

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE GLAZIERS' COMPANY

When the Glaziers' Company first came into being is lost in the mists of time, but the earliest mention of The Company is to be found in 1364-5, during the reign of Edward III¹.

Charters

The Company was granted its first Charter by Charles I in 1638. This, together with those of many City Livery Companies, was revoked by Charles II in 1683 with a view to raising money by means of the franchises belonging to those companies. Partial restitution was made by James II in a new Royal Charter of Incorporation dated 1685. Full restoration of the original Charter was made by William and Mary in 1689. Finally, by a Supplemental Royal Charter granted by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on 2nd January 1956, it was declared (inter alia) that the Court of Assistants shall consist of the Master, Upper Warden, Renter Warden and not less than ten, nor more than thirty, Assistants in addition to Assistants ex officio (i.e. Past Masters).

Governance

In accordance with its Charters, the Company today is administered by a Master, Upper Warden and Renter Warden who are installed annually on or near St. Andrew's Day. They are supported on the Court by a number of Assistants. Also, there are various Honorary Officers: Almoner, Bargemaster, Chaplain, Curator, Musician, Solicitor and Treasurer. The permanent staff is headed by the Clerk, assisted by the Assistant Clerk and the Beadle. The Court meets five times a year, namely within seven days before or after St. Paul's Day (25th January), St. Mark's Day (25th April), St Peter's Day (29th June), St. Matthew's Day (21st September) and St. Andrew's Day (30th November). In addition, the General Purposes Committee meets fourteen days before each Court meeting and various other committees meet at the discretion of their respective chairmen.

The Arms

The exact date when the Arms of the Company were formally granted, if ever, is unknown, but the first blazon (description) of them occurs in 1588 when the Herald Robert Cook, Clarencieux King of Arms, made his official visit to the Company. A second visitation was made in 1634 by Sir Henry St. George, Richmond Herald. Subsequently, on 5th March 1926 Sir Gerald Woods-Wollaston, Garter King of Arms, certified and declared that: "The Armorial Ensigns of the Worshipful Company of Glaziers of the City of London are as follows:-

Arms: Argent two grozing irons in saltire between four closing nails Sable. On a chief Gules a demi-lion passant guardant Or.

Crest: On a wreath of colours a lion's head couped Or between two wings Azure.

Supporters: On either side a boy proper holding in the exterior hand a torch Or, inflamed also proper.

Motto: Lucem Tuam Da Nobis Deus ("O God, give us Thy Light").

Membership of The Company

Every Liveryman of the Company is a Freeman of the City of London. While this is now a sinecure, in earliest times it meant that he (or she) was free to practise his trade within the five-mile radius. If he lived and worked outside this radius, he was regarded as a

¹ New research has cast doubt on the assertion in *Ashdown's History* that written records mentioning The Company go back to 1328. Instead, we believe the earliest mention of The Company is in a petition to the Mayor and Aldermen in 1364/65. We are considering how best to confirm this is indeed the case.

'foreigner' and could not do so.

From the early Middle Ages until changing times in the first quarter of the 19th century, the Glaziers' activities were largely taken up in protecting their rights. In our history there are many references to petitions to the Sovereign and the Lord Mayor objecting to infringements of our privileges. For example, during the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I, the pernicious practice, begun by Henry VIII, of granting monopolies in commodities to favourites, had reached such proportions that the cost of glass rose to a point where only the rich could afford windows in their houses. A coalition of capitalists led by Isaac Bungard and John Dynes attempted to corner the whole of the glass trade. Following a spirited fight against this monopoly by the Glaziers' Guild, it obtained its first Charter in 1638. Subsequently Bungard and Dynes motivated by the dictum "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em" became Liverymen of the Company. Today, they would not have been admitted; our forefathers were more forgiving.

On receipt of their Charter, the Glaziers proceeded against another antagonist, impeaching Sir Robert Mansell and his collaborators. The outcome was the proper supply of good glass and lead at a reasonable price.

Present Activities

The Company is still very much concerned with the craft and its origin. The emphasis has however moved from the protection of the personal economic welfare of the Glaziers to preservation of our heritage of glass, at the same time ensuring that the Craft continues to be practised to a high standard. To this end, the Company maintains the Glaziers' Trust which assists Churches in the restoration of medieval stained glass or other glass of importance. A travelling scholarship is awarded every other year and annual competitions are held for students of stained glass. Young craftsmen are given every encouragement to enter into and continue the Craft by way of work placements financed by the Company.

The Boydell Library of books on Stained Glass is situated at Glaziers' Hall, as is the Company's Glass Information Service. A close relationship is also maintained with the British Society of Master Glass Painters, the representative body for the Craft today.

The Company has established the very successful London Stained Glass Repository, the purpose of which is to rescue valuable stained glass considered at risk, and to find a suitable home for it.

The present-day Livery includes a wide range of professions and it is generally accepted that this infusion of experience and background adds significantly both to the direct objects of the Livery and to its social activities. The common theme is glass, but candidates for admission are welcome from all walks of life.

An eminent Honorary Freeman of the Company is her Royal Highness the Duchess of Kent. A strong link was formed with this branch of the Royal Family when the late Prince George KG 1st Duke of Kent, became an Assistant of the Court in 1936, followed by his widow, the late Princess Marina.

The Hall

In 1601 we have the first reference to a Hall. It appears from Deeds in the possession of the Company that a Hall was leased from the Fishmongers' Company in Five Foot (now Fye Foot) Lane, situated between Old Fish Street (now Queen Victoria Street) and Thames Street. This Hall was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666. From then on, meetings were held in various taverns and halls of other Companies until 1977.

In 1929, the Rt. Hon. The Lord Hirst of Witton, Master, established by a generous donation a Hall Building Fund (substantially augmented by a bequest of £40,000 under the

will of Lord Perry, Past Master), so that the Glaziers might once again have their own Hall. Eventually, in 1970, Gordon Simmons, Master, began the search for a site or building to accommodate a Hall. Hibernia Chambers, London Bridge, then awaiting internal reconstruction, was located by Patrick Trollope, Liveryman. The following year, Sir Frederick Snow, Master, began negotiations for a one-hundred-and-fifty-year lease of a Hall within this building.

In 1974, the Court decided to proceed with the Hall project and in 1975, the first reception was held there while construction was still under way. In 1977, the lease was finally signed, and Glaziers' Hall became our home.

Today our Hall is administered by a Limited Company, the main shareholders being three Liveries, The Worshipful Companies respectively of Glaziers, Scientific Instrument Makers and Launderers. The Hall is available for public functions, meetings, exhibitions, etc. Introductions from Liverymen are welcome.

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