

VOTE OF THANKS BY THE LIVERY
TO ALDERMAN WILLIAM ANTHONY BOWATER RUSSELL
LORD MAYOR OF THE CITY OF LONDON 2019/21

“My Lord Mayor, Fellow Liverymen,

I move

That the Liverymen of the several companies of the City of London take
great delight in expressing to

**The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor,
William Anthony Bowater Russell**

their gratitude and sincere appreciation for the distinguished manner in which he has carried out the role of Lord Mayor of the City of London during the past two years.

Fifty years before William took office in 1969 when he was aged 4½ he attended the parade for his grandfather Sir Ian Bowater when he became Lord Mayor. His family included three previous Lords Mayor: Sir Vansittart Bowater in 1913, Sir Frank Bowater in 1938, and Sir Noel Bowater in 1953. No wonder that he recently called on employers large and small to join him at a Conference on 'Recruiting from a Different Talent Pool' at the Mansion House.

We commend William for his dedication to the City during a most challenging period in its history, serving a second year as Lord Mayor to ensure continuity of leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic. This was a historic moment. The last time a Lord Mayor served a second year in office was as long ago as 1861 with the re-election of William Cubitt, who famously built Cubitt Town. There are no plans for a Russell Town...yet.

My Lord Mayor, you were expecting to hold office for one year, of which you would be spending 100 days overseas in 20 different countries, making 850 speeches. Instead, your term of office was extended to two years, and you have made some 2,500 video calls. You have made virtual visits to a wide range of distant countries including Chile, Singapore and the ASEAN countries, New Zealand and Wales. On some, no doubt, particularly exhausting days, you have travelled from Australasia to South East Asia, and then across the Pacific Ocean to the United States all on the same day.

We are grateful to William for placing the recovery of the City at the heart of his Mayoral Theme, as the City strives to respond to the particular challenges of recent times. William has worked tirelessly, leading a dedicated “Re-opening campaign” to entice and encourage people back to the Square Mile. He visited several hundred businesses, from banks and barbers to pubs and sandwich shops, and this concerted campaign was complemented by a series of COVID-19 recovery breakfasts, the programme for which drew together those leading their own recovery plans across both the City and the UK. During those breakfasts, people shared ideas and strategies across a wide range of fields, from mental health to the use of office space, to stimulate a more effective and speedy recovery.

And whilst COVID may have, until recently, restricted the usual methods of engagement with the Livery, the Lord Mayor has nevertheless endeavoured to find alternative ways of liaising with the movement, writing regular bulletins, giving updates on his work, and sharing information and best practice. He has hosted virtual coffee mornings with various Masters and Clerks to discuss the livery’s adaption to COVID, charity work, sustainability, trades and the economic recovery, as well as holding virtual round tables with specific livery groups and associated trade bodies in areas such as hospitality and construction to discuss recovery from COVID and support for trades hit particularly badly by the pandemic. We are particularly grateful to him for his steadfast commitment to, and support for, the Livery in these challenging times.

Your themes have been Global UK: Trade, Innovation and Culture and The New Future. We have only to look at your Twitter feed to see how dynamic you have been in pushing that wide-ranging agenda forward, despite the restrictions imposed by lockdowns and travel bans, which have prevented you from going out and doing in person so much of what you, as a self-confessed networker, expected to be engaged in. You have retained your enthusiasm and good humour whether when travelling or simply sitting in front of a screen in a virtual meeting.

A highlight of your Mayoralty must, therefore, be the Green Horizon Summit which you hosted. This was a major international conference which drew in an audience of 300,000 people from 100 countries and saw the global financial community come together to discuss how it can contribute to the fight against climate change. The Summit, a milestone on the Green Brick Road to COP26, garnered significant plaudits from business leaders, and we commend you for everything you have done to showcase green finance and for your commitment to sustainability.

You have also been most active in the Lord Mayor's Appeal for 2020 and 2021, with its four charity partners, Place2Be, OnSide Youth Zones, Samaritans, and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, and its key themes of inclusivity, health, skill and fairness. The impact of the Lord Mayor's Appeal has undoubtedly been all the greater because both of your predecessors, Sir Charles Bowman and Sir Peter Estlin, and your successor have cooperated in choosing these charity partners and themes over five years. The choices which you and they have made have proved all to be prescient. They are all in areas where the pandemic has greatly increased need. We should also mention your Virtual Big Curry Lunch, which, in a novel, on-line format, has had a most successful year supporting the charities for the three Armed Forces.

Since May this year the City has begun to reopen, and we at the Haberdashers' Company were delighted that you opened the first phase of the lifting of restrictions by visiting us at our Hall for a socially distanced catch-up. We were very sorry (although you may be less so) that you have not been able to abseil down 22 Bishopsgate, particularly when we know that you had been practising so hard at the Mile End Wall long in advance. You have, however, been able to raise Tower Bridge, although there is no news on your Twitter feed as to whether you were able to lower it again. And you have delivered casks of ale by horse-drawn dray to the newly-reopened Old Dr Butler's Head - just one of the many things that make the City a great place to live and work.

My Lord Mayor, it would be an understatement but also, in some senses, a misstatement, to say that yours has been an eventful two years, given how many events have been cancelled, rescheduled or become virtual.

Throughout these two hectic and unusual years, in all your work, you have received magnificent support from Hilary, the Lady Mayoress, starting from the moment she drove her tractor in the Lord Mayor's Parade, and as we move to the close of what we hope has been a memorable and special period for both of them, the Livery unites in thanking William for all that he has done as Lord Mayor of the City of London and sends to him and Hilary – as well as Edward, Nicholas, Alistair, and Helena – our very best wishes for their future good health and happiness.