



Worshipful Company of
Makers of Playing Cards

Charity
Education
Craft
Fellowship

A Livery Company of the City of London





The early years

1377

The first reference to European playing cards

1541

Henry VIII tries to suppress card games as it is interfering with the archery of his longbowmen

1565

England adopts their own names for suits with diamonds and hearts translated from the French and clubs and spades from the Spanish

1588

Roger Lashley becomes the first recorded card maker

1614

King James I is petitioned as English card makers are struggling. The Stationer's Company were issuing licences, the Merchant Taylors are importing paper and the Haberdashers Company are selling playing cards

1615

Sir Richard Coningsby was owed £1,800 by King James I and agreed to cancel the debt in return for the right to levy a tax of 5 shillings a gross on all imported cards

1628

The importation of foreign playing cards is forbidden to protect the trade

1628

The Company of the Mystery of Makers of Playing Cards of the City of London was founded by Royal Charter under King Charles I on 22nd October 1628





The livery company today

Although one of the older Companies, it wasn't until 1792 that the Company petitioned the Court of Alderman of the City of London to be made a Livery Company with a limit of one hundred Liverymen (subsequently increased to one hundred and fifty in 1903) and is 75th in the Order of Precedence. The total number of Companies currently numbers 110. Applications to obtain a charter and Livery status are still offered to new trades and professions, thus embracing the tradition of the City Guilds whilst recognising the evolution of business in the 21st Century.

Since the Middle Ages when playing cards were the sole entertainment for the population, the production of playing cards in London has declined. However, the Company still has card makers as Members as well as card collectors, dealers, bridge players and magicians. Like many Livery Companies of today, our role has changed over the years with an increasing emphasis on charity and the Company has been a "Force for Good" in the City for over 380 years.



The Immediate Past
Master's Commemorative
Installation Playing Cards
Mark Winston Esq DMS FIMgt

We have
produced a
pack of playing cards
for the installation of
every new Master since 1882



Craft

The Company actively pursues affiliations with modern successors to our ancient trade, notably the computer games industry and the broader entertainment business.

We are also responsible for maintaining a very large collection of cards and papers relating to playing cards which the Company has accumulated over the centuries and which form the National Card Collection, currently housed in the London Metropolitan Archive.

Our members include authors, lecturers and historians who still write books and papers relating to the industry and who conduct research into the history of card games, the changing designs, its social influence and the development of the production of the cards themselves.



Charity

Charity has always been an integral part of a Livery companies' existence and our own charity was set up in 1943 by two major card makers - John Waddington Ltd and De la Rue Ltd for the employees and descendants of those employed in making playing cards. In 1978 the objectives and scope were widened to include the relief of need, hardship and distress, especially among children, and the provision of financial assistance to deserving students under the age of 25 for educational purposes.

Fundraising continues throughout the year, and donations are always welcome. Over 70% of Freeman and Liveryman make regular donations to the charity and numerous members act as liaison partners with the charities we support.



Grant giving

Applications for grants are considered by the Trustees in May and October each year and those that are successful are supported by a liaison partner from the Company.



Education

Supporting young people through our charity affiliations is a core principle within the Company and to complement this, we believe that education plays an enormous part. This can be achieved either by directly helping those in need who may otherwise be deprived of the opportunity, through providing either financial or in kind benefits, or by supporting other organisations with the same objectives as ourselves. An up to date list of the charities we support can be found on our website, and in the last 3 years we have supported over 60 worthy causes, with the amount awarded doubling over the last 5 years.

Bridge for Youth

Of particular note is the Bridge for Youth initiative, a joint venture with English Bridge Education & Development, the charitable arm of the English Bridge Union. BfY aims to bring the fun of playing cards back into young peoples' lives, through the game of Mini Bridge,



a simpler form of Bridge, partly as an introduction to Bridge for young people, but also as a way of getting children to socialise more, without the aid of electronic devices. So far, the results have been most encouraging and we are hoping this will become a national movement by reintroducing cards into peoples' lives.



Affiliations

Proudly recognising those who serve



We are immensely proud and honoured to have several affiliations which represent the outstanding role that our Armed Forces provide. These close affiliations are maintained through the Awards of prizes and contributions for excellence to the young servicemen and women who serve our nation.

Royal Navy



Royal Engineers



Army Cadet Corps



Air Training Corps



Royal Navy

HMS Diamond is a jewel in the naval crown, HMS Diamond is the third of the highly capable Type 45 air defence destroyers and one of the most advanced warships in the world. Her primary role is to provide her fellow ships with air defence using the formidable Sea Viper anti-air missile system – detecting enemy threats at range, interrogating them, and neutralising them if required





Royal Engineers

33 Engineer Regiment (Explosive Ordnance Disposal and Search) who are the British Army's leading EOD & Search Regiment; robust, responsive, agile and ready to operate anywhere.

The regiment is comprised of three squadrons and a Regimental Headquarters (RHQ) based near Saffron Walden, Essex.



Army Cadet Corps

19 Company Middlesex & NW London which aims to inspire young people to develop themselves mentally and physically, to:

- Challenging their limits
- Grow their abilities and go further in life
- Unlock their talents
- Shape their own futures



Air Training Corps

82 Wandsworth Squadron whose aims are to:

- Promote and encourage a practical interest in aviation and the Royal Air Force among young people
- Provide training which will be useful in the Services and civilian life
- Encourage the spirit of adventure and develop qualities of leadership and good citizenship





Fellowship

Having been associated with playing games of cards through the ages, there is obviously an emphasis on fun and conviviality within the Company. We are also fortunate to be able to have our dinners and social events in the great Livery Halls of the City, including our Installation Banquet at Mansion House, giving us all a chance to visit and enjoy some unique surroundings.

As for actually playing with cards, there are a number of annual events. We host the annual Inter-Livery Bridge Competition (Drapers Hall); our own Inter-Livery Card event, a cribbage evening and a chance to play a few unusual and ancient card games. These are great fun and always a “sell-out”.

We have a number of London City Tour Guides amongst our members, which enable us to hold Guided City Walks, which fortunately seem to end in an appropriate hostelry. In addition the Company is represented at many Inter-Livery events including croquet, shooting and golf. We don't neglect our role as a City Livery Company either and support the Lord Mayor and Sheriffs throughout the year. As for our craft, we make trips to card factories abroad and visit our national card collection in the London Metropolitan Archives. Our Master's Programme is always a great talking point with other Companies and the envy of many.





Membership

Each of the 110 Livery Companies have their own procedures for Membership but all generally follow along similar lines.

If you would like to join our Company, you first need to arrange to meet with the Clerk, who will take you through the expectations and procedures. You need to be recommended by a proposer and seconder from within the Company, then an interview may follow, after which, you will become admitted as a **Freeman of the Company** once approved by the Court. This position is open to all.

**Our membership
is limited to 150
Liverymen.**

Our Company welcomes all, regardless of background or patrimony but we are mindful that membership is a privilege and a recognition of achievement. Whilst not a requirement, the Company does encourage applicants who are playing card makers, game makers, collectors,

dealers or bridge players. We do look for active and participating members. Once accepted, you may then obtain the **Freedom of the City**, in a ceremony dating back to 1237, following which you are then eligible to become a **Liveryman of the Company** and your “clothing” takes place before one of our Livery dinners in a delightful ceremony.

Once clothed in the Livery, you are entitled to take a full role in the activities of the Company and, after a period, to vote in civic elections for the Lord Mayor and Sheriff.



The City

The City of London is also known as the Square Mile, the financial district and historic centre of London with its ceremonial and administrative centre in the Guildhall. The livery companies developed out of the medieval guilds which evolved from a religious base, as craftsmen in various specific trades congregated in parishes in the City. From their congregations voluntary associations were formed for mutual aid and the protection of their members.

Gradually, trade considerations assumed a more important role, with the Guild's main role being the regulation of their trades or crafts within the City to ensure high standards in their trade or profession, and the training of apprentices.

Originally our Company was created in order to regulate and control the importation of cheap playing cards, to protect the cardmakers and their families and to maintain quality. Today, the Worshipful Company of Makers of Playing Cards plays an active role in the traditions, aims and ideals of the City, participating in the election of the Sheriffs and Lord Mayor and, alongside the other companies, playing a prominent part in major events.

Today the purpose has
changed and the
emphasis has moved
towards charity, education,
the craft and fellowship.



Get in touch

If you would like to find out more, there are contact forms on our website where you can raise specific questions, or alternatively, please send an email to our Clerk, Annie Prouse.



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We very much look forward to hearing from you.



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