



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, where new applications to obtain a charter and Livery status, are still offered to new trades and professions, both 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 practice of 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 we have 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

This has always been an integral part of a Livery companies' existence and our own charity, the MPCC, was set up in 1943. Our current objectives are to provide for the relief of need, hardship and distress and the provision of financial assistance for the education and well-being for those under 25.

Our fundraising continues throughout the year, and donations are always welcome. Most Freeman and Liveryman make regular donations to the charity and numerous members liaise with our charity partners, providing considerable time and expertise where it is most wanted.

We welcome applications for grants from all and every few years we have a reception for all our charity partners.



Grant giving

Applications for grants are considered by the Trustees in May and October each year and those that are successful will be 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. We can achieve this either by helping those in need who may otherwise be deprived of the opportunity, helping to progress young people through the armed forces or by helping them to benefit from apprentice schemes to further their skills and knowledge.



Within our charity efforts, we support **Bloomfield Learning Centre Charity** that provides 1-to-1 specialist literacy teaching with qualified dyslexia teachers for children struggling with literacy.

We are also proud to have several affiliations which recognise the outstanding role that our Armed Services provide. This includes an affiliation with **33 Engineer Regiment** (Explosive Ordnance and Search); two cadet units **19 Company, Middlesex** and **North West London Army Cadet Force** and **82 Squadron Air Training Corps**.

In particular we have a long standing association with **HMS Diamond**, a Royal Navy Destroyer launched in 2007.





Fellowship

Being associated with playing games of cards through the ages, there is obviously an emphasis on fun and conviviality around the Company. We are also fortunate to be able to spread our dinners and social events across 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 playing cards, we have a number of events. We host the annual Inter-Livery Bridge Competition (Drapers Hall); our own Inter-Livery Card event (Vintners Hall), 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 among our members, so we 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 visits to 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.

First you will be recommended by a proposer and seconder from within the Company, which involves an interview and briefing. At the end of which, you may become admitted as a **Freeman of the Company**. A position open to both men and women.

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

We are not a closed Company and welcome 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. 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 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 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.

They exercised control over standards, including the power of search, 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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