



The Worshipful Company of Farmers

Newsletter

July 2006

Master hosts a stream of superb Company events

THE MASTER, Lord Plumb, has had a busy year to date, hosting and attending a stream of superbly successful events and functions on behalf of the Worshipful Company of Farmers.

Most memorable of these Company occasions have been, undoubtedly, in order of occurrence, the Annual Banquet at the Skinners' Hall in February, addressed by Lord Rix (former actor Brian Rix); the Agricultural Dinner at the Farmers Fletchers Hall in April, with Henry Fell as guest speaker; the Ladies Court Dinner at the House of Lords in May, for an enthralling talk by Black Rod, Lt Gen Sir Michael Willcocks; and the Livery Lunch at the Hall in June, addressed by former Prime Minister The Rt Hon Sir John Major.

Lord Plumb also hosted the second very successful Fresh Start Seminar - *Responding to the Challenge* -

held at the Hall in late March, organised jointly by the Company and The Farmers Club, and with HRH The Princess Royal as keynote speaker.

Alas, space here does not allow detailed reports about the events and the talks given. As Lord Plumb says: "It's up to Liverymen, where at all possible, to attend these functions and see and hear for themselves".

Lord Rix - as one would expect from an actor who brought such humour to stage and screen - gave an hilarious account, much dotted with amusing stories and anecdotes, of his early life in Yorkshire, his wartime service in the RAF, and how he later became and spent his "first career" as an actor, principally in the much-loved Whitehall Farces. He then went on, in serious vein, to describe his second, ongoing, career in aid of the mentally disabled as Secretary General and Chairman of Mencap.

Henry Fell spoke passionately about the changing face of farming, where, today, "nothing is fair and there is no such thing as a level playing field... and nor will there be". Farmers, he added, instead of whingeing about this, should fight it, by exposing such things as the hypocrisy of food miles, the risks of importing disease, the implications of climate change, susceptibility to terrorist attack and, the biggest danger of all to global food security, the accelerating shortage of fresh water. "We must make the national case for food security," he said, going on to explain how individuals and the industry generally should go about this.

Sir John Major criticised the growing use of 'spin' - "a polite term for deception" - in politics, gave his views on what he saw as the dangers of an elected House of Lords, and concluded by stressing the need for "joined-up, commonsense politics".

All in all, it has been a year of Company events which, as well as providing much friendship and enjoyment, have given a great deal of food for thought.



Lord Rix gave an hilarious account of his career as an actor and, more seriously, his work with the charity Mencap.



The Master with Sir John Major and Company Clerk David King.



Lord Plumb chats with HRH The Princess Royal and his Chaplain, the Rt Rev John Oliver.



Henry Fell called on farmers to stop whingeing and, instead, make the case for National Food Security.

Meeting the challenge of a future in farming

LAST NOVEMBER 17 people arrived at the Passage House Hotel, Newton Abbott, Devon, to start a 13-day residential 'Challenge of Rural Leadership Course'. We were 14 from the UK, one German and two Australians; eleven men and six women.

The course took place on two levels:

- Development of our personal qualities to improve our leadership abilities.
- Exposure to proven leaders who enthusiastically conveyed their messages to inspire us and show us the way.

Our main case study was of Alvis Brothers Ltd, a large dairy farm and cheese maker just south of Bristol, who supply 50% of the UK's organic cheese. We immersed ourselves totally in coming up with recommendations for the company's Lye Cross brand of cheese and presented them to John Alvis and Nick Green.



There was a two-day computer simulation, to help our strategic decision making skills. We worked together in small teams and became international business

men and women producing computers in a global market. We had to make production and marketing decisions using the information the computer gave us. Miscalculating investment decisions, in some cases, led to encounters with the loan shark.

The visit of Wilfred Emmanuel Jones (The Black Farmer) was one of the most memorable. He came to show his 'out of the box' business thinking, using phrases such as "push the envelope" to encourage us to stretch our thinking, too.

After a successful career in television and marketing, he bought a small farm in Devon and has launched his own brand of sausages and sauces under the name that his neighbours gave him, The Black Farmer. Major lessons from this visit were the importance of a quality product, sticking to what you are personally good at and the use of publicity in building a brand.

A patch of countryside in the heart of London



All 15 assembled at 11am for coffee, to meet members of staff and listen to a briefing about the unit and its work by Farm Coordinator Rob Few. They then toured the farm to witness first-hand the rural 'snapshot' it offers the people of Rotherhithe and beyond, as well as the employment opportunities it provides for local people with restricted learning difficulties.

This Inner City Docklands farm - a registered charity - is of only 2.2 Thames-side acres, but offers the people of Southwark a unique chance to learn about food production and be actively involved in the work on the farm.

It carries a small number of milking goats, sheep, cows, pigs, poultry, bees and donkeys, as well as having green areas such as orchard, herb, vegetable and willow gardens. Everything is farmed organically.

In addition, the site has many art works made by schools and trainees with learning difficulties. A classroom and on-site teacher support the National Curriculum for visiting schools, leading to the unit being recognised as one of the most innovative city farm education projects in England.

Small wonder that the Worshipful Company of Farmers should choose to support such a worthwhile project. And how gratifying that the Master was able to tell the visiting group that the Company had just budgeted to put an extra £500 into the coffers for this admirable City Farm.

As visiting Liveryman and Nuffield Director John Stones said: "Everyone should pay a visit to this farm. It's quite incredible."



The Master (left) and Livery Linkman Tim Calcutt (centre) headed a visit to Surrey Docks Farm, Rotherhithe (below) in mid March.



A SMALL group of Liverymen - including the Master, Lord Plumb - plus guests, joined representatives of Edenbridge and Oxted Show Society in mid March for a morning tour of Surrey Docks Farm, Rotherhithe, organised by Liveryman Tim Calcutt.

Unfortunately there is not space to mention more details of the wide range of lectures we attended. The subjects ranged from gene technology to organic philosophy, from animal welfare to agricultural bio-fuels and from leadership in the army to generational leadership.

We also visited Lloyd Maunder, an abattoir, butcher and supplier of meat to the supermarkets which has recently seen its lamb de-listed by a major supermarket, with which they have dealt since 1898. However they have continued to move forward and have just bought the Dewhurst chain of butchers. There were some valuable lessons to be learned here.

An aspect of the course, from which we all particularly benefited and enjoyed, was the inclusion of some time spent exploring our creative sides. We became familiar with de Bono's coloured hats thinking strategy and learned how to brainstorm in a structured way. Later we encountered drama as a means of building up team bonding and to make us think.

A wonderful game called 'Chicken Boy' taught us a memorable lesson... Do not panic!

Music as a metaphor found us attending a choir practice in the beautiful Buckfast Abbey. We watched the leadership that a conductor gives to musicians and the teamwork necessary in a successful choir.

Later we stayed for Complin. We sat in dark stillness for ten minutes waiting for the service to begin and then listened to the soothing chants of the Monks. This experience reminded us of the benefits of quietness for contemplation and thinking - vital ingredients of leadership.

At the core of the course is the development of abilities for dealing with the media. We visited the *Western Morning News* to meet the Farming Editor and Deputy Editor, and were shown how to construct a press release in preparation for writing one of our own later in the week.

Our press release formed the basis for our practise radio and television interviews. The

motivation behind this area of the course is to train the attendees on how to get their positive messages about agriculture across to the public. We all agreed that this aspect of the course was excellent and was a leadership challenge in itself, as for most of us it was a new experience.

Thanks must go to Richard Soffe of Duchy College for his excellent organisation and for the warm manner in which the course was conducted. Thank you also to the Worshipful Company of Farmers for sponsoring the course and to Liveryman Michael Dart who was overseeing it for the last time, having been involved since the course was started 10 years earlier.

We had a memorable time, gained in confidence and our leadership skills were greatly enhanced. Most importantly, we made some really good friendships which will, I am sure, last a lifetime.

Sarah Keene

Learning what needs doing and how to go out and do it

THE FIFTY-SIXTH Wye course in Agricultural Business Management took place successfully during late January and early February this year. As usual, the participants assembled on the Sunday evening and immediately started networking.

There was an exceptionally wide mix of businesses represented on the course this year, demonstrating the way agriculture is changing these days. The geographical spread ranged from the Scottish Borders, Northumberland and the Lakes, through Lincolnshire, East Anglia and Kent across to Worcester and the Welsh borders, and took in all types of farming.

There were participants who were specialists in managing particular production processes for a number of farming enterprises, rather than as farmers on their own. There were also advisers to the dairy sector and the environmental interest. There was a specialist cheese-maker from Sussex

as well as participants from the land agency and banking professions.

Rob Kelly, a producer of super-fine wools from northern New South Wales, provided the antipodean input. It was an excellent mix and provided an extremely valuable set of experiences and skills with which to work.

Certain topics, particular to the times, emerge during each course. There was still considerable debate as to the likely impact of the move to the Single Farm Payment. But in the background there was acceptance of the political risk to the maintenance of payments after 2013.

Commodity producers were interested in how to gain scale economies by joining together. The specialist crop producers looked to gain market power in a similar way. A new feature of this year's course related to governance issues in farmer-controlled businesses.

This year the case studies threw up interesting questions about the degree to which it was possible or desirable to specialise in products whose costs of entry may be low, and the necessity for long-term thinking when it came to the development of farm sites for non-agricultural services.

As is often the case, many participants were concerned with problems of the succession in farming businesses. But the wide range of backgrounds of the participants meant that there was usually someone who had suggestions to make relating to almost any new venture that was proposed.



Lord Plumb hosted the final dinner at the end of the Wye course, as well as presenting prizes that included a signed box of House of Lords' whisky.

As always, I have received lots of kind emails which I will refrain from quoting here. The main message seems to be that the course provides participants with the tools to find out what needs to be done, and also the confidence to go out and do it. Again, as always, the participants were full of suggestions as to how the course could be kept up to date.

Paul Webster
Course Director

Silver Corn Dolly

PAST MASTER (2000-01) Richard Brooks joined the Farmers Company as an Apprentice in March 1956 and was Clothed in 1962. He celebrated his fiftieth anniversary as a member by presenting the Company, via current Master Lord Plumb, with his own hand-made corn dolly, which he had specially silvered.

Richard - of Melton Constable, Norfolk - learned how to make corn dollies as a child and found a West Country silver-smith who was able to spray on the molten metal in a vacuum to prevent the straw catching fire.

"I'm very proud



of the silvered corn dolly and hope it will hang in the Livery Hall cabinet," he said. "It's probably the only silvered corn dolly in the world at the moment... but not for long, as I've been asked to make two more after this year's harvest."

Lord Mayor's Show

ON 11 NOVEMBER the Company will again be joining the Modern Livery Companies' Float for the Lord Mayor's Show. Any Liverymen wishing to take part in this interesting and very enjoyable day are invited to notify the Clerk. Three places are available to join The Master.

The procession usually assembles at London Wall at 10am, follows a two mile route and finishes about 3pm. There is a break near the Aldwych for a free picnic lunch and drinks.

The Grand Firework Display in the early evening is also well worthwhile watching.

Talking turkey!

The Master paid a visit to the Berkshire farm of Junior Warden Tom Copas, famed for its production of Copas Traditional Turkeys. Needless to say, a great deal of their time together was spent talking turkey!



Obituaries

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

Liveryman **Geoffrey Howard Edmunds** of Mill Farmhouse, Stamford, Lincolnshire. Died 14 September 2005. Clothed 14 June 1965.

Freeman **David Laurie Ritchie** of Hall Farm, Ludham, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk. Died 18 December 2005. Admitted 2 October 2001.

Freeman **Edward James Hann** of Melbourne, Australia. The Company has become aware that he died in the 1990s. Admitted 17 October 1973.

Liveryman **Sir Richard Cooper Bt** of Lower Farm, Chedington, Beaminster, Dorset. Died 5 March 2006. Clothed 15 December 1976.

Liveryman **Philip George Wrixon** of The Green Farm, Norton Canon, Hereford. Died 7 March 2006. Clothed 10 September 1979.

Past Master **The Earl of Lonsdale** of Askham Hall, Penrith, Cumbria. Died 23 May 2006. Clothed 19 September 1958.

Liveryman **Ian Duncan Robertson MacNicol** of the Stody Estate, Melton Constable, Norfolk. Died 11 June 2006. Clothed 6 June 2006.

Liverymen and Freemen

The following were clothed as Liverymen at Court meetings on the dates shown:

6 December 2005

Baroness Hazel Byford DBE
The Lord Stafford DL
Peter Cook

7 March 2006

Christopher John French

6 June 2006

Michael Charles Marris Anyan
David John Hargreaves Bolton
Anne Cuthbertson Chamberlain
Olive Clarke
John Lloyd Evans
The late Ian Duncan Robertson MacNicol
Denis Parton
John Kenneth Reynolds

The following were made Freemen by Redemption at Court meetings on the dates shown:

6 December 2005:

David Benjamin Gibbons
Proposed by P H Gibbons
Seconded by J H Cossins

Alexander Fleming Pinkerton
Proposed by R R C Bloomfield
Seconded by P R Faulkner

John Smith Wilson
Proposed by G P Carson
Seconded by W E Wilson

Diary 2006

Wednesday 16 August

Visit to Surry Docks Farm

Friday 29 September

Election of Lord Mayor and Lunch in Hall

Tuesday 3 October

Installation Service and Lunch in Butchers Hall

Wednesday 8 November

Joint visit to the Magic Circle

Saturday 11 November

Lord Mayor's Show and Lunch in Hall

Tuesday 5 December

Livery Lunch in Hall

Tuesday 19 December

Carols followed by Refreshments in Hall

The visit to Surrey Docks Farm on Wednesday 16 August will start at 11am and be followed by lunch costing about £5 a head.

Email Tim Calcutt at tim@cfm-uk.co.uk for details of how to get to the farm by road or by river.

7 March 2006:

Denis Parton

Proposed by G P Carson
Seconded by J D Courtney

Stuart John Burgess

Proposed by I A Stockley
Seconded by Lord Carter

6 June 2006:

Anne Kelaart

Proposed by J A Sayers
Seconded by R S N Carne

James Charles Tyrer Forsyth

Proposed by T H Wheatley-Hubbard
Seconded by R S N Carne

David John Bright

Proposed by J D Courtney
Seconded by C M Rayner

The following were made Freemen by Servitude by the Assent of the Court:

Charles Phillip Harcourt Antrobus

George Frederick Fell

Apprentices

The following were bound Apprentice at a Court meeting on the date shown:

6 June 2006

Edward William Allen bound to Assistant Michael Edward Scott Dart

Thomas Christopher Copas bound to Junior Warden Thomas Arthur Copas