

Wardens, Liverymen, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

I am delighted to welcome you all to these very splendid surroundings of the Ironmongers' Hall. It is a great privilege to be dining here.

I was interested to discover that this is actually the fourth hall of the Ironmongers. Their previous hall was destroyed by a bomb in World War One. It is difficult to believe, but this hall was built in the 1920s by the old established construction firm of Holland Hannen and Cubitts.

Like many others in this Company, I have spent my professional life in the construction industry. I began my training in 1969 as an Articled Pupil in the estimating department of another old established firm – John Laing.

I had wanted to be a Quantity Surveyor, but I was told that estimating, where they had a vacancy, was very similar to quantity surveying. I discovered that this was, partly correct. Estimators are similar to quantity surveyors, but without the social skills. Thankfully, in my third year of training, I was allowed out on site and moved to the QS Department, where I met another young trainee by the name of David Cartwright.

It's not really that much of a coincidence that David and I both ended up as dispute resolvers and members of this Company.

But I could never have imagined that, all these years later, I would be standing in this splendid hall having received the very great honour and privilege of being installed to serve this great Company as Master.

And I undoubtedly would not be standing here tonight but for Sue, my wife and partner, and now, novelly, also my Mistress. I know I can rely on her total support in the year ahead.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Past Masters who have been so supporting and encouraging to me. When I started to list them I realised that this is going to sound like a roll call of Past Masters. But I truly would like to thank Past Masters James Mackie, Victoria Russell, Chris Dancaster, Kay Linnell, Hew Dundas, Karl Davies, Derek Ross and John Uff for their invaluable support and advice.

We are truly fortunate in this Company to have such a wealth of distinguished, talented and generous Past Masters – and I was pleased to find, upon looking at the guest list, that they and their consorts are all here with us tonight.

However, there are two amongst them who must take the majority of the credit, or possibly blame, for my being here: it is down to Chris Dancaster that I am a member of the Company at all. When I didn't respond with sufficient enthusiasm to his suggestion that I join the Company he just went behind my back and arranged it with Sue.

And it was Kay Linnell who enlisted me, plucked me from obscurity – where I was perfectly happy – to serve on the Programme Committee, and then propelled me onto the Court.

They both have a lot to answer for.

I absolutely must say a big thank you, on behalf of the Company, to our Immediate Past Master, the unflappable Michael Goodridge. I also thank Mike and Hilary personally, for all the support and encouragement they have given me and also for Mike's leadership over the past twelve months – he's set an example which I now have to live up to.

We have had an excellent year, with some memorable events and gatherings, including a visit to Mike and Hilary's glorious gardens in Wonersh, with a wonderful alfresco lunch, and just a few weeks ago a very memorable Master's Weekend in Bristol.

I am very fortunate, this year, to have the support of a very strong team, with David Wilson as Senior Warden and Sir Gary Hickinbottom as Junior Warden. And, lest we forget, the hard working Chairmen and members of our committees.

Also our Clerk, Biagio Fraulo, who has had a very steep learning curve to climb this year. As we near the end of his first year, he may shortly qualify for the title Learned Clerk.

And of course the indispensable John White, our Clerk's Assistant. What would we

year. As we near the end of his first year, he may shortly qualify for the title Learned Clerk.

And of course the indispensable John White, our Clerk's Assistant. What would we do without him? It is Biagio and John who between them have organised this evening's dinner so efficiently. My thanks to you both, and to our Beadle Jimmy James who keeps us all in order, and of course our Chaplain the Revd George Bush on whose good graces we can always rely.

Standing here tonight in the hall of one of the very oldest livery companies, I am reminded how proud I am to be part of a Modern Company.

Although we have borrowed freely from the ceremonies and traditions of the ancient Livery Companies, the Modern Companies all represent a contemporary living profession and act as a bridge between the professional bodies and the City of London.

We are one of twelve members of the Financial Services Group of Livery Companies – which acts as the Liaison group between the Lord Mayor's office and the professions. The Modern Great Twelve as Professor John Uff has called them.

The FSG's role is to ensure that when the Lord Mayor represents the City, at home or abroad, that representation also includes the Institutions that make the City the great power house of business and finance that it is – and which we fervently hope in these worrying times, it will remain.

In addition to our professional activities the Company remains seriously committed to projects concerned with education. And my focus this year will be on education, supporting literacy and school libraries, and helping disadvantaged young people. The Livery Schools Link, chaired until June this year by David Steward, organises voluntary work in improving numeracy and literacy for primary school children in deprived areas.

Our Charitable Trust, ably chaired by Philip Fidler, supports many worthwhile causes, including the Lord Mayor's appeal, assisting financially with the education of disadvantaged young people, supporting a food hub in North London, and many other charitable causes.

I believe that the pupillage scheme, run by our Education and Pupillage Committee, is the only pupillage scheme available for trainee dispute resolvers. We are continuing to expand this scheme.

Also run by our Education and Pupillage Committee, is our annual mediation/arbitration competition. This year it will be the turn of arbitration and we are grateful to Berwin Leighton Paisner for agreeing to sponsor this event once again.

All of these activities depend on your continued support for the Charitable Trust. And thanks to your generous contributions we have been able to substantially increase our charitable activities this year. We were able, for the first time, to support two students on a travelling scholarship for one month in Dubai, worth £5,000 each. This has proved to be a tremendous success and we intend to run it again next year.

Each Master, in turn, raises funds for the Charitable Trust, and I hope you will support me in my efforts. Sue and I are walking the 87 mile Ridgeway, from Avebury to the Ivinghoe Beacon, and we are inviting members to sponsor us and, if you wish, to join us for a section of the walk during the course of the year.

So, like all livery companies we have a formal side. But we are also here to enjoy ourselves and I hope to make this year an enjoyable one for everyone.

We have a number of events planned, starting with a theatre trip on 22<sup>nd</sup> November which is already almost sold out. I'm not going to list them all but we are planning a Burn's Night Supper, a tour of Sir John Soane's Museum, and a musical evening at the Charterhouse.

The highlight of the year, of course, will be our Charter Commemoration Banquet at the Mansion House on 15<sup>th</sup> May. But don't forget the Ladies Lunch at Innholders Hall on 30<sup>th</sup> June. Or the Spring, Masters and Clerks Lunch on board HQS Wellington on 9<sup>th</sup> February.

Sue and I are also organising two weekends away in 2017.

The Hay Festival Weekend on 26<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> May. We will be staying at The Castle House Hotel in Hereford, a lovely City with lots to see including the Mappa Mundi, but our main purpose is to visit the Hay Literary Festival.

And the Master's Weekend, on 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> September, will be held in Dartmouth. We will be staying at the Dart Marina Hotel, where every bedroom overlooks the River

main purpose is to visit the Hay Literary Festival.

And the Master's Weekend, on 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> September, will be held in Dartmouth. We will be staying at the Dart Marina Hotel, where every bedroom overlooks the River Dart. We will be visiting the Naval College as well as being transported back in time, by ferry, steam train and charabanc to Greenway, the Devon home of Agatha Christie.

Returning to our guests, I add my own welcome to the representatives of our affiliate units from Her Majesty's Armed Forces, Major Mark Gubby accompanied by his wife Anne, and my congratulations to the prize winner Sergeant instructor Alister Notridge.

Unfortunately, as you know, for the second year in succession, HMS Mersey is in sunnier climes and cannot be represented here tonight. However, we are finding ways to get round that and I would like to thank the Commander and Crew of HMS Mersey for the hospitality extended to Ken Maclean when he visited her only last week (not at the Company's expense I hasten to add) while she was docked at Piraeus, Athens, where Ken presented the award for last year's Sailor of the Year. We are planning to make a similar on-board presentation at some point next year. It is a pleasure to welcome also several new Liverymen and Freemen. We have with us tonight Maria Theresa Trofaier who was admitted to the Livery today, along with three new Freemen, two of whom are with us tonight: David Canning and James Clancy.

Finally, I welcome our principal guests, The Hon Mr Justice Edwards-Stuart and Lady Edwards-Stuart.

I am delighted that Mr Justice Edwards-Stuart was able to accept my invitation to speak this evening. He started practice at the Bar in 1978 after completion of pupillage, following ten years as a regular Army officer in the 1st Royal Tank Regiment.

His practice was based mainly on insurance and reinsurance, professional negligence, construction and other technical disputes. He was appointed QC and Assistant Recorder in 1991. He was subsequently appointed a Deputy High Court Judge, and was elected Head of Chambers in 2005.

He was appointed a High Court Judge in 2009 and has been Judge in Charge of the Technology and Construction Court since September 2013. I am very pleased, and relieved, to say that, so far, he has not been asked to enforce one of my decisions. So, now I ask all members of the Company to stand and drink a toast to our guests. Our guests.