



Newsletter

THE WORSHIPFUL COMPANY OF FARMERS



L-R: Jeremy Finnis, Graham Redman, Sue Nix, Milly Fyfe, Richard Crane and David Bolton (p10)

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Bringing inner-city children onto farms

A group of inner-city children visited a mixed farm in Bedfordshire, learning all about arable crops and beef production. Looking ahead, come along to Surrey Docks Farm's Golden Jubilee in July.

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Wine making in Burgundy - no idyll!

When Blair Pethel moved to France to become a wine-maker, he envisaged an exciting and romantic adventure. But, like any farming, growing and processing grapes is no idyll, as he discovered.

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Milly Fyfe wins the new John Nix Award

The new John Nix Award, worth £1,000 a year, was presented to Milly Fyfe, recognising excellence in rural business management among alumni of the WCF's flagship courses (see photo above).



Blair Pethel, who moved to France to become a wine-maker (p7)

Master's Musings

What an amazing first six months of my Mastership it has been! The whirlwind started in the first week after my fabulous installation last October in Great St Barts followed by a lunch in Haberdashers' Hall. It was wonderful to see so many of you there, thank you.

You will read about some of the activities we have been up to in this newsletter; I hope you will see your Livery is in good heart and that we have had a busy, interesting and successful year so far. This is of course down, in no small part, to the time all our clerks and committees have put into the increasingly wide reach of our events and charitable activities.

It is hard to say what my standouts have been, but the Lord Mayor's show, sponsored by Massey Fegurson, was special - harvesting the very positive reception from the crowds and parading with the NFU, Red Tractor and Surrey Docks Farm children. I wish I could have bottled the warmth to share across our members and industry.

The banquet at Drapers' Hall was amazing - a full house with many friends and family in the room to hear the ever supportive Princess Royal. Hosting the Cambridge dinner in Queen's college was a privilege and so well supported.

Westminster Dragoons

Then of course there are all the events I attend as your Master - many of them Livery based but also with our military affiliates. I was with the Westminster Dragoons three times before Christmas and very much enjoyed their company and introducing them to the ways of the Livery. We had our visit to Waddington in November - it is well worth attending as the relevance of our military becomes ever more important, especially if you have not already done so.

Just recently Caroline and I had the privilege of attending the Lord Mayor's banquet in Mansion House in all its finery followed by the wonderful United Guilds service in St Paul's. The address at that service was given by the Dean of Southwark and I have to say it was one of the best I have heard.

He spoke, amongst other thoughts, about the contribution the Liveries make to so many, and that such giving



The current Master (centre) at his installation in Great St Barts six months ago

only increases the amount of good in the world, whilst much of what goes on in the political and financial worlds just divides up a finite resource.

Talking of the good the Livery movement does, the new Livery Impact Report has been published. This shows that, combined, the Liveries give away in excess of £80m per year across the now 113 Liveries with 45,000 members, who give an estimated 44,000 hours of volunteer time. Truly impressive and worth sharing.

Our courses continue to be in very good shape, as witnessed by our visits to each in November and January, and indeed the strong turnout for the initial Zoom meeting launching the 74th Advanced Course in Agricultural Business Management. Well done to the Education committee, course leaders and Duncan for such valuable work in keeping these courses relevant and powerful.

The Alumni Association goes from strength to strength and will soon be larger than the Livery itself! I am convinced that, if not already, this group of people is becoming one of the most powerful in our industry. In fact, whilst I have been very impressed by the education activities of all the Liveries I have visited, I don't think any have such significant grouping in the actual industry they support as we do in the UK farming industry through our courses. I can only think that our founders and forebears would be so impressed by all that we are achieving for UK farming and, by implication, the UK itself.

I have also been increasingly struck by the wonders and history of the City. I have really enjoyed finding out more about its history and seeing how much of that still resonates today, including its governance. What a success that has been, with over 650,000 people now working in the City - 25% more than pre pandemic and, judging by the number of offices under construction, that number is only going one way.

Enduring nature

The fabric of the City, with its scattering of new, old and very old buildings, allows us to take comfort from its enduring nature, which illustrates what it has been through, and the pre-eminence many parts of the City still have across the commercial world. It is an amazing community and space and it is a huge privilege to be part of it.

Let me conclude by thanking all of you for supporting the Livery in whatever capacity, and those who make my role as Master as enjoyable as it is - the Clerk and Assistant Clerk in particular but also all those who serve on Court and on our Committees. I am very much looking forward to seeing many more members of the Livery and Alumni over the next six months, be it at events across the country or here in London - with a special shout out to our celebration of Surrey Docks Farm 50th Anniversary on the evening of July 17. Please do come and bring friends and family to see first hand what an amazing job the farm does and to share a fun evening of fellowship with the Livery.

City Farms students visit Bedfordshire

On October 30 (which will be remembered by most farmers as Budget Day), Past Master Richard Whitlock and the Master Richard Crane hosted a farm visit for inner city children from Surrey Docks Farm and Vauxhall City Farm.

Their destination was Pepsal End Farm, Pepperstock near Luton in Bedfordshire, owned by Gary and Angela Speirs and farmed with their two sons Jim and Tom, who all hosted the excited visitors.

It is a truly mixed farm of owned, share farmed, rented and contracted land totalling in all nearly 4,000 acres, comprising 3,000 acres of arable and 1,000 acres of grass for beef production.

The welcome included a presentation from both Richard and local NFU County Adviser Emily Brown about British farming and how the NFU supports it. The party was then split into two groups for separate tours of the arable and beef enterprises.

Arable tour

The arable tour was hosted by younger brother Tom who, after graduating from Nottingham Trent, worked for Waitrose, before returning home to farm. His guided tour included inspections of the in-store crops of milling wheat, malting barley and oilseed rape, during which the children were taught the importance of managing crops in store and were invited to take their own moisture test.

They also took part in a quiz as to which crops appeared in certain foods - which proved both demanding, complex and popular. The guests were also invited to sit on three combines, Horsch sprayer and multiple tractors, as well as take part in a bare foot race up a barley heap.

The family had ceased dairy farming in 2012 and, rather than go all arable, they decided to use existing buildings for a high-quality beef enterprise focusing mainly on pedigree Herefords and, more latterly, Simmentals.

They currently run over 300 cattle on a summer grazing system, but overwinter inside. Older brother Jim, who was once in the Saracens Rugby Academy, took great pride in getting the children to feed and bed animals and show the many awards from years of showing at

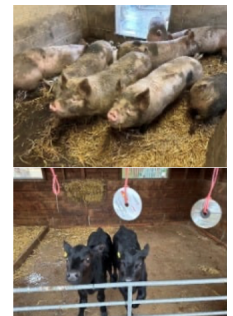


The 30 inner-city children learned all about arable and beef farming, with lots of fun had by all

local agricultural shows. The pedigree bulls bought at great expense from far afield and their young autumn-born calves proved to be great attractions, as did the JCB-mounted straw spreader.

It was great to visit such a well-run and truly sustainable mixed family

farm of such scale. The family have also rented out a building to a dog grooming business which has up to one hundred dogs on site every day, making it a truly diversified farm. When it came to leaving the children all seemed to have loved, and appreciated their visit.



YOU ARE INVITED TO A GOLDEN JUBILEE PARTY TO CELEBRATE 50 YEARS OF SURREY DOCKS FARM



Thursday 17 July 2025 from 5:00pm - 8:30pm

£40 per person to include all refreshments

Smart casual with a hint of Country & Western



The Worshipful Company of Farmers invites you and your family to a celebration evening of fun and fellowship, with plenty of time to explore the farm and its animals, guided by the staff and volunteers. There will be lots to see and do for all the family! The 2-acre farm has a fabulous setting, right on the river at Rotherhithe, opposite Canary Wharf. We will be serving drinks and nibbles by the river, followed by a hog roast.

The City Farms of London provide a unique opportunity for children and adults to experience something of the rural amid the urban. They explain where our food comes from and provide a safe environment for people with their own challenges to experience the therapeutic effects of growing plants and nurturing animals.

To reserve your places please use the QR code

Tickets are limited, so it's first come, first served!

There is limited parking, so it is best to come by public transport eg Canada Water tube and C10 bus (or 15 min walk), or maybe by river – Surrey Quays Uber Boat is 10 mins walk



Inter-Livery Ski Championship success

The first Inter-Livery Ski Championships took place in 2010 and has become increasingly popular each year, becoming one of the key events in the Livery Companies' annual calendar.

It offers an opportunity for members to participate and represent their own Company in this unique event, which also supports significant fundraising for the Lord Mayor's Appeal and its charity partner Snow Camp, raising collectively over £55,000 this year.

The Inter-Livery Ski Champs is informal and situated in the Alps. Participants can join as competitors or spectators, providing a chance for team building within their Company and networking with members from other Livery Companies.

The WCF team this year consisted of Master Richard Crane, Junior Warden Christopher Day, Steward Hugh Wykes, Liverymen Allan Stephenson, Gerard Oates, Mark Chatterton, and me - John Hardman.

Following on from a very successful supper with the Fletchers in 2024 on the evening before commencement of the three day event, we did the same again this year, and it was great to have both Masters together in a particularly convivial atmosphere.

The event started in earnest on the Wednesday, with the Snowcamp charity triathlon and curling. This is the lead-up to the start of the competition proper on Thursday. Thankfully, we had reasonably late start times, so most of



L-R: John Hardman (Captain), Hugh Wykes, Christopher Day, Richard Crane (Master), Gerard Oates, Allan Stephenson

us could get some social skiing in during the morning.

The 'main event' was on the Friday with the giant slalom, which had a prompt 10am start time. The superb organisation by the Ironmongers and ESF France rattled through the start list of over 220 competitors promptly, enabling another opportunity to ski socially before our team lunch on the mountain and presentations in the evening.

Medals and awards for our Company have been rather thin on the ground in the past, but this year started how we meant to go on, with Allan Stephenson getting a bronze medal in his age

category and additionally a team bronze for Allan, Hugh and our freshman for the year, Mark Chatterton.

I must stress this event is open to every ability and age and is very much focused on pan-Livery relations, fellowship, enjoyable competition and, certainly for our Company, particularly lively banter over some wonderful food and drink.

The event spans three days of competition and social activities in one of Europe's top ski resorts. In 2026 it will be in Mayrhofen, Austria from January 14-16 January. For more information please contact me, John Hardman, via the Clerk.



Getting ready for the Snowcamp fundraising triathlon

Charity Golf Day success

We held our second charity golf day at Denham golf club on October 10, with 14 teams participating. This was five more than last year - but wouldn't it be nice to get up to 18 for the 2025 event?

These charity event days are important because they give us the chance to raise money for the causes we support, which in this case was Surrey Docks Farm, as well as offering much fun to be had by all. Fellowship and meeting other kindred spirits form part of the ambience of the event - and who knows, we may be able to sign one or two up for the Livery.

I am delighted that we raised £20,000 and would like to thank all our sponsors who helped make this possible, as well as all those who helped make this event such a success, especially PM Richard Whitlock and Chris Broad, former England opening batsman, who presented the prizes.

This year's event will be on September 9, at Denham Golf Club. I am happy to take names now, so please contact me via Robert@searsbros.co.uk

PS - One auction prize left, a four ball at Hunstanton, would welcome a bid!

Lord Mayor's Pancake Races

The Master and Senior Warden were joined by Surrey Docks farm manager Gemma Hooper and Liveryman Cathy Robinson for these fun annual races, run in glorious sunshine in the Guildhall Yard, London.

Approximately 40 Livery Companies enter teams of four and participate in any or all of the following categories: Masters, Liverymen, Ladies and Novelty Races. The novelty race is all about fancy dress and this year the costumes were wonderful as usual.

The remainder all have to race with an apron, gloves, tall cook's hat and - this year - extra heavy frying pan. The object is to run as fast as possible, flip the pancake in two designated areas and run past the finish line - but you must have your hat on to finish.

This was unfortunately the downfall of our Master, who was in the lead in his heat until he and his hat parted company! Prizes for winners of each category were presented after lunch in the Guildhall Crypt. A great fun day was had by all.



L-R: Gemma Hooper, Richard Crane, Cathy Robinson and Jeremy Finnis

The Lord Mayor's Show

Led by Liveryman Richard Price, our contribution to the 2024 Lord Mayor's Show was a spectacular display of a combine harvester and tractor kindly provided by Massey Ferguson, which attracted the attention of the BBC cameras during their live coverage.

As usual, we clubbed together with the NFU, Surrey Docks Farm and Red Tractor, who joined the parade and interacted with the thousands who lined the route. The warmth of the crowd was most heartening, especially in view of the headwinds farming is now experiencing.



Summer outing

The Master's Summer Outing will take place on July 1-3, 2025. The provisional programme and timings are below:

July 1: Afternoon arrival - Manor Farm, the Master's Farm at Halloughton, NG25 0QP. Three-course dinner and overnight stay at Ye Olde Bell Hotel, Retford.

July 2: Breakfast at Ye Olde Bell Hotel. Approx 9.00am, coach to Strawsons Farming. Light Lunch at Hexgreave Hall - home of Liveryman Tony Strawson.

Approx 1.45pm coach for a 2pm arrival at the Welbeck Estate.

Approx 5.00pm coach back to Ye Olde Bell Hotel.

8.00pm informal buffet supper at Ye Olde Bell Hotel.

Overnight stay and breakfast.

July 3: Individual departure. Bookings via the website.

Farmer Focus: Revesby Estate

By Peter Wiggins-Davies

Revesby Estate is a forward-thinking yet historic estate, deeply rooted in tradition while embracing the opportunities of the modern era.

I was incredibly fortunate to be placed in a management position at an early stage in my life, which was made possible by the trust and support of my parents, for which I am immensely grateful.

After completing my university education, I felt that I needed more specialised knowledge to truly understand estate management. To that end I was fortunate enough to be accepted onto the Worshipful Company of Farmers Advanced Business Management Course, a decision that changed everything for me. The course ignited a passion within me, showing me the full potential of estate management and the ways in which modern principles could be applied.

My educational journey did not stop there. The WCF then co-sponsored my Nuffield Farming Scholarship, which became another transformative experience. My study title, Rural Estates: Objectives, Governance, and Growth, provided me with a deeper understanding of what makes estates unique and how they can be managed effectively.

Estates are not just businesses; they are multi-faceted entities with overlapping responsibilities and challenges which combine the



Natural environment, community, historic assets and visual appeal are the four building blocks of Revesby Estate

charitable with the economic, which I now refer to as building blocks. Many other estates also operate with these four blocks in mind, which are:-

- Natural environment
- Community
- Historic assets
- Visual appeal.

These building blocks have become deeply rooted within our business in that they have objectives, budgets and board time. They are our backbone, which forms both our brand and drives our growth.

Non-financial objectives are central to Revesby Estate's identity, shaping our legacy; however, financial sustainability is essential for long-term success. Like many estates over recent years we have had to diversify but our diversification remains loyal to our two golden threads of serving the local community and agriculture.

When the building blocks are combined with our management approach you get our mission statement:

"Revesby Estate is very proud of its ability to achieve the highest of standards. The underlying objectives of the board are: Not only to remain whole but sympathetically to increase both income streams and asset base.

To save and build upon our heritage, community, visual appearance and natural environment.'

We are proud to show anyone any area of our operations at any time.

A final word - education has given me so much and, importantly, the WCF has been instrumental in making it happen. However, learning never stops - nor does the WCF's role in my journey.



Peter Wiggins-Davies, pictured with his partner Joanna Fowler



Revesby Estate has a long history, but has moved with the times

Wine making in Burgundy

By Blair Pethel

It's a not-uncommon fantasy: I'm going to chuck in my job, move to France and become a winemaker. As appealing as that concept sounds in the abstract, it's quite a bit more complicated when made concrete.

To begin with, there isn't even a word in French for 'winemaker'. The French word vigneron can best be translated as 'winegrower'. And that's what I learned when I took the leap more than 20 years ago: The 'grower' part is primordial - those grapes do not grow themselves.

I pictured myself surrounded by gleaming stainless-steel fermenting tanks, in a cellar full of oak barrels, pouring out my precious product for admiring wine lovers. And yes, there was a bit of that. But what I gradually came to understand was that, while my goal was to be a winemaker, in fact what I was, was a farmer. And farming is hard. But you already knew that.

Winegrowing is a different kind of agriculture. There are few farmers who simultaneously grow the raw material, then transform it into the packaged finished product, then sell it to the (global) market. It's both the interest and the not-inconsiderable challenge of this kind of agriculture.

When I arrived in Burgundy to start the adventure, a local winegrower friend gave me these words of wisdom: You'll discover that it's easy to make wine, it's just hard to sell it. And he was right to a certain extent, although the vagaries of the weather - and of the French government - meant that



Blair has learned how to cultivate, harvest and process the grapes in Burgundy

it wasn't necessarily easy to make wine either. When I ultimately found my annual rhythm my year was divided largely as follows: 85% of the time in the vineyards (pruning, hand work, ploughing, spraying, hedging, etc), 10% of the time transforming the grapes into wine and finishing the product, and 5% of the time on administration and marketing. And with the effects of climate deregulation becoming ever more evident, the farming part became increasingly challenging.

The traditional viticultural cycle in Burgundy is: Prune the vines in late winter; attach them to the trellising in early to mid-spring; once the buds burst, start shoot selection and anti-fungal treatments, being particularly conscientious around flowering and fruit set; follow through with the hand husbandry until mid-July, when the bunches close in on themselves and there is no more space between the individual grapes. The mechanical aspects (spraying, ploughing, and hedging) continue until 45 days or so before harvest, which is done by hand.

This cycle depended on traditional Burgundian weather: Cold winters, with sustained temperatures well below freezing; a chilly, late spring; and moderate rainfall during the warm/hot summer. All that has, of course, been turned on its head by climate change.

In the past 15 years, mild, wet winters have meant early bud break and increased pressure from fungal diseases. Early bud break brings greater

risk of spring frost damage, which was devastating in 2016 and 2021. Chaotic weather patterns bring much greater hail risks, which were again devastating on a large scale in 2012, 2013, and 2014, and on a smaller scale almost every other year.

We as farmers cannot act, we can only react. We learn and adapt year to year. We delay pruning until spring so the vines stay dormant longer. We leave them unattached to the wires later into the season so the sap rise is delayed. We don't remove excess growth until the risk of frost is past. We no longer de-leaf around the bunches to avoid sunburn.

Alcohol levels

But despite this, alcohol levels (as measured by sugar content) continue to rise with the temperatures, and acidity levels decline, sometimes precipitously, leading to potentially unbalanced wines. While Burgundy wines used to measure 12.5% alcohol on average, that has increased over the past 15 years to more like 14% - or even higher. Choosing the best harvest date (when phenolic ripeness is attained and the sugar/acid balance is at its best given the year) has become an enormous challenge.

There is a very telling statistic: In the 9th century, monks began recording the date of the Burgundian wine harvest each year, the average being late September. Since then, there have been 18 harvests that started in August, and 12 of them have been since 2000.



Health and Wellbeing Forum

By Past Master Karen Mercer

In 2017, when Philip Wynn was Master of the Company, he initiated a meeting of all the rural support groups he could contact, to try to understand in more detail the issues and challenges being faced and how it might be possible to support them better and share best practice.

From that successful meeting, the Health and Wellbeing Forum was formed. It now has the support of over 50 organisations, with two meetings being held every year. This important Forum brings together various organisations where information can be shared to the benefit of all.

The Forum is Chaired by Liveryman, Jim Hume, who is head of the National

Rural Mental Health Forum in Scotland.

In November 2024 a meeting was held at the Farmers' Club and there were three presentations. Rapinder Newton of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) gave an update on their Mind Matter Initiative and spoke of their mental health training programme.

There are several mental health training programmes available, from various organisations. It is essential information that gives you the tools to recognise when someone is in need of help,



Past Master Karen Mercer

Caption Competition and Letters to the Editor

We have a new Caption Competition - send in your witty captions for this photo of our very own Assistant Clerk Duncan Couper.

Entries to: The Editor, Bill Young - please email billyyoungnsch@hotmail.com by October 1. The winning caption will be announced in next edition of the newsletter, alongside a photo of the winner!

The Newsletter team welcomes comments, especially positive ones, to help us produce a journal that our readership enjoys. Contributions are also welcome so you are invited to contact the editor, Bill Young, with your thoughts: billyyoungnsch@hotmail.com



and the best way to approach someone who is feeling vulnerable and in need of help and support.

- RSABI Mental Health First Aid training in Scotland: www.rsabi.org.uk/support-service/mental-health-first-aid-awareness-training.

- RABI Mental Health Training in England and Wales Mental Health Training - RABI

- RCVS' Mind Matter Initiative: vetmindmatters.org. Also its free online Compassion Course for Veterinarian Mental Wellbeing - Mind Matters.

- Change Mental Health's free mental health awareness training in Scotland for rural communities and organisations Rural Connections: Training - Change Mental Health.

- Lawrence Davies of the Money and Pension Service. This service is free and its Money Helper tools are really useful, especially for those that may be concerned about their pensions: www.moneyhelper.org.uk.

- Sarah Tilsed, of the Patients' Association, said the Association can help people who may be struggling with their health, to understand their rights and help navigatethroughtheirtreatments. www.patients-association.org.uk.

A Royal Banquet

The Master, Wardens, Liveryman and guests were the contingent of 240 people who attended the lively white tie Banquet on February 4 in the magnificent Drapers' Hall.

In one of the splendid reception rooms the new painting of the 'Red King', which sees King Charles III resplendent in his uniform as Admiral of the Fleet, is on view, restored to its destined place after being out on loan.

The principal guest, HRH The Princess Royal (PM 2002) arrived and was greeted by the Master and Wardens; a Carpet Guard was provided from our military affiliations, including Westminster Dragoons, Royal Yeomanry and Middlesex Wing Air Training Corps.

A delicious dinner was punctuated by music from the buglers of the London Banqueting Ensemble playing their post horns and having a fun time, each trying to outdo the other.

A fervent speech from our guest speaker The Rt Hon Sir Mark Spencer followed. Sir Mark spoke passionately about the current plight of farming and how farmers should refuse to capitulate



in spite of the ructions government is causing. HRH The Princess Royal also spoke to us, impressing us all with her knowledge of and empathy with agriculture, land management and animal husbandry.

She demonstrated a deep understanding of the varied demands made on the farming community in relation to land, crop and animal management, as well as the business decisions farmers are required to make. She was particularly pleased to mention

the safe arrival of a white heifer calf the previous evening!

Tradition then prevailed and the evening drew to a close with the ceremony of the Loving Cup, an ancient custom of some 1,000 years which is still preserved today, during which a raucous rendition of The Farmer's Boy took place. Great fun, amusement and camaraderie was enjoyed by all on what was a true celebration of the City, its traditions and, of course, the Worshipful Company of Farmers.

History of the Lincolnshire Dinner

By Christopher Day

The first Lincolnshire Dinner was held in 2004 to celebrate the Mastership of the late Philip Gibbons and was the brainchild of Michael Anyan.

Michael at that time was an alumnus of the Management course, although not a Liveryman, so he recruited the help of



The Lincolnshire Dinner has been running since 2004

fellow alumnus and new Junior Warden Christopher Day. The first dinner was held at the White Hart, Lincoln, which involved Lincolnshire-based Liverymen and Lincolnshire-based course alumni.

It was not until 2016 that we had the next Lincolnshire Master, Philip Wynn. The organising team expanded to include Liveryman Hugh Wykes, and the venue changed to Hemswell Court in order to accommodate more guests. Three recent alumni were invited to speak about their time on the courses run by our Livery.

The next Lincolnshire Dinner was in 2018 when Rosie Carne became Master; she had worked for Immingham-based Yara and was well known in the county.

Karen Mercer became Master in October 2021 and whilst Karen is based in Staffordshire her siblings are based in Lincolnshire, where they all farm.

Karen, having been Chair of the Education Committee, had interviewed

many of the alumni at the dinner, including all three alumni speakers, who were: Liz Genever CRL 2016, Simon Day ACABM 2018 and Benjamin Jackson BGP 2018. In October 2022 Richard Davies became Master; he started his career in Lincolnshire working for Aveling Barford in Grantham. Past Master Rosie Carne proposed his health during the evening, having introduced Richard to the Livery.

The most recent Lincolnshire dinner was held in November 2023 for Guy Brogden. Guy spent the first 23 years of his life in Lincolnshire; Guy's father Tony Brogden, an estate agent in Lincoln, was also a Liveryman.

In November 2024 a Dinner was held in Cambridgeshire, hosted by Master Richard Crane. An Essex dinner will be hosted by Jeremy Finnis after he becomes Master in October 2025.

The next Lincolnshire Dinner will be on November 3, 2026, at Hemswell Court.

The new John Nix award

This brand-new award, worth £1,000 a year, recognises excellence in Rural Business Management and was awarded by the Company in association with The Andersons Centre.

It is open to graduates of the Company's two flagship courses in Business Management and Rural Leadership, who have shown outstanding achievement in their field.

John Nix, who died in 2018, will be remembered by many as the doyen of agricultural business management in general and gross margins in particular. His practical, down-to-earth style won many farming hearts and minds, and his Management Pocketbook lives on as a worthy legacy.

The award was presented at the Company's annual lecture and dinner at Plaisterer's Hall in London on April 29.

The judges were: Jeremy Finnis, Senior Warden, WCF (Chairman), Graham Redman, Andersons, Editor of the John Nix Handbook (sponsor) and Cedric Porter, Farmers' Guardian (sponsor). They chose Milly Fyfe as the inaugural winner of the Award.



"The judges were most impressed by Milly's enthusiasm and boundless energy," said Mr Finnis. "They had all come across Milly in one or other of her many roles. Overcoming some challenges of her own, she throws herself wholeheartedly into everything she does. Her achievements, including her CEO role with the Shorthorn Society, and winning the Northamptonshire Business Person of the Year, speak

for themselves. She has been a great ambassador for the Challenge of Rural Leadership course, which – in her own words – transformed her career," he added. "As with the Company's Management Course, the cohort of each year's graduates provides a unique life-long support network.

"We have no doubt that Milly will continue to achieve great things in our industry in the years to come."

Livery Familiarisation Day



The Familiarisation Day is an informative yet informal day with the purpose of increasing knowledge of the wider Livery movement and the Farmers Company. There will be talks on the City and how the Guilds developed, and the history and governance of our Company. Our Beadle will explain his role at functions,

including how to use the loving cup correctly! In the afternoon there will be a city walking tour with a London guide. This also gives an opportunity to discuss and ask more questions arising from the morning talks.

The day is aimed primarily at anyone interested in joining the Company, including those that are about to or just have become Liverymen. However, even if you are a long-term Liveryman, you will still learn from the day and you are very welcome, especially if you have not been to any recent events and would like to re-establish your relationship with the Company.

The day starts at 11.00 am with coffee from 10.30 am. There is a buffet lunch at 13.00 and the walking tour will finish around 16.30.

If you require any more information, please contact Hugh Wykes on 07831 186471 or hugh@wykeslodge.co.uk.

Bin End Dinner

The Master and Wardens were joined by 75 guests, including those from our friends and co-hall owners, the Fletchers, at our relaxed Bin End Dinner where guests 'help the Clerk out' by drinking left over wines from the past year. The informal format included a chocolate in the Loving Cup whilst a raucous rendition of The Farmer's Boy was sung, traditional wetting behind the ears from rosewater in the Rose Bowl, and even a spider in our napkins. A fun evening's celebration.



The Master and guest Mrs Eloise Westacott

The Oxford Farming Conference

The Oxford Farming Conference 2025 was back to its best this year under the exemplary Chairmanship of former Natural England boss Geoff Sansome.

The movers and shakers of the industry rubbed shoulders with the up-and-coming leaders from the revamped Inspire scheme, which is attracting great sponsorship and high-quality applicants.

Sold out well before the event, the conference still runs concurrently with the Real Oxford Farming Conference held at the nearby town hall; some delegates run hot foot between the two but in truth both conferences are so crammed full of speakers and presentations it is a real logistical operation just attending one.

The OFC was a good mix of speakers from all backgrounds presenting a variety of subjects under the banner of 'Facing Change, Finding Opportunity'.

Secretary of State Steve Reed kicked off the main conference by surprisingly announcing a 25-year plan for agriculture. He also encouraged farmers to diversify, which raised a few eyebrows, as he was talking to some of the most progressive and diversified businesses in the country. As NFU President Tom Bradshaw said, with the background noise of farmer protestors outside, "the announcement of a long-term plan was surprising and not what you expect to hear when your house is on fire, and you need short term action".

As politicians always do at the Conference, Mr Reed came over well with his own composed and engaging



The sell-out OFC presented a variety of subjects around 'Facing Change, Finding Opportunity'

style, as did the Ministers from the three devolved Governments. The item that raised most eyebrows, particularly in the organic world, was the new Government stance giving a green light to gene editing. This could cause conflict within government itself.

Of the many other speakers there were some brilliant presentations; Anna Taylor from the Food Foundation showed a dramatic graphic illustrating how much agricultural land would be out of production by 2050; Tim Burnhope from JCB expanded on the rapid progress of hydrogen powered vehicles; Anthony Murphy, co-founder of the restaurant chain The Beefy Boys outlined business progress, and Oxfordshire livestock farmer Becci Berry bravely related her

personal and family tragedies, which was a true story of resilience.

Most worrying was the debate - which is always a great theatre - with the motion: 'This house believes that UK needs more grazing livestock, rather than fewer, to be truly sustainable'. The motion was only narrowly carried by seven votes, which for many of us who believe that mixed farming is the salvation of UK agriculture left us slightly bemused by the closeness of the vote.

Nonetheless a great two days and we wish the Farming Community Network CEO Dr Jude McCann good luck in the Chair next year. He has a very hard act to follow as the conference was back to its robust best, even if some key topics are occasionally avoided.

Military Affiliations join HRH The Princess Royal

We were delighted that three Commanding Officers of our Military Affiliations were our guests at this year's Banquet. These were: Group Captain Dutch Holland from RAF Waddington, Major Mike Crofts from the Westminster Dragoons and Wing Commander Tarandeep Bhachoo from the Middlesex Wing Air Cadets.

Also present were four Westminster Dragoons and eight Air Cadets who provided a Carpet Guard for guests on their arrival, including HRH The Princess Royal.



L-R: Liaison Officer Liveryman Giles Turton, Major Mike Crofts and Lt John Gulian of the Westminster Dragoons

The Livery visit to Dyson Strawberries

On November 12 some 30 Liverymen and guests were treated to a fascinating tour of the Dyson strawberry operation at Carrington, Lincs, organised by PM Philip Wynn.

The site was a field in 2020 and was producing strawberries 12 months later, and now produces 1,200t of fruit a year, including 100% of Marks & Spencers' requirement. The 10ha state-of-the-art glasshouse was mightily impressive not just for its scale, but for the level of sophistication of its environmental control systems.

The astonishing robotic harvesting units had to be seen to be believed. Each fruit was individually inspected, filmed, picked and filmed again for quality before being allocated to a punnet. The robots from Dogtooth, a Cambridge company, were in their fourth iteration and were nearing the speed required for commercial use.



The 10ha state-of-the-art facility produces 1,200t of fruit a year

The 3MW anaerobic digester, requiring 140t of feedstock per day - mainly on maize grown on the farm - provided all of the electrical power and heat for the glasshouse.

The three 24-cylinder engines, running on the methane produced by the huge anaerobic digester, hummed away impressively as we filed past in awe.

Annual visit to RAF Waddington

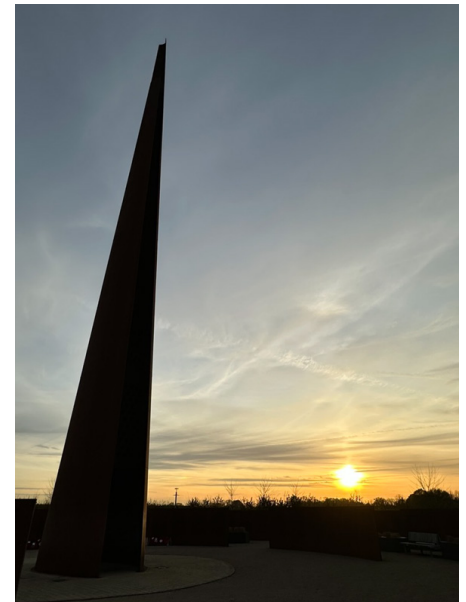
In November we travelled to RAF Waddington for our annual visit. Station Commander, Group Captain 'Dutch' Holland welcomed the group, and described the crucial 'ISTAR' work of the airbase - Intelligence, Surveillance, Targeting and Reconnaissance.

We were then accompanied around the base by Flight Officer Henry Campbell. The highlight was getting up close and personal with the new generation of drone - the 'Protector',

being assembled and tested at the base. The group then viewed the airbase's firefighting equipment and some of the modern airforce's firearms.

The Livery Salver was presented to Sgt Marc Horton for his outstanding contribution to the work of Waddington, especially the Family and Friends Day - attended by some 4,500 people.

Our final stop was the International Bomber Command Centre, where we were treated to a special fly past



The Memorial Spire

by the Red Arrows, organised by the Waddington staff.

The visit culminated in a moving, short service of remembrance next to the Memorial Spire. The Centre was inspired by Liveryman, and Lord Lieutenant of Lincs, Tony Worth.



The Master presenting the Livery Salver to Sgt Marc Horton

Education Committee report

By Stephen Watkins, Chair

The Education Committee administers the Worshipful Company of Farmers' portfolio of courses and falls under the Company's Structure, Governance and Responsibilities. Education is considered to be the core principle of the WCF and is also the Livery's largest spending area.

The Education Committee is divided into a number of distinct areas, each with its own Vice Chair and each supported by the Assistant Clerk, Duncan Couper:

- Agricultural Business Management course (ABM) - Poul Hovesen.
- Challenge of Rural Leadership course (CRL) - Peter Greig.
- Cranfield, including MBAs and the Business Growth Programme - John Hardman.
- Surrey Docks Farm initiatives - Stuart Philpot.
- Education funding - Nick Padwick.

ABM course

We launched the application process for the 74th ABM course early this year and it is the second year the WCF has run the course in-house, under the tutelage of Keith Barriball and Karen Brosnan.

This year, the programme commences with pre-residential preparation in October with the content delivery online. This is followed by two weeks in residence at our new home - the Stonehouse Court, near Stroud Gloucestershire, from November 9-22 inclusive, followed up with post-programme online coaching



CRL delegates learning the important skills of teamwork and challenging fears

in December and February 2026. In addition, there is also one-to-one online coaching planned in December 2025 and January 2026.

The fee for the 2025/26 programme is £6,700 +VAT. This course tends to attract students in their 30s to early 50s.

CRL course

The CRL has just completed its 28th course, under the tutelage of Duchy College's Rural Business School. This currently takes place at Dartington Hall and is a two-week residential course in the last two weeks of January.

The fee for 2025 programme was £6,700. This course tends to attract students in their mid 20s to early 40s.

More information on the 2026 edition to follow – applications will open on May 1. The applications process for these two flagship courses is now via our online portal, with interviews taking place at Farmers & Fletchers' Hall over two days. The interviews for both courses involves a selection panel consisting of the course directors, and the funding panel, who establish how applicants will fund their development.

Cranfield

Cranfield provides the Business Growth Programme and two MBAs – either full-time or part-time. These courses at the School of Management at Cranfield are a little different, as we rely on the University recommending those with an agricultural connection to apply to us for assistance with funding. Interviews are arranged by the Chair and Vice Chair and take place online. With grateful support via the Beckett Foundation, the WCF is able to provide Grants of £4,500 for either of the courses.

Funding

Funding via grants from WCF is available for the full portfolio of our education courses.

Each application is looked at on its own merits; we as a Livery Company do not wish anyone to be unable to attend any of the courses due to financial restrictions. More information can be found via www.farmerslivery.org.uk/courses/sponsorship-and-funding.

WCF Educational Portfolio

Course	Number	Deadline	Interview	Start date	Location
Agricultural Business Management 2025	74th	30/04/2025	08/07/25 - 09/07/25	27/10/25 online; 09/11-22/11 residential	Stonehouse Court, Stonehouse
Challenge of Rural Leadership 2026	29th	31/07/2025	10/09/25 - 11/09/25	18/01/26 - 30/01/26 residential	Dartington Hall, Totnes
Business Growth Programme		Throughout the year	At briefing days	February & September each year	Cranfield Business School
MBA		Throughout the year	Throughout the year	September	Cranfield Business School
Executive MBA		Throughout the year	Throughout the year	January	Cranfield Business School

Henman Brooks Committee

By Nick Major, Chair

The Henman Brooks and Jubilee Committee plays a vital role in fulfilling the charitable work of the Company by identifying and supporting young people in agriculture and associated industries who wish to study to improve their knowledge and skills. Through the awards and grants it oversees, it is often the first contact that young people will have with the Company and the wider Livery community.

Henman Nuffield Scholarship

Thanks to a bequest by Liveryman Philip Henman, the WCF, together with Savills, sponsors a Nuffield Scholarship each year. The award offers financial assistance of up to £16,000 to candidates aged between 25 and 45 to travel overseas and work or study in a sphere of their choice.

Recent subjects studied by WCF/Savills Scholars include leadership, plant breeding, maternal genetics, worm resistance in sheep and rewilding.

Attfield Brooks Apprentice Fund

The Attfield Brooks Apprentice Fund was set up in 1989 to assist Company apprentices between the ages of 18 and 26 to 'learn the art and science of agriculture', to pursue a formal education in agriculture and to widen



Nick Major, Chair of the Henman Brooks Committee

their experiences by overseas travel. The Company's apprenticeship scheme has recently been reviewed and the intention is to provide an element of mentoring in what is still an evolving programme. Applications are made through the Clerk.

Jubilee Scholarships

During her year as Master in 2001/2002 HRH the Princess Royal helped the Company establish a Scholarship Fund to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Farmers Company and Her Late Majesty The Queen's Golden Jubilee. Awards of up to £750 are made each

year to current members of the National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs (NFYFC), which administers the scheme in conjunction with the Company.

The Company makes up to 10 awards each year and recent courses completed include tractor training, knapsack and chainsaw proficiency, DIY artificial insemination and a number of modules contributing to the Institute of Agricultural Secretaries and Administrators (IAgSA) qualification.

OFC Scholarships

Each year an award is made to two members of the NFYFC to allow them to attend and participate in the Oxford Farming Conference. Each Scholar is asked to provide a report to the NFYFC and the Company on how they benefited from the Conference and its Scholarship programme.

University and College Awards

The Company's Recognition of Achievement in Education prizes are awarded annually to a student at a number of agricultural universities and colleges.

In 2024, 12 awards of £250 each were made and presented to successful applicants, usually by a Liveryman at the university or college's graduation ceremony.

The Fellowship and Communications Committee

By Peter Wiggins-Davies, Chair

The Fellowship and Communications Committee was established in 1986 "To keep members abreast of the latest developments, to enhance the participation of ordinary members and generally to keep members fully informed of the Company's activities".

It was merged with the Funding Committee in 2021, whose main object was to raise funds for the Worshipful Company of Farmers' Charitable Trust, by donation, sponsorship and organising fundraising events, to enable the Trust to fulfil its charitable objectives.

As with all committees we have detailed terms of reference:-

Pillar 1 - Fellowship

We promote and foster good fellowship in three main areas:

- Members of the Livery
- Other Livery Companies
- Wider farming and food industries

Promoting and fostering good fellowship means:

1) Keeping members abreast of the latest developments, through:

- A centralised calendar
- Social media
- Our website
- Mail shots
- Newsletters

2) Enhancing participation, through:

- Growing the number of Liverymen
- Reviewing and improving past events
- Developing new events

Pillar 2 - Funding

Funding is run as a sub-committee. Here we find the trusted hand of Robert Sears

on the tiller. Robert has very successfully increased the WCF's income in three separate ways:

- Donations
- Sponsorship
- Events



Continued on page 15

The City Food and Drink Lecture

The 24th annual City Food & Drink Lecture took place in the Guildhall's magnificent Great Hall on March 11. The Lecture is now a well-established event which is organised by a group of eight Livery Companies.

It is an important reminder of the links between the City of London and UK agri-food and drink industry. The audience of Liverymen and guests were joined once again by Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal, who is not only a great supporter of the City and the Livery but also Past Master (2002) of the Worshipful Company of Farmers.

Preparing for success

The lecture was presented by John Shropshire OBE, Executive Chairman of G's Group, a family farming business growing and packing salad crops in the UK and several countries in Europe, North Africa and the US. The title of his lecture was: 'Preparing to farm for 2040 with success'.

John is the first primary producer to give the lecture and he was able to use his extensive experience to set out the opportunities and threats to UK agriculture. Given the current policy context, John stated his view that food security is a national priority, and resilience and the ability to embrace new technology will be vital for farming



The Master (centre) with (L-R) Jubilee Scholars Megan Hall, Beth Williams, Harry Towers and Samuel Sharp

to succeed in the coming years. As is customary, the lecture was followed by a lively panel discussion chaired by BBC presenter Charlotte Smith. John Shropshire was joined by Henry Dimbleby MBE, (lead author of the National Food Strategy), Katie Pettifer, (CEO at the Food Standards Agency) and Jack Bobo (University of California, Los Angeles).

A number of critical topics were discussed, including the importance of

attracting people into the industry. This year, four WCF Jubilee Scholars were able to attend the City Food & Lecture, and the Future Generation Forum which precedes it.

During the reception and supper, which took place after the lecture and panel session, the Jubilee Scholars had the opportunity to meet HRH The Princess Royal and talk about how they had benefited from the award which she helped establish in 2001/2002.

The Fellowship Committee (continued)

Continued from page 14

Not only do we have terms of reference, we also have a five-year strategic plan. Its most salient points are:

- To have a minimum of 60% of members participating in at least one Company activity each year.
- To develop a communications strategy which promotes the educational and charitable activities of the Company to the Livery and the wider industry.
- After a thorough review of all current activities, to construct a new and carefully balanced Livery calendar, capable of delivering the Company's stated goals. Each year this would be reviewed and

agreed by the Master ahead of their year in office.

- To establish closer links with the membership of the WCFA so that its members feel sufficiently aware and connected to the Company to be able to contribute to and influence its thinking and activities.
- To widen our portfolio of strategic partners to help raise more funds and provide resilience going forward, and to ensure we deliver proper fellowship and value to them.
- To support regional activities where these can be seen to promote better understanding of the Company and to encourage members and non-members to become involved

with the Company in our City of London home.

- To develop and maintain an effective fundraising programme to help facilitate building up reserves.
- To attract additional funds to specifically support new programmes of charitable activity.

In conclusion, fellowship is central to our great organisation. Fellowship requires participation and, if you as a Liveryman fall into the slightly absent category, we would urge you back into the fold.

We are an open-minded, forward-thinking Livery - if you have any ideas that can improve anything that we do as a committee please do make contact.

Announcements

The following were admitted as Freemen at the meeting of the Court held on December 9, 2024:

Mrs Claudine Church

Proposed by Mark Leggott
Seconded by Richard Crane

Mr Malcolm John Hughes

Proposed by David Bolton
Seconded by Christopher Spokes

Mrs Sarah Evelyn Ingham Clark

Proposed by Guy Brogden
Seconded by John Thorpe OBE

Mr Oliver Charles Dale

Proposed by Christopher Philpot
Seconded by Christopher Behagg

The following were admitted as Freemen at the meeting of the Court held on March 5, 2025:

Mr Nicholas John Hunt

Proposed by Nicholas Padwick
Seconded by David Bolton

Mr Carl Aubrey Atkin-House

Proposed by Richard Crane
Seconded by Peter Wiggins-Davies

Mr Stephen William Bett

Proposed by David Bolton
Seconded by Vincent Hedley-Lewis

The following Freemen were Clothed into the Livery at the meeting of the Court held on March 5, 2025:

Mrs Sarah Jane Handbury Cowlrick

Mr Edmund George William Thornhill

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

Mrs Susan Elizabeth Kilpatrick of Cobham, Surrey, who died on November 29, 2024

Mr Christopher Ferens Pertwee of Hadleigh, Ipswich, who died on December 21, 2024. He was Master 1998-99.

Mr Timothy Maxwell of Gloucester Road, London who died on January 27, 2025.

Roger Harold Booth (Freeman) of Ranby, Lincolnshire, who died on October 11, 2024.

John William Roberts (Yeoman) of Chevington, Suffolk, who died on November 6, 2024.

Nicholas John Fiske of Burstall, Suffolk, who died on November 9, 2024. He was Master 2004-2005.

George Malcolm Newbury of Plumstead Green, Norfolk, who died on September 28, 2024.

Keith Heap Gilbert (Yeoman) of Tattershall Bridge, Lincoln, who died in July 2024.

Events

Events for your diaries in 2025 and 2026

14 May - Inter-Livery Clay Shooting, West London Shooting School
28 May - Company and Alumni visit to Thatcher's Cider, Somerset
2 June - Common Hall webinar, Court and Past Master's Dinner
3 June - Court and Livery Lunch
16 June - Livery Familiarisation Day
18 June - Lincolnshire Show event with CLA and CARAS
25 June - Norfolk Show Reception
1-3 July - Master's Summer Outing, Retford
17 July - Surrey Docks Farm 50th anniversary
9 September - Charity Golf Day, Denham
17-21 September - Livery visit to Cote d'Azur
22 September - Masters' and Clerks' lunch
14 October - Court, Harvest Thanksgiving Service and Lunch
8 November - Lord Mayor's Show
27 November - Past Masters' Meeting & Lunch
25-26 November - Alumni Learning Extension Day

9 December - Court Meeting & Lunch
16 December - Carol Service
16 December - Dinner at Farmers & Fletchers' Hall
3 February 2026 - Annual Banquet
23 February 2026 - City Food & Drink Lecture
3 March 2026 - Court & Livery Lunch
20 March 2026 - United Guilds Service
1 April 2026 - The Clerk's Bin End Dinner
21 April 2026 - Agricultural Lecture and Dinner

To view events on the Farmers' Livery website, please scan this QR code:



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