

## St Bartholomew the Great Benefactors' Day Service and Founder's Dinner

11<sup>th</sup> November 2008



The Clerk and I were privileged to be invited to the Founder's Dinner of St Bartholomew the Great, before which we attended a service where in fact our Clerk was giving one of the readings. After a hectic day at work it felt good to be enveloped by the spiritual feeling that seems to come over me when I step into a church, settle in to a pew and inhale the essence of 'Church Buildings' - a mixture of incense and hope (that all things can change...for the better). It is that really comfortable feeling that transports you from the busy, frantic material world to that of an unworldly holy land found in the corners of your mind. So there I was deep in my reverie...when I was rudely interrupted by a sound that immediately transported me back into reality. I had been so immersed in the words of the Clerk's reading that it took me a minute to realise that the sound was coming from my handbag. It couldn't be my phones...I had specifically turned them off and locked the keyboard prior to going in to church. By now I am trying to stand on my bag (from a sitting position) hoping to crush its contents and stop the ethereal sounds chiming out, whilst the Clerk continued to

read...imagine my panic, the only sounds to be heard in this huge space is the crushing (background) silence of a magnificent church, the Clerk performing her reading and mobile music accompaniment provide by yours truly. By now, not only can I not stop the noise (via the stomping, crushing method) I realise I have to dive into my bag to search for the unruly mobile phones...whilst all the rustling is going on, I look up at the Clerk as she continues to read without a flinch! Now whilst this scenario must have taken a matter of seconds to resolve in real terms, in my now adrenalized state it seemed that each nano-second was converted into an hour of shame and humiliation. Because I had turned off the phones and locked the keyboards I could not turn off the sound so I removed the batteries from each phone (quicker than my usual 'battery removal method' of dropping the phone). I then had the rest of the service to ask JC what that was all about...why me etc. It would appear that when you turn your phone off the Calendar reminders still chime out? That had never happened to me before... and hopefully never will again. The service was lovely and thought provoking. St. Bartholomew the Great is, apart from the chapel in the Tower, the oldest place of worship in London. It was founded as an Augustinian Priory in 1123 by Rahere (one of Henry 1's courtiers) after a prophetic vision. Rahere also founded the neighbouring hospital. For many years renowned as a place of miracles...During this modern age the church has been used for many film locations from Four Weddings and a Funeral to Harry Potter (I could have used the 'vanishing spell' on my bag earlier)! After the memorable service we made our way to Founders' Hall - Number One Cloth Fair EC1A 7HT. The Founders began in Lothbury in 1531 where their premises were destroyed in the Great Fire but rebuilt soon after. The hall as rebuilt in 1845 was let as offices to the Telegraph Company when they moved to St. Swithin's Lane in 1854. This building was rebuilt by George Aithchison in 1877 and later refurbished as offices. The new hall in Cloth Fair of 1986-7 won a Civic trust award for its architectural design. The dinner was excellent and the company as always at these City functions was most interesting, I was sat opposite one of the Past Masters- Mike Welpley (of my Mother Company - Worshipful Company of Security Professionals). I had a wonderful time and it was good to be representing the Guild on such a traditional occasion.