

I am tremendously proud and honoured to be elected Master. If my copy of our history is to be relied upon, adjusting for those Masters who served two or more years, I believe I am the 349th person to be Master and possibly the first Man of Kent under our Charter of 1604. I think shock and awe are the best ways to express my feelings.

My Master's year will mark my 50th year of working in the City. Paper making, which had occupied the previous five generations of my family, was not available to me. So it was, as a school leaver, I came to London not knowing what I wanted to do.

I started work with the Vestey group in Smithfield, and was introduced to everyday aspects of shipping, storage, wholesale and retail of meat and other foodstuffs along with their financing and insurance.

Not far away from Smithfield were the slightly more respectable stock exchange; discount houses; merchant banks; shipping companies and the insurance communities.

All operated in fairly close knit areas and at that time there were always so many people who knew each other scurrying around delivering or collecting all sorts of documents and engaging in all sorts of quick wit and banter.

It seemed to me I had left a small village in Kent to come to the very big village of London: I was captivated and have remained a city enthusiast ever since.

I hope I will convey that enthusiasm during the year ahead. It could be a busy one for all of us: there is a tremendous opportunity to be involved with each of our three core objectives: Company, City and Craft.

On Monday 26 November we are holding our biennial Company turning competitions and hosting competitions for members of the Association of Woodturners of Great Britain, the Society of Ornamental Turners and the Association of Pole Lathe Turners and Greenwood Workers.

All the entries to the competitions and curated collections of work by members of these organisations and the Register of Professional Turners will also be on display at our one day 'View, Love, Buy' event at Carpenters' Hall on Tuesday 27 November. Entry is free. I encourage all members of the Company to support this opportunity to understand more about our craft and to tell as many of their friends and acquaintances about the Company and its craft.

While our normal annual charitable activities will continue as usual, this year we are particularly pleased to be involved with our appeal to help with the restoration of the bells of St Paul's Cathedral. I should like to thank all those who have been involved in the appeal so far and would like to encourage all members of the Company to associate themselves with this part City and Company history.

The bells are due to be re-consecrated on Wednesday 1 November and rung for the first time to mark the centenary of the Armistice on Sunday 11 November.

The Company has enjoyed another good intake of new members. The Events Committee has been working hard to ensure we bring together new and longer established members both to enjoy livery life but also to get us all to know one another much better.

There are plans for many smaller, less formal and hopefully 'easier on the pocket' events. It is often quite difficult to get to talk to more than half a dozen people at formal dinners, so the hope is that these other events will give every member a better chance to know one another. Community life is an important part of city history. Please support as many events as you can.

During the year we will also be turning our attention to plans for Wizardry in Wood 2020.

I have many people to thank, in particular those who introduced me to the Company and have offered advice and support; the current chairs and members of our sub-committees and our ever patient Clerk, his assistant Becca and Steve Grundy our Beadle.

I would particularly like to thank Andrew Neill, Master 2017-18, and his wife Jo for their tremendous work and commitment to the Company during a demanding year. It was a great pleasure for the members of the Court to witness Andrew's father and Father of the Company, Sir Brian Neill, propose his son as Master at the 2017 Election Court. It was a great sadness that Sir Brian did not see Andrew complete his year; but Sir Brian must have been very pleased to know that his grand-daughters Ginny and Alexandra had both become Liverymen of the Turners' Company.

I am looking forward to a busy year as your Master. I also hope that you will be able to take advantage of the many City, craft and social events that are being organised and use these opportunities to introduce colleagues, family and friends to the Company.

David Batchelor

Master 2018-19