

The Worshipful Company of Tax Advisers

CITY OF LONDON



MASTER'S REPORT 2020/21

It has been a great privilege to serve as Master in our 25th anniversary year; in spite of the restrictions thrown at us by Covid we achieved some wonderful successes in both fund and awareness raising.

My installation at the start of the Company's year took place using Zoom which was to become our mainstay for so many months. There were no gowns, or chain of office but our Clerk devised a plan which still maintained the solemnity due to the occasion. We celebrated with a wine tasting without leaving our homes as we settled down to our separation in person - but not in spirit. There was a lot of good humoured chatter in the Zoom side screen that evening.

Charity and social interaction were at the forefront of the year, and I thank the Charities Committee for their sterling work in raising funds. We began with the intention of raising £25,000 in the year and we have now reached £19,150. The appeal will remain open until Christmas, and I am hoping that by then we will have hit our target. The fund raising was greatly helped by the History of Tax events which on one occasion had an online audience of over 460, something to bear in mind for the future.

The Social Committee also went into Zoom planning mode as it became all too clear that we would be in lockdown or similar for an indefinite period. Our City walk was done without leaving our chairs, we tasted salmon, watched truly amazing magic, members gave fascinating talks, and we tasted yet more wines, cheeses, meats, and chocolate.

One might expect that during such a year the Membership Committee would be very quiet- it was not! Enquiries for membership carried on coming in and we were able to admit new members at Court via Zoom.

A new Communications Group was formed to oversee the creation of a new website for the Company, a major venture which we hope will make us more visible and create interest particularly in the tax community at large.

Many of the events normally directed at Masters and Clerks were opened up to the Livery as a whole, three of these in particular were completely absorbing. The Glaziers' Company presented a talk from both the US and the UK on Pugin's stained glass, the speakers in the 2 locations were passionate about the subject and the photography was magnificent. The Air Pilots held an evening talk on 'The Few 'a thought-provoking narrative with photographs and film which very few people ever see. And finally, the Woodturners gave a demonstration from a workshop, making their skills look so very easy as they turned lumps of wood into delicate, decorative woodwork.

Finally, on 22nd June, I attended my first real event, duly gowned by our Clerk, this was the thanksgiving Service at St Paul's Cathedral, with awe inspiring music and speeches. It was both strange and wonderful to be out with other Masters and speak to each other without technical intervention!

On Midsummer Day we gathered -socially distanced- at Common Hall to elect our new Sheriffs, this was followed by lunch with the Chartered Accountants Company at the Guildhall which only ended when the Coldstream Guards band began to play in the yard for Armed Forces Day. Being a brass band enthusiast, I found it very difficult to tear myself away to catch my train.

I was delighted that on 6th August we were indeed able to hold our planned 25th anniversary BBQ at Barber Surgeons' Hall, and whilst the weather was not as we had hoped for there was sheer joy at seeing so many members for the first time in almost eighteen months!

Many of our supported charities were represented and Mike Gibbons spoke eloquently about their work. We were able to present their cheques and congratulate them in person.

Past Master Erica Stary and I cut the cake with the sword provided for the occasion as photographs on our new website will attest!

I would like to thank the Deputy Master, Wardens, Court, Committee Members, Clerk, Beadle and Deputy Beadle, Honorary Treasurer, and Assistant Clerks, and also our CIOT administrator who have worked through a very strange year in the life of a Livery Company. My thanks also to the Master's Consort who adapted to the role of 'chief cook and bottle washer' and never grumbled about the strange meal times adopted to allow for Zoom meetings!

Our diaries are filling up very quickly for the Company's new year in the fervent hope that life will return to a more stable pattern, and we can enjoy each other's company once more.

Sue Christensen