



Dinner to the Masters, Prime Wardens and Upper Bailiff

Egyptian Hall

Thursday 23rd March 2023

The Rt Hon The Lord Mayor of London

Alderman Nicholas Lyons

Masters. Prime Wardens. Upper Bailiff. Fellow Aldermen. Mr Dean. Sheriffs. Chief Commoner. Ladies and Gentlemen.

Well, what a sight this is! 350 of my closest friends for dinner! Welcome to Mansion House.

The Lady Mayoress and I have been such frequent beneficiaries of your hospitality throughout the year, so it is our *great* pleasure to be able to return the favour this evening.

Though an active member of several liveries, I have never served as Master, Prime Warden or - indeed - Upper Bailiff myself. However, I think my time as Lord Mayor has given me a bit of insight.

Heading up a livery is a great honour, and a great responsibility.

Everyone wants a piece of you, but...though dinners like this expand your waistline...there's still only so much to go around.

I want to take this opportunity to recognise the work you do for your companies...your respective industries...and, of course, the City. It is *hugely* important, and *hugely* appreciated.

Livery contribution

I want to keep things relatively light this evening. Yet, it's hard not to reflect on all that's happened in the world since we last met:

War and humanitarian crises. Political and economic turmoil. The recent breakout of banking failures. The death of the world's longest-reigning monarch, our Queen...and the accession of a new King.

It has been a year of tremendous change and challenge. Yet, in gloomy times, the livery has *shone*.

Moving straight from being Sheriff to Lord Mayor, I've had a unique insight into your activity over the last two years. And I have to say that it's been nothing short of inspirational.

I often use the headline figures you're all familiar with to highlight the livery's contribution to charitable causes and education, as well as volunteering and pro-bono work.

But I'd like to pick out just a couple of individual pan-livery projects this evening.

Earlier this month, I was delighted to hand over the keys to a new van to the brilliant charity, City Harvest, which takes surplus food and redistributes it to people in need across the capital.

The van was funded by the Livery Food Initiative - continuing a partnership formed in lockdown when City Harvest delivered meals prepared by the Livery Kitchen Initiative.

The day after the van launch the Lady Mayoress, Sheriffs and their consorts made the annual visit to Treloar's School alongside the Masters and Clerks of several liveryies.

There, they saw how money donated by the livery is supporting state-of-the-art technology that is opening up a new world of possibilities for disabled young people.

Sheriff King road-tested a wheelchair that can be operated using *only your eyes*...and though he steered dangerously close to the Lady Mayoress's ankles at one point, the demonstration was a great success!

The next day, I met with John Burton, chair of Pollinating London Together. A fabulous pan-livery initiative aiming to create green spaces in which pollinators can thrive and their habitats can be enjoyed by everyone for years to come.

Why have I picked these examples?

Well, because they highlight...in unequivocal terms...just how *future-looking* the City's "*ancient*" liveryies really are. With a focus on ensuring that *all* members of society benefit from the Square Mile's success...and the next generation can lead healthier, happier, more *fulfilling* lives.

Financing our Future

Those aims also run to the heart of my mayoral theme: Financing Our Future.

You know better than most that the Square Mile doesn't owe its success to short-term thinking or get-rich-quick schemes.

Generations of liverymen constructed buildings, started businesses, and launched charitable initiatives *knowing* they wouldn't be the ones to enjoy the fruits of their labour.

Yet, in recent years, we've missed opportunities to shore up the City's strengths and make lasting changes to secure the Square Mile's success.

London's international reputation took a hit last year...and we've seen key companies choose to list in New York rather than the City in recent weeks.

We face a real challenge for our crown...and must respond with a laser-like focus on competitiveness, growth, jobs and investment. That's what Financing Our Future is all about.

I'm happy to say support is growing for a private sector-led "future growth fund" that will give defined contribution pension savers the chance to invest in fast-growing businesses in areas like biotech: an idea I've been championing...

And I was very pleased to see this referenced by the Chancellor in his Budget speech last week.

Meanwhile, a few days ago, we announced that leading City executives will be part of the City Corporation's "Finance for Growth" initiative to set out a roadmap for financial services that will support the Square Mile's competitiveness and drive growth over the next decade.

This will look at the role of central bank digital currencies, blockchain, stable coins, crypto, AI, big data, quantum computing and much more.

I know my goals for the Square Mile are shared by many of you. Not least because a thriving City supports the corporate bookings upon which many liveries rely.

I've been overwhelmed by the support I've received from you in the last four months...and hope I can count on it at *key* moments in the coming months.

Did you know that nearly *half* of working-age adults have the numeracy level expected of a primary school child?

In a few weeks, I'll bring key stakeholders together for the *first* Financial Literacy and Inclusion Summit at Mansion House, to come up with a coordinated plan for further action.

Given the livery's long-standing support for education, your input would be invaluable.

Friends, after a tumultuous year, now's the time for us to reset and renew. We need to be more positive and more ambitious.

The City will soon be in the spotlight for the Coronation of our new King.

I feel incredibly proud to be Lord Mayor of London at this time. And - given the livery's strong ties to the Royal Family - I'm sure *you* feel honoured to be leading your companies through this period.

Many of you - a large majority - have pledged support for the anointing screen which is a prominent feature of the Westminster Abbey Coronation.

I would like sincerely to thank all companies that have contributed to this initiative.

Of course, whether in this or other ways, the livery makes its mark in a number of areas of particular interest to His Majesty.

Apprenticeships is one and so I am sure we will wish to look positively at the plans being developed by government to mark the Coronation.

The livery is also, of course, a great backer of His Majesty's Armed Forces.

I'm pleased to have four of five of my ADC - representing adult volunteers involved in cadet units - here this evening.

I know they're keen to speak with you about affiliation, so please do find them if you haven't already.

City/livery relations

Ladies and Gentlemen. You might have to bear with me on this one, but I'd argue that the pan-livery relationship is a bit like a marriage.

Our opinions might differ on some day-to-day matters...but on the big things - care for this City, the environment and our societal purpose - we align.

Individually, we can - and *do* - achieve a lot. But together, we're *unstoppable*...particularly in times of challenge.

As with any marriage, our relationship requires excellent communication, regular compliments - and some compromise.

If the dynamic's right, the partnership will go from strength to strength.

On that note. I'm looking forward to joining you all for the Annual Livery Weekend in Glasgow...which provides a chance to explore the city while strengthening the ties between our organisations.

Elsewhere, the Court of Alderman will now act as the livery's main point of contact with the Corporation - a move we hope will build more collaboration and understanding.

As I say - we must keep working on our relationship. I hope that, after hearing my speech tonight, none of you – especially the Lady Mayoress - will be filing for a divorce.

With that in mind – let me say on behalf of all Masters, Prime Wardens and Upper Bailiff a huge “thank you” to all our consorts for their tireless support.

During trips abroad - most recently to India - people tell me a variation of the same message: “We love London”, they say, “and we want you to succeed.”

As guardians of this great city, we have a responsibility to make good on that potential.

I have confidence that...working together - as we have done for so long...we can help ensure London remains a cultural and economic hub that *drives* growth for the whole UK and provides global thought leadership in key areas of finance.

Conclusion

Finally, I don't know how this happened...but I'm told I've got a reputation as a peddler of jokes about nuns.

I didn't want to disappoint you tonight...but you will have to wait a bit before you hear it.

Thank you, once more, for joining me this evening and for all you do for the Square Mile. Now - if you are able - please stand, and join me in a toast:

To the Masters, Prime Wardens and Upper Bailiff of the City livery companies.