

Wardens, My Lord Mayor, Sheriffs, Alderman, Masters, Prime Wardens, Distinguished Guests. Fellow Turners, Ladies and Gentlemen.

A very good evening to you all and welcome to this wonderful Skinners' Hall. It is always a pleasure to dine under the atmospheric murals painted by Sir Frank Brangwyn and I sincerely thank Skinners Company for allowing us to be here. Thank you Master Skinner.

This Hall, like Turners' first Hall in Philpott Street, was burnt to the ground in the Great Fire of 1666. This catastrophic event has been widely commemorated through-out the City during the last six months with numerous exciting activities.

These Commemorations culminated in the impressive burning of the wooden model of the City on a barge moored by Blackfriars Bridge ... a most remarkable and memorable spectacle.

However, there is still a fascinating exhibition at the Museum of London that should not be missed. In the excellent catalogue titled "*Butcher, Baker, Candlestick Maker - Surviving the Great fire of London*", there is a whole chapter relating to the 17th Century 'Turning' Trade in the City and identifies fascinating new information on the business relationship between Samuel Pepys and a Mr Howells, a Turner in Tower Street, who specialised in turning Lignum Vitae. It's on is on until April 2017.

My Lord Mayor, we greatly appreciate you and the Sheriffs taking the time to join with us this evening, particularly as we know what a busy schedule you all have.

You are the 689th person to have been elected to this high office and the dedication that you have shown to the City over the years is legendary. What is also legendary... is your ENERGY and ENTHUSIASM!

In your most amusing address to the Livery in November, you admitted to belonging to 18 Livery Companies. **Not a lot of People know that**. So doing my homework, I found that you are a Past Master of 3 Livery Companies – The Parish Clerks; the Musicians and the Glass Sellers.

You are a Court Member of 5 Companies – Blacksmiths; Educators; Horners; Joiners & Ceilers and Painter-Stainers.... and currently Renter Warden of Vintners.

You are also an Honorary Liveryman of 7 further Companies - the Builder's Merchants; Clockmakers; Constructors; Management Consultants; Security Professionals; Tobacco Pipe Makers and the Water Conservators and ...Honorary Freeman of the

Environmental Cleaners.....(I'm only involved with two Companies and find that exhausting enough!)

But I haven't finished yet!

You are also Honorary President of the Guild of Young Freeman; the founding Alderman of the newest City Guild – 'The Guild of Nurses'; plus being joint Patron of the Vintry & Dowgate Wards Club,... an office which you share with another of our top-table Guests – Alderman Alison Gowman – Alison you are most welcome!

You would all be excused in thinking that was sufficient commitments for one person.... But – Oh No! Our Lord Mayor is not only a very fine organist... but also a very fine composer, conductor and lyricist. I had the enormous pleasure of experiencing all four of his musical talents at yesterday's Carol Service at St James Garkickhythe. We know that for many years you have been dedicated to Education and Charities and we were delighted to learn that you have recently been invited to join the Prime Ministers Apprenticeship Delivery scheme.

I will let The Lord Mayor tell you more about his Charitable Aims for his year in due course.

But, in the meantime, please would you accept this Cheque on behalf of Turners' Company to assist your Appeal on its way. You can also rest assured that our Company will do as much as possible to assist you and the Sheriffs with your fund raising projects during the forthcoming year.

On behalf of Turners Company, I would also like to present you with an example of our craft, a turned laburnham vessel by one of our greatest past Turners, the late Bert March.

I also have great pleasure in welcoming the two Aldermanic Sheriffs, Sheriff Alderman William Russell and Sheriff Alderman Peter Estlin.

Both Sheriffs have already made their mark with Turners as both present present at our Civic reception on the opening evening of our Wizardry in Wood exhibition at Carpenters' Hall in October.

Sheriff Russell kindly opened the exhibition and Sheriff Estlin kindly presented our prestigious "Master in Turning Award" to the very worthy winner, Liveryman Reg Hawthorne.

Sheriffs you are both most welcome.

So they don't feel too left out I am presenting each of them with a turned cocobolo wood gavel – the tool of my profession Auctioneering.

Our Wizardry in Wood Exhibition, which we only hold every four years, was an undoubted success and I would like to thank again all those Turners who helped make it so.

However, it could not have been the success it was without the generous support of our principal Sponsor, my personal Guest. Nick Mayer, Past Master Carmen, Past Master Upholder and Chairman of Consolidated Timber Holdings. Thank you Nick.

On the centre-table in the outer hall you will have noticed a magnificent artistic arrangement of roses. This is the work of our Past Mast-Master and Master Emerita, Penrose Halson.

Penrose is also an Author. Her latest book "Marriages are made in Bond Street" makes a jolly good read ...and Christmas present! Thank you so much Penrose.

I must also thank the Allan Willis, Commanding Officer of the HAC Light Cavalry for providing the Carpet Guard and the trumpeter this evening. Your men did an excellent job.

Finally, before I propose the civic toast, I would like to relate a story told me by the previous Assistant City Town Clerk, Peter Nelson, who, like our current Lord Mayor, has a wonderful sense of humour.

It was the evening before Christmas Eve.

Father Christmas had just arrived home in a very bad mood.

He had had a terrible day and everything had gone wrong.

It had had been blowing a blizzard all day up at the North Pole

Rudolph had gone down with a stinking cold.

One of the runners had come off the sleigh.

The elves had still only wrapped half the presents

And they still hadn't repaired the hole in his sack, made when he got stuck in a chimney last year!

He felt so fed up that he decided to pour himself a very large whiskey. He slumps in his big chair and has a couple of big gulps and ...starts to feel a little better.

Just when he is feeling a little more comfortable, there is a knock on the door. *'Who the hell is this, at this time of night?'* he roars, heaving himself out of his comfortable chair.

There on the door step is a beautiful little fairy holding a very large Christmas Tree.

'Hello Fatso' she says *'Here's your Christmas Tree - Where would you like me to put it?'*

And that Ladies & Gentlemen is how the tradition of having a beautiful little fairy sitting at the top of your Christmas tree started!

I now ask the Company and Guests to be upstanding for the Civic toast.

The Toast is: The Lord Mayor, the Sheriffs and the City of London Corporation.

Approx. 1200 words