



Introduction to the Company

THE WORSHIPFUL COMPANY OF PAINTER-STAINERS

The earliest reference to The Stainers Company is in 1268 and that of the Painters in 1283. They came together to form the Worshipful Company of Painter-Stainers in 1502. It is the 28th in seniority of the City's Livery Companies.

The first hall was donated by Alderman Sir John Browne, Sergeant-painter to Henry VIII in 1532, but was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666. It was subsequently re-built but again destroyed by enemy action in 1941.

The present Hall, which is on a slightly larger site, re-opened in 1961, combines the traditional elegance of a City Livery Hall with the facilities expected of a modern building.



A SHORT HISTORY

From the time of their creation in medieval times, the Guilds and the Livery Companies that followed them, were mainly concerned with the protection of their respective trades. From time to time, this involved civil disturbances. One of the earliest riots recorded was a dispute in 1268 between the Taylors, assisted by the Steyners and the Goldsmiths, who were assisted by the Paynters. Five hundred men were involved. Many were sent to prison and the leaders were hanged.

Time evidently healed the differences between the Paynters who decorated, gilded and coloured solid objects such as wood, metal and stone, and the Steyners who applied colour to woven fabrics; they united in 1502 and became one company, The Painter-Stainers. They received a Charter from Queen Elizabeth I in 1581 and a further Charter from King James II in 1685.

The Minutes of the Company reveal that prolonged arguments took place during the seventeenth century with the Heralds at the College of Arms and with the Plaisterers. The first complained that Painters were indulging in the painting of Arms whilst the Plaisterers



complained that the Painter-Stainers were poaching work for which the Plaisterers had trained their apprentices – brightening up plastered walls and ceilings. The arguments were resolved only after many years.

In the 18th Century the Company became more involved with the artistic side of painting (fine art) and many artists and academicians became Liverymen or Freeman. Since its inception, many Presidents of the Royal Academy have become Liverymen of the Company.

With the growth of the trade unions, the style of the Company changed. Unions jealously guarded the rights of their members and trade disputes arose between organised groups of workers rather than between the Livery Companies. The Painter-Stainers' Company is one of many Companies that have flourished long after the passing of the original need that prompted its establishment.

EDUCATION

The Company's energies turned to education and it claims to be amongst the first to inaugurate training in art and craftwork. In 1872 it set up an evening class, which was the fore-runner of the City and Guilds of London Institute. By 1877 the Company was supporting technical education with prizes at the City of London School, the Freeman's Orphans School, the Commercial Travellers' School and the City and Spitalfields School of Design. By the end of the nineteenth century the Company was holding regular technical classes in conjunction with the Carpenter's Company and many members of the Company were involved in the establishment in 1899 of the Institute of British Decorators, later the British Institute of Interior Design.

The Company has maintained this enthusiasm for education and training and now awards prizes and bursaries at most major Art Schools and many Universities for painting, textile design and picture restoration. Outstanding students are often offered admission to the Company's Freedom. The Company also presents prizes for art at many schools throughout the country.

In 1860 the first of several exhibitions of marbling, graining and sign-writing was held. The company revived this Craft Exhibition in 1997 and in 2000 hosted the international Millennium Salon at which numerous craftsmen from around the world exhibited and demonstrated their skills in Painters' Hall and the Great Hall of St Bartholomew's Hospital.

PAINTERS' HALL

Painters' Hall was given to the Company in 1532 by Alderman Sir John Browne, Sergeant Painter to King Henry VIII, but was destroyed by the Great Fire of 1666. It is alleged that King Charles II rested in the Hall with his entourage whilst touring the



City during the conflagration and a painted window in the Court Room in the Hall is to commemorate this event.

Following the Fire the Hall was rebuilt, mainly by Mr Luck the Brickmaker and Mr Bell the Carpenter. It was completed in 1670 and improvements were made over the centuries until once again disaster struck and it was partly destroyed in a German Air Raid in 1941. The present Hall was completed in 1960 on an enlarged site.

PICTURES

The Company's collection of pictures was seriously depleted by fires in 1666 and 1946. Those that have survived, together with some recent additions and commissions, hang in the Hall. The present collection includes works given by recent Presidents of the Royal Academy together with paintings by other distinguished artists.

From time to time the Company purchases or commissions suitable paintings and Livery and Freemen often donate pictures to the Company's collection. Some works are on permanent loan to public galleries. The members of the Company's Fine Art Society hold an Annual Exhibition in Painters' Hall which is open to the public; most paintings on display are for sale.

DISTINGUISHED MEMBERS

Through the centuries the Company has included many distinguished artists including Sir Joshua Reynolds, Sir Godfrey Kneller, Sir Peter Lely, Sir James Thornhill, William Dobson, Peter Monamy, Lord Leighton, Sir John Millais, Sir Edwin Lutyens, Sir Alfred Munnings, Sir Thomas Monnington, Sir Gerald Kelly, Sir Charles Wheeler, Sir Hugh Casson and Sir Roger de Grey. Liveryman distinguished in other spheres include Field Marshal Lord Alexander, Marshal of the Royal Air Force Lord Tedder, Field Marshal Sir Gerald Templer and, more recently, Sir Colin Cole, Garter Principal King of Arms 1978-92, General Lord Guthrie, General Sir Roger Wheeler, Sir Denis Rooke and Sir Denis Thatcher.

The Company has always played a part in the civic and corporate life of the city and many Liveryman have served as members of the Court of Common Council, as Aldermen and as Sheriffs of the City. Eleven have served as Lord Mayor of the City of London – all since 1922, Their Arms are installed in the North Window of the Hall.

