



**THE ROYAL COMPANY OF MERCHANTS OF THE CITY OF
EDINBURGH**

**Minutes of the General Stated Meeting of the Royal
Company of Merchants held on Thursday 26th
March 2026 at 5.30 pm**

Present: the following Members of the Master's Court, Mr Grant Macrae (Master), Miss Katherine Ridland (Treasurer) Mr Andrew Swann Mr Mark Quinn, Mr Hamish Wilson, Mr Graham Walker, Mr Callum Seale Court Assistants; Mr Douglas Kinloch Anderson OBE, Sir Ewan Brown CBE, Mr Ian Darling, Mr Ian Watson, Mrs Patricia Denzler, Mr Peter Hillier, Mr Alan Robertson (Lord Dean of Guild); Old Masters. Mr Adam Dove, Mr Alan Ness, Mr Alistair Nimmo, Mr Alistair Smith, Mr Andrew McPherson, Mr Andrew McRae, Ms Anita Glasby, Mr Anthony Simpson, Mr Arif Madranefe, Mr Barry Watson, Mr Brian McGhee, Mr Christopher Burnside, Mr Daniel McNally, Mr David Bishop, Mr Denzil Skinner, Mr Duncan Reid, Ms Eleanor Hassall-Marlow, Mrs Fiona MacFarlane, Mr Graeme Hart, Mr Graham Harper, Mr Grahame Walker, Mr Hamish Homer, Ms Helen Franklin, Ms Helene Van Der Ploeg, Mr Iain Harper, Mr Iain Murray, Ms Irené Archer, Mr J Richard Allan, Mr Jacobus Huipen, Mr Jake Elliot-Hook, Mr James Hassall-Marlow, Mr James Miller, Ms Joanne Frette, Mr Jock Miller, Mr Jonathan Towers, Ms Maria Twomey, Mr Martin McMenigall, Mr Neal Allen, Mr R Forbes Ridland, Mr Robert Armour, Mr Russell Duncan, Mr Sergii Nadochii, Mr Simon McOscar, Mr Steven Donald, Mr Struan Fairweather, Mr Vincent Mason, Mr W Kenneth Ramage, Ms Winnie Wen, Ms Zoe Hamilton

In attendance:

Mr Guy Cartwright, CEO/Secretary

The Master welcomed everyone to the Stated General Meeting Company. The Master invited The Chaplain to say the Company Prayer.

The Master reported, with regret, the death of Mr John Dundas, who had joined the Company in 1983.

He noted that the passing of any member was always received with sadness, particularly those who had been well known to many within the Company.

The Master requested that the Company's sense of loss be formally recorded.

The Master then asked the Old Masters, Ladies and Gentlemen to be seated.

1. Apologies

The Master asked the Secretary to intimate any apologies.

The Secretary said that apologies had been intimated from -

Mrs Hilary Turnbull, Mrs Mary McIntosh, Ms Liz Flockhart, Mr Les Banks, Prof Joe Goldblatt, Mr Hew Mathewson **Court Assistants**, Mr Gilbert Archer, Mr Ian Adam,



Mr Alan Hartley, Mr Don Young **Old Masters**;

The Rt Hon The Lord Mackay of Clashfern KT, The Rt Hon The Lord Cullen of Whitekirk KT, Sir Charles Fraser KCVO and His Grace The Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry KT, Rev Charles Robertson LVO Honorary Members, and from several other Members of the Company

2. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 6th November 2026

The Master stated that with the notice calling the meeting, the Members received a copy of the Minutes of the Meeting held on 6th November 2026.

The Master asked if the Minutes were approved. The Members approved the Minutes.

3. Matters Arising

No matters arising

4. Master's Report

He reported that, since his previous report on 6 November, there had been a significant level of activity.

On the Executive team, Emma Cunningham had become a permanent member of staff in Finance. Eve Davis had joined the Membership team, Christina Tait had been appointed as Event Sales Manager to develop use of the Hall, Court Room and Crush Room facilities, and Todd Bioletti had taken up the role of Community Charity Coordinator. The Master welcomed each of them.

He reported that Megan Rough and Lisa Bee would shortly be leaving to pursue other career opportunities and expressed his thanks to both for their contributions. Megan had worked closely with Philly on the new website and database and had produced the Impact Report published the previous week. Lisa had contributed significantly to improving governance processes and had provided valuable support in organising Company activities. Their contributions were noted and would be greatly missed.

The Master noted his continuing concern that awareness of the Company in Edinburgh remained limited. He therefore welcomed the launch of the updated website and the publication of the first Impact Report, produced through considerable effort by Philly, Megan, Todd and others. It was anticipated that wide circulation of the report would improve understanding of the Company's work and achievements.

He further reported that communication with members had improved significantly through regular bulletins, largely due to the work of Philly and Megan.

The Master recalled that, upon taking office, he had asked the Membership Committee to develop a programme of events to appeal to a wide range of interests. The Committee had responded positively, supported by the in-house team, delivering a varied programme of monthly events. He noted strong attendance at



events such as the Sea2Sea talk by Ian Sinclair and the initial Wine Club meetings, with plans also underway to establish a Whisky Club. A well-attended Open House had been held in early December, with a further Open House scheduled for 31 March.

He reported that the introduction of revised joining fees and tiered membership had resulted in increased membership. A buddying programme had also been introduced to support new members in becoming more engaged.

The Master noted that he had attended a wide range of events representing the Company, sometimes alone and at other times accompanied by colleagues. These had included Remembrance Services at both schools and the national service at the City Chambers and St Giles' Cathedral.

He further reported attendance at several external events, including the Mercers', Grocers' and Haberdashers' Dinner in Richmond, Yorkshire, the Salters' Company Dinner for the Lord Mayor, and the AGMs of the SMC FP Club and Melville College Trust.

He noted attendance, with Katie, at HMS Queen Elizabeth Taranto 2025 Night at Rosyth, and at the 603 Squadron Prizegiving where Company awards had been presented. Ongoing engagement with affiliated organisations continued to support pupils exploring career opportunities.

The Master reflected on the well-attended Company Dinner held in early December and the importance of the Hall during the festive period, including its use by pensioners and performances by the ESMS choir.

He reported that, in early January, he, Katie and Guy had visited Peterhead to re-establish connections with the Fruars and the Harbour Board. He also attended a Dinner at Mansion House hosted by the Lady Mayor to promote business and investment links between London and Edinburgh.

He noted that February had included a number of engagements with Livery Companies, including the Ironmongers, Skinners, Vintners, Clothworkers, Grocers and Haberdashers. He highlighted the attendance of HRH The Princess Royal at Grocers' Hall and noted that such engagements had provided valuable insight into the activities of these organisations.

The Master drew attention to the fundraising efforts of Livery Companies and suggested that there was an opportunity for the Company to increase its charitable impact through member contributions. This was under consideration by the Court.

He reported that the Charities Committee, chaired by Robert Armour, had been active in engaging with local organisations, leading to support for the Ripple Project, Pilmeny Development Project and Community Renewal Trust. Additional one-off support had been provided to the Why Project, Fresh Start and Cyrenians. He also noted collaborative work through the Education and Liaison Committee and engagement with HMS Queen Elizabeth.

The Master advised that the Company maintained strong links with its schools through the Merchant Company Education Board. He noted recent challenges due



to declining pupil numbers and commended the leadership and staff for their work in managing costs. He also highlighted preparations for co-education at ESMS from August 2026.

He reported that a second Strategy Day had been held, with strong participation across a range of topics including charitable support, engagement with the business community and future development. The outcomes were being collated for further consideration.

The Master emphasised the importance of income generation through use of the Hall and associated facilities and reminded members of the discounted rates available for personal events.

He noted that, following the death of Queen Elizabeth II, His Majesty King Charles III had agreed to become Royal Patron. Consideration was being given to commissioning a portrait, with further details to follow.

He reminded members of the opportunity to apply to become Assistants on the Court and outlined the responsibilities associated with the role, including trusteeship of the Endowment Trust.

In closing, the Master reiterated that there was a significant level of activity across the Company and expressed his thanks to the Executive team, led by Guy, for their continued efforts. He invited questions from members. There were none.

5. Business Before Widow's Fund Contributors

The meeting proceeded to the business of the Widows' Fund.

5.1 Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 6 November 2025

The Minutes of the Stated General Meeting of the Contributors to the Widows' Fund, having been previously circulated, were considered.

The Minutes were approved by the Contributors.

5.2 Statement as to Annuitants

It was formally noted that there were 119 Annuitants on the Roll as at 1 March 2026.

6. Introduction of New Members

The Master stated that it gave him great pleasure to welcome the following new Members to the Company:

Ms Eleanor Hassall-Marlow
Ms Helen Franklin
Mr James Miller
Ms Zoe Hamilton
Mr Daniel McNally



Mr Sergii Nadtochii
Mr Alistair Nimmo
Ms Winnie Wen

The Master invited the Secretary to read the formal entry from the Record Book, following which the new Members signed the Roll in accordance with the Company's procedures.

The Master then formally admitted the new Members, presenting them with their Certificates of Membership and welcoming them to the Company.

The Master extended a warm welcome on behalf of the Company and noted the importance of its long history, traditions and charitable work within the City of Edinburgh. He encouraged the new Members to support the activities of the Company and to take an active role in its future, highlighting the value of fellowship and service within the organisation.

The Master concluded by welcoming the new Members to the Company.

7. The Master's Report

The Master invited Old Master Ian Watson to address the meeting. Mr Watson provided background information on the Enterprise Fund and outlined its purpose and development. He encouraged Members to support the Enterprise Fund and contribute towards its ongoing work.

8. Presentation of Burgess Tickets

The Master invited the Old Master, Mr Alan Robertson, Lord Dean of Guild, to present the Burgess Certificates.

The Lord Dean of Guild addressed the meeting, outlining the historical significance of Burgess tickets and their origins, noting that the practice dated back to at least 1406. He explained the evolution of Burgess-ship, its former requirement for those wishing to work in Edinburgh, and the changes following Local Government Reform in 1973.

He further noted the role of the Merchant Company in preserving the tradition through the office of the Lord Dean of Guild, and the reinstatement of the historic practice in 2007. He highlighted that Members were encouraged to apply for Burgess-ship based on their contribution to civic, professional, charitable and community life in Edinburgh.

The Lord Dean of Guild advised that all Burgesses were now enrolled in the Burgess Association of the City of Edinburgh.

He reported that Burgess-ship had been granted to Mr Anthony Simpson and Mr Andrew McRae.

The Lord Dean of Guild then presented the Burgess Certificates to Mr Simpson and Mr McRae.



Following the presentations, the Lord Dean of Guild congratulated both recipients on being awarded their Burgess Certificates.

9. Presentation from Retiring Court Assistants

The Master invited Mr Robert Armour, retired Senior Assistant, to address the meeting. Mr Armour spoke briefly regarding the presentation of port decanters from the retiring Court Assistants, namely himself, Ms Irene Archer, Mr Brian McGhee and Mr Frank Ross.

10. Any other competent business

No other business.

11. Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting is Thursday 18th June 2026 at 5.30pm. This will be followed by a wine reception, to which guests are invited to join us at about 6.45pm.

Old Masters, Ladies and Gentlemen, there being no other business, that concludes this Stated General Meeting which I now declare duly closed.