This note is one of a series placed in the Clerks' Almanac by the Livery Committee. Most are written by its chairman, of whom you may read more at the foot of the Contact page. They are intended to be of guidance to livery clerks, especially new ones, or those seeking advice on a particular topic. They are not prescriptive, and how individual companies choose to conduct their affairs is, of course, entirely up to them.

Twin aldermanic sheriffs

This note sets out the background to why and when there are two aldermanic sheriffs in any one year. The word *Court* throughout this note refers the Court of Aldermen.

Background

Usually one of the two sheriffs at the Old Bailey will be an alderman, and the other will not. In the not so distant past, it was perfectly common for the route to becoming LM at Mansion House to *first* be elected sheriff; then to be elected an alderman; and then having fulfilled the two criteria for being elected LM (served sheriff and being an alderman), persuade the livery and your fellow aldermen to be elected LM. The last to follow this route was Peter Gadsden (LM in 1979, sheriff 1970).
However nowadays it is the norm for one alderman to be nominated by the Court (of Alderman) to stand as sheriff, and the other, a liveryman, to stand for election at Common Hall on Midsummer Day (24th June) as they wish. If two or more non aldermen are nominated, technically all candidates (including the alderman) are equal on the 'ballot paper', though in practice, the livery will vote for the alderman, and one of the others.

Problems

Difficulties arise when the 'pool' of qualified aldermen who have served sheriff dwindles. Typically a minimum of two or three is usual, allowing a bit of wriggle room for the Court to select which alderman to go forward. Over the years there have been a host of reasons why served aldermanic sheriffs do not go forward (to LM), and when that happens, the pool gets reduced. Pre 1979, the top up may have come from an earlier non aldermanic sheriff subsequently being elected to the Court.

Twin Aldermen

When the pool diminishes, a solution is to elect two aldermen in one year, thus increasing it by a net one (one other of course having moved out of the pool to become LM). The decision to allow this is for the Livery, for in law, any liveryman is free to stand for election in any year. In practice, when the Court judge that they may be needing to "top up the pool", they consult with the Livery Committee, and **request** that two aldermen may stand, with the tacit understanding that no other liveryman be encouraged to put themselves forward for election.
The Livery Committee is under no obligation to accede to the request, though they have an equal and shared interest in ensuring a smooth progression to the Mayoralty. Any potential shrieval candidate will start seriously considering his/her plans about two years ahead of the actual election, so the Court must engage in dialogue with the Committee well in advance.

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History

The first twin aldermanic shrievalty of the modern era was in 1982 (Davis & Traill) and was repeated in alternate years a further two times that decade. There were two aldermanic sheriffs again in 1997 and 2007 (Bear & Luder), and a full record of sheriffs may be found in the A-Z Lists folder of this website.

2016

On 24th June, for the sixth time, two aldermen were elected sheriffs, Peter Estlin and William Russell, to take office on 28th September 2016.

Nigel R Pullman
Livery Committee

25th June 2016

Was this note helpful? Do you have comment? Email nrpullman@btinternet.com