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Lord Mayor's Show

Last Saturday we went up to central London to see the Lord Mayor's Show. His full title is Lord Mayor of the City of London and he is the non-political leader of the City of London Corporation, with a one-year term. He should not be confused with the Mayor of London which is a popularly elected position, with a four-year term, and whose control covers the larger Greater London area. The Lord Mayor takes office the day before the show. On the following day the procession makes its way from Mansion House to the Royal Courts of Justice where the new Lord Mayor of London swears allegiance to the sovereign before the Justices of the High Court. The procession then continues along its circular route back to Mansion House.

The weather was mild and sunny but with the threat of afternoon showers, although none were evident at the time we took our place to await the parade's arrival. We stood at a point near the end of the route, as we have found from past years that there are fewer people there, and we can stand at the side of the kerb with elbow room and no-one behind us. There was no need to guess when the procession was near, as we could hear the sound of the first military band being funnelled up the street and echoing off the tall buildings on either side.

The parade participants are a mixture of army, military, troops, regiments and mounted cavalry, with their bands and music, young persons' service groups such as scouts, guides and cadets, and then a wide range of organisations that work and trade in London. They walked, marched, danced and rode on a variety of vehicles, vintage cars, taxis, vans and giant trucks transformed into novel and colourful floats with the excited participants waving to the crowds. Those who walked were smacking hands in greeting with everyone who held out their hand and endless smiles abounded. It was a very happy, positive and cheerful atmosphere, with everyone celebrating their city and enthusiastic

about declaring and advertising their particular group's work to all the onlookers, and indeed the world watching by television and internet.

Although we enjoyed seeing the vibrancy and creativeness of the giant floats, for me the best part was the marching bands, with the drum beats being felt in the stomach, all the feet marching in well-trained unison, and a close-up view of the faces of ordinary people doing extraordinary things in serving their country. The only ones not smiling quite so broadly were those who had to concentrate instead on their marching and musical tasks, keeping to a predetermined pace, not getting out of sync with the others and playing their music without a fluff.

Towards the end of the parade came the Lord Mayor's golden coach, a very old and splendidly ornate vehicle, pulled by magnificent horses and surrounded by guards in uniforms from past centuries. This coach can be seen year round in the Museum of London where you can get a good leisurely close-up view of all the detail. I enjoyed watching the groups of Horse Guards go by, and the horses were perfectly groomed and kitted out in just as much finery as the dignitaries and the Lord Mayor himself. One particular beautiful white horse seemed to have glowing yellow legs as he passed us and went up the street, but then I realised it was the headlights of the large van that was following at a little distance behind to act as a spacer between them and the next set of groups.

Just as the procession was disappearing out of sight and the cleansing trucks began their work, a few spots of rain turned into a light shower. As we passed along the riverside pathway, the Thames started to look very cold, grey and unpleasant, with a darkening sky to match. We hurried on to Blackfriars Station, where we did not have to wait long for our train and soon we were sitting in the warm carriage and looking forward to getting back home, away from the chilly November showers. (689 words)