

Master Elect Deputy Keith Bottomley CC received pictures from Liveryman Barbara Barker of a medal presented to her Grandfather together with a Newspaper Article.

LONG SERVICE

PRESENTATIONS TO THE GREENGATE AND IRWELL RUBBER CO. EMPLOYEES.

A visit was paid by Mr. John Frederick Cleeves, a past master of the Worshipful Company of Patten Makers, attended by Mr. Fitch, clerk to the company, to the works of the Greengate and Irwell Rubber Company, Ltd. (formerly Messrs I. Frankenburg and Sons, Ltd.), Greengate, Salford, on Saturday for the purpose of presenting badges and diplomas to the employees of the rubber shoe department for long service and general proficiency.

Captain Sydney Frankenburg (director) presided at the presentation. He remarked on the happy relations which had always existed between the firm and the employes, than whom "no better body of workers could be found anywhere."

Calling for Mr. William Boardman, the oldest employe in the department, Mr. Cleeves announced that the Board had decided to create Mr. Boardman a freeman of the Worshipful Company of Pattenmakers, which honour also carried the freedom of the City of London. An impressive form of declaration followed, and Mr. Boardman, who suitably acknowledged the honours conferred on him, received a great ovation from his fellow-workers. Mr. Cleeves afterwards presented 96 diplomas for seven years' service, and twenty-two badges for twenty-two years' service, the length of service ranging from seven to forty-three years.



Court Assistant Steve Huxham was able to investigate:

These medals date from the period after World War One when the Company was trying to engage closely again with the modern footwear trade and as part of that came up with the idea of presenting these Long Service badges and also Diplomas. If you refer to pages 95-98 of the History Book, you will see that Stephen Cribb has written about this plan in depth there, and one of the badges that we still have in our Collection is pictured on p95. We retain a couple of examples, and Liveryman Robertson acquired another example in August 2020. At the time, his acquisition, plus the work I did to identify further the owner, was featured in one or more Newsletters around then.

What is even more invaluable here is that we rarely have the provenance to understand who the people were whose names are engraved on any surviving badges, so the newspaper clipping is as interesting as the badge itself. We don't seem to have a date for that piece, and it would be useful if the owner did, but you will see from the Book pages referenced that the visits to conduct these presentations commenced in 1922. John Frederick Cleeves was Master in 1921 (and again in 1934 – the son of course of Past Master Frederick Cleeves) and as he is described here as a “past master” that would narrow it down, as would the fact that Charles Fitch, Clerk and author of the first History Book, is also referenced. Fitch served until 1924, so even without any further corroboration that would narrow it down to 1922 – 1924.

I think we can do better than that on dates though! If I cross reference across to our list of Admissions, I get a date of 24th June 1922 for the Admission of William Boardman being granted Honorary Freedom. He is described as “Boot Sole Cutter, Greengate & Irwell Rubber Co Ltd” and an address is given of 181 Lower Brompton Street, Salford, Manchester. This would suggest that this Badge was then presented during one of those early “outings to the North” by Court members.

Finally, further interest in the article is generated by the mention of Captain Sydney Frankenburg, a Director of what became the Greengate and Irwell Rubber Company Ltd. He was a key figure in that link of our Company back to the trade. His Admission Certificate of 14th October 1920 describes him as an “India Rubber Manufacturer” and he went on to serve as Master in 1928. He had previously seen distinguished active service later in the Great War, but what was not always clear from later descriptions of a very full and active life, was that he took it upon himself, whilst working for the British Red Cross, to drive his own car to France in September 1914 to convert to a field ambulance and did that for first year of the War. Quite a character!