Livery Company Peter will be pleased to help. His address is: 7 Eccleston Close, Cockfosters, Barnet, Herts EN4 9EZ. Phone: 020 8441 3539.

'Thank you'

A message from Neville Watson

Dear Fellow Guildmen and Apprentices

My short reply at the Installation Dinner when I received the most delightful and unexpected gift was quite inadequate to express my thanks to you all.

I am very thrilled with the quite unusual and novel globe that you gave me which I shall treasure for many years. It looks most elegant in our sitting room. I was also delighted with the Past Master's badge with the specially engraved bar that the Court presented to me during the meeting.

It has been a pleasure and privilege to serve the Guild as your Clerk for ten years and I have enjoyed it very much. All organizations must move forward and I felt that after a decade it was time to hand over to someone else.

During the past ten years the membership has risen from 125 Guildmen and Apprentices to 217 at the last meeting. The indentured apprentice scheme has been a great success, so much so that our new Clerk will need many volunteers as Masters if she is to keep up with the enquiries she is now receiving. We have welcomed membership from both St Paul's Schools and this year from Walsall Academy.

The Guild is in the good hands of my successor Susan Shilling. She has been carrying out many of the administrative duties over the past year and I am grateful to her for her help. I am at her disposal as her Deputy for any task she cares to devolve to me.

Jo was sorry that a pre-planned visit to Germany prevented her from being at the dinner but she is delighted with the extravagant bunch of flowers that was subsequently delivered to her.

Once again many thanks to you all,

Yours sincerely

Neville & Jo Watson

In Memoriam

The Court was advised of the death of the following during the year:

- Raymond Miles, Collyers (1940 - 1944) who died during November 2009.
- Eldred Derek Slynn, who died on 24th December 2008,
- Caroline Elizabeth McMillan, wife of Renter Warden Andrew McMillan, who died on 21st February 2009

Court Meetings in 2010

Members of the Court are advised that Court meetings have been arranged on the following dates at the Guildhall unless otherwise specified:

- **Christmas Day Court:** Thursday 21st January 2010
- **Lady Day Court:** Thursday 22nd April 2010
- **Mid Summer Day Court and Annual Meeting:** Thursday 8th July 2010
- **Michaelmas Day Court:** Wednesday 20th October 2010 at Glaziers' Hall