The Master’s first 100 days

From Swan Feasts to Basketmakers, the range of experiences open to the Master is very wide ranging and, indeed, it is a privilege to represent our Company at events in the City of London and beyond.

All 110 Livery Companies in the City have their own traditions and are proud to exhibit the skills and craftsmanship of their members. Many traditional crafts are flourishing – whether that be in wood turning and the creation of bells fashioned from the wood of the belfry in St Paul’s Cathedral, to basket making using willow grown on smallholdings. Their willow-weaving skills are not confined to baskets; larger pieces and works of art also feature in their repertoire.

Some Livery Companies arrange lectures on their crafts and traditions. The Glass Sellers invited the world-famous surgeon Sir Roger Kneebone to deliver a lecture, which began with a film of a surgical operation. The point he made was how we create and think with our hands – and that this is the basis of how we create and think with our operation. The point he made was which began with a film of a surgical operation. The point he made was where we create and think with our hands – and that this is the basis of how we create and think with our operation.

Music plays an important role in many Livery Companies – some have their own Company song and many sing the Livery Grace composed in the 16 century. The Vintners’ Swan Feast included minstrels playing on varied medieval instruments.

Education is a feature of Livery Companies. It is a pleasure as Master to award our scholarships and prizes for the encouragement of the study of Spirits to a new enthusiastic and appreciative generation, as I was able to do recently at the WSET Awards in the Guildhall.

Military Affiliates are now being effectively managed and coordinated by a group of our liverymen known as MALT (Military Affiliates Liaison Team). There will be more future communication to liverymen about the activities of each of our affiliates.

Our new Development Director

I am delighted to announce the appointment of Clive Bairsto CBE to the new role of Development Director of the Distillers. Over the last year a management review has been taking place to consider the best way of driving our ambitious agenda of growth and development of our industry activities, our vocational education plans, and our social events among many other areas – in fact all areas other than the formal events and Livery governance managed by the Clerk’s office.

The research carried out among liverymen was clear on the need to drive such areas as a mentoring programme, charitable giving and informal networking. The committees wanted to see more resources go into communications and if we are to run another Charity Auction we will need to strengthen the team to drive this forward and not rely excessively on volunteer time.

Clive was chosen from a large number of applicants because of his unique blend of experience and abilities. Coming from a famous family of airmen, he has had an illustrious 30 year career in the Royal Air Force flying Tornados, as OC of the Sovereign base in Cyprus, and at RAF Leuchars, retiring as an Air Vice Marshal. More recently he has worked in charity, helping young people excluded from school to be rehabilitated; he was responsible for crisis management at the National Grid and developing the readiness of the London Olympics team. He will combine his part time work for the Distillers with his role at Streetworks, which coordinates the plans of all the utility companies; quite a task on its own!

Clive lives in Oxfordshire with his wife and three girls and will be joining us in March. We welcome him to our Company and wish him well in this crucial and exciting new role.

Richard Watling
Past Master

Later the same day I was very pleased to present PM Hayman with the prestigious Hall of Fame award at the Gin Magazine Awards Dinner at Armoury House (home of the Honourable Artillery Company) in the City.

My first 100 Days as Master has been a rich tapestry of unique and memorable experiences.

Martin Riley
The Master
February Lunch

At this year’s February Livery lunch the Master presented the Livery to David Croll, Paul Hick, Iain Stirling and John Stirling. Major Jamie Barklem (Commanding Officer of London Scottish), Commander Duncan Thomas (825 Naval Air Squadron), and Dr. Dawn Maskell (Head of the International Centre for Brewing and Distilling at Heriot-Watt University) each received the Freedom of the Company by Presentation. Gary Horsfield of William Grant & Sons, was made a Corporate Freeman, Trevor Stirling was appointed as Steward and Garvin Brown IV and Justin Hicklin were appointed Court Assistants.

Liveryman Nicholas Cook proposed the toast to the guests and introduced the former Lord Mayor Sir Roger Gifford, as well as the Master of the Worshipful Company of Innholders the Reverend Canon Bill Christianson, who attended with his Clerk, Mr. Charles Henty. Nicholas also introduced the Master’s personal guests: Amanda Garnham from the National Armagnac Bureau in France (who is also a Mousquetaire with the Compagnie des Mousquetaires d’Armagnac); and Christopher Hayward (a Past Master of the Patten Makers and a candidate for the non-Aldermanic Sheriff in the elections in June).

He also welcomed the guest speaker, Mr. Tony Hales, CBE. Tony was the CEO of Allied Domecq for eight years, at a time when it was one of the biggest British companies and had a large spirits portfolio. Outside the world of spirits Tony has a wide range of business and artistic interests, including Chair of the NAAFI Pension Fund, Workspace, and British Waterways and Canal Trust, as well as being a director of Welsh National Opera. He was also a director of Aston Villa for 10 years while they were in the Premiership. Tony currently Chairs the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, the Greenwich Foundation and is an Honorary Governor of the Royal Shakespeare Company. He is a liveryman of the Brewers’ Company and, when time permits, he plays the saxophone.

The Master thanked Tony for his fascinating speech. He then proceeded to publicly recognise Nicholas Cook for his very generous donation of Gin Guild tasting fees to the Distillers’ Charity, before formally announcing the appointment of retired Air Vice Marshal Clive Bairsto, CBE as the new Development Director of the Livery. The Master concluded the lunch by presenting the Livery golf prizes, followed by the Distillers’ Company’s Scholarship Award to Ms. Diana Lyalle (Wine and Spirit Education Trust’s Diploma). The guests then retired for a restorative stirrup cup with the Master, where they were joined by the consorts of Liverymen, who had dined with the Mistress at a separate lunch at Innholders’ Hall.

Who was That Sailor I Saw You Kissing?

A group of Consorts joined the Mistress, Nicola Riley and her guest Fiona Adler for a very sociable lunch at Innholders’ Hall. After making the most of the opportunity to catch up with each others’ news over a delicious lunch, we had the privilege of listening to Fiona Adler talking about her varied career, including practising as an NLP Coach helping children to overcome bullying. She was the first female to become Master of the Worshipful Company of Tobacco Pipe Makers and Tobacco Blenders, and feels passionately about protecting the history of The City of London.

Fiona was elected as Non-Aldermanic Sheriff in support of Lord Mayor Alan Yarrow and shared with us the highlights of her year; an exciting moment was attending the installation of the Lord Mayor at the Silent Ceremony and all the celebrations which followed (a trip on The Gloriana down the Thames surrounded by small boats prior to The Lord Mayor’s Show (originally the show only took place on the Thames, hence the name “floats”) before being driven with a blue light police escort back to Guildhall to join the Show in a carriage lent by the Queen). A sombre occasion was the service in St Paul’s Cathedral commemorating the end of the Afghanistan combat in which 453 lives were lost. Seeing her on television, her sister texted, “Who was that sailor I saw you kissing” to which Fiona replied, “Just The First Sea Lord!” Fiona finished to great applause by reminding us of the importance of the City’s and the Liveries’ support of the Armed Forces to whom we owe an enormous debt of gratitude.

Sarah Watling
WSET Awards Ceremony

Over 500 global wine and spirits professionals and industry influencers gathered at the City of London’s historic Guildhall on January 21st to celebrate the 2019 Wine & Spirit Education Trust (WSET) Awards & Graduation Ceremony—the first event in the WSET’s 50th anniversary year. Hosted by WSET Honorary President Steven Spurrier alongside Chief Executive Ian Harris, the occasion saw Sarah Jane Evans MW, last year’s WSET Outstanding Alumni Award winner, open the ceremony with a key note speech to WSET’s largest ever graduating class of Diploma candidates. This year 332 new WSET Diploma graduates were honoured, representing a 21per cent increase over last year. Graduates came from over 40 countries worldwide, ranging from Chile to South Korea to Croatia. This compares to WSET’s first ever graduation ceremony in 1970 when 84 students from the UK received their diplomas. Following the graduate procession, outstanding candidates for the 2017/18 academic year were presented with awards and scholarships in recognition of their achievements.

Diana Lyalle from Wraxall, Somerset, won the Worshipful Company of Distillers’ Diploma Prize for outstanding results in the WSET Diploma Unit 4 exam – Spirits of the World. She will receive funds to study a spirit-producing region of her choice.

Mark Williams from Ringwood, Hampshire, won the Worshipful Company of Distillers’ Prize for outstanding results in the WSET Level 2 Award in Spirits. Mark, who completed his qualification at WSET School London, is owner & director of New Forest Spirits, a company he set up one year ago this January. He will receive funds to study a spirit-producing region of his choice.

Ian Harris
CEO - WSET

Lawyer turned Educator

This year’s winner of the WSET Diploma prize for outstanding results in the spirits examination is Diana Lyalle, a lawyer turned wine and spirits educator and tastings host from North Somerset. Diana began her studies at evening classes where she met Kelli Coxhead. Although they both agreed to give up their day jobs and get into wine and spirits, Kelli was the first to do so, and now co-owns The Wine Shop Winscombe with her husband Matthew. Diana now works freelance for them as a WSET tutor and tastings host, as well as for West of England Wine School based in Bristol, where she undertook her WSET studies. Although she enjoys a dram or two of Scotch, Diana was not confident about the spirits unit of the WSET Diploma, leaving it until last, and tasting as many spirits as she could get her hands on to ensure a pass. She attributes her success to her excessive zeal in this regard. Since then Diana’s exploration of spirits has continued; at a recent whisky tasting hosted by Gordon & MacPhail’s Luke Todd-Wood, she discovered that whisky goes exceptionally well with strong cheddar cheese and charcuterie. She is now keen to develop tasting events featuring spirits and food matching to help consumers find new ways of enjoying spirits at home. A tasting using this theme to coincide with Fathers’ Day is planned this summer, and Diana plans to use her blog page to showcase further food and spirits matching adventures. Diana has yet to decide which spirit-producing region to study as part of her prize, but an area offering gastronomic possibilities is likely to be high on the shortlist.

Editor

Website Development

The database refreshment and reinvigoration project is on its final chapter. The acid test is to be able to provide reports to the PMC in March and we await the satisfaction check from its key report compiler, and then the green light is achieved.

A significant milestone for the website was reached in January when the Clerk’s Office decided to take all timely bookings via the website for the February lunch and this worked very well for those brave members who managed to log in.

Future plans are to improve the navigation around the site, to reorganise the flow of reports from the home page onto the relevant pages (and then archiving), and to activate the photo gallery so that we can download photos from our Dropbox account.

The key challenge is to market the website to members so we build traffic to the site, and increase the usage. The website exists as an information source (like a library) and offers daily news feeds from The Drinks Report and Just Drinks. However it is just one element in the developing communications strategy that the team is working on, and we would welcome more members logging on and checking their personal profiles.

Chris Searle
Website Manager
HMS Montrose on Global Deployment

Since sailing from Chile in mid-December we embarked on a 5,500 nautical mile crossing of the Pacific Ocean, which was punctuated by some fantastic island stops. Following a celebration of Christmas at sea, which included the traditional midnight Mass, Nativity Play, Carols and the Officers of the Wardroom serving Christmas Lunch, we anchored off Easter Island on 27 December. During our short time at anchor, all of the crew got ashore, 50 per cent at a time, to explore this UNESCO World Heritage Site, visit the Moai statues and enjoy a relaxing Christmas BBQ that was generously funded by the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity. While being away from our families and loved ones at Christmas was particularly hard, the once-in-a-lifetime visit certainly kept our spirits high.

On to Pitcairn Island for New Year’s Eve, we were the first RN warship to visit the island since 2000. Despite being amongst the descendants of the Bounty mutineers, I managed to avoid a mutiny onboard!

Prior to coming alongside in Tahiti, we exercised with the French Navy, which highlighted that even 10,000 miles from home we can operate with ease with our nearest ally to the UK.

The arrival in Devonport Naval Base in New Zealand is something we will never forget. Following an 11 Gun Salute and reply in Auckland Harbour, as we went alongside, we were greeted first by a band, and then a traditional Hakka from members of Her Majesty’s New Zealand Ship Canterbury. It required all my willpower and concentration to put the ship alongside. Upon sailing from New Zealand we conducted further training, with aircraft from both the Royal New Zealand Air Force and the French Navy, this time operating out of New Caledonia. We also took the opportunity to celebrate Burns’ Night at sea with a fantastic Supper organised by the junior officers onboard, who portrayed and acted out Burns’ poetry in a manner (and accent) not to cause any embarrassment to our status as a Scottish ship.

We took on fuel in Darwin, Australia, enjoying a short but very enjoyable day there, which built on numerous visits to Australia from our fellow Scottish ship, HMS Sutherland last year, and again a connection with Montrose was found. Having sailed through the Java Sea and arrived in Singapore at our “half way” point, I want to thank you for the support we continue to receive from our affiliation.

Conor O’Neill
Commanding Officer HMS Montrose

(A fuller transcript of the Ship’s global deployment will be published in the next Distillate.)

Record Number of Scottish Freemen on Their Way

The Scottish Committee would like to advise liveryman that the annual Scottish Distillers’ Dinner will be held again at the Signet Library Edinburgh, on Thursday 12 September 2019. For Golfers, Royal Burgess at Barnton has been booked again for the following day. Liverymen from south of the border are most welcome for one, or other, or indeed both events. Please look out for further notifications from the Clerk’s office.

A record six freemen are going forward to become liverymen. Congratulations to Graham Horne, Malcolm Leask, Karen Betts, Joanne McKerchar, Stephen Bremner and Fred Laing.

Brian Morrison
Gentlemen Start your Engines!

Around the start of the year the committee sits together (in very business-like fashion, of course) to pull together the plan for the forthcoming year. We hardly have to rack our brains for ideas, as these always spill onto the table and it is more a question of what we cannot do, not what we will do. So many roads to drive, so little time. Better drive faster! So what’s in store for 2019?

We always start with a dinner in the winter months and this year we will come together at the Quirinale restaurant in Westminster to chat through ideas, eat some Italian food in homage to Ferrari (sadly no German restaurants in London, but plenty of great Riesling!) take the train home and look forward to getting our steeds great Riesling!) take the train home to restaurants in London, but plenty of Italian food in hommage to Ferrari (sadly no German restaurants in London, but plenty of great Riesling will come together at the Quirinale restaurant in Westminster to chat through ideas, eat some Italian food in homage to Ferrari (sadly no German restaurants in London, but plenty of great Riesling) take the train home and look forward to getting our steeds out of the stables and on the road.

While the F1 team is in Australia we will be looking around the premises of McLaren in Woking – and hopefully touring the road car section as well. The architecture is stunning in its own right, and hopefully the lunch, held on 15 March, in a local hostelry will be pretty good too.

May sees us on track at Brands Hatch. Have you ever driven a Lamborghini, Ferrari, Aston Martin, Porsche 911 and BMW Hybrid in one day? No, nor have we, but we will on 22 May. It’s an early morning start at 0800 so an overnight may be necessary (cue a delicious curry perhaps) and then we are off for a few laps each with an instructor.

We always try to do a weekend away with some distilling connections, sightseeing and a varied schedule. This July we will go to the Air Day at RNAS Yeovilton to see our friends at 825 Squadron and watch some thrilling flying. A visit to a famous car restorer, a cider brandy distillery, Stoneham Park, Cheddar Gorge and Bath Spa are all in the plans, and July 11-14 are the dates.

And finally – as if that was not enough – we head to Norfolk to visit Lotus on 19 October.

As I said we are not short of ideas, and 2020 is already practically planned. A big thank you to Nick Carr, our secretary for pulling together such a varied programme. Why not join us? All you have to be is a liverman with a car, it doesn’t have to be a Ferrari GTO but of course they are very welcome. If you are interested please get in touch with Nick Carr, the secretary at carnicholas@yahoo.co.uk.

Richard Watling
Past Master

Gin Guild News

The Gin Guild continues to innovate. At the end of 2018 it launched Gin-Note™¹⁹, the flavour profiling descriptor package aimed at helping consumers identify a gin profile (and helping the industry describe their products). Brands are now picking up the profiles and users report that the response from their marketing teams and consumers is very positive. It will be launched in the USA at the Gin Summit in Denver in March.

The Guild now seeks to address the problem caused by a number of products brought to market that are not gin (within the EU definition), but which are being marketed as ‘gin’, cashing in on the popularity and damaging the category by the misuse of the name.

Enforcement by Trading Standards of product misdescription has been patchy, not least due to the sheer number of new gins, distilleries and gin related – non-compliant – products now on the market.

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Richard Watling
Past Master

Good Golfing Weather is Around the Corner!

The main draws for the knock-out tournaments in England and Scotland have already been circulated and many first round matches have been arranged in anticipation that good golfing weather is coming soon. If recent years are anything to go by, the competition will be fierce but sternly social.

Secretary, Graham Franklin has already circulated the 2019 fixture list. Our match managers are always happy to hear from those wishing to play, so do please let them know if you are available, as I am sure you will enjoy the friendly company of fellow distillers and genial opponents. Please let Graham Franklin know if you would like to be added to his golf mailing list via, ggfranklin3@aol.com

PM Keith Garrard
Golf President

Nicholas Cook
Director General The Gin Guild