

Press release for immediate release



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STATIONERS'
C O M P A N Y

New Master of the Stationers' Company, Robert Flather,
looks to serve the whole country

Robert Flather, chairman of Kolbus UK, has been elected Master of the Stationers' Company and last night enjoyed an installation celebration at Goldsmiths' Hall. He will be the Master to welcome Liverymen and members back to live events, initially at various Livery Halls but in due course back at Stationers' Hall when it re-opens after a period of refurbishment.

He succeeds the Rt Rev Dr Stephen Platten and Robert recognises the achievement of his predecessor: "Implementing Vision 350, the refurbishment of the Hall, will be Stephen's number one achievement but he has also drawn on his background of outreach and pastoral care to ensure members of the Stationers' Company have continued to remain in touch and informed throughout the pandemic. He ran weekly video interviews with members and participated in the many online events that continued throughout his year of service."

Robert Flather intends to continue the established consultative approach in his role. "More than just London" will be his theme this year. He has never worked within the M25 and he wants to ensure the Stationers' Company connects with the whole country.

He is keen to attract members back to events with the opportunity to visit other livery halls and to enjoy the return to Stationers' Hall when it is re-opened. The improvements will create new spaces, some to rent out, in addition to the prestigious hall with its Shakespeare and Caxton windows.

“I may be the first machinery supplier as Master or at least the first for very many years,” he says. He comes from a family which was heavily involved in the steel industry (Flather Bright Steels) in Sheffield and four of his family served as Master Cutlers with the Cutlers of Hallamshire, two on his father’s side and two on his mother’s side (owners of Champion Scissors). He is pleased to carry on the Livery tradition in his sphere of work.

Robert himself started in the steel industry (with Tube Investments) after graduating with an engineering degree from Sheffield University. However, after seven years by “chance and luck” he transferred to the printing industry, first with Clays (part of St Ives) and then with Jarrolds. At both companies he had used Kolbus bookbinding equipment and, having a feeling he would be good at sales, he moved to the supplier side when approached by Gordon Robson, then managing director of Kolbus UK.

It was Gordon Robson who first invited Robert to Stationers’ Hall in 2001 and he was awe-struck by his surroundings and decided “I want a slice of that”. He not only became a Liveryman but within ten years was invited onto the Court. He has served the Company in many capacities but his favourite role was with the Foundation, the charitable arm of the Company. He served on that Committee for seven years, three as chairman. He believes his greatest achievement in that role was to partner with other organisations which led to, for instance, the Printing Charity, supporting some student bursaries that encourage talented individuals to further their qualifications and knowledge in the trades. He was also the first Chairman of the Marketing Advisory Committee.

Robert will also be unusual in being a working Master as he continues with Kolbus UK. He has had an enviable reputation with Kolbus where he significantly increased the company’s market share and then, more recently, moved the company from a purely sales organisation to one that is also manufacturing packaging machinery in the UK, once again drawing on his engineering roots. He remains very involved with Picon, the print suppliers trade organisation. He is a past chairman of that organisation and also of Global Print. The benefit of Stationers, he says, is that it encompasses a very wide range of businesses in the content and communications sector and Robert admits that having been able to meet with, and talk to, book publishers in the past was a significant help when selling to book printers.

Robert is married to Sue and they have two adult children, Richard who is a farmer and Harriet who is a musician. Robert is a singer in a number of choirs and plays clarinet. A Yorkshireman to his core, Robert also spends a good deal of his time hill walking in the Dales where he has a second home. He is known to friends as enthusiastic reliable and tenacious – just what's required of a Master!

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About the Stationers' Company:

The Stationers' Company is the City of London Livery Company for the Communications and Content industries. The Company's mission is to be the most effective independent forum in the UK Communications and Content industries, actively contributing to the strategic development, success and education of these industries. The majority of its members work in or supply the paper, print, publishing, packaging, office products, newspaper, broadcasting, and online media industries. See www.stationers.org

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