



Newsletter

THE WORSHIPFUL COMPANY OF FARMERS



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Immediate Past Master - Karen Mercer - picks out the highlights of her year in office, in which we celebrated the Company's 70th anniversary

New five-year strategic plan for the Company

In this issue, we have included the new five-year strategic plan for the Company



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The Master and Wardens led the Company's Jubilee themed float, accompanied by representatives of the NFU, Massey Ferguson, Red Tractor and Surrey Docks Farm

Master's Musings....

A great deal has happened since the last newsletter dropped through your letterboxes. Not the least of which has been the appointment of a new team, Agri-hub, managed by Olivia Cooper, to organise and produce our newsletters. Jeremy Finnis, as Chairman of the Fellowship and Funding committee, has been the mastermind behind the whole process, as well as occasional writer, whipper-in for content and central liaison with the agency. I hope you will agree with me, he has done a fantastic job!

I also want to make mention of the loose insert you will have seen drop out of this edition of the newsletter - The Worshipful Company of Farmers - Five Year Strategic Plan. The Deputy Master, Philip Wynn was the instigator of this project, and led the team that produced it. As a Company we all owe Philip and his team a vote of thanks for the hours they spent on this.

What has been created is a really important document, and I want to encourage you all to spend a few minutes reading it. This plan, alongside the recently published booklet on Structure Governance and Responsibilities - which will in future be given to every new member of the Company - form the basis of all the Company's decision-making, planning and policy going forward. They are both very important documents - I hope you find them helpful, clear and informative.

In terms of other activities - I am pleased to report that the new online application system which I have been working on with Stephen Watkins; Chairman of Education, and Assistant Clerk, Duncan Couper, went live at the end of March. We have already received in excess of 30 applications for the 2023 Advanced Course in Agricultural Business Management via this new application portal. The portal will in future have a transformational effect on our ability to organise, manage, track and record the progress of applicants and delegates.

Post-Covid, I am delighted that we have this year been able to run a full calendar of events, and it is reassuring to be able to say that all of them have all been well attended. A highlight for



me has been listening to some excellent speeches by our course alumni. It is clear that the time and effort we all put into supporting our Educational Portfolio continues to be more than worthwhile. Our courses make an impact that is felt, through our alumni, throughout the industry. By concentrating our efforts in this relatively narrow area we are able to punch well above our weight.

Our relationship with Chefs In Schools, heralded by Henry Dimbleby at the Banquet, is beginning to develop quite nicely. Interestingly, we have been able to make a connection between the Chefs in Schools team and our friends at Surrey Docks Farm - who are helping Woodmansterne School in Streatham, a flagship Chefs in Schools project - to develop their own community farm and garden.

While it feels to me like the year is flying by, there is still plenty to come. By the time you receive this newsletter, the Agricultural Lecture (reported elsewhere) will have been held, and I hope thoroughly enjoyed by a mix of Liverymen, corporate and personal guests - and importantly, many of our alumni.

A couple of events I want to mention in particular. May 9 will see the second WCF Wine Bluff evening take place at the Lansdowne Club - if you haven't booked yet, you will be missing a great evening - and it's a fundraiser too - so get in touch with the Clerk if you want

to join us. Then from the May 30 to June 1, we have the Master's Summer Visit - with a trip down to Glorious Gloucestershire, and in particular the King's own private garden at Highgrove. Again, if you are not yet on the list, the Clerk can still probably fit you in.

It is an honour and privilege to be Master of the Company for a year, and I am thoroughly enjoying it so far. So here's to an equally fun and productive second half of my year.

Livery Familiarisation Day

Held this year on June 12, this event is open to all Liverymen and provides a fascinating introduction to the City Livery Companies and their extraordinary traditions. Meet at the Hall at 10.30. Includes lunch and a walking tour.



WCF Annual Banquet - the full report



Henry Dimbleby, MBE, makes his point about how important school meals can be for the less well-off

Held in the magnificent surroundings of Goldsmith's Hall on 16 January 2023, the Annual Banquet was indeed a feast for all the senses. Our Clerk Graham Bamford, ably assisted by his dashing assistant, Duncan Couper, pulled out all the stops on the night.

A sparkling champagne reception accompanied by a string quartet was

followed by a delicious dinner with a selection of delectable wines. Ted Prior, our Beadle, kept things ticking along in his usual authoritative fashion (accompanied by a knowing glint), ably assisted by stewards from the Westminster Dragoons.

Senior Warden Guy Brogden welcomed the guests and gave a

fascinating summary of the somewhat chequered history of the Hall over the centuries. In his toast to the Guests, the Master described the events of his year so far – astonishingly already a third of the way through – and announced the Company's support for the 'Chefs in Schools' initiative.

In reply, Henry Dimbleby MBE, adviser to Government on food policy issues and proprietor of the 'Leon' restaurant chain, emphasised the effect on the nation's health, and finances, of diet, giving the frightening explosion of type-2 diabetes as a graphic example.

He went on to describe how important school meals can be for the less well-off, and the work of 'Chefs in Schools', which he co-founded. He described how his children wouldn't believe the pageantry of the evening, and so took a 'selfie' in front of the gathering to prove the fact!

The ceremony of the 'Loving Cup, the Post Horn Gallop competition by our two buglers, the rendering of 'To Be a Farmers Boy' and a superb solo performance by soprano Hilary Cronin made for a wonderful, memorable evening, enjoyed by all.



Eminent explorer Sir David Hempleman-Adams enjoys the reception with Liveryman Chris Philpot

The Lord Mayor's Show

Saturday 12 November saw the Master and Wardens, with the team from Surrey Docks Farm, take part in the annual Lord Mayor's Show.

Richard Price writes: "It has been a both a pleasure and honour to work with a great team of people to deliver this year's WCF entry for the Lord Mayor's Show, showcasing British produce and celebrating 70 years of the company supporting farming in the City. The original theme was to celebrate Her Majesty's Jubilee, which would include a grey Fergie from 1952 and the current T8 model from 2022.

"After the passing of the Queen, the Royal Household and Pageant Master's office were still very keen to see the tractor in the procession, so we removed the Jubilee material and promoted the 70 years of farming in the City.

"The team included Massey Ferguson, NFU, Red Tractor and Surrey Docks Farm. It was great to pull everyone together and we managed to deliver a fantastic float, which included 10 of



Richard Price (L) and Andrew Blenkiron with the float

the youngsters from the Surrey Docks farm. Gemma and Claire do a fantastic job at the farm and I was amazed at the volume of people that visit the farm over the course of the year. The visit on the day before the show with the NFU ambassadors was excellent, and

everybody enjoyed seeing the nuggets of innovation around the site and to experience the passion that they all have in what they do. It was great to catch up with all the NFU ambassadors and for the Master to be able to thank all the relevant people and organisations for everything that had done for the 2022 entry. The post-meeting meal at Haz restaurant near St Paul's was kindly sponsored by Massey Ferguson.

"NFU and Red Tractor put a lot of time into the graphics, design and look of the float, which was excellent. It was Amy Hubbard's first Lord Mayor's Show and she was very organised and proud of what she and her team had achieved. We are also very grateful to Andrew Blenkiron of Euston Estate, for all the preparation of the float, and to Jonathan in the Estate workshop for putting it all together. Andrew has looked after the last five years of our entries and has quietly put a lot of time into this with his team. We are very grateful to him.

"Saturday morning started at 6am for Andrew and I, meeting Rainthorpe's Transport, who delivered the tractor trailer and grey Fergie. By 11am all of the NFU ambassadors, Surrey Docks youngsters and the Master and his team were ready to start their journey through the city of London on the three-mile procession.

"The cloudless, warm day went very well and we had a great response from the public supporting the float, our Company and British agriculture."

Presenting the new John Thorpe Salver



The Master presented, for the first time, the 'new' John Thorpe Salver – for the Squadron which has won the most points throughout the year for outdoor activities – to 1159 Edmonton Squadron.

Wing Commander Niall Cumming and his wife attended the Banquet at Goldsmiths Hall, together with O/Cs from our other military affiliations; the Army Reserves Westminster Dragoons and RAF Waddington.

Inter-Livery ski championships 2023

I am delighted to report that after a break of two years, due to covid, the Inter-Livery ski races were once again held in Morzine on 25-27 January.

We had our largest team to date with Liverymen Allan Stevenson, John Ward, John Hardman, Christopher Day, Gerard Oates, Cathy Robinson, and Hugh Wykes taking part. A very warm welcome and congratulations to Cathy, clothed in December, and making history by being the Farmers' first lady racer a month later!

Wednesday saw Allan, John H, Cathy and Hugh take part in Snow Camp's charity triathlon. This consisted of a giant slalom, target shooting and walking round a course wearing snowshoes. We were one of 27 teams and came 13th, It was great fun taking part in brilliant sunshine and good snow conditions in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere, raising money for this worthy cause.

The slalom took place on Thursday. The purpose of this race was to give the 188 racers from the 34 Companies represented a starting position for the giant slalom, which is the main race attracting the prizes. Unfortunately, the cloud had come down and this race took place in thick fog, which didn't make it any easier! The drinks reception in the evening was well attended and gave an excellent opportunity to catch up with old friends and make new ones from



the different Livery Companies. It was another cold misty day for the giant slalom on Friday. but this didn't dampen the racers' enthusiasm, which created an exciting atmosphere for the return of this well-loved event.

We were unfortunate not to get a medal in the fastest team of three, with a total age of 200 coming fourth. Allan was our fastest skier and in the men's age adjusted results came 15th with Hugh coming 38th out of 132 racers. The

prize-giving dinner was in a new venue this year, which was well liked and gave another good opportunity to meet and socialise with other Liverymen.

After a number of years as ski captain, I am now standing down and I am pleased to tell you that John Hardman will be next year's ski captain, so if you are interested in joining us please do contact him for further information. The 2024 races will be held in Morzine on 24-26 January. Written by: Hugh Wykes.

March Court meeting clothes three new liverymen

The March Court meeting saw three new Liverymen clothed, followed by a packed hall for lunch. Our speaker was Kelly Hewson-Fisher, an alumna of the 26th Challenge of Rural Leadership course. Kelly spoke with a rare passion about the effect the course had had on her confidence and ambition. The Master's speech reinforced the importance of our courses in shaping the new generation of industry leaders. He was pleased to take wine with the new members.

Right; The Master with freshly-clothed Liverymen Gary Mills-Thomas, Sebastian Edwards and John Davie-Thornhill



A good day at the pancake races

The Farmers' team for the 2023 running of the now famous Inter-Livery Pancake Day Races – the 19th iteration of the Poulterers' organised event, was made up of The Master, Richard Davies, Court Assistant James Peck, Liveryman James Harris and Company Apprentice Victoria Rayner.

Guildhall Yard had the usual happy, colourful crowd, with some amazing fancy dress costumes (including two versions of St Paul's Cathedral) and Masters in their Livery gowns and badges. The weather for once, was fine and dry and the pancakes on sale to help competitors carb load were excellent. Our team, carefully chosen for their athleticism by the



Photo above: The competitors get ready for the challenge, in all sorts of colourful costumes
 Photo left: The Farmers' team ready for the off, with James Peck claiming to be the fastest bull in the City!



Master, were rather more successful this year than we usually are, with two of our competitors, James and Victoria, winning through to their respective semi-finals. We missed out in both semis by a matter of inches – so no prizes again this year, but valuable training and experience for next year's event, one hopes. Despite the lack of medals, the day will be remembered for the sight of James, more normally mounted on a giant tractor, piggy-backing a cow in the fancy dress race,



Richard Whitlock: 1,985 miles across New Zealand

Liverymen will be aware that Past Master Whitlock has performed a rather astounding feat of cycling endurance, riding from one end of New Zealand to the other and raising £21,253.

He writes: "You will be pleased to hear that I have now completed my New Zealand end-to-end cycle ride. This was for my own pleasure and to raise money for children from London City Farms to visit larger-scale, mixed-enterprise English working farms organised by the Farmer's Livery Company. Here are the statistics for my ride:



- Total distance cycled: 1,985 miles (3,195km)
- Longest one-day ride: 86.5 miles
- Total ascent: 116,496ft (22 miles), equivalent to Everest four times, Ben Nevis x26 or the Shard 114 times
- Greatest one-day ascent: 5,774ft (1.09 miles)
- Fastest verified downhill speed: 51mph – a bit scary on a mountain bike, but at least the road was smooth and straight

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Annual visit to RAF Waddington

Tuesday 8 November 2022 brought two of the oldest and most important professions together with our annual visit and presentation at RAF Waddington; the farmers that feed the nation and the RAF that defends the nation. The day commenced with a very warm and informative presentation from the Station Commander Group Captain Mark Lorriman-Hughes, who briefed us on many interesting facts about the base, which is home to around 3500 service personnel and, as one of the RAF's busiest stations, the hub of UK Intelligence.

During his tenure, the base has already welcomed the Red Arrows, which has recently transferred from RAF Scampton. We were then briefed on plans to improve their single persons' accommodation, which dates back to the 1940s and 50s, to equal that of modern University Students' Accommodation, but the quotes are double what they budgeted for so there will inevitably have to be some cutbacks, a great example of how input cost inflation is affecting everyone!

Bird strike is an ongoing H&S issue, and to help combat this, the entire air field has recently been reseeded after discovering that the existing grass was infested with Leatherjackets, which were attracting the birds. Providing that you don't count the cost of aviation fuel as this is an essential requirement, this will help the base reach its target of Carbon Net Zero, as the new variety of grass (Fescue) is deeper rooting and so will store more carbon! We then moved onto the awards ceremony, with the



The Master with Senior Air Traffic Control Officer David Pickard

Master presenting the award to Senior Air Traffic Control Officer David Pickard, along with a keepsake, both of which were sponsored by Liveryman Tony Ireland. After enjoying a three-course lunch, we then split into two parties for a tour of the control tower and the station's Vulcan bomber.

The control tower was staffed by four personnel who are responsible for all air traffic movements in the area, as well as ground movements on the base and road traffic on the adjacent A15, where traffic lights are located and put on red every time an aircraft is coming into land. We were very lucky to witness an F-35 Lightning Aircraft, which is one of the most advanced fighter aircraft in the world, coming in for a test landing. All pilots regularly carry out practice

landings as part of their training. At the same time, we also witnessed the potential issue of Bird Strike by seeing a flock of Gulls feasting on hopefully the last remaining leather jackets.

We were then briefed on the base's history with the Vulcan. Waddington was the first base to receive the ground-breaking Vulcan Bomber in 1957 with No 83 Squadron. The base's last remaining Vulcan XM 607 is one of the most famous, after carrying out the bombing of the runway in Port Stanley during the Falkland Islands War. The aircraft is currently being restored for ground use only by a small but very enthusiastic team of volunteers, who have just six months of hanger space in which to complete the task. We look forward to seeing the results.

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- Steepest stated road climb: 18%, or a bit steeper than a 1:6 hill – just about pedalable in the lowest crawler gear. Some of the trails were even steeper for short distances, or too narrow, and the only option was to walk. Highest temperature while cycling: 36 C, lowest – 6 C
- Home countries of participants – UK, USA, Canada, Holland, Australia and New Zealand
- Number of cyclists in our group: 12, plus a cycle guide and van driver.



Nine people commenced the New Zealand end-to-end bike ride, with three others joining part way through. Only four cyclists rode every mile, with two on e-bikes, one young man aged 27 who competes in ironman competitions, and me.

- My total personal weight loss: 14lbs - hooray!

You will be pleased to hear that we missed the storms and cyclones that ravaged New Zealand earlier this year, although we did get caught in several tropical downpours and showers.

The immediate past Master picks out her highlights of the Company's 70th anniversary year



A summer visit packed with family, fun and fellowship

In line with my theme for the year – 'The Family Farm', the summer visit was hosted by my three sons, Tom, Robert, Alec, and myself. From our base at the beautiful Hoar Cross Hall we visited three superb, family owned and run businesses; Castle Hayes Farm,

Mercer Farming and Busby Partners of Chilcote. Dinner on the Wednesday night was held in a marquee in the garden of my own home, where the Abbots Bromley Horn Dancers were a particular treat – seeing a troupe of our own Past Masters joining them was even more fun!



When I was jailed and bailed



In Aid of the Red Cross, 30 Masters appeared at the Old Bailey to be charged with their misdemeanours during their year of office. Dobbled-in by the Clerk and I believe, even my own sons, I was convicted of intimidation and indecent public behaviour and sent to the Tower of London, charges of course, I still strongly deny!



HMS Defender Portsmouth visit

The Master, Hugh Wykes and Anne Courtney were privileged to be on board HMS Defender from 07.30 to 18.00, forming part of a group of over 30 Affiliates. Setting sail from Portsmouth Harbour, we were shown every corner of the ship. We went to the Bridge, the Ops room, the Air Weapons Magazine, the engine room, and the galley feeding 240 personnel. We were given the opportunity to don firefighting suits and breathing apparatus to do a firefighting exercise. We also enjoyed a simulation of a fast attack by the ship's sea boat. What an experience. Our thanks to Commander George Storton.

A week in beautiful Lausanne



Wonderfully well organised and chaperoned by Graham, Duncan and Maggi, the Company's much delayed visit to Lausanne was a triumph. We saw mountains, lakes, town and country. We tasted cheese and chocolate (not together). We ate in some splendid locations and travelled on pretty much every form of transport known to man. A trip so good, that many demanded a repeat event in locations far and wide ASAP!



A delayed Masters and Clerks Luncheon

Delayed out of my year in office, and into the new Master's year due to the funeral of Her Majesty the Queen, the Luncheon was nevertheless a great honour. I welcomed Masters and Clerks from a whole host other Livery Companies which had been so instrumental in making my year in office so enjoyable. The friends I made in my year will, I am certain, stay with me for many years to come through the 'Platinum Masters' group.

The theme was Leadership, and the guest speaker was Robbie Moore, MP for Keithley and Ilkley, who just happens to be my nephew. Robbie gave an informative and humorous speech, with references to his Auntie Karen, which were greatly enjoyed by the Liverymen and guests alike. A fantastic way to round off my year, and thank all those who have been so welcoming and supportive.

Exercising our ancient rights to cross the river

As Master, I led a party of 15 Liverymen, friends and supporters for the annual sheep drive organised by the Woolmen's Company. We gathered together, with parties from many other Liveries, at Monument, ready to brave the challenge of potentially troublesome sheep, in one of the world's busiest cities. Dressed appropriately, with hessian aprons and crooks, we guided our flock safely over London Bridge, before retiring to a local hostelry.



71st Management Course 2022

After some debate in Autumn 2021, the ACABM has a more succinct and accurate title for 'everyday use' as an important part of our Education Portfolio: The Management Course.

2022 was the 71st in the series. Over the years this course has acquired an excellent reputation throughout the agricultural industry.

Without doubt, the 'run-up' to the 71st course had not been entirely straightforward, given the need to tender and renew the contract with the course provider. A lot of work went into the renewed memorandum of understanding with RAU, meaning the groundwork could go ahead.

Preparations involved a webinar in June 2022, organised by Elizabeth Badger at RAU so that potential candidates could gain a feel for the course. In reality, many applicants are encouraged to join the course by peers who have attended a previous WCF course. However, it is an interesting challenge to give applicants sufficient insight to 'whet their appetite', without compromising the element of the 'unexpected', which is an important component of the course.

There were 29 applicants; nine from overseas, including three women, and, for the first time, two men from African countries. No doubt a very significant ingredient of our courses is the bonding experience between delegates, and an important objective of the interview process is selecting a good cohort to optimise this.

In the 'wash-up session' the Master picked up on a comment from the delegates: "The interviews might seem intimidating", to which the Master replied: "If that was intimidating, coming on a course like this would (probably) be too much for you!"

Judging by reflections from an Alumnus from a previous course, he certainly has a point... "(on the course) I was taken to pieces and then put back together again!"

Some 20 delegates started the 71st course, with just two women, one from Holland and one from Morocco, along with one other overseas delegate, a man from Australia. 2022 was the first year that the course was reduced from



three weeks residential to two, and the course tutors had to be nimble to re-configure the programme. It meant Zoom sessions in the week before arrival at RAU; less external case-study work during the course, but retaining plenty of speaker sessions and a stimulating day of external visits. There will also be follow-up Zoom sessions in the months after the course.

Feedback at the 'wash-up session' suggested that combining some speakers, and creating more 'conference-like sessions' would be welcomed; and particularly the delegates loved to debrief after speakers and external visits, by focussing the spotlight on their own businesses.

One particular reflection from a delegate captured much about the course: "The chance to focus on your personal development with support from experts and a room full of critical friends was a unique one". And the overall feedback on the 'key partnership of course tutors' was very clear: "Keith and Karen did an amazing job!"

The value of the Alumni cannot be overstated, and Christopher is very encouraging of the delegates to make the most of the relationships developed within their cohort by joining WCFA. Christopher is undoubtedly part of our

'impact team'! This was clear at our early breakfast on the morning after the wash-up... attired in a very bright outfit he had an unstoppable determination to add another 5k run to his tally before the sun was up!

Even more impactful was his choice of keynote speaker at the WCFA learning extension day, Gareth Timmins, talking about his book: 'Becoming the 0.1%' - how the Royal Marines cultivate the mental strength and resilience needed to push through for success'.

As our Master is keen to emphasise, our programme of education has a clear objective: "Inspiring, encouraging and developing excellence in the field of UK agriculture".

For us to continue to 'push for success' we must be prepared to adapt to match our ambition. Our new digitised application process is a very positive step taken in 2023 towards improving the resilience of our programme.

Equally important is the funding that we provide, and, on this, the last word to one of the 2022 cohort: "I wanted to write to thank you enormously for the generous contribution that both the WCF and WCF Alumni made towards the cost of the course. It made a huge difference to my ability to afford it and I am very grateful for this".

26th Challenge of Rural Leadership Course

Some 20 delegates assembled at Dartington on the afternoon of 8 January to embark on two weeks of 14-hour working days that, as several attendees said, "changed our lives for ever".

I had the privilege of attending the 'meet and greet' on the first Sunday afternoon, as well as the opening session taken by a dynamic drama lecturer. By the end of the hour, the ice had been well and truly broken, all names had been learnt and we had all got to walk like a chicken! I left in no doubt that this course was going to exceed expectations; the delegates were definitely prepped and raring to go.

"It was everything I had wished it would be and more."

For those Livery members who might be unsure exactly what the Challenge of Rural Leadership course is all about...a brief description!

The course title really defines the nature of the two weeks. The CRL is targeted at individuals in the rural and farming sectors in management positions. It comprises an intensive programme of management and leadership development. It is intended to advance each individual in their leadership skills, with focus on personal development and self-awareness being very much to the fore.

Delegates also have time developing their skills in media, learning how to have difficult conversations, how to achieve both creative and strategic thinking, how to team build, and so much more.

"I did not appreciate how valuable the course would be to me, on both a professional and personal level."

The programme had been tweaked a little but, generally, it followed the same pattern as previous years. A case study was the main focus of the first week, this year based on the challenges facing the development of the Dartmoor National Park.

In addition to this, over the two weeks, the delegates listened to 15 speakers from diverse backgrounds including the military, NHS, and business, as well as agriculture. Following the semi-



The 2023 Challenge of Rural Leadership delegates at Dartington Hall

retirement of Richard Soffe, for 26 years the mastermind behind the course, Robin Jackson had taken up the helm and, by the end of the two weeks, there is no doubt that the course continues to be in a safe pair of hands.

"You leave the course with 19 non-executive board members of your life – for life."

Once again, Dartington proved to be the ideal base. The Dartington Estate was purchased by the Elmhirst family in the 1920s, restored and transformed into a centre of learning and self-improvement, and it remains today an important educational facility. It has unique accommodation, its own on-site restaurant, bar and classrooms, all within its 1200-acre estate.

The quality of the accommodation, food, facilities and the overall geography enhances the CRL course experience; it is the perfect backdrop for the immersive 'bubble' experience which adds so positively to the course.

The WCF was given high profile, and the positive feedback received from so many left me in no doubt just how important and valued the WCF and its contributions, both financially and

administratively, are to the success of the whole course.

Upon completion of the course, each delegate is invited to become a member of the WCF Alumni Association, which then enables them to attend events and to continue their own personal training, development and progress, as well as accessing the wider network of previous CRL attendees.

Written by Patsi Wheatley-Hubbard.

"The foundations you have given me make me much more confident to explore opportunities that I would previously have thought unachievable."

Kelly Hewson-Fisher, National Water Resources Specialist, NFU, attended the course. "I came away with a list of actions/reflections, which included having a real purpose as an expert and realising the need to value myself. It takes four to five acts of appreciation to cancel one negative!

"The dance floor and balcony analogy really struck with all of us. As leaders we need to spend more time on the balcony. Thank you to the WCF for the opportunity to attend this course."

The Liveries and the Coronation

Last autumn, Buckingham Palace approached the Livery movement to create the anointing screen for the King's Coronation on 8 May. The Anointing Screen has been designed for use at the most sacred moment of the Coronation, the Anointing of His Majesty the King with the chrism oil. The project found its way to the Textile Livery Group, which has been working with the Weavers and Broderers, managed by the Royal School of Needlework.

The Screen was designed by iconographer Aidan Hart and brought to life through both hand and digital embroidery. The central design takes the form of a tree, which includes 56 branches, representing the 56 member countries of the Commonwealth.

The King's cypher is positioned at the base of the tree, representing the Sovereign as servant of their people. The design has been selected personally by the King and is inspired by the stained glass Sanctuary Window in the Chapel Royal at St James's Palace, which was gifted by the Livery Companies to mark the Golden Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II in 2002. The Main fabric (maroon for body and slate for



pelmet) is made from Australian and New Zealand wool, spun, woven and dyed at AW Hainsworth, Leeds. The applique fabrics include wool spun in the UK at Camira Fabrics and R Gledhill, and woven at Camira Fabrics and John Spencer Textile. They were finished at Camira Fabrics and WT Johnson & Sons. Linen fabrics were woven at John Spencer Textiles and finished at H&C Whitehead. The embroidery is in gold and silver thread, made up of a gold or silver foil, wrapped around a cotton

or silk thread core. So, although not all the base fabrics have come from the UK, all the processes for the cloth were conducted in the North of England.

The supporting poles were designed by Nick Gutfreund of the Worshipful Company of Carpenters and turned from a windblown oak dating from 1765 out of Windsor Great Park. The Anointing Screen has been gifted by the City of London Corporation and City Livery Companies, including the Farmers Company.

WCFA Learning Extension Days

One hundred WCFA members, guests and partners attended the 2022 WCFA Learning Extension Days – over a day and a half at Loughborough University – for a full programme entitled “Insight & inspirations from the wider world”.

The event started on 29 November with a speed networking event – which made many hoarse – followed by a drinks reception and dinner with Amie Burke as after-dinner speaker. At the dinner, Chris Manley was presented the new Farmers' Company Alumni award – a silver rose bowl donated by Liveryman Peter Bennett.

The next day kicked off with keynote speaker Gareth Timmins, former Royal Marine and author of “Becoming the 0.1% – how to build an elite mindset” – who made many think. Three streams then took place, on social media (Tom



Martin), the value of mentoring (Nicola Miller) and funnelling great ideas to enhance your business (Sian Gardner & Martin Horton consultants). A debate on: “Farming's image will only be fixed if we all take responsibility for fixing it ourselves” took place with Charlie Ireland

of Ceres Rural; Anna Jones, author of “Divide: The relationship crisis between town and country”; Tom Martin, social media influencer; and Jonathan Roberts, director of external affairs for CLA. Now the Committee starts planning for 2023 – save the dates: 28-29 November.

News from Surrey Docks Farm

Your Editor visited Surrey Docks Farm for the first time in March, shown round by Farm Manager Gemma Hooper, and was mightily impressed. Not just by the extraordinary facilities in the heart of London and the help the farm offers to a staggering selection of disadvantaged and city-bound people, but also by the sheer professionalism of the staff.

The Livery supports the farm to the tune of £5,000 per year, and also by donating livestock and helping with some of the physical work.

The farm, first established nearby in 1972, is owned by Southwark Council and moved here in 1986. It extends to just over two acres, set right on the river opposite Docklands, with the Thames Path at its edge. There are cattle, pigs, goats and rabbits, as well as lots of areas for adults and children to see plants growing from 'seed to feed'.

Claire Ellis-Elson; in charge of the animals, is passionate about her livestock, and stresses that they are not for petting, but to show how meat is produced – ending up for sale in the farm's shop. James Taylor, the longest-



serving member of staff at 27 years, runs the horticultural department, and is doing fascinating work on small-scale methane production as well as overseeing the shop.

There are 50,000 visitors a year to the farm from all walks of life, from passers-by who can simply walk in (past the excellent small café) to schools, youth offenders, disabled people and those in need of green space for their wellbeing. Some 100 volunteers assist the four full-time staff with the visitors and farmwork.

Do pay a visit to the farm if you can (www.surreydocksfarm.org.uk).

The Master also visited in March and writes: "One of the joys of the Livery is the diverse group of people you encounter. Occasionally it's possible to connect these people, who would otherwise be worlds apart. So it was, when I arranged to take Mike Crofts – officer commanding F Squadron of the Royal Yeomanry (one of the Company's military affiliates) to the farm. Mike runs a charity called 3Pillars, which works with adult prisoners and young people in custody, and it was fascinating to see how the inspirational work that Surrey Docks and 3Pillars do found lots of echoes and points of contact.

"The hope is that Mike will be able to bring some of his clients to Surrey Docks Farm, where they can both enjoy the amazing atmosphere and positivity, and at the same time help the farm by undertaking suitable projects.

"You just never know where these types of contacts might lead – but this one certainly seems to have got off on the right foot."

Master attends the City University graduation



The association between the Livery Companies and the City University goes back to its very foundation as the Northampton Institute in the 1890 (the land for what is now the main part of the university campus at the Barbican was bequeathed by the Marquess of Northampton). The Livery movement in the City of London, keen to encourage training in technology and science were amongst the new institution's most important benefactors.

The Worshipful Company of Farmers is proud to now count itself amongst City University's supporters through our annual student prize – and the Master was therefore delighted to accept an invitation to represent the Company, along with the Lord Mayor and the Masters of other Companies associated with the institution, at the 2023 Graduation Ceremony held at the Barbican in January 2023.

Agricultural Lecture

Leadership was topic of the day at the Annual Lecture and Dinner, held at Plaisterers' Hall, London, on April 25. Attracting 175 Liverymen, alumni, sponsors and guests, the dinner provided top quality food as well as food for thought.

"Every industry needs great leaders," said Master, Richard Davies. "We need to encourage and empower a new generation of managers who have the ability to see the world differently."

Kathryn Bishop CBE was the keynote speaker, sharing her extensive experience of teaching leadership and implementing it across different industries. She explored 200 years of leadership thinking, proving that no single style of leadership is universally appropriate.

"There are lots of different ways to lead, and context affects leadership success – some contexts favour leaders who are task-focused, while others favour those who are relationship orientated," she said.



Leadership styles range from risk-taking heroes to thoughtful, analytical leaders, and from sole innovators to empathetic coaches, Kathryn explained. Some people are leaders because of

their charismatic personality, others because of the way they make you feel; or it could be due to their characteristics and what they choose to do. "You can't be good at them all – we need to understand that we are all incomplete leaders – we don't have to be perfect in every circumstance."

She likened leaders to an orchestra conductor – they are rarely able to play every instrument in the orchestra, but are still creating a coherent and effective team. "The leader also doesn't have to have all the answers. It's not what you know – it's what you do with what you know."

Kathryn emphasised the importance of identifying weaknesses, both within a skillset and personality profile, and working together with others to plug those gaps. "Distributing leadership is the only way to achieve large scale shifts, it's about sharing and encouraging leadership, not just having one person at the top."

It's also critical to assess each circumstance and decide on the most appropriate leadership style for that context, she added. "Draw on your natural strengths whenever you can, and develop your potential and fragile strengths. Identify your resistant limitations and build a leadership team around you – together you'll be much stronger than any individual one of us can be."

Court Meeting



The 2023 Court (standing, from left): Jeremy Finnis, Peter Wiggins-Davies, Jan Boomaars, Duncan Couper, Follett Balch, Belinda Young, Christopher Day, Anne Courtney, Stephen Watkins, Nick Major, Julian Sayers, Richard Whitlock, Richard Anscombe, Graham Bamford.
Seated, from left: Philip Wynn, Mary Foster, Guy Brogden, Richard Davies, Richard Crane, Rosie Carne, David Bolton.

2022 Nuffield scholar Vic Ballantyne

I arrived back from Australia on 11 January and had my video training in London on the 12th. I've since managed to catch up on outstanding business paperwork and set about summarising my five weeks away. Easier said than done! What I had intended to be a two-page summary turned into six pages and still didn't scratch the surface of my journey, experiences and learning.

I was incredibly fortunate to meet with and visit dozens of farmers and researchers from a number of industries, and took something away from every one of them. Many were experts on my topic, however the side discussions on other issues were equally as interesting.

A number of Nuffield families welcomed me into their homes and the conversations were so insightful. I was so impressed with the combination of professionalism, innovation and thoughtfulness in the way these people went about their business. I feel I learnt a lot about leadership in its different guises. In terms of my topic, the summary has helped me focus on the main points and I will sit down over the next month to begin writing my report. The reports are now only 5,000 words, so I will need to be very concise and only use information necessary to bring it all



together in a clear and cohesive way. I hope I have captured enough pictures and videos to also represent my travels when I put together the three-minute video (which will possibly take more time to put together than the report). The intention is to have these completed by July. I feel this trip, my visit to Canada and the other Nuffield events I've attended

will be hugely beneficial in shaping my future, in business and as a leader in UK agriculture. I'm not quite sure what this path looks like at the moment, however I hope to make the most of the opportunity that being a Nuffield Scholar presents. I am grateful to the WCF for its support and look forward to being involved with you in the future.

Oxford Farming Conference



The 2023 Worshipful Company of Farmers NFYFC Scholars, Ernie Richards and Flo Giles, are joined at the Oxford Farming Conference by Court Assistant Nick Major and Deputy Master Philip Wynn

Every year the WCF proudly pays for two young farmers to go to the Oxford Farming Conference. The UK's leading international conference for farming and agribusiness, the OFC takes place in January in the historic and inspiring surroundings of Oxford University. Its mission is to inform, challenge and inspire the 560 or so delegates who attend, to resonate and be a force for positive change throughout the industry. It's a role that's developed over 80 years of its history, giving crucial issues a voice and sparking national debate.

This year our two young farmers were Flo Giles and Ernie Richards. The reports on their experiences can be found on our website.

Announcements

The following were admitted as Freemen at the Court at meetings held on 6 December, 2022:

Mrs Diane Chennells
Proposed by Rosie Carne
Seconded by Anne Courtney

The following Freemen were Clothed with the Livery at the Court Meeting on 8 March, 2023:

John Philip Bache Davie-Thornhill
Gary Mills-Thomas
Sebastian John Edwards

The following Freemen were Clothed with the Livery at the Court Meeting on 6 December, 2022:

Dr Alessandra Kim Ashley Sherman

David Guy Leverton

Christopher James Harold Philpot

Nicholas James Barkhouse

Catherine Clare Brenner Robinson

Deaths

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

Mr Alec Basil Michael Batanero de Montenegro of Blaenbrynich Farm, Brecon, who died on 25 March, 2023. He was Clothed on 4 December, 2012.

Mr Joseph Hugh Harris DL of Penrith, Cumbria, who died on 1 February, 2023. He was Clothed on 10 December, 1973.

Mr John Kerr MBE of Blaxhall Hall, Woodbridge, Suffolk, who died on 14 March, 2023. He was Clothed on 10 March, 1985.

Events

9 May - "Call My Wine Bluff" fundraising evening, Lansdowne Club

29 May - 1 June - Master's Summer Outing, Gloucestershire

5 June - Meeting of the Court, Farmers & Fletcher's Hall

6 June - Common Hall, Farmers & Fletcher's Hall 10:30am

6 June - Court & Livery Lunch, Farmers & Fletcher's Hall 12:15pm

12 June - Company Familiarisation Day, Farmers & Fletcher's Hall
 With City walking tour in the afternoon (10:30am to 4:30pm)

2 September - Livery and Inter-Livery family and friends charity bike ride in the Essex countryside,
 followed by a hog roast and refreshments

18 September - Master's & Clerks' Luncheon, Farmers & Fletcher's Hall

23 September - Sheep drive over London Bridge

28 September - Golf Day, Denham Golf Club

10 October - Court Meeting, Harvest Thanksgiving Service and Installation
 Saint Bartholomew the Great Court & Livery Luncheon at Haberdashers' Hall

16 January 2024 - Annual Banquet, Drapers' Hall

WCF appoints new PR agency



WCF has appointed Agri-hub to manage its PR and communications. This well-established agricultural journalism and PR consultancy has a small team of five people, headed up by Olivia Cooper. Former Chair of the British Guild of Agricultural Journalists, and GB representative on the International Federation of Agricultural Journalists' executive board, Olivia has a wealth of agricultural and PR experience. She and her team will be working to produce the WCF newsletter, website, press releases and articles, and are happy to offer a free consultation to any members who are in need of PR help and advice. Visit www.agri-hub.co.uk.

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