



Newsletter

THE WORSHIPFUL COMPANY OF FARMERS



Wing Commander Niall Cumming and Flt Lt Christopher Pocock with four Air Cadets from the Middlesex Wing, who assisted at the Banquet, and the Westminster Dragoons who provided the Carpet Guard for the evening.

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Annual Banquet

The Annual Banquet at Drapers' Hall was full of good cheer, fellowship, food and wine. Countryfile's Tom Heap was guest speaker, while the Westminster Dragoons provided the Carpet Guard.



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Visit to Euston Estate

Robin Upton reflects on the Alumni visit to Euston Estate, with its superb irrigation infrastructure and drive to achieve net zero through its anaerobic digester and Polonia tree planting scheme.

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Oxford Farming Conference Scholars

Hear from the two Young Farmers Club members who won a Worshipful Company of Farmers scholarship to attend the Oxford Farming Conference - a life-changing experience.



Master's Musings

By Guy Brogden, Master

I am now halfway through my year as Master, and this coincides with the Livery being roughly half way through its Strategic Plan 2022-2027. Back in 2022, Deputy Master Philip Wynn and a good number of Liverymen set out to plan what we are looking to achieve during this period, and it is worth highlighting to you all.

Our vision is to be a friendly, progressive, open-minded and growing City of London Livery Company... well, I believe we are making good progress along each of these lines. Time and again, as I attend events around the City, I am told how friendly we are, our courses are admired and much commented on, and our involvement with our educational activities applauded.

Our membership is growing - we have admitted 11 newly-clothed Liverymen and 10 new Freemen in the past 12 months, and most particularly we are open-minded - our membership gender and ethnic balance is improving. Whilst we have a way to go, we are keeping up with and, in many cases, are ahead of our peers. We have had more female Masters in the past 10 years than most Liveries.

Our success at promoting UK agriculture is growing - the Annual City Food and Drink lecture chaired by Liveryman Allan Wilkinson is a great example of that. And we are having a great impact nurturing the leaders and managers of the future through our



Alumni Association and its events, so well promoted by Christopher Day and Duncan, our Assistant Clerk.

I was chatting to both course directors and attendees of this year's courses at our own Agricultural Lecture recently, and it is quite clear what a tremendous impact these young people are having.

In 2024, we are running a very busy year with an expanded number of events. Not only are we having a trip to Sicily in June, but we are also running a Master's Weekend in September, a Bin End dinner, and a lunch at the Honourable Artillery Company, both in May. Whilst this is keeping everyone busy, especially Graham our Clerk, these events are promoting fellowship on the one hand and increasing our profile in the City of London on the other. If you haven't signed up for the Master's Summer outing to Oxfordshire in September, please do - the two-day trip is packed with interesting visits and an evening banquet.

Our relationship with the London City Farms is growing. Not only have we organised the May lunch to raise awareness of all 12 Farms, but we are also helping Surrey Docks Farm plan for the future. And we continue to take school children to working farms (organised by past Master Richard Whitlock). We are looking to expand

that, working in partnership with The Country Trust, to show more children farms and where food comes from.

Our hall continues to attract both our own and outside custom and I am delighted to report that we have agreed to extend the operator contract with Graysons by a further two years, until September 2026.

Whilst business could always be brisker, the hall is not currently a burden to us that it has been at times in the past. Tribute must be paid to those who enabled the refurbishment over 10 years ago and those who continue to oversee it, largely under the leadership of our Senior Warden, Richard Crane.

So far, my year has been amazing, and I am extremely proud to be representing the Company for a year. It is an honour and a privilege, and I am thoroughly enjoying it.

Catriona and I have found the number of events bewildering at times, but you do get to pace yourself. Whilst you have an idea of what it will be like before the start, I was not expecting to meet such a diverse and interesting group of people and see quite so many special buildings.

We now appreciate what the Livery movement is doing generally, for education, for communication and of course fellowship - I recommend it to you all!

Annual Banquet at Drapers' Hall

By Richard Anscombe, Court Assistant

What a treat it was to share food, wine and conversations with fellow Liverymen, friends and new faces in the simply splendid venue that is Drapers' Hall.

The Carpet Guard was provided by the Westminster Dragoons (Royal Yeomanry) and the Middlesex Wing Air Training Cadets, both adding to the special feeling of the Banquet as they welcomed and guided us up to the champagne reception, held in the magnificent drawing room.

Senior Warden Richard Crane formally opened proceedings, welcoming us all and setting the scene, briefing us on the Drapers and their rich history, and the evening ahead, with customary wit and humour. Fine food and wine and the warmth of those around you were very welcome, and in stark contrast to the temperature outside, which was decidedly chilly.

We dined well, with Guinea Fowl and the extremely well-chosen wines that we have become accustomed to, courtesy of our esteemed Clerk, thank you Graham.

Countryfile's Tom Heap was our guest speaker, taking us through the wide and varied landscape that is today's agricultural sector, interspersing his personal views with anecdotes and observations from his varied career.

The Master surprised us by awarding a Special Award to Duncan, our Assistant Clerk; much deserved, judging by the reception this received in the hall, and in recognition of his outstanding contribution to our education portfolio. Special guests were Richard Maunder, Chairman of the Farmers' Club; Wing Commander Niall and Mrs Morag Cumming; Group Captain Dutch Holland; and Major Mike and Mrs Eleanor Crofts.

The Master briefed us all on his key theme for the year; supporting city farms and the vital work that they do, especially enabling youngsters living within the city of London to experience a farm, many for the first time. This plays an important role in helping those living with challenges in their lives, as well as educating visitors about food



Photographs from the splendid surroundings of Drapers' Hall, the fine food and wine alongside the warmth of fellow Liverymen, friends and new faces. All were very welcome and in stark contrast to the wintry and chilly temperatures outside.

and farming. An extended and welcome spirit cup followed the end of formal proceedings, enabling us all to enjoy the fellowship that the Livery is so good at giving to us all. Thanks to all who worked

hard for our collective pleasure. If you are yet to attend our Annual Banquet, put the date in your diary for January 2025. Come and enjoy a thoroughly splendid evening among friends.

Inter-Livery Pancake Race

A fun-filled day was had by 41 City of London Livery Companies for the 20th inter-livery pancake races at Guildhall Yard. It was superbly organised by the Worshipful Company of Poulterers for The Lord Mayor's Appeal, Barts Charity, Tower RNLI and Master Poulter's Pelican Trust. The racing was sadly cancelled due to the rain - so we all moved down to the crypt for the tossing competition.

The Worshipful Company of Farmers team included the Master, Guy Brogden, Liveryman Sebastian Edwards and his wife Rebecca and Journeyman Victoria Rayner.

The Master performed very well but sadly, at the end of his 30 seconds, lost out to a magnificent 80 tosses by the Master of the Worshipful Company of Tylers & Bricklayers. Respect to them!



Inter Livery Skiing



(L to R) Hugh Wykes, Christopher Day, Cathy Robinson, Allan Stevenson, John Ward and John Hardman (Captain)

Lord Mayor's Show a Success

This year's Lord Mayor's Show was blessed with blue skies all day, which helped swell the cheering crowds lining the route.

Our 'float' consisted of two Case tractors, one of which – the enormous Quadtrac – attracted most of the public's attention.

Richard Price and the team from the NFU – headed by Minette Batters – Red Tractor and Surrey Docks Farm did a splendid job preparing for the Show, and the incredibly warm reception from the crowds along the way made it all worthwhile.



Farmers unite in London for the Lord Mayor's Show

Alumni visit to Euston Estate

By Robin Upton

I've been thinking back on last year's fascinating trip hosted by Andrew Blenkiron, who manages this very special place for the Grafton Family, principally all on very light land.

As a retired light land farmer, I have learned that without water the risks of going bankrupt were always fairly high, as I was in danger of not even covering my variable costs. In my first year as a farmer I combined my neighbour's barley crop, and the bill came to more than the crop I harvested!

But with water and light land the world is our oyster. One can nearly always drill and plant and keep things clean when you want, and harvest when your customer requires the produce. Having irrigation water available; some stored in reservoirs, you can assure customers that the tonnage you promised of the likes of carrots, potatoes and onions will actually appear on their shelves, even telling British Sugar that there is every chance we will more than honour our tonnage contract.

We must remember with nothing to sell they also will not survive!

At Euston, with adequate water, the crops were superb and contracts had been honoured. But where irrigation licences were the limiting factor, the alternatives were fascinating. There is an anaerobic digester, producing essential gas for the grid and priceless digestates as fertiliser and to increase the water holding capacity of their sand. The farm grows large areas of maize; the perfect feedstock for those producing vegetables, as it's not drilled until late April, locking up carbon dioxide and returning carbon to the land as humus.

It also has a solar farm on unproductive land, supplying electricity to the whole enterprise. This is so different to the present idea, where solar farms are being proposed and installed on good food-producing land, totally regardless of cost and subsequent inflation and its devastating consequences.

Some unproductive land went into wilding, keeping those unhappy - happy. And 500 acres has been let to an organisation growing cloned Polonia trees. This tree grows five times faster



Polonia trees grow extremely rapidly, locking up carbon. The Estate also has an anaerobic digester and irrigation.

than other trees and locks up carbon, so credits can be sold to those who are trying to reach net zero (like cement makers and oil companies).

The group has invested £4,000/acre in planting the trees, installing drip irrigation to each tree, and will hand back the standing trees to the estate in 30-40 years after having sold the carbon credits. Keeping out the red deer with an 8-ft fence (capable of keeping out elephants) was an essential large expenditure.

Of course, there are some decrying such a scheme, as they think the trees will be felled for generating power in the future. But that is where the family have been so clever; there is a plan to build a chipboard factory, where carbon is

locked up for ever as part of a building, aiding insulation.

As one of the visitors, I would like to thank the Alumni for arranging a trip around a very special and loved place along, with a superb lunch fit for farmers.

Yesterday I went to our own local water usage group; we comprise 20 different organisations dependant on water. Together, we unite and tell Government that the whole of East Anglia is suffering from lack of investment in water and in sewage disposal. We have even achieved a promise that there will be two very large reservoirs storing water from the North by 2050. So united we remain. The management of water in the UK could be the key to farming here in the future.

RAF Waddington Visit



A group of 33 Liverymen were treated to a tour of RAF Waddington, including a detailed brief and look around the Red Arrows hangar.

On November 8, a group of Liverymen visited RAF Waddington for lunch, hosted by the Station Commander Mark Lorriman-Hughes OBE, and presentation of the WCF award by the Master.

The visit was organised by LO Michael Chennells in conjunction with LO, FS Steven Wheatley and Sergeant Ross Mc Keon, ably assisted by Stacey Jones.

Our visit was led by the Master Guy Brogden and his wife Catriona. The group of 33 Liverymen arrived at the officer's mess at 8.30 for a 9.00 start.

We then travelled by coach to the part of the base where the Red Arrows are based.

There, we split into two groups to take it in turns to enjoy a detailed presentation on the Red Arrows and a visit to the hangar where they are housed, along with a detailed brief when there was plenty of time for questions.

We then returned to the Officers' Mess where we were welcomed by the Station Commander, who updated us all on the current activities on the base. This was followed by a presentation from LO Steven Wheatley.

The morning session was then concluded by the presentation of our award along with a keepsake by the Master to Corporal Matt Healey in recognition of his excellence in implementing systems changes and upgrades across the base.

Lunch was taken in the Officers' Mess, where we enjoyed a three-meat carvery, following which the Master expressed our thanks to the team at Waddington for entertaining us for the day.

We completed the day with a visit to the RAF Waddington Heritage Centre, which covers all aspects of the history of the RAF from the very beginning to the present day.



The Master presenting to Corporal Matt Healey

Education - OFC Scholars

The WCF sponsors two scholars through the National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs to attend the Oxford Farming Conference. We find out how they got on.

Marley Lamerton was one of those lucky enough to win a scholarship to attend the Oxford Farming Conference. So what was it like?

"As part of the scholars' training we visited the McCain factory in Scarborough and a local potato storage site, to see how the whole chip-making process is carried out," explains Marley. "We also had a workshop focusing on equality, diversity and inclusion, which was very eye opening, getting us talking about topics which are typically difficult and thought to be 'taboo'.

"On the first day of the Oxford Farming Conference we were fortunate enough to have a workshop on leadership, which looked at how we interact with other people, and particularly how we each fit into different personality profiles. The workshop was extremely beneficial to make sure we got the most out of networking whilst at the event, but also to ensure we got the most from the speakers."

Marley attended a wide range of sessions, from building climate resilience to food labelling, and sustainable farming to attracting new people into agriculture. "There was a lot to take away from the conference, but I think the key message was how to get people into agriculture and showcase just how amazing and diversified a sector it really is," he says.

"The conference has been one of the main highlights of my whole YFC life; it has been so beneficial."

"I was shocked to learn in another session that we as a nation waste 18.9m meals a day due to supermarket standards such as size and shape. Other takeaways were that other countries are typically experiencing similar situations to those faced in the UK, such as market access and crop performance.

"I also learnt about the range of diversity in the agricultural sector, from food and farming enterprises to the



Marley Lamerton and Sian Eliri Davies were lucky enough to be chosen to attend the Oxford Farming Conference

diversity in the current workforce," he adds. "Also discussed was how farms for city children showcase farming to those who otherwise would not get to experience it.

"It is not just about the diversity, it is also about being inclusive. I was very blinded to the fact that farming could be inclusive for everyone until listening to blind farmer, Mike Duxbury of the Inclusive Farm. It is very possible and important that the public is aware that farming can be for everyone.

"The conference has been one of the main highlights of my whole YFC life, it has been so beneficial to meet like-minded people but also share and experience different views on how agriculture works and will continue to adapt in the future," notes Marley.

"The conference is a great way to hear from industry professionals, farmers and those at the face of farming, all of whom want the best for the future of agriculture.

"It has been a way to increase my own knowledge about how agriculture operates, learning how we can improve the stigma often associated with the profession."

Sian Eliri Davies was the second scholar to benefit from WCF support. "I was privileged and honoured to have been selected as Oxford Farming Scholar 2024 by the kindness of NFYFC and Worshipful Company of Farmers," says Sian.

"The first event saw 40+ scholars head to Scarborough to McCain Food HQ for a training event and a tour round the facilities. From farm to factory, it truly was an inspirational trip showcasing the best of British produce, and an opportunity to meet and get to know the fellow scholars.

"It's not just about the diversity, it is also about being inclusive for everyone."

"Our Whatsapp group allowed for informal discussion and FAQ ahead of conference – and most importantly to carry on conversations and share ideas and concerns since then. The conference itself was a jam-packed three days included a mixture of speakers, events, and opportunities," she explains. "The main theme was 'Power of Diversity', however the conference encompassed

Education - OFC Scholars

a variety of current topics within the agricultural industry. The contrast of sessions highlighted the current issues the industry faces of food security, food production, climate, extreme weather conditions, food waste, and opportunities for the future."

Sian attended a book club session, with Rebecca Smith and Anna Jones giving an insight into the divided relationship between town and country. She then heard from Secretary of State, Steve Barclay on the current changes to agricultural policy in England, followed by a session on diversification opportunities on farm. The day concluded with an address from HRH The Princess Royal.

"Food security is essential, farming is a business and must be profitable, and farming and the environment go hand-in-hand."

"Throughout the conference there were several opportunities to enhance networking skills, and this even led to me being able to do television interviews for the Welsh farming programme 'Ffermio' on S4C, covering my views on being a scholar and the opportunity it had



The OFC debate was a highlight of the event, alongside valuable networking opportunities and learning experiences

provided me to attend the conference," she says. "The Oxford Union debate: 'This house believes that farming for food is holding back nature recovery' truly was a highlight. Proposing the debate were Ben Goldsmith and Sarah Dickens, with Will Cockbain and Prof Jula Aglionby opposing - the opposition won.

"Key messages from the conference were that without people there is no industry," Sian explains.

"Food security is essential, farming is a business and therefore must be profitable, and farming and the

environment go hand-in-hand together. The conference allowed me to meet stakeholders, like-minded business people, people I knew, people I didn't, and most importantly an opportunity to engage with so many varied people in the industry," she adds.

"This conference was totally different to any I have been to before. I have learned so much and made so many friends and contacts along the way. My thanks to NFYFC and WCF for the opportunity and the once-in-a-lifetime experience."

CRL Programme

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Jean Lonie:

I am still energised from the CRL programme and have already carried some of what we learned and did into the classroom. Next on my list is getting it out to our producers and community leaders. I found the programme to be inspiring, engaging, and definitely life-changing. And the friendships I made will be with me forever. I cannot thank the Worshipful Company of Farmers enough for the programme and opportunity.

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Schools on Farms

The Master and his two Wardens have begun a three-year initiative to assist urban children in learning about farming and food. This builds on previous work, especially that of Past Master Whitlock and his exceptional fund-raising efforts.

The two-pronged approach will see further support given to city farms, especially Surrey Docks, and also to enable schoolchildren from less-advantaged backgrounds to visit commercial farms and see first-hand how their food is produced.

As many Liverymen will know from their own experience, the sight of young people seeing a heap of milling wheat safely in the barn, a field of oilseed rape in full bloom, watching cows being milked, witnessing the magic of lambing or standing next to a combine harvester - all usually for the first time - is something very special indeed.

Do please get in touch if you wish to volunteer your farm (which needs to be within about an hour by coach from London).

The experienced and professional Country Trust (www.countrytrust.org.uk) is helping with the practicalities of the visits. We will be reporting more on the initiative in future editions.



Children getting the feel of milling wheat for the first time.

Challenge of Rural Leadership



The children were amazed to see through the microscope that the soil is teeming with bugs.



Delegates on the CRL course experience some media training, and feedback from the course is overwhelmingly positive

On 22 April we had a 'wash-up session', led by Robin Jackson, who is Director of the Duchy Rural Business School, and leading tutor for the course.

The statistics on the feedback from the 19 delegates were overwhelmingly positive, and reflected the extraordinary energy which was clearly present within the group at the final presentation and dinner on 19 January.

This energy is generated during the two weeks at Dartington and it is the

'magic ingredient of the course, and we can feel great confidence in Robin, as he takes over the baton from Richard Soffe who has skilfully crafted the model of the course since its inception 27 years ago.

No doubt their delivery of the course has a 'X' factor, but the quality of the delegates that we are attracting and selecting ensures this course is well set to continue delivering something very exceptional. By Peter Greig

Health and Wellbeing Forum

By Forum Chairman Jim Hume.

In October, the Worshipful Company of Farmers continued its vital Health and Wellbeing Forums at the Farmers and Fletchers' Hall.

The meeting was a 'blended' one, with participants from across the UK in person and online.

Police Superintendent Adrian Davis and Officer Cat Starkey spoke about important messaging for those who hold firearms and shotgun certificates, urging them to seek support at the earliest stage if they feel that their wellbeing is low.

In Scotland, an information leaflet goes out to certificate holders informing them of where to get support and the importance of doing so. This is distributed when they apply or renew, and is looking to be replicated throughout England and Wales.

The Company is supporting the Police with this necessary work, as there are 516,500 certificate holders in the UK.

The Forum was also joined by past President of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS), Kate Richards, now chair of the RCVS' Mind Matter Initiative.

Worshipful Company of Farmers Alumnus, Angharad Belcher, now Director of Advancements at the RCVS, also informed the gathering of the Initiative.



Left to right: Police Superintendent Adrian Davis, Cat Starkey (Police), Sarah Bachelor (National Farmers Union), Suzy Deeley (RABI at rear), Angharad Belcher (RCVS at front), Past Master Karen Mercer (WCF), Kate Richards (RCVS), Alicia Chivers (CEO RABI), Jim Hume (Liveryman and Chair of Forum) and Past Master, David Bolton (WCF).

"It was a hugely positive meeting, with shared goals and desires to support rural mental health," says Angharad.

"For us it was an opportunity to talk about the challenges vets, nurses and students face generally, but also in a specific setting of rural living and working. It has been excellent to connect with others who work in or support the reduction of stigma, and the increase of training or education on mental health and wellbeing. We have had a growing programme of activities focused on those who live or work rurally, and it'll

be advantageous to collaborate with like-minded groups to ensure that we can be as inclusive and accessible as possible," she adds. "We look forward to further opportunities to work together and would be delighted to share our plans and insights if people want to get in touch."

Angharad can be contacted at:

a.belcher@rcvs.org.uk
<https://vetmindmatters.org>

Golf Day

After the success of the inaugural charity golf day run at Denham last year the WCF is intending to run it again on 10 October. The day, which attracted nine teams of four players, raised nearly £10,000 last year, and was thoroughly enjoyed by all involved.

Anyone interested should please contact Robert Sears on robert@searsbros.co.uk. If golf is not your thing, he would be delighted if you can offer something to put in to the auction of promises.

WCF Apprenticeships

The WCF runs an annual apprenticeship scheme, whereby a Liveryman acts as an 'Apprentice Master'.

Apprentice benefits:

- Structured mentoring scheme
- Exposure to the Livery, City of London and its network
- Enjoyment of one annual luncheon
- Possibility of travel contribution
- Possibility of sums for educational travel
- Simplifies and reduces the cost of joining the Livery until the age of 40

- Ongoing Livery involvement.

Apprentice criteria

- 18-24 at the age of binding
- Apprenticeship ends at 26
- Expected to learn something of the art of farming
- Annually attend a livery luncheon with their Master (Mentor)
- Annually compile a 250 word update
- Commitment to engagement with mentor.

Contact: clerk@farmerslivery.org.uk

Middlesex Wing Air Cadets

Wing Commander Niall Cumming and our Livery Liaison Officer Victoria Rayner attended the Jack Petchey Foundation Awards on February 3, held at Greenford Town Hall on the outskirts of London.

The Jack Petchey Foundation was set up to inspire and motivate young people from across London and Essex and over 1500 schools and youth organisations participate.

The Middlesex Wing won an award in recognition of the achievements of the cadets and staff across the Wing.



Wing Commander Niall Cumming



Victoria Rayner presenting the gold medal award to one of the Wing Cadets

WCF Legacies

Legacies are an important source of income, enabling the Company to run its management courses and sponsor young people to attend them. They also enable sponsorship of other professional development like a Nuffield Scholarship or Cranfield course.

Past Liverymen have been very generous, and it is now our turn to consider leaving the Company a legacy to enable it to continue and hopefully expand its educational and charity work to benefit future generations in the industry. It is important that we give them the opportunities from which we have benefited and enjoyed, thanks to Liverymen's generosity.

Please consider leaving a legacy to the Company when you are making or reviewing your will. If you would like more information or a confidential chat, please get in touch or speak to me at one of our events. Hugh Wykes: 07831 186471 or hugh@wykeslodge.co.uk

The Junior Warden's Card Evening

It is a pleasant feature of the Livery movement that the various companies invite Liverymen to convivial events to encourage new contacts and engender fellowship.

One such event is the annual card evening hosted by the Worshipful Company of Makers of Playing Cards (yes, there is such a thing - originally founded by King Charles I in 1628!). Proceeds go to the Lord Mayor's Appeal.

The evening is designed to enable those who are due be elevated to their respective Mastership in two years' time to meet and cement what often become lifelong friendships.

I was lucky enough to attend this year's event at the splendid Drapers' Hall on February 5.

A toothsome supper with sufficient wine was followed by a competitive - but good-natured - game of cards called Swedish Pursuit. Most of us had never played the game, so there was



The Worshipful Company of Makers of Playing Cards was originally founded by King Charles I in 1628.

a relatively level card-playing field, but this did not prevent some vicious moves by some of the more aggressive players! I'm afraid your Junior Warden did not make it to the winners' enclosure.

Past Masters



Recent Clothings



Mr James Charles Tyrer Forsyth



Mr Christopher Arthur Bacon

Freedoms granted (Right):

Mr Edmund George William Thornhill
Proposed by Jeremy Finnis DL
Seconded by Christopher Day

Mr William Philip Fox
Proposed by Lady Hilary Russell
Seconded by Thomas Green DL



Agricultural Lecture and Dinner

Our annual Agricultural Lecture and Dinner has firmly established itself as a key event for our diaries each year, bringing as it does industry experts with very firm and learned views and the ability to communicate these to the assembled diners. This year the Master introduced a fresh twist, inviting three keynote speakers and a facilitator, Tim Smith CBE of Cranswick Foods, and challenging them to share their views and actions under the wide umbrella of farming sustainability.

Christine Tacon CBE kicked off proceedings, taking the challenges as she sees them heads-on. Notably drawing on her Grocery Adjudicator years, she stated that farmers will never achieve a fair share in the supply chain for their produce if the nation persists with free market conditions, pointing markedly to government intervention. Looking at the here and now, with very challenging market conditions for 'price-taking' farmers, coupled with the effects of climate change, she asked us to consider: "Why bother?"

Next up was Tanya Steele CBE, CEO at the World Wildlife Fund, who took us into the world of the environment and sustainability. She was firmly convinced that unless society enshrines improved standards for climate and nature into law then the changes required will simply not land. She went on to say that the current system of food production is not fit for purpose.



Nature is farmers' best ally for successful business, underpinning everything that we do, she added. So we need a holistic view of nutritionally secure food; which goes much further than sustainable food production, which the industry is so focused on today.

Ms Steele made a passionate call for equality, stating that current trade deals allow unscrupulously produced food into the UK whilst at the same time imposing tough standards on our own producers. "So let's have a level playing field."

She finished by saying that the effects of climate change are here and now, so we must all act now, with the finger pointed strongly at the government, where the buck must stop.

Susan Jebb OBE, Chair at the Food Standards Agency, spoke about diet and health, saying it was brave of us to invite a nutritionist to dinner! Poor diet is the biggest cause of ill health in the UK population, with obesity costing the NHS £19bn a year, rising to £35bn for the economy when the knock-on cost of this ill health is measured. That's 10 times the subsidy given to UK farming!

She shared three key factors, which we can all do something about now. Firstly, society must accept that obesity is a fundamental problem and that bad diet is the key cause. Secondly, education is a key factor which must be invested in. And thirdly, will-power is not enough alone for people to change their eating habits; her plea being: Don't



Above: Prof Susan Jebb



Above right: Tanya Steele



Far right: Christine Tacon



Agricultural Lecture and Dinner

bring biscuits into meetings! Ms Jebb's key message was that the entire food system needs to change - root and branch. We need to make it hard to eat badly, whereas at the moment it is hard to eat well. Let's have fruit not chocolate in vending machines, she cried. Like the previous speakers, she called for strong government intervention.

With the division bell still ringing in his ears, Secretary of State Stephen Barclay hot-footed it to join us just as the audience had the opportunity to ask questions.

He chose to respond to key themes, while stating that the vast majority of his workload focuses on three key events: Brexit, the pandemic and the war in Ukraine; none of which any of us would have predicted 10 years ago, showing just how volatile and challenging our market is.

He called for more focus on a circular economy, to recycle the waste currently persisting across the entire economy.



Stephen Barclay called for more focus on a circular economy, to recycle the waste persisting across the entire economy

Questions from the floor showed a marked contradiction with the speakers' views that the government should shoulder the weight of addressing the key issues discussed. Instead, delegates felt strongly that industry players must come together to act, and not rely on governments with their five-year

election horizons. Much more lively debate could, I am sure, have seen us into the early hours, so with much left to the post-dinner networking we sat down to dine in the sumptuous surroundings of Plaisterers' Hall.

By Richard Anscombe
Court Assistant.

Livery Familiarisation Day

The Familiarisation Day will take place this year on Monday 17 June at the Farmers and Fletchers Hall. Coffee will be available at 10.30am for an 11am start.

The day will give members, and anyone interested in joining the Company, a better understanding of its history and governance, and also of the wider Livery movement and the City of London Corporation.

It is an informal but informative day suitable for those with no knowledge of the Company through to seasoned Liverymen. It is particularly useful for those who have joined recently.

There will be four speakers in the morning. Julia Sibley MBE will talk about the City; the Master will elaborate on the Company history; the Deputy Master elect will explain about the governance of the Company, and the Beadle will talk about his role and ceremonials.



This will be followed by a buffet lunch, at which the Beadle will demonstrate the correct use of the Loving Cup. In the afternoon there will be a city walking tour, with City of London guide Murray Craig, finishing at about 4.30pm. Registration is now open for

this event. And if you know anyone who might be interested in becoming a Liveryman, please ask them to contact the Clerk. If you have any questions about the day, please contact Hugh Wykes on 07831 186471 or email hugh@wykeslodge.co.uk.

Announcements

The following were admitted as Freemen at the Court meetings held on 5 December 2023 and 5 March 2024:

Victoria Rosemary Keith

Proposed by David Bolton
Seconded by Vincent Hedley-Lewis

William Philip Fox

Proposed by Hilary Russell
Seconded by Thomas Green

Edmund George William Thornhill

Proposed by Jeremy Finnis
Seconded by Christopher Day

The following Freemen were Clothed with the Livery at the Court meetings on 5 December 2023 and 5 March 2024:

Christopher Jon Horn

Paul Jonathan Fosh

Jonathan Nicholas Baltesz

James Charles Tyrer Forsyth

Christopher Arthur Bacon

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

Anthony Lewis Roberts of Malthouse Farm, Cardiff who died on 8 November 2023.

James Edward Grant of Fold Hill, Boston, who died on 9 November 2023.

Robin Clive Bloomfield CBE of The Mill House, Wareham, who died on 19 November 2023.

Oliver Stanley Leon Simon of Manor Farm, Sturminster Newton, who died on 6 December 2023.

Michael John Scott of Austhorpe Top, Sleaford, who died on 16 December 2023.

Olive Clarke OBE DL JP of Kaker Mill Farm, Milnthorpe, who died on 16 December 2023.

The Lord Clinton DL of Blackberry Farmhouse, Sidmouth, who died on the 2 April 2024.

Events

Dates for your diaries in 2024

- 1 May - Bin End' dinner at Farmers & Fletchers' Hall
- 16 May - 30th Inter-Livery clay shoot at Northolt
- 20 May - London City Farms lunch at the Honourable Artillery Company
- 21 May - Surrey Docks Farm visit
- 29 May - Joint visit with WCFA to the Raimes' vineyard, Winchester
- 3 June - Court meeting and Court and Past Masters' dinner
- 4 June - Common Hall and Livery lunch, Farmers & Fletchers' Hall
- 17 June - Livery familiarisation day
- 24 June - Common Hall for the election of the Sheriffs
- 8-12 June - Livery visit to Sicily
- 19 June - Invitation by CLA for those attending the Lincolnshire Show
- 9 September - The Farmers' Company hosts the Modern Liveries dinner
- 10-12 September - Master's summer outing to Oxfordshire
- 29 September - Annual sheep drive and Livery Fair, Southwark Bridge
- 8 October - Harvest thanksgiving and installation lunch, St Barts & Haberdashers' Hall
- 10 October - Charity golf day at Denham
- 6 November - East Anglia dinner, Queen's College, Cambridge
- 20 November - Past Masters' meeting and lunch
- 26 November - Learning Extension Days at Loughborough
- 3 December - Court meeting and Livery lunch at Ironmongers' Hall
- 17 December - Carol service and dinner at St Barts and Butchers' Hall
- 4 February, 2025 - Annual banquet at Drapers' Hall

This newsletter is published by the Worshipful Company of Farmers. See farmerslivery.org.uk for more information.
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