

Update from the Chamberlain's Court January 2023

Dear all,

I hope you have all spent some lovely time with your friends and family, and not indulged in too much chocolate (or cheese in my case...). We can't thank you all enough for your collaboration in 2022. This year alone, we have granted the Freedom to roughly 800 of your members.

Now 2023 has officially started, we wish all of you and your members a very good and healthy year ahead.

As we are all making our way back into the office, it is time to get back to business. And at the Chamberlain's Court, that means giving 'joy' to people. Admittedly, it could be a lot worse!

Waiting dates for ceremonies:

You will be very pleased to hear that we have managed to reduce our 4-month waiting time to 3 months. With the Court fully staffed again, we have been able to go back to conducting 8 ceremonies a day. Anyone wishing to book ceremonies at the time of writing will be able to do so from end of March/early April onwards. An increase in group ceremonies, has also helped to relieve this backlog, but more about that later.

We are also still offering the option of a virtual ceremony for those who cannot travel to Guildhall – if your members are hesitant about it, please reassure them that the format is pretty much the same. They will be asked to read the Declaration as if they had come in the Courtroom and their name will be written in our Book of Freemen, which we will sign for them by proxy. We will then tell them more about the Freedom (and this funny business of driving sheep across London Bridge!) so they can have an enjoyable time. Another bonus is that they can share the link to their Freedom ceremony with friends and relatives so they can watch it live from the comfort of their homes, which can be quite convenient when it's -5C outside or when train strikes... strike again.

Suggestions for 2023 for a smooth application process:

As a reminder, all applications must be sent to us via email – we no longer accept paper applications. Applicants do not need to come to Guildhall to submit their applications – they just need to attend on the day of their ceremony. We are conscious that your members are based all over the world so this should make things easier this way for everyone.

A few words of advice for your members who wish to apply:

- Ensure applications are correctly completed, and all the required documents are provided (including full birth certificates), as this is the single biggest cause of delays.
- Ensure the reference for the payment is clearly stated as "Freedom + surname" – our Freedom fees are received by an account that processes thousands of payments for the wider Corporation so they can easily be lost without the right reference.
- Group ceremonies: we have been encouraging your members to check with you if they can join group ceremonies, especially if you know that some of your Freemen have already secured a slot in the near future. This doesn't lessen the personal nature of the ceremony and can be an effective way of introducing new members of your Company to each other.
- Alternatively, you can book group ceremonies in advance, allowing you to offer these to your members. Please contact me or the Court Assistant, Dave, if you would like us to arrange this.

- A reminder: only completed applications that have been paid for will be sent to the Court of Aldermen for approval – if we are missing anything, the process might be delayed. It is therefore best not to offer Clothing ceremonies to your members until they have been admitted to the Freedom as we may not be able to help if their application hasn't gone through the Court or their Freedom of the City ceremony had to be cancelled.

Excursion to Hampton Court:

Some of you might recall the lovely, embroidered box sitting on the Court table. Gifted to the Chamberlain's Court by the Worshipful Company of Broderers some time ago, over the years it sadly got a bit dusty. But how proud we are of this little box! It showcases a very precise and skilled artistry, and brings a lovely touch of femininity in our Courtroom, representing the work of women and their influence in the City of London from its very beginning.

In July, I had the pleasure of meeting Angie Wyman, a degree programme course leader at the Royal School of Needlework, and her guests for her ceremony at Guildhall. I showed them this little object with pride and, knowing I was talking to specialists, I asked how best to clean it, as the last thing we wanted was to damage it!

After some correspondence with Anne Butcher, Head of Studio and Education, and Gemma Murray, Studio Manager at the Royal School of Needlework, we agreed that it would be a great opportunity for the box to be part of their teaching programme: their students would work on it while learning about conservation and restoration methods in the studio.

So early one December morning, braving the cold and the train strikes, Dave and I went to the Royal School of Needlework, beautifully situated in Hampton Court, to collect our box. There the team talked us through their work and education programme. They were also kind enough to show us around the school so we could meet and talk to their students. From restoring christening gowns handed down through generations to designing and sewing stunning coats of arms, as well as modern pieces on which the students were working, it was a real treat for the eye. The range of pieces they work on is truly incredible.

Sadly, we had to rush to get a train back to the Chamberlain's Court so we couldn't stay long, but we enjoyed the experience very much and can't thank Angie, Bryna, Anne and Gemma at the RSN enough for their help and kindness in restoring our beautiful little box. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with them if you want to know more about their work – you will be enchanted for sure!



Cleaning of the box



Patron: HRH The Duchess of Cornwall
President: HRH The Duchess of Gloucester



Instagramable picture of the RSN team with Dave and me

High-profile ceremonies of 2022:

In 2022, we admitted yet another cohort of remarkable Freemen. Previously in this newsletter, we mentioned Nobel prize-winning mathematician and physicist **Professor Sir Roger Penrose** and musician **Ed Sheeran**, but we also welcomed to the Freedom of the City the cricketers **Roland Butcher**, **Eoin Morgan** and **Sajid Mahmood**, Covid-19 inquiry chair **Baroness Hallett**, jockey **Sir Anthony McCoy** (also known as AP McCoy) – and we finished the year with Ancient Rome specialist **Dame Mary Beard**, who insisted our Clerk should conduct a tour of our very own Roman amphitheatre!

As no two days are ever the same at Guildhall, we look forward to seeing who 2023 will bring into our Courtroom.

Once again, we wish you all a very happy and healthy New Year!

The Chamberlain's Court