

This note is one of a series placed in the Almanac for the guidance of livery masters, wardens, and their clerks, especially new ones, 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. Most are written by a past chairman of the Livery Committee, of whom you may read more at the foot of the Contact page.

Substitute master

There will be occasions (hopefully not too many during his/her year) when the master or prime warden is unable to accept an official invitation. This note aims to offer guidance on what may be considered the acceptable alternatives.

First, we may categorise the typical likely invitations as follows:

- A. Formal invitations to The Master, for eg to be a guest at livery dinners
- B. Ceremonial duties, at eg Common Hall elections, or UGS (and may involve processing)
- C. Other less high profile occasions when the host is primarily seeking guests to attend.

Taking each in turn:

Formal invitations to The Master

As a general principle it may be assumed that such invitations are **ONLY** intended for the master, and if that person cannot accept, then regrets should be promptly sent. It is not generally considered acceptable to send a substitute to eg a livery dinner (unless the host has made it explicitly clear that one is welcome), and in the exceptional circumstances that a substitute seems appropriate, then clearance from the host should be sought.

Ceremonial duties

There are a number of occasions during the year when it is important that the company is represented, and a wise master (and their clerk) will have ensured at the outset that these dates are reserved in his/her diary (all dates are at the Diary page of this website).

However there will be occasions (eg ill health) when non attendance by the master is unavoidable. All liveries will have their own policy as to who is the preferred substitute – often the IPM (sometimes styled the Deputy Master) though other companies may choose a senior or upper warden. It is entirely appropriate for the master to be represented by a substitute (if essential) at such events.

He/she may wear the gown and badge according to the custom of that company (and the prescribed dress code).

Less high profile occasions

There are a multiplicity of such events, to which the master is invited, eg charity events, lectures, exhibitions etc etc. Often the invitation will offer the option of a representative substituting for the master. If it does not, common sense may indicate when a senior liveryman (or eg past master) would be welcome; or if in doubt, a brief enquiry to the host would be in order.

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Note – many take the view (as does this writer) that it is not good form to accept an invitation from a charity when the company has no intention of financially supporting that charity. Of course if there is a ticket price for the event, that is rather different.

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