

THE FREEDOM OF THE WORSHIPFUL COMPANY OF FARRIERS



The Worshipful Company of Farriers is a descendant of the original Guilds of the City of London, and the first records show that the Fellowship was called together by the then Mayor of London in 1356. For the next three hundred years or so, the craft of farriery was controlled within the City by this Guild, but all records were destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666. The modern history of the Company begins with the grant of the first Charter by King Charles II on 17th January 1674. It is number 55 in order of seniority of the Livery Companies of the City, and there are now 108 such Companies, with more awaiting the grant of Livery.

The Company has been responsible for standards of farriery in modern times, and was instrumental in the instigation of the Farriers Registration Acts of 1975 and 1977. The 1975 Act created a statutory body, the Farriers Registration Council, and the Company appoints three representatives to the Council. The Company still retains a responsibility for maintaining standards, and, as a body independent of the Council, conducts the examinations for the registration qualification, the Company's Diploma (DipWCF). It also encourages farriers to take the Company's higher qualifications – Associateship (AWCF) and Fellowship (FWCF) – and to engage in Continuing Professional Development.

Purpose of the Freedom

Like all Livery Companies of the City of London, the Company receives its authority from the Court of Aldermen. They determine among other things, a limit on the number of Liverymen the Company may enrol. Before an individual may be admitted to full membership of the Livery, he or she has first to be admitted to the Freedom of the Company. Once this is completed, that individual may approach the City of London Corporation for admission to the Freedom of the City, which, with the intervention of the Company, will be granted.

There is no statutory limit on the number of Freemen a Company may admit, and the Company is keen to benefit from a much broader membership of those who are interested in the wellbeing of the horse. Similarly, there are many who are interested in the horse and in equine activities, but who may not be able, for a range of reasons, to pursue full Livery membership, and the Company has therefore introduced a separate category of membership – the Freedom of the Company.

Benefits of the Freedom

This category of membership offers many of the benefits, without all of the commitments of being a full Liveryman. These benefits include:

- A Freeman's Certificate
- A Freeman's lapel badge
- Progression where eligible to the Freedom of the City of London
- Progression where appropriate to the Livery in due course
- To receive the Company's newsletter, *The Clench*
- To receive invitations to apply to attend events specifically for Freemen
- To receive invitations to apply to attend a number of the Company's social functions, including the Livery Banquet at Mansion House, the Carol Service and more informal events arranged by the Company's Livery Committee

Obligations of Freemen

Once admitted, the obligations on a Freeman of the Company are few. As long as Fines and Quarterage are current, Freemen are expected only to conduct themselves according to the oath they will have sworn, and to uphold the dignity of the Company.

What the Freedom of the City of London is not

There are a number of misconceptions about the rights that attach to the Freedom of the City. It would be wrong to embark upon the path to Freedom believing, for example, that possession of the Freedom allows its holder to drive sheep across London Bridge, or that the modern-day Freeman may be hanged by a silken rope, or that he or she may be married in St Paul's Cathedral or be buried in the City.

Many of these ideas have no identifiable basis in history, while others have lapsed entirely. It is true that Freemen in the Middle Ages were exempt from bridge, market and turnpike tolls, and accordingly then the Freedom was a valuable privilege.

What the Freedom of the Company can offer

The Freeman of the WCF will have the honour and privilege of membership of an ancient yet forward-looking body which is active in both the world of the horse and the City of London. He or she will be able to participate in many Company events and to become involved in many craft-related and City activities. In due course, as vacancies occur, interested Freemen will be invited to apply for membership of the Livery, and may in turn progress to the highest positions within the Company. It is an opportunity to become associated with a body which has responsibility for maintaining the highest standards of professional and ethical behaviour in farriery, and thus the welfare of the horse.

The way forward

The procedure for making application for the Freedom is as follows:

- The introduction must be made by a Freeman or Liveryman of the Company; the Clerk will be happy to assist with introductions where required.
- Application forms are available from the Clerk, and these should be signed by a combination of two Freemen or Liverymen
- The Clerk will review an application together with a short CV to be provided by the candidate, and if appropriate, will recommend approval of the application to the Court
- If approved, the Clerk will obtain the fines from the candidate
- Admission to the Freedom will be by the Master and Wardens in the City of London. The candidate will be allowed to bring a limited number of supporters to witness the ceremony.

Fines and quarterage

The Fine (fee) for admission to the Freedom is £70. In addition, annual Quarterage (subscription) of £45 will be payable in advance on 25th June annually.

If in due course, the candidate should proceed to full membership of the Livery, the fine for this would be reduced by the amount already paid for admission to the Freedom. On admission to the Livery, the annual quarterage would be increased to the level payable by full Liverymen.

Mrs. Charlotte Clifford
Clerk to the Company