

SPEECH AT SPRING LUNCHEON
8th February 2018

by the Master – Eur Ing David M Wilson

Wardens, Aldermen, Liverymen, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen. It is my great pleasure and privilege to welcome you all, especially our guests, to this Spring Luncheon in the magnificent surroundings of the Apothecaries Hall.

A particularly warm welcome to our Principal Guest this afternoon Ms Victoria Russell with her husband Steve Lawrence. Victoria is the Deputy Chairman of the City of London Livery Committee. She is both Past Master Arbitrator and Past Master Constructor. She has been a partner at Fenwick Elliott solicitors for a number of years and whilst she has vast experience across a wide range of topics I suspect that construction is one of her favourites. We shall look forward to hearing from her later.

We also welcome The Honourable Liz Green, a candidate for non-aldermanic Sheriff, here as a guest of Past Master Goodridge.

I give a special recognition to Liveryman Nicola Cohen who has today joined the Court as a Court Assistant.

I extend a particular welcome to the masters, in one case an immediate past master, and their clerks from twenty livery companies here with us today. All are resplendent with their dazzling badges of office.

The origins of the livery movement go way back but this is so well known to all present I need hardly progress into the detail. I will however mention that the representative of the earliest company here with us today is the Master Woolman whose company was founded in the same year that Louis VII King of France died. That was 1180.

I will at this point mention that today is the 92nd birthday of Sir Francis McWilliams former Lord Mayor, Past Master Arbitrator and Past Master Engineer.

I now rush ahead to the year of the General Strike - 1926 - when the Honourable Company of Master Mariners was formed. They stand as Company No. 78 and are acknowledged as the first of the modern livery companies.

Since then there has been a steady increase in the number of livery companies until at the present day there are some 110 companies. Our Company, the Arbitrators, was founded in 1981 and we were granted our Royal Charter in 2012. At company No.93 we are squarely within the Modern Livery Companies. Our Royal Charter requires us "to foster the profession of arbitration and other forms of private dispute resolution". So that encompasses not just arbitration but also adjudication, mediation and a number of related formats all focussed on private dispute resolution. We pride ourselves in being the preeminent organisation in the City concerned with those services. We are somewhat unusual in that the activities of our members extend across a wide range of professions. The legal profession, engineering, surveying, accountancy, banking, insurance, maritime, the medical profession and so on.

It is also our proud boast to be a member of the City's Financial Services Group of livery companies. This group of 12 companies aims to support the Lord Mayor by providing advice to him, the Court of Aldermen and the City Corporation across the entire range of financial and related services. The FSG multi-discipline knowledge base supplies a ready source of key information to assist the Lord Mayor and others in

promotion of London and the UK both in overseas visits and at home. I am pleased to welcome eight of the other eleven masters of the FSG companies here today.

Since my installation in Skinners Hall on the twenty fourth of October we have had a number of notable events. Our annual seminar was held at Keating Chambers, this year under the title 'Starting as an arbitrator: how to do it'. The keynote address was given by our own Liveryman, Mrs Justice O'Farrell DBE, and we had many notable contributions from our own Liverymen, from officers of arbitral institutions and speakers from a range of bodies all associated with dispute resolution. Such was the attendance that it became necessary to keep bringing more chairs into the conference room. It was very gratifying to see that so many were interested in learning about dispute resolution activities. The evening proved a great success and we thank Past Master Professor John Uff QC and Liveryman Robert Gaitskell QC for their skilful organisation of the event.

Then there was the annual Carol Concert held in conjunction with the City of London Solicitors Company at the Company's church, St Mary le Bow, with our chaplain The Reverend George Bush presiding. This was, as usual, a fine occasion in the run up to Christmas and the service was followed by a supper for about thirty of us in a rather rowdy restaurant.

Our Mediation Competition took place over the weekend of the twentieth and twenty-first of January at the offices of the International Dispute Resolution Centre, Fleet Street. The contestants were twelve teams assembled by universities, firms of solicitors and barristers chambers and they competed in rounds throughout the weekend. There was considerable enthusiasm demonstrated not only by the young contestants but also by the organising committee of Chris McArdle, Nicola Cohen, Joy Davies and Phillippa Rowe and the other twenty or so organisers and judging panellists. The winning team was from 39 Essex Chambers. We are very grateful for all the support offered for the Mediation Competition by our several sponsors who enabled the weekend to be such a great success.

Last week a party of us made a theatre trip to see 'Witness for the Prosecution' by Agatha Christie at the old County Hall. The former Council Chamber was an ideal venue for the production and I recommend the play and the venue for anyone who has not yet seen it.

As for the future, our next significant event is the eagerly awaited Master's Lecture which is to be held on the thirteenth of March at the offices of Simmons and Simmons solicitors. The lecture will be presented by Lord Dyson, former Justice of the Supreme Court and former Master of the Rolls and Head of Civil Justice. The title of the lecture is 'What are the proper limits to the immunity of arbitrators?' And for those of wondering, that is not quite as dry a subject as you might think.

I must also mention our Charity steered for several years now under the wise and effective Chairmanship of our Court Assistant Philip Fidler. The Charity has a number of aims. It encourages the advancement of dispute resolution by scholarships, grants and prizes. One such activity worthy of mention is the grant for two individuals, who demonstrate attainments on the threshold of their legal careers, to visit Dubai for one month each to experience and learn about court, arbitral and dispute resolution practices there. Candidates are being vetted right now for trips in April and May. The Charity also supports young people, youth projects and education works. One such project supported, Authors Aloud, is intended to encourage reading by primary school youngsters by having real live authors visit schools to read and discuss their books. The Past Mistress Sue Bastone has championed this particular initiative in the Company. And finally but not least, our Charity contributes to the charitable aims of the Lord Mayor and the City of London.

Our Company also supports the military through our affiliation with 13 Company Army Cadet Force and with HMS Mersey of the Royal Navy. This morning the Court approved a proposal for affiliation with a squadron of the Royal Air Force and I am directed to sign the appropriate documents as soon as possible.

I thank our Learned Clerk, Biagio Fraulo and our Clerk's Assistant, John White for masterminding arrangements here today. And I thank our mighty Beadle Jimmy and the Reverend George Bush for their detailed attentions to this event. After a splendid meal we must also thank the staff attending at Apothecaries Hall for us today.

To conclude I now ask the Members of the Worshipful Company of Arbitrators to rise, and to drink the health of 'Our Guests'

'Our Guests'.