Wardens, visiting Masters, fellow liverymen and honoured guests

Members of the Company will recall that one of the supporting objectives of the Company is to support the Mayoralty, Corporation of London and the wider livery movement and in order to develop this objective the Court has been looking at ways to achieve this.

Since the Court last met in October, the Company has, for the first time, taken a stall at the Christmas market held at the Guildhall in aid of the Red Cross. This has had a dual result of not only raising money for a worthy cause but also raising our profile within the city and wider livery movement. Moreover, the Christmas card, which I commissioned, attracted the attention of the Corporation’s Business Development Manager, Sarah Miller.

The Wardens and I have been looking at other ways in which the Company can develop this particular objective in concert with other objectives designed to support our mission statement and I hope that this process will continue and develop further in future years.

Court has taken some important decisions today, not least in respect of our future policy for managing our investment portfolio. We have heard from the Chairman of the Communications Committee about progress with the Company history and the refining of the new Company website and we have also heard from the Chairman of the Membership Development Committee about the pipeline of potential new liverymen, which appears not to be as full as we might like.

On this point I reiterate what I have said on previous occasions that every member of the Company should be on the lookout for potential new members who would bring social and administrative benefits to the Company. If anyone has a potential candidate in mind but feels that he or she has not been a member of the Company for long enough, speak to Past Master David Blake, who will be happy to provide the appropriate guidance.

Today we have sworn a new liveryman into the Company in the person of Alistair Dobson and I ask him to stand so that we may all congratulate him on joining the Company.

We have also approved the admission of a new yeoman mason, Susan Asperghis. It is not customary to mention new yeoman masons specifically, but I first met this lady at the annual prizegiving of the City & Guilds of London Art School and was particularly taken by a stone sculpture she had made of a 1st World War soldier, based on soldiers on the Royal Artillery War Memorial in Hyde Park. In fact, I was so taken by this particular piece of work, that I bought her preliminary sketch for the work, which was on sale at the fund-raising event in October.

That event was a great success for the Company both financially and socially and it also provided our stonemasons who exhibited work, an opportunity to showcase their talents. We are most grateful to liveryman Neil Phillips and his wife Karina for allowing us to use their Gallery Different as the venue and for providing refreshments, all without charge. We hope to repeat this event next year.

It is always a pleasure to welcome our guests to lunch on these occasions. I hope they have had a happy time in our company and I wish them and indeed all of you a very happy and prosperous new year.

Today we have the pleasure of the company of the Master Plumber, Dr Peter Rumley and his clerk Mr Adrian Mumford, and the Master Chartered Architect, Mrs Valerie Le Vaillant and her clerk, Cdr Phil Green.

Our principal guest is Mr Jonathan Spence. He is a former City banker, having started his career at Kleinwort Benson moving in 1989 to Singer & Friedlander, where he spent nearly 17 years becoming an Executive Director and Head of Banking. He then moved into academia and although he is a graduate of Oxford University, he took up the position of Senior Bursar at Queens College, Cambridge, which office he has held since 2006. He is also Chairman of Cambridge Building Society and a non-executive director of Bank of China (UK) Ltd.

It is a pleasure to welcome him today and I invite him to respond on behalf of our guests.