

## **Masters' Annual Reports**



### **Lorna Walker 2008 to 2009**

This time last year, as I took the helm of the Water Conservators, I was inspired by the leadership of previous years, and excited by the thought of the experiences this year would hold. Still, looking back, I was unprepared for the delights and challenges that being Master of a Livery Company brings, and it is my pleasure to share my experiences with you here.

My objectives for the year were to continue to develop the Corporate Strategy and rolling Business Plans, with a particular focus on increasing recruitment and retention of members, achieving a sound financial base and addressing matters of governance and transparency. Also, as ever we aimed to continue to strengthen our links with the City of London, and to develop our charitable works. Having in recent years been working on the effects of climate change on the built environment, I decided the theme for my year should be, "Water and Climate Change," in order to highlight the significant challenges of water supply and sanitation around the world that climate change looks set to exacerbate. The skills of our Company members will be of vital importance to meeting these challenges.

#### **Company Business**

As I took over, the Company was in fine form thanks to the great job Colin Drummond and his Wardens had done in the previous year. The Company was thriving and bursting with new energy as the Court had taken a fundamental look at how the Company operated. The development of a new Corporate Strategy and a rolling Business Plan helped to set the stage for the year, in particular the aim of developing a Strategy which will deliver continuity, participation and greater focus to the Company, one of my objectives for the year. I am pleased to say that we now have an agreed Management Plan with task groups addressing recruitment, and communications. The Governance task force has now disbanded as their task has been completed. I also invited the Deputy Master to attend FM&GP meetings so we could benefit from his knowledge and experience. His presence, and the continuing contribution of the Clerk, Ralph Riley, has led to much improved continuity.

The issue of Governance raised many subjects for debate. I believe it was healthy, and healing, to have a chance to discuss issues which were important to people, and in some cases, had been causing disquiet for some time. There were ten items in the Governance paper and we received significant support for eight of these from the Court and the Past Masters. Unfortunately we could not reach

complete agreement on two of these: the 70 year rule and the procedure for appointing the Walbrook Warden. We have therefore taken some best practice ideas from other well established Liveries at the suggestion of one of our most experienced Past Masters to revamp our election process, and ensured that the revised process has a fail-safe mechanism to ensure that an over-70 candidate is properly assessed for competence. The same rules will apply to the over 70s as to any other Liveryman to ensure there is no discrimination. By these means our processes have been enhanced and made more transparent. At the Election Court meeting in April, the Paper was passed unanimously. I would like to thank the Governance Task group for all their hard work, and to members of the Court, the FM&GP and all the Past Masters who gave time and commitment to consider and comment on the paper.

The nominations committee this year had a challenge as we needed to select two wardens; Ian Staniforth has decided for personal reasons that he will not be able to progress. I would like to thank Kevin Bond as Chairman of the Nominations committee and the members for resolving this extraordinary situation.

### **Charitable Works**

The trustees of The Water Conservation Trust continue to work tirelessly to support our charitable endeavours and to extend our reach where possible. The Trust now supports post graduate students at six universities with bursaries, grants and prizes. Although the monies are not huge, they often make the difference between a student being able to continue in their studies or not. The Trust not only invests money, but time of our members to mentor the students and build a relationship with the universities. This investment in the future of our profession is crucial.

We continue to support people with disabilities at two centres, the Calvert Trust and Ysgol Gogarth. This year the Calvert trust was able to buy a safety boat with our contribution. A small number of Trustees and Company members attended the launch and were well received. The boat is to be named "The Water Conservator". Links will be maintained through Frank Jones and Bob Davies. At Ysgol Gogarth, Ivor Richards continues to be our link in supporting the development of the gardens, where there are now polytunnels and paving stones are being installed to enable wheelchair access for the students. In addition, the Pupils' Prize, which gives support to local schools for environmental education, has been up-dated and re-launched.

Due to the magnificent efforts of Nigel Cartwright to persuade our members and our guests to part with their money after lunch, we raised enough money to sponsor half a taxi for the Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers Magical Mystery Tour to Disney Land in Paris for disabled and ill children. My chosen charity for the year was the Treloars School and we had a wonderful evening at the RAF Club with entertainment from the Players to raise money for Treloars and the WCT. My thanks to all of those who donated prizes for the raffles and particularly to Ian Staniforth for the donation of a unique and beautiful guitar. The proceeds from the evening and the sale of the guitar raised over two thousand pounds. My thanks to Bill Halson, for organising the event, the Players for giving their time for free and all of you for so generously contributing.

The Trust is facing enormous challenges this year due to the current economic climate. We have already lost money and I urge all in the Company to give what you can, time or money, to ensure that this most central function of our Company can continue and thrive. My heartfelt thanks to Jeff Rasbash and the other trustees for their continuing hard work, dedication and commitment.

## **Member's Survey**

As you know, we carried out a Members' Survey to find out the wishes and opinions of all. We had responses from over 20% of the Company which gave some interesting insights; my thanks to those of you who responded. The Company is perceived to be friendly, which is excellent because social events are considered to be the most important benefit of membership. The proof is that feedback received from our members and guests about Company events is always positive. This is a great joy to me, and we as a Company can be proud of them.

The website was supported, although in some areas, such as Charity and Education it was felt that the content could be improved. It was also agreed that everything should be posted on the public area, unless it was confidential or of no interest to others. I would like to thank the webmaster, Bill Halson, for his sterling work in upgrading and maintaining the site and keeping in contact with our members.

## **Company Events**

The Members Survey showed us that becoming a Liveryman of the Company and a Freeman of the City of London are seen to be the second greatest benefits of joining the Company. There are many events organised by the City that we are able to attend as Liverymen. These include the Silent Ceremony, where the current Lord Mayor hands over to the new Lord Mayor and the Lord Mayor's Show. It has been my privilege to attend many of these and I strongly recommend them to you as part of the City of London's rich history and tradition.

Reflecting my theme for the year, at the Installation lunch we had a speech from Sir John Sorrell, Chairman of CABA (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) about the work they are doing and their recent Climate Change festival. Our speaker at the Michaelmas Lunch was Colin Challen MP, Chairman of the All Party Parliamentary Committee on Climate Change. And for the Annual Banquet we entertained The Right Honourable Margaret Beckett, former Minister of State for the Environment, who gave thoughtful insights into some of the dilemmas facing the government in terms of climate change, housing, people and the environment. We were honoured to have The Lord Mayor of London, Ian Luder, and his wife, the Lady Mayoress as our guests at the Myddelton Lunch. The Lord Mayor gave an entertaining and witty speech. Our final principal guest at the Election Court Lunch was Sir David Brewer who described the work of the Treloars Trust and gave us some hilarious stories about life in the City. At this lunch, we presented him with a cheque for £1000 for the Trust.

Once again this year, our cutter, the Water Forget-Me-Not, has performed outstandingly. I had the pleasure of experiencing first-hand the thrill of speeding along the River Thames during the Tudor Pull, a mere foot or so from the water surface. The skill displayed by the team, their understanding of the water and the ease with which they manoeuvred the cutter – and, indeed, me! – is something I believe is best witnessed first-hand, and something I shall remember forever. My sincere thanks to Johnny Dwan and his team.

Despite the popularity of our formal events, we are aware that the cost of some of them can be a deterrent to bringing guests, and there has at times been a lack of support from employers to allow time off. We hope our profile-raising activities may help persuade employers of the benefit of their

members attending our functions, in terms of networking and influence. In addition, we are facing difficult economic times, one of the biggest challenges being the credit crunch, a particular issue with our retired members as in many cases the value of pensions is reducing in real terms. We recognise that we must adapt to survive, and we have therefore held all function costs and quarterages for this year and are proposing stage payments for new members joining the company to mitigate the current high initial joining sum.

This year we have managed, with the invaluable assistance of my Bailiff, Bill Halson, to organise events which are different, less expensive and not always during working hours. These included a trip to St George's Chapel in Windsor, a visit to the Gherkin, a wonderful weekend to the Champagne region of France, and a sentimental journey by steam train through the Watercress beds of Hampshire. This has resulted in not only more people attending, but more people from the Company whom we have not seen for a while. Regional events were encouraged and Past Master Mike McDowell has now hosted two meetings in the regions.

### **And finally...**

I would like to thank my Wardens, Bob Mark, Ian Staniforth and Barry Dennis for all their help and support. I would particularly like to thank Ian, who has reluctantly decided that he will not be able to progress, for his commitment and enthusiasm to the Company. I would also like to thank Peter Matthews for his work as Hon Treasurer, Peter Mullen for his work as Hon Chaplain and Tony Parker, our Beadle for saving me from embarrassment on many occasions! We could not survive without the good offices of our Clerk, Ralph Riley and I thank him as well. My Bailiff, Bill Halson, has worked tirelessly, not only organising events and being webmaster, but in trying to keep me on the straight and narrow, and vaguely sane; my thanks to him. The members of the committees and task groups have committed time, effort and enthusiasm to the Company and I thank them. I would not have been able to carry out my duties as Master, and enjoy the year without the support of my husband, Gareth and my special thanks to him.

Finally, my thanks to you all, for your continuing support of the Company. It is a very special organisation for fellowship, charity and furthering the aims of the water Industry: we must support and protect it. I have had a wonderful year, being involved in things I had never imagined and meeting fascinating and interesting people; I know that the incoming Master will enjoy the experience as much as I have!

**Lorna Walker**

**Deputy Master**