It may not have been the heady heights of 29.1°C we all enjoyed at the 2018 Election Court lunch but the sun shone and the Company enjoyed this well attended lunch. Well over 100 Freemen, Liverymen, Court Assistants, Wardens, Guests and our Master enjoyed a thoroughly entertaining and enjoyable afternoon on the HQS Wellington. HQS Wellington, a Grimsby Class Sloop of 1256 tons, was built for the Royal Navy at Devonport Dockyard in 1934. After steaming over 240,000 miles in the Second World War including rescuing over 450 Merchant Navy seamen, evacuating troops at Dunkirk, participating in the North African landings and sharing the credit for sinking a U Boat, she was purchased in 1947 by the Honourable Company of Master Mariners to serve as their Livery Hall and Headquarters.

At the Court Meeting before lunch the new display boards for the Company which were gifted by Past Master Mike Williamson were unveiled and the Master took pride of place next to one of them with the newly refurbished bonnet.

At the Court meeting it was with regret that the Court accepted the resignation of Malcolm Butchers as Walbrook Warden. The Court, and in particular the Master, expressed their gratitude for the efforts of Malcolm over the last 12 months. The Court were delighted to elect the following for the 2019/2020 team:-

Master – Mark Lane  
Thames Warden - Rob Casey  
Fleet Warden – Graham Howells  
Walbrook Warden – Martin Baggs  

David Lloyd-Owen, David Richards and Nigel Cartwright were re-elected as Court Assistants.

The Court also paid tribute to the hard work of the Tony Parker as our Beadle for in excess of 20 years and confirmed the appointment of Tim Gutteridge as our new Beadle.
Seven new Freeman were admitted by the Court; Allan Barton, Martin Bigg, Ramon Gonzales, Afzal Ginwalla, David Jefferay, David Meehan and Tony Williams. The new Freeman were given a warm welcome by the Court.

The drinks reception was held on the Quarterdeck and with the sun shining it may well have been a summer’s day. The open upper deck was available and, given the fine weather, enjoyed by many!

Although a smashing contribution to the Company on this occasion there was no need for the Company embossed umbrellas helpfully organised by Court Assistant Christine Duthie. No doubt they will be more than invaluable in the future!

Following the drinks reception, we proceeded below deck for lunch in the Court Room which in a previous life was the engine room of HQS Wellington. The Court Room was extensively refurbished in 2005 and includes cabinets set into the panelled walls which display the silver and gold collection of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners together with half models and framed antique charts.

Court Assistant and Fleet Warden elect Graham Howells proposed a toast in water to our Guests. Our Principal Guest was Professor William Blake of Plymouth University who was attending with his colleague Carey Mark. Other guests included the Master Fueller Sharavan Joshi and his Clerk Bill Walworth together with Simon Murrels of the Livery Committee of the City of London.

Graham proceeded to introduce three Bursary Award winners, namely Lili Dreyer (Brunel), Alex Hazelgrove-Planel (Cambridge) and Nameera Khan (Oxford) together with two other University guests, Martin Cook (Newcastle) and Patrick Sullivan (Oxford). As Graham explained we may have seen Patrick when he was rowing for Oxford in the 2019 Boat Race. Professor William Blake responded by amusingly summing up how he started his career in a ‘grooming post’ in the Foreign and
Commonwealth Office in a bid to understand the real world before moving into academia and now describing himself as an ‘indiscriminate scientist’ focusing on river catchments and the impact of human activities and natural disturbances in channels and estuaries. Professor Blake advised his captive audience to ignore local knowledge at their peril and in particular local knowledge which advises on the importance of hippo watch!

Professor Blake proposed a toast to our Company and in reply the Master thanked him and his assistant Carey Marks. The Master congratulated the Bursary Students and in addition to personally thanking Tony Parker and introducing Tim Gutteridge he explained the success of the H2Outreach programme which was well on target to deliver a 10% growth in our Company by 2020. The Master reminded us that this was his last opportunity to address our Company before Mark Lane picks up the reins at the Installation Court Lunch in July 2019 and expressed his thanks to all which he said had ‘been a privilege to lead’. The Master gave particular thanks to Thames Warden elect Rob Casey for all his hard work in delivering the Water Conservators ‘Taking Control of Your Environment’ initiative on World Water Day on 22 March 2019.

Before departing a traditional Stirrup Cup was enjoyed in The Model Room of HQS Wellington where Court Assistance Nigel Cartwright announced that a fantastic £800 had been collected for the Lord Mayors Big Curry Lunch which supports veteran of the Army, the Royal Navy, the Royal Marines and the Royal Air Force who have been affected by military service.