

MASTER'S REPORT TO THE ANNUAL ASSEMBLY St Bartholomew the Great, 24TH March 2004

It was an honour to take over from Sir Rowland Whitehead Bt at the end of September 2003 as the fourth Master of the Guild of Public Relations Practitioners and I thank for his continuing support as Deputy Master.

This is the first time the Guild has held an Annual Assembly, or Common Hall as it is called in some Livery companies. It seemed a timely moment to begin a new Guild tradition, since this is the half-way point of the Master's year and the Guild is approaching its fourth anniversary in June.

The purpose of our assembly is to review the Guild's progress to date, outline the Court's future plans and give all members the opportunity to contribute ideas, comments and questions. It is also a chance for Freemen to meet informally and get to know each other better, for promoting good fellowship is one of our core purposes.

The Master's report is intended as an overview of the Guild's activities, which will be reported on in more detail by committee chairmen, and I will also offer a personal perspective on the role of the Guild and the challenges it faces.

Administration

My aim at the start of the year was to ensure that the basic infrastructure and processes were put in place that would enable the Guild to grow and prosper. The first significant action was the appointment in October 2003 of our **new Clerk**, Mrs. Gaynor Lintott.

The Guild had been most fortunate to have the expert assistance and guidance of Philip Willoughby on a largely voluntary basis for the previous two years. However, his own commitments, including becoming Master of the Clockmakers, and the Guild's growing administrative needs made it necessary to seek the services of a new part-time Clerk. Gaynor's arrival and dedication have transformed our administration and I hope we will soon be able to afford to pay her for all the time she is putting into Guild – as, I am sure, does she!

Our next priority was to create an **efficient database**, which is essential for a membership organisation to function effectively. We did not have this but now we do, with few gaps left to fill. We can now say with confidence that we have

Total number of Freemen (at 24 March)	89	
Approved and awaiting freedom	<u>8</u>	97
Outstanding prospects (awaiting application papers)	48	

Progress against core Objectives

Membership

The Chairman of the Membership Committee, Tim Halford, will report plans for a **membership drive**, which will be greatly helped by having a **recruitment leaflet**, just hot off the press. It sets out the objectives of the Guild, reasons for joining and the application process. We hope all members will use this to encourage suitable friends and colleagues to become members of the Guild. Boosting our active membership, particularly among senior practitioners with the experience and influence to help achieve our charitable and educational aims, is critical to our success and financial stability. If every Freeman introduced two new members, we would almost achieve our target membership and triple our income.

Education

The Court has been considering how best the Guild could fulfil its educational objectives by contributing to professional education or training without duplicating work done by the IPR and PRCA. After consultation, the Court asked the Education Committee to develop a **mentoring scheme** that would take advantage of the experience of Guild members to the benefit of practitioners across the sector. The committee has devised a protocol for such a scheme, which the Guild is now ready to launch and chairman Peter Rose will explain this under his report.

Charity

The most important objective of the Guild is to raise money for charity, initially by building the funds of our Charitable Trust. This is necessary for two reasons: to create a fund from which charitable disbursements may be made and to support our progress from Guild to Livery Company. The accumulation of a minimum level of charity funds is one of the key requirements of the Court of Aldermen.

However, potential donors and fund-raisers are more motivated by the needs of named charities whose beneficiaries they can identify than those of a Trust that will eventually make grants but is currently building its funds. The Charitable Developments Committee has therefore put forward a **charitable development policy**, which was approved by the Court today. More details will be reported under the Committee's report but the important point is that it acknowledges the priority to build the Trust's funds and at the same time points to ways in which the Guild will raise funds for named charities.

Fund-raising has already begun on a small scale with two very successful **Quiz nights** held already and third coming up shortly. Apart from raising much needed funds, these events have the huge benefit of extending the Guild's reach to young practitioners who are not members.

Communications

Cobbler's children! We haven't done as much as we should to raise the Guild's profile but, to be fair and in line with best practice, we have been concentrating on doing the right thing first and getting our content and substance right before talking about it.

That phase is now over and getting the website properly and regularly updated is now a priority, as is the regular issue of a Guild newsletter to keep members abreast of developments. Carol Friend has taken on responsibility for Communications and will bring us up to date under her report.

Finance

As you will from the Accounts, our financial situation is far from satisfactory. However, we can report considerable **progress in collecting quarterage** from the membership, with £11,850 revenue being collected to date since 1st October 2003 compared with some £7,565 for the previous year and £3,890 the year before that. The alleged membership base was much the same every year! However, it is a matter of regret that **25** members have still not paid their quarterage which was due in October, a shortfall of over **£4,300** in income.

In addition to improving collection, over the last 12-18 months, all **Guild events have made a surplus** albeit small, which has helped to alleviate the operating deficit. To further increase income, and in line with common Livery practice, the Court will in

future apply a **system of fines** – an odd but traditional Livery term for the sum that is payable by the Master, Wardens and Court Assistants for the privilege of taking office.

Despite these advances, operating income is barely sufficient to cover essential costs, including adequate remuneration of the Clerkship, administrative costs and deposits on major functions place a strain on cash flow. Members of the Court bear all expenses involved in supporting Guild and Livery functions and have each made a modest, voluntary personal loan but this is a temporary and unsatisfactory solution.

A larger membership base combined with sponsorship income is needed to enable the Guild is to administer its education and charitable development plans. In due course, we also hope to fund new initiatives such as an annual lecture, to commission a coat of arms, and to play a fuller part in the Livery by extending reciprocal invitations to guests of other Guilds and Livery Companies.

In summary

Milestones in recent months that are evidence of the Guild's progress:

- More efficient administration
- A reliable membership database
- New recruitment leaflet and plans for a membership drive
- Finalised proposal for a mentoring scheme
- A Charitable Developments Policy to underpin fund-raising plans
- The beginnings of wider outreach such as through Quiz nights
- Increasing income from better collection of quarterage and from fines, and Guild events returning a surplus instead of deficit.

Playing our part in Livery life

Most of what I have reported so far is inward looking, largely because getting our own house in order and establishing sound policies and infrastructure for the years ahead has been the priority.

However, the Guild is already beginning to play its part in Livery life through its own calendar and participation at various events. The dinner at Mansion House was very successful and well attended, by members and their guests. At the Installation Dinner in September, we heard an inspiring and seminal speech on the role of public relations and its practitioners in the City from Ron Sandler, author of the Sandler report to the Treasury and former chief executive of Lloyds of London.

In January, **Alderman** Sir Gavyn Arthur, Lord Mayor in 2002-3 and our sponsoring Alderman, joined members for an informal supper. There was a lively question and answer session covering the Guild, the City and insights into the fascinating and awesomely busy year of office of the Lord Mayor.

As Master of the Guild, I have attended several functions including Benefactors' events at St. Bartholomew the Great; the annual IoD lunch at the Mansion House as a guest of one of our members Tricia Topping; the annual Rivers Lecture of the **Worshipful Company** of **Chartered** Secretaries and Administrators as a guest of the Clerk; and (tomorrow) the Lord Mayor's banquet for Masters and Prime Wardens at the Mansion House. On Friday, several Court members will attend the annual United Guild's Service at St. Paul's.

A highlight was a visit in February with the Lord Mayor and Masters of 30 companies to the Treloar Trust's school and college for disabled young people. Their work is

outstanding and it was humbling and inspiring to see the extraordinary ways in which severely disabled young people manage to cope with their disabilities, acquire an education and some measure of independence.

The Lord Mayor's visit to Treloar takes place every year and of course has a fund-raising purpose. The Guild does not have funds to give but I did offer our support, as a result of which I spent a couple of hours this week with the heads of marketing and fund-raising talking about their forthcoming centenary appeal. They have asked for access to advice from the Guild on specific aspects of this project and agreed, in so doing, to help us pilot a pro bono scheme.

What these events have revealed is the real value and importance of representatives of the Guild participating in as many City events as possible. It is the key way to fulfil that purpose of the Guild, which is to raise the profile of public relations in the City and demonstrate its central role in its business and community life. It has also helped me to understand why we should be committed to progressing to Company and Livery status as soon as practicable – because it enables us to play an even fuller part.

I end this report with sincere thanks to my fellow Wardens and Court Assistants and to the members of our committees, who have been so supportive in the drive to clarify our strategies and get active programmes up and running. And, once again, we thank our Clerk, Mrs. Gaynor Lintott, and also the Honorary Treasurer, Tony Peck for maintaining a supervisory eye over our financial administration.

As a result of everyone's efforts, the Guild can now offer practitioners a variety of mechanisms through which they can 'give back' to our own and the wider community. I hope all Freemen will participate actively, each in your own way, and feel a renewed confidence in advocating membership to all practitioners who value the profession and the contribution it can make to society.

Rosemary Brook FIPR
Master