

Past Master Peter Monson (1993/4)

I joined the Company and was made a Freeman in 1988. At that time, I was Head of Education and Training at the Admiralty Research Establishments based in Portsmouth. The Establishments were at the leading edge of technology and research projects on behalf of the Royal Navy and MoD(N). It was an exciting appointment for an engineer as Education and Training was at the hub of all research projects. One minute I would be authorising technical and medical training for divers in the compression chambers, the next sending a scientist to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) to present a research paper. My own research was on the emerging technology of interactive video and the design of methodology in producing the programmes. This was carried out by two partners: the Royal Naval Education and Training School, and the Sound Services and Vision Corporation, an MoD satellite company. Lancaster University was assigned to carry out the project with myself as Project Manager. The research paper was published twelve months later, well received by the IT companies involved in producing programmes. Taking cognisance of colour physiology was of particular interest.

In September 1993 I retired from the Service and in October 1993 became Master of the Company. It was one of the proudest moments of my life, and as any Past Master will tell you, a daunting task. However, I was well supported by the Wardens, a great Court of Assistants, the Clerk, and encouraging Membership. We were the new boys on the block, determined to become a formidable Livery Company. From day one we had to engage with the City, the IT industry, academia, and the military; I was determined to carry on with the task. All invitations to attend City functions were accepted and reciprocated as well as those outside the City. The average for my year as Master, usually accompanied by the Clerk, was at least six a week – good for networking but not so good for the waistline. We achieved engagement in 1993/94 through innovative projects such as a float for the Lord Mayor's Show depicting IT in the community both in the City and the country at large, the float being a full-size Tele Centre. At the Livery Companies' Exhibition in July 1994 Lord Mayor Sir Paul Newall was linked to Michel Carpentier, an Honorary Liveryman of the Company, in Brussels.

In order for the Membership to grow, we were constantly interviewing and then holding Clothing Ceremonies for Liverymen at the Tallow Chandlers' Hall. Business luncheons (94 as I write) were an excellent means of having guest speakers and allowing Members to bring guests, many of whom went on to join the Company. Panels continued to be successful. Linking with the Military was also a key initiative, and in 1993 I established a major link with the Defence IT Management Training Centre at Shrivenham, the Centre later absorbed into the Defence Academy. Our other major link was with the Royal Corps of Signals which continues to this day. It was a very proud moment when together with the Master of the Signals I opened the Museum at Blandford Forum on 23 February 1995: a must to visit. I believe that our major success has been the policy of the Company to include and encourage participation of all our Members, our greatest asset. Long may it continue.