

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.

Allocution, procession etc at formal Livery Dinners

Notes elsewhere in this folder offer guidance on speeches, photography, and much else; that on Speeches gives detail on the so-called *allocution* – the introductory words or Preamble at the start of most formal speeches (*'My Lords, Ladies, and Gentlemen' etc*)

This paper seeks to bring together the three elements of a livery dinner where the clerk needs to consider whom the VIP's are, and how/whether to include them without causing offence. In the usual order of their occurrence:

Photographs

Procession into Dinner

Allocution

Photographs

As is explained in the note on Photographs, these are best taken immediately before going into dinner, and limited to those in the procession.

The best rule to bear in mind when considering VIP's is that the more you include, the more likely you are to cause offence by omitting someone (who considers himself a VIP!). So for all sorts of practical reasons, it is sensible to keep their number to a minimum.

However should there be a need to photograph all the company's VIP guests, then it would be best to take that photo first, and then ask those not in the procession to leave, and go in to dinner.

Procession

So who to include in the Procession? Master and Wardens, and spouses/consorts if present.

Principle guest/speaker (plus partner)

Er, that's it, though the chaplain and clerk may follow.

Guest masters, City officers etc only serve to confuse the issue, and can just look a bit silly in a long crocodile.

However there clearly will be exceptions, eg for example when the LM and Sheriffs are present. Also seriously high ranking big wigs (assuming only one or two). This writer would consider an absolute maximum of six pairs to be sensible and practical.

The Beadle should be given (in advance) a written order of march as to how to get the procession lined up (immediately on completion of the photographs).

The Clerk would be wise to consider the top table seating plan with the procession order in mind. A neat solution is for the procession to lead each guest in order and

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logically to their seat. However clearly this can present difficulties, for it might suggest placing the master in the middle of the procession! Nevertheless, it is worth bearing in mind for other participants. If wardens are taking the gunner positions, it is worth suggesting that they go directly to their seats (rather than traipse all the way around the back of the top table). However if the host is on the top table, it is a courtesy to arrange things so that he/she can show their VIP guest to their seat before moving on to their own.

Where host liverymen have been nominated to look after official company guests (as is strongly recommended they should be), then the host should brief his/her allocated guest during the reception as to whether they are in the procession or not, and whether they will be needed for photographs. (if the forgoing advice is followed, then it will be either Yes, or No, to both.). [Other briefing points for hosts during the Reception are the Sung Grace (where is it printed?), Loving Cup procedure etc.]

Allocution (sometimes termed the Preamble)

Detailed guidance on whom to include and in what order is given in each of the notes in this folder on Speeches and Toasts. Overly long lists are neither funny nor clever (though some speech makers think they are, but they are hardly the first to make the "joke"). As explained above, shorter is better, and confirmation of this is given in *Debretts Correct Form* (p.298) [for a copy of the book, go to the Library page on this website].

The allocution is not used before a toast. Nor need it be repeated slavishly over and over again by the same speaker (this also applies to toastmasters).

In all of the above, fewer is better! And saves precious time.

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Livery Committee

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