



The Worshipful Company of Farmers Newsletter

Spring 2008

Master Tom Copas rates education as Farmers Company raison d'être

TOM COPAS, at his Installation Lunch in October, described himself as "a dirt farmer, who raises turkeys in my semi-retirement". This was putting it mildly, to say the very least.

The 56th Master of the Worshipful Company of Farmers has 750 acres at Cookham, East Berkshire, and his company - The Copas Partnership, through Copas Traditional Turkeys Ltd - is one of the largest Christmas-only traditional turkey producers in the country.

Each year his Kings Coppice Farm rears and markets some 45,000 traditional farmfresh turkeys of three different types: barn-reared white-feathered, free-range bronze-feathered, and organic free-range bronze-feathered. It also offers turkey crowns, breast roasts and boneless turkeys.

Most sales are through some 300 quality butchers across Britain, all listed on the company website, or direct delivery can be done overnight to anywhere in the country.

Hardly, what one would call, the work of a "dirt farmer", particularly when one also takes into consideration a CV which includes numerous awards and prestigious posts across the agricultural industry.

The Copas family have been in the village of Cookham since 1690, running the local pub - The Chequers - for the century up to 1920. It started farming in 1907, Tom's grandfather, James, running the farm from the pub.

"I farmed Copas Bros with my brother, Geoffrey, from when we left school until we split the business in 1999," Tom explains. "Copas Bros was formed around fruit growing, potatoes and pedigree Berkshire pigs

"The turkey business was very much a minnow, stemming from my father buying me 150 birds when I left school in 1957. Geoffrey still arable farms, while we've expanded the turkey business to the size it is today, particularly after my marriage to Brenda in 1968 and when our daughter Tanya joined the company in 1995."



The Master and Brenda present a Christmas turkey to the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress

Tom and Brenda have four children, their three daughters - Tania, Fenella and Sarah - working full-time for the company, and their son - another Tom - working part-time on his breaks from Bristol University, where he's studying product design and building.

Tom sees education as the Farmers Company's *raison d'être*, and it was, indeed, education that got him involved with the Livery.

"When I was in my 40s, I decided I ought to start training myself, so did a series of management courses with the ATB and then applied to attend the 35th Advanced Management Course at Wye," he explains. "I benefited so much from this that I decided to join the Livery and put something back, being clothed in 1989 and elected to Court in 1994, then going on to Chair the Liaison Committee for four years."

His particular interest is the Company Management courses, and he has put before the Education Committee a proposal to develop a third, superior, 15-day course at MBA level, based at Cranfield College. He hopes to have this set up during his year as Master, though accepts that it unlikely to start until 2009.

"Agriculture has changed enormously since we

started the ground-breaking Wye course 50 years ago, particularly in the past 10 years, with units becoming much bigger and requiring a higher level of training," he explains. While Wye is structured around people who are taking over their family farms, this new course will be for people who want to become managing directors of companies with a board structure, employing 100-plus"

As well as turkeys, which make up 59% of The Copas Partnership turnover, the company is involved in property management (19% of turnover), arable farming on 600 acres, half of which is contract farmed and the other half set aside (3%), and event management (19%).

This latter is centred on family-owned, 500-acre Remenham Farm, near Henley, which has more than two miles of Thames riverbank, including the Start and about half of the Royal Henley Regatta course. Liverymen and their guests attending the Company outing to the Regatta on 6 July will be able to see the racing and witness Copas hospitality at first hand, with all the excitement of a visit to historic Windsor Castle the next day. It will, surely, be an outing second to none.

PO Jack Nicholson wins first Leadership Trophy

IMMEDIATE Past Master Sir Graham Wilkinson, accompanied by the Clerk, visited HMS York in January to make the first award of the Worshipful Company of Farmers Leadership Trophy.

The trophy was presented to Petty Officer Medical Assistant Jack Nicholson, in recognition of his confident and calm leadership style during two extended operational deployments.

Commanding Officer Commander Tim Cryar said the support of the Farmers meant a great deal to the

ship's company and that PO Nicholson was absolutely delighted to win the 2007 award. Clerk Colonel David King OBE described the event as "an excellent example of how a City Livery Company can support the Forces of the Crown"

The trophy is a personal gift to the Company by Sir Graham. It is a sterling silver copy of an eighteenth century beer jug... which may well be filled by winners with something appropriate for a celebration in their Mess!



The Master's Chaplain

THE RT REVEREND Dr Anthony Russell, Bishop of Ely, is a perfect choice to be Chaplain to Company Master Tom Copas. Born into a farming family, he attended Durham and Oxford universities, where he gained a Doctorate in Church History with particular reference to the development of the church in rural areas.

He was a curate in west Norfolk in the early 1970s, before being appointed Incumbent in three parishes in South Warwickshire and to serve at the Arthur Rank Centre at the NAC. In 1983 he took over as the Director of the Centre, from Canon Peter Buckler, and was also appointed a Chaplain to HM The Queen.

Five years later he left the NAC to become Bishop of Dorchester; the Suffragan Bishop responsible for Oxfordshire. Shortly afterwards he became one of the Rural Development Commissioners and was Honorary Chaplain to the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Society from 1983 - 2002.

He was appointed Bishop of Ely in 2000.

Bishop Anthony served as President of the Royal Agricultural Society in 2004-5 and as President of the East of England Agricultural Society in 2007-8. He has written several books about the church in the countryside.



Giant tractor and plough join Liverymen on Lord Mayor's parade through London

A MASSIVE Case IH Quadrac tractor and Gregoire-Besson plough were seen parading through the streets of the City of London in November, taking part in the Lord Mayor's Show, with the message: "British Farmers, growing our daily bread".

The office of Lord Mayor of London dates from 1189, with the first show held in 1215. The show was initiated under the Charter of King John, who decreed that the Lord Mayor of London should "swear an oath of allegiance to the Crown" and also that he "should show himself to the people". Alderman David Lewis is the 680th Lord Mayor of the City of London.

Marching with the impressive tractor and plough was Master Thomas Copas, supported by Senior Warden John Thorpe and Steward Richard Halhead, with Liveryman Lindsay Hargreaves carrying the Farmers' banner and dressed in 'working attire' as shown on the Company's coat-of-arms.

"To have a farming display closely associated with the Lord Mayor makes a strong statement

about the importance of food and farming to feeding the people of Britain and to the economic wellbeing of the country," said Master Tom Copas. "It's particularly appropriate in this 'Year of Food and Farming', running from September 2007 to July 2008.

"By taking part in the parade, livery companies are declaring allegiance to the Crown, the Lord Mayor, the City of London and all the people and institutions which rely on them."



Red Polls donated to Surrey Docks Farm

TWO Red Poll heifers were donated to Company-sponsored Surrey Docks Farm in December by Liveryman John Brooks, to mark his 50 years association with the Company.

Nine other Liverymen attended the visit, including Master Tom Copas and Senior Warden John Thorpe, as well as John Brooks' brother Richard and trip organiser Jill Willows. Also present were Richard Dawes, immediate past President of the Red Poll Cattle Society, through whom Richard Brooks obtained the heifers, and Tony Sharpe of Lambourne End Outdoor Centre, a 54-acre working farm 'classroom' in Essex.

In officially presenting the cattle, John Brooks explained how he and brother Richard had not been farmers but were agricultural merchants by background, and how as a young man he used to go on past Surrey Docks farm on Thames sailing barges, on one occasion delivering a bull to the docks for onward shipment to Jamaica by banana boat.

There was a moral to this tale when, a couple of days later, your Editor received a picture from Richard depicting this event, which, he says, must have been taken in the early 50s.

Published here, it shows a young John Brooks (centre) and the brothers' father, Atfield Brooks - Company Master in 1975-76 - (right, in trilby) overseeing the loading of the bull into a crate on the dockside ready for its journey.



Talking turkey at December lunch



TURKEY - perhaps not surprisingly - featured highly at the Livery December lunch, with Master and producer Tom Copas providing his own "very, very special roast turkey" for the 120 Liverymen and guests present, as well as introducing Paul Kelly of Kelly Turkey Farms - a Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Butchers - as speaker.

Paul Kelly had, he said, been in the farming industry for some 25 years, and found it "particularly exciting at the moment", with massive changes taking place.

"I do tend to believe that retailers are supporting British agriculture, particularly within marketing," he added. "At Board level there is a genuine effort to support the industry, though whether this filters down to buyer level quickly enough is a different issue."

There were, of course, major problems currently in the livestock sector, with huge increases in feed prices, export bans and the like. He had been speaking to a Scottish farmer the previous week, who was selling blackface lambs at £15 each. "Shocking."

One of the biggest issues in the poultry industry was GMO, where there were "major problems being swept under the counter".

"We're being told that we're getting our GMO-free soya by default really," he said. "It's not that they're not growing it any more, it's just that they can't grow it quickly enough."

"Retailers are saying we ought to tell the public about this. We're saying: 'well, they're your customers; you tell them', but whether they will I just don't know. It's a burning debate that will go on for the next three or four years."

Another issue he had with the poultry industry was that it had been, and still was being, driven down the road of producing ever-cheaper meat, which meant that producers never really opened their doors to consumers, to show them how their food was being produced.

"I do really believe that if we informed producers about what we are doing, the industry would be seen in much better light... not that there's anything wrong with it, of course. I just find it sad that we're not proud to take retail customers and consumers around our farms."

Paul Kelly concluded by talking about co-operation, a subject he knew had been flogged to death. "But I have to say that when I go to Denmark and Germany, to Holland or France, I can't fail to be impressed by the strength of their co-ops and the investment that goes into them. Over here, we're just playing at it, compared with those guys."

Moving off turkeys, the luncheon event concluded with Past Master Sir Graham

Wilkinson announcing that a member of the crew of destroyer HMS York had won the Company Leadership Trophy (see separate item), the ship's Commander Tim Cryer talking about the Royal Navy, and Master Skinner Patrick Crosthwaite telling diners about the link between the Skinners and Farmers companies.

Ladies Court Dinner heralds Henley visit

WHAT more fitting place to have the 2007 Ladies Court Dinner than the Innholders Hall? As Master Tom Copas explained, the Farmers Company has a longstanding relationship with the Innholders and its 17th Century Hall, holding regular events there since the formation of the Company in 1946 until it moved to its own Hall in 1984.

And what more appropriate speaker than Richard Goddard, Senior Warden of the Watermen and, until 2006, Secretary of Henley Royal Regatta, a post he held for 31 years and where Tom Copas will be hosting Liverymen and their guests this coming 6-7 July?

Richard Goddard did not disappoint, giving the 60-plus Liverymen and their Ladies present a talk combining a superb mix of humour and history. The Regatta itself he described as "a very curious animal, currently sinking under the weight of computers and modern technology, but seeking to retain the image of an Edwardian Garden Party". Elegance and style were its keywords, as those visiting in July would experience.

"Tom kindly attributed to me some of the financial success of the Regatta, but it was the introduction of corporate hospitality that really turned round the finances," he said. "But we've also diversified in other ways, just as you farmers have done. We sell memorabilia in a gift shop and make use of our land in a variety of ways, such as for car boot sales."

"Other changes that have affected us, just as I'm sure they have you, are Health and Safety Regulations, the need to provide facilities for the disabled, Health and Safety officers, and the like."

"Nevertheless, this all adds up to the success and splendour that is Henley Royal Regatta today,



as many of you will see for yourselves."

Richard Goddard concluded by thanking the Master for his patronage of the Regatta gift shop, at which he had bought HRR-inscribed fine bone china trinket dishes for presentation to the ladies that evening.

In all, a superb occasion... with the promise of a fantastic visit to come.

Gaining confidence and friends needed for a future in farming

WHEN I was asked to apply to attend the 12th Challenge of Rural Leadership Course at Duchy College, Cornwall, I was more than a little hesitant. What would I get out of it? How would it benefit my business? Would it be worth two weeks of unpaid leave and the £2,950 fees?

However, these concerns were soon allayed when I asked a previous delegate for her thoughts



on the course. "It changed my life," she said. "You must do it." So that was that. Up I went to London for the interviews, and set about raising as much funding as possible.

The nerves again set in as November 4 - the course start date - approached. Would I be good enough? What if I made a fool of myself? All questions, I later discovered, that were playing on minds of most delegates.

We soon got to know each other over a few drinks, and launched headlong into two weeks of intensive learning... about ourselves, our industry, and the challenges ahead.

The first week was dedicated to an in-depth case study of a family farm and cheese business, to which the 18 delegates were invited to appraise and advise on future direction and investment. We all realised how important it was to step back from our own businesses to see the whole picture - and hoped that some of our ideas proved valuable.

The second week balanced theoretical lectures and practical sessions on strategy and leadership, ensuring we discovered personal skills gaps to be addressed. It concluded with media training, including live television and radio interviews, revealing hidden talents and a new confidence across the group.

It was this new confidence that many of us took away from the course, armed with the friends and tools to develop and succeed in our professional lives.

Was it a life-changing experience? We're meeting up in a year's time... so watch this space.

Olivia Cooper

Clerk's Diary to December

Tuesday 13 May

Sons of the Clergy Service, St Paul's Cathedral, at 5.30pm

Tuesday 3 June

Court Meeting and Livery Luncheon in Hall

Tuesday 24 June

Election of Sheriffs at Guildhall and Luncheon in Hall

Friday 4 July

Company Lunch at The Royal Show, Stoneleigh

Sunday 6 July – Monday 7 July

Company Summer Outing

Monday 29 September

Election of Lord Mayor at Guildhall and Luncheon in Hall

Tuesday 7 October

Court Meeting, Harvest Thanksgiving Service, Installation and Livery Luncheon in Haberdashers' Hall

Wednesday 29 October

Court and Committees Ladies Dinner

Saturday 8 November

Lord Mayor's Show and Lunch in Hall

Tuesday 2 December

Court Meeting and Livery Luncheon in Hall

Liverymen and Freeman

The following were clothed as Liverymen at the Court meeting on 4 December 2007:

Stuart Houston OBE

Anne Kelaart

Alexander Fleming Pinkerton

Justine Anne Pinkerton

Walter Robert Alexander Ross CVO

Timothy James Russ

John Thorley OBE

William David Scriven Williams

The following were clothed as Liverymen at the Court meeting on 11 March 2008:

Charles William Antrobus

Timothy Peter Bartleet

Hugh Christopher Bourn

Christopher Selwyn Cooper

John William Hodge

Stephen Paul Watkins

The following were made Freeman by Redemption at the Court meeting on 9 October 2007:

Hugh Christopher Bourn

Proposed by C J Day

Seconded by M C M Anyan

Andrew Jonathon Brown

Proposed by J S Beer OBE JP

Seconded by R J Soffe

Richard Charles Butler

Proposed by R D Margesson MBE JP DL

Seconded by J A Sayers

Philip Richard Halhead

Proposed by M E S Dart

Seconded by Miss R S N Carne

James Martyn Miles-Hobbs

Proposed by P J Miles DL

Seconded by R D Margesson MBE JP DL

Christine Mary Tacon CBE

Proposed by Miss R S N Carne

Seconded by J H Cossins CBE DL

Howard Leigh Venters

Proposed by D A Gomery

Seconded by P M Bolam LVO

The following were made Freeman by Redemption at the Court meeting on 4 December 2007:

Genevieve Marie-Blanche Borner

Proposed by J D Courtney

Seconded by J H Cossins CBE DL

Simon Rowley Butcher

Proposed by C B Montgomery

Seconded by D M Cross

Brian Norman Lock

Proposed by J H Cossins CBE DL

Seconded by O S L Simon

Jeremy Paul Moody

Proposed by K M Flemington

Seconded by J A Sayers

Mark Arthur Rogerson Webb

Proposed by K M Flemington

Seconded by M St J Flemington

The following were made Freeman by Redemption at the Court meeting on 11 March 2008:

Charles William Antrobus

Proposed by Lord Plumb DL

Seconded by J H Cossins CBE DL

Mrs Elizabeth Brierley

Proposed by T J Russ

Seconded by A P Dyke

Terence Clifford Court

Proposed by K M Flemington

Seconded by M StJ Flemington

Mrs Susan Elizabeth Kilpatrick OBE

Proposed by A W D Pexton OBE

Seconded by G P Carson

Michael George More Molyneux DL

Proposed by Sir Graham Wilkinson Bt

Seconded by J D Courtney

Mark Shephard

Proposed by J D Courtney

Seconded by T J Calcutt

Mrs Teresa Wickham

Proposed by J Willows

Seconded by C P Carson

Miss Belinda Young

Proposed by J D Courtney

Seconded by T J Calcutt

Court

The following will join the Court in October 2008:

Peter Ralph Faulkner

Julian Anthony Sayers

Lindsay Harrison Hargreaves

Obituaries

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

Liveryman **Timothy Garland Orbell JP** of Woolstaplers Hall, Lavenham, Suffolk. Died 20 August 2007. Clothed 13 June 1983.

Yeoman **Kerr Kirkwood** of Aldbourne Avenue, Earley, Reading. Died 27 August 2007. Clothed 12 June 1989 and Yeoman from 2005.

Liveryman **Michael Norman Denham** of Orpington, Kent. Died 12 October 2007. Clothed 22 September 1980.

Liveryman **Edmund Hoyle Vestey DL**, of Little Thurlow Hall, Haverhill, Suffolk. Died 23 November 2007. Clothed 10 September 1959.

Freeman **John Frederick Pygott**, of Leasingham, Lincolnshire. Died on 30 December 2007. Admitted 1 December 1997.

Autumn Newsletter

Copy date for the Autumn Newsletter is Friday 12 September. Will any Liveryman with copy to supply please ensure it arrives with Rosie Carne, along with any photographs, by that date, either by email to rosie.carne@yara.com or by post to Jacobite House, Sancton, York YO43 4QX. Email or telephone 07836 584789 with any queries.

Your opinions sought on Company website

THE COMPANY is pleased to report that its website is now 'live'. The compilers would welcome comments from Liverymen and Freeman on the usefulness of the information included, as well as suggestions for further information that would be considered helpful.

Our plan is to provide as much information as possible on what is relevant to the farming industry. Consequently, your suggestions for inclusion could include

links to other agricultural, City or charitable websites.

We hope that the website will be particularly useful when you are recommending Company courses to potential candidates. This is why we have included a link to both the Wye Course (Kent Business School) and The Rural Leadership Course at Duchy College.

The website address is www.farmerslivery.org.uk Please send any comments and suggestions to me, Sarah Keene, at wmf@farmline.com or phone me on 01485 541641.

Sarah Keene