

equities and cash deposits has greatly exceeded requirements and the Corporation has established the Bridge House Estates Charitable Trust, which donates £12m annually to the needs of the elderly and education throughout the London area.

The hospitality responsibility concerns mostly agreeing to requests for hospitality, before directing the organisation of the event. Whilst this normally takes the form of an official lunch or dinner in the Guildhall, or the Crypts, it frequently involves looking after a visiting civic dignitary and his delegation for a full two or three day itinerary. Whereas all the detailed clerical work is done at Guildhall by the officers and their staff, the duties of hosting fall upon the Committee in general and the "Chief" in particular. During 1997, this involved the writer in visits by the Mayors of Chicago, Boston, Buenos Aires and Prague, ranging from helicopter flights over central London to visiting Lloyds, Hampstead Heath, LIFFE and the Central Police Station in addition to regular breakfast meetings and seminars tailored to meet our guests' interests and their own parochial problems at home.

Management of the operational buildings involves regular visits to the Mansion House, where all work to that historic property is ultra-sensitive and normally subject to approval by English Heritage. Similarly, work at the Old Bailey is not only of a high security specification but also of very high quality in view of the importance of the building.

Tower Bridge figures prominently in this respect and the Committee carry responsibility for all aspects of the Bridge, including the Museum and displays, the catering and even the bureau de change!

All lettings of the Guildhall complex fall to the Committee. Applications for the Great Hall are considered by the Grand Committee, with delegated authority to the "Chief" for the remaining facilities. This is a major responsibility as all the Halls and the Crypts are in almost daily use, and it is essential to ensure that all related costs to the Corporation are covered.

Perhaps the responsibilities with the highest profile for the "Chief" are the major events in the Guildhall when more than 700 guests enjoy an important banquet or lunch, or a major ceremony such as an Honorary Freedom. During 1997 there were State Banquets for the Presidents of Israel and Brazil and the Lunch to celebrate the Golden Wedding Anniversary of the Queen and Prince Philip.

Whilst the State Banquets are the responsibility of a uniquely appointed "one-off" Ward Committee with its own elected Chairman, the Chief Commoner is prominent in the ceremonial in that, as "Chief", several months before the

event he proposes the Resolution to be presented to the Head of State at the civic ceremony before the banquet. As proposer, he has honour of presentation to the Head of State and is involved in the pre-banquet entertainment and official photographs.

Events such as the Golden Wedding Lunch and Honorary Freedoms are the direct responsibility of the "Chief" and his committee, so that the "Chief" is in the limelight through the planning and the execution of the event. Prior to the recent Golden Wedding Lunch I worked very closely with the Mansion House and the Remembrancer in agreeing the budget and the detail planning. The various proposals as to the guest list were coordinated and agreed. Suitable catering firms were invited to submit proposals for the lunch, including wines, before being short-listed and interviewed, before the successful applicant was identified. This was followed by a trial meal for the "Chief" accompanied by a small group from the Committee. Arrangements for the arrival, reception and care of the principal guests were discussed and agreed.

On the day of the lunch everything went according to plan, with the Lord Mayor hosting the Queen, Prince Philip and several members of the Royal family, not to mention a full list of past Prime Ministers and their spouses amongst several hundred guests. A truly memorable and probably unique occasion and certainly a high spot of my year in office.

Another duty accorded to the "Chief" is to accompany the Lord Mayor on one of his overseas visits. During 1997 my wife and I were privileged to be members of the party that visited the USA, with engagements in Phoenix, Los Angeles, Chicago and New York. Despite a very busy itinerary we were able to use our rest day to visit the Grand Canyon by light plane and helicopter, and our commitments included a reciprocal visit to meet Mayor Daly in Chicago. The main purpose of such mayoral visits is the stimulation and promotion of trading and commercial links with the City of London so that visits span a wide range of activities relevant to both sides.

In conclusion, it can be seen that the "Chief" has an action packed year in office, with wide ranging responsibilities. If "variety be the spice of life", the year must surely be a highspot in the Civic career of the incumbent and spouse. Sometime soon this former "Chief" will get down to recording a detailed account of the year, illustrated by memorable photographs, menu cards, invitations and other artifacts; something to look back on when the diary ceases to be full of interesting and enjoyable commitments.

A RIVINGTON BLUE PLAQUE?

by Liveryman Lawrence Rivington.

During 1996, I had thought it would be a good idea to buy 62 St Paul's Churchyard which is where our family had set up in publishing in 1711, and were in business for 139 years. I had wondered who owned it now for some time. I thought my good friend the Dean of St Paul's, the Very Reverend Eric Evans, might know.

The Dean gave me an appointment at 11 o'clock on Tuesday 3rd August 1996. I came around the corner as the cathedral clock struck 11 a.m. and there were 3 dogs sitting up 3 steps looking at me. Then his wife ushered me in. I was shocked to see the Dean sitting behind his large desk with 2 plastic tubes up his nostrils. The tubes went over his shoulders down to the floor and across the room to an oxygen cylinder. He quickly put me at my ease and seemed lively. I asked him if he could tell me who owned 62 St Paul's Churchyard as I wanted to buy or rent it for our family again. He said, with flourish of his arm, "You don't want to buy anything, you don't want to rent anything, have a plaque.

He picked up his phone and called the architect Sir William Whitfield, and told him to give me a plaque for our family for 285 years in publishing. I went to see the architect Sir William Whitfield and he explained that all the area around and including Pater Noster Square belonged to Mitsubishi, the Japanese firm. They said that when the square has been pulled down and rebuilt in two years they would like my plaque to be placed in the square to give it a sense of history.

The Dean died two weeks later.

The two years have nearly passed and still the deserted buildings stand around the square.