



Newsletter

THE WORSHIPFUL COMPANY OF FARMERS



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Installation of the Master and Wardens



The new Master Richard Davies, flanked by his wardens Guy Brogden (right) and Richard Crane (left)

11 October saw the installation of the new Master of the Company, Richard Davies, the elevation of Guy Brogden to Senior Warden and Richard Crane to Junior Warden.

The service, set in the magnificent Norman surroundings of the church of St Bartholomew the Great, doubled as our harvest thanksgiving. The church choir provided a wonderful musical thread throughout the service, which culminated in a stirring rendition by the congregation of 'Jerusalem'. A reception and lunch at Haberdashers Hall followed, with delicious fare provided by our own caterers, Graysons.

The new Master gave us his vision for his year, which will centre on education, with alumni from our courses giving talks at each of our lunches. Richard also gave fulsome thanks to the outgoing Master, Karen Mercer for her excellent year of wonderful events.



Meet the New Master

Richard joined the Farmers' Company in 1999 and the Court in 2016 as Chairman of the Communications Committee and then in 2019, Chairman of the Education Committee. He also sits on the management committee of the Company's Alumni Association, an organisation he was instrumental in setting up.



Richard has a degree in economics and a background in FMCG advertising.

He was CEO of one of the Saatchi & Saatchi Advertising networks before leaving to set up his own agency RDP Ltd. Quite by chance, the agency grew a substantial portfolio of major agricultural clients and as a consequence, Richard developed an abiding interest in, and passion for, the farming and food industry.

In 2007 he sold the agency to its management, but still works all around the globe, as an independent strategic consultant for large agri-industry multi-nationals.

Richard is passionate about helping to enhance and develop the essential management and leadership skills needed for a modern agricultural sector to thrive in today's tough global environment, and committed to ensuring the ongoing excellence of the Worshipful Company of Farmers' highly regarded leadership and management education portfolio.

Annual Lecture and Dinner: “The Elephant in the Farmyard”

UK Agriculture is blessed with many inspirational individuals, who are progressive in thought and practice, shaping not only their own farming businesses but a legacy for the future.

The Worshipful Company of Farmers Annual Agricultural Lecture and Dinner always aims to bring such individuals to the fore, challenging the thinking of those in the room and not shying away from topics that are often difficult to discuss.

The 2022 event, held at Plaisterers Hall on 27th April, was no exception.



Opening the event, Master Karen Mercer referred to the lecture as “the huge elephant in the farmyard”. She continued,

“Despite the importance of succession planning, 60% of family farms don’t have a written plan, though they accept that the absence of such a plan threatens the very future of their business, which has taken a lifetime to build.

“Two thirds of those family members looking to take on the farm believe that being unable to talk about it is the biggest barrier – and one in four believe that doing so will create family conflict!

“This shows what a thorny issue succession planning can be, both for the business and the assets, it is often left, to be dealt with another day.”

With over 35 years of working on succession, Professor Matt Lobley from the University of Exeter asked the audience “what is fair and what is equal?”. He highlighted how often succession is viewed as handing over assets, when the focus should be the handing over of management control over time. Matt explained,

“Ownership and management are often one and the same in farming, but this can change with succession. We need to be mindful of the emotional ownership – who you are and what you do is all tied up with the farm. We all need to see succession and the costs associated with it as an investment in the future of your farm, and your personal life.”

He continued by dispelling some of the myths that make succession such a difficult topic to tackle.

“You need to prepare yourself and your family. Before you bring in any legal help, you need to work out what you want as a family. Bring in an external facilitator, sit down, discuss your options, and try to make the decisions before you seek advice on how to practically implement it.

“Succession is all about preparing yourself. It takes time to prepare a successor. Share and delegate management over a number of years, don’t expect to do it all at once.”

During his Lecture, Matt demonstrated how far farming has progressed, despite the challenges still facing conversations linked to succession. He told the story of one family who believed they had no succession, commenting "I've not got a successor; I've just got two daughters". Today, whilst this may still be the view of some, Matt explained that everyone is now considered in succession planning.

This was demonstrated by the second speaker of the evening, James Small, who farms at the Cheddar Gorge. James shared his first-hand experience of working across generations, with complex family issues including the loss of both his Father and Uncle.

The farming enterprise is made up of both owned and tenanted land, primarily grazing cattle and sheep. In the 1940's his Grandfather moved to the farm and prepared a simple will, leaving the farming business in a trust that was to be setup for the lifetime of his Grandmother. James described her as being as strong as an Ox as she went on to live for another 35 years after his Grandfather's passing!

It was only in 2010 that the family realised there was nothing in place to protect them and the farming business. The difficulty of discussing succession felt too big a leap, and the conversation was put on hold.

"In 2012 I joined the Rural Leadership course. It focused the mind and reinforced the need for succession, and more importantly new approaches on how to tackle it. Every time I stepped into the house, I would revert back to feeling like a small child, so we found neutral territory where everyone felt comfortable to speak. We didn't look at it in terms of what we wanted but instead what we wanted for our children. This helped us decide what was right for the future. The most important aspect for me and my wife was time. You don't get it back, so we didn't want to waste what time we do have."

It took two years for James and the family to complete their succession plan but because they knew what they wanted, it provided more focused legal conversations. They ensured the solicitor and accountant were round the table at the same time, so they could help identify elements that the family might not have.

"Be clear about what you want and don't be afraid to spend money. You have to see it as an investment and working towards a succession plan that everyone wants to achieve together. Take time and listen to all those involved - two ears and one mouth - but remember plans and circumstances can change too, so continually review and refresh the plan."

His final words summed up his own journey, "better to have it and not need it, than need it and not have it." The final speaker was Abigail Bird of Laurus Law who discussed legal and tax issues. She explained the importance of getting the right legal advice and at the appropriate time. During the evening, The Master paid tribute to Past Master Lord Plumb who passed away earlier this year.

"Henry was a truly inspirational international leader. He committed his life to the service of the farming community on so many fronts. He stood up for what he believed in and made sure that the voice of UK Agriculture was heard loud and clear.

"Ensuring there was a future for the generations to come, within our farming industry, was at the heart of so much that he set out to achieve. Which is clearly demonstrated by his legacy of The Henry Plumb Foundation. He was always approachable and had time for others..... So many of us here this evening are indebted to him.

"On a personal level, my friendship with Henry spans many years and I had the great privilege of being able to call him my Godfather for the past 17 years, behind which lies another story! We spent enjoyable times together, of which I have very fond memories and the greatest of respect for a truly wonderful gentleman. He will be greatly missed."

The Agricultural Lecture and Dinner was kindly sponsored by Frontier.

Visit to Parliament



On the 16th May, 28 Liverymen and friends visited the Houses of Parliament kindly arranged by the Master, whose nephew Robbie Moore, has been the MP for Keighley and Ilkley, in N Yorkshire since 2019.

It's certainly useful to have people in the know, as we were also hosted by Lord John Taylor of Holbeach - a fellow Liveryman.

We arrived promptly at 9.00am on Monday morning, which is a good time to visit because parliamentary proceedings do not start until after lunch on a Monday, allowing time for MP's from distant constituencies to return to London.

This meant we could see many places, either close-up or behind the scenes, not normally open to the public, with some of us even visiting the private loo facilities built for Queen Victoria. Standing in the middle of the Lords or Commons chambers shows a very different perspective to the one we see on TV, as this time it's us on the inside looking out.

We ended our tour with a most enlightening Q&A session in the Commons committee room which hosts the 1922 Committee – the scene of recent tumultuous events.

After leaving Westminster we hot-footed across town to the Guildhall private dining facilities in the City of London for a welcome drinks reception and lunch.

Thank you to the Master for arranging everything for us, with the whole event running very smoothly from start to finish.

It must be said, that one of the wonderful benefits of being a Liveryman is visiting places not always open to the public and enjoying special camaraderie along the way.



The Inter-Livery Clay Day

The Inter-Livery clay day took place at the Holland & Holland shooting ground on 18 May.

The Company fielded two teams, captained by Tony Alston and Jeremy Finnis.

Another sunny day meant shooting in shirtsleeves, with even the Master having a go at one of the flushes. She claims to have hit at least one! Our teams did not reach the giddy results of last year, but came respectably in the upper half.

Next year's event will be held on 16-17 May at the West London Shooting School. Liverymen who are interested in taking part should contact Tony Alston (tonyalston@hotmail.com)



Livery Platinum Birthday Luncheon

7 June saw the Livery's 70th (Platinum) birthday luncheon after Common Hall, the annual occasion which all Liverymen can attend to hear about the business of the Company and all the latest news.

Stuart Roberts and John Wilson were clothed as Liverymen at the meeting and welcomed by the Company at the capacity lunch in the Great Hall. Our new caterers, Grayson's, excelled themselves with the quality of food and service on the special occasion.



The principal guest at the lunch was President of the NFU, Minette Batters, who gave an impassioned speech of two halves. She reflected on some of the defining moments of her time at the NFU over the past eight and a half years, the major challenges the industry has faced during this period with Brexit, the pandemic and now the war in Ukraine, and confirmed that her focus has always remained on food production.

However, she acknowledged that both policymakers and the public have become deeply disconnected with the people who produce our food, forgetting that without agriculture there is no food, and called for a statutory underpinning of food production.

Looking to the future, Minette shared the success story that has been the Environmental Farmers Group in exploring the value of natural capital and most importantly, building a financial portfolio – a prime example of what the NFU is looking to achieve for its members on the journey to net zero.

Beyond that and with COP27 on the horizon, she argued that that there is a massive opportunity for this government to lead the green economy, the most important requirement of which is a single agreed carbon metric, and - especially – and a reliable tool for measuring it.

The toast to the company was proposed by the force of nature that is our oldest Liveryman, the incomparable centenarian Olive Clarke OBE JP DL. Olive had us all in stitches with her wry comments. All who were lucky enough to hear it agreed that it was one of the best speeches ever heard at one of our events, receiving an unprecedented standing ovation at the end.

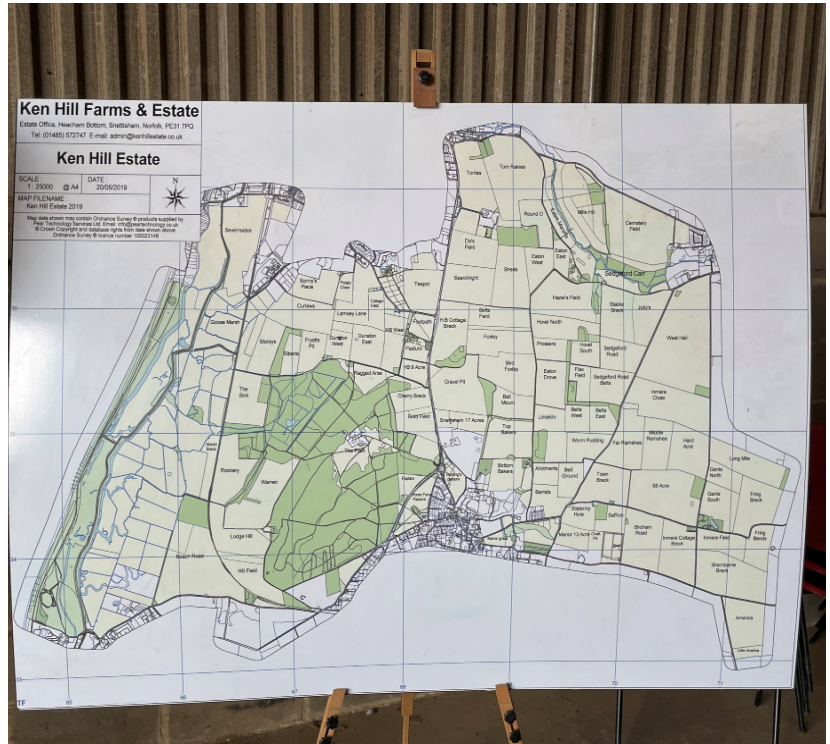


Visits to Knepp and Wild Ken Hill Estates

The first Farmers Company and WCF Alumni Association joint estate visit took place at Knepp near Horsham, Sussex, on 31st May 2022. WCF Alumnus Russ Carrington (CRL 2018), the current estate manager, kindly hosted the day for the thirty attending.

Following a trailer ride through parts of the estate the group were given a brief overview of the 20-year history of rewilding on the estate in the historic Granary barn.

Laurie Jackson, the safari guide, led a walking tour through the rewilded area and pointed out flora and fauna which had developed over time with a system of non-intervention. En route the group visited the glamping site but turned down the offer of some wild swimming



After an excellent lunch in the Granary the tour continued with a visit to the regenerative area of the estate.

The group saw mob grazing in action including a move to a new area - it was fascinating to see how with the use of GPS technology cattle movements could be controlled. Another new enterprise on the estate was the pastured poultry with eggs being sold in the local area.

The final part of the visit was to see the new market garden and farm shop building site. We all agreed Russ provided us a wonderful and insightful day.

On 22 September, Liveryman Nick Padwick, the Estate Director, hosted a joint Livery and Alumni Association visit to Wild Ken Hill, the site of the BBC's Spring and Autumn Watch watch. Dominic Buscall, who with his father Harry owns the Estate, introduced the regeneration and wilding project, aided by ecologist Hetty Grant.

The Estate includes coastal scrub, freshwater marshes, heathland and woodland habitats, also now home to Norfolk's first population of beavers for hundreds of years.

Intricate dams and structures have been created by the beavers and there were highly visible signs of their feeding, After a delicious farmhouse lunch provided by Michelle Padwick the visit continued with the regenerative section of the Estate.

Enhancing the soil ecosystem is very much a central tenet of regenerative systems. Using RTK GPS guidance systems the estate is using a Horizon direct drill to establish strips of a mixture of clover, ribgrass, shepherd's parsley and burnet. The area between these strips are then drilled to a cereal crop. The group were fascinated in the working demonstration of producing compost teas for soil amelioration.

The WCFA are planning two more visits for 2023. Watch this space.

Deaths



It is with deep sadness that we mark in this Newsletter the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, who died on the 8th of September 2022.

A staunch supporter of all things rural, with horses and dogs especially close to her heart, Her Majesty's unprecedented 70-year reign was a shining example of unwavering devotion to duty.

We are indeed fortunate to count members of her family among our most loyal supporters. His Majesty King Charles III has been an honorary Liveryman since 1980 and The Princess Royal was Master of the Company in 2001-2.

It is also with sadness and regret that we announce the deaths of the following:

Julian Hickman Proctor OBE of Onslow house, 124 St. James Road, Long Sutton, Spalding who died on the 14th October 2022. He was Clothed on the 12th March 1990

Denis Parton of Merefield of 43 Birchin Lane, Nantwich, Cheshire CW5 6JU who died on the 14th September 2022. He was Clothed on the 11th October 2006

Mr Mark Peter Hill of Eastfield, Flax Bourton, Somerset who died on the 4th September 2022. He was Clothed on the 11th November 2013

Trevor William Kemsley who died on the 13th May 2022
He was Clothed on the 13th December 1966 and was Master 1986-7

Announcements & Events

The following were admitted as Freemen at the Court at meetings held on the 6th October 2022

Catherine Clare Brenner Robinson
Proposed following interview by Karen J Mercer
Seconded following interview by David H Bolton

Paul Jonathan Fosh
Proposed by Jeremy Finnis DL
Seconded by Lance Lepper

Sebastian John Edwards
Proposed by Christopher Day
Seconded by Philip Wynn

The following Freemen were Clothed with the Livery at the Court Meeting on the 6th June 2022

John Smith Wilson - Stuart Francis Robert

The following were admitted as Freemen at the Court at meetings held on the 6th October 2022

The Lord Thomas Charles Raynham
Proposed by: Poul Jorgen Hovesen
Seconded by: David John Hargreaves Bolton

Mr Wilfred Emmanuel-Jones
Proposed by: Richard Edward Davies
Seconded by: Karen Jayne Mercer

Mrs Sarah Jane Handbury Cowrick
Proposed by: William Andrew Lindsay Gemmill
Seconded by: Karen Jayne Mercer

Mr Ashley Christopher Hodson Behagg
Proposed by: William Richard Thomas Crane
Seconded by: Geoffrey John Dodgson

Mr Jonathan Nicholas Baltesz
Proposed by: William Richard Thomas Crane
Seconded by: Mark Peter Hill

24th November 2022
Past Masters' Meeting & Luncheon
11.00am Farmers & Fletcherers' Hall

29th & 30th November 2022
WCFA Learning Extension Days
Loughborough University

6th December 2022
Court Meeting 9.30am & Livery Lunch at 12:15pm
Painters' Hall

13th December 2022
6pm Carol Service at St Bartholomew the Great
followed by Dinner at Butchers' Hall (Lounge Suit)

18th January 2023
6.15pm Annual Banquet, (Evening Dress)
Goldsmiths' Hall

21st February 2023
Inter-Livery Pancake Races,
11.30am Guildhall Yard

25th April 2023
Agricultural Lecture & Dinner
6.00pm Plaisterers' Hall (Black Tie)
Guest speaker; Kathryn Bishop CBE on quality training and education.

9th May 2023
Call My Wine Bluff at Lansdowne Club

15th May 2023
City Food Lecture

An update on our Courses

Another great year for applications to all our courses, with both the Advanced Course in Agricultural Business Management and The Challenge of Rural Leadership being over subscribed.

The MBA and the Business Growth Programme at Cranfield have also had a full take-up of places.

PLEASE NOTE: we have a change in the closing date for ACABM applications for the 72nd course in 2023:

THE CLOSING DATE IS 30th APRIL, with interviews on 5th and 6th July 2023.

Livery Apprenticeships

Your Livery Needs You!

As a dynamic, forward-looking livery, we understand the importance of engaging the younger generation. Not only does this secure our strong future it also brings a youthful energy to the Company.

One way we do this is through our apprentice scheme, which is open to farming and non-farming applicants. Here, a Liveryman nominates a friend or family member aged between 15 and 21. Once sworn in the apprentice is expected to attend a minimum of one luncheon a year. At the end of the apprenticeship term (between four and eight years), they are offered a year's free membership of the Alumni Association.

On completion of their apprenticeship they are entitled to become a Freeman of the Company by Servitude, which is significantly cheaper than the alternative route of Redemption and thereafter to progress to full membership of the Livery, again at a reduced fee.

There are about thirty Liverymen by Servitude, and a total of four active apprenticeships, with the majority completing their term within the next 12 months.

Please encourage a young person you think suitable to apply – for further guidance contact:

Grant Burton: grant@wilberfoss.com, 01759 380244 or 07759 136677

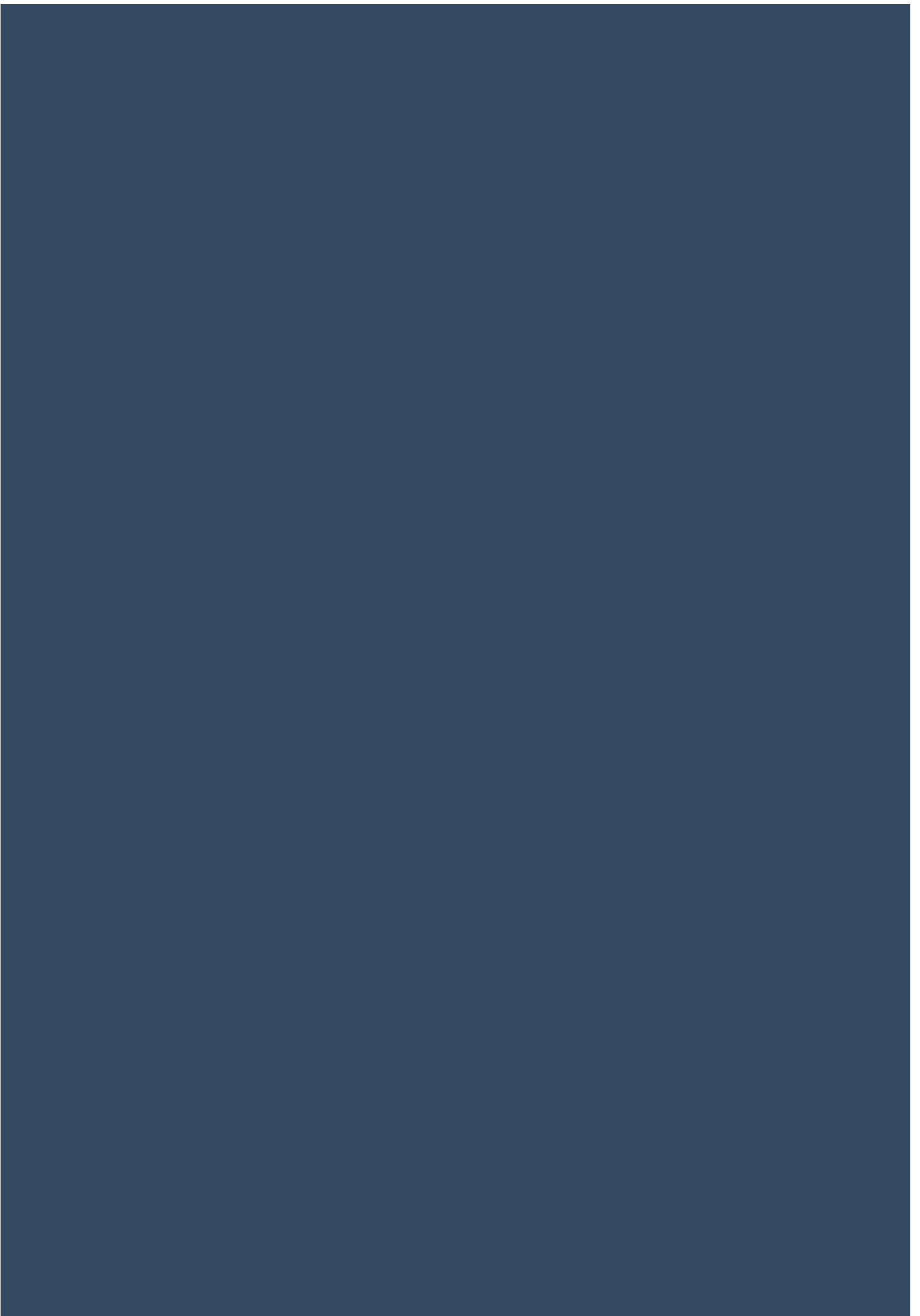
Or the Clerk, Graham Bamford clerk@farmerslivery.org.uk, 020 8326 2945

Please do visit our website (www.farmerslivery.org.uk) for some of the other recent news of the company, eg the Master's Summer Visit and the Livery Familiarisation Day

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Clerk: Mr Graham Bamford, FIH MI, 24 Herons Place, Old Isleworth, Middlesex TW7 7BE Tel: 020 8326 2945. Email clerk@farmerslivery.org.uk

Editor: Mr Richard Davies Tel: 01285 851675, email richard@redcomms3d.com

Design: Jane Craigie Marketing. email hello@janecraigie.com





The Worshipful Company of Farmers

Farmers & Fletchers Hall
3 Cloth St, London, EC1A 7LD
United Kingdom

For more information, contact the Clerk

• email: clerk@farmerslivery.org.uk • phone: 020 8326 2945 • website: www.farmerslivery.org.uk