



Worshipful Company of Constructors

Quarterly Newsletter — JULY 2020

ISSUE 12

The Newsletter

This issue of the Newsletter is the twelfth in our quarterly series of Newsletters and is being published at an austere and worrying time for many of us. The current Covid-19 pandemic has fundamentally changed our lives. We are in a State of Emergency and Lockdown. But the Livery continues to overcome all difficulties and is supporting its membership and looking forward to the light at the end of the tunnel which, thankfully, appears to be looming ever closer.

To maintain, as much as we can, business as usual whilst being mindful of both legislation and advice, the Worshipful Company of Constructors, has adopted many new processes and is becoming even more reliant on modern IT - virtual meetings using Zoom.us and Microsoft Teams are becoming the order of the day. One must perhaps ask, if it works now, why don't we do it all the time? But we must remember that the Livery is founded on social interaction, so it is perhaps right and proper that we revert to the age-old traditional format of the regular Court Meeting, although this will probably be the subject of much debate going forward. Whilst the virtual meetings work when members are locked down at home, once they return to the hustle and bustle of normal office life will they be able to be as focused remotely in a virtual meeting as they are when in a real meeting? Perhaps only time will tell!

Not surprisingly, our intended programme of events has, at least in the short term, been drastically curtailed, and the Clerk has emphasised this. We have also injected (thanks to a number of members) a series of informal social events and "Zoominars" into our programme.

The upside of all of this doom and gloom is, however, that once the pandemic is over we hope quickly to return to our normal vibrant programme of events, but their character may well change to reflect the "new normal" of social distancing and infection control (for example it is almost certain that the Loving Cup ceremony will not be with us for some time to come). When we do start up again in a face-to-face mode we will need members to support as many of those events as they can, otherwise we may be forced to cancel events because they are not financially viable - we cannot run events at a loss.

The Membership under "Lockdown"

These are strange times for all of us - physical interaction outside one's household has all but ceased in recent months, and only now is slowly returning, perhaps with a respectful glance over the shoulder to the demands of COVID-19. Indeed, as just over 12% of our members (ie those over 70 years of age) fall into one of the Government's "At Risk" categories, that glance may well be more directed by some than others. The nearest thing to the current "lockdown" as a social effect is said to be the second World War, but as that can only really be remembered by some 2% of our members very few of us can make that comparison.

So, whilst we have been constrained, many of us have found different things to do, and a few of our members have given the Editor their thoughts on "Lockdown". We start with the members who have been extremely active in organising our enforced "virtual" informal social programme, **Liveryman Gary Jackson** and **Liveryman Stewart Owen**, who write:

"Lockdown – 'Life On A Virtual Desert Island'"

Whilst WFH, (working from home) is, and has always been, a normal part of the working week for some, us included, face to face interaction is an essential part of the 'stuff' that drives our world.

Most professionals in construction and associated businesses are expected to undertake a degree of relationship or business development, even if it is just making sure clients feel they are important and are being supported - and that involves communication, in person.

Many of the tasks we carry out can be done alone, remotely or without direct interaction, but making things happen, building dialogue, in the most part, requires social exchange - many are realising this for the first time, in the absence of normal behaviours and with lockdown restricting how we communicate. Previously meeting, talking, and generally interacting with our peers, clients and colleagues was so much a part of the normal routine, we did it without noticing - it just happened as part of the working day. So we've all had to learn new skills and working habits - Zoom, Teams and other 'virtual' platforms have facilitated meetings and helped keep the wheels of commerce turning, Email is still the norm, but maybe a few of us have returned to picking up the phone, and talking to each other. This will have helped with avoiding the lost nuance and tone of an email, and

looking someone in the camera, sorry, eye, even if only on a 'Zoom' meeting helps build trust.

We have certainly missed the chance to meet people, new and old friends, with a glass in hand, and the splendid conversation associated with the brilliant British sense of humour, and experiencing the cultural perspective of visitors and those who have chosen to come to Britain to work. We have, however, enjoyed hosting, and participating in, a series of virtual Company events; the VINE 'informal' networking has proved a great addition, especially for our far flung members, and has helped, we hope, those who are a bit isolated, to feel a sense of belonging in some small way. And it's been a change to talk about something other than Brexit or Covid-19. Virtual working has also helped us to reflect on how the Company can not only remain fresh, modern and inclusive, but how it can be a means to purposeful networking – as well as a pleasant way to share time with fellow Constructors in fine surroundings and enjoying good food and refreshment (be it at 'our house' or Mansion House).

It is interesting to reflect that for many of us, we dream of exotic overseas holidays, on glorious, sun kissed beaches, enjoying quality, dedicated time with our families, perhaps even on an exclusive island. That may be unattainable for some time to come, but we've been all working in our own remote spaces, enjoying unexpectedly fine British weather with long periods of time with those same family members, with, no doubt, mixed feelings (It may even be we're all quietly missing the chance to escape to work!).

Perhaps that's why hordes have flocked to beaches in the UK, and not just for the weather – but perhaps because it's a way to truly experience the sense of 'we're all in this together, as we can see how others in the same boat are faring!

And they say no man is an island ...”

The Merchandise and Events Committee, despite the impact of Covid-19, has been pretty active over the past few months. Whilst many of the planned “real” events have been cancelled, the Committee has been busy virtually organising alternative events. Iain Meek, the Chair of the Merchandise and Events Committee writes:

Merchandise and events in a “time of plague”

Whilst there have been no formal events during lockdown informal events have continued, but in an entirely novel fashion. Our Old Bailey visit for 'Trial & Treason' was cancelled, all those who requested it refunded, and all further in-real-life (IRL) events postponed until we are allowed out to play again. Only today (22 June), the BBC News suggested that the pubs will be open from 4th July (but might mitigation include 1m long straws?).

What have we done during the pandemic? Firstly, courtesy of Liveryman Gary Jackson, we instigated VINE - yet another acronym - Virtual Informal Networking Events (where wine or other beverages may be consumed). Secondly, courtesy of our newest member Liveryman Craig Harding, we have held a number of CPD events - a virtual walk round the City after the Great Fire with Dr Stephen Cornish, our Master on Contracts, and an expert member Rebecca Thompson on building archaeology. So much easier than going to Singapore for at least one of these!

These events have been held approximately weekly to date, and have linked members who have internet access; and who have the time to learn how to use the readily-available software: now on Zoom, having tried and rejected Teams.

Special thanks must also go to Liveryman Stewart Owen for refereeing the VINE events.

By organising these events we hope that we have encouraged fellowship and maintained our CPD studies; hopefully supporting the Church and the City in the process. At least Reverend Canon David Parrott has been there to advise on our spiritual progress at VINEs. Liveryman Paul Singh of the Media and Publicity Committee has also been instrumental in feeding these virtual events into our social media accounts.

The virtual events continue to develop, with 'rooms' for break-out at our next VINE event. Going forward, we hope to move back into real life sooner rather than later, and the Clerk will no doubt let members know how the Company will move forward.

Our affiliated Army organisation (101 Regiment RE) have also not escaped the pandemic. Captain Ruth Breslin writes:



“The Coronavirus pandemic has impacted every organisation. For 101 Engr Regt (EOD&S), a Reserve Army unit, the implications were significant. On announcement of the lock-down Regimental headquarters followed Government and MOD direction and all permanent and civil service personnel were ordered to work from home as much as possible. Only essential business has since been conducted on Regimental premises and many meetings are happening via Skype or group telephone calls. Training events were postponed or, where possible, are being delivered via remote means. The weekly Tuesday evening training nights are now all virtual, with over 120 people joining each week, proving the Regiment has the ability and enthusiasm to continue its business despite social distancing.

Many of our soldiers have public sector occupations and they have been vital in valiantly helping to keep the nation running. Many of those who do not have key worker status many have volunteered their time to help the NHS and charitable organisations to give the more vulnerable members of society a helping hand, delivering groceries to neighbours, distributing PPE, and assisting Team Rubicon with Op RE:ACT. So the members of the Regiment have certainly kept busy and although we all miss the opportunity to physically meet each other, the Regiment has remained in a good place to respond to the pandemic as it has developed. Over 130 personnel volunteered to be mobilised in support of the Military Response and although the Regiment has not yet been mobilised, we do provide a credible and useful option for our higher headquarters to call upon if required.

Unrelated to the pandemic, the Regiment has still been a force generating soldiers for overseas operations. There is currently 1 person serving overseas and a further 3 preparing to deploy in support of ongoing Operations. As restrictions have eased we are also managing to keep our Search training pipeline open, with 28 people qualifying in this trade.

The Regiment hopes that all members of the Worshipful Company of Constructors remain fit and healthy and is looking forward to future endeavours once restrictions have lifted.”



Our Royal Navy Affiliate, HMS Lancaster, returned to sea on 5 June, and since then has been successfully undergoing sea trials. The captain, Commander Will Blackett RN now proudly reports that the flight deck has been re-commissioned, the primary weapons and sensors are all back online and as every day passes the crew's confidence in the reliability of power, propulsion and 'hotel services' improves and, despite the affect of Covid-19, which compressed the planned June programme into a single continuous period at sea, the ship has completed its trials package whilst the crew had enough time to enjoy some of the more unique aspects of life in a warship such as 'hands to bathe' and flight deck BBQs. Issue 2 of the HMS Lancaster's quarterly newsletter is now on the WCC website, and gives much more detail of their recent activities.

Above all else, Commander Blackett confirms that he is conscious that plans to get the ship's affiliates onboard have been 'scuppered' by Covid-19 and he promises that they will soon find some new dates for the visits.

Freeman Martin Gettings has also not escaped the 'Lockdown Experience'. He writes:

“Lockdown implies isolation, confinement, quarantine. It has negative overtones, and rightly so. It is an imposition intended to have impact, to make you think and change your behaviours. That is not always a bad thing. On reflection I can honestly say this has not been the worst experience of my life.

Through technology I have felt very connected. I have kept in touch with my family, more often than normal if I'm honest; spirits have been significantly lifted with family quizzes and online album sharing. Of course, being there is better, but my family are all at least 300 miles away in the north of England, so being there is not always possible, even in the best of times.

I have been one of the lucky ones in terms of my work. I have been able to work successfully from home and, like most of us, have significantly enhanced my online meeting skills and practiced 'presence from a distance', a very useful characteristic to exercise in an increasingly more digitised world.

Being a regular participant in the Company's VINE events has been a very welcome opportunity to connect with fellow Constructors and share experiences and stories. It has felt natural, friendly, useful and incredibly supportive, I hope it can continue in an online format as well as in person.

Clearly working in the built environment is about personal contact. It is a sector literally built upon location, place, connection and participation; all the things 'lockdown' seeks to curtail. But it is the same skills and characteristics that we as Constructors excel in; those of innovation, teamwork, collaboration, and leadership that have got us through this, and undoubtedly will be called upon in great demand, as we emerge from this crisis to build back better than ever before.

Pan-Livery Initiatives

The many pan-livery initiatives have continued despite the impact of Covid-19. Past Master Tony Ward, the Chairman of the Construction Liveries Group writes:

“The 'No Going Back Pan Livery Initiative' has continued with outreach initiatives, and the 'No Going Back / Bounce Back' programme of finding construction related job opportunities for ex-offenders was launched on the 1st of July. The pan-livery Steering Group is Chaired by Past Master Mercer Johnny Robertson and is seeking construction related Job Opportunities via the CLG, and its Members. From our own Livery Members, Admiral Scaffolding is being proactive, with Renter Warden Terry Withers engaging with the job opportunities programme. He has volunteered to give a Prison Radio interview, which is currently the main means of communication for inmates, who, during the pandemic are locked in their cells literally for 23 hours each day.. This broadcast will inform Prisoners about the Livery and its charitable role in the City and beyond, as well as inform them about possible jobs etc on release from their custodial sentences.

Lis Goodwin, Chair of the Livery Schools Link, is also seeking a representative to replace the current LSL Construction Industry representative, PM Builders Merchant Brian Blanchard, who is retiring from the LSL Board this summer. The LSL are keen to have a Construction Industry Representative, but not necessarily to join their Board. If anyone from the Company is interested in this position, they should contact me and I will put them in contact with Lis Goodwin. The West Suffolk Sixth Form College at Bury St Edmunds, who train future apprentices in construction trades, will display our Livery Logo in their Building and Crafts Department as part of their emerging relationship with us and I am seeking support for a Prize to be given annually to one or their outstanding students, much in the same way that we donate to the London based Universities, and to our Armed Forces Affiliates. As soon as the regulations permit any WCC Member who would like to visit the College would be welcome, and if you contact me I would be pleased to make the necessary arrangements.”

The Master Writes ...

Dear Fellow Constructors



I am writing this message on 24 June as the country takes further steps to ease the lockdown. There is now a delicate balance to be drawn between maintaining the health of the nation and ensuring that the nation's economy survives. From the Company's point of view, we have been able to function virtually but otherwise as normal. We have maintained our usual schedule of meetings, with all our committees meeting on a virtual platform. In addition, we have had a virtual court on 7 May and have our next court on 2 July. These have allowed us to admit candidates to the yeomanry, freedom and livery and to conduct business much as we would do usually – without the lunches!

Our Thursday evening Zoom events have also been a great success and we are grateful to Gary Jackson, Stewart Owen and Craig Harding for their hard work in making these possible. Every other Thursday we have the VINE, an informal networking opportunity which, with the Zoom breakout room feature, now means smaller groups can meet, as they did in the old days of the Barrowboy and Banker. The VINE is alternating with a talk on the other Thursday. We have heard about the rebuilding of London after the Great Fire of 1666, Developing construction contracts for the 21st century and last Thursday Court Assistant Rebecca Thompson gave a fascinating talk about the archaeology of buildings. Our next talk on 16 July is by Kevin Hydes on "Net Zero Energy Buildings". Look out for the flyers or contact Gary Jackson to book a place for a VINE (gary@gaisurveys.co.uk), or Craig Harding (craige96@hotmail.co.uk) for the talks.

We are delighted that a good number of Members have put their names forward to join committees and we welcome the opportunity to add Members with new ideas to help us pursue the essential work of our committees. Following our request for candidates for the three positions as Junior Court Assistants, we had a good number of candidates and those chosen will then be put forward for election at Common Hall in September.

In July we will review whether the Sir Christopher Wren Banquet can go ahead on 8 September and whether the Master's Weekend in France can take place on 11 to 13 September. Whilst the prospects of being able to hold them look slim, a week is a long time in a pandemic, to borrow a phrase and we shall have to see what happens in the next few weeks.

Our new Almoner, Cheryl Moreton, is being kept busy contacting members. We know that this a challenging time for our Members both in terms of work worries and adapting to changed life in more isolated conditions. The Almoner, the Company and its charitable arm, the Charitable Trust, are all there to support you in time of difficulty and I would encourage any of you who are facing problems, particularly at this time, to approach Cheryl in absolute confidence to access the necessary support. Her contact details are cheryl.moreton@commercialrisk.management.

Finally, since the Livery and Awards Dinner on 12 February and the Senior Members' Lunch on 13 February, face to face events for the Company have been suspended as have events in the City. It is not quite the year I had been expecting! In some Companies the Master is staying on for an additional year, as are the Lord Mayor and Sheriffs. My work commitments do not allow me to do so but, in any case, I think the orderly succession through the Company makes it undesirable to do so. I shall therefore be handing over the reins to the new Master in October. By then we hope that we shall be getting back to normal and able to meet face to face!

Very best wishes

Sir Vivian Ramsey - Master

Message from the Clerk



Our Gallant Clerk is Kim Tyrell, and it is he who manages the majority of our workings, administration of the Court, payment of our dues and all our communications with Members.

The latest message from the Clerk is:

"As the Company's administrator and major events organiser it will come as no surprise to anyone that the past 12 weeks have been a severe disappointment for all of us with the loss of the Master's Weekends in Singapore and Durham, the Companions and Court & Livery Lunches, as well the first cancellation of the United Guilds Service in its history. We have also postponed the Sir Christopher Wren Banquet and the Master's Weekend in France until September, but as you all appreciate a lot must happen before these will be able to proceed.

Well, the bad news is there and writ large, however (and there is a big however) the good news is that the Company has shown its flexibility and determination to continue and to achieve as much as it can within the limitations of the current restrictions. The "Zoom" platform has so far facilitated not only the executive committee meetings, and meetings of the General Purposes, Election and Charity Committees, it has also enabled the Company to Conduct a most successful Court, where Ben DeSanges progressed to Livery, Andrew Heath-Richardson joined and progressed to Livery and Chandni Vora, Hasan Civelek, Satnam Gida, Jay Parmar, Caroline Gumble all

joined the Freedom of the Company.

As for the Clerk, well yes, there has been more time on offer as there is no requirement to commute to London. However the current situation does not seem to have reduced the administration load or the requirement to ensure that planning both in the current situation and for the post Covid 19 future is agreed and ready to go forward. The latter has covered everything from plans of how to run an event to how to install the Master with Social distancing either in St Lawrence Jewry, or ... his kitchen!

In addition Members have been organising Virtual Informal Networking Events and Zoominars, all of which have worked towards maintaining the vital fellowship and passage of information within the Company. Liveryman Cheryl Moreton has also stepped into the role of Almoner and has worked hard contacting those of the Membership who have been adversely affected over the past few months.

As I said we have planned forthcoming events

- Sir Christopher Wren Banquet 8 September Middle Temple Hall
- Master's Weekend Mimizan 11-13 September
- Common Hall 17 September

An update on these events will be provided in Mid July."

City Briefings

These are aimed particularly at new Liverymen and Freemen; partners are also welcome, as are Court Assistants and Liverymen of longer standing, who have not previously been to a Briefing and who are also encouraged to attend.

They give a short introduction to the work of the Corporation, especially the relationship with the livery companies. The presentation is given by an Assistant Town Clerk and a member of the Livery Committee. There is opportunity to ask questions of the speakers and the Briefing is followed by a light finger buffet, which provides the chance to mix with other Liverymen and Freemen.

The Briefings are held at the Livery Hall, 71 Basinghall Street, Guildhall, London EC2V 5DH and there is a non-refundable charge of £20 per person.

There are several Briefings each year and the next Briefings will (subject to the then current regulations) be held on Tuesday 15 September and Monday 9 November. There will also be briefings on 16 February 2021, 19 May 2021, 21 September 2021 and 21 October 2021. Once you have selected and applied for one of the Briefings, you will be able to change the date and carry your payment forward, providing 10 days notice is given. To change the date of the Briefing which you wish to attend you should contact the [Course Administrator](mailto:liverycourses@cityoflondon.gov.uk) at (liverycourses@cityoflondon.gov.uk) stating your and your guest's (if applicable) name, your livery company, the date of the course you were originally booked on and the new date of the course you wish to attend. Please also note that bookings can only be made up to 10 days before each course and that bookings will close when the maximum number of attendees (120) has been reached.

Programme and timings:

- 5.00pm **Registration**, tea/coffee served
- 5.30pm **Welcome:** Vicky Russell, Chairman of the Livery Committee
- 5.40pm **The Freedom of the City of London:** Murray Craig, Clerk to the Chamberlain's Court
- 5.55pm **The role of the City of London Corporation:** Greg Moore, Town Clerk's Department
- 6.10pm **Livery companies, their membership, and activities:** Paul Jagger, The Worshipful Company of Information Technologists
- 6.25pm **On being an Alderman, Sheriff and Lord Mayor:** Alderman Alastair King
- 6.40pm **Panel discussion with Q and A**
- 7.00pm **Closing remarks:** Chairman of the Livery Committee
- 7.05pm **Drinks Reception**
- 8.00pm End

Lockdown and the City

The City of London has not been immune to the effects of Covid-19. It, too, has virtually "shut-down", and it has been decided that both the Lord Mayor and the Sheriffs will serve a further year, until Autumn 2021, so that their planned international mission and programme of international events can be completed. Therefore the normal routine of elections will not take place this year.

However, the Lord Mayor has made it very clear that it remains his intention to hold this year's Lord Mayor's Show as normal and that it will prove to be one of the best ever, despite it perhaps still being necessary to observe the applicable social distancing requirements and recognise the "new normal"

Forthcoming Events

Due to the current Covid-19 pandemic, all physical events up to the end of July 2020 have been cancelled, and the list of events below is subject to change. For the latest information it would be wise to check the Company [website](#).

- 8 Sep** **Sir Christopher Wren Banquet**
- 9 Sep** **Revised Inter-Livery Clay Pigeon Shoot**
- 11-13 Sep** **Revised Master's Weekend in France**

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 as the year progresses, so please look at the Company website (www.constructorscompany.org.uk) for details of these and updates on any of the events listed above.

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:iain@meek.demon.co.uk) (iain@meek.demon.co.uk) who is the Chair of the Events committee.