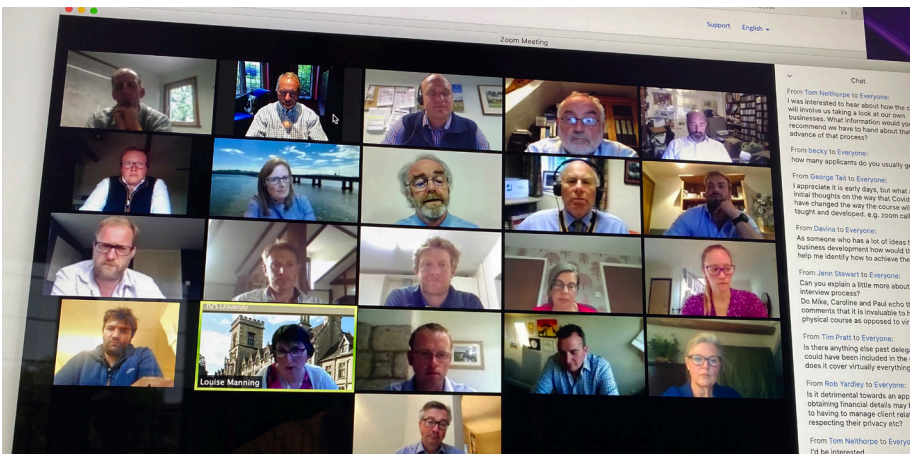


Newsletter

Inspiring, encouraging and developing excellence in the management and leadership of UK agriculture



On page 7 Philip Gibson's inspiring report on his BGP experience

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Meeting the 70th ACABM delegates by ZOOM



Just one of the entries for the Clerk's 'Farm Cart Photo Competition'



Alice Midmer our Cranfield MBA delegate



Looking to the future The Master's Perspective



The Master addresses the Company before 'lockdown'

To-date, little about my year as Master of the Worshipful Company of Farmers could be described as normal.

Expected arrangements for my installation - St Bartholomews, harvest hamper and Haberdashers' Hall lunch were all in place. Suddenly Smithfield Market became a 'no-go' area for fear of food demonstrations by extremists that week, so our Clerk shifted nearly 200 liverymen and guests to St Lawrence Jewry and then Plaisterers' Hall at incredibly short notice. Then, barely 4 months later we see the arrival and catastrophic impact of Covid-19, precluding meetings and ushering in "virtual" almost everything! Prone to exaggeration I may be, but by any standards this has been unusual....

I am of course disappointed not to have been able to see all of you at the Hall more often than I have, or even to welcome the Company to the delights of glorious Norfolk for my Summer Outing. Our hosts, Salle Estate, Place (UK) and John Innes were ready and eager with anticipation - another time perhaps.

For light relief, James Peck's appearance at the Inter-Company Pancake Race at Guildhall Yard disguised as a scarecrow challenged his own mother to recognise "her own genes"! My successful appearance there was followed on the same day by the NFU Conference in Birmingham, as a guest of Minette Batters (that hall became a Covid Nightingale hospital barely two months afterwards). Since 23rd March there have been no opportunities to represent the Company at the many events which had been planned.

Whilst neither the committees nor Court have been able to meet in person since March 3rd, this doesn't mean there hasn't been a great deal going on. In fact, an enormous amount has been achieved in the last 100 days. Members of the Court and the Company have been busy reorganising to meet fresh requirements of the Charity Commissioners and on top of that, the fallout from Covid-19.

The impact of the pandemic on the operation of Farmers and Fletchers' Hall has been extremely serious. The Hall

was on course to make a small profit in the 2019/20 year. Unsurprisingly the cancellation of an entire summer of events has completely removed that possibility - instead it was in imminent danger of making a very substantial loss that would have been a burden on our Charity and the Company.

Having reviewed all the possibilities, and with an eye to securing our financial position for the future, in consultation with our partners the Fletchers, the Directors of Farmers & Fletchers Hall Ltd, took the hard decision to put the hall's operating company into Members Voluntary Liquidation. By doing so we were able to make sure that potential debts didn't spiral out of control, customer deposits were protected, all the hall creditors were paid in full and that the hall would be properly preserved and maintained for future use. Revalued last winter, it remains the Company's largest single asset.

We are as a Company rightly proud of our hall. Incidentally we are one of only forty Livery Companies to have their own hall, and by acting quickly and decisively we have made sure that this asset is secured for the long-term. Farmers & Fletchers' Hall itself will of course remain at 3 Cloth Street, the only change is in the operating model we adopt to run it. Discussions about the best way to do this are on-going and in the meantime to keep costs to a minimum, while no one can use the hall, we have temporarily mothballed it. As soon as we know more about the future structure, we will let everyone know.

I am immensely grateful to many individuals within the Company, but particularly Jeremy Finnis, Philip Wynn and Guy Brogden, who have worked tirelessly, not just to come to this decision but to wade through all the complex legal paperwork necessary to implement it. The Fletchers too have earned a very honourable mention - throughout the very detailed negotiations they have been helpful, positive and a pleasure to work with.

Another casualty of Covid-19 has been our education programme. The Court approved the recommendation of Chairman of Education, Richard Davies,

to postpone both the 2020 ACABM and the 2021 CRL. This is the first time, as far as I can tell, that we have ever had to do this, but I am certain it was the right decision. As you will read elsewhere, although we are all disappointed to have to delay the running of the 70th ACABM and the 25th CRL it seems that our decision to put the quality of these courses and the experience of the delegates first, has been well received. Perversely this has in fact led to a surge in enquiries for both the postponed courses.

It hasn't all been about Covid-19 either. We have been working for some considerable time, under the guidance of the Honorary Solicitor, Ann Phillips, and with the help of our legal advisors Stone King, on a necessary re-structuring of the way the Farmers Company Charitable Fund is administered and managed. As required by the Charity Commissioners, this re-structure separates the management of our charity, from the management of our day-to-day commercial activities, thereby eliminating the risk of any conflict of interest.

This separation necessitates a change in the trusteeship of our Charity, away from the Court of the Worshipful Company of Farmers to a newly incorporated Trustee Company. In future it will be the

Directors of this new Trustee Company who will act as the trustees of our charity. Day-to-day there will be very little change. Our committees will still draw-up budgets and make spending recommendations, but instead of these going through the Finance Committee to the Court for approval, they will in future go from the Finance Committee to the board of the new Trustee Company for final approval.

You have all seen last October's Company handbook (still available from the Clerk) which shows our structure. The new structure above, is only slightly different. The board of the new Trustee Company will initially have 5 members. It will be chaired by Past Master, Julian Sayers, with its initial directors/trustees being Court Assistant, Guy Brogden, Liveryman Baroness Hazel Byford and Liveryman Tim Russ, with Rupert Jones (former Master of the Solicitors Company) in the important role of independent member.

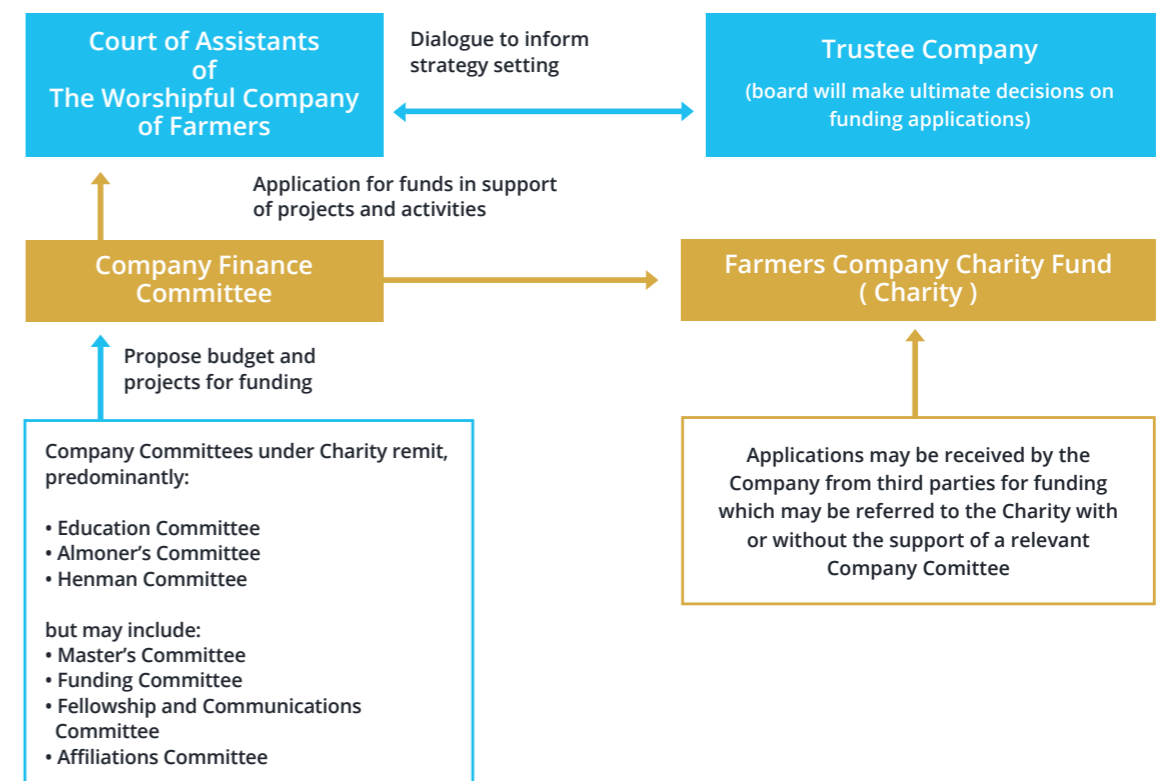
By restructuring in this way we have been able to achieve for our charity the independence that the Charity Commissioners insist upon, while still retaining a strong and very close relationship with the Company and the Court.

There is no getting away from the fact that the last few months have been difficult. Never-the-less I feel completely confident in and grateful for, all the hard work and effort put in by so many of the Company's Liverymen. The Finance Committee and its prudent investment subcommittee have given sound advice to Court, guaranteeing the Company sound governance and finances for many years ahead.

Along with all of you I suspect, I am looking forward to reviving the close community and social interaction that we all value so much. Fellowship has always been at the heart of the Company's activities and will be again.

I was flattered to receive, and very much appreciated, an invitation to continue as Master Farmer for a second term. However, following consultations with both the Senior and Junior Wardens, the Clerk and my Chaplain David Parrott, I declined. Instead I hope to contribute in future working on initiatives centring around the City Farms, supported by the Mansion House itself and the enthusiasm of the Lady Mayoress, (our own liveryman Hilary Russell).

2019/2020 will be a year none of us is likely to forget in a hurry and I for one certainly won't want to!





A view from the wardens



Senior Warden – Richard Whitlock

The Senior Warden – Planning for all eventualities

When you accept the role of Senior Warden your forward-thinking imagination sometimes starts to consider what you will do when you are Master of our Livery Company. From my perspective it's nice to feel both challenged and excited, particularly during these uncertain times. Our present Master has continually maintained a very positive demeanour and we all take great comfort from his genial leadership - thank you.

For more than 6 months before lockdown I had a black book where I would jot down ideas for my year.

You will be pleased to hear that, along with the Clerk, I am still planning my year as if it was going ahead as usual. But, it would be naïve to think that everything will be business as usual. Over the last few months the Clerk and I have therefore started to prepare some "Plan B" ideas to make sure that two of the main functions of our Livery are prioritised, namely Fellowship and Charity. In the meantime we will continue to assess both the Government guidance and the need to safeguard our Liverymen and guests at any future social engagements. We will keep you posted on our plans as things unfold. We WILL meet again.

The Junior Warden – looking forward to a year of celebration

As the Senior Warden steps up to become Master in October I look forward to being part of his team and to giving him my full support as he takes the Company forward with his own programme of events, which I am sure will be of great interest to us all.

As Junior Warden I am already hard at work preparing my programme for my year as Master which commences in October 2021, I know it will soon be upon me. Lockdown has certainly given me plenty of thinking time as I spend hours in the garden and on the mower.

We will definitely have cause for celebration during my year, as it will be the 70th Anniversary of the formal Grant of Livery by the Court of Aldermen in June 1952. It will also be the 70th Advanced Course in Agricultural Business Management and a remarkable 1,227 delegates to-date and the 25th Challenge of Rural Leadership and an equally impressive 450 delegates so far. We are rightly proud of both courses and the high regard in which they are held. Whilst, due to Covid-19, neither course will be run this year, we are continuing to work on the postponed courses and look

forward to seeing them back on the calendar with renewed vigour. With so much to celebrate I certainly have valid reasons to expand my wardrobe!

Family and farming have always been at the core of my life and it was an obvious decision to explore the question of "The Future of the Family Farm" as the theme for my year in office. Never has agriculture faced so much uncertainty with Brexit, the Agricultural bill, establishing trade agreements throughout the world and of course the backlash of Covid-19 with its health issues, regulations and all the economic implications. The road ahead is certainly going to be bumpy and not for the feint-hearted. However, there are always opportunities and we must adapt to meet future demands. I hope that through my Master's Report, my speakers and Agricultural Lecture I will be able to address some of the issues family farms face now and in the years ahead.

For my summer visit you will all be invited to the county of Staffordshire - north of Birmingham, south of Derby, west of Nottingham and to the East of the M6, for those of you who have not yet ventured to this wonderful part of the country that I call home. I intend to lay on an interesting but

more importantly an enjoyable couple of days. I do hope you will be able to join me.

I look forward to seeing you all again as soon as restrictions are lifted so that we can once again get back to doing what Livery does best, fellowship. Until then please do take care and keep well.



Junior Warden Karen Mercer with her sons Tom, Robert and Alec

The Clerk's Farm Cart Photo Competition

With meetings currently suspended the Clerk was the first to spot the effect on fund-raising of the missing farm cart contributions. He decided to take matters into his own hands by launching a Virtual Farm Cart to encourage online donations - but he needed an impactful pic to go with the announcement.

As you know, the 'Farm Cart' makes appearances at all our Livery Lunches and Dinners and the Clerk tells us that, through the generosity of our Liverymen and their guests, this generates a very significant sum in donations - usually around £8,000 plus gift aid each year.

As we have not been able to meet, this important fund-raising opportunity has not been possible. The Clerk takes up the story.

"With no lunches or dinners I decided to launch a Virtual Farm Cart using Virgin Money-Giving to try to make up a bit of the shortfall. But I knew to grab the attention of the Livery I would need a good pic, which needed to be copyright free so I could use it in my mail. The membership of the Company was the obvious source so I started a little competition."

To-date there have been 6 entries and these, along with any subsequent submissions, the Master and Wardens will be asked to decide the winner, with a bottle of Champagne from the Clerk's cellar at stake, at the end of June. The Clerk will announce the winning entry in early July.

In the meantime, the Clerk reports that the requests for photos has itself, thanks to the generosity of the Company, already generated nearly £1,000 in donations. Should you wish to make a donation even before the 'Virtual Cart' is circulated you can go straight to our Charities Aid Foundation account at this address <https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/10840>

Every little donation helps and will of course contribute towards the Worshipful Company of Farmers Charitable Fund which supports all of our educational and other charitable efforts.



Rosemary Nash sent in this picture of her cousin's spectacular bright yellow farm cart.



John Pudge submitted this pic, not quite a 'farm cart' perhaps but a fine display none-the-less



Your editor submitted this, a neat bit of Photoshopping, but is that cheating?



An international entry from the editor a covered waggon money box



One of a number of pics from the family archive submitted by Tom Copas



From Nigel Brown, a painting he commissioned in 1990 to celebrate the centenary of the family merchant business



News from Surrey Docks Farm

In common with almost every other business and activity in London, our City Farms affiliate, Surrey Docks Farm, has suffered badly during the Covid 19 lockdown but the team at the farm, under

farm manager Gemma Hooper, are doing all that can to keep things ticking over for when they can open safely. Here is Gemma's update -



We continue to support the farm, as we have done now for many years. Our usual, annual donation for 2019 was used to help support the employment of an apprentice on the Farm and in September we will be making a further donation, this time to fund the purchase of a trailer that will allow the Farm team to get out and take their message to local schools.

In line with the Master's commitment to the London Funders Pledge, the Company, through liaison officer Ben Parker, has also been working closely with Gemma to see if there are more ways that we can help as they work their way through the crisis.

The future for the farm looks positive. The café, that has been closed for some time, has had an essential new power supply installed and with a new tenant in place will be up and running and making a contribution to the farm's income as soon as restrictions allow. There has also been a complete re-development of the water tower in the centre of the site with a new visitor centre, offices and facilities - all looking absolutely immaculate and perfect for the Farm's busy programme of school visits, commercial partner events and adult education courses.

We haven't been able to get to see the new facilities first-hand yet but as soon as it is possible Ben will arrange a Livery visit.

Despite closing our gates at the start of lockdown and having to furlough the majority of staff - the remaining team at Surrey Docks Farm are working really hard and continue to support our community with a new adapted service.

We engage our vulnerable volunteers, adult students with learning disabilities and their families via regular phone calls, a weekly newsletter and free food deliveries to their homes.

We've set up an online food shop selling freshly harvested vegetables, eggs and meat for collection from the Farm gates six days a week. Over 412 local households have already bought from us and benefited from quality, local food, that can be collected safely: *"Thank you for the fabulous work you and the team are doing in these really tough times. We are loving our plants and veg, and the visit to the farm, even just to the gates, brightens our days enormously"*

We also offer an online garden shop selling compost, manure, seeds, fruit and veg plants available from the Farm gates twice a week. Over 150 individuals and community gardens have already benefited from this, with many people getting into food growing for the first time.

We're running an adapted service for our 40 youth club members and their families; curating weekly activities, farm quizzes and sending regular updates with photos. Lucy our Youth Manager organises free food collections and deliveries twice a week to support our more vulnerable families.

We continue to enable 17 local families to grow food on our community plots with slots to visit in the early evenings. It's been lovely to hear that they've taken produce home and shared surplus with neighbours!

Initially we were very concerned about the future of the Farm and faced serious cash flow issues, so we set up a donation campaign aiming to cover the costs of our livestock feed, bedding, vet bills and staffing. Within just three weeks our incredible community had raised £21,000 and we were on much safer footing to then focus on core grant applications!

The community support has been a huge boost for staff and volunteers, with wonderful comments such as: *"It's rare to find such an innovative place serving so many in the community. The Farm is a beacon of light for all local people offering vitality, connection & nature in the middle of the busy city. It's a place for people to truly connect with what matters."*



Updates from our Cranfield Business Growth Programme delegates



Philip Gibson

When you are running a business, taking time out for personal development often takes a back seat. There is always something more pressing to do. But by chance, at the end of one particularly busy and slightly frustrating day, I found myself browsing the web and I came upon the Business Growth Programme which claimed to 'help you create the future you want for your business and for yourself.

Sounds good, doesn't it? And just a short

website visit convinced me that this was what I needed to do. But despite being interested, I just couldn't see how I could find the time or the cash to think about participating.

After a conversation with my wife (and business partner) we decided that we would apply to the Worshipful Company of Farmers for a bursary and, if successful, would simply find the time for me to participate.

I completed the paperwork and after an interview (and a fantastic livery lunch!) I was delighted to be accepted for a grant from the Company.

One of the most beneficial elements of the programme, is the interaction with other business owners. It is easy as a business owner to think that that the things you struggle with, others somehow find easy. Chatting through your own thoughts and concerns in a safe, confidential place, with people from other sectors that are in a

similar position proved enlightening. And then, as soon as it had begun, it was the Business Plan Review Day - the end of the programme. I'm not going to sugar-coat it - it is hard work. Trying to do your day job at the same time as BGP attendance is one thing. But the BGP programme gets into your head. Sleepless nights and soul-searching are definitely on the agenda if you participate.

Yet I would recommend it to any business owner. For the first time since we started our business, we have a very clear plan for the next five years and I have a newfound understanding of budgeting and how to assess our financial performance.

I am so grateful to the Worshipful Company of Farmers for making it possible for me to take part in the Business Growth Programme and would recommend it to anyone running an agricultural business. Do it - it might just be the best business decision you ever make.



Johnny Wake

I took over the family estate about 5 years ago. Trained as a GP, I never expected to be running it full-time, but we lacked an Estate Manager and a part-time role sucked me in, to the point where I was doing so little doctoring that I had to give it up.

My medical background gave me a different perspective, but also helped foster a sense of "impostor syndrome". To help tackle this I went on the Institute of Agricultural Management's three-week Leadership course. It was revelatory in

many ways, one of which was opening my eyes to the benefits of training for myself, and another was the contacts it opened up.

One of these contacts was someone senior in the WCF, who suggested I look at the BGP as he thought it would fit me well. When I read the Cranfield website, I was astonished that it seemed like someone had created a tailor-made course just for me.

I approached the WCF for help with the funding; the course is not cheap. I was immensely grateful when they offered to help out and it was fascinating being asked to an event with them and to learn more about the Company.

The course itself was very intense, conducted on a series of Fridays and Saturdays. The delegates were from all kinds of different businesses and backgrounds. My business continually raised eyebrows, due to the fact that we didn't really have customers or marketing, but also because of me having a 100-year

timeline in mind always!

The course felt like all the most useful parts of an MBA compressed into just a few weeks. I certainly feel like I now have a lot of the basics, that I was clueless about before the course, covered. Perhaps even more usefully, I met countless people who can help me with any future queries or issues.

The course climaxes with a presentation of the business plan that you have sweated out. My plan had a painful birth and I was sceptical about how useful it would be, but I have been proven wrong as it has been an immensely helpful tool to show where the business has come from and where it is going.

Sadly, our six month review was cancelled due to Covid-19. But Cranfield has been very active in keeping communications up and I've been speaking with my small group, supporting each other.

I'm immensely grateful to the WCF for helping me attend such a valuable course.



New dates for ACABM & CRL

New dates have now been agreed for the 70th ACABM and the 25th CRL.

The ACABM will now take place at the Royal Agricultural University between 14th November and 4th December 2021 with the interview days for potential delegates now scheduled for the 1st & 2nd September 2021.

The 25th CRL will be held between the 9th & 22nd January 2022 at Dartington Hall with the interview day scheduled for the 27th October 2021.

Despite the delayed date, a very successful and well attended, initial

ZOOM introduction meeting for the 70th ACABM has already been held. This allowed ten early applicants to meet the Master, Richard Davies, the Chairman of Education, the team at the RAU, led by Louise Manning and Keith Bariball and three past delegates of the ACABM - Carolyn Coxe (2019), Mike Patch (2018) and Paul Gillies (2019). The potential delegates were provided with an overview of the Company and the course and given some insight into the profound impact and effect of attending the course by the past delegate representatives.

Further follow-up meetings with ACABM

delegates are in the planning phase at the moment and similar discussions are being held with the team at the Duchy College to develop a programme of activities to engage with potential delegates for the 2022 CRL.

Applications for both courses are being accepted immediately and pressure for places is expected to be high so if members of the Company or the alumni know of individuals who might benefit from attending, the advice is to get an application in sooner rather than later.



ZOOM introduction for 70th ACABM delegates

EVENTS

Dates and Times for your Diaries in 2020-2021

(All subject to review and relevant Covid-19 restrictions)

2020

Monday 21st September
Masters & Clerks Luncheon
Farmers & Fletchers' Hall

Monday 28th September
Agricultural Lecture & Dinner
Plasterers' Hall

Tuesday 13th October
Court Meeting
Haberdashers' Hall

Tuesday 13th October
Harvest Thanksgiving and
Installation
Venue TBA

Tuesday 13th October
Court & Livery Luncheon
Haberdashers' Hall

Saturday 14th November
Lord Mayor's Show
City of London

Monday 7th December
Court Meeting & Court Dinner
Farmers & Fletchers' Hall

Tuesday 8th December
Court & Livery Luncheon
Fishmongers' Hall

2021

Tuesday 26th January
Annual Livery Banquet
Drapers' Hall

Thursday 11th February
City Food Lecture
Guildhall

Tuesday 16th February
17th Inter-Livery Pancake Race
Guildhall Yard

Tuesday March 9th
Court and Livery Luncheon
Farmers & Fletchers' Hall

Wednesday 21st April
2021 Agricultural Lecture &
Dinner
Plasterers' Hall

Monday 6th September to -
Friday 10th September
Livery visit to Switzerland
(please note there may be some
places available please contact
the Clerk)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The following was admitted as a Freeman at the ZOOM Court meeting held on June 2020

Mr Paul Rous
Proposed by Richard Anscombe
Seconded by Caroline Ratcliffe & Past Master John Reynolds

OBITUARIES

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

Mr Michael Davies OBE, DL Yeoman of the Company

of Avey Lane Farm, Waltham Abbey, Essex, who died on 11th April. He was clothed on the 14th June 1982