

THE OFFICE OF CHIEF COMMONER

We offer our congratulations to Liveryman Michael Bramwell who has been appointed Chief Commoner.

For over 400 years the management of the property and land belonging to the citizens of the City of London – known as the City's Estate – has rested with the City Lands Committee of the Corporation of London. The Chairman of this Committee enjoys the courtesy title Chief Commoner established in the later part of the 19th century.

The origin of the City's Estate lies in a Royal charter of Henry VI who in 1444 conferred upon the citizens of London all soils, commons, wastes, streets and ways "that they may enjoy the rents of the same for them and their successors for ever." The Estate has been added to over the centuries, most notably in 1638 when Charles I conferred "all houses, messages, and edifices and their site and foundation, and all watercourses, gutters and easements which now are erected built or enjoyed in, upon or under void grounds, wastes, commons, streets, ways of public places and in the banks, shores and wastes of the Thames." The revenue from buildings now standing on this common land provide the major part of the Corporation's private income.

In 1969 the City Lands Committee was merged with the Bridge House Estates Committee, which was responsible for managing the property and lands possessed by the Corporation for the maintenance of the bridges over the Thames.

The City Lands and Bridge House Estates Committee, as it is now known, is responsible for the management of the Corporation's main private assets and as such controls the best part of the Corporation's non-rates revenue. Consequently it is regarded as the premier Committee of the Corporation.

It therefore follows that the Chairman of this Committee has great influence throughout the Corporation and takes precedence over all other 'commoners'. It is his responsibility to ensure that the Common Estate is preserved for the benefit of the citizens both now and in the future.

IN THE OFFICE

We thank Liveryman Hilary Wiltshire for her assistance in the office and wish her well in the future.

At the same time, we welcome Margaret Alford who has joined us on a very full time basis!

JAZZ IN BRITAIN TODAY

By Assistant Nigel Tully, a Bandleader since 1963 and a member of our Jazz Committee.

Peter Ind has made a major contribution to jazz in Britain and America through his bass playing and his "Bass Clef" enterprise, so I started to read his recent article on jazz in "Preserve Harmony" with a sense of pleasant anticipation. But somehow Peter's views gave a much more negative picture of the jazz scene than I was expecting, in fact I could hardly relate it to what I perceive as a jazz fan and listener. Hence this article; I would like my fellow Liverymen to know that there is another, much more positive point of view.

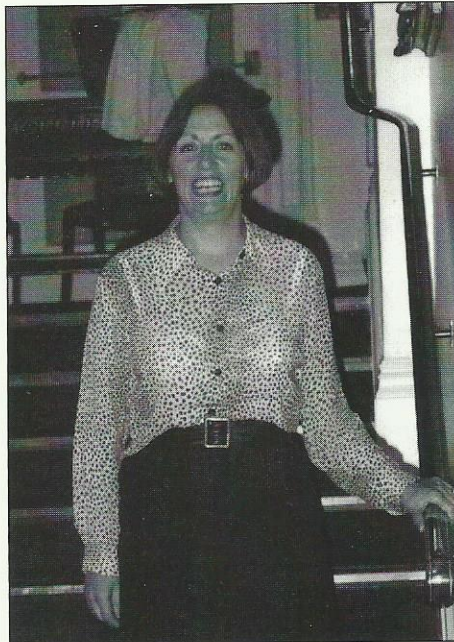
I should declare a personal belief – that modern (post 1930's) jazz, based on live improvisation over a framework of known tunes and chord progressions, is one of the century's most significant art-forms. Because improvisation is *the* vital ingredient, producing music unlike any other kind, I place great importance on the ready availability of top-quality live jazz music, and it's my belief that in Britain today there is an abundance of exactly this. Rather than generalise, let me list five examples.

First, in London and Birmingham we have what is indisputably one of the world's greatest jazz clubs - Ronnie Scott's. Six nights a week, anyone interested in jazz can go to Ronnie's (without checking who is on the bill) and be sure of hearing wonderful live music, in a delightful setting and for a very reasonable admission charge. Usually the bill features a world-class

musician or band as the main attraction, plus a British artiste whose name may not yet have the same commercial clout but whose playing will be worthy of serious critical attention. I have enjoyed superb musical experiences at Ronnie's over the last 30 years, hearing great artistes such as Ben Webster, Roland Kirk, Stan Tracey, Nina Simone, James Moody, the Brecker Brothers, Loose Tubes, George Melly, Arturo Sandoval, Stan Getz, Buddy Rich, and of course Ronnie Scott himself. To put it simply, I feel lucky to have been alive and in London while Ronnie's has consistently produced such magnificent music. More importantly, thousands of other people seem to agree - these days Ronnie's is almost always full, packed with people young and old visibly enjoying and reverencing the best of live improvised music.

Secondly, NYJO (the National Youth Jazz Orchestra) has for over 30 years offered the aspiring young jazz player a high-quality goal – that of playing in a world-class but youthful jazz big-band. NYJO's performances are exciting, musically accomplished, and technically impressive; the band's alumni include Andy Panayi and Mark Nightingale, both outstanding musicians who have been awarded the Company's Silver Medal for Jazz. NYJO's mere existence would be refutation of Peter's gloomy views in its own right; the fact that, under Bill Ashton's enthusiastic leadership it is going from strength to strength, with an increasing fan base and bigger sponsorship, is evidence that young jazz in Britain today is alive and kicking.

Thirdly, I am delighted by the ready availability of good recorded jazz. I'm



Margaret Alford – after the Livery Dinner!

THE LORD MA

To quote the Lord Mayor, Alderman Roger Cork, in his address to the Masters, Prime Wardens and Upper Bailiff of the City Livery Companies at Mansion House:

'...We wanted to choose a cancer charity that spends its money on research into cancer in all its forms.

The Cancer Research Campaign is in the forefront of the research and development of anti cancer drugs, which, thanks to their and many others' efforts, have been revolutionised in the last 20 years. Medical research and development is a very expensive business and the Cancer Research Campaign needs more funds for this vital work.'

It has been customary for the Company to support the annual Lord Mayor's Appeal. This year we are doing so with a difference. As part of the fund raising