

Speech by the Master, Michael Stephens, 19 July 2006

Senior Warden,

My Lord Bishop,

Sir David,

Liveryman,

Ladies and gentlemen

Welcome everyone on this special occasion.

My first task is a very pleasant one. It is to thank our Chaplain, **George Bush**. George led us in our worship tonight as he has done in years past. Once again he did it with his unique charm and sincerity.

He led us in our grace this evening; as always, witty and thoughtful.

We are very lucky to have you as our Chaplain, George, and we hope that it will be an association that will last for a long time yet. Thank you for being with us.

Another substantial contribution to the memory of this evening has been the music during our service. Once again, the choir was under the direction of **Alan Wilson**. He has been a fixture – if he will let me call him that – of St Mary le Bow for many years and he has always produced sparkling music for our annual services.

This year he surpassed himself. He directed the choir to produce the fantastic sounds that we have heard year upon year. But he also composed for the Company an anthem to celebrate this 25th anniversary.

“The Lord Knows the Way of Righteousness” was inspired by the writings in Psalm 1. I hope that you, like me, felt that the music and words were a very fitting part of our service and that they will become a regular part of the Company’s worship.

Alan, thank you for your composition and your contribution to a very important aspect of the Company’s life. Your work deserves wider recognition among the livery Companies. It should be part of the canon of choral music associated with the City.

On the 17th March 1981 the Company of Arbitrators was granted livery at a meeting of the Court of Mayor and Aldermen of the City of London at Guildhall. Thus it became the 93rd in the list of livery companies created by the City. Just over 25 years have passed since that day and a further 14 companies have been created. As modern livery companies go, we are actually becoming quite established.

Tonight we celebrate our silver anniversary of that grant of livery and we do so in marvellous surroundings, with friends old and new. Although 25 years is but a mere bagatelle by the standards of the livery companies of the City it is nonetheless a significant anniversary to us and, I hope you agree, one that deserves to be celebrated.

You will know that our founder Master was the late **John Phillips QC**. Going through the directory of the livery I found that there are still with us some 23 members of the Company

who were clothed in the livery in 1981. Of those liveryman a number have served on the Court and no less than four of them have gone to be chairman or president of the Chartered Institute. I would like to think that our founder Master would be very pleased with those achievements.

Our links with the Chartered Institute remain strong and if you should go into Bloomsbury Square look in the stairwell and there next to the grant of coat of arms to Lord Diplock you will find framed and affixed to the wall our grant of livery. Just as that document remains strongly attached to the wall so do our feelings towards the Chartered Institute. We look forward to continuing to foster our link with it.

Not everyone who played a part in the foundation of this Company could be here tonight. I bring you warmest greetings from **Bertie Vigrass**, who acted as our Honorary Clerk in the early years and from **Clifford Clark**, the senior Past Master. I know that you would join me in sending them our good wishes in return.

We are delighted to see with us tonight **Past Master Colonel Bill Armstrong and Louise**. Bill has been a stalwart of the Company and we really appreciate you both coming down from the Wirral to be with us on this special occasion.

May I be permitted to mention a couple of others here tonight? Perhaps they would be good enough to rise so that we might greet them better.

This afternoon at the Court meeting, we have the pleasure of admitting to the freedom of the Company **Michael Forbes Smith**, the Director-General of the Chartered Institute **and Paul Rose**, a chartered valuation surveyor, chartered arbitrator and member of the President's panel.

I welcome you both and hope that you will have many happy years membership of this Company.

May I be forgiven for singling out two other individuals as well please?

Firstly, **Past Master James Mackie**. As you will shortly find, James has written a concise and very readable history of the Company up to the present time. This booklet will be distributed to all the other livery companies and City institutions as well as to our Liveryman and Freeman.

I would like to pay a particular tribute to James for all the work that he has put into the production of this history. It is a great testament to his commitment to the success of this Company and you have our unstinting thanks for what you have done.

The other individual that I should like to mention is Liveryman **Rodney Oliver**. He undertook a 10 km sponsored run to support the Treloar Trust, the chosen charity of the Lord Mayor. The Company has given support to the charity and I am delighted to tell you that through his own efforts and on completing the race in 58 minutes Rodney has been able to add some £500 to the appeal. You have our admiration and congratulations.

May I turn now to our guests?

Master Constructor, Robert Craig, like many of us, is a member of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators. He has spent his working life with the Bovis Group -- where he was responsible for some award winning projects including the Arts Centre at Christ's Hospital,

his old school. Subsequently, he was Chief Executive of Kyle Stewart Management and a director of Trafalgar House Construction Management before forming his own construction consultancy business. The number of significant projects in which Master Constructor has been involved are many and various and include some of the best-known public buildings in the country.

But life has not been all work and no play. In addition to his enjoyment of family life he has manfully shouldered the burdens of sailing, golfing, gardening and walking, whilst at the same time leading his livery with great distinction.

Master Constructor, you are most welcome.

Master Furniture Maker, Nicholas Radford, comes from a family of furniture makers, beginning his career with the family firm Stag Furniture before working with other companies both here and abroad. Today he runs a small group of companies manufacturing leather upholstery and importing other furniture products. He is the fourth member of his family to become the Master.

Like Master Constructor, Master Furniture Maker enjoys sailing; he still finds time for salmon fishing, travel and skiing.

His ambition during his year as Master is to prove the relevance of his livery company to the industry today. I would say that such an ambition was not a lofty ideal. The modern companies are highly relevant to their respective crafts, providing an outlet for social and charitable activities as well as overseeing further education. We have no doubt that with its various awards, prizes and grants, the Worshipful Company of Furniture Makers is entirely relevant to the furniture industry in all its aspects. The thriving membership of the Furniture Makers can have every confidence in you as its Master.

Master Furniture Maker, you, together with your clerk, Mrs Wright, are most welcome.

Master Solicitor, Karen Richardson, spend several years in private practice in the city before moving into industry where she is now Group Company Secretary of Novar PLC. Her company operates in three main segments: Intelligent Building Systems (fire alarms, security systems, environmental controls, and other products), then in aluminum extrusions for consumer goods, construction, and transportation, and finally in Security Printing Services (such as cheque printing). In 2005 Honeywell International made a successful multi-billion dollar bid to acquire the company.

Her interests are not confined to the City of London. She is a former Chairman of the National Association of Women Solicitors and a governor of Reed's School in Cobham.

Master Solicitor, you and your clerk, Neil Cameron, are most welcome.

I have not quite finished our livery connections.

Our two other principal guests are both liveryman.

His Grace the Bishop of London has also been able to join us for dinner this evening, together with Mrs Chartres. We are most honoured.

My Lord Bishop, you are a liveryman of the Drapers Company, the Merchant Taylors Company and the an honorary liveryman of the Leathersellers Company. There is no doubt that you are a supporter of the City of London. .

I think you most sincerely for addressing us at our service at St Mary le Bow this evening. Your thoughtful words will be a source of great inspiration for us. We welcome you both

Sir David Steel is a judge of the High Court. He is the Admiralty Judge, a position for which he is entirely suited given his maritime practice in his years at the Bar. He is a liveryman of the Shipwrights Company.

In a lecture that he gave a couple of years ago he raised the question as to whether the maritime judge was actually a policeman or a salesman. A policeman in ensuring that assets were not dissipated so as to frustrate judgment creditors; and a salesman in seeking to promote the High Court as the best place for the trial of international disputes.

I would tell you that from my own knowledge of him he is most highly regarded by all who appear in front of him not just for his policing and selling but also for the good humour and obvious sense of justice that he brings to his work.

Lady Steel is also with us tonight. We welcome you both. I am thrilled that Sir David is willing to respond to the toast that I now asked the company to rise and drink with me:

Our guests