



VIEWPOINT



Dennis Surgeon
Master
London

February is month of feast and debate

A busy few weeks for the Fruiterers featured several livery banquets, the much-loved pancake races and a thought-provoking City Food Lecture

Last month I reported on the first seven days as Master, which was a week of gently easing into the role. The past 28 days have been somewhat more intense but equally enjoyable.

There tends to be affiliations and associations between certain livery companies forged over the years through common interests or motivations. Fruiterers and Gardeners are two such bodies. It was a privilege to be a guest at the Gardeners' Banquet held at Mansion House on 8 February. Principal guests were the Lord and Lady Mayoress and Master World Trader and Master Wax Chandler. Inter-

Our own banquet was held in Mansion House on 16 February. The Lord Mayor locum tenens, Sir David Wootton and Lady Wootton along with the High Commissioner for Australia were our principal guests. It was made all the sweeter for me personally to have 28 family and friends in attendance during the evening.

Following a Ward Council on 21 February, Past Master Cryan had arranged a visit to the Mayor's Court in Guildhall. After formal affairs had been completed he provided us with a history of the court, and its duties and responsibilities.

The City Food Lecture was first held 16 years ago. Originally conceived by the Fruiterers, it now embraces the joint, concentrated attention and efforts of the main food livery companies. Held at Guildhall on 21 February, it appears to gain in stature with each passing year. The title of the lecture for 2017 was 'Does it matter where food comes from?' Penned by Chris Elliott, a professor of food safety and a founder of the Institute for Food Security at Queen's University Belfast, it was delivered in his absence by Michael Bell, executive director of the Northern Ireland Food and Drink Association. It was a very competent performance by the author's stand in and touched upon many important issues surrounding the subject. It was my pleasure to be given the task of looking after Margaret Mountford, TV personality and panel chairman.

Shrove Tuesday is traditionally marked with the making and consum-

ing of pancakes. More recently it has become a fun occasion for those livery companies that have associations with the tradition. Started by the Poulters, the Fruiterers' *raison d'être* is of course the lemons. On the day a series of four races are held in the square of Guildhall: Masters, liverymen, ladies and fancy dress. Each company is issued with distinctive racing colours (cardboard top hats) that have to be worn while racing to and from a lane marker. As an extra handicap the run-



estingly, as a first for the venue, a steel band provided the musical accompaniment, made up of players from the Sir John Cass Street Orchestra.

The Corporation of The City of London is responsible for the wholesale markets that have historically been attached to the square mile: Borough, Billingsgate, Smithfield and Spitalfields. Every year, in February the chairman of the Markets' Committee hosts a dinner. Sitting next to the chairman of the Transport Committee, Christopher Hayward, I learnt more about London in two and a half hours than I have over my lifetime. Along with the Master Butcher and Fishmonger we were there to represent the three livers of wholesaling practised in the markets.



ners have to carry a frying pan with a pancake that has to be tossed during the race. Complicated? Yes, but a lot of fun which raises funds for charity. There are so many entrants these days that the races are run in heats, ending with the winners from the preliminaries competing in a final. —FPI



LEFT—Master and wardens at Mansion House
RIGHT—Pancake races at Guildhall