Wardens, Assistants, Past Masters, Fellow Liverymen, Clerk and Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am honoured and humbled to have been elected Master for the ensuing year for a second time. The Lord Mayor and a lot of other Livery companies had two terms due to the pandemic, so I am incredibly grateful that you have allowed me to have that same opportunity. I am looking forward to experiencing it in the “real World” rather than being sat in front of a computer at home on Zoom!

The Common Hall in 2020, when I was last elected, was hugely different. There was no church service, the Court were the only members of the Livery that were allowed to attend. My wife, Simone, was the only member of my family who could be present. I am so pleased that this time other members of my family can be here including my children, Emily and Joe.

At this point, I need to thank them, particularly Simone, for their never ending support during my time in the Livery and for their encouragement to serve as Master again.

I looked back at the speech I gave at Common Hall in 2020 which highlighted the precarious situation we were in, due to the reopening of the Hall just before we had to lock it down again due to Covid. I am sorry to say that I feel like a stuck record. Our Livery, as you know from the letter that the Immediate Past Master sent out two or three months ago, is still in a tricky situation. Covid lasted longer than we hoped. The City of London has come back slower as people change their working habits. And now on top of this we are faced with a period of Stagflation which will no doubt curb the demand for the use of our Hall through our Event Management Partner – Bovingdons. The 4th Floor still remains unlet despite our best efforts to attract a tenant. There is still time to support Margaret’s appeal, including the 200 club, direct donations and chair sponsorship amongst others. The Enterprise Committee headed by Warden Gwyn Howells would be delighted to hear from you.

We also launched our Corporate Membership initiative last year. This has proved to be a successful addition to the Livery but there is still room for a few more businesses, so if you know of any companies that would benefit from being associated with our Livery and benefit from the networking opportunities that it would bring then please contact either the Clerk or myself.

Away from the financial challenges that our Livery faces, the key strands to our Livery remain – fellowship and charity.

Every Liveryman knows the great fellowship that we have within our Livery. Our welcoming hospitality is well known throughout the city and our Industry. Away from the usual Court lunches, we have other events in the year including the Boar’s Head ceremony and the White Tie Ladies Banquet, when we hope to entertain the Lord Mayor and the civic party. Please support these events, these are also the lifeblood of our Livery.

Regarding fellowship, we need you, our Liverymen, to introduce more people to our Livery. It is important that we continue to bring new blood into the Butchers, and it relies on all of us to introduce friends and colleagues to our historic organisation. If you know people that would benefit from the excellent networking opportunities that our wonderful Livery has to offer, then please contact Warden Peter Allen who heads up our recruitment committee.

One of the other key strands of our Livery is Charity. We support two charities on a rolling three year basis. We are in the process this month of selecting two charities for a three year period, for which we provide significant financial and Livery support to; as well as donating smaller amounts to several other deserving charities. At the same time, we are maintaining our engagement within the meat industry by providing financial support to individuals and organisations within the educational system, in order to grow our leaders within the industry.

When I spoke here 2 years ago one of the areas, I wanted to explore was our Livery’s relevance to our modern Industry. With the help of the Industry Engagement working group new initiatives have started that have gone some way to ensuring that as a Livery – we can focus ourselves at the centre of the meat industry.

We have started a mentoring initiative where Liverymen, with their experience can give help and guidance to those that are working in the meat industry. I have heard many people who enter our Livery say that they want to “give back” Mentoring is one of the ways you can.

Another big initiative the Industry Engagement Group introduced was the City Meat Lecture. This is an evening based on a similar format to the City Food Lecture. Important and relevant topics are discussed and debated by experts in their field. Last year was the first lecture and it was a tremendous success. This year it will be on the 24th of November and Professor Alice Stanton will be leading the topic on “How much Red Meat should we Eat? Will the WWF Climate Ambitions Endanger Human Health?” This event is open not just to Liverymen, but to everyone in our industry and is a wonderful opportunity for everyone to meet up and network. Tickets go on sale this month so please sign up, attend and spread the word!

One of the highlights in our year is the Master’s Charity Ball and this year will be no different. We will be having another gala night where we will be raising money both for our Hall and for my chosen Charity - Dementia UK. Dementia UK support and train special “Admiral” nurses to help and assist individuals with dementia and the families of those having to live with this disease.

Dementia is currently the biggest killer in the UK. At the moment there are 850,000 people having to live with this disease and this is set to rise to 1.6 million by 2040. Dementia UK through their 376 specialist admiral nurses provide invaluable support to over 70,000 families in the UK.

I hope as many people as possible can join me for what will be a very memorable evening and a worthwhile cause.

I now would like to pay tribute to our immediate Past Master, Margaret Boanas. Margaret has thrown herself 100% into the role of Master this year. There does not seem to be a day that has gone by where you have been representing the Worshipful Company of Butchers. You were elected Master just as the World was starting to open up after 2 long years of lockdowns. Talk about hitting the ground running!!

I know that this year has not just been about representing the Butchers’. There have also been some significant challenges along the way but you have guided our Livery through what has been a difficult year with great leadership – Thank you!

In conclusion, this again is a challenging and tough time for our Livery but through the heroic efforts of all Liverymen, I know that we can survive and thrive beyond this difficult period and strengthen our great Livery for the future!!

It is now my immense pleasure to give a vote of thanks to the Immediate Past Master and to present her with her Past Master’s medal.