

Wardens, fellow liverymen and guests,

Firstly, may I thank you for giving me the great honour of electing me to be Master of this ancient Company for the ensuing year. It is not only a great honour but also a great privilege to follow in the footsteps of so many worthy and distinguished Masters.

I spoke about some of the achievements of my immediate predecessor at Common Hall earlier and he will be a hard act to follow. Nevertheless, he has laid down firm foundations on which I hope to build during my year of office.

I have always maintained that to do nothing is to go backwards, so this will most definitely not be a year of resting on Andrew's laurels.

Fellowship is a theme which runs through every Master's year in office and mine will be no different. In conjunction with the Social Committee we are putting together a programme of social activities which I hope will cater for all tastes and encourage as much participation from our members as possible. I take great comfort from the large

attendance by the livery at Common Hall today and hope this will be replicated at our other events as the year progresses.

From time to time it has been asked what members of the Company get in return for their quarterage payments. In addition to the privilege of belonging to one of the ancient Companies of the City of London, I hope that we get a great deal of enjoyment and fun not only from the variety of activities available to all members of the Company but also from each other's company and I look forward to meeting as many members of the Company as possible during the forthcoming year.

We now have nearly 200 liverymen in our Company, close to the membership ceiling agreed by Court some years ago and Court will soon be considering a recommendation to raise that ceiling. Proposing potential new members into our company is both a pleasure and a duty incumbent upon all of us in order to keep the Company thriving both socially and financially and to ensure its future prosperity. Whether you are relatively new to the Company or have been a member for many years don't hesitate to talk about the livery and

encourage suitable potential candidates to come forward and join us.

Today we have taken further steps along that road by swearing in two new liverymen and I ask them to stand so we can recognise them and make them welcome within our ranks. Ryan Williams was sworn into the Freedom & Livery of the Company and Chris Gladwell was sworn into the livery having previously been a Freeman of the Company. A warm welcome to you both.

The Company has a standing within the stonemasonry trade, which has been raised further during the previous year and I hope to build on that and extend our reach still further if possible. We have a strong record of supporting students and apprentices in stonemasonry and other related activities through our charities, the Craft Fund and the Charitable Trust. The Craft Fund has ambitious plans to extend our support for students and apprentices further and wider than we do at present. However, this can only be achieved with your continuing support and I ask you all to consider the

extent to which you support our charities and help them to achieve their ambitious goals by increasing your financial support.

In recent years the profile of our Company within the City has been raised considerably and I hope to continue that process. May I urge you all to attend at least one of the City briefings during the forthcoming year. The City of London is vibrant and forward looking and it is developing with sometimes frightening rapidity. Consequently, there is much to learn whether you are a longstanding and experienced member or a newly sworn and gowned liveryman. None of us are too old to learn.

Many of you will know that my great hero is Lord Nelson and that I am a member of The Nelson Society, so it won't surprise you to learn that on 21st October we shall be holding a dinner to celebrate the 214th anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar, which took place on that date in 1805. Nelson was one of two great figures that featured in the long nearly three decades of war with France, the other being the Duke of Wellington and it so happens that today is the 204th

anniversary of his greatest triumph, the Battle of Waterloo, which he described as “a damned close-run thing.”

Today has been the opposite and the result of much detailed planning and hard work on the part of our gallant clerk and I thank him very much for everything he has done on our behalf. I hope you have all enjoyed today as much as I have and I look forward to meeting as many members of the Company as possible during my year of office. Thank you and GOD bless you all.