



Worshipful Company of Constructors

Special Newsletter — November 2018

ISSUE 5

The Newsletter

This is a special and important issue of the Newsletter. It is being issued to bring the Master's initiative of a root and branch review of our structure, processes and membership to the notice of all our members as soon as it is reasonably possible.

The Worshipful Company of Constructors is one of the Modern Livery Companies of the City of London and it wishes to structure itself in a way that will ensure its continued success in the years ahead. It is for this reason that the Master has initiated the review and the first step on this road has now been taken with a specially arranged workshop at the Oxford and Cambridge Club on 22 October 2018. Whilst this initial step only involved some 10% of our membership, the Master is keen to involve all our members, and he welcomes everyone's input to this initiative. If you have any views on how the Company can ensure that it can build a strong Company and a strong Charity both now and in the future please let the [Master](#) know - clicking on the link will automatically originate an email to him.

As Company members we must remember that our primary interest is the same as all Livery Companies - Charity. Our Charitable Trust is an important part of our Company, and the Master is keen that the Company and its Charitable Trust work seamlessly and with a common aim and mission. He is determined that we will work together to build a Company and Charity that is strong now, and will continue to be strong in the future.

The Way Forward - building a strong Company and a strong Charity



The Worshipful Company of Constructors is one of the "Modern Livery Companies" and as such should always seek to move with the times whilst recognising the enormous part that tradition plays in the life of the City and the Livery.

The Company has evolved over the 40 odd years since it was founded as the Company of Builders in 1976. Whilst its processes have similarly evolved it is always good to re-evaluate them both from the top down and also from the bottom-up especially when common perceptions in the world around us have changed in so many ways, particularly over recent years.

With one of the Master's themes being diversity and inclusivity it seemed a good time to review our structure and processes and think how we might benefit from change. In particular we want the Company to thrive not only today, but for many years ahead, and for this to happen we need to embrace the added value that our younger members

might bring along with options for greater diversity and inclusivity amongst our members, bearing in mind that the fundamental role for any City Livery Company is to dispense charity. For the Worshipful Company of Constructors the prime agent for that is our Charitable Trust.

Accordingly, the Master invited a broad cross section of around 10% of our members to spend a day with each other in the magnificent surroundings of the Oxford and Cambridge Club, to share their aspirations for the Company and their concerns about the Company in a positive and supportive manner. The broad cross-section drew upon the experience of longstanding Liverymen as well as the thoughts and hopes of not only our younger Freemen and Yeoman but also of some newer members of the Company. It also included some Trustees of the Charitable Trust.

In his opening remarks the Master said “For any organisation of this kind it is important for those leading the Company to listen. If we do not listen, then we will eventually be filled with members who have nothing to say. Therefore, it is important for us to listen and to encourage comments and views from our members.”

The day was ably facilitated by Renter Warden David Sheehan, with support from the Gallant Clerk and Court Assistant Jane Wright. It started with the inevitable selection, in a pseudo random manner, of the members of each of the six teams. The selected teams then sat down to write down their issues, aspirations and needs on individual post-it notes, which were assembled by them into broad topic headings. Each table then summarised their work to the other five tables so that generic headings could be agreed, against which each post-it note could be grouped. Individual participants were then invited to vote on the Topics they felt most important to resolve. This allowed the topics to be ranked in order of importance to the delegates, and the seven highest ranking subjects were then taken back to tables for individual teams to work up a SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable and Timebound) plan to deliver a way forward to resolve the issue or take the initiative forward.

Whilst this process dealt with only the seven most important topics, the remaining issues were recorded and will be worked upon as time goes on.

Going forward the proposed action plans will be allocated to various elements (committees, Wardens, corporate structures etc) to take forward in detail and propose change to the Court. These changes, if endorsed by the Court, will then be taken forward as a matter of priority by the Company.

This is clearly only a start, but without a start there is very little chance of a finish, and without a finish there will be no change, and the Company will not evolve to meet its new challenges, or thrive in the years ahead.

At the initial workshop the topics that received the most votes were:

- We should improve Our Diversity And Equality
- We should have a positive relationship With The Charitable Trust
- We should consider mentoring the Membership
- Would a Young Persons’ Committee be an advantage?
- Should we increase our Industry Exposure
- Would we benefit from having a London based Hall/ Office?
- We should review the Court constitution and processes

As the Master said in his closing remarks – “This is only the start of what may well become a continuing process, not just through my year, but perhaps beyond!”

If any member of the Company who wasn’t part of this initiative feels that there are other issues that need to be addressed they should let the [Master](#) know. It may be that your concern is already an issue that is already going to be addressed. If so your concern will be added to that topic. If it is not a concern that has already been highlighted it will form part of the on-going review process.

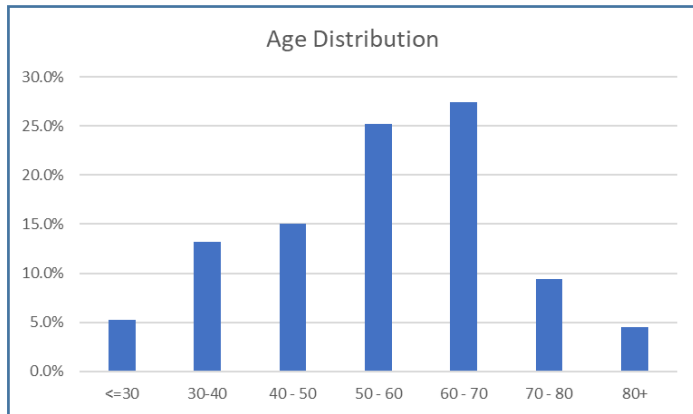
2017 Membership Review

In Summer 2017 we conducted a wide ranging review of the Company that was distributed to all our Freemen and Liverymen. We issued 289 invitations to participate and 55 members actually returned the survey - just over 19% of our membership. The Membership Survey was our initial step towards full engagement with our members and went a long way towards doing that. Indeed, the responses contained many good ideas, and the best are being taken forward by the Company.

The current initiative takes the Membership Review another step forward by directly addressing the way the Company operates, so the Master would be very pleased if you would let him know if you have any concerns about the Company, or would like to suggest changes to the way we operate and also how we might attract a younger and committed membership. We had hoped that the response to the 2017 Membership survey would have been slightly more enthusiastic, but this initiative is now imperative as the very future of our Company depends on YOU, our membership.

The Company Today

The Worshipful Company of Constructors has a number of challenges, not the least of which is how we structure our Company to be viable both now, and going forward. An issue which we cannot escape is the fact that our average age, based on membership data at the beginning of this Company year, is currently 55 years. The age distribution of the Company is depicted in the graphic on the left,



which excludes all honorary members, Companions and Emeritus Members.

Our aim going forward is to reduce that figure from the mid 50's to the mid 40's and then perhaps even lower.

However, we clearly need a balance of youth and experience, so it might be unlikely that our average age would be lower than say 40, as we need to have not only a core of empowered younger members but also a cohort of more senior members who can give of their time, experience and resources to encourage and support the younger members of the Company.

We are also keen that our younger members play a part in the management of the Company, but we recognise that this will put serious pressure on them, particularly with the current demands of employers and the focus of young professionals on pursuing their career. We must therefore ask ourselves if our aim to reduce the average age of the Company by 10 years or more is practicable. As a Company we are not alone in having an average age that is higher than we would like to ensure that there is a future for the Company. Nearly all Livery Companies are experiencing similar issues, but without a cohort of younger and committed members the future of the Company will be challenging.

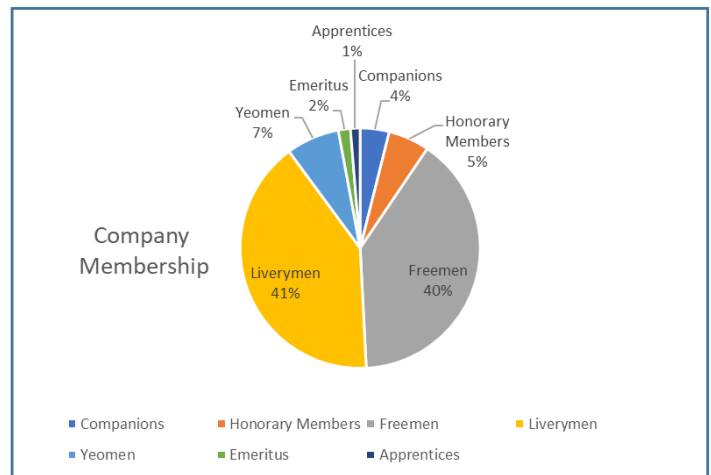
Our review of our membership data also allows us to look at how it is made up. (see the pie chart on the right).

One of the ways that we can encourage a long term interest in the Company would be to increase the number of Apprentices and Yeomen, as we would hope that these members would in due time become Freeman, and then Liverymen.

Such members are likely to “move through the ranks” sooner rather than later and that would soon reduce the average age of our Freeman and Liverymen.

Statistically we also have the challenge that each year the average age of a static Company will increase by a year, so we really do need to attract younger members.

It is perhaps interesting to note that we have about the same number of people under 30 as we do people who are over 80 years of age. Although these only total about 10% of our Company, and we really do value the contribution of those members who are over 80 years of age, we could do much to lower the average age of the Company by concentrating on young recruitment and these young recruits would, without doubt, benefit from the encouragement that can be provided by some of our older members.



We also need to recognise that we need members who can really contribute to the way in which the Company works - and that requires people who are able to give of their time and talents, something perhaps that our younger members, who have their career aspirations to consider in this modern corporate world, may not be able to do. So there may be a dichotomy - reduce the average age of the Company or benefit from the increased time and commitment that the 35% of the Company who are over 60 years can provide. The question is “Where do you think we should go?”

Perhaps another indicator of the vibrancy of the Company is the attendance at the events that it organises. Last year, we recorded attendance at 24 events. These ranged from the Formal events such as the Sir Christopher Wren Banquet to the many smaller informal events that were organised during the year. 149 members out of our total membership of just over 300 attended at least one of the events, 23 members attended 8 events or more, and only 3 members attended 50% or more of our events. There is obviously an issue here and if we could do better, do

please tell us, and suggest how. But, having carefully considered the suggestions made in the 2017 Membership survey response and modified our programme to reflect those suggestions, we did not experience any tangible increase in attendance levels. So we are left wondering what, if anything, we can do. Again, your suggestions please to the [Events Committee](#).

The Master 2018-19

The Master 2018-19, Mike Parrett, was installed on 10 October 2018 and he has chosen International Relations and Diversity as his main themes for his year as Master. He is also very focused on building a strong Company and a strong Charity both now and for the future, and it is this that is the starting point for his initiative to review the way the Company operates and, where change is thought appropriate, to drive that change through.



Mike is a world-renowned expert in building pathology and holds a Cambridge Master's degree, reading Interdisciplinary Design for the Built Environment. He is an Eminent Fellow of RICS, Fellow and Ambassador of CIOB, Fellow of CABE, Fellow of the Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining, and a Chartered Scientist. He is a former trustee of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.

Mike first came to public notice through the landmark BBC2 series Raising The Roof, which exposed the misdiagnosis of rising damp and raised concerns over chemical damp-proof course injections. Following his early work in UK public housing, Mike now investigates failures in international ancient and modern buildings. His most notable work includes the Basilica San Marco in Venice, the Helena May building in Hong Kong SAR, the home of the Duke of Wellington and many other buildings of historical importance in the UK and Ireland.

He lectures and writes extensively on investigating dampness in buildings, including flooding, condensation and mould.

He is a visiting lecturer to the Antiquities and Monuments Office in Hong Kong SAR, American Society of Home Inspectors, Architectural Association, Welsh School of Architecture, Glasgow Caledonian University, University College of Estate Management, Welsh Assembly and the Scottish Lime Forum.

Mike is a published author with Donhead and RICS Books, which also distributes his award-winning Building Pathology DVD training films. Mike regularly writes peer-reviewed technical articles for the RICS Property, Building Surveying and Conservation Journals and contributes to other prestigious publications, including the Cambridge University Land Society.

Mike has served on all the main committees since first joining the Worshipful Company of Constructors as a Freeman in 2005, taking Livery the same year. He subsequently acted as a Steward and Court Assistant before progressing to his current position as Master.

Mike is a trustee and United Kingdom General Assembly member of the True Jesus Church, a non-denominational Christian faith with churches throughout the world. He is married to Jessica. They have two sons, Gavin and Jonathan (who is a Yeoman of the Company).

In his spare time Mike is an avid follower of Rugby Union and has a profound interest in historic building conservation.

Forthcoming Events

10 Nov	Lord Mayor's Show	16 Jan 19	Sir Ian Dixon Award presentations
29 Nov	International Research Award presentation	4 Feb 19	Ironmongers' Hall Lunch
3 Dec	Festive Lunch	5 March 19	Inter-Livery Pancake Races
13 Dec	Carol Service and Reception	29 Mar 19	United Guilds Service
13 Feb 19	Livery & Awards Dinner	29 Mar 19	Lunch at Painter Stainers' Hall

Where the above details are in **BLUE** a Flyer or other notification has already been issued, and bookings should be made in accordance with the instructions contained in the Flyer.

We are also hoping to arrange several other informal events, so please look at the website for details of these.

We are always looking for people to arrange our technical visits and informal events. If you are able to assist in this way, please contact [Iain Meek](mailto:iainsmeek@gmail.com) (iainsmeek@gmail.com) who is the Chair of the Publicity and Events committee.