

Cast to Endure

A Short History of the Founders' Company

Jasmine Kilburn-Toppin





Past Masters' Arms in the stained glass windows in Founders' Hall

Foreword

This potted history of the Founders' Company has been produced to mark the 400th anniversary of the grant to the Company of a Royal Charter in 1614 by King James I.

However, the origins and history of the Founders reach back much earlier to 1365, when the then Lord Mayor of the City of London, Adam de Bury, and the City's Aldermen approved the petition of the Founders for Livery Company status and enrolled their Ordinances. Two years earlier, in 1363 an Act of Parliament ordered that all craftsmen and merchants should choose and remain a member of an appropriate 'Mystery' or Livery Company. The historian Macaulay attached so much importance to the effect of this Act, initiated by Edward III, that he commented: "Here commences the history of the English nation".

So, in its modest, low key way, the Founders' Company has reflected for nearly 650 years issues and events which have been central to England's development, the Royal Charter of 1614 being one of many milestones and achievements.

Along that pathway, treasures and much loved items have been acquired and received, and illustrations and references to some of these are included in the text.

Our thanks and congratulations go to Dr. Jasmine Kilburn-Toppin who has written this history, and to those Founders who have contributed to our archives and historical records over the centuries.

Andrew Gillett
Master
18th September 2014

Foundations

In 1365 the ‘Good Men of the Mystery of the Founders of the City of London’ represented by their elected Master, John de Lincoln, successfully petitioned the Mayor and Aldermen for their Ordinances to be enrolled at Guildhall. This document, in Norman French, is the oldest surviving archival record relating to the Founders’ Company. The petition demonstrates that a brotherhood of craftsmen, working in brass or the alloy ‘latten’ and producing in their workshops ‘candlesticks, buckles, straps and other such like articles’, were active within the medieval City by the latter half of the 14th century.¹



Draper's shop of c.1500 showing scales and weights, as used by retailers of "fine wares as sewing silk, gold lace and such lyke" who had "ever used the Brazen Wait"

By this date London was a growing centre of commerce, manufacture and overseas trade. The City government had established considerable autonomy from the Crown and guilds were proliferating; thirty-five new craft guilds were formed between 1328 and 1377 alone.²

The 14th century petition reveals that the ‘Mystery of the Founders’ primarily sought to regulate material quality. In the words of the late-medieval Liverymen, ‘no Man of the said Mystery shall work... unless it be of good Metal’. Safeguarding the quality of raw materials was perceived to be essential both for the satisfaction of discerning consumers and for upholding the reputation of the producers and the Company. In contrast to ‘the best and finest Metal’, false metals and ‘false solder’ were said to be liable to ‘crack, break, and dissolve’ when ‘exposed to fire or great strain’.³ The governors of the Mystery also attempted to regulate workshop production, including the times at which craftsmen could work and the enrolment of apprentices within workshops.⁴ Founders were routinely fined 20 pence ‘for werkyng by night’.⁵ Furthermore, Founders were not permitted to keep shop until their proficiency and skills had first been examined by Masters of the Mystery;

artisans had to prove that they were ‘able, and sufficient, and knowing’ in the craft. The 14th century governors of the Mystery were also authorised to carry out the search of workshops of any craftsmen engaged in producing the articles of the founder, and to confiscate any work ‘found falsely wrought’ or ‘of false and brittle metal’.⁶

The Ordinances of 1365 demonstrate that the medieval guild of Founders also had an important role to play in the management of social and professional relations between craftsmen. Dissatisfied masters and exploited apprentices alike were required to report ‘any contention’ or disputes to the elected guild masters, those two or three individuals who had been ‘selected and sworn to watch and oversee the whole Mystery’.⁷ Those who showed rebellious tendencies or ‘evil will and malice’ towards their rulers were disciplined by their Masters and then brought back within the fold and reconciled with their fellows.⁸

¹ William. N. Hibbert, *History of the Worshipful Company of Founders of the City of London* (London, 1925), pp. 285-88.

² Guy Hadley, *Citizens and Founders: A History of the Worshipful Company of Founders, London, 1365-1975* (London, 1976), p. 2.

³ Hibbert, *History of the Worshipful Company of Founders*, p. 285.

⁴ The Ordinances of 1489 stated that every Founder enrolled with the Company was permitted to have a single apprentice; those ‘of the clothing’ [the Livery] could have two apprentices within their workshops.

⁵ Wardens’ Accounts, 1497-1577, MS 6330/1, fol. 26.

⁶ Hibbert, *History of the Worshipful Company of Founders*, p. 286-88.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 287.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 287, p. 290.

The Mystery of the Founders

The 14th century petition to the City government focused upon the economic role of the Mystery of the Founders, but the guild also served a range of highly significant social, civic, charitable and religious functions. The variety of activities is revealed through Ordinances of 1489 and 1516 and the Wardens' Accounts. The latter is a truly remarkable collection of documents and a very unusual archival survival, which runs in an almost unbroken series from 1497 to 1681. The Accounts, which have been painstakingly transcribed by Guy Parsloe, detail corporate receipts and expenditure. These include fines, quarterage lists and alms in addition to funds associated with the presentment of apprentices, the maintenance of Company property, engagement with 'stranger' craftsmen, the search of markets for false wares and Company dinners.⁹ Aside from the Founders, only three other City Livery Companies - the Bakers', Blacksmiths' and Carpenters' Companies - are in possession of earlier accounts.¹⁰

As was typical of craft mysteries throughout London, the working organisation of Founders was closely related to an associated religious fraternity. All Liverymen were also required to be members of the Brotherhood of St Clement, which provided charitable relief to poor, sick and elderly members of the craft and carried out funerals and religious services on behalf of deceased brethren, including saying masses for their souls.¹¹ The archival records show that Liverymen gave funds for the 'keeping of masses, burying of poor brethren and other deed[s] of alms', as well as making quarterage payments.¹² At the turn of the 16th century, 77 pence was spent for the 'wyndyng shetes', torch bearers and burials of Founders named William Chirchgate and John Bird, two examples among dozens from the Wardens' Accounts.¹³ Religious services of the Brotherhood of St Clement were held in the church of St Lawrence Jewry, next Guildhall, dating from the 13th century, and later in St Margaret, Lothbury, a 12th century church rebuilt in c. 1440.¹⁴



Image of St Clement from Williams' Account of the Worshipful Company of Founders

An inventory of Company possessions of 1497 records an altar 'with an ymage of Seint Clement', in all likelihood located in St Clement's Chapel in St Margaret, Lothbury.¹⁵ The communities of living and dead brothers of the fraternity were understood to be closely entwined; prominent Liverymen ensured that their memory was preserved and their souls released from purgatory through the donation of funds for annual masses and commemoration dinners, carried out by the Brotherhood. Richard Hawke left the Company money in his will of 1495 for an annual requiem mass at St Margaret, referred to as 'Hawke's Dirge'. Until Reformation reforms of the 1540s outlawed the doctrine of purgatory and the performance of obits, payments for ale, bread and cheese for Hawke's mourners were recorded each year in the Wardens' Accounts.¹⁶

⁹ *Wardens' Accounts of the Worshipful Company of Founders of the City of London, 1497-1681. Transcribed, calendared and edited by Guy Parsloe* (London, 1964).

¹⁰ Parsloe, *Wardens' Accounts*, ix.

¹¹ St Clement (d. c. 100), pope and martyr [David H. Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1987), p. 91].

¹² Hadley, *Citizens and Founders*, p. 10.

¹³ MS 6330/1, fol. 40.

¹⁴ Wilberforce Jenkinson, *London Churches before the Great Fire* (London, 1917), pp.162-64, pp. 130-31.

¹⁵ Parsloe, *Wardens' Accounts*, p. 413.

¹⁶ Hadley, *Citizens and Founders*, p. 21-22; Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c. 1400-1580*, 2nd edn (New Haven; London, 2005), p. 381.

Sociability and conviviality were also essential features of medieval and early modern guild culture. Feasts and dinners were particularly significant, with communal meals hosted on important days in the liturgical and working calendar. At the end of search days and on visits to fairs Founders would also share a drink or meal at one of the many inns and taverns within the City, including The Bull Head and The Mitre on Cheapside, and The Angel and Pope's Head on Lombard Street. For medieval craft fraternities the yearly celebration of the patronal feast day, which usually coincided with the Election Day for Master and Wardens, was understood to be an essential occasion for the forging and maintenance of social and political bonds between members of the Livery; feasts were 'commonly described as having been intended 'for the promotion of love and charity among the members''.¹⁷ Large quantities of food, including meat, poultry and fish, were prepared for a single meal of multiple courses, served in 'messes', while dining participants were typically entertained by musicians and 'players' (theatrical performers).¹⁸ Diners would be arranged at tables according to rank and status and would utilise plate, glass and linen which had been gifted by fellow Liverymen, thus perpetuating the donor's name and memory within the living body of the guild.

Though the Founders did not possess a hall of their own until the 1530s, the Wardens' Accounts demonstrate that their feasts, dinners and Court meetings were usually hosted in Brewers' Hall on Addle Street (now Aldermanbury Square) and the Armourers' and Brasiers' Hall on Coleman Street.¹⁹ At one such dinner in 1498, which cost the Company several pounds, a not inconsiderable sum for the time, the participants enjoyed two barrels of ale and five gallons of wine and feasted upon chicken, mutton and pigeon, prepared with butter, saffron, cloves and dates. They were entertained by minstrels, who were paid 20 pence for their efforts.²⁰ Several years later, in 1502, the Founders also contributed 40 shillings towards the construction of a new kitchen at Guildhall.²¹ It was within Guildhall that the feast in celebration of the inauguration of the new Lord Mayor, which included representatives of the Founders' Company, was held on an annual basis.



The Wardens' Accounts 1497

¹⁷ Gervase Rosser, 'Going to the Fraternity Feast: Commensality and Social Relations in Late Medieval England', *Journal of British Studies*, 33 (1994), 430-46 (431).

¹⁸ Anne B. Lancashire, *London Civic Theatre: City Drama and Pageantry from Roman Times to 1558* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 91.

¹⁹ MS 6330/1, fol. 18.

²⁰ MS 6330/1, fols 23-24.

²¹ MS 6330/1, fol. 47.

Despite the rhetorical stress upon communality and harbouring no ‘evil will’ towards fellow brothers of the Company, considerable tensions between the Livery and the Yeomanry came to a height in the first and second decades of the 16th century. The Wardens’ Accounts show that considerable costs were expended upon no less than four law suits at the Court of Exchequer and Star Chamber, ‘labourynge against the Youngmen rebelles’.²² These internal disputes related to the custody of plate, table linen and money owned collectively by the Company and the audit of the Company accounts. These matters were only officially resolved by an order from the Lord Mayor, Sir Laurence Aylmer, that all the Founders’ valuable goods should be kept in a chest with four locks and keys - one of which was to be in the possession of the Yeomanry - and stored in St Clement’s Chapel in St Margaret Lothbury, ‘where the said craft have their yearly mass for the brethren and sisters of the said fellowship of Founders’.²³



Chest for storing valuables and monies, 1579

Further, Aylmer decreed that six representatives of the Yeomanry were to be present when the Wardens presented their annual accounts and handed over the responsibility to their successors.²⁴ It would appear that these contentious issues were symptomatic of a broader trend; the Wardens’ growing authority and control over Company affairs, to the detriment of their subordinates, the Yeomanry. The former tended to represent mercantile interests, the latter those of the manufacturer, including master craftsmen and journeymen. Indeed, these disputes over access to - and misappropriation of - Company valuables and precious records were not unique to the Founders, but mirrored in many Livery Halls throughout the City, as Liverymen acquired increasing authority over the administration of Company business and regulation of the craft and trade.²⁵

In addition to tensions brewing between different estates, Liverymen also faced the challenge of how to respond to the perceived threat of skilled ‘stranger’ or ‘alien’ founders. These artisans were predominantly of French and Dutch origin and operated as ‘non-free’ workers in areas such as Southwark, outside of the jurisdiction of the City officers.²⁶ Following an Act of Parliament of 1529, which required that immigrant craftsmen, most of whom had fled from their home countries due to religious persecution, nominally join a suitable company and pay quarterage, 16 ‘Franche men’ were initially listed in the Founders’ Wardens’ Accounts.²⁷ By the early Elizabethan period approximately 25 per cent of the Founders’ Company’s work force were aliens.²⁸

²² Parsloe, *The Wardens’ Accounts*, p. 17.

²³ Hibbert, *History of the Worshipful Company of Founders*, pp. 12-15.

²⁴ Hadley, *Citizens and Founders*, p. 15.

²⁵ Ian Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 102-11.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 131-40.

²⁷ MS 6330/1, fols 250-51.

²⁸ Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability*, p. 132.

An Early Modern Company

One of the primary achievements of the 16th century Founders' Company was the acquisition and development of its own Hall. It was within this building that Liverymen socialised, the craft and trade was regulated, valuables and records were stored, craftsmen were memorialised and the quality of materials and workmanship assessed. The Hall was also the site from which the Company's appointed officers would ritualistically begin and end their search of workshops. By the time the Founders' Company purchased two houses and a parcel of ground (the latter perhaps formerly the burial ground of the Monastery of St Austin), for the purposes of a Hall in 1531, 44 other London mercantile and craft guilds possessed similar structures.²⁹ As was typical, a group of members, 18 Liverymen in all, contributed funds (over nine pounds), towards the acquisition of corporate property.³⁰

The Strangers at m d q				
0	0	0	John gnye	m ^s
0	0	0	Cristofor Small	m ^s
0	0	0	Jaffrey Salappon	m ^s
0	0	0	Robert Toze	m ^s
0	0	0	William phurgame	m ^s
0	0	0	Phillips Seno	m ^s
0	0	0	John Damasco	m ^s
0	0	0	John Carponde	m ^s
0	0	0	William Barget	m ^s
0	0	0	Maxvan Treonck	m ^s
0	0	0	Cristofor Bondis	m ^s
0	0	0	Edward Jaxram	m ^s
0	0	0	Thomas Cgwallter	m ^s
Jernynmen strangers at m d q				
			gilbert Smyth	m ^s
			Carole Fran	m ^s
			Andeo Seno	m ^s
			france Woods	m ^s
			Pichard Tandrite	m ^s
			lewis Barget	m ^s
			lewis Jernynmen	m ^s
			Edwland Cgwallter	m ^s

Liverymen's accounts, 1531

Fittingly the first Founders' Hall was situated on the street of Lothbury, an area densely populated by working founders. The 16th century historian of London, John Stow, remarked that the street of Lothbury:

"is possessed for the most part by founders that cast candlesticks, chafing dishes, spice mortars, and such-like copper or laton works, and do afterwards turn them with the foot, and not with the wheel, to make them smooth and bright... making a loathsome noise to the passers-by that have not been used to the like".³¹

Stow also noted that Founders' Hall was 'a Proper House'.³² This suggests that the building, like most other guild halls within the city, was a reasonably sized town house of a courtyard arrangement, with rooms of varying statuses, including an internal hall for feasting, organised around a central courtyard space.

Aside from routine maintenance, heating and cleaning costs amounting to approximately two or three shillings per annum, the Wardens' Accounts demonstrate that the Company spent considerable sums throughout the 1530s and 1540s making suitable adaptations and material

improvements to their new Hall. Considering the importance of civic sociability, it comes as no great surprise that the first significant expense related to the construction of ovens in 1539-40, and later a substantial chimney within the Company kitchen.³³ The Parlour, the primary space within which the Wardens met in private to discuss Company affairs, was also subject to significant adaptations in 1540-41. These included the plastering of the ceiling and the installation of wainscot and a wooden table painted with the heraldic arms of prominent benefactors.³⁴

²⁹ John Schofield, *Medieval London Houses* (London; New Haven, 1995), p. 47.

³⁰ MS 6330/1, fol. 260.

³¹ John Stow, *A Survey of London*, ed. by Charles Lethbridge Kingsford, 2 vols (Oxford, 1908), I, 277.

³² *Ibid.*, I, 283.

³³ MS 6330/1, fol. 280; fol. 380.

³⁴ MS 6330/1, fol. 281.

The high end of the Common Hall was similarly wainscoted and decorated with painted cloths, perhaps featuring biblical scenes and craftsmen, as in other artisanal halls.³⁵ By the 1580s a penthouse had been enlarged within Founders' Hall, and mention is made in the Wardens' Accounts of a buttery, melting house and yard loft; in the early 17th century a sizing house on an upper floor was also constructed for the assize of weights.³⁶

As well as being a space for socialising, governance and craft regulation, the Hall and two houses were an important asset and source of company revenue. The 16th century Founders' Hall was regularly rented for weddings and for gentlemen 'making pastimes' as well as to the Brown Bakers', Merchant Adventurers', East India' and Muscovy Merchants' Companies for their meetings and dinners; indeed, it was at Founders' Hall that the East India Company was originally established.³⁷ From the 1670s the Founders also permitted their Hall and Parlour to be used as a 'publick place' for preaching; a number of Nonconformist congregations subsequently hired it for this purpose.



Wool weight with Founders' Hall mark, 1702

A significant increase in revenue and control over the Founders' craft was also generated by the Company's successful attempt, following a petition to the Lord Mayor and Aldermen in the 1580s, to obtain exclusive rights over the 'assizing' of all brass weights in the City. From May 1587, all sellers and users of brass weights were required to have their articles tested at Founders' Hall - against payment of fees - and either marked with the Company's arms or broken up, if proved to be defective.³⁸ In 1590 the Founders obtained a grant of arms from the Herald Robert Cooke; recording in their accounts that over three pounds was 'payd by the Auditors to Clarencieux King at Armes... with a Creste thereunto added of the gifte of the sayde Kinge at Armes and confirmed to the Company under his seale of office'.³⁹

³⁵ MS 6330/1, fol. 282.

³⁶ Parsloe, *Wardens' Accounts*, xlix.

³⁷ Parsloe, xxi-xxii, 'Rents from tenants of the two houses, together with payments for the use of the Hall... averaged between £3 and £4 a year until 1548, when a sudden drop to 14s and 7s occurred'.

³⁸ Hadley, *Citizens and Founders*, pp. 60-63.

³⁹ MS 6330/2, fol. 66.



The Weoley Cup, Venetian cristallo, c.1400 (gilt foot 1547)

the Coronation procession, the Founders set up a wooden frame at Cornhill decorated with a painted or embroidered cloth.⁴²

Though the late medieval Brotherhood of St Clement was suppressed in the Reformation process in the 1540s, together with contributions in ‘Mass money’, the Founders’ Company took on the responsibility to support distressed members Liverymen and was actively engaged with wider projects of civic philanthropy. Donations were routinely made by the Livery and Yeomanry towards ‘the poverty’ of St Bartholomew’s Hospital and occasionally for the poor at Bridewell Prison and Hospital.⁴³ In 1579 the guild also established a new fund for the relief of the poor of the Company; Liverymen were required to pay three pence quarterly and Yeomen two pence and the collection was carefully stored in a box in Founders’ Hall with three locks and keys.⁴⁴

This was undoubtedly a significant fund at a time when unusually high rates of inflation were troubling many journeymen and householders within London. The Company also continued to administer the charitable fund or ‘dole’ established in the 15th century by the Fishmonger Henry Jordan, which provided coal to poor Founders, and which the Company has administered ever since.

Aside from concerning itself with matters of the craft, the early modern Founders’ Company was deeply integrated into the rich fabric of civic culture and politics. The Company provided barges for the Thames when the Lord Mayor and Sheriffs went to Westminster in State, and armed men and torches for the annual Midsummer Watch, a great demonstration of civic strength and urban security which took place on the eve of St John the Baptist’s Day (23-24th June) and St Peter and St Paul’s Day (28-29th June).⁴⁰ Soldiers were occasionally provided for foreign wars, as when England was engaged in military hostilities with France during the 1540s.⁴¹ It was on one such foray that the Weoley Cup was secured at the Siege of Boulogne. The Founders were also involved in civic celebrations to mark important Royal events, such as the burial of King Henry VII in 1509 and the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth I in 1559. The latter included a procession through the City to Westminster on Saturday 14th January, on the eve of her Coronation at that Abbey. In preparation for

⁴⁰ Tracey Hill, *Pageantry and Power: A Cultural History of the Early Modern Lord Mayor’s Show, 1585-1639* (Manchester, 2010), pp. 28-30.

⁴¹ MS 6330/1, fols 309-10.

⁴² MS 6330/1, fol. 436.

⁴³ Parsloe, *Wardens’ Accounts*, xxv; MS 6330/1, fol. 407.

⁴⁴ Parsloe, *Wardens’ Accounts*, xxiv; Hibbert, *History of the Worshipful Company of Founders*, pp. 19-20.

The Royal Charter

After several attempts in previous centuries, the Founders' Company was successful in its efforts to obtain a Royal Charter in September 1614, signed by James I, 'King of England, France, and Ireland and Scotland'. The Charter conferred legal rights to own land worth up to 40 pounds per annum; to 'have for ever a Com[m]on Seale'; to search shops and warehouses for 'deceitful' 'Brass and Copper Works, Weights, and Wares; also to Sizing and making all Brass Weights within the City and three Miles compas[s] thereof'.⁴⁵ Brass weights were to be brought to Founders' Hall to receive 'their Com[m]on Mark'.



James I as depicted in the Royal Charter, 1614

The acquisition of the Charter, particularly the services of the City Remembrancer, William Dyos, was a costly business, met primarily by Liveryman Richard Rowdinge, who advanced 150 pounds against promise of future repayment.⁴⁶

This document also set out the governing structure of the Company. The Founders' Company was to be ruled by one Master, two Wardens and 15 Assistants. The Assistants were to be elected for life, 'unless removed or dismissed'; the Master and Wardens were to be elected on an annual basis 'on the Monday next before the Feast of St Michael the Archangell', as is still the case.



The Founders' Company ballot box

⁴⁵ Hibbert, *History of the Founders' Company*, p. 32.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

The World Turned Upside Down

While the acquisition of the Royal Charter was undoubtedly a great achievement for the Company, the Stuart era proved to be immensely draining on both finances and morale. In October 1612 the Court of Assistants declared that the guild 'is gre[a]tly impoverished by reason of the dayly charges and taxes levied on the said company both for His Majesty's service and also for the service of the Citie'.⁴⁷ It was consequently decided 'for the good of the said society and for the increase of their stocke', that the gift of a silver spoon, worth at least six shillings and eight pence, was a new condition of membership.⁴⁸

This compulsory gifting practice, which formalised a pre-existing voluntary custom, was evidently essential, as between 1617 and 1624, 85 of these admission spoons, marked with the donor's initials, were regrettably sold off as a consequence of Royal demands. The 'charges and taxes' to which the Court of Assistants referred included the Founders' share of a twenty thousand pound loan from the City of London in 1604; the 'plantation' of Ulster from 1609, according to which the Founders were allocated land in Derry and Coleraine; and the City's requirement that Livery Companies purchase and store quotas of corn within their Halls.

The reign of Charles I, from 1625, a monarch who steadfastly pursued his belief in the divine right of Kings, and the subsequent Civil War, further undermined the precarious financial situation of the City Livery companies, including the Founders. The most significant charges included over 4,000 pounds for the 'pageants and other solemnities' at the Coronation of the King in 1625; a forced loan of 120,000 pounds (of which the Founders' were responsible for 90 pounds) in 1627 and 'ship money' in 1634-5, levied without the consent of Parliament. The London guilds faced new financial burdens from 1642, including an annual tax - the Founders paid 12 pounds, which they



The Bowen Spoon, 1624

could scarcely afford - when the City became a Parliamentary stronghold. By 1635 the Company's collection of silver spoons had been sold off, all except Humphrey Bowen's spoon, gifted to the Company on his admission in 1624-5 and inscribed on both sides of the handle: 'If You Love Me, Keep Me Ever - That's My Desire and Your Endeavour'. This remains one of the Company's most precious treasures.⁴⁹

Aside from the grave financial implications, the social and constitutional upheavals of the Civil War years and Interregnum also had deleterious effects upon relations between men of the same guild. Long-standing antagonisms between craftsmen belonging to the Yeomanry and mercantile capitalist interests dominating the Livery and Court of Assistants erupted throughout many City Livery Companies during the 1640s and 1650s.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Court Orders, 1603-38, MS 6335.

⁴⁸ Hadley, *Citizens and Founders*, p. 73. The minimum value of the spoons was raised to 13s. 4d. a year later.

⁴⁹ Hibbert, *History of the Worshipful Company of Founders*, p. 274.

⁵⁰ Norah Carlin, 'Liberty and Fraternity in the English Revolution: The Politics of London Artisan Protests, 1635-1659', *International Review of Social History*, 39 (1994), 223-54; Michael Berlin, 'Guilds in Decline? London Livery Companies and the Rise of the Liberal Economy, 1600-1800', in *Guilds, Innovation and the European Economy*, ed. by S. R. Epstein and Maarten Prak (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 316-41 (236).



Seal of James I on Royal Charter, 1614

The Master, Wardens and Assistants of the Founders' Company were presented with a petition from the self-styled 'commonality of the corporation' in February 1651, setting out a 'brief account of our desires', chiefly that: 'you would let us have the Charter of the Company read - without which we are in no rational capacity to know our privileges'.⁵¹ This request was met, though the Clerk allegedly 'did wilfully omit the reading of the privileges which to the Commonalty did belong'. The 'ringleaders' thus refused to pay their quarterage until 'the Company would keep better their Charter, and let them have those privileges unto which they were born, for they had been made slaves long enough by the Company'.⁵²

These strong words did not mark the end of the internal Company conflict. In October 1652, after the Court of Assistants had petitioned for a renewal of the Charter, several 'rebel' Founders sent a counter-petition to the Committee for Corporations, demanding that certain changes be made. Subsequently 16 Founders set down their demands to the Committee in writing.⁵³ These grievances were focused upon the Court of Assistants' methods of governance and administration of Company property and finances, rooted in the frustration that the Yeomanry were governed by 'rulers who are not able to judge anything relating to the Trade, for that they being men of other callings'. It was alleged by the 'commonality' that fines were issued 'according to their [the Assistants'] pleasure'; that the Charter should be, but was not read out in the Founders' Hall each year and that the affairs of the Company were carried out 'secretly', in 'a close parlor... whereas other Companies keep open Court in their Halls for every Member thereof to hear'.

The Court of Assistants supposedly 'misapplie[d] the Giftes and Charities'; 'that they have wasted the stock and revenues of the Company'; that one of the Wardens, Stephen Pilchard, was a Royalist and the Clerk, William Basspoole, 'a Mocker and Scoffer of all manner of godliness, and holiness, and goodness'.⁵⁴ The Court of Assistants sent their own written reply to 'the scandales and false reports', denying all charges and presenting the petitioners as rebels, who 'would levell the government and orders of the Company according to their own perverse, proud, and peevish mynd'.⁵⁵ Both sides of the dispute were called to a hearing by the Committee for Corporations in November 1652, though unfortunately its findings are not on record.

⁵¹ Hibbert, *History of the Worshipful Company of Founders*, pp. 41-42.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 47-48.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 48.



WITNESSETH that we the said King and our Council have granted and confirmed that the said Company shall have full power and authority to buy and sell such and such things as they shall think good for the better and more profitable governance of the said City of London and the inhabitants thereof... And further we have granted and confirmed that the said Company shall have full power and authority to make and use such and such laws and ordinances as they shall think good for the better and more profitable governance of the said City of London and the inhabitants thereof...



Founders' Company Royal Charter, 1614

Observing the Great Fire of September 1666, the civil servant and diarist Samuel Pepys lamented that: 'It made me weep to see it. The churches, houses, and all on fire and flaming at once, and a horrid noise the flames made, and the cracking of houses at their ruine'.⁵⁶ The City of London



The Beadle's Staff

was devastated by this inferno: five-sixths of the area within the walls, 14,000 houses, 78 parish churches, forty-four Company Halls, the Guildhall and St Paul's Cathedral were destroyed.⁵⁷ The City Livery Companies not only lost their institutional headquarters, but also precious rental incomes. For the Founders this was a double blow: they lost rental income on their property in Lothbury and income derived from the sizing of weights. Thankfully the quick witted Clerk, Francis Lambert, managed to at least salvage at least 'plate and other things belonging to the Hall', for which he was awarded seven pounds. As was typical throughout the City, efforts to rebuild began relatively quickly and after the appointment of a rebuilding committee for the new Founders' Hall, construction work commenced in 1670. It appears that all Liverymen of the Company were compelled to make subscriptions towards the cost of rebuilding, which in total came to over 1,000 pounds.⁵⁸ Once building work on the Hall and tenements was completed in 1672 the Court of Assistants

reasserted control over Company affairs, declaring 'that all those Laws, Ordinances, Orders, Customs, and usages of the sayd Company, shall be put in practice againe and be observed as formerly'.⁵⁹

'How merrily we live, that Founders be'

Compared to the exceptional trials and tribulations of the preceding century, the 1700s was an era of relative harmony for the Founders, though the Company still faced a number of significant internal challenges, including debt, absenteeism among the Livery and encroachments upon the craft by non-founders. Waning influence over craft regulation was a shared experience among the 89 guilds of eighteenth-century London. Companies that had once played a close role in upholding standards and training practices, including control over apprentice numbers, found connections between working members loosen. By the second half of the 18th century, the role of City Livery Companies was largely focused upon conferring social status, charity and political legitimacy.⁶⁰

The disruptions of the 17th century, including Civil War, Interregnum and Great Fire, left guilds impoverished and fundamentally altered their status and authority.⁶¹ The Founders had 'no stock but... six hundred pounds in debt' in the late 1690s.⁶² The continued growth of the suburbs, populated by rising numbers of non-free craftsmen and traders, further undermined the ability of the City Livery companies to regulate material quality and conditions of production. A petition to the Master, Wardens and Court of Assistants in 1771 by several Liverymen of the Company 'humbly requested' that the guild use 'every just means in their power to preserve to

⁵⁶ *The Diary of Samuel Pepys: A Selection*, ed. by Robert Latham (London, 2003), p. 662.

⁵⁷ Thomas F. Reddaway, *The Rebuilding of London after the Great Fire* (London, 1940), pp. 115-21.

⁵⁸ Hadley, *Citizens and Founders*, p. 107.

⁵⁹ Hibbert, *History of the Worshipful Company of Founders*, p. 53.

⁶⁰ J. R. Kelleth, 'The Breakdown of Guild and Corporation Control over the Handicraft and Retail Trades', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., 10 (1957-8), 381-94; G. D. Ramsey, 'Victorian Historiography and the Guilds of London: The Report of the Royal Commission of the Livery Companies of London, 1884', *The London Journal*, 10 (1984), 155-66 (158).

⁶¹ Berlin, 'Guilds in Decline?', p. 325.

⁶² William M. Williams, *Some Account of the Worshipful Company of Founders*, 2 vols, MS 6353/1, fol. 185.

the Company their ancient rights and privileges granted to them by Charter... rights which at this time are most grossly and daringly invaded by many aliens to the Company'.⁶³

At the beginning of the 18th century the Court of Assistants lamented 'how easy it is to run into debt, but hard to get out'.⁶⁴ A man of 'prudent wisdom and zeale', Richard Nevill, Master from 1705 to 1706, was responsible for partially alleviating this problem. Nevill paid off 200 pounds of the Founders' old debt and several other debts amounting to more than 100 pounds, as well as bringing into the Livery 33 new members 'some of whose names were not in the Company's Books'. In recognition of Nevill's ingenuity and so 'that so great and good services may not be soon forgotten' his name was put up in Founders' Hall in the glass windows between the two parlours.⁶⁵



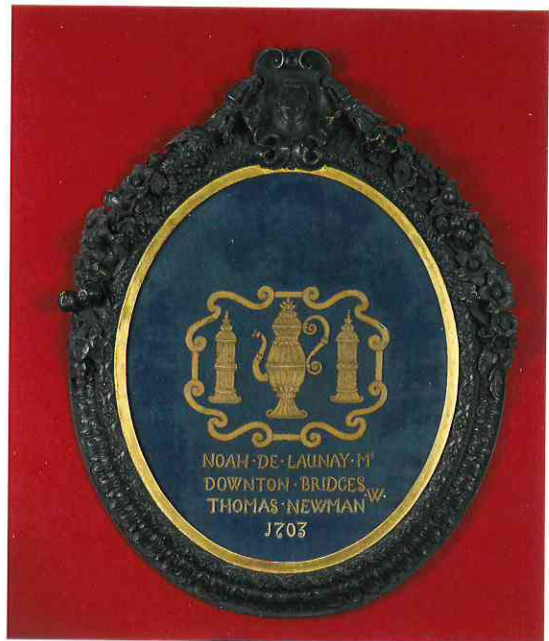
Name plate from Hall, c.1845

The Hall itself also proved to be a continued source of much needed revenue with various rooms rented to other guilds, religious societies and social clubs. The Parlour was rented by the Clockmakers' Company, a dancing master and the Society for Promoting Religious Knowledge; the Court Room to the Tackle and Ticket Porters; the Hall to the Loriners' Company for their monthly Court meetings and annual dinner. The Founders were also paid over two pounds each time the Court Room and Parlour were used for a funeral; extra if 'the corpse lays there any longer time than usual'.⁶⁶ A Scottish Presbyterian congregation used 'the little room'

in the Hall, called 'the Vestry Room' for 'the exercise of Divine Service' and were at liberty to set their pews 'in the brickplace or passage in the Hall' four times a year.⁶⁷

Absenteeism among the Liverymen was a perennial problem throughout this century, and minutes from the Court of Assistants reveal that repeated orders were issued threatening prosecution, expulsion from the Livery or fines for those who persistently neglected their duties. Three Assistants named Newman, Meakins and Brooks were accordingly dismissed from the Court in 1720.⁶⁸ In August 1726 a rather desperate scheme to encourage attendance was proposed; that each member of the Court of Assistants who came to the meeting within an hour of commencement, and stayed for the duration, was to be given a shilling from the Company's stock.⁶⁹

Absenteeism must have been, to some extent, a consequence of Liverymen living at considerable distance from London, as evidenced by the decision in 1764 that 'all members of the Court residing beyond the distance of a twelve-penny coach fare be excused attendance on Court Days'.⁷⁰



Fragment of table covering from Court Room, 1703

⁶³ MS 6353/1, fol. 258.

⁶⁴ MS 6353/1, fol. 206.

⁶⁵ MS 6353/1, fol. 553.

⁶⁶ MS 6353/1, fol. 250.

⁶⁷ MS 6353/1, fols 216-17.

⁶⁸ Hadley, *Citizens and Founders*, p. 135.

⁶⁹ MS 6353/1, fol. 227.

⁷⁰ Hadley, *Citizens and Founders*, p. 135.

Attempts were made to ensure that all working founders were members of the Founders' Company, but the 18th century guild was facing an uphill struggle. A petition was made to the Court of Common Council in 1750 - which resulted in an Act in 1753 - to uphold the Company's claims that 'all and every persons not being free of the said City, occupying, using or exercising the art, trade, or manual occupation of a founder within the City of London or liberties thereof, shall... be made a freeman, of the said Company of Founders'.⁷¹

A gentler method of reasserting connections between Company and craft was the proposition that all working founders who were free of another company should become members of the Founders' Company as 'Love Brothers... without any fee or expense from them' and not be called upon to take up any Company office.⁷² The matter of weights was also a troubling issue and it is very probable that the 18th century Company was gradually losing the authority to uphold the regulation that brass weights should be marked at Founders' Hall.

19th century London was the heart of a modern industrialising nation and growing overseas Empire. This century saw concerted attempts by planners and reformers to 'improve' and refashion the streets and infrastructure of the City and the development of new sorts of mass urban culture, leisure and socialisation, but it also witnessed the proliferation of slums, poverty and squalor with London's population reaching over 3,000,000 by 1871.⁷³ Through their philanthropy, building projects and social practices, the Founders played their modest part in the metropolitan transformation.



Liveryman John Warner, who founded and endowed the John Warner School, still supported by the Company

From its foundation, charity had always been an important feature of Company identity, though motivations and methods of charitable giving certainly changed over the centuries. In 1829, under the direction of Thomas Mears, a member of the Court and a former Master (as well as a renowned bell founder), the Founders reaffirmed this philanthropic impetus through the establishment of The Founders' Charitable Fund. A printed bill sent to all Liverymen and every new member of the Founders' Company stated that the Fund had been set up for the benefit of Liverymen and their widows, 'who from a state of affluence or comparative comfort, have been reduced to the greatest necessities, from circumstances not within their own control'. Dozens of Liverymen subscribed to the Fund - perhaps heeding the none too subtle warning 'that we none of us know how soon it may be our fate to require similar aid' - and gave nearly 500 pounds in total.⁷⁴ The Fund's rules and regulations ascertained that the collection was to be kept separate from the Company's 'debts or contingencies', a new but significant practice, which

must have been beneficial to the charity. 'Distressed, but meritorious applicants' had to be over 60 and earn less than 20 pounds a year to qualify for a pension; they could not already be in receipt of parish relief or simultaneously on the Founder's 'poor list'.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 132.

⁷² MS 6353/1, fol. 241.

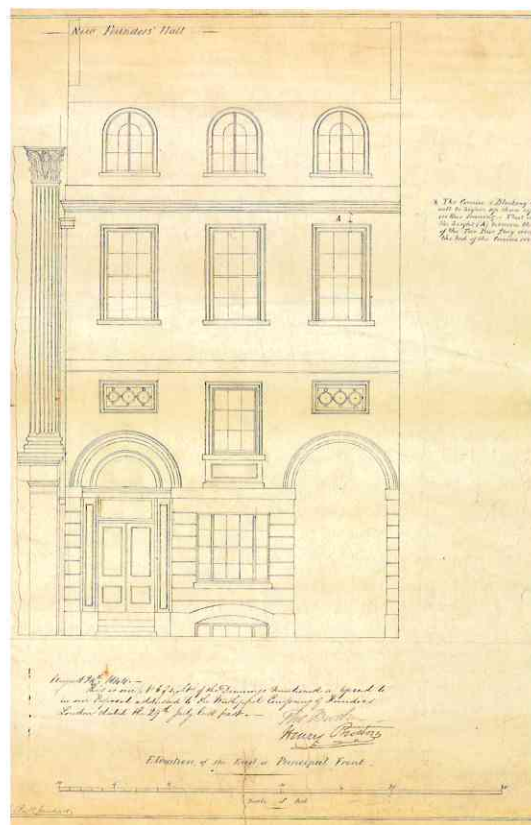
⁷³ Lynda Nead, *Victorian Babylon: People, Streets and Images in Nineteenth-Century London* (New Haven; London, 2000).

⁷⁴ MS 6353/1, fol. 503.

⁷⁵ Hadley, *Citizens and Founders*, p. 150.

Aside from philanthropy, the Hall was a major preoccupation for the 19th century Founders. In 1844 the Court of Assistants decided to demolish the two houses in Founders' Court, 'in anticipation of the Metropolitan Buildings Bill (which would prevent the Company using their ground so beneficially as at present)', and construct a new Hall on that site.⁷⁶ This new building was completed in 1845, at a cost of nearly 2,000 pounds. A song was composed and sung by the Clerk at the opening of the new Hall with verses commemorating the Company's customary role in settling disputes, providing charity and lending money to Crown and Parliament. It ended with the rousing verse: 'So in the words of Weoley, let the members, one and all, drink. May harmony and brotherly love prevail in this new Hall. May harmony and brotherly love prevail in this new Hall'.⁷⁷

The old Founders' Hall was let to the Electric Telegraph Company in 1844 and this organisation also obtained the lease for the new Founders' Hall, for 400 pounds per annum, in 1853. A year later, Master William Meade Williams found a suitable new headquarters for the Founders' Company at 13 St Swithin's Lane, which was subsequently purchased thanks to subscriptions to the Loan Fund by 12 Liverymen (of 300 pounds each).⁷⁸ In 1876 this Hall was pulled down and rebuilt, according to designs by George Aitchison, at a cost of 8,000 pounds, met by a loan from the London Life Assurance Company. Though a Court Room, offices for Clerk and Beadle and a weights office were maintained at this new Hall on St Swithin's Lane, the majority of the building was let as offices and shops.⁷⁹



Elevation of new Hall, 1845



Frontispiece to Williams' *Account of the Worshipful Company of Founders*

Aside from his notable services relating to the acquisition of a new Company property, Master Williams - who held this office twice, in 1852-3 and again in 1853-4 - also undertook the substantial task of compiling a complete history of the Founders' Company for the first time. Williams' *Account of the Worshipful Company of Founders*, comprises two hand-written, weighty volumes, amply demonstrating his ambition 'to trace the links that connect us with the past, and to make acquaintance with the names and history of those of fellow-citizens of former days'.⁸⁰

Meticulously researched, the text is also interspersed with illustrations, contemporary and historic prints, newspaper cuttings, maps and sketches of the City's topography and sites of architectural significance. Historical artefacts are even preserved

⁷⁶ MS 6353/1, fol. 371.

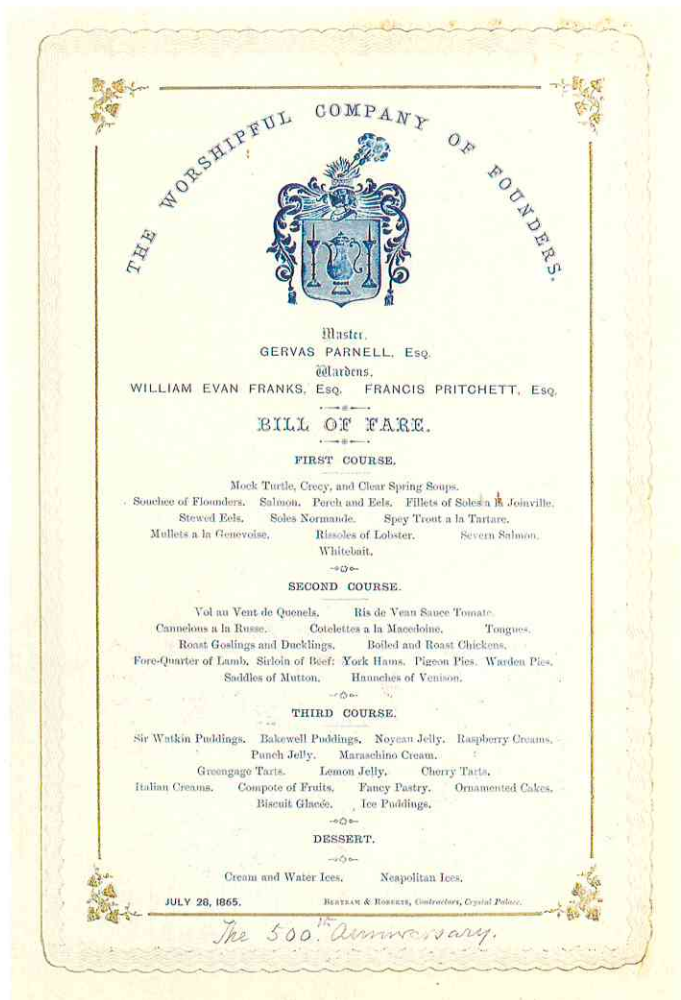
⁷⁷ MS 6353/1, fol. 547.

⁷⁸ MS 6353/1, fol. 433.

⁷⁹ Hadley, *Citizens and Founders*, p. 153.

⁸⁰ Preface printed in: Hibbert, *History*, ix-xii.

within the covers of the *Annals*, including a rosette in the Founders' colours from October 1844, which was worn, instead of a Livery gown, when Queen Victoria 'honoured the City with her presence to open the Royal Exchange'.⁸¹



Menu from Crystal Palace dinner, 1865

Mindful of the Founders' Company's rich heritage and the continued importance of corporate sociability, on Friday 18th July 1865 a splendid dinner was held at Crystal Palace, 'in commemoration of the five hundred anniversary of the recognized existence of the company'. Each Liveryman was 'entitled to introduce a Lady without payment'.⁸² Surviving menus and programmes reveal that three courses - composed of multiple dishes - plus dessert were served. The Founders enjoyed, among other gastronomic luxuries, lobster, salmon, haunches of venison, roast goslings and ducklings, pigeon pies, 'fancy' pastry and 'Italian creams'. Choice selections of musical entertainments were also performed, including the 'Historical Romance', *King Richard the Second and Wat Tyler* and a 'Buffo Romance', *Whittington and his Cat*. The finale of the night was the performance of the 'Glee', *How Merrily We Live*.⁸³

How merrily we live, that Founders be,
Roundelays still we sing with merry glee;
In the pleasant fields where, as our mines
we see,
We feel no care, we fear not fortune's
frown:
We have no envy which sweet mirth
confounds.

⁸¹ MS 6353/1, fol. 372.

⁸² MS 6353/2, fol. 285.

⁸³ MS 6353/2, fol. 293.

A Modern Company

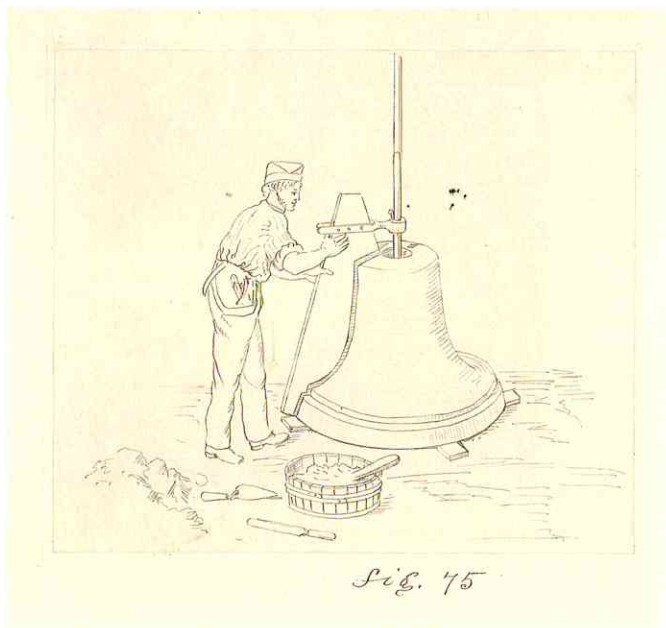
At a time when many Livery Companies had become wholly disconnected from their craft or trade, the 20th century Founders' Company forged strong links with the thriving founding industry. In 1901 and 1910 the Company funded an exhibition and awards held at Ironmongers' Hall of foundry designs, models and castings. The Company sponsored a similar display of technical skill at the 1935 Buildings Exhibition and a competition in 1957 organised by the City and Guilds Institute. Founders' Company Scholarships were established in 1924 for students in the Engineering Faculty at King's College, London, and from 1938 the Company also sponsored Founders' Company Fellowships to facilitate further technical training for men who had completed their basic education in foundry work. Thanks to the generosity of the Trust Fund, established by Robert Warner, Master in 1933, the Company also began to sponsor research into all aspects of foundry work carried out at higher education institutions from the 1960s.⁸⁴

The modern Founders' Company also renewed its connection to the craft of bell founding, specifically the Whitechapel Bell Foundry, through the contribution of funds for the repairs of the 'Bow Bells' in 1928. There is evidence, from the 16th century, that master-founders of the Whitechapel Bell Foundry, the oldest such foundry in Britain, responsible for casting America's Liberty Bell (1752) and Big Ben (1858), were also members of



The Hall bell, cast by the Whitechapel Bell Foundry

the Founders' Company.⁸⁵ In celebration of the 400th anniversary of the Whitechapel Foundry in 1970 two of its partners, William and Douglas Hughes, were made Freemen of the Company.⁸⁶



Bell making at the Whitechapel Bell Foundry, c.1850

⁸⁴ Hadley, *Citizens and Founders*, pp. 160-61.

⁸⁵ Simon Brett, *The Whitechapel Bell Foundry* (London, 1977).

⁸⁶ Hadley, *Citizens and Founders*, pp. 160-61.



Memorial in the Hall to the fallen of the Company, 1914-18

son John, to thank for their fire-watching duties which ensured that Founders' Hall remained relatively unscathed. When the Company feared that the Hall was in grave danger from aerial bombardment, measures were also taken to protect its most precious and historically significant material possessions, including a hole dug in the basement floor of the Hall to store the Weoley Cup.⁸⁷

As in earlier centuries, the modern Company's financial position was closely tied to property ownership and in 1964 the freehold of the Founders' property in Lothbury was sold to its tenants, the private banking firm, Brown Shipley. This sale enabled the Company to rebuild and modernise the Hall on St Swithin's Lane, including a new Parlour, kitchens and cellarage, and offices for Master, Clerk and Beadle; though there was unfortunately insufficient space for full livery dinners, which were held at Mansion House or other Livery Halls.⁸⁸ The 1980s saw an exciting move for the Company when the Victorian Hall on 13 St Swithin's Lane was sold and the Founders relocated to newly built premises in Cloth Fair, at the east end of St Bartholomew the Great. The new Hall was designed by the late architect Sam Lloyd, senior partner at Green Lloyd, who was also commissioned for the Royal Society of Arts and the Courtauld Institute, as well as many other prominent London commissions. Lloyd's grandfather, William Curtis Green, had been very influential in the development of the Arts and Crafts style for domestic architecture, in addition to many monumental projects, including the Dorchester Hotel in Park Lane.⁸⁹ A review of the new Founders' Hall - with Parlour, office, Livery Hall, flats and offices - in *Country Life*, concluded that: 'The whole elevation is an excellent example of the type of lively yet courteous street architecture that all our cities so badly need after 20 years of vulgar prima donna displays by "modern" architects'.⁹⁰



Roundel on the facade of the Hall in Cloth Fair

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 161-62.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

⁸⁹ Hubert Worthington, 'Green, William Curtis (1875-1960)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn.

⁹⁰ Roderick Gradidge, 'Lively yet Courteous: The New Founders' Hall in Cloth Fair', *Country Life*, 44 (1988), 200-202 (202).

Ever active in the wider civic culture and politics of the City, representatives of the Founders' Company were honoured to serve as Lord Mayor twice in the 20th century, in 1912 and again in 1947. During the restoration of the West Crypt, Guildhall in the early 1970s, which dates from the 12th century, the Company installed a stained glass window displaying the heraldic device of the guild and emblems such as the anchor, which refers back to the Company's late medieval associations with Saint Clement.⁹¹ Another strong connection to the earliest years of the Founders' Company was made in 1972, when the Court of Assistants revived the practice of electing 'Free Sisters' of the Company. An entry from 1529-30 of the Wardens' Accounts, that great repository of Company history, records the names of five women, most likely widows of former Founders, as members.⁹²



The Founders' Company's window in the West Crypt, Guildhall

⁹¹ St Clement was said to have been martyred by being tied to an anchor and thrown into the Black Sea in c. AD 100.

⁹² Parsloe, *Wardens' Accounts*, p. 81.

The Company today and in the future

The 400th anniversary of the grant of the Company's Royal Charter is just one of a number of achievements stretching back over six and a half centuries. It is gratifying to see that the original ethos of self-help, charitable works and support for the City of London is as strong today as it has ever been. The membership includes relatives of past generous benefactors who can be traced back over many generations – in one case 14 – and who still support and contribute to the Company's charitable and educational works. Like many City Livery Companies, support for education in its various guises is a major priority and takes the form of aiding inner city primary and secondary schools with scholarships and bursaries, support for the John Warner School established in the 1850's by a Founder, to bursaries for under- and post-graduate students studying a range of disciplines from metallurgy and engineering to music and medicine, and more general travelling scholarships and bursaries.

The Company is proud of its long association with the Armed Forces, which currently include the Royal Naval frigate HMS Iron Duke, the London Irish Rifles (D Company, 4th Battⁿ The Rifles), and 33 Squadron RAF.



*A collegiate life: one of the Founders' sporting trophies
in form of a salamander*

The collegiate spirit of the Founders' Company lives on in the life of the Company, as it has done for centuries. A fine example of that ethos is reflected in the sentiments attaching to the deed of gift of Richard Weoley when he gave his famous cup to the Company in 1644. That cup is still being used, as directed under the terms of his gift, only when the new Master is sworn in each October when the retiring Master drinks the health of the new Master in a cup of Hippocras. The deed concludes with the desire: "And I hereby do wish that my means were more agreeable to my will that they should record me a better Benefactor; and I shall ever wish that the whole body might live in unity, concord and brotherly love which is pleasing to God and Man. Even thus the God of Heaven bless them all - Amen."

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MASTERS

1365 JOHN DE LINCOLN
1366-90 NOT KNOWN
1391 THOMAS GRACE AND
ROBERT NEWMAN
1392-1423 NOT KNOWN
1424 WALTER ADAM AND
NICHOLAS WEST
1425-7 NOT KNOWN
1428 WALTER ADAM AND
WILLIAM BYRD
1429-30 NOT KNOWN
1431 WILLIAM TURNER AND
SIMON STERNE
1432 JOHN WEST AND
JOHN RUSSELL
1433-7 NOT KNOWN
1438 JOHN RUSSELL AND
ROBERT REYNOLDS
1439-96 NOT KNOWN
1497 ROBERT SETCOLE
1498 ROBERT SETCOLE
1499 JOHN PINCHBECK
1500 JOHN PINCHBECK
1501 ROBERT SETCOLE
1502 ROBERT SETCOLE
1503 RANDOLF AUSTIN
1504 RANDOLF AUSTIN
1505 RANDOLF AUSTIN
1506 RANDOLF AUSTIN

1570 ROBERT FALCONER
1571 JOHN CHAMBERS
1572 JOHN JACKSON
1573 THOMAS BARLEY
1574 ROBERT SHURLOCK
1575 JOHN CHAMBERS
1576 JOHN CHAMBERS
1577 JOHN JACKSON
1578 EDWARD FALCONER
1579 EDWARD FALCONER
1580 EDWARD HEARNE
1581 EDWARD HEARNE
1582 JOHN JACKSON
1583 JOHN CHAMBERS
1584 EDWARD FALCONER
1585 EDWARD HEARNE
1586 URYAN DANIELL
1587 THOMAS HORTON
1588 ROBERT WALDO
1589 ROBERT WALDO
1590 NICHOLAS ROBERTS
1591 NICHOLAS ROBERTS
1592 JOHN CHAMBERS
1593 EDWARD FALCONER
1594 EDWARD HEARNE
1595 ROBERT WALDO
1596 THOMAS JACKSON
1597 NICHOLAS ROBERTS
1598 RICHARD ROWDINGE
1599 RICHARD ROWDINGE
1600 ROBERT WALDO
1601 NICHOLAS ROBERTS
1602 EDWARD HEARNE