

## Master's Report 2010 – 2011

As 'my year' draws to a close, I look back with gratitude at an unforgettable year and I thank you for the honour of serving as Master Tax Adviser. I have represented the Company at fifty dinners and lunches, held at twenty-one different halls and at the Mansion House and Guildhall. I have attended twelve church services, including six at St Paul's Cathedral and three at our own guild church, St Bartholomew the Great. There have been charity events, cultural occasions, public lectures, celebrations of historic milestones, and much fun besides.

The great sadness of the year has been the passing of John Jeffrey-Cook, a Founder Member of the Guild of Tax Advisers, the Clerk for many years, and for the past ten years Clerk Emeritus and Honorary Assistant. He had long championed the history of tax and was delighted when the Company's History of Tax Group took shape in 2008. He provided me with all the information, contacts and support I needed to get the Group going, although he steadfastly refused to become Chairman! It was fitting that he gave the inaugural lecture on 'The remarkable William Pitt and his taxes.' Over and above everything that John contributed to the tax profession and to the Company, he will be remembered for the warm friendships he formed with so many Company members. Whilst his immense contribution leaves a lasting legacy, I and many others mourn the loss of a personal friend.

Our formal functions this year have been well supported by members. The Installation Dinner was held at Vintners' Hall, with Dame Judith Mayhew Jonas as the guest speaker. Lord Peter Goldsmith, having just been admitted as an honorary freeman and our 250<sup>th</sup> member, was also present. Our Budget Banquet took place at Stationers' Hall in March and I was honoured that Dame Barbara Mills was our principal guest. Her sudden death a couple of months later was saddening. On a happier note, we welcomed 'our own sheriff' Alderman Fiona Woolf as the Lord Mayor's representative at our Civic Lunch at Apothecaries' Hall on a glorious day in May.

As for our much-valued armed forces affiliations, it was a relief that 101 Squadron survived the Defence Review (at least for the time being) and the Squadron continues its refuelling role in Afghanistan, as well as being deployed in the NATO action in Libya. This year RAF Brize Norton became home to the squadrons based at RAF Lyneham, and Middle Warden Nick Goulding attended the formal hand-over day at RAF Brize Norton in July. HMS Bangor, after several months of intensive training exercises from her home base of Faslane, was scheduled for a NATO deployment around Northern Europe, but instead was called at short notice to set sail to the Mediterranean for an active role off Libya. We send our best wishes to 101 Squadron and HMS Bangor, as they continue to be engaged on active service.

I have been fortunate to visit our Army Cadet Force's annual camp two years running. Our affiliation sector draws its cadets from North East London boroughs such as Haringey, Hackney and Barking, and it is inspirational to see the self-discipline and self-assurance achieved by these teenagers after a demanding fortnight experiencing the 'great outdoors' at camp. This year we also formed an affiliation with the Westminster cadet unit of St John Ambulance, marked by a guided tour and reception in May at the Museum of the Order of St John, where we were joined by several cadets from the Unit.

We continue to participate in the life of the City and the livery movement. The tax briefings provided by Assistant Paul Morton and his team before the Lord Mayor's overseas visits attract wide praise. The Financial Services Group of livery companies is becoming increasingly influential and is actively supporting the Lord Mayor's initiative 'Restoring Trust in the City.' I am grateful to Assistant Nicholas Dee, our FSG representative, for his forthright engagement with the Group's initiatives.

In the past inter-livery rivalry sometimes erupted into pitched battles in the streets between livery companies. Today we have inter-livery competitions, and our fiercely competitive bridge team retained their team trophy this year, with the Deputy Master and Stephen Barnfield coming 1<sup>st</sup> overall and Bill Dodwell and Nick Prentice taking 5<sup>th</sup> place. Congratulations, Gentlemen!

The History of Tax Group continues to flourish, and there have been presentations this past

year by liveryman John Brown CBE - on the VAT cases of Paul de Voil, our first honorary chaplain - , Professor David Southern and Professor Chantal Stebbings. From the beginning our History of Tax initiative has benefited from the enthusiastic support of the tax academic community, and I was glad to welcome some leading tax professors to our formal functions: Professors Jane Frecknall Hughes, Judith Freedman, Chantal Stebbings and John Tiley.

We have had a smart, new and fully-functioning website. This was achieved within budget through the good judgement and sheer hard work of Nick Goulding. Together with The Owl, the website provides an effective means of communicating with members and informing a wider audience about the Company.

It has been good to meet newer members at our various social events, as well as catching up with the “usual suspects,” whose loyalty to the Company is much appreciated. Events have ranged from a visit to the Museum of London (where our old Master’s Badge is on display), to an outing to Wilton’s Music Hall with the Society of Young Freemen (then chaired by liveryman Victoria Lloyd), to a Victoria League fundraising concert. Late July saw forty-six of us gathering at Bromley-by-Bow station for a fascinating guided walk around the Olympic site, followed by supper at Forman’s, overlooking the main Olympic arena. Another popular event was the tour of the Old Bailey in March, through the good offices of our Sheriff and the Deputy Master, when Charles Henty, Under Sheriff and Secondary of London, was our witty and informative guide. Sheriff Fiona has done much for the Company during her year in office and fittingly we had an excellent turn-out for the final event of my year, The Sheriffs’ Opera at the Guildhall, in support of the Lord Mayor’s Appeal.

The Company simply could not function without those who work so hard on its behalf. First and foremost I must thank our Clerk Paul Herbage for all he does, and also our administrator Ann Bailey. Amongst the many members who contribute, I especially thank the Wardens, Treasurer, The Court, and our two Assistant Clerks as well as the Chairmen and Secretaries of the Committees. Not least I am grateful to all members who have simply turned up and enjoyed themselves during my year! Heartfelt thanks to my escorts during the year, particularly as, according to quaint City custom, they have not been offered the privileges afforded to spouses of Masters.

Finally I wish Peter Gravestock every success as Master and hope he and Cynthia have as enjoyable and satisfying a year as I have done.

Barbara Abraham  
September 2011