

# THE SMITHFIELD GAZETTE



**EDITION 170**

**January 2020**

## IN MEMORIAM

JOHN BREWSTER OBE 1930-2019



John Brewster who died on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2019 aged 89

Pictured in his year of office as Master of the Worshipful Company of Butchers

A memorial service was held on 13<sup>th</sup> November at the Priory Church of St Bartholomew the Great

The eulogies are reproduced on pages 2-4.

**SMITHFIELD GAZETTE 1**

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## THE SMITHFIELD GAZETTE COMMENT

We have devoted a large proportion of this edition to our friend, John Brewster, who died in September. It is hard to overstate his importance to Smithfield as you will see if you read about his life in the eulogies from his memorial service which we have reprinted here. Our thoughts and condolences are with his family.

As I write this, the election campaign is in full swing. Is this what any of us want to be thinking about at this time of year? Probably not. But it was inevitable with the Government hamstrung as it was. My hope is that we get a decisive result and that the Brexit uncertainty can be ended. I am sure that those of you who are of the remain persuasion think otherwise! One way or the other, a resolution must be found so that we can all move forward together.

My other wish for 2020 is that Crossrail finally announces a date that they will start running trains!

Wishing you and yours a Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year.

## CHRISTMAS OPENING

Details of Christmas opening times for the Market are on page 5 of this Gazette. If you plan to visit the Market in the run up to Christmas you should note that special parking and travel arrangements will be in place around the Market from 10pm until 8am on

Wed/Thur 18/19 December

Thur/Fri 19/20 December

Sun/Mon 22/23 December

Mon/Tue 23/24 December

Full information can be found on the [www.smithfieldmarket.com](http://www.smithfieldmarket.com) website.

### **QUOTE OF THE MONTH**

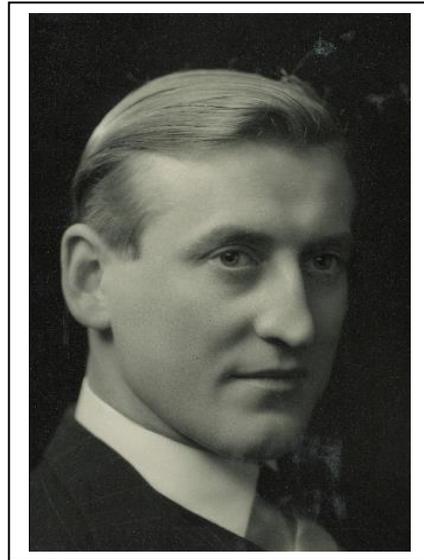
“Democracy is even more important for what it prevents than for what it provides.”

Clive James, 1939-2019  
*Critic, broadcaster and poet*

## JOHN BREWSTER OBE

17 APRIL 1930 – 30 SEPTEMBER 2019

The following are extracts from the eulogies given at the memorial service held on 13 November 2019.



### **Early Life – Edward Brewster**

This part covers John's first twenty four years – it is a tale of adventures and some glory. Born in Paris in 1930 to Jack and Dulcie, his father was a keen amateur photographer, had been in the Artists Rifles during the 1914-18 war and in 1930 was working for Kodak. It was a happy early childhood growing up with his elder sister Wendy and he fondly recalled his time in France. One of his favourite stories was at his own expense. Like every young boy learning their temper, when he didn't get his own way, he was prone to the odd tantrum and would throw himself down on the Paris pavement. Naturally, his parents ignored him. But it might attract a small crowd of French ladies to inspect the unruly English child. His mother would join them and happily agree in French how dreadful small English boys were. The family remained in Paris until, like everyone in Europe, their lives were interrupted. The story goes that his father, who departed later, left their car on the docks with the engine still running.

Back in England the decision was taken to send the children to live with their uncle in the Argentine, where he managed the family business – the Argentina Smithfield Meat Company – nobody can accuse the Brewsters of lacking imagination. So aged nine, John embarked on the Highland Monarch with his sister and cousin. He always talked about the excitement and the sense of adventure. The journey was extended as they took an indirect route to avoid the U-boats. The highlight was arriving at the mouth of the Rio de la Plata, off Montevideo, and seeing the still smoking hulk of the Graf Spee.

He enjoyed the next seven years – they lived on an island in the Rio Parana, Spanish replaced French and, despite a set of unusual academic results at St Georges College and claiming the school caning record, he flourished. He rode across the pampas with gauchos, mustered cattle, admired Eva Peron and fifty odd years later was particularly proud to have led the City of London's organisation for the visit of President Carlos Menem. He remained a member of the Anglo-Argentine Society who continue to host the best Assado this side of the Atlantic. He was in effect brought up by his Uncle Jim and they remained very close. They made what seem to us today extraordinary choices and sacrifices.

Two years were spent meat packing in Canada where he would say that the only way to keep warm at night was to share beds. He returned to Britain in time for the Festival of Britain in 1951 and got a job as a tri-lingual guide. There followed a period of National Service with the Tank Regiment where a highlight was commanding a squadron of tanks on Salisbury Plain and also as a debs delight which led to him swimming across the Thames wearing only a top hat. He loved his time in the army and subsequently the TA and relished the leadership and training it gave him. He was proud to attain the rank of Major.

So it was not a conventional start to life for an Englishman and he was in truth far from the conventional Englishman. In some ways he was never an insider, except, of course, on Smithfield Market, which would become his home from home. His adventures moulded a strong-willed young man who would always challenge himself, always be moving forward and who was never afraid to lead from the front – aspects of his character that I admire and respect more and more every day.

### **The Smithfield Years – Greg Lawrence**

It is a great honour and a privilege to have been asked to speak about John's time at Smithfield. A colleague and mentor, John remained passionate about the meat trade and, more specifically, Smithfield, long after he retired from the business. Smithfield was in John's blood and he will be forever a part of the Market's fabric. His family's history in the meat trade goes back five generations and even pre-dates the Victorian Market buildings, with his great-great-grandfather, James Brewster, having been on the City of London committee that commissioned the building of the Market, as well as trading at Smithfield. Subsequent generations established businesses in Argentina and Venezuela and as we have already heard John himself was evacuated to Argentina during the second world war before returning to do his national service.

John started working at the Market in 1954 at the age of 24 for Gee and Webb after meat was de-rationed. They were very different times – it fell to John's generation to rebuild the country and the Market after the war and it is a testament to their abilities that we are still here today. He was always very conscious of the Smithfield men who had not come back from the

two world wars and was very proud of the war memorial in Grand Avenue. In those days there was strict demarcation of the various roles on the Market enforced by the all-powerful Transport and General Workers Union.

John became managing director and owner of Gee and Webb in 1968. In 1967 consumer, distribution and production committees were set up and John sat on the distribution committee with James Sainsbury of the Sainsbury family. A system of levies to be paid to the Meat and Livestock Commission was set up. John was at Smithfield through many major milestones – the Poultry Market fire in 1958 and the completion of the new Poultry Market building in 1962 to 1963 which carries a plaque in East Poultry Avenue commemorating his great-uncle's year of office as Master of the Butchers' Company in 1961 to 1962.

There was also the introduction of the common agricultural policy in which he became involved in negotiations on behalf of the trade, foot and mouth disease in Argentina which led to major changes not only at Smithfield but in the whole of the meat industry and of course the Smithfield Market refurbishment in the 1990s. He chaired various national trade bodies and served on the Meat and Livestock Commission Distribution Committee from 1972 to 1977 and on various consultative committees for the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, now DEFRA. He was awarded an OBE in recognition of his contribution to the international meat trade.

He became Chairman of the SMTA in 1987 and served for 10 years, a period that included the Market refurbishment. He was President of the SMTA from 2013 to 2016. The modernisation of labour relations at the Market stands as one of his major achievements, having served as Chairman through the last strikes at Smithfield with full picket lines. His patience and determination bore fruit when the union voted to remove the pitchers and pullers back in 1991. John negotiated the transition to the refurbished Market buildings and the tenant decanting and took on the City in the High Court in what is known as the Brewster case. His argument that the City was 'barking mad' fell before the judge but won over public opinion and succeeded in bringing the City back to the negotiating table.

Two of his favourite words during that process were 'magnanimous' and 'proliferation'. Some of us didn't know what they meant, most of us couldn't pronounce them and none of us could spell them! He turned to politics to defend his beloved Market from the hands of greedy developers in the 1990s and successfully won election after election in Bassishaw Ward going on to become a senior player within the City Corporation. As Chairman of the Port Health Committee he took charge of the Market on behalf of the City from 2002 until 2006. He helped to heal the divide between the City and the Market which still bears fruit to this day.

John was one of the last great twentieth century Smithfield traders. He would walk the Market, a tall, upright figure in a pinstripe suit and crisp white detachable collar wearing the cream Chester coat. The embodiment of the Smithfield 'my word is my bond' ethos. He had time to talk to everyone and was always ready to help if anyone was in trouble of any kind. His varied experiences gave him a unique perspective and enabled him to be at home in a variety of situations – from the dark, crowded, smoke-filled basement of the Cock Tavern, drinking coffee and feasting on dripping toast while talking shop, talking prices, always talking about Smithfield, to attending white tie banquets at Mansion House and also to dealing with senior union representatives, legendary figures like Nobby Eady, Big John Everett, The Bear and of course Tiny Sylvester as he calmly dealt with yet another claim for unsafe load, unfair dismissal, 'elf' and safety and 25% wage claims. One of his proudest memories was leading the singing of 'if you were the only girl in the world' for the Queen Mother.

He was held in the highest regard by the union and his own staff. He was the father of Smithfield and a father figure to the next generation, my generation. Long after he retired from the meat trade, John was active on the Market's behalf. He and I used to speak regularly and I last spoke to him just a few weeks before he died. He was still concerned about the Market and the meat trade in general. His first words were always 'how's the trade?' I am honoured to have counted him as a friend and Smithfield and its traders will be forever in his debt. He will be sorely missed.

#### **Political and Civic Life – James Brewster**

John was a reformer. He greatly valued the traditions of the Worshipful Company of Butchers and the Corporation of the City of London but saw it as his mission to stir things up and leave his mark on them. He was not afraid of controversy; indeed it is hard to think that he didn't enjoy it! When others might have been pondering retirement at the age of 64, he was engaged in a titanic High Court struggle against the Corporation over rent increases and the future of the Market. He lost. One of his favourite tricks was, however, to turn defeat to victory. He and other Smithfield men stepped into the lion's den winning election to the Corporation's governing body, the Court of Common Council. The means by which they achieved this exposed weaknesses in the City's mediaeval constitution. The end result, however, was that Smithfield obtained a powerful representation in the City which has continued to this day. The Smithfield candidates' success led directly to the modernisation of the City's franchise and, if the proof is in the pudding, the Market is still thriving and still where it has always been. To the great credit of the Corporation, it went on to embrace the Smithfield men. Despite its antiquity, the City knew how modern, inclusive democracy worked. Within a short while, they had been co-opted onto committees and put to work. John served on several of them and rose to become Chairman of the Port Health and

Environmental Services Committee, one of the City's most powerful institutions.

In that role, John attracted media interest. The newspapers could smell a story when he was confronted by wild swimmers after health and safety measures were introduced to the Hampstead Heath swimming ponds. Proposals to create more space in graveyards were also fertile ground for some ghoulish headlines. He was a born politician and his involvement in the City continued into his late seventies.

The Butchers' Company was another of his great loves. He was 21 when he joined the livery and, after becoming Master at the unusually young age of 53, he set about making changes. The Hall was refurbished, the Company's promotional ladder was brought up to date and new catering arrangements were introduced. The 1980s decorating scheme he selected has recently been comprehensively and impressively superseded. The reforms he introduced, however, still ensure that new blood flows in a steady stream onto the Court and that the food at the Hall is the best in the City.

John had a great many friends and I apologise that I cannot mention all of them. On the Market, Peter Martinelli, John Absalom, Graham Jackman and Greg Lawrence, who has spoken of him with such affection, were a great source of joy to him. His many years in the trade led to him forming close bonds with 'meat men' all over the country. Ackie Manson and Willy Donald in Aberdeenshire and Howell Maybery in South Wales were amongst those most dear to him.

John liked to make a splash. He strode into rooms with his arms open and making a noise in the expectation that conversation would cease to mark his arrival. His public speaking skills were legendary. The supplier of his unusual puce and olive green stiff-collared shirts appears to have had only the one customer. He once forgot to bring his black shoes to a banquet for the Queen Mother and shook hands with her in his socks. He was quite convinced she hadn't noticed and it never crossed his mind that she was too polite to comment!

John was a tower of strength to his children and grandchildren. I will hugely miss our weekly chats about business, politics, the state of the economy and rugby. He never wavered in his support as a father and that sense of love and duty was typical of the man.

John was married twice, first to Jane Sidebottom with whom he had two children, Katie and James, and secondly to Daphne Hutcheon with whom he had a son, Edward.



**The Smithfield Gazette**  
wishes all its readers a  
**Happy Christmas**  
and a  
**Prosperous New Year**

**Smithfield Meat Market**

poultry · game · pork · lamb · beef · offal  
sausages · bacon · other provisions · halal

*open to the trade and the public all year round  
Monday to Friday excluding Bank Holidays from 2am to 8am*

**Christmas Trading Hours**

**2am to 10am**

**Monday 16<sup>th</sup> December to Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> December**

Free car parking for market customers from 9pm on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> December until  
10am on Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> December between 9pm and 10am the following day

*The Market will be closed on 25<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup> December and 1<sup>st</sup> January and open on  
27<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> December. Normal opening resumes from 2<sup>nd</sup> January.*

**[www.smithfieldmarket.com](http://www.smithfieldmarket.com)**

# Members of the Smithfield Market Tenants' Association

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## David Andrade & Sons Ltd

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45 West Market Building  
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Fax: 020 7236 7824

## James Burden Ltd

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Fax: 020 7489 8403

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29 West Market Building

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219 Central Markets

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Fax: 020 7329 3993  
www.centralmeat.uk  
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## Channel Meats Ltd

31/33 West Market Building  
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E: channelmeats@aol.com

## D.P. Meats (Alford & Ford Ltd)

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Fax: 020 7236 4173  
www.dpmeats.co.uk  
E: sales@dpmeats.co.uk

## Denton Bros. (Smithfield)

220 Central Markets  
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E: admin@dentonbros.co.uk

## J. F. Edwards (Smithfield) Ltd

42 West Market Building  
Phone: 020 7236 9721  
Fax: 020 7248 4359  
www.jfedwards.uk.com  
E: info@jfedwards.uk.com  
and shops 28, 207 & 208

## Finclass Ltd

224 West Market Building  
Phone: 020 7329 4779  
Fax: 020 7329 0271  
E: sales@finclass.co.uk

## G & E Meats Ltd

36 West Market Building  
Phone: 020 7236 6678  
Fax: 020 7329 3993  
www.gemeats.uk  
E: info@gemeats.uk

## Icefront Ltd t/a Gordon Meats

222/223 Central Markets  
Phone: 020 7236 6286  
Fax: 020 7489 9382  
E: sales@icefront.co.uk

## Tom Hixson of Smithfield

38 West Market Building  
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www.tomhixson.co.uk  
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and shop 221

## Keevil & Keevil

218 Central Markets  
Phone: 020 7489 9246  
Fax: 020 7329 0402  
www.keevilandkeevil.co.uk  
E: info@keevils.co.uk

## PW & JK Killby Ltd

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E: info@glawrence.co.uk

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## Edward Price & Partners Ltd

27 West Market Building  
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## Reeve & Co. Ltd

9/11 East Market Building  
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## Rhonda Meats Ltd

13/15 East Market Building  
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## Smithfield Beef Co. Ltd

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Fax: 020 7236 3414  
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## Vixelli

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## William Warman & Guttridge Ltd

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www.warmanandguttridge.co.uk  
E: sales@warmans.uk.com  
and shop 6, 8 & 10

## **2019 BDCI FESTIVAL DINNER**

Once again, The Brewery in the City of London, was full to capacity for the annual BDCI Festival Dinner. The drinks reception before the dinner was well attended with industry colleagues catching up with each other. Ed Rising was a charismatic, entertaining and very persuasive auctioneer and together with proceeds from the popular Heads & Tails and Silent Auction will have made a considerable contribution to BDCI. Special guest speaker comedian Hugh Dennis had a warm reception and entertained the audience with his normal wit and funny stories. The band, The X-Rays were excellent and enthusiastic dancing continued until well beyond midnight.

This year's BDCI Festival Chairman, Jo Discombe, Business Development Director of Finnebrogue Artisan, said, "This year's BDCI Festival Dinner was possibly one of the most memorable events in my lifetime. To share delicious food and drink, have such a wonderful time with industry friends old and new, laugh with Hugh Dennis and finally dance the night away to the band made for the perfect evening! We were all there for a very special charity, BDCI, and to raise funds not only for generations of colleagues before us, but also for future generation entering the Meat Industry. I thank each and every person who came for their generosity, not only in booking tickets but on the evening itself'.

Edward Hoefling, BDCI Treasurer said, "Once again the generous support of the Meat Industry made the Festival Dinner an outstanding success. Many thanks to Jo Discombe, in her year of office, in doing such a great job of raising the profile and funds for our Charity, with such enthusiasm. BDCI will continue to help those in need, already in, or having left the meat industry, but we are extending support to education at all appropriate levels, not just higher education; the money raised will go to very good use, students today are of course the industry tomorrow."

### **About BDCI**

BDCI can provide support for anyone in the UK and the Republic of Ireland who has been connected with the meat trade, as well as their widows/widowers or dependents. Help is available for those who may be struggling to cope with a variety of needs including paying bills, repairs to the home, mobility equipment and nursing home fees. BDCI also offers bursaries for students to support the future of the industry. If you know of anyone who could benefit from some support please encourage them to get in contact at [www.bdc.org.uk](http://www.bdc.org.uk), 01727 896094 or via e-mail [info@bdc.org.uk](mailto:info@bdc.org.uk).

## **RESIDENTS CONTINUE FIGHT TO PROTECT ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE OF THE BARBICAN**

Barbican residents are continuing their battle against plans by the governors of the City of London School for Girls for a significant expansion of the school's buildings within the Barbican Estate. This includes a large new school canteen running directly underneath Mountjoy House, a large multi-storey building at lakeside overlooking St. Giles' terrace and a new wood and glass building, sitting at podium level, overlooking Thomas More gardens. At a proposed cost of over £17m, it will accommodate 96 new primary school children.

Residents fear that these plans constitute a major threat to the architectural heritage of the Estate by removing the Grade II\* listed open views beneath Mountjoy House, hiding the 'pilots' columns and directly contravening the City's own listed management guidelines in the Barbican Estate's 50<sup>th</sup> year. Opposition is beyond residents directly impacted by the plans. Over 3,300 residents have signed a petition asking the City to re-consider and a recent survey of local residents revealed that just 3% supported the school's proposals. In the recent councillor elections for the Aldersgate ward, candidates all spoke out in support of the residents.

A spokesperson from the Barbican Association group opposing these plans commented "There are a number of alternative sites, adjacent to the Barbican, available to the City that would allow the school room to expand into the medium-term and avoid irreparable damage to an architectural icon. Their current proposals would only satisfy the school's needs for a decade or so anyway. The school has expanded five times on its existing site since 1969, each time destroying architectural features that most people forget ever existed. And this is despite repeated public promises over the years that no further expansions would be needed. This is an expensive and harmful stop-gap with no long-term strategy or plan to support it"

The Barbican was described by the architect Piers Gough as "the greatest piece of combined urban planning and architecture in Britain in the 20<sup>th</sup> century" and by the lecturer in architecture Barnabas Calder as "more internationally important and influential than almost anything earlier in British architecture—and more internationally loved". Residents feel disappointed that the City that had the bold vision to build the Barbican in the post-war years, is now not acting to protect its own legacy. "We can see no public benefit from this proposed development to offset the damage to Grade 2 buildings and Grade 2\* landscapes in a newly-defined conservation area. Less than 5% of pupils come from the City area and we already have an excess supply of primary school spaces. This expansion will divert girls from other prestigious fee-paying schools across London to bring them into the City each day, to an already cramped site, but with no clear social benefit" commented a local resident. The school has yet to finalise their plans and submit a full planning application - more details at [www.sosbarbican.com](http://www.sosbarbican.com)

*Andy Hawkins on behalf of the Barbican Association's  
SOSBarbican Campaign*

## EVENTS AT THE CHARTERHOUSE

### **Charterhouse Christmas Service**

18<sup>th</sup> December, 7.30-8.30pm

Traditional Christmas service of carols and lessons with the ST Michael Chorale in the Jacobean Chapel. Donations welcome.

### **Baby Broadway!**

19<sup>th</sup> December, 3.30-4.15pm

A festive family concert presented by Baby Broadway. Sing and dance along to seasonal showtunes from hit musicals and well known songs from Christmas films all performed by West End singers. There will be bubbles, flying babies, jingly bells and lots of fun! Adults £11.90 (£12 on the door, subject to availability). Children free (up to 3 per adult). Advance booking recommended.  
<https://babybroadway.co.uk/find-a-show/>

### **Dying to talk about it**

21<sup>st</sup> January, 5.30-8.30pm

Charterhouse will be hosting a Death Café in association with Gentle Dusk and Age UK Islington. This is an initiative to provide supportive, informal and friendly environments for people to talk openly about death. This is a free event but donations of £2.50 would be welcome to cover costs.

[www.thecharterhouse.org/visit-us/whats-on/](http://www.thecharterhouse.org/visit-us/whats-on/)

**The Smithfield Gazette** invites tenants, staff and others to forward items for inclusion in the Gazette. These could be personal or company news and events or anything else you might care to write about. Your stories are of great interest to your colleagues and will go unnoticed without your input. Who's getting married? Is there a new baby? Are you looking for sponsorship for a charity event?

Let us know by email [info@smithfieldmarket.com](mailto:info@smithfieldmarket.com)

telephone 020 7248 3151

or by mail to

225 Central Markets, London, EC1A 9LH

## GAZETTE BY EMAIL

If you would prefer to receive the Gazette by email, please email us to request this at [info@smithfieldmarket.com](mailto:info@smithfieldmarket.com)

## NEWS IN BRIEF

**Lord Mayor's visit to Smithfield Market** – the Rt Hon Alderman Peter Estlin visited Smithfield on 22<sup>nd</sup> October, just fitting it into his year of office. A traditional presentation of meat was made by the Tenants' Association at Absalom and Tribe's shop before heading for breakfast at the newly refurbished Butchers' Hall.

**New Lord Mayor** – the Rt Hon Alderman William Russell is the City's 692<sup>nd</sup> Lord Mayor. He was elected as Alderman for the Ward of Bread Street in 2013 and served as Sheriff in 2016-17.

**Poppy Appeal** – the appeal raised £213.12 at Smithfield Market.

## CHRISTMAS QUOTE

"I heard the bells on Christmas Day  
Their old familiar carols play,  
And wild and sweet  
The words repeat  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"

*Henry Wadsworth Longfellow 1807-1882*



## DIARY

29 Jan Markets Committee  
12 Feb SMTA Council  
4 Mar Markets Committee  
18 Mar SMTA Council  
1 Apr SMTA AGM  
29 Apr SMTA Council  
6 May Markets Committee  
20 May SMTA Council