



The Worshipful Company of Farmers Newsletter

Summer 2007

Visit to Portsmouth provides historic travel through time

THE LIVERY visit to Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight in early June was an example of the Farmers Company at its very best. Organised with military precision by Clerk Colonel David King and greatly enhanced by the seafaring knowledge and experience of Master Sir Graham Wilkinson - accompanied by his wife, Hilary - it was a most historic and enjoyable occasion that will linger long in the memories of the 90 Liverymen and their guests who attended.

Most travelled to Portsmouth in time for informal drinks and suppers on the evening of Sunday 3 June, ready for an early start and look round the historic naval dockyard the next day. And what a day it was, with visitors spoiled for choice by the vast array of sights to see, representing 800 years of Royal Navy history in ships and listed buildings, surrounded by the modern Royal Navy, as well as ships from other countries.

The party was free to explore as individuals wished, most starting close to the harbour entrance with a tour of HMS Warrior, launched in 1860 as the world's first iron-hulled warship, powered by steam as well as sail and with four vast decks transporting visitors back into the world of a 19th Century warship. Next, for many, was a 45-minute harbour tour, with fabulous views accompanied by a lively commentary on the sights and ships, ancient and modern, to be seen.

And then, of course, there was that most famous warship of all, HMS Victory, Nelson's flagship, virtually unchanged since she led the defeat of the combined French and Spanish fleets at Trafalgar in 1805. What atmosphere. What history.

Many also took in the Mary Rose Ship Hall, where the 16th Century warship is being preserved for all time; the Falklands Museum; and, for the more energetic, a lift before climbing stairs to the top of the Spinnaker Tower for spectacular views of the whole area.

After a quick lunch (there was too much to see to linger long) the party was split into two groups to visit the Type 42 destroyer HMS York, an operational warship with a crew of 260 under Commander Tim Cryar RN. What a journey through time and history.

Then, it was back to our respective hotels to change for what was, undoubtedly, the highlight of the visit... a black tie dinner on the Lower Gun Deck of HMS Victory. Who could not be conscious, as we tucked into smoked salmon, loin of lamb, tarte au citron, washed down by fine wines, that we were dining where brave men had fought and many died in order to help provide us with the freedom to enjoy such splendid occasions?

Next day, the sea was still very much in evidence as the group crossed by ferry to the Isle of Wight, for a look round Osborne House, the country retreat and family



On HMS York in Portsmouth Harbour

home of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, before lunch hosted by Sir Graham and Lady Wilkinson at the Royal Yacht Squadron in West Cowes and the return ferry to Portsmouth.

At Osborne House, while members of the Court met in the Drawing Room, the remainder of the group were free to tour the magnificent house and gardens, with members of English Heritage always close at hand to explain and answer questions. What an enthralling history was provided of this great Queen and her Prince Consort.

With such a nautical flavour to the two-day visit to the area, it was very apt that it should officially conclude with lunch at the Royal Yacht Squadron. The hearty applause given to the Master and Clerk for arranging the programme said it all: this was the Livery Company at its very, very best.



Black tie evening on HMS Victory



Osborne House on the Isle of Wight



The Master with Rear Admiral Roy Clare and Lt Cdr John Scivier

City Food Lecture

THE FARMERS Company was one of seven food-related Livery Companies supporting the 2007 City Food Lecture, held at the Guildhall, London, on 23 January. It was represented by 22 Liverymen - headed by Master Sir Graham Wilkinson - and 27 guests.

After missing a year, it was good to see the City Food Lecture back in business, sponsored for the first time by the Food Standards Agency and with an after-

lecture reception provided by The Real Good Food Company and Nestlé UK.

Following a welcome by Alderman Sheriff David Lewis on behalf of The Lord Mayor, the lecture - 'Food and values - the organic future' - was given by Lord Peter Melchett, Policy Director of The Soil Association. Although not all present may have agreed with Lord Melchett's views on the future role of organic food, they provided much to think deeply about.

This became apparent immediately after the lecture, when FSA Chair Dame Deirdre Hutton chaired a four-strong discussion panel comprising Sir Stuart Hampson, Chairman of the John Lewis Partnership; Tim Lang, City University Professor of Food Policy; Prue Leith, restaurateur and Chair of the School Food Trust; and Tim Smith, Chief Executive of ARLA Foods. The panel spent 80 minutes answering questions, both from the floor and submitted before the event by email.

In all, as always, it was a thought-provoking evening. The 2008 Food Lecture will be held on Tuesday 29 January.

Countryside changes

INCREASES in world population - which is going up by 90million a year, or by one-and-a-half times Britain's population - coupled with growing demands from hitherto poorer areas for a Western-style diet, bode well for British farming, according to Lord Cameron of Dillington.

Lord Cameron - who as Ewen Cameron was at Oxford University with Company Master Sir Graham Wilkinson and is a former President of the CLA (1995-97) and former Chairman of the Countryside Agency (1999-2004) - delivered this optimistic message as guest speaker at the Livery lunch in-Hall on 20 March, in a talk on the Challenges of Change in the Countryside.

"Britain's rural population is growing at four times the rate of the urban population," he said, "with some 80% of people in England wanting to live in the countryside.

"Farmers and landowners are still the backbone of the rural community and, more importantly, look after the backdrop, our countryside.

"One thing the Government really desperately needs persuading about is the need for food security, which I believe is going to become increasingly important as the world population continues to grow and demands increase for western-style, higher-protein diets."

The challenge, he added, was how best to get this message over to the Government. One way was to show that, as well as producing food, farmers had played a tremendous role in the past 20 years with diversification into areas such as tourism, worth £14-£15 billion a year and, consequently, terribly important to UK Inc.



Lord Cameron with the Master, Sir Graham Wilkinson

Six ways for farmers to help secure their future

LIVERYMEN who attended the Oxford Farming Conference in January - and there were many of them - will appreciate the oratory powers of its 2007 Chairman, Lincolnshire arable and fresh produce grower Mark Tinsley, as will those who have heard him speak in his other roles across the food and farming industry.

Small wonder, then, that the Farmers and Fletchers Hall was filled to capacity with Liverymen and their guests for the Company's Agricultural Dinner in mid April, when Mark Tinsley was the pre-meal speaker. He did not disappoint.

Mark, due to his interest in the fresh produce sector, talked about the decline in the unsupported UK horticulture sector between 1995 and 2005 (vegetable area down 26%, fruit 27%) and also the unsupported pig sector (sow herd down 41%).

"It is not, therefore, subsidies in their own right that have led to an increasingly uncompetitive UK position," he said, going on to illustrate how profoundly UK farming had been affected by the decline in publicly-funded R&D since the mid 1980s.

"UK cereals, dairy, sheep and beef either are or should be capable of satisfying the home market. With CAP decoupling, what will be interesting is whether the lack of market focus fostered by years of subsidy allied to other difficulties in the UK, such as the strong pound and unsympathetic governments, will result in a decline of our main agricultural sectors to match that in horticulture and pigs."

He admitted that, since Margaret Beckett's stewardship, when Defra was only interested in the environmental elements of rural UK, preferring to import food from abroad, there had been a rhetoric change in approach, brought about by talk of climate change, a rising world population, water shortages, Middle East instability, falling grain stocks, fossil fuel limitation and the use of land for energy production. On the other hand, we had a Treasury which saw low food prices as an inflation buster.

"Why are our political masters so complacent about our industry decline?" Mark Tinsley asked, going on to suggest that it was because they believed - just as his non-farming fellow Curry Commissioners did - that farming was something

that could be turned on and off like a tap. "The pendulum is swinging, however, and primary agriculture will come back onto the political agenda."

He would leave the important question of UK self-sufficiency in food to the Commercial Farmers Group (of which he is a member), he said, going on to look in detail at the five major links in the food chain... consumers, retailers, packers and processors, farmers and growers, and suppliers to those farmers and growers.

Alas, space here doesn't permit a detailed account of Mark's analysis, save to say that he examined farmers' perspective of the five links (including themselves) from a debit and credit point of view, concluding that they needed to be

- More business focussed
- More collaborative
- Prepared to promote
- Challenging the Government on R&D decline
- Making the most of the new levy body structure
- Supportive of the NFU (when deserved).

They should also, he said, make more of initiatives such as Food and Farming Year and Farm Sunday, as well as organisations such as LEAF, FWAG and Assured Food Standards.

Riveting stuff.



Mark Tinsley speaking at the Agricultural Dinner

Marvellous Master's Meet in super 'Stovold Country'



TWENTY-FIVE Liverymen and guests joined Sir Graham and Lady Wilkinson for the Master's south-east counties lunch and visit to Lydling Farm, Shackleford, near Godalming, Surrey, on 25 April.

On a day of forecast showers - what else in April? - the sun shone throughout, making obsolete the recommended waterproofs and wellies. Friendly greetings upon meeting at noon were followed by a lunch of tomato soup, melt-in-the-mouth Rosemead Aberdeen Angus steak (there could be no other at Lydling), ice cream on nut cake, and a glass or two of wine.

A highlight over lunch was the presentation by the Master of an engraved silver plate to Professor Paul Webster, to mark his retirement following 19 years of running the Wye Advanced Course in

Agricultural Business Management on behalf of the Company. Very appropriately, many past attendees of the course were present, including the Master himself and 2007 participant James Baird... but more about this later in the Newsletter.

Following lunch, our hosts for the day - Bob and Angus Stovold, with wives Pat and Tiggy - showed us round ring-fenced Lydling and Cross farms, which jointly make up the 1,400-acre farming company of PC Stovold & Son. Able to trace their family farming in Surrey back to 1367, and having started farming at Lydling in 1874, small wonder that this is known as 'Stovold Country'.

Our tour started with a look at the magnificent Lutyens-inspired farm buildings that formed the



Aberdeen Angus cattle for which the farm is famous.



Angus Stovold

hub at Cross when it became a model farm in 1911, and which were converted into homes by the Stovolds 11 years ago. Breathtakingly beautiful.

Then it was off across the fields from Cross to Lydling on this light sandy loam land, where farming is practised with conservation, consideration for wildlife and sustainability very much in mind. Many areas are left to regenerate naturally; hedgerows are cut on a three-yearly basis; six metre margins are left round all arable fields; crops are rotated and fym is used extensively; bird and bat boxes have been put up; and dead trees are left standing.

But it is, of course, for its livestock that the Stovold family is best known. Led by Angus Stovold, we were taken first to see the Lydling Herd of British Saddlebacks, formed in 1992 and consisting today of 12 breeding sows and three boars. All of the pigs are kept free-range, with piglets staying with their mothers for at least eight weeks, most being sold for breeding.

Reflections on 57th Advanced Course in Agricultural Business Management

MY INVOLVEMENT in the 57th Advanced Course in Farm Management began with an interview in London on a quite stunning day last October.

An opportunity to be interviewed is valuable in its own right... and, for a practical farmer, one that rarely comes along. Consequently, I was keen to attend the selection day, to meet the other candidates and to see how I felt I had measured up. It turned out to be an enjoyable and interesting occasion, and also a fruitful one, as I was selected to take part in the course.

Some three months later, we all turned up at Wye to begin the course, starting by getting to know one another. It was slightly stilted at first, but a combination of lectures, late night assignments and the odd beer soon broke down the barriers.

The course was far reaching and tested all of us at some stage in areas where we were especially weak or just downright ignorant. Some excellent speakers provided stimulating lectures and discussions. Others, such as Charles Abel of Farmers Weekly and Doug Wanstall (the Alan Sugar

of the farming world) just made you feel completely inadequate!

The assignments, and especially the case study of a member's business, were particularly valuable in building both relationships and understanding.

Looking back now, I remember a three-week course that was interesting, stimulating and challenging. Three weeks away from the farm provided invaluable thinking time and a chance to put priorities in perspective; a chance to really get inside other participants' businesses and to find out about their mindsets both for now and for the future.

However, the real benefit of a course such as this is the people you meet... the business contacts and the friendships that are made. Our first reunion is already under way and will be the beginning of many, both organised and informal.

The acid test is, would I recommend the course to others? And the answer would certainly be a most definite "Yes".

David Christensen



Sir Graham Wilkinson presenting an inscribed silver plate to Professor Paul Webster.



David Christensen receiving his course tie and certificate from Sir Graham Wilkinson



Jewel in the Stovold farming crown is, undoubtedly, the Rosemead Herd of Aberdeen Angus cattle, founded 71 years ago by Percy Stovold. The herd is kept free-range, living and calving outside all year round, and calves suckling their dams for nine months.

"We've currently got 130 cows, but are going up to 180-200," Angus told us. "We aim to market only top-quality cattle, selling to butchers as well as chains such as Burger King - which is 100% Aberdeen Angus - and many supermarkets. We're also selling breeding animals, privately, as fast as we can produce them."

What a day! The best of farming, coupled with the best of food and weather... amid the very best of company. Well done, Master.



Clerk's Diary to December

Wednesday 15 August

Visit to Surrey Docks Farm. Contact Liveryman Tim Calcutt for details (email: tim@cfm-uk.co.uk)

Monday 1 October

Election of Lord Mayor and Luncheon

Tuesday 9 October

Installation and Luncheon

Wednesday 31 October

Ladies Dinner at Innholders' Hall for members of the Court and Committees

Saturday 10 November

Lord Mayor's Show and Luncheon

Tuesday 4 December

Livery Luncheon

Thursday 20 December

Carol Service at 6pm in St Bartholomew the Great followed by refreshments in Hall

The 2008 Banquet

The Banquet in 2008 will be in Carpenters' Hall on Tuesday 22 January

Inter-Livery Clay Shoot

ON A MAGNIFICENT May day, the Master led the Company in this annual competition organised and hosted by the Worshipful Company of Environmental Cleaners at the Holland & Holland Shooting Ground. Ninety-three Livery teams participated, enjoying an early breakfast and a hog-roast buffet lunch amid great bonhomie.

With Past Master Marcus Cornish, Liveryman Andrew Slack and Miss Anna Gordon, the team's high point on the day was 5th place in the 'Flush', with a score of 74 out of 80, the Gunmakers 'F' team

achieving 78. The Gunmakers entered five teams to take 1st (Team 'C') and 2nd (Team 'A') with scores of 338 and 316, respectively, out of a maximum of 400.

Overall, the Farmers achieved a respectable score of 254 to finish 24th out of 69 places.

The 2008 Inter-Livery Clay Shoot will take place at the Holland & Holland Shooting Ground on Wednesday 21 May. Liverymen interested in taking place are invited to contact the Master on 01428 683858.

Liverymen and Freemen

The following were clothed as Liverymen at the Court meeting on 20 March 2007:

Rev Dr Stuart John Burgess

David Benjamin Gibbons

Kenneth Scott Jones

The following were made Freemen by Redemption at the Court meeting on 20 March 2007:

John Charles Alliston

Proposed by M R Taylor
Seconded by J B Dent

Christopher Selwyn Cooper

Proposed by C J French
Seconded by M C Foreman

Andrew Steven Counsell

Proposed by R J Soffe
Seconded by J D Courtney

Geoffrey John Dodgson

Proposed by Mrs J Willows
Seconded by W R T Crane

Timothy James Gibbons

Proposed by P H Gibbons DL
Seconded by R A Bevan

John Arthur Cadas Godfrey

Proposed by N D S Brown
Seconded by A J L Worth

Stewart Houston

Proposed by J B Forrest OBE
Seconded by A W D Pexton OBE

Robert Samuel Markillie

Proposed by G C H Smith
Seconded by M H Hudson

The following were made Freemen by Redemption at the Court meeting on 5 June 2007:

Timothy Peter Bartleet

Proposed by J E Bartleet
Seconded by Lord Dixon-Smith

Christopher Charles Deene

Proposed by P G Wynn
Seconded by J E Grant

Reginald George Leslie Haydon OBE

Proposed by J D Courtney
Seconded by C D Oldler

John William Hodge

Proposed by J M Slack
Seconded by Mrs S K Muddiman

Timothy James Russ

Proposed by A P Dyke
Seconded by R J Soffe

Stephen Paul Watkins

Proposed by S C R Fell
Seconded by C D Oldler

Court

The following were successful in an election and will join the Court in October 2007:

Alexander Gavin Angell Lane

William Follett Balch FRICS

Honours and Awards

In the Queen's Birthday Honours 2007 a CBE to Freeman Stewart Houston for services to agriculture.

Obituaries

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

Liveryman **Colonel John Frederick Kenyon OBE MC** of Pradoc, Oswestry, Shropshire. Died in late 2006. Clothed 30 November 1998.

Former Liveryman **Henry Stephen Burtt** of Grantham, Lincolnshire. Died 22 March 2007. Clothed 15 March 1966.

Past Master **Philip Henry Gibbons DL** of Lindum Terrace, Lincoln. Died 19 June 2007. Clothed 8 March 1982. Master 2003-2004.

Liveryman **Robert Edward Hitchcock** of The Barn House, Barley Lands, Suffolk. Died 11 July 2007. Clothed 19 March 1968.

Autumn Newsletter

Copy date for the Autumn Newsletter is Wednesday 10 October. Will any Liveryman with copy to supply please ensure it is delivered to Editor Don Gomery, along with any accompanying photographs, by that date, either by email to don.gomery@btinternet.com or by post to Isfield Cottage, Church Road, Crowborough, East Sussex TN6 1BN.