

The Welsh Livery Bulletin

of the Worshipful Livery Company of Wales

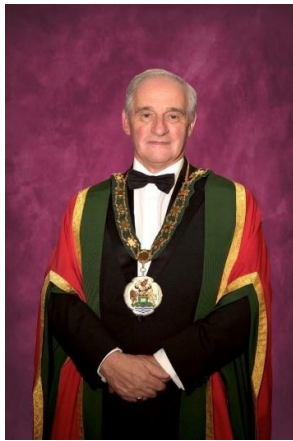


Issue No: 12



December 2020

MASTER'S MESSAGE



December might be the time of the longest and darkest nights but we are in the middle of a season of festivities for many faiths, Diwali, the festival of light, Hanukkah which also celebrates light and Christmas with its special light over Bethlehem, to list just a few. So let's enjoy the host of colourful and bright lights and try and celebrate the end of the year with hope for the future; as one political commentator stated "the light at the end of the tunnel is getting brighter"

Many will look back at 2020 as the year that wasn't. To many, it has been a challenging and frustrating time and for some a sad and tragic time with the pandemic causing an extra upset. To those who have lost family or friends this year, whatever the cause, may I express my sincere condolences.

Looking forward, all that we can really wish for is that that New Year will bring us the encouraging development of vaccines and the beginning of a return to some true form of normality.

There is very little that I can add to what has already been said other than to sincerely wish you well and would close with a little known fact, namely that Santa is a Welshman

Many miles away from here, even further than Pen y Fan
You'll find a house that no one knows, and a very special man
He's very large and jolly, with a beard as white as snow.
Of course it's Father Christmas, but there's something you don't know.

When it turns December, and the elves have made the toys.
And after he's delivered them to all the girls and boys.
He locks up all the workshops, puts the tools away.
Feeds the reindeer for the winter, and gives the Elves their pay.
He packs his summer suitcase and loads up his other sleigh.
The one, you know, that won't be noticed, on the motorway.

He heads off to his Homeland, the place from which he hails.
It's always been a big secret, that Santa comes from Wales!
He was born in Abercwnscott where he ran and played all day.
It was here he learnt the secret of how to give, not take away.

On Saturdays to the rugby he always liked to go and watch
Especially when Wales were at home – always a great match
He stood and sang the anthem. His Mam and Dad were so proud.
"Mae Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau" was never sung so loud.

But Santa left it all behind, I think he always knew.
That destiny was calling from where the North Wind blew
Santa now works across the World for countries wide and far.
He's Wales' greatest export, a truly global Superstar

Wearing the colour red reminds him of Wales from afar
 And of all his friends he played with in the park
 He remembers Chippy Lane, Clarks Pies and
 and a decent pint of Brains "Dark"
 And then on Sunday morning swinging
 along to St Johns and joining in the uplifting singing

But, being Welsh is not where you are from, nor the colour of your skin.
 It's the good you do for others and the love you have within.
 So when sitting there, feeling full of Christmas ales.
 Remember it's a secret, Santa comes from Wales!

All the very best for Christmas and the New Year

Peter Coleman

THE MASTER'S AUTUMN PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

Thank you to all who took the time to take part and for the wide and enjoyable contributions. After due deliberation the panel of independent judges agreed that the winning photo was:-



The comments were "A picture that captures colours, and the calm of Autumn"

Congratulations to Past Master Keith Arnold; a bottle of bubbly will be heading your way in due course

UPDATE FROM THE MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

The Membership Committee are anxious to set up a network of people with a Welsh connection across the UK. If any Liveryman knows of individuals, perhaps members of their family, friends, acquaintances or

even groups who might be interested in the WLCow, feel free to forward my e-mail address to them for more information about the Livery Company rsolbe@btinternet.com.

Rosemary Solbé FRSB
Chair - Membership Committee



PRC Breaking News.....
Team "Festive Yuletide" triumphs !!



On 11th December, the PR Committee celebrated its virtual Festive Celebrations 🥂🎄!

As can be seen from the group screenshot above, the festive cheer was enjoyed by the PRC members as well as guests including John and Rosemary Solbe and the newly appointed Welsh Livery Guild Charitable Trustee, Dyfrig Morgan James and his wife Glesni.

The virtual celebration's entertainment included not only a double act courtesy of the Chair, Agnes Xavier-Phillips and Deputy Chair, Henry Gilbert but also a Christmas Quiz and Name that Carol!

The Winners were:
Christmas quiz : PM Dr.Sarah Cockbill
Name that Carol : Master Peter Coleman
Raffle Prize : Commander Bob Reid
Best Dressed in Festive Attire: Dyfrig Morgan James

Prizes included a bottle of Chivas Regal, Chocolates and a memento of the virtual party to all attendees !

The Best Dressed in Festive Attire, judged by our very own Angela Parry, was a surprise category and a thank you to attendees for making the effort. The festivities started off with the Master in full Santa Claus suit including a Santa beard and moustache which set the festive scene and Simon made a sparkling grand entrance!

The finale for the evening was the Master's rendition of his "ditty" which was a recital of his attempt at 5 finger typing....."**Prinderella and the Cince**" 🤖! We dare you not to laugh.....full version available on request .

We were also delighted to welcome the youngest attendee Morgan (aged 15) delightful son of Liveryman Professor Karen Jones from North Wales Group. He was invited to join in as he wanted mum to prepare his dinner, which meant she would have had to leave early. It was good to have an injection of youth in our festivities although not entirely certain how Morgan would have fared in "Naming that Carol" as, surprisingly his musical preference turned out to be Country and Western - Johnny Cash! As a thank you for being a sport and joining in, we played one of Johnny's hits which delighted Morgan!

Feedback from Karen.....Morgan thoroughly enjoyed your company and did comment on how funny and "cool" you all were! Johnny Cash was just the icing on the cake"! We are apparently now well known on teenage social media as "Cool and the Gang"!

Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the virtual "party"; and together with the PR Committee members, I am very grateful to all attendees for joining in and participating in the festive cheer !

Agnes Xavier-Phillips JP DL

Chair - PR Committee

UPDATE FROM THE AWARDS COMMITTEE

As we reach the turn of the calendar year it is clear that the restrictions imposed upon all parts of the Welsh economy by the pandemic have had a disproportionate effect on the young people of Wales. The difference we make with our awards will be needed even more than in "normal times".

As I write this note, the news of MHRA approving the first vaccine against the corona virus is a cause for

hope. Citing the words of Winston Spencer Churchill delivered at the Lord Mayor's lunch in the City of London on 10th November 1942, "*can it be said this is not the end, it is not even the beginning of the end but it is perhaps, the end of the beginning*", I hope so and we can return to face to face meetings, interviews and presentations.

The Company can be proud of the hard working members of the Awards Committee. They have worked tirelessly and inventively to implement the annual plan of awards and despite all the restrictions, event cancellations and migration to Zoom and Teams virtual platforms have successfully completed approximately 70% of the awards programme.

Court approved a new major award, the Silver Jubilee Development Award having a value of £2500. The team is led by Past Master Professor Gillian Davies. I look forward to seeing a successful award presented this year. A more detailed article written by the Silver Jubilee Development Awards Team is included in this edition.

The Welsh Livery Guild Charitable Trust have been asked to provide an early indication of the funds to made available for awards in 2021-2022, the Awards Committee can then develop its outline plan of awards for the coming year.

On behalf of the Master, Wardens and Liverymen of the Company, I thank the hard working members of the Awards Committee for all the work they have and will do the meet the objective of the Worshipful Livery Company of Wales – Nurturing Welsh Talent.

**Windsor Coles OBE CEng FIET
Chair - Awards Committee**

A NEW MAJOR AWARD

The Worshipful Livery Company of Wales celebrated the Silver Jubilee of its foundation in 1993 during the Livery Year 2017-2018. At the time, additional funds were raised to enable the Company's Charitable Trust to increase the number of Awards to be made to the young people of Wales. Among those Awards, a new Major Award has now been approved. This new Award is for £2,500 per annum and has been titled The Silver Jubilee Development Award.

The Objective of the Award is to enable an outstanding young person with a commitment to Wales, who has graduated from an academic institution, or qualified with a professional body, to

further their academic or professional development by undertaking an important project or attending a high level academic course or conference, preferably with an international element.

The Award will be made to a young person aged 21 – 25, with possible extension to 30, if the candidate is a postgraduate student. All candidates will be expected also to have shown a commitment to Wales.

The subject area is open but in furtherance of the objectives of the Silver Jubilee Appeal, applications in 2021 will be welcomed from young people with an interest and background of studies in International Relations and Politics and/or Modern Foreign Languages, areas where the Company has not traditionally made Awards.

PM Professor Gillian Davies, and Chairperson of the Awards Sub Committee which will manage and judge the applications, said, “I am delighted to see this new Award being approved and I look forward to seeing it becoming both one of the prestigious Major Awards of the Company and attracting outstanding applicants. If any Member is aware of possible applicants, please do draw their attention to the information about this Award on the Company website and encourage them to apply”.

Application Forms and further information are available on the WLCow Website and completed applications should be sent to the Secretary of the Awards Committee awards@liverycompanywales.cymru before the end of January 2021.

The winner of the Award will, in addition, receive a Prestigious Award Certificate, be invited to attend a significant Livery Company event and will also be entitled to include in their CV that they are a winner of this Major Award from the Worshipful Livery Company of Wales.

Reports duly received from Award winners, detailing the use to which the Award funds have been put and the benefits which have resulted to the furtherance of their academic or professional development, will be publicised on the website and in future issues of this Bulletin and other Livery communications.

Silver Jubilee Development Awards Team

UPDATE FROM THE CHARITY COMMITTEE

David Hurn Photoshoot Auction



Brought up in Cardiff, David became one of the Magnum Collective photographers. He made his name as a young man documenting the Hungarian revolution and his career as a world-famous photographer and Welsh enthusiasts now extend over 6 decades. His publicity pictures of Sean Connery as James Bond and Jane Fonda as Barbarella are instantly recognised icons. He has worked as photographer with Ken Russell and Dino De Laurentiis amongst other famous names. His Abbey Road series of the Beatles are legendary. More recently he is particularly renowned for his photographs of Wales and he lives in Tintern. He set up the School of Documentary Photography in Newport in 1973 and has supported it ever since. He has generously donated many of his photographs and those of his Magnum colleagues to the National Museum of Wales.

Want to know more? Watch, “David Hurn, A life in Pictures”, BBC documentary on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=am8Kj4dcZul>

David has very kindly offered for auction a photoshoot to benefit the Welsh Livery Guild Charitable Trust. You will have a choice of a family portrait or local landscape photographed and signed by David Hurn himself (Time and location by mutual consent. A4 sized signed print, additional copies available at £30 each)

Bids in excess of £500 to
charity@liverycompanywales.cymru
by 31 Jan 21

Simon Holt MBE FRCS
Chair - Charity Committee

CONGRATULATION TO FORMER GOLD AWARD WINNER



Professor Tom Crick MBE FLSW, Liveryman and former Gold Award Winner has been awarded the British Educational Research Association's 2020 Public Engagement and Impact Award for "Leading the Future of Science and Technology"

For full details <https://www.bera.ac.uk/bera-in-the-news/bera-announces-2020-public-engagement-and-impact-awards> which is also posted on the Livery's Website.

RAF VALLEY ISLE OF ANGLESEY



Group Captain Andy Turk, DFC, MA, takes up his appointment as Officer Commanding Royal Air Force Valley in December. RAF Valley is one of our military affiliations, and some Liverymen will recall a fascinating visit to the Valley in 2011 when, amongst other things, we had a chance of seeing the Hawk simulator in action and presenting awards to two

members of the station's staff. We wish Gp Capt Turk a successful few years on the Isle of Anglesey and hope that we will have the opportunity to meet him at one of our official functions.



CHRISTMAS CORNER

THE 12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS TURKEY

On the first day of Christmas, my true love said to me
We were right to buy fresh turkey and a proper Christmas tree.

On the second day of Christmas, much laughter could be heard
As we tucked into the turkey, a most delicious bird.
On the third day of Christmas, we had guests from right next door
The turkey tasted just as good as it did the days before.

On the fourth day of Christmas, with the in-laws, as of old
We finished off the Christmas pud – and served the turkey cold.

On the fifth day of Christmas, outside the snow flakes flurried
But we were nice and warm inside, and ate the turkey curried.

On the sixth day of Christmas, the festive spirit died
The children fought and bickered and we ate the turkey fried.

On the seventh day of Christmas, my true love he did wince
As he sat down at the table and was offered turkey mince.

On the eighth day of Christmas, our cat had run for shelter

When I served up turkey pancakes, with a glass of Alka Seltzer.

On the ninth day of Christmas, by lunchtime Dad was blotto
The only way, he reckoned, he could take my turkey risotto!

On the tenth day of Christmas, the only drink was homebrew
Not strong enough to help digest, those plates of turkey stew.

On the eleventh day of Christmas, the tree's pines they were moulting
The sweet mince pies were hard and dry, the turkey was revolting.

On the twelfth day of Christmas, my true love licked his lips
The guests were gone, the turkey too, we dined on fish and chips!

With acknowledgement to John McGullach

ADVENT CAROLS IN ST ASAPH CATHEDRAL – WITH A DIFFERENCE

'Looking for the Light' *'Chwilio am y Golau'*

Carols:

This is the Truth, *arr. Vaughan Williams*
Adam lay y bounden, *Peter Warlock*
O come, O come Emmanuel, *Trad.*
Dixit Maria, *Hans Leo Hassler*
People look East *arr. Malcom Archer*
O Thou, The Central Orb, *Charles Wood*
Lo, He Comes – tune: Helmsle



It is now seven years since the North Wales Committee first welcomed Liverymen to the service of

Advent Carols in St Asaph Cathedral. The pattern of this delightful event has evolved over the years. In 2014 the afternoon service was followed by sherry and mince pies at Dol Hyfryd. In 2015 when the then Master Dr Sarah Cockbill was asked to read the final lesson we upped our game and had supper after the service. Donations for the Charitable Trust were made. We retained that pattern for 2016 but in 2017 we decided to offer lunch before the service and we continued with this through 2018 and 2019. On both of these occasions it was good to be able to welcome Liverymen from the Shrewsbury Drapers. The dining tables have been pretty well at full capacity and the catering has only been possible to teamwork in shooting the food (or some of it), cooking a variety of excellent seasonal main courses and wicked desserts, providing homemade breads, sourcing wines and of course unearthing sherries with impeccable provenance.

But what of 2020, the year of the Great Plague? Things could not have been more different. Safe spacing within the Cathedral meant that we could not, in all fairness, take up spaces to which the local congregations had first claim. Neither could the Choir process round the building singing Advent Carols at five different points. No form of socialising before or after the service would have been possible. Instead, the service went out live from the Cathedral website and an amazing number, currently (4 Dec) over 1,100 people viewed the service. The Choir had to be socially distanced from each other and the congregation were positioned in the East end. This meant that their balance with the main organ would have been difficult so the Dean organised the purchase of a nice three-manual organ to be placed in front of the 15th Century Canon Stalls. The great organ made itself felt at the very end of the service after the six readings and Advent Carols. The influence of the Worshipful Livery Company of Wales, was not entirely absent since Dr Rosie Solbé, taking time off from her usual catering duties with Jean Bryson, created the Advent Wreath.



Let us all hope that next year we can meet again.



“ He is not a Vicar but a Sheriff “ !

Greetings go to Court Assistant & PRC Deputy Chair/Secretary, Henry Gilbert Esq as he celebrates his birthday on 30th December.

SAVE THE DATE

Talking Heads on Thursday 21st January 2021

Welsh Livery Guild Charitable Trustee Dyfrig Morgan James BSc FGS CGeol FIG FIWA, Geologist, Global Business Leader, in conversation with Court Assistant Keith Shankland, Chartered Engineer, Management Consultant and business start-up specialist.

Common Hall on Thursday 28th January 2021 via Zoom

Further details to be issued shortly

WEBSITE

If you wish to visit the Members (password protected) area of the website and have forgotten the “User Name and Password”, please contact the Assistant Clerk.

asstclerk@liverycompanywales.cymru

DONATE – JUST GIVING

The WLCow is pleased to receive donations through JUST GIVING on the website – liverycompanywales.cymru - just click **DONATE** on the menu bar. Alternatively, you can do so by contacting the Treasurer at treasurer@liverycompanywales.cymru

EDITORIAL TEAM

If you have any articles you wish to be included in future editions of the WLB please contact Agnes Xavier-Phillips (PRC Chair) and Angela Parry MBE (Assistant Clerk) who compile the WLB based on contributions/ articles received.

THE EDITORIAL TEAM WISH ALL LIVERYMEN AND THEIR FAMILIES.....



The Welsh Livery Bulletin



Issue No: 12



Special Talking Heads Supplement

TALKING HEADS -THURSDAY 29TH OCT'20
AGNES XAVIER- PHILLIPS JP DL LLB(HONS)
ACCREDITED MEDIATOR, SCM SRN



Senior Warden Dr. Kathy Seddon, introduced another excellent "Talking Heads" session with the Chair of our Public Relations Committee (PRC) Agnes Xavier-Phillips in conversation with Court Assistant Henry Gilbert Esq, former High Sheriff of W Glamorgan and Secretary/Deputy Chair of PRC.

Henry stated at the outset that they would not be 'solving world issues!' but would enjoy a dialogue exploring the life of Agnes. Henry asked about the origin of Agnes' double barrel surname. She explained that Xavier was her maiden name and Phillips her married name which she changed to Xavier-Phillips in memory of her father, a big influence in her life. The hyphen was added to avoid her name being abbreviated to just Phillips! Agnes was amused at Henry's suggestion that he believed she lived in Caerphilly Castle and known as Lady Agnes . "Alas, I don't live in a castle but my house is in the castle grounds and I can safely say Caerphilly Castle, the biggest castle in Wales and the moat is in my back garden - please feel free to award me a title though!" As for her origins, she describes herself as a British Malaysian Indian - 40 years in Britain, born and bred in Malaysia and Indian ethnic origin.

Agnes' legal career followed next. She is a qualified Solicitor and has been a Senior Executive, General Counsel and Board Advisor. She read law at Cardiff University and did her Law Society finals at Guildford College of Law. Agnes completed her training contract with Geldards Solicitors, Cardiff and was retained as an Assistant Litigation Solicitor. She left private practice when she accepted an in house role as Senior Litigation Counsel within Nat West and later promoted to Manager of their Litigation department.

Following a merger, the business was acquired by Abbey National and she moved to London to manage the acquired portfolio, provide training and was subsequently promoted to Head of Specialist Litigation. Through another merger, the business was acquired by GE Capital. She successfully managed her first project of outsourcing the in house legal services. She was promoted to Head of Legal and became Client Relationship Manager, managing the panel law firms. She was also responsible for introducing and embedding GE Women's Network (GEWN) into the acquired business and subsequently became Regional GWEN Hub Leader. She represented her business at the Council of Mortgage Lenders and was Founder Chairperson of the Finance & Leasing Litigation Forum. Agnes reached the peak of her legal career when she was promoted to General Counsel of GE Capital.

Henry asked Agnes about the highlights of her legal career. She said there were many but one of significance is when she represented the Financial Services Industry on the Access to Justice Working Party on the Woolf Reforms. The review looked at the costs, accessibility and delay in the civil justice system. The resulting reforms were the most radical in 30 years and provided the landscape for the civil justice system for the 21st C. The other highlight was when she received the GE CEO Award presented to just 25 international GE employees for outstanding performance. This was an all expense paid 2 week

cruise on a privately chartered cruise ship for both her and her husband. The award itself was presented in an open air 'Oscar' type ceremony with the Mediterranean Sea as a backdrop!

Henry spotted a gap in the 'story' of about eight years. Agnes returned to her time when she was still in Malaysia and explained her first job was in Education as a Supply Teacher providing maternity cover. As always Agnes proved to be a great success and turned down a proposal to pursue a teaching career and wanted to travel to London. She took up nursing which appeared a secure way of setting down roots in London as a young adult abroad. Training involved theoretical study in the School of Nursing and practical training on the hospital wards. It was physically daunting, a challenge that Agnes rose to. She stayed the course and after three years qualified as a State Registered Nurse. She then undertook post qualification study of Midwifery and qualified as a State Certified Midwife. Within 8 years of qualifying, Agnes advanced from Staff Nurse to Ward Sister, Tutor at the School of Nursing, Examiner for the practical nursing exams and promoted to Nursing Officer. Having reached the pinnacle of nursing- a meteoric rise, she turned it down to pursue her lifelong ambition to be a lawyer.

Henry asked about her nursing highlights and Agnes felt honoured working with Sir Magdi Yacoub, the famous pioneering cardiothoracic surgeon who performed delicate heart valve replacement surgery with amazing flexibility and dexterity. During cardiothoracic surgeries, she saw the use of heart-lung machines and once witnessed open heart massage performed during cardiac arrest. One of many highlights of her midwifery training was witnessing the birth of quadruplets.

Henry then asked about her present third career. Agnes described it as a diverse 'portfolio career'. It includes being a Vice President member of Cardiff Business Club and Council and Committees Member of Cardiff University and recently recorded a Message of Support for the Graduating Class of 2020- "you are what you are because of the choices you make, make good choices and be the best in whatever you do." Agnes is also a Magistrate and was interviewed by the BBC on her role which was televised. She is a Member of Welsh Water and found the 'not for profit' ethos refreshing. She was very honoured when appointed Deputy Lieutenant of Gwent and recently appointed Director of Ffin Dance upon introduction by their patron.

Henry moved on to her Livery Company role, "Why the Welsh Livery Company?" Agnes explained her membership of the London Liveries, namely the City of London Solicitors and Arbitrators Livery as she is also an Accredited Mediator. She had to become a Freeman of the City of London prior to joining the Liveries. She was introduced to the Welsh Livery at a retired Solicitors lunch at the Cardiff & County Club. She was impressed by its aim of nurturing young Welsh talent through their Awards programme. Agnes is also a Court Assistant, Member of the Awards and GPC Committees and has led the revamp of the website, introduced a bilingual site and championed greater use of social media to promote the Livery.

Henry asked two further questions, "what do you miss in the current COVID situation and do you have any regrets?" Agnes replied "I miss social engagements and have "no regrets" but I wish my parents were still alive to share my journey." Henry responded that they would have been very proud of her.

Agnes thanked Henry, Liverymen and all guests (local and abroad) from all her areas of involvement.

The Master thanked Agnes and Henry for an excellent discussion and asked us all to charge our glasses and make a toast to "Liverymen and friends everywhere"



TALKING HEADS – PAST MASTER GEOFF HUGHES MBA Med BA CertEd



Senior Warden, Dr. Kathy Seddon, introduced the conversationalists. These were Immediate Past

Master **Geoff Hughes** MBA Med BA Cert Ed., former Governor of HM Prisons Belmarsh, Cardiff and Drake Hall, and Court Assistant **Andrew Board** former Chair of RSA Wales, VLV Trustee, BT Project Director and member of OFCOM Advisory Committee Wales. Another excellent evening began.

Andrew asked Geoff about his birthplace and schooling and Geoff told us that he was born and raised in Usk, attending a small junior school there before moving to Monmouth School. His father's first language was Welsh, Geoff regretted that Welsh was not spoken at home and so he is not a Welsh speaker.

Geoff then spoke about training to be a PE teacher. He said his choice of career came from a wish to "play rugby forever". He qualified as a teacher at Cardiff College of Education where his PE student contemporaries included six Welsh Internationals, who went on to be British Lions! These included John Bevan (who was only 19 when he was selected for the Lions) JJ Williams, Alan Martin, Roy Bergiers Brynmor Williams and Stuart Lane. Another contemporary was Colin Smart the English International. Geoff played club rugby for Bath, Newport, Pontypool and Cross Keys.

Andrew recounted how Geoff also scaled another height through rugby! He was a member of the sixty strong "Captain's Climb" team that set out to climb Mt Kilimanjaro. The group included 15 former Welsh rugby captains. They were responding to Huw Evans call to raise a million pounds to fight lung cancer. Huw was the WRU photographer and his wife Sue was being treated at Velindre Hospital.



"So how did you become a prison Governor?" Andrew asked. Geoff explained that his last three years in teaching had been spent at a "naughty boy's school", so he was already moving away from mainstream education. Geoff spoke about the direct entry scheme which saw him become an Assistant Governor. He

went on to detail how prisons in the UK are classified, following the Mountbatten report. This sought to simplify the system and prevent the worrying levels of "escapes".

Category A top security prisons, such as Belmarsh, house the most dangerous prisoners. There are eight in the UK. Prisoners in Category B institutions are serving long sentences and are still a danger. Category C prisons have walls or fence, but the prisoners are unlikely to try to escape, or to pose a danger if they do. 'Open prisons' are classed as category D, where prisoners won't try to escape and pose no threat.

Geoff spent four years on secondment to HM Inspectorate of Prisons reporting on the treatment of, and conditions for, prisoners. This was on behalf of two Chief Inspectors, Lord Ramsbotham and Dame Anne Owers. This involved leading teams on announced and unannounced visits to prisons throughout the country. When then offered the post of Governor of Belmarsh High Security Prison, Geoff wondered if those who had been criticised in his inspections thought that he deserved the challenge! Andrew asked about the prisoners and Geoff explained that Belmarsh housed 1000 prisoners, not only terrorists but also anyone sentenced at the Old Bailey, such as Jeffrey Archer.

He later moved to Drake Hall the open women's prison in Staffordshire where 150 prisoners had absconded in the year before he took up post. Discussing the proportion of offenders nationally that are women in prison, Andrew was surprised to hear that it is less than 5% of the total prison population. Geoff then returned to Wales as Governor of Cardiff Prison and his last post was Area Manager for the Prison Service in Wales

A Churchill Fellowship saw him travel to Sweden and Finland where he was struck by how cultural differences affect the penal systems. Geoff was surprised that every prison in Finland has access to a sauna which they considered normal. The Finns were however astonished, and thought it outrageous, that some UK Prisons had swimming pools.

Andrew asked what major reforms Geoff would make to the system and Geoff spoke about "life sentences" and "remand". If found guilty of murder the only sentence is life imprisonment, so an *Al-Qaeda* terrorist has the same sentence as an elderly, domestic murderer. The Judge then sets a tariff about the minimum length of the sentence to be served.

Geoff felt it would be sensible to have the sentence on the warrant reflecting the severity of the crime (rather than the tariff). In terms of the remand system someone who is remanded, in custody for six months, might be found innocent and have lost everything, with no compensation. If found guilty the time in remand would count as part of the sentence. Geoff felt that this was unjust and that it is not the case in other countries.

Turning to privatisation Geoff outlined that the private sector in the Prison Service is bound by contract to provide a specific service, they are inspected and fined if they failed to do this. He noted that Parc Prison, Bridgend provided good outcomes for prisoners.

Turning to the Livery Andrew asked what the highlights of his “Master’s Year” had been. Geoff described how much of an honour it had been to represent the WLCOW at many events and venues in London including Buckingham Palace and St. Paul’s Cathedral. He was proud of the financial turn-around he and his team effected from £8000 in the red to £9500 in the black. He had also very much enjoyed events like the Treorchy Male Voice Choir at St German’s Church. However, the highlight occurred during his Master’s ‘away weekend’ at Ypres. He laid a wreath at the Menin Gate at the “Last Post” Ceremony, which has occurred there since 1928. He was also asked to read the very moving exhortation taken from Laurence Binyon’s poem “For the Fallen”. In retirement Geoff became an Independent Member of the Lord Chancellor’s Advisory Committee for South Wales. He also works as a freelance Prison’s Consultant. Andrew asked about the prisons in the many countries that Geoff had visited. Geoff felt that the UK penal system compares favourably – otherwise he would not be asked to visit as a consultant! Detailing some of the more troubling experiences Geoff spoke about Mongolia where the very militaristic guards inspired terror in the prisoners. Andrew outlined Geoff’s involvement as Chairman of the South Wales Fire and Rescue Service Standards Committee. Geoff added that he also lectures part time on Prison Studies at Universities of South Wales, Bangor, Aberystwyth and, next year, at Chester. Geoff is also a Liveryman of the Haberdashers’ Company. More recently, Geoff has had yet another career as a guest speaker for Cunard and P&O on their cruise ships all around the world. He said that retirement is tough!!

Andrew thanked Geoff and handed back to the Master, Peter Coleman who thanked Geoff for an

interesting and illuminating evening, He thanked Andrew for “aiding and abetting” him. The Master concluded by asking everyone to raise a glass to the Worshipful Livery Company of Wales and Liverymen everywhere.

TALKING HEADS
COURT ASSISTANT, PROFESSOR
JOHN SOLBÉ MBE DSc RETIRED



Liverymen and guests joined us for the fourth in the most enjoyable ‘Talking Heads’ series. The Senior Warden introduced the evening’s conversationalists, Professor John Solbé and Noel Hulmston. John is the secretary of the WLCOW North Wales Committee.

He is a retired ecotoxicologist and a distinguished author in his field. He is a member and former chair of the North Wales branch of the Royal Society of Biology. John is the Head Steward of the North Wales International Music Festival and he is also a steward at St Asaph Cathedral, John was in conversation with Liveryman Noel Hulmston who has had three very successful careers. He worked in the Magistrates Courts Service and was the Principal Administrator to The West Cheshire Courts. Subsequently he became a well-respected lymphoedema practitioner and in recent years his love of the environment has seen him lead exciting expeditions to a wide range of locations Noel was a very successful chair if the Welsh Association of Churchill Fellows

Noel took us back to the beginning and asked John about his early life. John was born in Tetbury in 1941. Their House in Birmingham was damaged by a landmine and so the move to the Cotswolds for his birth was made. A further move was then made to South Devon and John fondly remembered the rock pools and “Nature Parliaments” on Children’s hour as

early influences. A sea mine blow up against the cliff below their house (which was undamaged) and a third mine floated onto the beach! In 1952 the family moved Somerset – to the Quantocks. John's first school was in Chard and he attended Dr Morgan's Grammar School in Bridgwater followed by Cardiff University for an Honours Zoology Degree. This was where he met Rosie - at his first lecture!

Noel asked, “*so after University – what came next?*” John had looked at a career in forensic science but there were no vacancies in 1963. Therefore, John accepted a post studying “*population dynamics of earthworms in sewage percolating filters*” at DSIR Water Pollution Research Lab from 1963 to 69. John explained his findings about the fine balance in sewage percolating beds ecosystems. (He later mentioned that the half-life of organics in such systems was only 11 minutes.) Noel noted that by 1970 John was studying fish in polluted rivers and he asked how ecotoxicology came into this, John outlined how ecotoxicology is the study of “*the fate effects and pathways of chemicals – their biodegradation, partitioning, bioaccumulation and toxicity*” John was working in less heavily damaged systems and he derived an index of water quality to “guarantee” safety for fish. He helped Ron Edwards (later UWIST) and Morlais Owens (later WNWDA) working on the oxygen balance in rivers. Fisheries Research was always central to John's work. “*Fish will always tell you what is going on!*” Whilst at the Atlantic Salmon Trust he wrote their ‘Blue Book’ “*Water Quality for Salmon and Trout*” that had widespread press coverage, including a BBC interview with Alex Kirby. John commented that Salmon are not perfect at homing and their wanderlust allows flexibility and survival if their home is destroyed.

In terms of ‘next steps’ Noel asked how Unilever came into the story. John described how they identified his potential to run their Environmental Group (part of the Safety and Environmental Advisory Centre). John was obviously a top scientist, but he also had the required management skills having transferred all the WPRL and WRC staff to Water Industry Terms and Conditions of Service. He stayed with Unilever until retirement at 60 in 2001, gaining a DSc and MBE during those years

John described how he then became a consultant, visiting 34 countries, teaching ecotoxicology and environmental protection. Noel noted that John had a knack of being in interesting places at interesting times. John agreed and told us about chairing a meeting in the Reichstag and watching the Berlin Wall

coming down and his amusement at the instant acquisition of capitalist ways as use was made of multiple prams and children for the available handouts. John was also in Pretoria on the day that the Truth and Reconciliation Committee published its report – bumping him from a TV interview.

Answering Noel's question about the interesting people he had met John detailed his work on the House of Lord's conservation Committee with Lord Crichton, Lord Nugent and Baroness White. He met Prince Charles on half a dozen occasions, most recently when he came with Camilla to celebrate the city status in St Asaph Cathedral in 2012 and in November that year when the Prince visited again after the devastating floods. The most fun time was when the Prince brought Queen Margrethe of Denmark and Prince Henrik to Unilever for an explanation about sewage treatment and ecotoxicology. John also met the Princess Royal (DSc) the Queen (MBE) and King Baudouin of Belgium - and his chic lady bodyguards.

Noel probed further about John's role in St Asaph Cathedral and John detailed his 13 years as head steward. Working with Rosie, he still organises the Cathedral Volunteers. They both also volunteer at RSPB Conwy, initiating prize winning environmental improvements. Noel concluded their dialogue by asking “*If you could wave a magic wand to improve water quality – what would you do*” John felt that in Urban areas storm sewage was a great problem and providing large scale storage to moderate flow would be very beneficial - if possible. In Rural areas a solution would be to create buffer zones – rich in biodiversity – to reduce contamination from the economically required monoculture for food production.

The fascinating evening ended with a vote of thanks from the Master who noted the depth of talent among liverymen. We then raised our glasses in a toast to “*Liverymen wherever they may be*”