

The Fruiterers' Company NEWSLETTER



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Editor: Eric Williams

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'We are all involved' says Master

DETERMINATION to make the Fruiterers' Company more widely known and appreciated not only in the fruit industry but in the City, is the inspiration behind this year's programme of our new Master, Tony Coster.

"We have a long and unique association with the fruit industry in our capital city, and it is only proper that we should maintain our role in an industry which makes such a vital contribution to our national well-being," he says.

"During my year I want to build on the tremendous success which Norman Sheldon, our Immediate Past Master, achieved last year.

"He was a splendid ambassador for the Company, representing us at more than 45 separate functions outside the Livery—in addition to 28 functions of our own.

"He over-saw all the day-to-day decisions of the Company, which are considerable, as I now appreciate.

"I receive daily correspondence from the Clerk, so I understand more clearly the workload involved.

Appeal

"Norman has also instigated an appeal for the Fruit Culture Trust, which deserves the support of every member of the Livery. We want to appeal to some of the large companies in horticulture and food. We need to raise money to encourage research and education in the fruit industry. But how can we honestly approach outside organisations until we have achieved substantial commitment from our own members? We have established close links with East Malling Institute of Horticultural Research, and we need to develop these for the benefit of our industry," Tony Coster declares.

The administrative load borne by the Clerk, too, is one of our Master's concerns. The Clerk has now been provided with a micro-computer, which he is learning to operate. "I have no doubt that this will help ease his burdens and still further improve our efficiency.

Expanding the Livery is another target. "We need to encourage people of prominence and standing both in and out of the industry to take an interest in our traditions and activities and help develop awareness of the Fruiterers' Company and what it stands for.

"I shall take every opportunity this year of speaking up for the Company. I was very pleased to be invited as the guest of honour to the annual banquet on April 16 of the Produce Packaging and Marketing Association at the end of their Stratford-Upon-Avon conference.

"I took this opportunity of telling several hundred industry representatives prominent in fresh produce marketing, something about the Fruiterers' history, its industry role over the centuries and its determination to play some significant part in industry affairs today."

He continued: "We can do this through our developing communications and good public relations, through personal contact and by encouraging good people—particularly younger people—to come into the Livery and play their part in our affairs.



Norman Sheldon, retiring Master, clothes Antony Coster, the new Master at the January Court meeting.

"There is an important need to increase our revenue. As we are not a richly-endowed Company we have to pay our way—and this can only come about through our own efforts.

"Finally a plea to all members: If you have any suggestions or complaints about the way in which the

Company manages its affairs, any ideas as to what we should be doing but aren't please write to me or the Wardens or the Clerk and we will do something about it—including a reply to your letters! After all, the Fruiterers' Company is the concern of every member of the Livery, and we are all involved," he declares.

Bishop's attack

UNDER the high gilded dome of St Paul's Cathedral, with sunlight playing among the cornices and columns, several thousand members of the City's guilds gathered for the annual United Service on March 25 and heard a robust attack on "Our Godless society" in today's Britain.

It was made by the Rt. Rev. Bill Westwood, Bishop of Peterborough, giving the sermon at the 45th annual service—first held in 1943 during the trials of wartime London.

Bishop Westwood pointed out that what was done in London today was followed in the cities and towns the day after, and in the villages the day after that.

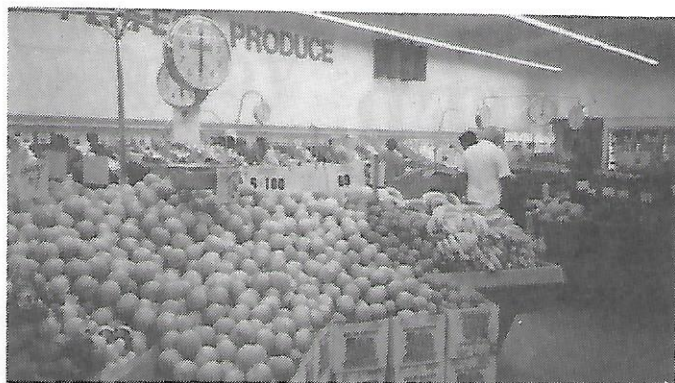
"I have seen the future—and I don't like it," he stated. "If you have no respect for

God you have no respect for his Creation, and you have no respect for human beings, families—and ourselves."

He emphasised that the Church needed to give a strong lead to the country: to speak out against injustice and wrong in today's world.

The media came under scathing attack for ignoring and debasing moral standards and for intruding into personal privacy. Of faltering standards in our business and commercial lives, he declared: "We only deserve to be in business if we are struggling to do business by the most just and honourable standards."

More than 30 members of the Livery with wives and guests enjoyed an informal lunch afterwards at Hudsons' club, in Walker House, in nearby Queen Victoria Street.



At least 90 different varieties and lines of fruit and vegetables.

California's bounty

CALIFORNIA can reasonably claim to be America's fruit and salad bowl. Within its generous latitudes enjoying the blessing of hospitable climate and productive soil, it seems to grow an enormously wide range of fruit and vegetables. And if the season isn't right or ripe, then in comes the produce from the south to fill the supermarket shelves.

In the bright airy store where we did most of our

shopping during a February stay in California, I counted 90 different lines of fruit and vegetables. The comparison with the UK shopping pound was worth recording.

White seedless grapes from Chile were offered at 56p a pound, with nectarines just in at 40p

There were good ripe avocados at 22p each and locally-grown kiwi fruit at 10p (an indication of increasing production, surely). Oranges were offered at 4 lbs. for a dollar (14p per lb.) with Red Delicious apples from Washington State at 22p per lb. They had been as high as 50p—"we knock the price down if we have lots in to sell," explained the salesman.

On the veg. side there were excellent potatoes at 4p per lb., onions at 18p and large firm tomatoes at 40p. Washed carrots—not a speck of soil—were in decorative bunches at 14p per lb., and small iceberg lettuce were offered at 40p. Cauliflowers were priced at 45p, together with peas, but mushrooms at £1.30 seemed highly priced—although of excellent quality. At the shelves near the check-out was a new health food line: apple chips. These looked much like potato chips except they were crisp, dry apple slices—and nothing but.

There were packets of Red Delicious. "They've only been in for a couple of weeks and they're selling very well," said the girl at the check-out.

American supermarkets pack all your groceries in large brown paper sacks (they don't charge 4p for a plastic carrier when you've spent £50), insist on wheeling your trolley load to the car boot, where it is transferred with a smile and the inevitable "Thanks—have a nice day".

And they all seem to mean it—certainly in California.

E. W.

Old folk's help

FOR three years past the Company has maintained a friendly link with The Gardeners' Royal Benevolent Society, on whose council our Master sits.

The Society was founded in 1939 to help elderly retired gardeners and their widows. Today it has nearly 400 pensioners on its books and a residential home at Henfield in West Sussex, which cares for up to 50 retired gardeners, their wives or widows.

Sheltered accommodation is also provided by 20 flats at Henfield, and other bungalows at Barton in Cambridgeshire.

Pensions, grants to relieve hardship, and holidays are also provided.

"The Society does a wonderful job and I am very pleased that the Fruiterers' Company is able to help in its management," Tony Coster says.

What we do for charity

FROM the time of their first formation in pre-Conquest times, the Guilds of the City of London have been concerned to care, not only for their own Liverymen and families but also for the needy in general. Many, for example, have used their accumulated wealth to establish schools which to this day are among the most respected in the country.

The Fruiterers' Company, though undoubtedly very ancient, did not have these resources, but the records—though incomplete—would indicate that the Livery throughout its history has been concerned to promote efficiency in the production and distribution of fruit. Since the War, the Court has put the charitable work of the Company on a sounder and more permanent footing—a necessary change to cope with the increasing complexity of tax law.

Three main charitable funds have been established. The first, and oldest, is the Charitable Trust which provides a fund for general charitable support of the needy, and is often used at the discretion of the Master or Court to assist worthy causes espoused by the Lord Mayor or other City institutions. Contributions from the Livery to this fund are always welcome—though they are not my concern at this time.

The Company's support for education and research associated with the fruit industry depends on two separate but closely related registered charities. The Fruit Culture Fund is designed to receive bequests and other substantial donations in order progressively to build up a capital sum, and thus provide an assured annual

How does the Fruiterers' Company do this? What claim is this organised? What claim make on each us in the Livery?
Norman Sheldon, Immediate

income. This is a long-term project, but the fund is growing and will hopefully in time become the main source of our support. For many years yet, however, our effort will depend on the generosity of Liverymen giving on an annual basis. These contributions are paid into the other charity, 'The Fruit Culture Trust', and are applied forthwith.

The funds available from both charities are administered by the Fruit Culture Council, chaired by a member of the Court—at present Past Master Donald Mack—and comprising suitably qualified members both from within and outside the Livery. It is they who decide which projects to back and to whom to award the prestigious prizes offered by the Company.

Projects

Although it need not necessarily be so, much of the work of the Company has been associated with East Malling Research Station, now part of the Institute of Horticultural Research, and it is there that the Council meets. Projects have covered a wide field, designed to improve the efficiency of production and the quality of the fruit. Often, by making grants to sandwich-course or postgraduate students, it has been possible simultaneously to assist in their education and tackle new research projects. I, and the members of the Livery who visited East Malling last

Ensuring perfect fruit



any support charities? How does this charitable giving

ate Past Master, explains.

September were most impressed, both by the achievements so far and for the need for greater effort on our Company's part. This is the more so since Government grants have been cut. I hope that it will be possible to organise visits by other supporters of our charities over a period of time.

Covenants

The appeals which I have made over the past year have resulted in many more of the Livery contributing towards the Company's charitable work, but much more remains to be done. Every member of the Livery should assist to the best of his ability. Liverymen who make donations should enter into covenants. Their fears are quite misplaced, and their signature alone could increase the value of their subscription by 33%. Older Liverymen, worried about the effects of inflation or a deterioration in their health, are sometimes reluctant to enter into any commitment. An interest-free loan or a bequest would often enable them to give the support that they would like to give, while maintaining their security against the unknown risk.

At the request of the Master, and with the help of Honorary Assistants and a committee which I am in the process of forming, I hope to explore all these avenues. Meanwhile, all those Liverymen who feel that they can play a more important part, should get in touch with me direct.

AS WE pluck a peach, savour a fresh strawberry, pick a ripe plum or cast an apprehensive eye on an unknown exotic in the fruit bowls at our banquets and dinners, give a thought as to how the selection is made.

There has been recent renewed interest in the Fruiterers' Company's fruit bowls—and increased appreciation of the quality we enjoy with our guests.

Past Master Ron Starns has been reviewing the channels of supply, selection and preparation.

It's not an easy task. And there are professionally critical palates poised over the dessert plates!

"We offer the most popular fruit like the after-dinner Cox and Comice pear, with bananas, peaches, small, easy-peeling citrus such as clementines (not oranges, which are rather too large), and one looks for bite-size fruit of high appeal," Ron explains.

"We tried this year at the banquet, for instance, to create interest with Sharon fruit or persimmons (from Israel in January), passion fruit, Cape peaches, kiwi fruit, South African lychees, grapes from South America, Cape

clementines, apricots and plums, mangoes, star fruits and physalis or Cape gooseberry.

Remember the small, hard, egg-shaped fruit with yellow skins which caused a certain curious concern at this year's banquet?

They were Tamirillos, sometimes known as tree tomatoes—native to South America but now grown in many tropical and sub-tropical countries. Our supplies came from Southern Spain. Their vitamin C content is even higher than oranges.

How do we select our fruit?

Ron explains again: "The fruit must come to the table properly ripened, so we went to a catering and hotel supplier used to conditioning fruit.

"Home Grown Fruit were also very helpful in ensuring

perfect conditioning of the Cox and Comice. And this year we had the services of Nobby Price, our fruit porter, and his assistant, Steve Prentice, who ensured that the fruit was delivered on time and who made up the baskets during the afternoon."

Have you noticed a single pineapple ('The Fruit of Kings—the King of Fruits') perched on display at the top table as part of the centre display?

It's an old tradition in the Fruiterers' Company. It travels home with the Master afterwards to be enjoyed at leisure.

● *Editor's note: Would members of the Livery be interested in a series of Newsletter notes on some of the fruit we are now finding in our greengrocers'?*

Inter-Livery shoot

KEEN shots among the Livery are warmly invited to offer themselves for the team competing in the Inter-Livery clay pigeon shoot, again to be held at Holland & Holland's shooting school at Northwood on Wednesday, May 18.

The organiser, Dr. John Garham, of the Farriers

Company, explains that the proceeds will go to charity, and hopes that each Company will enter a team or teams of four guns each.

There will be several stands simulating driven partridge, high pheasant, rising teal and so on, which will be shot individually, and all four guns will take part in a barrage of clays from high towers.

Family and guests will again be welcome but there will be a separate charge for their refreshments.

Diary dates

DON'T FORGET these dates for your diary:

The **Golf Day** on Thursday, May 5, at Kingswood Golf Club, Surrey;

The **Inter-Livery Clay Pigeon Shoot** on Wednesday, May 18;

The **Audit Court dinner** at the Butchers Hall on Thursday, May 19;

Visit to **Hatfield House** with ladies, luncheon and tea on Wednesday June 15.

New members

THREE new members of the Livery were clothed at the Court of Assistants on Monday, January 25.

They were **Norman Coppock**, a bank manager; **Bernard Marshall** and **Lawrence Olins**, both of whom are in fresh produce distribution.

Meet the Beadle

ALL of us have seen Paul Marsh, leading a Fruiterers' procession, helping at Court or some other function, may well wonder what this tall and perpetually smiling figure does for the rest of his time.

Very simple: Paul is a professional Beadle, at present serving four City Companies, including ourselves.

At 59, he looks back on a career which began when he was a boy arriving at the Innholders' Hall in 1934 where his father was caterer and Beadle—also becoming Beadle of the Fruiterers, whom he served for more than 20 years.

When Paul's father died in 1972, Paul took over with his wife, June, as the butler responsible—among other duties—for laying all the silver up in the Hall.

All of us who dine at the Innholders' are always impressed not only by the quality of food, but by the table settings.

"When 85 people sit down



to dine, there are more than 1,000 pieces of cutlery to be laid, collected—and accounted for," Paul explains. "Not to mention all the plates and glasses!"

In addition to the Innholders' and Fruiterers', Paul acts also as Beadle to the Blacksmiths and Cooks, and claims to be London's busiest Beadle.

He and June take great pride in their Hall's history. Henry VIII, who gave the Company its original charter, would have enjoyed dining there as much as we do for sure!

Company plays its part

THE INVOLVEMENT of the Fruiterers' Company in the life of the industry was underlined by the Master at the annual banquet held in the Merchant Taylors' Hall on January 26. Welcoming the Lord Mayor of London, Sir Greville Spratt, and Sheriffs, Tony Coster stated: "The Fruiterers' Company makes regular awards for fruit excellence, exemplified by the Ridley Medal for distinguished service to fruit growing, which will next be awarded in January, 1990, and the Lewis Award for distinguished service to the marketing of fresh fruit, which will be presented next in January, 1989.

Awards

"In addition awards are made to students at selected universities and colleges who have shown particular merit in the study of fruit culture. The Company is very much concerned with the improvement of efficiency in the fruit industry in terms of education and research into improved methods of fruit growing, producing higher crop yield, coupled with the maintenance of visual attractiveness and flavour of the fruit, and the minimisation—and even eradication of disease where this is possible—and improvement in methods of storing."

He continued: "This work is carried out through the Fruit Culture Trust, which was created in 1980 for this express purpose. Since the commencement of the Trust many projects have received the benefit of our financial support. These include an extensive Bramley Trial project on the influence of modern production systems on fruit quality, and a project investigating modified atmosphere packaging of apples and pears.

"At the present time the projects being carried out include an investigation into the effect of the weather on the yield of Cox apples, for which the Fruiterers' Company has

supported a construction of a mobile glasshouse which can be used to simulate different weather conditions. In the near future it is also intended that research will be conducted in connection with the rates of moisture loss in apples and pears in relation to market strategy and store design, and a number of other projects of a technical nature," he stated.

He emphasised the range of produce available for British families. "We are very fortunate in this country to have a superb range of fruits, which come from most parts of the world for the greater part of the year, with more and more varieties becoming available all the year round. We all

know that apples, oranges and bananas are available constantly and, to a lesser extent, strawberries and raspberries, which are imported from different parts of the world at different times of the year, but how delightful it is to see and to be able to enjoy a steadily expanding range of the less commonplace and even exotic fruits, some of whose names I find—being a mere insurance man—to be quite unpronounceable!"

He continued: "At the present time, for example, there are no less than 18 different varieties of home-grown apple commercially available in this country, apart

from apples which are imported from 16 other countries, and the imports, together with our own home-grown produce, which these days is stored under closely-monitored conditions, provide us with year-round fresh fruit. This is just a brief glimpse of the fruit industry at work, and this is something which we are justly proud. It is a tribute to the importers, marketing experts, distributors and retailers, both on the specialist side and the supermarkets, that this should not only be possible but that this fruit should be available to the consumer at an affordable price after, in many cases, so many miles of travel."



Before the banquet: (left to right) Upper Warden David Hope-Mason, Mrs. Mal Hope-Mason; Master Antony Coster, Mrs. Helen Coster, and Renter Warden Sir Edward Du Cann.

Full turn-out for Golf Day

THE FRUITERERS' Golf Society is in full swing, so to speak, following the success of the Golf Day on May 5 last at Selsdon Park Hotel, Sandstead, and a full turn-out is expected for this year's event on May 5.

Society President Ralph Felton is looking forward to greeting all players at Kingswood Golf Club, conveniently situated near the A217, within a few miles of the M25.

To encourage all playing standards, there will be two divisions in the competition, which will be played as a full

handicap Stapleford.

Tee-off will be at 9. a.m., and play will be followed by lunch and prizegiving.

Non-players are welcome to join the Master and the players for a general walkabout before lunch and the prizegiving.

It is hoped that a party of some 40 people will be sitting down to lunch, followed by the presentation of prizes. Last year's winner Pip Arnold (handicap of six) is again strongly tipped to top this year's scores although there are strong challenges (the Clerk is coming out of retirement to take part!).

"We're looking forward to another very successful day not only in terms of good golfing scores but as an enjoyable social occasion," says Past Master Robert Sice, Joint Secretary with Hon. Assistant David Hohnen.

"In addition to golf we hope there will be a table or two of bridge, and if the day fulfils its promise, we may well organise other events during the season.

"Anyhow we are being warmly welcomed to Kingswood—particularly as Liveryman Tom Hilliard owns the Course!"