

This “Vade Mecum” was published by the Fellowship of Clerks in 2000, and draws heavily on an earlier version produced by the Clerks’ Association. No attempt has been made to update it, but whilst it may now be largely of historical interest, much is still pertinent. However, as with all else in the Clerks’ Almanac,, the guidance is not prescriptive, and how individual companies and clerks choose to conduct their affairs is, of course, up to them.

## NOTES ON PRACTICES

### “Vade Mecum”

#### Dining Out

Invitations from other Livery Companies will be addressed either by a single letter addressed to the Clerk inviting both Master and Clerk or by separate letters to Master and Clerk.

In the first case, if the Master cannot accept, the Clerk should not do so, unless the invitation makes it clear that such attendance would be acceptable.

In the second case, the Clerk is entitled to attend without his Master, but would be unwise to make a frequent practice of so doing.

In the case of companies having a Hall, it is customary for a livery company hiring that Hall to invite the Master and Clerk of the Livery Company to attend the function in the Hall. It is not best practice for that Livery Company's Master and Clerk to accept such an invitation unless they intend to return the invitation.

Invitations to events run by charitable organisations for the purpose of raising funds are not normally accepted unless the Master (and Clerk) of the company accepting intend that their Company should contribute towards the charity's funds.

Having dined out, a Clerk should always write a letter of thanks to his host, but he always addresses that letter to the Clerk of the host Company and requests him to thank his Master. It is customary for such letters to be hand-written.

A Master always writes his thanks to the Master of the host Company, also by a hand-written letter.

A Master or Clerk without a wife may take another lady to a ladies dinner. It is not common for either, being married, to take any lady other than a relation (such as daughter).

There is sometimes confusion about how to interpret the dress indicated on a formal invitation to dinner. “Evening dress” comprises a tail coat and white bow tie (worn with a wing collared shirt) and is worn with any orders and decorations to which the wearer may be entitled (miniature medals and neck decorations). “Dinner jacket” or “Black tie” comprises a dinner suit and black bow tie and, if no mention is made of decorations, should not include orders and decorations. However, if the invitation

states that decorations should be worn with dinner jacket, it is of course incumbent on the guest to comply with the wishes of the host. The term “Badges” on an invitation refers to a Clerk’s Company badge (if provided) and should not be confused with orders and decorations.

### The Master

Except for letters of thanks for hospitality, and private communications, the Master does not normally write letters. He instructs the Clerk to write on his behalf.

If any Master insists upon writing official or semi-official letters, it is most desirable that the Clerk should ensure that he is given a copy for purposes of information and record.

### Dinners

The Clerk is responsible for conduct of the function generally but should use the Beadle as his intermediary. He should not expect to leave his place. Some Clerks jump up and down - this is not the best practice.

The Clerk should not normally speak and, if invited, should consider very seriously whether to accept. It is the task of the Clerk to motivate the speakers to perform properly, not to usurp their position.

In case of need, which should be rare, the Clerk should be prepared to write a speech for the Master, sometimes at very short notice. But the Clerk should be prepared to be consulted by the Master (indeed he should encourage it) as to the content of his speech.

### Toasts at Dinners

The Civic Toast will normally be “The Lord Mayor and Corporation of London”. However, when the Lord Mayor and one or more Sheriffs are guests of a Company, then, as a courtesy, the Civic Toast should be “The Lord Mayor, the Corporation of London and the Sheriffs”. (Letter of November 1996)

### Lord Mayor Locum Tenens and Representative Lord Mayor

Where the Lord Mayor has agreed to attend an event but must subsequently withdraw at short notice, a substitute will be offered, though the host Company is under no obligation to accept. A Lord Mayor Locum Tenens (LMLT) may be appointed if the Lord Mayor is out of the country, a Representative Lord Mayor (RLM) in other circumstances. Both should be accorded the same courtesies and protocol as the Lord Mayor. If neither LMLT or RLM are appropriate, then the Company may invite an Alderman, Recorder or other civic functionary to represent the Corporation and to make a speech, but then the Civic Toast should be drunk in silence. (Letter of June 1993)

### Guests

The Clerk should always advise the Master as to the guests to be invited to a function, and should feel free to advise as to any guest proposed by the Master whom the Clerk feels would be unsuitable.

The Master will often himself write to invite speakers to address the Company at a function. The Clerk should then confirm the arrangement with the speaker, setting out the specific duty, and advising the speaker of the length of time normally regarded as the maximum length of speech.

### Clerk's Badge

Clerks supplied with badges normally wear these at all Company functions; some wear them at all livery and other functions to which they are officially invited as Clerk. Such badges are not normally worn on any other occasion.

Clerks to the Great Twelve and many of the older companies do not have badges. This is because they are servants of the Company, not honorary officers

### Master's Badge

Members of Companies sometimes invite as private guests to Company functions persons who happen to be Masters of other Companies. Such persons are not entitled to wear their badge at such a function. A Master (or indeed a Clerk) only wears his badge when asked by the Company as an official guest. However, in such cases, the host Master can agree to adopt the guest Master as an official guest in which case he can wear his badge.

### Annual Events for all Companies

There are a number of events in the civic calendar, linked to the Lord Mayor which occur annually and which most, if not all, Companies will be expected to attend:

Event	Usual Date
Common Hall for the election of Lord Mayor	Michaelmas (29 <sup>th</sup> September) or the nearest weekday
Lord Mayor's talk to Masters and Clerks	Late November
Lord Mayor's Banquet for Masters	The night before the United Guilds' Service
United Guilds' Service	The 2 <sup>nd</sup> Friday before Easter - but can be adjusted if Easter is late
Common Hall for the Election of Sheriffs	Midsummer Day (24 <sup>th</sup> June) or the nearest weekday.

In addition, many Companies take part in the Lord Mayor's Show on the second Saturday in November.

### United Guilds Service

The Clerk is responsible (with the Beadle) for ensuring that the Master and Wardens are gowned before proceeding to their appointed seats in St Paul's.

### Lord Mayor's Show

Many Companies do not take part in the Lord Mayor's Show. If a Company does take part, the Clerk may find that it requires a disproportionate amount of time and effort and that it may be better not to be directly involved in the arrangements.

### Members Elected as Lord Mayor or Sheriff

If a Company has a member as Sheriff or Lord Mayor, the Clerk will be well-advised to consult another clerk who has had such an experience at least a year before the member takes office.

### Associations of Clerks

There are three Associations of Clerks:

1. The Great Twelve. Limited to the serving Clerks of the Companies listed as the first twelve Companies by the Court of Aldermen in January 1515/16. Secretary: Charles Parker
2. Clerks' Association. Limited to the serving Clerks of Companies (other than the Great Twelve) with qualifying Halls. Secretary: Andrew Gillett.
3. Fellowship of Clerks. Open to all Clerks, Assistant Clerks and retired Clerks. Secretary: Edward Windsor Clive.

### Charitable Appeals

Some Masters and even liverymen attempt to use their position to make appeals for charities in which they are interested. This is regarded as quite unacceptable in that it attempts to usurp the freedom of the companies to apply their funds as they wish. Therefore any such attempt should always be resisted. Companies should not appeal to one another. This dictum does not, of course, apply to assistance sought by a company itself if it is in difficulties.

### Nomenclature

Strictly, a Clerk who is a member of his Company is described as the Clerk of that Company, whilst one who is not a member is described as Clerk to that Company. Such correct practice may be regarded as somewhat pedantic and is more honoured in the breach than the observance.

### Clerk Vacancies

The position of Clerk is often much desired, usually based on wide misconceptions and Clerks may well be asked by acquaintances about how a position may be obtained. They should be discouraged from “cold calling” which runs the risk of being thought importunate and should be advised about whether the post being considered is full-time and part-time. The names of those who are considered strong candidates should be passed to the Secretary of the Fellowship of Clerks who maintains a list of those seeking a Clerkship, which will be passed to those Companies who ask for it.

Fellowship of Clerks

March MM

Was this note helpful? Do you have comment? Email [nrpullman@btinternet.com](mailto:nrpullman@btinternet.com)

**NB Disclaimer at the head of this document.**