

The Feltmaker



The Magazine of the Worshipful Company of Feltmakers Winter 2023 Master: Lt. Col. Simon Wilkinson, TD, DL Issue No. 47

The Master's Address

I am humbled by the great honour of being installed as Master Feltmaker. My family has very close links with the hatting industry. My great grandfather was a partner in Hucklesby's of Luton from the late 1800s through to the 1920s. In the 1921 census, eight of his siblings were described as milliners, straw plait workers or hat-making equipment salesmen. My father, too, was a Feltmaker and my daughters, Stephanie and Estelle, are on their way to becoming Liverymen. How proud my ancestors would be at this continuity. Obviously, this honour you bestow on me has real meaning. My consort, Cathryn and I are looking forward to a magical year and I am delighted to have her by my side and, of course, putting me right!

I must thank immediate Past Master, Neil Edwards, for his great leadership through the last year and his support and encouragement to me and our Wardens. You brought rugby to the heart of your year and a lot of fun and enjoyment. Not too many rucks, perhaps a few difficult tackles, some tries but wins all season. Neil, it's no exaggeration to say you are a big man to follow!

Thank you, Alistair, for your fine speech tonight. Your humanitarian passion and integrity are qualities we should all strive to achieve in our own lives. You are truly and genuinely a good man, who has demonstrated through your actions the highest standards of the British Army Officer. What a role model. Thank you for your service.



In my year I am keen to drive three key themes:

To encourage the recruitment of new liverymen, younger, more diverse and ethnically broader people who want to 'make their way in life' - through friendship and participation with fellow liverymen. We must



challenge ourselves to reflect wider society and yet hold on fiercely to our traditions and standards that make our Worshipful Company so special and widely respected. Secondly, fun! Yes, I want us to have fun.

Encouraging active participation is key to our 'club', we must provide interesting, exciting, informative and relevant events and opportunities for us to meet and develop our friendships, especially with so many new members - apprentices, freemen and liverymen - we want everyone to feel welcome. We don't want to be a stuffy, anachronistic and crusty group of (largely middle-aged) men, but a lively, receptive and engaging group of interesting people who have life experience and knowledge, to help newer and younger members learn our ways and traditions, to enjoy new experiences and opportunities that are available exclusively through our Livery Company.

My third theme is to promote our working milliners; after all, hats are a very British tradition! We have a wonderful blend and mix of creativity and energy amongst these hard working and talented individuals. We must do more to promote them, their world leading designs and magnificent creations, many the envy of the world, and part of British tradition. They reinforce our national standards and values - from our own weddings and family events to Henley, Royal Ascot and Glorious Goodwood, the Trooping of the Colour, Royal Garden Parties and, of course, the passing of our late sovereign, Queen Elizabeth II.

We must also consider our wonderful and ever growing closeness with the Zumpft Zur Waag, the Swiss Guild of Zürich, and their brilliant festival of the end of winter or Sechseläuten. Next April, I hope for an even stronger participation from us and, when we

hope to have a Feltmaker as Lord Mayor once again. Added to that, we must also prepare for a strong participation in the Lord Mayor's Show 2024!

The immediate Past Master and I visited our affiliated ship, HMS Lancaster, last year and met with the "Port" crew, at HM Naval Base Portsmouth. The starboard crew were at sea in the Middle and Far East, often in the national spotlight for some incredible intercepts, not least seizing drones made in Iran and destined for Russia. We are immensely proud of both crews and hope to see them soon. We welcome the Captain of the Starboard crew here with us tonight, Commander Jon Thompson RN.

My year, coincides with the Paris Olympics, and I intend to support the Charity Committee's chosen initiative, Brain Tumour Research, as well as Wheelpower. Wheelpower is based at Stoke Mandeville, home to the para-Olympics. They have done amazing work to revolutionise the wheelchair to a bespoke comfortable and efficient machine that enables some 70,000 users to participate in sport and to have a better quality of life. With this in mind, I intend to initiate a sponsored cycle ride around the City of London in which I would like as many Liverymen and their families to participate. It will be about 3 miles and include rickshaws or electric bikes as may be required, followed by an informal brunch. However, the innovative part is that I have agreed with the Zumpftmeister, Robi Naville, to run a similar event in Zürich, enabling the Swiss guild to participate - I am told this will be a first for them!

Like so much in life, we tend to reap what we sow and I would encourage you all to come along and join in when you can.

Master: Lt. Col. Simon Wilkinson, TD, DL

Wardens: Jeremy Bedford, Simon Millar, Peter Winfield, Simon Wood

Immediate Past Master: Neil Edwards **Clerk:** Maj. Gen. Aidan Smyth, QVRM, TD, DL **Registered at:** Stationers' Hall

Editorial Committee: Simon Wood, Rebecca Nelson, Graeme Gordon, Mark Williams, Carole Denford

From the Editor



Another year has flown by and plans are already shaping up for the Feltmakers' float at the 2024 Lord Mayor's Show when we hope to have a Feltmaker once again elected as Lord Mayor.

We are making strenuous efforts to update and expand our communications to share information as widely as appropriate and to encourage new members to join our remarkable Company.

We're upgrading our website www.feltmakers.co.uk and you can also follow us on Instagram @feltmakers and LinkedIn www.linkedin.com/company/worshipful-company-of-feltmakers.

Rebecca Nelson

We Welcome - Liverymen

Jane Masojada

Emma Heal

...and Freeman

Gian Carlo Compostella

Fleur Curtis

Terri Davies

Victoria Grant

Oxana Girko

Cdr. Tom Johnson RN

Lord Hastings of Scarisbrook CBE

Robert Naville

Tom Owen

Mary Spiteri

Estelle Wilkinson

Stephanie Wilkinson

Craig Winfield

In this issue...

Sechseläuten Revisited:
Ancient & Modern

Jolly Boating Weather at
Henley

The amazing "Amazing
Grace"

HMS Lancaster chocolat

Hats made Me

Our New Master

I joined the family estate agency business in 1981 and worked in various towns across Buckinghamshire. After a spell with corporate estate agencies, by 1992, I was ready to start my own land and estate agency business.

I served in the Army Reserve for 42 years, having joined the Royal Green Jackets in 1980 as a Rifleman and was Commissioned in 1987. In 2000, I joined the new Civil Affairs Group and three years later, I was mobilised for service in Iraq for six months as Chief of Operations at the Humanitarian Operations Centre (HOC) in Kuwait. The HOC coordinated all the humanitarian and civilian operations for the theatre and surrounding nations. I was awarded the United States Commendation Medal for my work. During my career, I have commanded Regular/ Reserve teams in Ghana, Uganda, Norway and Bulgaria.

I was a Board Director of the Relocation Agent Network for 10 years - the largest group of Independent Estate Agents in the UK. From 2017-2019, I sat on the Bank of England local panel as the Property Representative and was co-opted onto the Government 'working group' for Transaction Reform in 2017-20.

From 2019-2023, I served on the main board of PropertyMark establishing the PropertyMark 'Sales Protocol' and proposed the 'Stamp Duty' holiday in 2021, which was the principle accepted recommendation from PropertyMark to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities during the Covid pandemic.



I am a Trustee of the Buckinghamshire Military Museum Trust, past County Chairman of the Royal British Legion and a Deputy Lieutenant for Buckinghamshire. My consort, Cathryn, along with my daughters, Stephanie and Estelle, support me, and my daughters are both on their way to becoming liverymen. I enjoy shooting, country pursuits and skiing, when time allows, plus good food and wine most of the time.

I became a Liveryman of the Feltmakers' Company in 2000 and joined the Court in 2006.

After walking 50m into a minefield, riding the Cresta Run multiple times, parachuting, abseiling, cross-decking in the Baltic Sea, parasailing to 7,500 feet and five car right-offs, I have every reason to be optimistic and somewhat more risk averse these days.

Fourth Warden is Buzzing with Enthusiasm

A Feltmaker since 1990, Simon Wood follows in the footsteps of his father, Edward and grandfather, Morton, who joined the Livery in 1960. Since then, his son, Archie, has become a Feltmaker and also his sister Caro, who is a member of the Charity Committee. His wife, Lucy, is an academic at King's College and they have two daughters, Erica and Lizzie.

He grew up in Yorkshire, attending Bradford Grammar School, then Downing College, Cambridge, where he studied Archaeology, then Land Economy. He had a Short Service Commission in the Duke of Wellington's Regiment, West Riding, followed by 10 years in the Territorial Army.

Since leaving university, he has worked in real estate, in the UK and Europe. He now runs his own property asset management and development business, working in hotels, leisure, medical and other non-core property asset classes.

His extra-curricular activities include rowing at Quintin Club in Chiswick, in Eights and



Fours – he has a vintage 1915 rowing boat, used this year at the Feltmakers' picnic at Henley Royal Regatta. He is President of the Downing College Segreants (rowing alumni), and coaches some of the College crews. He is the Surveyor to the Trustees of the River and Rowing Museum at Henley.

He has a number of active hobbies including woodwork and beekeeping, this year winning First Prize in the Hertfordshire Set Honey Class.

Recruitment, Fun and Millinery



The Feltmakers gather each October at Haberdashers' Hall to celebrate the installation of the new Master who will be their representative in the City of London for the next 12 months. This is an extremely important position with a remit that seeks

Secondly, he wanted us to 'have fun', by encouraging active participation and



providing interesting, exciting and informative events. Especially, with so many new members, apprentices, freeman and liverymen coming through. 'We aim not to be a stuffy, old-fashioned and crusty group of largely, middle-aged men, but a lively, receptive engaging group with life experience and knowledge' he declared.

Thirdly, to promote our working milliners, be they start-ups or established. 'We have a

wonderful blend and mix of creativity and energy amongst these hard-working folk. We must do more to promote them, their world leading designs and magnificent creations. Many are the envy of the world and through British tradition they reinforce our national standards and values, through weddings and family events, to Henley, Royal Ascot, Glorious Goodwood and Royal Garden parties. Hats are very British and we make the best in the world'.



He then referenced the connection with the Swiss Guild of Zürich, the Zunft zur Waag, and our ever-growing closeness, particularly their brilliant festival to mark the end of winter or Sechseläuten. And finally, in a year that coincides with the Paris Olympics, his support of the chosen charity, 'Wheelpower', which enables some 70,000 wheelchair users to participate in sport and to have a better quality of life.

Life-affirming messages all round.

Carole Denford



to strengthen the Feltmakers' standing and continue their good work, whilst each individual Master leaves their personal stamp on their year of service.

Our new Master, Simon Wilkinson, has a personal connection with the hatting industry as the grandson of Alderman Albert Wilkinson, a partner at Hucklesby's of Luton, which was a large hat producer for more than 40 years (between 1880 and 1920). He therefore has a deep personal commitment to the craft, focusing his energies within our Livery, on 'Promoting Hatting'.

As the hall fell silent, the Master delivered his speech, citing three themes to pursue in his term of office.

The first was to encourage recruitment of new liverymen, younger, more diverse people who wanted to 'make their way in life' through friendship and participation with fellow liverymen.



Sechseläuten memories

My abiding memories of Sechseläuten is of the generosity and good humour of our Waag hosts and the immaculate organisation that is evident at every stage. Judging by the numerous photos on our WhatsApp group, the Feltmaker contingent this year looked



pretty smart in our capes and, of course, our hats. There were so many opportunities to meet friends, old and new. Combined with the wonderful cuisine, it was all very memorable and huge fun. An added feature for me this year, however, was making use of the "free time" on Saturday to visit five of the churches which Zürich has to offer. It was something which was most interesting in its own right because of the churches themselves but walking to each of them took me to parts of the city I had never previously visited. The churches were Grossmünster, Fraumünster, St. Peter's Church, Liebfrauen and Prediger. What a delight it was, therefore, to return to St. Peter's Church on the Monday, the day of the main parade, for an apero or two after a vertiginous ascent to the tower from where to enjoy wonderful views of the city.

PM Edward Hutton

A non-stop weekend of socialising the Zürich way, culminated with the afternoon Parade and burning of the Bööge on Sechseläuten day.

Fairly relaxing and fun for the Master Feltmaker? That's what I was told ...

First up, a 9.30am trip to St. Peter's Tower for the first toast of the day. However, I met trouble, as did the Fourth Warden being two 6ft 4inch Feltmakers we were unlikely to make it to the top of the late 19th century tower bells due to the law of physics and the age of the tiny wooden stairwell leading to them. So, in harmony, we agreed to share a "Tower Aperitif" from the ground, looking upwards with great gratitude.

We then followed the marching band of the Waag from St. Peter's Square to the Zunft Zur Waag's Waagstubli, where the outside square fountain had been conveniently drained of water and replaced with white wine - something that doesn't happen in Trafalgar Square!

Lunch commenced at 11.00 am - early even by my standards - with amusing speeches and good wishes from visiting Guilds/ local

children and the Zunft Meister, Robi Naville. Following the afternoon parade and "social" at the burning of the Bööge, we returned to the Waagstubli for dinner at 7.00pm, for more speeches, including mine, (and I have to say, with pride, that they "got" the English joke I told them, so, a memorable Feltmaker coup!).

After the formal part of the night, it was on to visit other Guild Houses, toasts and top ups!

I managed to return to our hotel at 2.00am and rise in good time the next morning to take a swim in the lake and at 8 degrees temperature.

I was as fresh as a daisy!

PM Neil Edwards

Amazingly, 2023 was Linda's and my 11th Sechseläuten over the last 15 years, every



year since 2008, barring lock-downs, volcanic eruptions and family events. As always, the hospitality and friendship of the Zunft zur Waag was beyond generous and this year's festival was particularly enjoyable because there were a healthy number of Feltmakers attending. As always, there were many memorable moments and, for us, highlights this year must include Robi Naville's first Sechseläuten as Guild Master, our supper at the Grasshoppers' Rowing Club, generously hosted by Guildsman Peter Altenburger, the lack of rain during Sechseläuten afternoon (always a bonus!) and the party to celebrate our (then) Upper Warden's 60th birthday. Switzerland is a very special country for Linda and me - it's where we met - and we often extend our Sechseläuten visit with a holiday to other parts of the country. This year, we were particularly lucky, thanks to Liveryman and Past Guildmaster, René Kalt's thoughtful invitation to attend another uniquely Swiss event - the annual Landsgemeinde of Appenzell canton. This is democracy, Swiss-style, with 2,500 people crowded into the square of Appenzell, complete with bands, flags and costumes, to vote in person on Cantonal issues.

PM David Bentata



I was invited to attend the remarkable and unforgettable annual Zürich Sechseläuten by the Waag guild and the Past Master of the Feltmakers, who, with other Court members and partners, made up the rest of our group. Sechseläuten consists of a children's parade (with all children in medieval dress), much dancing and revelry across the city and the burning and exploding of the Böögg (a six metre snowman on a pyre).

Just burning the Böögg would be considered too boring. To add excitement not only is the head of the Böögg filled with firecrackers (which explode to mark the end of winter) but horses are ridden around the burning pyre to show their discipline and the riders' skill.

Each of the guild houses hold continuous parties throughout Saturday, Sunday and Monday. Beer and wine flow freely (the fountains are literally flowing with wine) and the entertainment is both lavish and generous.

Apart from a few sleeping hours, I doubt there were many times throughout the long weekend when I did not have a glass in-hand.



The festivities for us started on Saturday with a convivial dinner before the guild houses opened to all members and their guests. It is sort of like First Footing on steroids. Everyone is dressed in medieval costume relating to their guild and music and dancing is accompanied by open bars. At 2am I retired but 6am stories were not uncommon.

Sunday is gentle (after the night before) with a delightful children's parade. They walk through the streets with floats and horses (and camels) showering their parents and onlookers with sweets. Dinner was at the Grasshoppers Ruder (Rowing) Club, again hosted by the Waag but in their historic club house on the lake.

The Waag Monday started at 8am with breakfast before heading off to climb one of the city church's watchtowers. A good vantage point to have an initial glass of wine.

Our band (each guild has its own) with a complement of over 60, then arrived in full pomp and escorted and serenaded us back to the Waag guild house to sample local beers and wines in the sunshine.

All the guilds are doing likewise, music and colour fill the medieval streets before lunch begins and finishes in time for the start of the city parade for all 26 guilds (each with its own band of percussionists and drummers).

Of course, all guild members have their own costumes and colours with associated insignia. I wore my past Upper Bailiff badge at all times and was lent a Waag cloak and topper; the Feltmakers brought gowns and of course their hats.

The parade ends at Sechseläuten Platz when, with Swiss precision, the pyre is lit at 6pm.

Tradition states that the shorter the time between lighting and the snowman losing his head in exploding fury signifies the success



of the future harvest. With rain on Saturday and Sunday, this year's snowman stayed intact for a record 57 minutes; perhaps the pagan Gods were angry following the recent demise of Credit Suisse.

William Makower, Past Upper Bailiff, Weavers' Company

Sechseläuten '23 was a great return to full form after Covid, and Zürich was looking its spring best. Lucy and I took the scenic route on the Golden train from Montreux – Interlaken into Zürich, where we enjoyed great hosting from Suzannah and Andreas Jaeger and family, where the cocktail bar is permanently open. We love the Zunfthaus of the Waag Guild and feasted like Swiss kings. The parades were fun and we kept up with



the brisk pace set by Master Neil Edwards to the end. Our visit extended by a further day to celebrate the birthday of Upper Warden Simon Wilkinson, with a fabulous dinner chez family Andreas, with wonderful friendship from our friends of the Waag.

Simon Wood, Fourth Warden



Another marvellous spectacle with the massive explosions, smoke and flames as the Bööge took longer to burn than usual. Our hosts, as ever, generous, organised and fun. The numerous events of eating, drinking and speeches, the parades and the colour,



diversity, history and style of Sechseläuten is something to behold. It is certainly a 'must do' for every Feltmaker at some point.

Master Simon Wilkinson



I had been warned about the warmth and the generosity of our friends in the Waag but hadn't expected the riot of colour, noise and tradition that is Sechseläuten. Traditional costumes, marching bands and the whole of Zürich turning out for the parade made for an exhilarating couple of days in excellent company.

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Simon Millar, Renter Warden



Olney, the home of “Amazing Grace”

The Church of Ss. Peter and Paul, Olney, where I am Rector, speaks of the love of God in so many ways. It is built upon a floorplan of a cross, the symbol of the love of God for all of us and a reminder of the sacrifice made for us all by Jesus. We have stained glass windows that tell of the truths that can be found in the Bible. There is a table at the East end where we remember how Jesus had His ‘Last Supper’ with His closest friends before He was crucified. We have a font that speaks to all who are welcome to be adopted into God’s family, acknowledging their sins, the grace of being forgiven, (washed away) and embracing a new start in life; from wherever they have been and from whatever they have done. On some of the stained glass windows we have images that remind us of the poet and translator, William Cowper, and the Reverend John Newton, who worshipped in Olney some 250 years ago. In the graveyard is the tomb of Newton and his wife, Mary. John Newton had been a seafarer, a slave and a slave trader. On one return journey to England, his ship, ‘The Greyhound’, was caught in a storm. Fearing for his life, John called out in prayer to God and he and the ship’s company were saved. It was a moment of transformation for him and he was never to be the same again. He came to know



God’s forgiveness and love, and he dedicated himself to making the good things that he had experienced known to others. After training, the Reverend John Newton became the curate in charge of this church where I now serve. It was here in December 1772 that he penned the hymn ‘Amazing Grace’. This monumental hymn was sung for the first time ever in Olney on the 1st January 1773. This year, on New Year’s Day, it was sung in our morning service; exactly 250 years to the day of when it was first heard. From Olney, Newton moved to the City of London and in 1780, became rector of St. Mary Woolnoth. During his time at that church, he supported William Wilberforce in his work to abolish the slave trade. He was a prolific writer and had the humanity and dignity to publish the pamphlet, “Thoughts

upon the African Slave Trade”, in which he wrote about his regret as a slave trader and his condemnation of slavery. The Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade Committee purchased copies of Newton’s pamphlet and sent them to every member of the House of Commons and the House of Lords.

The law to abolish the slave trade in the British Empire, (An Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade) was passed in March 1807, and in December of the same year, John Newton’s life and his work came to an end. He was buried in the crypt of St Mary Woolnoth, alongside his wife.

When the crypt was cleared for the construction of Bank Underground station, the bodies of John and his wife Mary were moved to the church in Olney. His original resting place is now Bank station’s ticketing hall.....

The hymn ‘Amazing Grace’ has now been sung for over 250 years. It speaks of God’s amazing love and God’s wonderful forgiveness; love and forgiveness that have existed for many more years than 250.

Andrew Pritchard-Keen
Feltmakers’ Chaplain and Rector of
Ss. Peter and Paul Olney

Brain Tumour Research is our Latest Nominated Charity

Following a survey of liverymen to select our new nominated charity, Brain Tumour Research (BTR) topped the leaderboard.

Laying claim to being the founder of “Wear a Hat Day”, BTR works to fund and manage the direction of research into brain cancers. One notable patron is Philip Treacy who has previously donated one of his hats for auction.



Among the factors that the Charity Committee looked at in its assessment of the potential beneficiaries was whether there were opportunities to engage through volunteering or fundraising events. BTR offers volunteering days to assist in its head office in Milton Keynes. In terms of fundraising, one of BTR’s most lucrative events is the London Marathon. The other is its flagship “Wear a Hat Day” which is targeted at schools, businesses and communities. In addition to its formal date each spring, there have been a number of special spin-off dates that can be adapted for other times of the year, such as “Wear a Christmas Hat Day” and hat-wearing walks. In late 2022, then Master Nigel MacDonald asked me to convene a new Charity Committee with the purpose of finding the successor to Helen Arkell Dyslexia Foundation (HADF), which had been our Nominated Charity since 2019. Since its appointment, a number of fund-raising events have been held including a dinner at the Cavalry & Guards Club in October 2019, PM Nigel MacDonald’s memorable dinner underneath Cutty Sark and, of course, Graeme Gordon’s impressive Source 2City

row in 2021. Covid extended HADF’s tenure but the time had come to identify our new charity partner.

A group including Emma Whitaker, Caro Wood, Alex Hayward, Richard Holmes and Sam Gordon-Luty, met in early 2023 to start the process. Our brief was to find a charity that the next Master and his successors over the following couple of years would be happy to support and, equally importantly, one that the Livery would too. By having a multi-year period, the hope is that members of the Livery have a greater opportunity to support, engage with and learn from the Charity, and that an annual report back to members by the Charity will keep us informed as to how our fundraising is being applied.

We started with a number of suggestions from the Master & Wardens, then adding a few of our own, we refreshed our operating principles and agreed an outline plan.

The first step was for the Charity Committee to undertake due diligence on potential organisations to create to a shortlist. Key criteria included the strength and quality of governance, opportunities for engagement or collaboration and finances. We also looked at purpose and if it had any relevance to Feltmakers. This was particularly challenging but in the end, BTR’s links to wearing hats proved very appealing. Caro Wood kindly undertook the initial assessment of each charity and the results were discussed by the Committee. The Charity Committee believed it was important to allow Liverymen the opportunity to help with the selection, making the process as transparent and engaging as possible.

There were three finalists, the other two

being Fight For Sight/Vision Foundation and Ruth Strauss Foundation. The final three were presented to the Master & Wardens at the July Court meeting, and the proposal to hold an online poll of the Livery was approved. PM Macdonald, the Master and the (then) Upper Warden also agreed to offer a prize to be drawn from the responses to the survey.

At the Installation Dinner, the newly installed Master announced that BTR had been selected.

The Master also announced the names drawn for a spot prize for participating. Congratulations to each of the following winners:

Admiral Sir Ben Key – a rare bottle of whisky kindly donated by PM Nigel MacDonald

Graeme Gordon – a John Lewis voucher for £50 kindly donated by the Master

Philip Wood – a voucher for Odeon cinema tickets kindly donated by PM Neil Edwards. Many of us will know someone who has been affected by brain tumours, a devastating diagnosis. An initial meeting with BTR was held in early November at which we found out about possible volunteering opportunities as well as the calendar of planned fundraising events.

As for the Charity Committee, we plan to stay involved, with our brief now being to encourage as many Liverymen as possible to engage with BTR, by volunteering, fundraising or supporting one of our number in their exertions. We really hope that you will accept the challenge to give as much support as we can over the next three years.

Louisa Vincent

Jolly Boating Weather... Feltmakers go to Henley!

Well, in truth, the forecast was only quite good; overcast and coolish with the chance of a shower. Not quite the weather one wants when planning to spend a day watching rowing, sipping on Pimm's or Aperol and grazing on strawberries. But, on the day, it proved better than expected – a cooling breeze, but jackets came off and hats stayed on – the ideal combination, really!



Simon Wood had come up with the idea of a day by the river, enjoying the sights and colours of the renowned Henley Regatta. He and Sarah McGrath arranged a lovely spot in the garden of a private house, a

substantial gazebo, a fulsome and delicious picnic (very well chosen and coordinated by Simon's wife, Lucy) and plentiful supplies of assorted cooling drinks. Even parking was planned, a short walk away, making the logistics easy for those coming by car.



With a backdrop of a Feltmakers' banner, about 30 liverymen and guests, along with Edgar Heggli and his wife Joyce from the Waag, gathered to spend the day together. Those in the know had a programme of races, occasionally pausing in their conversations to cheer on a particular team or critique technique and strategy. Others (like me) just enjoyed the spectacle of rowers, boats, blazers, boaters, dresses and hats in blissful ignorance of the finer points of the day.

As a complete bonus, Simon also had his beautiful vintage boat, Frogge, on hand to take guests out on the river, complete with some young Cambridge Blues who proved not just adept with the oars, but also delightful lunch companions. Maybe we can



persuade some of them to join the Livery in due course?

All in all, a highly enjoyable day, with all the elements needed – good company, a spectacle to watch, delicious food and drink and (mostly) fine weather. Sincere congratulations and thanks to Simon, Sarah and Lucy for all the effort they put in to bring it together.



For my part, I just hope it becomes an annual event! I'm already thinking about my hat for next year...

Louisa Vincent

HMS Lancaster Hits its Sweet Spot



During a visit to HMS Lancaster in mid-February, the Master and Upper Warden discovered that some of the starboard crew had added yet another skill to their formidable abilities. Following specialist training, the catering team are now chocolatiers and created an array of exquisitely decorated and mouth-watering hand-made chocolates to supplement their existing melt-in-the-mouth pastries, including croissants and pain au chocolat.

The fascinating morning included a view around the Officers' Mess Headquarters – HMS Nelson - and a visit aboard HMS



Defender one of the very latest type 45 destroyers, including the Bridge and Ops Room. The Feltmakers were offered a sneak



insight into the Navy's current project, NavyX, bringing Autonomy and Lethality to Maritime Ops aboard The Patrick Blackett. In addition, they learned more about HMS Lancaster's history, including the role that fur and felt have had on Naval and Military headwear.

The Master noted: "HMS Lancaster enjoys showcasing its day to day work and the familial bond among the Starboard crew is tangible. The crew also values the close association with the Feltmakers as much as we do with Lancaster".

Master Neil Edwards and Upper Warden, Simon Wilkinson

The Winners of the 2023 Design Competition

The annual design competition run by The Worshipful Company of Feltmakers is open to millinery students, apprentices and those who are within the first two years of starting their own labels. It is very much an industry prize with the aim of supporting individuals who aspire to join the hat trade.

Entrants are invited to submit designs that are exciting, innovative and unique. The hats must be predominantly made of felt and capable of being manufactured in a workshop or a factory. They must also be comfortable and wearable!

There are three main prizes and four additional categories. The overall winners are chosen on the basis of their design, originality and craftsmanship. The further categories are awarded for Commerciality, Craftsmanship, Innovative Use of Felt and Artwork.

This year's judging took place at Haberdashers' Hall on 4 April and was judged by a wide and talented panel. We were thrilled to be joined by Victoria Claridge, the millinery buyer for Fenwick, who was able to bring her buyer's eye to the proceedings. We were also joined by Elly Stemerding, editor of "The Hat Magazine" and couture milliners, Edwina Ibbotson and Victoria Grant and, of course, PM William Horsman, a retired hat manufacturer with many years' experience as well as being the mastermind who started the competition over 30 years ago. As current organiser, I also judged and lead proceedings.

We had over 28 entries from colleges including RCA, Morley College London, Nottingham Trent University, Glasgow Clyde College and Northern School of Art, as well as new start-ups and international entries from Finland, Germany and France. Entrants are first invited to submit images of their hats along with supporting papers. This is followed by a pre-selection and those selected are invited to send in their physical hats which are then judged in person. The choice of winning hats is always very tough and the judges took quite a while to reach their final decision. Many factors have to be taken into account; does the winning hat fit all the criteria but also stand out above the others? Is the design original? Would someone wear it?

We then went on to select the other four categories which, in the event, proved an easier task.

Elly Stemerding commented "The variety of the entries was reflected in the top three winning designs where besides craftsmanship, the innovative, theatrical and commercial skills were appreciated by the judges. It will be interesting to follow the work of these designers who are all just at the beginning of their career!"

Decisions made, all the hats were

photographed by Peter Clarke and modelled by Danielle.

To witness the final deliberations, we were joined by The Lady Mayoress of the City of London, Mrs Felicity Lyons, and Corrine Lee, Sheriff's Consort, along with the Master of the Company, Neil Edwards and his wife, Nicki.

The winners were awarded as follows:

First Prize - Dawn Wilson (Morley College) - £1500

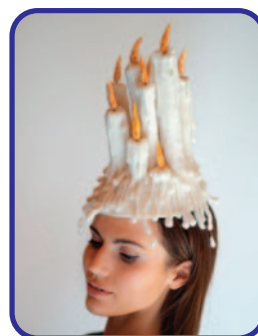
This hat was inspired and very original, unlike anything the judges had seen before.

Dawn's hood wrapped around the head with cut out felt details. The blue and copper tones were inspired by the rooftop paintings of Cezanne and Hopper and the interior of the piece was gilded with copper leaf.



Second Prize - Issi Roberts (Nottingham Trent University) - £1000

Issi's dramatic hat was inspired by religious imagery and the use of burning candles to mark a person's passing. The base was made from traditional millinery felt but Issi had also used needle felting to achieve the candles and wax drips.



Third Prize - Pip Mayo (Morley College) - £750

Pip's 'Jupiter' hat was inspired by NASA's images of Jupiter and its beautiful rings and colour palette. She achieved the colour effects by dip dyeing on stretched felt. This piece was very well balanced, simple and dramatic.



Craftsmanship - Aurore Martinez (Aurore M - new starter) - £250

Aurore's hat was inspired by Zarafa, the name given to the first French giraffe. Her technique for creating a giraffe patterned hide was beautifully executed and crafted

with each spot being individually cut and stitched into the paler felt base, taking many hours of work. Coloured feathers were then individually worked and attached to wire to create foliage. The hat was edged and lined with a beautiful cotton print.



Artwork - Paula Kasurinen (Stadin Ammattioppilaitos, Finland) - £250

Paula's hat was an ode to forest and fungi. Her hat was beautifully made and quirky. Her artwork stood out with beautiful hand drawn illustrations and material samples.



Commerciality - Fleur Curtis (Oscar and Willow millinery - new starter) - £250

A winter white felt disc with ivory goose feathers and flowers, Fleur's hat was extremely commercial. It was a very considered piece that was beautifully made. We all agreed that we would be able to sell it very easily.



Innovative Use of Felt - Niki Bywater (Working Men's College, Camden) - £250

All the judges loved Niki's fun paint pot hat. Niki had experimented using chalk paint on felt. She had blocked shape onto a paint pot and a brush using sinamay for the bristles. The result was surreal and witty.



Rachel Trevor-Morgan

Hats Made Me Luton Headlines

Stockwood Discovery Centre in Luton lives up to its name. The stroll to our private viewing of "Hats Made Me" took us via some outstanding vintage carriages dating back to the 17th century.

After imbibing the essential glass of fizz and outstandingly tasty and delicate canapés, our Master, Simon Wilkinson, leapt onto a bench, sporting a bespoke red top hat (courtesy of



Lock & Co.) to deliver an enthusiastic speech, during which he included the Livery's new beneficiary - Brain Tumour Research - and his personal charity, Wheelpower, which promotes accessible cycling. He reiterated his themes for his year, recruitment, fun and millinery to which we can each espouse.

"Hats Made Me" is outstandingly curated



and took us through the history of headwear; historical and topographical, practical and fashionable, theatrical and royal, political and religious, film and celebrity. Every hat made a statement. The curators say it best:

"Hats have made us warm and safe. They've shown our position in society or our occupation. Hats have let others know our faith or political party. We've honoured our heritage or rebelled against systems. They let us dress up, rejoice, mourn, imitate; they've freed us from ourselves, given us a living and made Luton the heart of the UK's hat industry".

Even Luton Town's football club is affectionately known as "the Hatters"! A delightful way to showcase the creativity and symbolic importance and relevance of headwear and to welcome prospective members to our Livery.

Rebecca Nelson

On 23 February, the Feltmakers and their guests gathered at the grand Luton Hoo Mansion House, set in extensive grounds in the Bedfordshire countryside. As all Feltmakers know, Luton is the historical home of hat making and once the world's biggest hat producing location, with more than 500 hat manufacturers based there in the 1800s and it is an important part of the Company's history.

We were greeted with a sparkling reception and met our friends from the Company in the ornate Romanov Suite, once the chapel of the house. The stained-glass windows, highly decorated ceiling and elegant marble and plasterwork were a suitably colourful setting for the milliners to showcase their fantastic creations. There was a great variety of stylish hats on display, made from high quality materials and suitable for all occasions from Ascot or weddings to a fashionable country walk.



We then moved to the Fabergé Private Dining Suite for a delicious three course lunch with a winter country menu accompanied by wine. Court Assistant, John Horn, was an effortless "Master of Ceremonies" and, between courses, we were entertained by three members of the British Hat Guild, each giving an insight into their work.

First, Feltmaker Carole Denford explained the history of the Guild and how it had been re-established in 2019 following a meeting between her and industry colleagues in a London pub two years earlier. Carole is the founder of trade publication The "Hat Magazine" and was motivated to rekindle the



Guild to promote the unrivalled excellence of British millinery and help people in the trade to network, support each other and promote the industry. Carole enthusiastically explained how she had steered the Guild's



formation through the difficulties of lockdown, where Zoom-style meetings helped the milliners and hatmakers to support each other through a devastating period for their trade. Since then, the Guild has taken in new members and should grow from strength to strength, as shown at www.thebritishhatguild.org.uk.

Next, milliner, Jess Collett, gave a lively and entertaining talk about her 25 years' creating exciting designs, normally handmade and often for famous clients. Jess has an infectious light-hearted attitude to what must be a demanding business. She has now added an "off the shelf" range and, as we had witnessed in the Romanov Suite and then on her video at the lunch, her designs are strikingly stylish, colourful and edgy, as can also be seen at www.jesscollettmilliner.com.

Finally, Guild member, Rachel Frost, gave a fascinating talk on her work, which is unique in the UK and, almost, the world. Rachel is a feltmaker in the historical sense, making felt for her hats from ethically sourced wool, beaver fur and plant-based dyes. Rachel explained how an interest in traditional hat making led her to research old books and recreate the original tools from drawings. She then travelled to Hungary, Turkey and ultimately Mexico to learn from the few remaining pre-industrial feltmakers around the world. Rachel brought along some of her creations, some raw materials and her best prop, a Hatter's Bow. This large wooden implement was strung like an archer's bow and Rachel played a video showing how it is used and her journey from initial curiosity to travelling the globe in search of the last of the feltmakers. Rachel is now the only person in Europe using these traditional techniques and has made hats for stage and screen. It was a pleasure to experience her dedication to this fascinating part of our own Company's history, more of which can be seen at www.thecraftybeggars.org.

Finally, we all applauded Viviane Vayssieres, who we have been lucky enough to have as the creative organiser of the Luton Lunch for many years. Viviane is now handing over the reins of this event and her charm and *joie de vivre* will be a tough act to follow; *merci beaucoup* from all at the Feltmakers!

Mark Williams

Third Successful Home Fixture in London for this Year's "skipper"

For many, Monday 9th January was the first day of a full week back at work after the Christmas and New Year break. For the Feltmakers, it was the date of this year's Plough Monday dinner at the Armourers' Hall, hosted by Master Neil Edwards, and ably supported by our Wardens.



The Armourers' Hall is an impressive location. On arrival, guests are confronted with swords, shields and armour from a bygone age but which still act as a timely reminder of today's conflicts, especially Ukraine, now nearing its first anniversary. We were welcomed by the Master and Wardens with suitable refreshment and provided with an opportunity to catch up and renew friendships before the formal proceedings commenced. With precision timing, we were ushered into the main hall where our Chaplain, the Reverend Andrew Pritchard-Keens, lead us in Grace. Once seated, we were soon enjoying a tasty starter of sea bass accompanied by a refreshing Pinot Grigio. Our first toast of the evening was to welcome a new liveryman, Mrs Jane Masojada, to the Company. This was soon followed by the welcome of our guests for the evening Dr. Trevor Brignall, Master Marketor; Mr John Richardson, Prime Warden Blacksmiths, together with their respective clerks and our chief guests, Alderman Sheriff Alistair King and Sheriff Andrew Marsden. This led us into our main course of Pedigree Hereford Beef with suitable accompaniment and an excellent Chateau Le Truch. This was followed by Dark Chocolate Posset, English Brie Tart and coffee, a most suitable selection to prepare us for the speeches. The Master kicked off with two loyal toasts before an excellent heel to James de Broë-Ferguson to enable him to begin the toasts to the Lord Mayor and the Sheriffs. We heard that Alderman & Sheriff Alastair

King launched his professional life as a lawyer before switching to asset management via the London Business School and founded and led his own asset management firm. This has been accompanied by investment

ventures supporting various charities and a very active involvement with the Corporation of the City of London starting as a Common Council member for the Ward of Queenhithe and becoming Alderman in

Painters of Glass, various Ward clubs and cross-livery organisations. James finished his run by passing to Alderman & Sheriff Alastair King to respond who thanked James for his excellent introduction to the Sheriffs and the Master for his kind invitation. He spoke of his career both in the City, the livery and associated charities giving us a clear view of the causes he was sponsoring during his year in office. A swift but accurate pass to the Master allowed him to give us an insightful and precise overview of Dr Trevor Brignall and Mr John Richardson, full details can be found on their respective websites. Sufficient to say that each has had a varied and fascinating background and made significant contributions to their respective livery companies and professions. The Master also introduced his rugby guests Peter Winterbottom, Greg Chalmers and Duncan Steele-Bodger. His address concluding with another accurate pass to Sheriff Andrew Marsden to enable him to go for the line and propose the health of the Worshipful Company of Feltmakers and the Master. He told us how he grew up in Yorkshire and about his journey through industry leading him into the City of London and involvement



2016. He serves on an impressive array of committees and outside charities. Sheriff Andrew Marsden has an equally accomplished City record. His background in marketing started with Unilever and on through a range of blue-chip companies and executive and non-executive roles in specialist marketing organisations. His involvement with the livery started with the Worshipful Company of Marketors, extending to the Worshipful Company of World Traders, the Worshipful Company of Stationers and Newspaper Makers, the Worshipful Company of Glaziers and

with the world of the livery and the Feltmakers' excellent reputation for hospitality, finishing just as the referee blew time. Post-match refreshments were then held in the adjoining hall allowing those liverymen dashing off for trains easy access to the exits. All agreed an excellent evening, with great food and wine followed by interesting and timely speeches.

Christopher Horsburgh

Summer Banquet

On a beautifully sunny June evening, Feltmakers and their guests arrived at Mansion House for the Summer Banquet.

Mansion House looked its very best and the Egyptian Hall was splendid in the warm glow of the evening sun, while chandeliers defied gravity in the reception rooms. Perhaps the only things more eye-catching than the beautiful rooms and guests were the prize-winning entries for the Feltmakers' Design Award: seven beautiful hats and headpieces,



complete with descriptions of the inspiration and thought process behind each design. Each had been selected by the judging panel for qualities such as craftsmanship, innovation or commercial appeal, and it was fantastic to see them on display to appreciate the variety of styles and inspirations.

At the sounding of the gong, we took our seats for dinner. Fresh crab salad, chicken with spring vegetables and a mango and camomile mousse proved the perfect meal for a summer's evening. But this was a feast for more than just our tastebuds.

We were also treated to beautiful music from Holly Brown (soprano) and Emilia



Noack-Wilkinson (piano) from the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. They performed four arias, from the tragic Marietta's Lied from Die tote Stadt by Korngold, to the comic Tarantula Aria from La Tempranica by Gimenez.

The evening's speeches began with Upper Warden, Simon Wilkinson, proposing the civic toast to welcome Lord Mayor Locum Tenens Sir William Russell, Alderman Sheriff Alistair King and Sheriff Andrew Marsden and their Consorts. Sir William joined us because Lord Mayor, Nicholas Lyons, was visiting Asia as part of his mayoral duties. It was a pleasure to be joined by Sir William, especially given his personal connection to the company as a Feltmaker and, of course, we forgive him his membership of the Haberdashers too; a joint membership which

has not been held since the Feltmakers split from the Haberdashers in 1604!

Master Neil Edwards welcomed guests from the Zunft zur Waag Guild in Zürich, who recently hosted 15 Feltmakers at their Spring



Festival, Sechseläuten. The Master spoke of their warm hospitality and the spectacle of the celebrations. He also shared details of the Feltmakers' recent involvement in a celebration much closer to home: King Charles III's Coronation. As part of the Craft Livery Companies, the Feltmakers supported the Royal School of Needlework, the Broderers, Drapers and Weavers in creating and producing the Anointing Screen used by the King at the most private and spiritual part of the ceremony.

The Master also presented The Lord Mayor with a cheque for £4,000 for the Lord Mayor's Appeal and a further donation to the Alderman Sheriff's City Ride appeal. Then it was time for the awarding of the Feltmakers' Design Award. The Master, together with Lady Russell, presented the 1st prize to Dawn Wilson of Morley College. Dawn's structural design drew inspiration from such varied sources as the intricately decorated linings of kimonos and paintings by Cezanne and Hopper.

René Kalt, Past Master of the Zunft zur Waag, proposed a toast to our shared friendship in place of Zunftmeister, Robert Naville, who sadly was unable to join us on the evening. René introduced the customs of the Sechseläuten, including the burning of the puppet (Böög) and the traditional honey biscuits, Tirggel, which he shared with us. This year marks the fifteenth year of friendship between the Feltmakers and the Zunft zur Waag; a friendship which was sparked "by accident" when Past Master David Bentata and his wife Linda travelled to Zürich as part of the Coronation Masters' Past Masters' Association to attend the Sechseläuten. René commemorated the occasion, and David and Linda's efforts to cultivate this friendship, with a special gift from the Guild – A Certificate of Appreciation. This bond has been enthusiastically nurtured by subsequent Feltmaker and Waag Masters.

Soon it was time to retire from the Egyptian Hall and join the Master for a final Stirrup Cup, before departing into the evening, warmed by such enjoyable company and delicious food. An evening almost as sweet as the honey-infused Tirrgel biscuits to which René and the Waag treated us!

Sarah Wood

Apothecaries' Hall Heralds Spring Livery



Rather a bad start – I'd forgotten that I'd agreed to write a report of the Spring Livery Dinner. Suddenly remembered with a jolt. Phew! Looked out the evening togs, plus a bright shawl in case it would get parky at Apothecaries' Hall, then looked up how to get there on Apple Maps, as it's one of those Halls you think you know how to get to until all of a sudden it just disappears from where you thought it was. But there it was, on the left, down a squiggly lane towards Blackfriars Bridge.

Found it and joined the throng, waiting downstairs for the Court meeting to finish. I was introduced to our newest Freeman, Fleur, who has a medical background prior to being a milliner, and who was fascinated to be at Apothecaries' Hall. I very much like the milling around at the beginning as it's a chance to meet up with everyone, although at the meal itself you can have some proper conversations, of course.

On entering the Dining Hall, we were surrounded by dark wooden panelling, portraits, long tables, a crush of black tie, beautiful frocks, happy people. Good wine and a particularly good vegetarian choice, ending with a most beautiful rainbow plate of fruit. John Horn proposed the toast to the guests, and the main speaker was Alan Bird, the Head of the City of London School, where our Master had been educated just a year or two previously (ahem). Several other Old Boys of the school (were they called Citizens?) were among the guests that evening. Alan Bird spoke most entertainingly and well. There was much mention of sporting prowess, which the Head claimed had rather passed him by. The Master replied, finishing with a terrific racing joke which I'm recycling now among my friends with all my might.

I drifted off back home before the Stirrup Cup, a kind Feltmaker friend offered to walk me home through the dark alleys, but I'm tough as old boots and declined, with grace, I hope. I returned with tales of another splendid evening with the Feltmakers, beautifully organised, smoothly run and as always, fun!

Richenda Carey

Good Sports

Once again, tennis teams took to the courts at Queen's Club for the annual Inter-livery Tennis Competition and a sunny weather window promised an enjoyable day on the outside courts at the club. This year, Gilly Yarrow, well supported by partner Alan, represented the Feltmakers, and we had a full complement of 24 teams to ensure a smooth-running competition. In addition, our friends from the Waag (Zürich) fielded a team, with Lia Gander and Cyrill von Planta bringing a more international flavour.



The organising team of Adrian Gubby and Bruce Fraser put together a good event, recruiting teams, coordinating with the Clerk and liaising with Queen's. This year, in addition to our usual participants of Tallow Chandlers, Drapers and Vintners, we welcomed new Companies, including the Coopers, Educators and Constructors. The Round Robin started promptly at 11.30 and teams played on six shale courts in the beautiful Queen's Club setting.

Once we entered the business end of the competition, our Feltmaker team survived in the Plate Competition but lost valiantly in the quarter-finals to the eventual winner. The final was played out between Actuaries and Grocers, with Actuaries winning a tremendous match.

In the championship, there were more surprises, with multiple time winners, the Tallow Chandlers, falling in the semi-final on the sword of the Barbers, as well as former winners, the Drapers, losing to the World Traders. We therefore had two new finalists and it was a thrilling match, with the World Traders beating the Barbers.

At dinner in the evening, we had 72 guests, and the Master delivered a riveting speech to the assembled fellow sportsmen and women, explaining the true essence of competitive sport. We presented the prizes of etched glasses to winners, as well as bottles of Champagne, sponsored by Bollinger.

My thanks to the participants and to Adrian and Bruce.

Fourth Warden, Simon Wood

The Master's Masterful Day

A windy Saturday in March, the 9.38am train fighting the technological advances of modern transport, pulled in slowly. A stark contrast to the smooth operating Elizabeth line, whose doors are designed to open exactly where the train access points are located and trains which accelerate without effort or jolt.

Next stop, underneath the four-sided clock above the station concourse at Waterloo Station, where according to The Kinks, "Terry meets Julie every Friday night", to greet my guest, grab a coffee and watch "people so busy, make me feel dizzy" and then board the 11.20am train to Twickenham via Clapham Junction. It was the Master's Charity Day at the Varsity match. The annual games between



the rugby clubs of Oxford and Cambridge Universities first played in 1872. How do we know this? Read on.

William Webb Ellis – credited with creating the game of rugby in 1823 and who won a cricket blue for Oxford, was the first inductee to the "Rugby Hall of Fame" as recently as 2006. The first game between the two University clubs involved 20 players from each side. Oxford wore dark blue and Cambridge, pink.

The large Feltmakers' "tailgate" party outside the Stadium displayed much tweed, some lively red trousers and the Master with the Feltmakers' gilet, but sadly no pink. In polite company no scrum formed around the delicious and very generous food and drink. Whilst eating, it was good to meet old friends and new guests.

The Master led the "pack" with a game of "heads" and "tails". A statement is given and should you think correct, hands are placed in a cone shape on one's head. If false, then the same but on the rear. Leading with the date of the first Varsity game, the throng was quickly reduced as those who guessed incorrectly stood aside. The deciding question was not the year the first Varsity red card was shown but "why the 1981 Varsity game was renowned (other than the fact it was the centenary game)". The reason: it was played with a three to four-inch layer of snow covering the pitch; it had snowed overnight and the snow could not be removed in time for the game.

There are two Varsity games played on the same day, Women's and Men's. Cambridge University women's team, despite an early 7-0 lead, tasted defeat for the first time since 2016 as they went down in the early kick-off

to a 31-12 loss against their Oxford counterparts.

The Cambridge women won in 2017, 2018 and 2019 before last year's meeting between the rivals ended in a first ever draw.

Oxford's win means that overall the head-to-head record is in their favour by a margin of 21-13.

With drinks replenished and form assessed, the Feltmakers' pack returned to the Stadium for the 3pm kick-off of the Men's encounter.

One end of the stadium was "Feltmaker" blue as the Master had arranged for the "Pack" to sit together in the same section. National Anthem sung, the Varsity match inducted into the Rugby Hall of Fame and in blustery conditions, the game got underway. A name for the future was Cambridge's Jamie Benson playing fly-half. He is already an England U20, Harlequins' academy player and reading Natural Sciences - an all-round talent. Jamie scored all the Cambridge points in the 15-10 win. Oxford appeared to spend most of the match in the Cambridge half but stoic defence kept Oxford at bay. The Master explained what was happening on the pitch, the intricacy of play, the training ground routines put in to practice and the penalty errors which broke up momentum. It was all very exciting – does this sound rather "Pathé Newsreel"?

Cambridge scored first with a three point penalty which Oxford equalised. All even at half time but then Cambridge came out fired-up and scored an early try. Oxford matched this with both tries being converted. Cambridge scored a second try but failed to convert. With a converted try now the winning margin, it was edge of the seat rugby! Cambridge awarded a late penalty which, if kicked, would have secured the game. Rather unkindly, the ball hit bone and then the other post and came back to earth on the field of play. The final whistle and it was Cambridge's day.

The "Pack" moved as one to the tailgate spot where a fantastic afternoon tea awaited. Plenty of time to discuss the game and the next fixture - the Spring Dinner.



Thank you to Master Neil Edwards and his family for arranging such a special day to bring together so many Feltmakers and their friends. If I had to choose, it's the only "Pack" I would want to scrum down with.

Tim Stocks

On Target!



A bright morning greeted the Feltmakers' team to the West London Shooting School in time for a coffee, the obligatory bacon buttie and a very high quality of sporting layout. The 29th Inter-Livery Clay Shoot has grown substantially from its modest origins and is now attended by nearly 500 guns, split over two days, enjoying the fraternity of the competition. There is an air of determination about the day with companies putting in up to five squads to secure the coveted top spot. At its core, however, is the conviviality of a day concerned with raising money for charity and getting to know our fellow liverymen. There were five principle charities benefitting this year including The Lord Mayor's Appeal and The Sheriffs' & Recorder's Charity.

In a change to normal orders there was a sequence of single and simultaneous pairs from a dozen different stands offering a total of 70 clays for each of the four individuals on the team and the venue had been switched from Holland & Holland to The West London Shooting School. The queue at the stands allowed the opportunity to discuss the day with other teams as we all awaited our turn to shoot. This was followed by a flurry when the whole team shot wave after wave of clays launched from a battery of hidden traps while another livery team loaded for us.

I am very pleased to say that the Feltmakers gave a good account of themselves as we ended the day 73rd of 126 teams. Peter Winfield, who usually captains the team, was unfortunately unavailable to shoot due to an imminent knee replacement. However, his presence on the day, along with Caro Wood, helped to spur on the team which was led by his brother, Edward. The court were well represented by Simon Wilkinson and Jeremy Bedford and the fourth spot was taken by Thomas Owen who joins the Livery later this year. A special mention must go to Jeremy who shot his side by side with accuracy and panache.

Our fine day was brought to a close with a hearty lunch from the BBQ in a sun-drenched marquee where the prizes were awarded. It came as no surprise that the Gunmakers held top spot (alongside the Pattenmakers) as well as three other places in the top 10 with their A, B, and D teams. It was pleasing to see so many lady shots on the day with the top lady shot scoring 62 from a possible 70. The aspiration next year is to field two teams from the Feltmakers in the hope of a more equal representation from the Company.

Edward Winfield

In the "Bleakish" mid-Winter



A return to Smithfield – walking through the streets of West Smithfield, towards the church of St. Bartholomew the Great, one might be forgiven for thinking they had stepped into a Dickens' novel. The walk along the churchyard was dark and bitterly cold, but inside St. Bartholomew's, the atmosphere and the welcome were warm indeed!

The procession, in which the Master & Wardens looked splendid in their furs and felt hats, took place under candlelight and the twinkle of Christmas tree lights dotted around the chapel. A unique addition to this year's Carol Service was the inclusion of a Swiss lantern, kindly given by our sister company, the Waag. The service was led by the Reverend Andrew Pritchard-Keens and the carols by the Choir of St. Bartholomew, who certainly raised the roof. The mixture of old and new carols was delightful, with a beautiful first verse of Silent Night sung in German. Amongst the carols, six Lessons were read wonderfully by Third Warden Peter Winfield, Liverymen Ms Richenda Carey, Mrs Sarah McLeod, Terry Harragan and Freeman, Miss Stephanie Wilkinson, with the sixth Lesson by Master, Simon Wilkinson. Upon our exit, attendees were gifted a bottle of Feltmakers' Company sloe gin, generously provided by The Master – a sure way to warm hearts on a winter's night! Following an informal drinks reception, a hearty meal was served at Haberdashers' Hall, consisting of cottage pie, sautéed vegetables and mince pies aplenty. It was wonderful to see fellow Feltmakers getting into the Christmas spirit, popping crackers and wearing brightly coloured Christmas hats. Following supper, the Master gave a fabulous toast and also informed the Company of the success that had been had at the British Red Cross Christmas Fair earlier in the week, in which the Feltmakers' hat stall raised a spectacular amount for the charity. To close the evening, a toast and all best wishes for the Christmas season were also given by Past Master Geoffrey Farr. All in all, the evening was a real Christmas treat!

Sarah McGrath

Feltnakers raise record amount for British Red Cross



Creative, committed. Enthusiastic (and then exhausted). Full of fun and friendship. That was the Feltnakers' team at the 2023 British Red Cross Christmas Market in Guildhall. This year, the Gala Evening was opened by their Royal Highnesses, the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester. The Lord and Lady Mayoress, Michael and Elisabeth Mainelli, were also in attendance, along with Aldermen and Pikemen.



We made a "FAB-U-LOUS" £8,800, not only breaking our own record but every other stall's takings. Despite a lower than average footfall, the British Red Cross raised a total of around £134,000 and we are hugely proud to be part of that. Enormous thanks to every Feltnaker who helped achieve this and made it a memorable few days for all the right reasons. What a super team!

Hold onto your hats for 2025!

Rebecca Nelson

England's Proud Tradition of Hatting and the Feltnakers' role

England was for centuries a producer of hat making felt. In 1604, when James I granted the Incorporation of the Feltnakers, it was noted that there were 7,000 feltnakers within the City of London and its suburbs. By the mid-20th century, this number had fallen dramatically and the handful of feltnakers still producing was spread across



the country from London to Manchester, via Atherstone in Warwickshire. It was in Atherstone that Austin Aspden became our last UK felt producer, supplying local hat manufacturer, Wilson & Stafford, with hoods to satisfy their substantial production of hats for airlines, military establishments and the UK's fashion chains.



Today, the main producers of felt are Fepsa in Portugal, ISESA in Spain, Bollman in the US and across Poland. Sadly, the Ukrainian producer, Husst Velours, who make quality fur felt hat bodies, have become somewhat elusive since the war. Russia was also a huge producer of felt, but less than three years after my visit, the decaying factory closed. At its peak, 3,000 people had worked there.



With the loss of feltnaking and manufacturing of men's hats during the 1980s and 1990s, the Feltnakers, along with other Livery Companies, became more reliant on the financial sectors of the City of

London to raise funds for charitable causes. The focus moving away from the heavy industry and suffocating atmosphere of feltnaking, towards becoming a more refined 'City Livery'. But the craft and skills of the hatmaker could not be forgotten, there had to be some connection.

The Feltnakers' first step to bring about their support of the craft took place over 30 years ago when PM William Horsman suggested a Feltnakers Design Award to bring new makers with design flair to the attention of the Livery. This event was so successful that it has become a major stepping-stone for new designers. Today, it is an honour to win one of the six categories and to include winning The Feltnakers' Design Competition on any hatmaker's CV is without doubt a mark of achievement.

Our new Master, Simon Wilkinson, has strong connections with Luton's hat trade. His grandfather, Alderman Albert Wilkinson, was Mayor and a partner with Hucklesby's. He has made a commitment to increase the knowledge and know-how of the craft to the Livery and to support those who currently work within the trade.

Carole Denford

In Memoriam

PM Peter Grant – 1932-2023

Peter certainly had a varied and interesting life. Even his childhood demonstrated this, spending the war years in India at boarding school in the Himalayas, roaming the mountains on Sundays but fortunately without encountering the tigers that prowled there.

After returning to the UK in peacetime to complete his secondary education, he



qualified as a Chartered Accountant and joined Shell International, working for them in Puerto Rico and Indonesia but not before he and Mary had tied the knot aged 24.

Five years later, back in the UK, Peter joined the merchant bank, Schroder Wagg, eventually becoming Group Financial Controller. Here he met Viscount Chelsea who invited him to join Cadogan Group to develop a portfolio of commercial interests alongside the family's very substantial property assets. Peter joined the board of Cadogan Group and became deputy chairman, a position he held for 25 years. This explains how Peter became a Feltmaker. One of Cadogan's investments was Christy's & Co, the long-established firm of hatmakers, then based in Stockport. Introduced by late Past Master Wallworth, then CEO of Christy's, Peter was duly elected as a Liveryman in 1981. and subsequently served as Master in 1997.

I owe Peter a huge debt of gratitude for many reasons, not least allowing me to marry Cathy, the eldest of his three daughters and then sponsoring me as a liveryman.

The birth of Emma, our first child in 1987, meant that Peter became a grandfather, something which, as he commented at the time, did not fully accord with his vision of himself as a youthful 54 year old!

My memory of Peter is of someone who never did things by halves. He was an excellent companion, a man of immense charm who was generous to a fault. As we will also hear, he was a committed supporter of the Feltmakers and amongst other things proposed many liverymen including the late Betty Boothroyd.

PM Edward Hutton (and son-in-law)

Peter was a committed Liveryman for over 42 years and was elected Master in 1997. His business career shows that he was clearly a good administrator and the Livery benefitted from that.

For many years Peter was a Trustee of the Charitable Foundation and he was instrumental in rewriting the Trust Deed which is now being reviewed again to update it for the 21st century. We are reminded of his generosity each year in the Charity accounts. In 2002, Peter made a donation to the Charitable Foundation in shares worth £10,600. Today that donation has grown to be the Endowment Fund, which is worth just under £69,000.

Peter was also instrumental in formalising the management of the investments of both the Company and the Charitable Foundation under the Investment Committee. He remained on the Investment Committee until just a few years ago, giving valuable advice and wise counsel. He was the right man for detail.

Finally, I would like to read verbatim a section of the Acknowledgement at the start of the "Feltmakers History", published to mark the 400th anniversary of our incorporation:

"However, one Past Master contributed more than anyone else- Past Master Peter Grant. He analysed the available Audit Books from 1757-1949, the Clerk's Bills from 1729-1880 and the more recent Charity and Company accounts. His outstanding input is felt throughout the History, not only in fact but in nuance".

PM Susan Wood

PM John Bowler MC: 1932-2023

John Bowler was born in Surrey in 1932, an elder child and only son. He was educated at Cranleigh, where he played rugby for the Colts XV and represented his house at cricket, fives, athletics and boxing. At 16, he joined the eponymous family company of hatmakers. His maturity gained through working meant he was soon selected for officer training.

In June 1951, aged 19, he was commissioned as a National Service officer and joined 1st Battalion The Welch Regiment (1 Welch) in Colchester, expecting to be sent to Hong Kong to face the Chinese People's Liberation Army. Instead, he was ordered to Korea. Bowler and his platoon of 40 men were soon in the one with the Commonwealth Division in mountainous terrain and appalling weather.

By December 1951, quoting from the recommendation for a gallantry award, Bowler led a daylight patrol with the object of observing and reporting on enemy positions and movement:

"During that afternoon he came under heavy mortar fire and was shelled by a self-propelled gun. He refused to move to a safer area and, in spite of the lack of cover, he continued to try and locate the gun and mortar positions. Later he did locate them and, while still under fire, he directed the artillery on them until they were both silenced".

A few days later, he led another daylight patrol to a hill that had been occupied by the enemy at night, while a patrol from the battalion reoccupied it by day. The reoccupation by daylight was always hazardous as there was no approach other



than up the very steep southern slope, and there was no guarantee, until the patrol reached the top, that the enemy had evacuated it the previous night.

One night, in May, Bowler was in command of another fighting patrol. Part of the approach to his objective was along 800 yards of a feature that had not been reconnoitred, but where enemy opposition might be expected. When the patrol got within 200 yards of their objective, Bowler halted it and with one man, crawled forward over the open country in moonlight to make a closer recon of the objective. When he got to within 20 yards, he led a charge that took the enemy by surprise.

It became apparent that that the enemy were in platoon strength on the objective and were also reinforcing so Bowler ordered his patrol to withdraw. The enemy came after them in large numbers and tried to cut them off. According to a subsequent report: "2/Lieut. Bowler's task was not an easy one as his objective was some 3000 yards from his forward defensive lines, and some 600 yards deeper in enemy territory than any patrol had penetrated for five months". Major General James Cassels approved an immediate Military Cross for a "great coolness under fire, which, allied to his initiative, his sound judgment and his tactical ability, inspired and set a splendid example to all those who led".

On leaving the army in late 1952, Bowler joined Allardyce Palmer, a London advertising agency, and later ran his own advertising and marketing company.

In 1959, Bowler joined the Worshipful Company of Feltmakers, following his grandfather and great-grandfather. In 1961, he married Gillian Fielder whom he met at a cocktail party thrown by Associated Television.

By 1981, he was elected Master Feltmaker and, with his wife, he wrote a history of the Feltmakers' Company. In retirement, he lived in Oxfordshire, where he embraced local community affairs and cast the occasional fly. Gillian survives him, with their son, Colin, and daughters, Jackie and Kathryn.

Abridged from The Times obituary, 18 May, 2023

Betty Boothroyd, Baroness Boothroyd OM, PC: 1929-2023.

First woman to serve as Speaker of the House of Commons (1992-2000). Honorary Liveryman since 1994.

Hilary Alexander OBE



2023

