

12 October 2011

**The History of the Lord Mayor’s Show**

Dominic Reid obe

Pageantmaster, The Lord Mayor’s Show

**Lord Mayor's Show - Logsdail**

I am going to tell you about the Lord Mayor’s Show and how I organise it. And attempt to put it into historical perspective for you.

But what explains the current surge of popularity that the Show is experiencing? In this very challenging economic climate we have more organisations paid up to participate than we have ever had before. The crowds on the route are huge and getting bigger every year. Television audiences are not only strong but the appreciation index is off the scale.

You can go back to Aristotle or Pericles to find the roots and the relevance of civic ceremonial, and interesting work has been done recently on the social and biological implications of screen time and social networking, (Aric Sigman “Well Connected? The biological implications of ‘social networking’.” Institute of Biology Feb 2009) “*One of the most pronounced changes in the daily habits of British Citizens is a reduction in the number of minutes per day that they interact with another human being. Recent history has seen people in marked retreat from one another as Britain moves from a culture of greater common experience to a society of more isolated experience. She is in good company, as Americans too step back form on another in unprecedented magnitude.”* (Carne Ross “The Leaderless Revolution” 2011) talks about the power of the crowd: “this was the power of the crowd, a force that can be felt benignly in the exhilaration of a cheering crowd, or malignly in a rioting mob” very topical.

But I will start with a quotation from the Preface to the Ceremonial Handbook of the Corporation of London which I believe goes to the very heart of what it is all about:

“Ceremonies are not idle forms or shows, put on merely for entertainment. They ensure that things are done with dignity and in good order. More than this: they embody and make visible rights and privileges. By means of ceremonials the historical traditions of the past were maintained and the rights and privileges impressed on the minds of all who witnessed them. Thus it is today that the City makes manifest many of its traditions and rights by appropriate ceremonials. If, however ceremonies are to make their full impact it is vital that the reason why they are performed should be clearly understood. Without such understanding, ceremonial tends to be regarded merely as a traditional form of behaviour or a piece of pageantry.”

So ceremony isn’t merely a traditional form of behaviour then, it is more than that. It has to be legible (clearly understood) and it is a creative combination of tradition and innovation. That is my job. And it’s an old job. According to Dr Tracey Hill of Bath Spa University…

**Old St Paul’s**

*“Some 450 years ago the account books and minute books of the City’s livery companies began to preserve the names of those responsible for bringing the Lord Mayor’s Show to life. In 1556, for example, a painter-stainer called John Leedes was called upon to build a ‘decent and comely’ pageant for Sir Thomas White’s Show, and to ‘fynde at his own costes and charges’ porters and marshals to carry said pageant and to control the crowds. Little is known about the nature of the pageantry that day, but five years later, in 1561, the Merchant Taylors’ Company saw fit to preserve the speeches delivered from the pageant station located on the Lord Mayor’s ceremonial route through the City, along with descriptions of the classical figures used, such as Orpheus and Amphion and the biblical harper David (a reference to the Lord Mayor’s name, William Harper).*

*O St Paul’s with a Civic Procession - Roberts The pattern was now established: the livery companies, whose members paid for the Show, would commission one or more men to oversee the production in all its logistical complexity. As the sixteenth century wore on, the Show became more sophisticated and its artistic dimensions more ambitious. By 1613, as this illlustration reveals, designing and running the Lord Mayor’s Show was a considerable undertaking involving large sums of money: the work ranged from writing the speeches, to organising porters and ‘whifflers’, to constructing and decorating the pageants and devices, to printing the commemorative books.*

*Relatively little has changed over the last 400 years. The Shows have always demonstrated continuity with past ages – even in the sixteenth century it was considered essential to stress the antiquity of the Lord Mayor’s role and of the festivities held to celebrate his inauguration – whilst at the same time, they had to be responsive to their immediate moment, to appeal to a diverse audience and not become stale. This characteristic combination of tradition and innovation has persisted to the present day.”*

Tracey Hill’s book is the winner of the 2011 David Bevington prize for the best book on early drama in the year. *Pageantry and Power: A Cultural History of the Early Modern Lord Mayor’s Show, 1585-1639* is published by Manchester University Press. The citation reads:

*“This beautifully written and cogently argued book addresses the early modern Lord Mayor’s Show and its spectacular display of power and authority in the city of London. Hill’s focus on the “social, cultural and economic contexts in which the Shows were designed, presented and experienced,” leads to a fresh evaluation of this heretofore underappreciated event, bringing to light the significance of a dramatic experience claimed by previous scholars to be “relentlessly lowbrow.” As the author points out a bias towards court, and court entertainments, has led to our studying coronations more than civic ceremonies. Pageantry and Power fills in a major gap.”*

**JR Snowdon**

The record for tenure of the post of Pageantmaster is held by my late father, with 20 Shows to his credit. The previous record being held by Thomas Jourdan who did 14 Shows from 1671-85. This November I will equal my father’s total of 20 Shows and become the equal longest-serving Pageantmaster in history!

**Street-naming 1993**

I am very proud of our family tradition, and the fact that in 1992 the City saw fit to name “Pageantmaster Court” in recognition of the service of my father gave to the City. And that both my father, and then ten years late me, were awarded the OBE for our work.

**St Paul’s Cathedral 1993**

As *Pageantmaster* I am responsible for all aspects of the design, organisation and production of the Lord Mayor’s Show. In this role I am the agent of the Senior Alderman below the Chair, and I am employed as a consultant to *Lord Mayor’s Show Ltd* the not for profit company limited by guarantee that puts on the Show.

**King John’s Charter**

The Lord Mayor’s Show originates in King John’s Charter of 1215, and takes place every year, for the same reasons for which it was initiated 796 years ago. As such it is the oldest surviving demonstration of the democratic principle anywhere in the world.

Whilst Richard the Lionheart was away crusading, his brother John wooed the City to back him in his power struggle against Richard’s Chancellor, Longchamps. In gratitude for their support, John granted the citizens of London a *commune*, or European-style, sworn association of townspeople. The chief officer of which was given the French title of *Mayor*, there being apparently no adequate English word. The formal title “Lord Mayor” was not adopted until 1540.

**FitzAlwyn**

London’s first Mayor was Henry Fitz Alwyn who took post in 1189 and held it for 24 years. King John’s Charter of 9th May 1215, confirmed the citizens’ right to choose their Mayor, and instituted an annual election to avoid a repeat of Fitz Alwyn’s excess. The condition imposed was that the man chosen by the people was to be presented to the King for his approval, and to swear fealty to him.

It was in order to take the Mayor from the City to the Court at Westminster to swear his oath, and quite literally be *shown* to the Sovereign and the people, that the Lord Mayor’ *Show* evolved. It is an indication of the power which the City held at that time that the only signatory of Magna Carta who was not a Baron was the new Mayor of London.

**Mansion House**

This is exactly what happens today. The Lord Mayor is escorted from Mansion House, his residence in the City, to the Royal Courts of Justice in the Strand where the oath has been sworn since 1883

**RCJ engraving**

When the new Palace of Justice was opened and the original destination, Westminster Hall, was abandoned.

Westminster had been set as the destination in 1253. But in 1298, Edward 1 decreed that the Mayor could present himself to the Constable of the Tower, instead of the King, if both the King and the Barons of the Exchequer were absent. It is now the Judges of the Queen’s Bench Division who hear the oath.

**Swearing in Ceremony**

The modern legislation which frames this ceremony is Section 5 (1) of the City of London (Various Powers Act) 1959, which states that:

“The presentation and swearing in of the Lord Mayor shall take place in the Queen’s Bench Division of the High Court or before the Judges of that division on the second Saturday in November in every year and in the same manner as was formerly accustomed in the Court of Exchequer.

This engraving from “*The Graphic*” magazine of 1890 shows the swearing ceremony taking place in the Lord Chief Justice of England’s Court, and very closely resembles the scene you would see today. The robes of the Judges and the Lord Mayor’s party have not changed at all, although the Ladies fashions may have done. You can see the Swordbearer wearing the Cap of Maintenance [which contain one of three keys to the Hospital Seal…], a piece of headgear dating from the middle ages, and the Judges wear their black caps, which since the abolition of the death penalty are no longer used except on this unique occasion.

**Tissot**

Originally the date of the Show was 29th October: the Feast of St Simon and St Jude. But with the introduction of the new calendar in 1751 the date changed to 9th November. And so it remained until the early 1950’s when it was felt that the disruption caused to City business by the Procession falling on whichever day of the week the 9th happened to be was unacceptable. In 1959 the City of London (Various Powers) Act changed the date of the Show from 9th of November to the second Saturday in November. [Remembrance Sunday is fixed by a separate Act of Parliament and is the Sunday nearest Armistice Day, the 11th November,so every few years the Lord Mayor’s Show and Remembrance Sunday fall on separate weekends….]

2012 10 11

2013 9 10

2014 8 9

**2015 14 8**

2016 12 13

2017 **11** 12

2018 10 11

2019 9 10

**2020 14 8**

2021 13 14

2022 12 13

2023 **11** 12

**Strand from St Paul’s**

The inconvenience of the date was compounded by the route varying each year to allow the procession to pass through the Ward of the Alderman who had been elected. So the present route was agreed between the Corporation and the Home Office in 1952, and only alters in the event of construction or road works; as in 1676 when the Court of Aldermen approved a change of route:

“The passage…being now obstructed by the great quantities of stone laid there for the convenience of St Paul’s Church.”

The modern development of the route is something which requires constant attention for just such reasons. The design of the physical nature of the roadway, and the shapes and sizes of all the traffic islands are things with which I am intimately involved. Without that intervention modern traffic engineering would have long since rendered the route impassable by the Procession.

In the early days there were two principal routes from London to Westminster. One was along a country road called *Strand*, flanked by the houses of the Dukes of Somerset and Savoy. Today the sites of Somerset House, and the Savoy Hotel.

**David Roberts (WC Goldsmiths)**

…and the other was by River. Throughout history, the Procession has vacillated between road and river. Early records of the Grocers’ Company reveal river processions in the early fifteenth century, and there is evidence that in 1422 the Mayor, William Walderne, made the first journey by river. In 1453, Sir John Norman, had his own stately barge built specially for the purpose.

My favorite of the Show’s many contributions to the language is the expression “*to be at sixes and sevens*”; which originates in the River Procession of 1483, when the barges of the Skinners’ and the Merchant Taylors’ clashed in the effort to overtake one another, and a man was killed. The Lord Mayor ruled that the two companies should alternate their seniority between six and seven, and dine together and drink each others health every year; a tradition still alive today.

**Canaletto**

Here is one of five paintings by Canaletto of the Lord Mayor’s Show on the river, this one painted in 1747 [remember that date…]. Apart from the Lord Mayor’s State Barge which you see in the centre foreground, you can also see the barges of a number of Great Twelve Livery Companies amongst them the Skinners’, Goldsmiths’, Merchant Taylors’, Vintners’, Mercers’, and Drapers’.

You can see that the canopy of the Lord Mayor’s State Barge is covered with blue cloth, and this is significant. Two types of cloth were used for this purpose: blue cloth indicating a civic event which was called “Plunkett”; and “Murrey” a red cloth used only on Royal occasions.

You can see Lambeth Palace; Westminster Abbey, Westminster Hall the original destination of the Procession, and in the background the four spires of St John’s Smith Square [Queen Anne’s footstool]. However the most obvious architectural feature is the new Westminster Bridge which was not opened until 1750, and then became only the second crossing of the Thames. It is seen here with the statues of the river gods Thames and Isis, which although intended were never executed.

**Westminster Steps -Roberts**

The last City Barge to take a Lord Mayor to Westminster was built in 1807. Described at the time as “profusely gilt”, it was 85 ft long with 18 oars and cost £2,579. The last River Procession took place in 1856, a year in which two things happened. The Corporation ceased to be the sole conservator of the River Thames; and Bazelguette’s great civil engineering project, the Victorian Embankment was completed. This effectively narrowed the River and increased the speed of its flow so dramatically, that a leisurely row from the City to Westminster Pier could no longer be contemplated. In 1860 the City barge was sold for £85 to Queen’s College, Oxford where it served the boat club until it fell into disrepair and sank.

**1616 Horsemen**

The history of the journey by land is equally eventful. And when the procession went by river it invariably travelled as far by land as it did on water, by the time it had passed through the ward of the Lord Mayor and made its way down to the River. Originally the important people rode on horse-back. The last Lord Mayor to do so was Sir Gilbert Heathcote, who in 1711 fell and broke his leg, unseated some say by a drunken serving wench. From then on the Lord Mayor travelled by coach.

**Queen Victoria - Nixon**

I would like to explain that the number of horses pulling a ceremonial coach is dictated not by the weight of the vehicle, but by the rank of the occupant. Commomers would have two; Lords, nobles, and those of elevated rank would have four; the Lord Mayor six; but only the Sovereign eight. Since 1740 the Lord Mayor’s Coach has been drawn by six horses.

**State Coach**

In 1757 the “New Grand State Coach”, which is still used every year, was designed by the architect Sir Robert Taylor and built by Joseph Berry of Holborn for £1,065.0s.3d. It was of the modern “Berlin” type rather than the heavier “Grand Carosse” used for state coaches in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. The state harness was added later in 1833

**Temperance**

The painted panels, are by Giovanni Battista Cipriani, and the original heraldic devices by Charles Catton, coach painter to George III. Both men were to become founder members of the Royal Academy. The panels show the allegorical figures of *Truth, Temperance, Justice* and *Fortitude*. [*Temperance*: a good City virtue.]

**Door Panel**

The doors show allegorical scenes. Here we see “*the Genius of the City*” enthroned above St Paul’s cathedral, receiving a Lord Mayor escorted into her presence by “*Fame*”.

**1616 Lemon Tree**

In the Early Modern period, City Poets wrote the spoken pageants which were performed like medieval mystery plays, and were published. The titles of these Shows were high-flown classical ones such as “Chryso-Thriambos” and “Troia Nova Truimphans”, references to London’s mythological past. But running through them was the humorous tradition of the crude pun in Elizabethan theatre. When John Leman, a fishmonger, became Lord Mayor in 1616, the title of his Show was *“Chrysanaleia”*, but the symbol of the lemon tree was very much in evidence. This recalls the earlier trade-pageants of the Grocers’ Company, and refers back to the Royal Entry of 1432 when the Lord Mayor, John Wells was represented by three wells.

**1997 Money Tree**

These titles were the forerunners of today’s themes which not only shape the content and design of the Show, but also form the agenda of the Mayoral year. This year’s theme will be “Fit for the Future”. Modern themes are not necessarily chosen with a view to creative visual expression but to express the Lord Mayo’s intentions for his year in office, and as a result I have to inspire designers and produce an interesting and attractive Show. [Compare “Lemon Tree” with “Money Tree”.]

**London Regiment**

The Forces of the Crown are an important component of the uniquely British mix of the Lord Mayor’s Show, and something we have had since before the establishment of a regular standing army. We know that members of the City’s Trained Bands escorted the Lord Mayor from very early on, because in 1658

**Pikemen & Musketeers HAC**

We hear of the Honourable Artillery Company reviving an ancient custom by providing an escort. The Pikemen and Musketeers whose uniforms and drill date from that period, form the bodyguard to the Lord Mayor under Royal Warrant.

**King’s Troop**

The Show is privileged to enjoy the participation of the finest and most senior ceremonial units of the British Army, who take part by the gracious permission of Her Majesty The Queen. They include King’s Troop, Royal Horse Artillery, who when on parade with their Guns, are Right of the Line,

**Household Cavalry**

And the Mounted Band of the Household Cavalry Regiment, who ride in their Gold State Coats. The Lord Mayor’s Show is the only occasion when they do so except in the presence of Royalty, and this singular honour dates back to the Coronation of Charles II.

**Coronation Procession**

The King ordered new gold coats for all his cavalry bands especially for his coronation, and presented the bill to Parliament. Parliament was unimpressed and refused to pay. The Lord Mayor came to the aid of the King and paid the bill, and in return was granted the privilege of being escorted by the Household Cavalry in State Dress on Lord Mayor’s Day.

**1915**

Military participation seems to be diminished by some campaigns and increased by others. In 1914 some 3000 troops from Britain and the Dominions marched, with the newspapers commenting that “it ought to prove more valuable than 100 best speeches”. The Show of 1915 was a recruiting show; German prisoners of war and captured guns and aircraft were paraded, and the procession was timed to coincide with 10 recruiting meetings as it passed. Men fell in behind the Lord Mayor’ Coach and marched away to war.

**Dig for Victory**

By contrast, Operation Granby as the first Gulf War was known, stripped the Show of military bands, whose bandsmen had the war-role of stretcher-bearers.

Operation Telic, or Gulf Two, did not have the same effect and last November the Guard of Honour at Mansion House was found by Messines Company of the London Regiment who had recently returned from an operational tour in Iraq, and paraded in desert combats.

**Gog**

There are many fine written descriptions of the “Lord Mayor’s Show”, but the earliest that is positively identified is from 1553 by a Merchant Taylor called Henry Machyn, who described giants, wildmen and whifflers.

A plethora of ceremonies and processions existed in the mediaeval period. Some originated in pagan ritual and continued into the middle ages; while others which grew up around the newer religious and Royal celebrations. It was to accompany the Lord Mayor in fulfilling his constitutional duty that Show developed. In 1377 we hear of minstrels accompanying the Lord Mayor, Sir Nicholas Bembre, and the Show grew in importance and grandeur as a competitive response to the Royal Entries which focussed on the Crown. In 1535 with the demise of the Midsummer Watch and the transfer of much of its theatricality to the Show, the transition was more or less complete.

**Pattenmakers**

One of these early processions was organised by the Worshipful Company of Pattenmakers, seen here with their float in the early 1920’s. This year the Pattenmakers’ will take part in the Show, as of right, as they do every three years. All because one fateful Lord Mayor’s Day many centuries ago the two processions met head-on. The Pattenmakers agreed to desist, and were granted the right to take part in the Lord Mayor’s Show every third year.

**Gog & Magog 1993**

The mythical figures which Machyn describes, come from this pre-Christian tradition of English pageantry. The last remaining pagan vestiges are the two famous City giants: Gog and Magog. They are the traditional guardians of the City and are known to have been carried in the Lord Mayor’s Show since before the reign of Henry V, but their history is buried in the mysterious world of myth and legend [and could easily fill another lecture]. We resurrected them in 1993, causing indignant correspondence in *The Times* from members of the clergy outraged by the revival of this pagan imagery.

**Magog**

One version of their story is that they were the last two surviving sons of the infamous daughters of Diocletian, and were captured and kept chained to the gates of Guildhall as guardians. However they got there, we know that by the reign of Henry V, there were giants residing in Guildhall. And when in 1554, they appeared in the Lord Mayor’s Show, the names “Gogmagog” and “Corineus” were attached to them for the first time.

In 1672, the Pageantmaster Thomas Jordan described them as “two exceeding rarities”, and stated that:

“at the conclusion of the show, they are to be set up in Guildhall, where they may be daily seen all year and I hope never to be demolished by such dismal violence as happened to their predecessors.”

**Great Fire**

He was referring to the terrible destruction of the Great Fire in 1666. His giants however only lasted a few years being made of wickerwork and pasteboard, like their sacrificial forebearers, and were soon destroyed by mice and rats. They were replaced in 1708 by the magnificent carved wooden statues on which I based the modern inflatable versions. They lasted for over two hundred years before destruction in the blitz, and were in turn replaced by the pair you can see in Guildhall today. The wickerwork originals were re-created by Basketmakers’ Company in 2006.

**1616 Tableau**

The Show has had a broad influence on British culture. Its most fundamental effect has been on the language, to which it has given a number of words and expressions and we have already heard about *“sixes and sevens”*. The most obvious word is “*Float*”, derived from the days when the tableaux in the Show really did float on the river as you can see here. But perhaps most fundamentally of all, the Lord Mayor’s Show appears in the Oxford English Dictionary as part of the very definition of the word *“show”*.

**Walworth / Tyler engraving**

In the early years Lord Mayors were real Lord Mayors who rode about on horseback brandishing swords. In 1381 it was the Lord Mayor, William Walworth who slew the rebel Watt Tyler, and was knighted in the field. In his case: “*Smithfield*”.

**Dick Whittington book entry**

Dick Whittington really did turn again, and was Lord Mayor of London three times in 1397, 1406 and 1419 and here is his entry in the Mayoral book to prove it.

**1616 Leopard**

The Show was enormously popular during the Renaissance, and when in 1605 it was ruined by bad weather it had to be repeated on All Saints’ Day due to public demand. In 1618 the unpopular execution of Sir Walter Raleigh was scheduled for Lord Mayor’s Day in the hope that public attention would be distracted, and civil disobedience avoided.

**Elephants**

Another peak of popularity was reached in the late 19th century with the development of broader international themes and participation. In 1876 thirteen elephants took part to represent Empire. Seen here led by “Delhi” passing Temple Bar, they are said to have attracted more cheers than the Lord Mayor himself. The RNLI have taken part on occasion ever since Grace Darling’s actual rowing boat was carried in the Show in 1883.

**Sabotage**

The Lord Mayor’s Show was one of the first events in the world to be broadcast live on television, and vies with the Chelsea Flower Show as the longest running television programme on earth. It saw the first use of radio stereo microphones in live outside broadcast in 1992, and is now broadcast live to Britain, Europe, Hong Kong and the Asian Sub-Continent by BBC 1 and BBC World Service. As many people see the Show in any one year as did during the whole of the nineteenth century. The Show also featured in Alfred Hitchcock’s film “Sabotage”, based on Conrad’s novel “The Secret Agent”, seen here being filmed against a backdrop of the Law Courts erected in a field in Northolt.

**Plague**

During its long history the Show has been repeatedly threatened. On a number of occasions by the Black Death; by the Great Fire;

**1830 Riots**

by the Gordon Riots; of course by the newspapers; in 1867 *The Times* thundered “*the Show will vanish but the Banquet is safe*”;

Blitz - St Paul’s and more recently by the Luftwaffe,

BMW 316i and the IRA. In a quiet and unassuming way the Show has endured and despite all these tribulations

Wellington’s Funeral it was last cancelled in 1852, for the funeral of the Duke of Wellington.

**Hogarth**

In 1761 the Prime Minister took part and was so popular that the crowds mobbed his carriage and kissed his horses; it was William Pitt. It is hard to envisage such a frenzy being whipped up today, and I can assure you that if it were, the exigencies of a modern security operation would not allow the crowd to kiss anything, anywhere near the Prime Minister.

It was on Lord Mayor’s Day in Guildhall in 1940 that Winston Churchill made his famous speech in which he spoke of “…not the beginning of the end, but the end of the beginning.”

Although we know of occasions in history when members of the Royal Family have watched the Show. And you can see in this engraving by Hogarth, Frederick Prince of Wales and Princess Augusta watching the Show in 1747. Royalty has only rarely been involved in the procession itself.

**Princess Royal**

I am fortunate to have been Pageantmaster on the only two occasions during the last century when Royalty took part. The Princess Royal participated in 1992 in her capacity as Master Loriner, the Master of the then Lord Mayor’s Mother Company;

**Duke of Gloucester**

and the Duke of Gloucester, participated in his capacity as the Grand Prior of the Order of St John in 1995. The Sovereign has not been involved in person except as a spectator, since 1252.

**Woman with Union Jack**

The Lord Mayor’s Show is a vibrant event that attracts half a million people onto the cold November streets every year, and commands a domestic television audience of two million, as well as those who watch it in Europe, Hong Kong and Asia, and the 15 million who read about it in the press. That has got to make it special, and the thing that is so special about it, is that it is a living tradition.

Royal Mail Stamps It is a living strand of English history, drawn by Hogarth painted by Canaletto, described by Samuel Pepys in his dairies, referred to by In Fleming in *Dr No* with floats designed by Indigo Jones, script by Ben Johnson and celebrated by a special issue of stamps,

Pitcairn Stamp not only here but as far a field as the Pitcairn Islands!

**Pageantry & Performance**

So what sort of challenge does a modern Pageantmaster face?

When my father was appointed in 1972 the procession had dwindled to a shadow of its former glory; but gradually we have developed techniques for starting the Procession, covering the route smoothly, and stopping it successfully at its destination. It has taken years of painstaking work to enable it to run on time, so that now the movement of the whole procession, and the Lord Mayor in particular, is predicted to an accuracy of seconds,

**Floats on Ludgate Hill**

And that isn’t bad considering the expensive and carefully choreographed three and a quarter mile traffic jam in front of him.

As for my role: every year, on a cold November morning, armed with only a stopwatch, and the temporary stewardship of 790 years of English history. I set it all going at a speed of 237.6 feet per minute, and hope that all the meticulous planning will work.

Whilst the Show is extremely good value, with a budget of only just over £35032,000; its total cost has been estimated in the region of 3 million pounds, the same as a major West End musical. So, as you watch it from the pavement it passes you at the rate of £60,000 a minute.

**DLR**

My work begins Eighteen months before Lord Mayor’s Day by persuading a large number of organisations to spend quite a lot of money making one of their vehicles un-road worthy, or perhaps procuring a roller-skating train or a large inflatable dragon.

**DLR Close-Up**

The kids who roller-skated inside the Docklands train were from the Enforcers street hockey club. They were paid for their skating and for subsequent appearances that followed on from their success. The money which they earned was used to fund two further junior teams, taking lots more kids off the streets, and helped the club on its path to victory in the European Championships.

**Moore Stephens 1996**

My next job is to keep an eye on them to make sure they don’t go and do anything daft or dangerous, or both. On the one hand bearing in mind Health & Safety, and Road Traffic Legislation, whilst on the other, always trying to encourage the most imaginative flights of fancy that the designers can come up with.

**Sir John Cass School**

The great success story of the Show today is the active participation of many young people for whom it is a rare opportunity to learn, to be creative and to shine. Increasingly organizations use the Show as a platform for Corporate Social Responsibility projects involving schools and community groups. Hundreds of children have achieved GCSE and NVQ qualifications. Twelve of those have gained entry to Art College with portfolios of the work they have done on the Show, and two have found careers in theatre production. One particular boy who had found nothing at school in which he was interested and whose future was not looking too rosy now works as a set builder in a West End theatre having discovered new skills and enthusiasms through the Lord Mayor’s Show.

**Fish**

The Show has changed, and that change is best summed up by this passage written last year by a liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Chartered Secretaries & Administrators, Claire Holder. Some of you will know her as the person who for many years was responsible for the Notting Hill Carnival.

“I thought to myself, it can’t be. That sounds like steelpan music. I was in the City not Notting Hill. As we got closer to the sound it was undeniably steelpan music. Well I’ll be jiggered! There were also costumes, jazz bands, [and] traditional carriages. The Lord Mayor’s Show has for some years now opened up and embraced other cultures and styles that reflect the evolutionary trends in our city’s population. You could have knocked me over with a feather. Where was I when all this development had been taking place?”

**Thrust SSC**

The Show is a platform. A platform for children and charities to demonstrate what they can do; for British ceremonial to flourish; and for the best we have to offer to be seen. Here is Richard Noble’s world-record-breaking Thrust SSC in the Show in 1997, just back in the country still covered with a film of dust from the Nevada desert.

And so to the administrative detail… I arrange for someone to dump 43 tons of sand on the streets, for the benefit of the horses; place over 6,300 galvanised crowd barriers; supervise the building of some three thousand grandstand seats; print the tickets;

Fireworks procure the fireworks; write the instructions; launch the website; and make sure that every one of the 3,500 manholes and 197 vacant properties on the route has been searched and sealed, and of course in this day and age Risk Assess it!…

**Marshals**

Then, together with my trusty team of Marshals, 120 assorted officers of the reserve forces, I marshal 4,000 civilians, 2,000 servicemen and women (which makes it the largest military parade in the calendar with 2 and a half times as many troops on parade as for Trooping the Colour), 250 horses, 220 motor vehicles,

RM Band 20 bands, the fabulous State Coach-

**State Coach (chiaroscuro)**

all the carriages Her Majesty has to lend us, and a few more I have to go out and hire, (last year we had 23 carriages in the Lord Mayor’s Show, by contrast both the Jubilee processions of 4th June 2002 had a combined total of…seven) into a Procession which is the biggest unrehearsed procession in the world at over three miles in length, which makes it over twice as long as the route we have available. So we get it all going at the correct speed, which you will remember is 237.6 feet per minute, broadcast it live to an audience of some two million television viewers,

Blessing Ceremony - pausing only for the Lord Mayor to be blessed at St Paul’s Cathedral, stop it, take it to pieces, feed the 6,000 in 45 minutes, put it back together, and do it all over again.

**Fly Past 1997**

Now in order to start the whole thing off, a tradition has emerged in recent years, which is the Fly-Past. In 1997 this consisted of 28 aircraft of the French airforce and the RAF, and on the ground in front of Mansion House was a magnificent Guard of Honour found by the Commandement des Fusiliers Commando de L’Air and the Queen’s Colour Squadron. (The reasons why the French were involved…Franco-British European Air Group / European Air Group (+Spain, + Germany)) But while I was at a planning meeting at Headquarters Strike Command, it became clear to me that we had a problem. The Aircraft could quite easily arrive at a given point in space and time

Fly Past with coloured smoke (in this case 1,500 feet above Mansion House at eleven o’clock precisely). And the guard could be relied upon to execute their drill immaculately, but the two were not capable of communicating with one and other, and were unable to co-ordinate the fly-past with the salute. So, I suggested that all that was needed was a visual cue. And so it was agreed that the Lord Mayor would emerge on the Mansion House balcony, greet the crowds by waving his hat, and put it back on his head at 10:59 and 40 seconds. This would allow 20 seconds for the preliminary words of command, and perfect co-ordination would result. It seemed eminently reasonable to me, after all it’s what I do for a living. But the French Air Force Colonel sitting opposite me simply couldn’t contain himself: “You English!” he said, “You talk in seconds and you mean it! In France if we get there within half an hour, we’re pretty happy!”

**DR/McRobbie Saluting**

So you can see that my task covers a wide range of areas, apart from the obvious logistics and administration. Of increasing importance nowadays are: effective marketing; good media relations; and tight security, and all these things must be attended to in minute detail. The Show is a peculiar British combination of State ceremonial, military parade and carnival. It contains all the splendour, pomp and ceremony of glittering carriages, brightly uniformed soldiers and marching bands, and an ever more exciting and innovative approach to the design of floats, and the integration of corporate social responsibility.

**Gog & Magog 1993**

I would like to finish by harking back to Gog and Magog in the words of Thomas Boreman’s “Gigantick History” of 1741:

“Corineus and Gogmagog were two brave giants who richly valued their honour, and exerted their whole strength and force in the defence of their liberty and country; so the City of London, by placing these, their representatives in their Guildhall, emblematically declare that they will, like mighty giants defend the honour of their country, and liberties of this their City; which excels all others, as much as those huge giants exceed in stature the common bulk of mankind.”

©Dominic Reid, Gresham College 2011