

Past Masters

2007: Oliver Whitehead CBE

On Thursday 1st March 2007, Oliver Whitehead was installed as new Master at the Church of St. Martin within Ludgate. He completed his year in office on 6th March 2008 by installing his successor.

Oliver Whitehead (CBE) has been a Pavior for twenty years. He enjoys life in all aspects. Clearly, he takes business life seriously, but has also made sure that a sense of “fun and enjoyment” is never lost nor compromised. Education, charity and socialising continue to be very much on Oliver’s agenda, and he has found, through the years, that the Pavors offers and develops all of these elements.

Having earned a Degree in civil engineering, he worked for eighteen months in Sheffield for Husband and Co., a consultant responsible for the structural design of the Jodrell Bank Observatory. He also fondly remembers working for the man who had designed both the radio telescope and the timber bridge for the film “Bridge over the River Kwai”.

Oliver’s career progressed to John Laing (1963 –1986) (which Oliver recounts had an excellent training programme). Life at Laing was enjoyed immensely.

Primarily based in the UK, Oliver was involved in a number of international projects including in Iraq, Falkland Islands, Far East and Africa. This forged a number of military links, and ultimately he became the Commanding Officer of the Engineer and Logistics Staff Corps, which was set up in 1860 to allow the Army access to civilian expertise. This proved very interesting in terms of involvement during the Gulf War of 1991, Afghanistan and more recently in Iraq.

During his time at John Laing, Oliver was also a Director at the PSA (Property Services Agency).

Oliver’s successful career includes periods at Amec plc (three years) and Babcock International plc (as Chief Executive working with Lord King) before joining Alfred McAlpine in 1993. He has been Non-Executive Chairman of Alfred McAlpine since 2003 (succession will occur in June 2007).

Oliver’s time at Alfred McAlpine has seen the business recover from the difficulties of the early 1990’s into a successful home builder and construction company. Following the sale of the housing business in 2001 the company has evolved into a major support services company both through organic growth and acquisition. Since 2003 a fellow Pavior, Ian Grice, has been the CEO.

Other key aspects of Oliver’s working life include involvement in the Northwest Business Leadership Team (1995 – 2005), working alongside the Regional Development Agency.

Oliver will continue his career with an appointment as Non-Executive Director and Chairman at the property group Minerva plc.

A family man, Oliver is married to Stephanie and they have four children (Ben 31, Tom 34, Joel, 38 Lucy 39). They live in Little Missenden, Buckinghamshire. Spare time is spent in the garden, walking, game shooting and listening to music.

Oliver will make an excellent, charismatic Master and is very much looking forward to the opportunity to consolidate and focus key elements of the Livery.



*The Master
Oliver Whitehead CBE*



The Master Oliver Whitehead & Mistress Stephanie with Family

Master's Message

So far, so good. As I indicated at our April Livery Dinner, I have had a fairly gentle start to my year as Master. I have represented you and the Company at many and varied events and functions - some educational such as the lecture on Integrity and Diversity in the City and some entirely social such as the White Tie banquets at the Mansion House.

The Master's Jolly was a very interesting and enjoyable trip to Northumberland. Very recently, I agreed to be "jailed" in the Tower of London on behalf of the British Red Cross.

At my installation I referred to the need to respond to the membership and many of you have strongly suggested that we need a period of consolidation and a refreshing of the initiatives that we have introduced in recent years. I am committed to doing this and we have already started the process. The Wardens and Committee Chairman are now following up and reporting back.

During the recent visit to Ironbridge, which all Masters are invited to, I presented a plaque to the Ironbridge Trust which will hang with the other Livery Company plaques.

Whilst there, I learned that the Livery Companies were very much involved in setting up the Trust and have been supportive ever since. For those members who have not visited the Museum and displays, I would encourage you to do so. It will be an inspirational visit.

You may recall that the Master's nominated charity for this year is the Ian Rennie Hospice at Home. It provides nursing care at the home during the final stages of a terminal illness. Charity administration and overhead costs are minimal with the bulk of the money spent on nursing care. It operates in Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire and provides a very much needed and compassionate service for those coming to the end of their lives. During my various meetings in the wider Livery it has been reassuring to find that our Company is very well regarded and the changes we have made in recent years to refresh our activities have been noted and others have done the same. I believe this is a consequence of decisions made by my predecessors and our on-going commitment to attract good quality candidates for admission to the Company. Please continue with this essential and on-going task. We have enjoyed the Luncheon Club Christmas Dinner at Cutlers' Hall as part of the warm up for the holiday and New Year.

In January we have our Common Hall gathering and I hope you will come along to Pewterers' Hall to add to the discussion and hopefully ask questions on those matters that are concerning you in the Livery. I know that you have heard it before, but it is still true... the strength and quality of our Livery is based on its members. The Court is committed to a successful, vibrant and enjoyable company please continue to support and participate and thank you for helping me through my year as Master.



The Master's Jolly to Northumberland—Visit to Alnwick Gardens Water Cascades



The Master and others were "jailed and bailed" in the Tower of London to raise money for the Red Cross



The Master Oliver Whitehead (centre), Upper Warden Christopher Laing and Renter Warden Andrew Panter



Carol Singers at the Luncheon Club Christmas Dinner held in Cutlers' Hall

Past Master's Reflections

During the first few weeks I felt that there seemed to be so little notice regarding diary dates and events to attend. I think that the ideal situation would be to have a year off work! I was advised to attend as many events as possible, which is not always easy with other professional commitments.

Highlights have indeed been many. I have to say that The Lord Mayor's Dinner at Mansion House was a good start. Processing into St Paul's for one of the key services was a special event, The Ironbridge weekend visit too. Representing the Company at so many events has been a great privilege and I cannot count the number of breakfasts, lunches and dinners that Stephanie and I have attended. Not to mention lectures too.

Being a member of the Lord Mayor's and Sheriff's committee gave a great insight into the formal process of electing the Sheriffs and the Lord Mayor.

Processing around Guildhall wearing gloves and carrying a "Kant" was a unique experience on the night of the Lord Mayor's banquet, and on this occasion, Gordon Brown did wear a white tie!

I have met some great people, made some friendships and joined the 007 Masters Association with the objective of maintaining contact with all the Masters in office during the past year. Seeing many magnificent halls and learning that most companies do not have their own halls and, like us, have to work hard to raise charitable funds.

The blend of serious business and great humour has been uplifting and reassuring at the same time.

As one approaches the end of the Master's Year, and sees familiar faces at most functions, we all realise that we have now got the hang of it as our time runs out.. A fabulous experience.

Oliver Whitehead



Paviers' Lecture 2008—The Design and Construction of the Millau Bridge, France

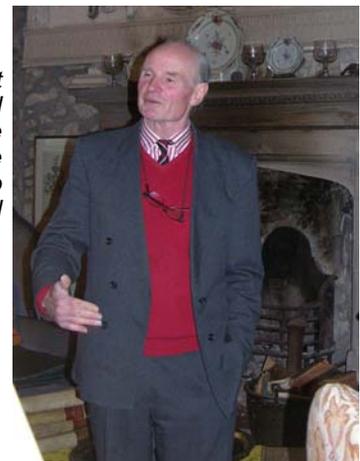


Luncheon Club Visit to Bletchley Park —Bombe machine used in decoding WWII codes



Tasting the wines from Bourgogne—Wine Circle Event at the Travellers' Club

Our Host Sir Humphrey Wakefield of Chillingham Castle during the Master's Jolly to Northumberland



The Master with Sherriff Michael Bear at Haberdashers' Hall Livery Dinner