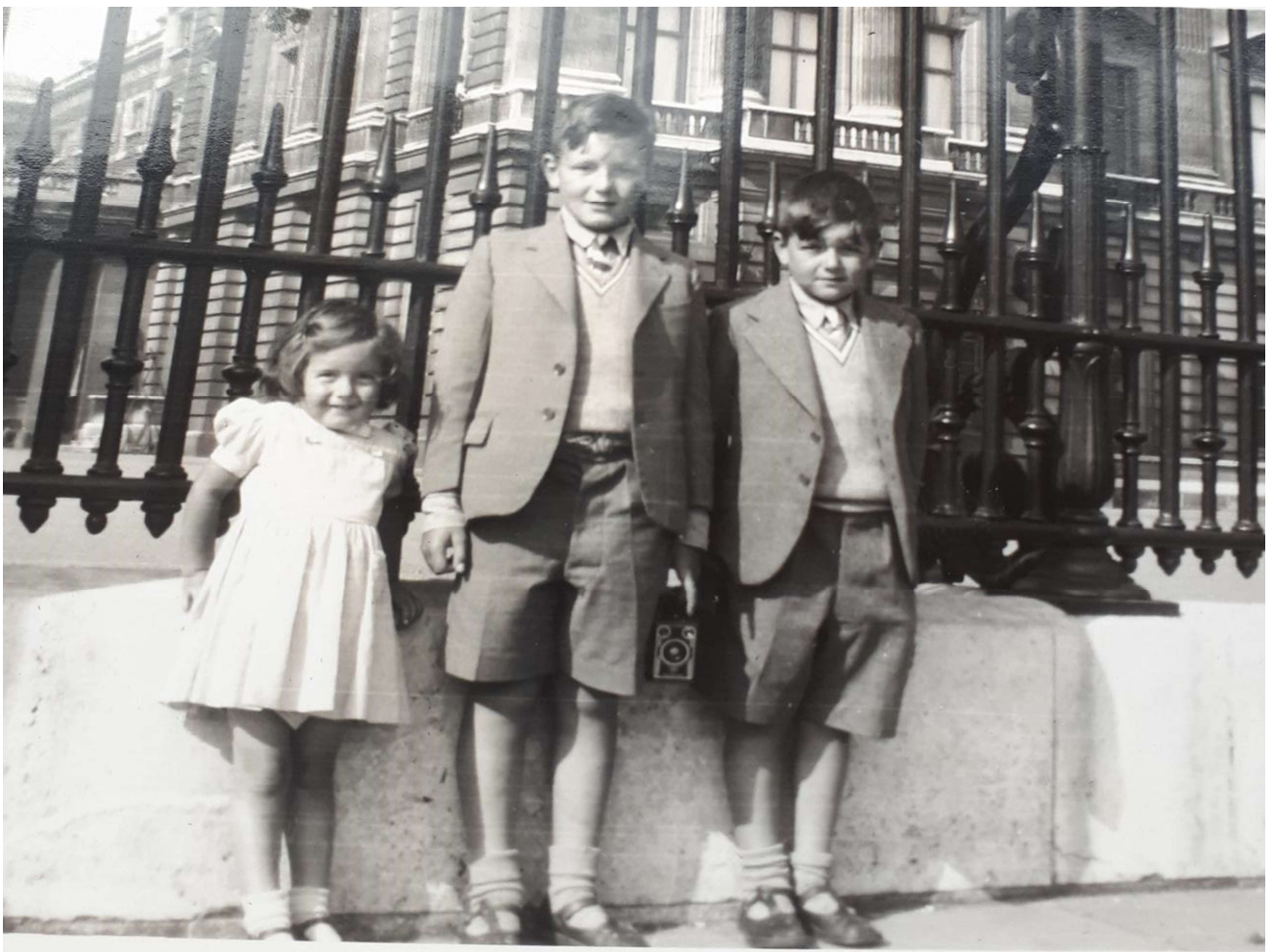




The Flame

MEMORIES



JANE DE HALPERT AND HER TWO BROTHERS OUTSIDE
BUCKINGHAM PALACE SHORTLY AFTER THE CORONATION IN 1953



DEAR FIREBIRDS,

I am writing this on Saturday, 5th March. Since 24th February I cannot stop looking at the BBC Live News in regular intervals, hoping to find something that tells me the war in Ukraine is over. Of course, I know that this is very unlikely ... so I will keep logging in and praying for the Ukrainian and Russian people who are all suffering because of Putin's senseless and brutal invasion. However, for the next few hours I am now concentrating on The Flame. (I'll just have another quick check on the BBC Live News before I get going properly!)

... well, another ten minutes gone, only to find out that Russia is shelling a ceasefire escape route. All this reminds me of not being able to take my eyes off the screen watching two airplanes flying into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York in 2001!

It took a while for my mind to clear enough to focus on putting the Flame together. Thank you to all who contributed. I really do enjoy hearing from you and look forward to receiving your articles for the next issue, which will come out some time in July.

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Enjoy reading the above.

Wishing you all a good Easter.

Best wishes

Erika Gloyn

firebirds.newsletter@gmail.com

FORTHCOMING FIREBIRDS EVENTS 2022

Tuesday
29th March 2022 – 6pm
Zoom Lecture by Patrick
Hoyle 'Below Stairs'
(FREE)

Friday
6th May 2022
Phoenix Masters hosting
Firebirds at **lunch on
HQS Wellington**

Friday/Saturday
17/18th June 2022
**Becket Pageant at
Guildhall Yard**

Wednesday
27th July 2022
Phoenix's are organising
a **visit to the Tenterden
area with afternoon tea
at Liz Ward's house.** To
include Firebirds.

Tuesday
20th September 2022
**Thames Boat trip
including lunch.**
Includes invitation to
Phoenix Masters.

December 2022
Tea at Fenwick's
Date to be advised.

VISIT THE FIREBIRDS
WEBSITE
on
www.firebirds.london

The views and opinions expressed by the authors and those providing comments are theirs alone and do not reflect the views and opinions of the Editor or the Firebirds Committee.

FIREBIRDS AGM 21ST FEBRUARY 2022

AT THE FARMERS' AND FLETCHERS' HALL

by Erika Gloyn (Masons)



As always, Vicky Nugée, our Lady Chairman, kept us under control during the meeting and made sure that we were able to enjoy our lunch as soon as possible.

Despite the storms and subsequent delays on public transport, 15 Firebirds turned up to the meeting. One Firebird, Jane Orr, was so severely held up on her journey that she arrived at the Farmers' and Fletchers' Hall after lunch. Don't worry, Jane didn't have to go without lunch after her tribulations; the lovely catering team sorted out the much needed lunch and a glass of wine for her.

Anne Somers, our Secretary, circulated the minutes to you recently. Without wanting to repeat anything, I would like to mention again that Peter Green is participating in the Lady Mayoress' 'Sleep Out' later this month. This is in support for those who have no place to stay. Peter is willing to give up the comfort of his bed for one night to highlight such a worthwhile cause. You can help him raise money by donating directly to his fundraising page - <https://www.justgiving.com/Peter-Green47>. JustGiving sends your donation straight to The Lord Mayor's Appeal and automatically reclaims Gift Aid if you are a UK taxpayer, so your donation is worth even more.

THE DOGGETT'S COAT AND BADGE RACE

by Richard Springford (Past Master - Watermen and Lightermen)



The Doggett Coat and Badge Race can be argued to be one of London's best kept secrets. It is the oldest continuous annual sporting event in the world, having been held every year since 1715.

The rowing race is for up to six apprentices of the Company of Watermen and Lightermen of the River Thames to row single sculling from London Bridge (the Old Swan pub) to Chelsea Bridge (the Old Swan pub). The race is approximately 4.5 miles in distance. The River Thames is closed to all water borne traffic while the race takes place. The event is normally held in July on a date with suitable tides. This year's event is to take place on the 19th July.

The contest takes its name from the founder Thomas Doggett, an Irishman who was a comedian and actor in the late 1600s; he became Manager of Drury Lane Theatre, later the Haymarket Theatre. He was born in Dublin in 1650, died in Eltham on 10th September 1721 and is buried in the church at Eltham.

Doggett took particular interest in the watermen who operated a water taxi service - an important method of moving around in London in the 1800s. He created and organised the race in 1715, offering a coat and badge to the winner. Being a Whig, he was passionately devoted to the House of Hanover and laid down that the race was to be held each "1st day of August forever" to commemorate the accession of George I. It was not unusual to have rowing wagers on the river at the time.

The winner of the race receives a number of prizes. The most important is the badge, which is silver, and worn on the left shoulder of the coat. It is unique to the winner, with their name inscribed, and has the Hanoverian Horse engraved on it, reflecting its origins.

The details laid down by Thomas Doggett in his will are as follows :

"Five pounds for a Badge of Silver weighing about 12 ounces and representing Liberty to be given to be rowed for by Six young watermen according to my Custom, Eighteen Shillings for Cloth for a livery where on the said Badge is to be put, one pound and one shilling for making up the said Livery and Buttons and Appurtenances to it.... All which I would have to be continued for ever yearly in Commemoration of His Majesty King George's happy Accession to the British Throne".

The winner following the race is then fitted out for his red uniform which is a traditional style worn by Watermen of the time. It is worn at a colourful ceremonial function that is held each year at the Fishmongers' Hall in November, when the winner receives his badge and other prizes and joins the unique club of "Doggett Winners".

Today the race is organised jointly by The Worshipful Company of Watermen and Lightermen and The Worshipful Company of Fishmongers. The contestants are in their first year of their Freedom following a completion of an apprenticeship with the Company of Watermen and Lightermen of the River Thames.

MEMORIES I

by Jane de Halpert (Shipwrights)

For many, the Coronation was the catalyst to buy a first television and my family was no exception. In my mind's eye I can see this strange new contraption placed in the corner of our sitting room. It resembled a tall, narrow wooden cabinet with doors at the top. These were then opened to reveal a very small screen. I was four in 1953 and got caught up in the general excitement. We lived in the North of England and shortly after the Coronation my parents took me and my two older brothers to London for the first time. I have to admit that my main memory of this trip was the novelty of staying in a hotel. Sadly, although I remember the Coronation souvenir tea tin, used in our family for many years, and the toy coronation coach purchased by my parents to mark the occasion, they do not seem to have survived into 2022.



Fast forward to 1977 when, on reflection, quite a lot had happened since standing aged four outside Buckingham Palace. I migrated south to work in London, met my Naval Officer husband when on holiday in Malta and the Silver Jubilee photo shows me with our then two small children in the cottage we had just bought. We are still in the same cottage extended over the years and have celebrated two further Jubilees in our village. On each occasion appropriate group photos were taken on the playing fields after a festive tea and commemorative mugs presented. It remains to be seen how much longer we will be living here but with a bit of luck we will still be in residence for our fourth Jubilee celebration!

MY RECOLLECTIONS OF THE CORONATION 2ND JUNE 1953

by Sarah Mosse (Broderers)

My father, who was in the Navy, was to be on guard in The Mall for the day. So we all got up really early for him to catch a train to get into position in time. He was in full uniform and would be given his gun later. My mother and her four sisters also went up to London to line the streets. They managed to spot my father and my Aunt Edwina, always the brave one, poked him with her umbrella so he would see them. That apparently did not go down very well as he had to be completely still and not talk to anyone.

My father's sister, who had a housekeeper, said she would look after all the cousins. There were 7 of us between 3 and 8 and we were allowed to watch it on her black and white television, sitting on a rug in the morning room (as it was called!!). Frankly at the age of three, with my other two cousins also three, it did not mean much to us but the moving pictures on that box were rather fun as none of us had or had seen anything like it before.

On Sunday we had a lovely Accession service in our local church with a lot of the music that was played that day. When we were recounting our memories, one cheeky person said, 'well if you can remember it you must be really old'. Sadly that is very true and I have to say it is fairly hazy, but I will never forget that little wooden box with moving black and white pictures and sitting on a rug watching 'television' with my cousins.

FOND AND PAINFUL MEMORIES

by Bill Gloyn (Past Master - Masons)

For me, the Coronation nearly didn't happen.

I was coming up to my seventh birthday and there was great excitement in the house. Like many others, we were to have our first television set – a 9 inch screen Marconi. Obviously black and white as colour didn't exist then in the UK – at least not for public use.

A few weeks before, I went down with yet another bout of tonsillitis. This time it was clearly quite serious. It was decided that I had to have my tonsils out, together with my adenoids. This was to be done in the Royal National Ear, Nose and Throat Hospital in Grays Inn Road, which only closed down as recently as 2020.

For a six year-old lad living in Leyton, this meant quite a long journey. One of the memories of that was coming down the hill at Caledonian Road and seeing the impressive edifice of St Pancras Station Hotel ahead. It clearly made a great impression on me.

I think that I was admitted about a week before the Coronation and there was concern that I might not get home in time for the festivities. I don't remember much about being in hospital. There was no facility for parents to stay and only limited visiting hours. The up-side was that there was plenty of ice-cream to sooth the pain!

Fortunately, I was let out a couple of days before the Coronation and joined a great party of family and friends, including visitors from the USA. I had to be very quiet during a long ceremony and all the before and after coverage. I have watched and listened to it on several occasions since – thanks to YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=52NTjasbmgw> How nostalgic to hear Richard Dimbleby!

I have souvenirs of the day – a State Coach made by Britains in England. Also a mounted band and HM Queen riding side-saddle – perhaps at the Trooping of the Colour. They have been much played with and provoke precious memories.



JUBILEE

by Carmen and David Pearson (Marketors)

We live in a cul-de-sac which has just 17 houses. At our end there is a small island in a roundabout. In the centre of the island is the pumping station. While it is functional, it is actually quite attractive with octagonal wooden walls, a tiled roof and a weathervane on the top. Around the station is a neat little circular lawn.

20 years ago, we decided to celebrate the Golden Jubilee with a barbecue around the pumping station. We managed to wheel our barbecues there and we all provided garden tables and chairs. One of our neighbours has an account at Costco and he bought all the food while we all provided the drink. As our house is one of the nearest, I provided the music and we danced congas and other odd moves well into the night.

We have continued this tradition every year until the last two when the Covid restrictions and perhaps our own unease has prevented us from repeating it, but we are certainly planning to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee in June in this manner. We are now one of only four couples who were present 20 years ago and we have lots of new neighbours, several with young children, and so it should be quite an occasion.



THE BECKET PAGEANT

by David Pearson (Past Master - Marketors)

I am chairman of the Phoenix Masters Outreach and Purpose Committee and we have adopted the Beckett Pageant as one of our projects. Before we made this decision, the Phoenix Masters were already heavily involved. The Pageant is directed by Phoenix Past Master Skinner Emmeline Winterbotham. Our chairman Past Master Pewterer Mark Chambers is in charge of the Livery Craft Fair which is now fully subscribed. Past Master Chartered Accountant Mark Spofforth is the Honorary Treasurer of the Pageant.

We have tried to encourage through our various contacts all the livery companies to get involved in some way. To date about 40 have done so either by making a donation or by some in-kind contribution and, of course, there are those livery companies who will participate in the Livery Craft Fair. We have also appealed for volunteers to perform as singers, help with costume and puppet making and various other tasks. The Pageant is not only intended to commemorate the life of the man who was once patron saint of London but is also intended to involve all aspects of the community and encourage a forward-looking emphasis on skills and schools and community involvement.

LIVING WITH BECKET

By James Winterbotham (Skinners)

For the Winterbotham household, COVID and Becket go hand in hand. Both got going at the beginning of 2020, have had peaks and troughs, and both (we hope) are heading towards a final conclusion! As Firebirds will know, the Pageant was originally planned for June 2020, postponed to 2021, and is finally happening this June, meaning that a project expected to take six months will have taken almost three years. And it has grown with the timespan – Emmeline has worked and reworked the script; her brilliant collaborator, composer Vahan Salorian (from the Guildhall School of Music and Drama) has written an entire soundtrack rather than simply music to the lyrics. The wider vision, for the Livery Fair, for the educational outreach programme and for community involvement is growing and deepening by the day.

Perhaps the most surprising thing of all for me was that having studied medieval history at university, I found myself living in lockdown with the new world expert on Thomas Becket and Henry II. I could even after 40 years dig out arcane history books on the Medieval Constitutions of England. But it is Emmeline who is corresponding with Professors and PhD students around the world while I mow the lawn, dig the vegetables and look after the chickens (and the spreadsheets)!

It has been particularly great to see the fantastic support from Phoenix Masters and Firebirds, especially our Chairman, and also David Pearson, Mark Spofforth and Pam Taylor. And I know how much Emmeline has valued your support. The word is certainly starting to get out there, despite the slow start due to Covid restrictions and lack of obvious channels. Indeed in some areas, such as the costume making – led by Basketmaker and Professional Costume Designer Sasha Keir – they have been inundated with offers. People are beginning to realise that this is sociable and above all fun. I will definitely have to get down to St James's Garlickhythe one of these days, where conversations are just beginning to get going on what form the giant puppet might take to express the 'Spirit of London'.

As we get closer to the performance dates, the excitement is rising. Audition tapes from potential actors have suddenly brought the script to life. The house has started to fill up with actors, producers and costume designers, all fantastically creative and committed; as well as the usual "stuff" that goes with the territory - the posters and banners from the November launch, a vast cutting table for costumes, hundreds of metres of silk curtains donated by Nomura. Is "Becket the Musical" going to look like The Sound of Music? I don't think so, but wouldn't complain if it was as successful!

The "road trips" of Emmeline's creative projects have a recognisable rhythm, from excitement to frustration to bounce-back to hard grind to the final thrill of arrival. The bends and hidden dips are to be navigated carefully, the glimpses of the destination savoured, and the potholes – "what do you think of this?" – swerved.

What do I think of it? It's going to be quite unlike anything anyone has seen before, but it will be a stunner! As long as no one asks me to sing!





LILY THOMPSON, NINA CAVENDISH AND JENNY NEWHOUSE AND YOU CAN JUST SEE JANET WELLS

THE BECKET SEWING BEE

The volunteer costume making group for the Becket Pageant.

by Sasha Keir (Chief Steward - Basketmakers)

A new musical performance, re-imagining the life and legend of Thomas Becket, who formerly was the patron saint of London, is being held in the Guildhall Yard on 17th and 18th June 2022.

This project reprises a pageant held in 1519 by the Skinners to honour Becket on the 400th anniversary of his birth. Emmeline Winterbotham, also a Skinner, was charged with the task of writing a new production for the 900th anniversary and is now directing "London's Turbulent Son".



WENDY SHORTER BLAKE, MASTER UPHOLDER,
AND HER DAUGHTER LOUISE

The cast are drawn from the City community, with key professional principals, and come from the Livery, local residents, workers and business people. The same blend is true of what we are now calling the Becket Sewing Bee who meet twice a week to create all the costumes for this production. I am a theatrical costumier and first met Emmeline in the Guildhall, where I was helping a team of Basketmakers get the wicker Giants Gog and Magog clean and repaired for the 2019 Lord Mayor's Show. I said I might be able to help and exchanged emails. Of course, the whole project was postponed due to Covid but, a year ago, Emmeline got in touch again and the idea of the show was revived.

On Zoom, I met up with Jenny Newhouse, Barbara Tysome and Catherine Fuller, who had produced some early designs and found some really good fabrics. Jenny has ties with the archive of costume stored at Fulham Palace and Barbara is very experienced with volunteers. We held an open day at St Stephen Walbrook to get support for the production

costs and to find volunteers. At that open day we heard some of the original score sung by two young singers from the Guildhall and a short presentation of the script. It was well attended by the Livery and lots of contact details were taken. Many of those early contacts have borne fruit. The City, I've found, is full of energetic, skilled and friendly women. I even got two volunteers who wandered in off the street! The first thing to do, I thought, was to set up a WhatsApp group so the costume volunteers could get to know each other, stay abreast of the schedule and take part in the discussions and plans. I was keen to keep the fire lit, so to speak, during the intervening time between that early open day and the time when, several months later, we would get to work. Every week, it seemed, some new person was introduced either by an existing member or through word of mouth. The group now numbers 23 and we meet twice a week - Sunday afternoons in my studio in Shoreditch and Thursday afternoons in St James' Garlickhithe.

Obviously, as a theatrical costumier, I've got the ideal facilities for costume making, but I also wanted us to have a base actually in the City and what more apposite venue than the Skinners Church! The administrator there, Johanne, and the vicar, Tim, have been very kind and helpful and we are now messing up the carpet every week until June! There are a lot of costumes to make! Each ensemble member has a base costume and several quick change overlayers to become monks, lords, Saracens, traders, guildsmen, etc. There are also the emblematic costumes of Time, Fortune and Death and plans for a giant puppet representing the Spirit of London. I hope my large and talented team will enjoy the journey.



PILE OF CURTAINS BEING FILLETED IN THE BARN

We have also had some amazing donations, chief of which is two enormous sets of curtains donated by the Japanese investment bank Nomura. One of my fellow Stewards in the Basketmakers is the maintenance manager for their very grand house in Regent's Park. Each time it is redecorated, David has to dispose of the discarded furnishings. "Could I find a use for some curtains?" he asked. There were crates full. I sent them up to Emmeline's barn near Southwold where her husband James helped me fillet them into three piles of useful fabric: silk, flannelette and cotton. Almost 150 metres of usable textile being re-purposed and re-cycled. I'm in line for a bolt of red silk ottoman surplus to the production of Hamilton and I've got any amount of smaller donations from a variety of sources. The rest of the fabrics will be bought from the main budget.

One of the most rewarding aspects of this sort of voluntary project is the opportunity to make new friends and to share skills. I have been making costumes for over 40 years, ever since my student days in Edinburgh where I used to make all my friends' evening dresses to go to the Highland Balls. From

there I went to the Opera House at Covent Garden via a postgraduate diploma largely funded by grants from three Livery Companies. This project is, in a way, a thank you from me to the Livery movement for making my career possible and allowing me to create a thriving business of international standing from my hobby.



Would you like to become a volunteer?

Volunteers are at the heart of everything at The Becket Pageant for London. There are opportunities to:

- Perform in a spectacular musical **London's Turbulent Son** written to mark the triple anniversary of London's former Patron Saint. Actors and singers of all ages needed. By audition.
- Help create a giant to represent the Spirit of London with a leading puppet company.
- Help make costumes for the show under the supervision of a professional costume designer.
- Promote our work by being our ambassadors and distributing programmes and brochures. Support our administrative and professional production crew with a range of tasks.
- Work on Front of House and Stewarding for the show and Livery Crafts Fair in Guildhall Yard 17 & 18 June (training given in days leading up to the pageant).

In exchange for your hard work you will become part of a friendly and supportive team, build skills, make friends and help to re-ignite an old cultural tradition of outdoor performance in the City.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, please get in touch with:

Emmeline Winterbotham (Chair and Creative Director) at becketpageant@gmail.com
or Barbara Tysome (Community Coordinator at becketpageantcommunity@gmail.com)

*'Remember then how our fathers worked out their salvation;
remember the sufferings through which the Church has grown
and the storms the ship of Peter has weathered
because it has Christ on board.
Remember how the crown was attained,
by those whose sufferings gave new radiance to their faith.
The whole company of saints bears witness to the unfailing truth,
that without real effort no-one wins the crown.'*

Thomas Becket (1118-1170)



MACAVITY'S BASKET

by Vicky Nugée (Weavers) – Winner of the recent Basketmakers' Poetry Competition
(with apologies to T S Eliot)

Macavity's a Mystery Cat, he's called the Hidden Claw;
He rebels against Authority, he sins and breaks the Law.
But behind the hard façade you'll find a softer cat inside
With a wicker basket for a bed in the place he does reside.

The basket's round and sturdy with a blanket and a pillow;
It fits his shape precisely and its sides are made of willow.
He loves his wicker basket, it's the only place called home,
And at the end of every night-prowl he sleeps there all alone.

But one day after spending half the night out on the tiles
And leading the Police upon a chase for miles and miles,
He came home with the milk as the day was dawning fair
And found, to his astonishment, *the basket wasn't there!*

Oh Wicker basket, wicker basket, where's my basket made of willow?
With its soft and woolly blanket striped in blue and green and yellow.
It's the only home I'd call my own – I've had it since a kitten
(Though its bottom's getting mouldy and its sides are somewhat bitten.)
I found a secret place for it beneath an undiscovered stair -
But repining is no earthly use: *the basket isn't there.*

Macavity is prowling and his forehead's deeply lined;
By the lashing of his tail there is something in his mind.
He climbs a tree and drops on a roof on silent velvet paws,
He yowls and calls upon the feline mobsters and outlaws.

My wicker basket, wicker basket! Nothing like my wicker basket!
I've called you all together and you must perform the task: it
Can not have simply disappeared and I suspect a canine thief:
Seek him out and track him down and then I'll see he comes to grief.
For at crack of dawn this morning with the birdsong in the air
I came home to my hidden place and found *my basket was not there.*

The hunt is up! The criminals of the feline persuasion
Are there to do his bidding and they're masters of evasion;
They're looking for the basket and it could be anywhere:
They seek it in the parlour, in the kitchen, on the stair.

They overturn the rubbish bins, they pull the washing down,
They're breaking and they're entering for the basket must be found.
And Razzle-ding is searching in the gardens like a hawk,
He looks in Towser's kennel for he's gone out for his walk;

And lurking in the corner of the mastiff's musty lair -
Oh wonderful encounter! For the basket's hidden there.
So Razzle-ding sets up a yowl, he calls the other cats,
They gather in the garden and Macavity goes bats:

Oh wicker basket, wicker basket! Little basket of woven wicker!
We'll take my basket home, my lads, so make it quick or even quicker!
And so they bore it off in triumph, with the blanket and the pillow,
And Macavity the Mystery Cat has hid his basket made of willow.
He's subdued the stripy blanket and he's just a ball of fur,
And if you listen very closely then I'm sure you'll hear him purr.



7th September 2022 - City Giving Day

City Giving Day is a simple but impactful initiative that enables City companies and employees to celebrate and showcase their philanthropic and volunteering achievements and encourage others to get involved.

You can organise your own events or you could sign up to take part in one of the City Giving Day events organised by or on behalf of The Lord Mayor's Appeal:

- Tour de City static Wattbike challenge
- City Walk
- Treasure Hunt
- Quiz Night

More details about all of these events will be available soon.

For further information or to register for City Giving Day 2022 please click [here](#) or email cgd@thelordmayorsappeal.org