

Past Masters

2008 Master Christopher M Liang CBE DL

On Tuesday, 4th March 2008, Christopher Laing was installed as new Master at the Church of St Martin-within-Ludgate, and completed his year in office on 8th March 2009 when he installed his successor Andrew Panter.

Christopher Laing was admitted to The Paviers in 1971. After completing his school education at St Lawrence College in Ramsgate, Kent he moved on to Hertfordshire College of Building where he obtained an HND in Building Management. This gave partial exemption to the CIOB qualifications, but he became a full member of the Institute in 1980 – his admission being signed by then President, fellow Pavior Tony Barry. He became President of CIOB in 1992.

He joined John Laing plc and was dispatched with his new bride, Diana, to Edinburgh to work as a Trainee Site Manager at the new Heriot Watt University at Riccarton. This was a testing time but gave a valued training in the realities of construction life. He recalls being told that “you have not made it as a manager until you have been called a 'xxxxxxx xxxxxxx' by the workforce”! Normally regarded as a proper gentleman he set out to obtain this accolade, which was won four weeks later! This period also provided lunchtime tuition in dominoes and cribbage – perhaps there is a possibility for a new Paviers’ tournament?

Edinburgh was followed by a move further north to construct a distillery for Chivas Brothers near to Tomintoul, Glenlivet. More training followed - this time into the gentle flavours of MacAllan and Mortlach whisky. It was here also that his eldest child, Paula, was born - in Dufftown, under the towers of the Glenfiddich Distillery. Sadly, this has not given her a liking for the amber nectar.

Reality had to follow and the next project was at Rochdale in Lancashire – Gracie Fields and Cyril Smith country, but also one of the wettest parts of England. It was here that he first met Immediate Past Master Oliver Whitehead, who was at that time a District Manager for John Laing Construction Ltd. Milton Keynes was next on the list and then it was a posting to Head Office to obtain experience on the Personnel and Marketing sides of the business. Then in 1998 Christopher was appointed Director of Environmental Affairs for John Laing, which was a most informative time and it was from this moment that he gained his interest in sustainability and environmental issues, which he retains today.

He retired from John Laing in 2002, but immediately took up positions within the Voluntary Sector. Christopher was Chairman of the National Playing Fields Association from 1993 - 2000 and is currently a Vice President. Other posts have included trustee positions at Global Action Plan and Hertfordshire

Community Foundation. He was High Sheriff of Hertfordshire in 2001 and he is a Deputy Lieutenant of the County. He is Chairman of Eskmuir Properties Ltd and is President of Hertfordshire Groundwork Trust. He is also a Trustee of The Lord's Taverners, which is to be his charity of the year.

Christopher and Diana live in Ayo St Lawrence, Hertfordshire and have four children, Paula, Michael, Carla and Stewart and with Stewart having been



*The Master
Alderman Sir Michael Bear*



*The Master & Mistress Pavior
with extended Family*



The Master with Mistress Diana

admitted as a Freeman of the Company. With two grandsons and one granddaughter Christopher has ensured there is succession on various fronts of the Laing dynasty. Christopher's other interests include golf, walking, shooting (full-bore and shotgun) and holidays at their home in Menorca, but this year all will take second place to the Master's role for The Paviers which he is looking forward to with relish.

A Poem for The New Master

Let us sing of Master Laing, who is hosting this shebang,
He is here tonight, and on his best behaviour.
For his fellows in the hall have decided, one and all,
That for this year, he should be the Master Pavior.

You should perhaps recall that we're here in Cutlers' Hall,
Even though tonight's, of course, a Paviers' bender.
But they haven't got their own – they've got the plans,
But six hundred years the job's been out to the stone tender.

I would not suggest your going has enrolled Master Laing,
Because you thought the company needs a saviour.
But a Laing seems to be here almost every other year,
So it's not surprise they've made him Master Pavior.

I've known young Master Laing since before the first big bang,
He will treat you well – not bully or enslave yer.
With great care, he'll place you all – not flat – with a slight fall.
As you might expect from any Master Pavior.

I have just been handed this – a hand written note from Chris,
“Just one more word from you Richard, and I'll shave yer!”
So that's my final shout – I'll leave you to top him out,
And salute Chris Laing, your brand new Master Pavior.

Master's Message

From the moment that I took office I knew that this was going to be a year to remember. Holding office as Master of a Livery Company is a most privileged position offering many opportunities to represent the Company at dinners around the various Halls as well as other less waist-increasing events.

Moments that deserve greater mention include the Annual Livery Weekend at Ironbridge, which took place at the beginning of June. This weekend saw Masters and Mistresses from 87 Worshipful Companies descend upon Ironbridge where we were guided around four of the ten museums that make up the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust.

The Sheriff's Breakfast signalled the beginning of the end for Sheriff and Pavior, Alderman Michael Bear. I am sure that all of us will join to congratulate Michael for the manner in which he has conducted the office of Sheriff and we wish him and Barbara well as they commence preparation for higher office in 2010.

I would like to thank all Paviers who have brought forward candidates for admission into the Livery and to say how much we want to encourage every Liveryman to spread the word about the value of membership of our Company and to propose further candidates for consideration by the Court.

The Paviers and their guests dined at Mansion House in what was a splendid occasion. Our principal speaker was Martin Bayfield and he literally dwarfed all those around him and I gather that The Lord Mayor was able to dine out on the spectacle of our Mistress attempting to protect Hagfried's back during the Loving Cup!

On 29th September in Guildhall over 1500 liverymen gathered in Common Hall for the purpose of electing a new Lord Mayor for the ensuing year. I had a privileged position on the dais immediately behind



Richard Stilgoe reciting his Poem to the new Master during the Installation Dinner



Sheriff Alderman Michael Bear

the Masters of the 'Great Twelve', from where I was called upon to second the resolution of thanks for Alderman Michael Bear as outgoing Sheriff. Thankfully all was

I would like to pay tribute to all who have contributed to my charity of the year – The Lord's Taverners. As those who attended the Banquet will know we have achieved our first aim, to provide funds to acquire an adapted minibus in the Company's name. Bedecked in Taverner's green it is hoped that this will be available for donation to a City school in 2009. It is a major achievement and I would like to thank all golfers, cyclists, walkers and all others for their help, which is greatly appreciated by this thriving charity

Past Master's Reflections

Being past is not all that bad! Amongst other things it offers an opportunity to reflect on some special moments from a very special year.

To attempt to summarise these in a brief article will prove quite challenging and I doubt very much whether there is anyone out there who will be the slightest bit bothered about the menu for lunch with the Master of the Constructors or for dinner at Carpenters Hall for their Ladies Banquet. The effect on the waistline is noticeable and that will be one of the first matters to address now that the Paviers have a new Master. However, it would be wrong to ignore the hospitality offered to Masters of the various Livery Companies by their counterparts, many of which also included my Mistress – now that's a privilege I shall miss! To be able to have a mistress without a moment of complaint from my wife!

The year as Master offers the chance to make new friends from the other Companies and in many ways stepping down from office will mean that I will be able to develop these friendships through the "After Eight" Past Master's Association. Certainly this group of like-minded individuals has plans to encourage this and a full programme of events has been compiled, and not just involving seats around a dinner table.

When Diana and I look back at the year we know that we have enjoyed every moment. High up the list will be the services in St Paul's Cathedral and in Westminster Cathedral, and of course, as every Master will agree there is the Ironbridge weekend. But at the pinnacle for us both have been the occasions spent with Paviers.

From the moment that I stood in front of the assembled gathering at St Martin-Within-Ludgate I knew that I would have the tremendous support of the entire Company and throughout the year this has proved to be the case. It is a great family and we cannot thank you enough for your wonderful support and we know that you will treat Andrew and Tui Panter in exactly the same way – because that is the way of the Paviers.

Diana and I wish the new Master and Mistress every success in their term of office.

Christopher Laing



5 new Liverymen installed at the Spring Livery Dinner



Master's Jolly to Madrid 2008—Toledo, the ancient capital with the River Tajo.



Master's Summer Event—Visit to MCC Lords on 24th June 2008



Livery Halls Walk—guided by The Clerk 7th September 2008.

Steam Roller FG 1191 leading
the Paviers' Float in the
Lord Mayors Show
11th November 2008



Bill Tidy, Guest Speaker, gives his
cartoon presentation at Clothworkers'
Hall for the Autumn Livery Dinner
20th November 2008

Common Hall 2009
was held in Armourers' Hall
on 20th January 2009



Professor David Nethercott, Stephen
Tarr and The Master Christopher
Laing at The 2009 Paviers' Lecture on
"Keeping Britain Moving and Going
Underground at Hindhead"