



The Worshipful Company of Blacksmiths

Newsletter

23rd Issue

October 2003

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and

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Published by: The Publicity and Public Relations Committee,
Worshipful Company of Blacksmiths, 48 Upwood Road, Lee, London SE12 8AN
www.blacksmithscompany.org.uk



Photo: Stroud Newspaper & Journal

Mike Roberts

Liveryman

Blacksmith

No. 7

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First Hall of the Blacksmiths Company

The first Blacksmiths' Hall was held on a lease from the City Corporation granted in the year 1494.

The earliest written manuscript in the possession of the Blacksmiths' Company relating to the Hall bears the date 1496, and consists of an Inventory of all the furniture and appointments of the Hall.

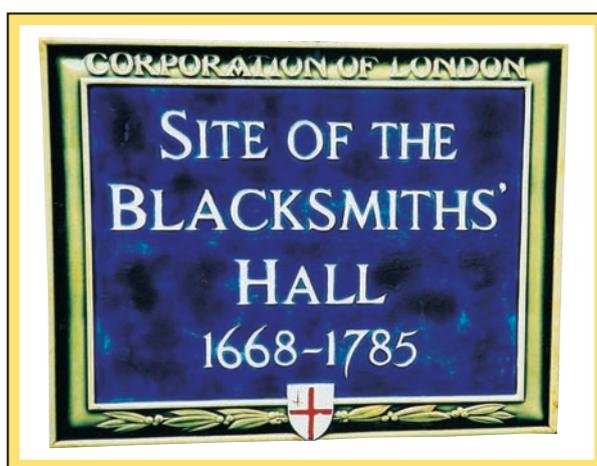
As a result of the lease considerable repairs and improvements were carried out. The Hall was then an old building and it is noticeable that much of the furniture and appointments had been in the possession of the Company for some time. However, it is not possible to determine whether the Company occupied the Hall before the granting of the lease.

By renewals of the lease the Hall continued in use until the Great Fire of London (1666), when it was completely destroyed.

Blacksmiths' Hall was situated on Lambeth Hill, which now rises from Upper Thames Street to join Queen Victoria Street, which is, of course, a modern street; but Lambeth Hill follows the same course as it did of old, and the site of the Hall was in 1949 exposed due to the destruction by German bombers.

Lambeth Hill; or according to Stow, Lambart Hill referring to "one Lambart, owner thereof", was in Queenhithe Ward and Blacksmiths' Hall stood on the west side of the hill.

It was not far from the Church of St Mary Somerset which was destroyed in the Great Fire and rebuilt and of which Wren's tower is still standing; but was somewhat nearer to the small Church of St Mary Monthaw. Another building in the vicinity was the great Priory of the Dominicans or Black Friars, the site now occupied by the offices of "The Times". Baynards Castle near the river was not far away and the Steelyard on the site of Cannon Street Station was a short distance to the east.



Plaque on site of the Hall

In the course of its occupation by the Company the Hall was constantly repaired and improved. In the years immediately preceding the Great Fire entries in the Minutes and Accounts serve to show that since the latter years of the reign of King Henry VII, when its interior and contents are first described, the interior of the Hall had

been completely reconstructed. The alterations were of the same type as may be observed in existing ancient houses which were adapted for the inclusion of fireplaces and chimneys, and upper floors which were widely introduced in the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

The records of the ten years preceding the Great Fire throw a certain amount of light on the aspect of the interior. Apart from the Great Hall there were a number of rooms, one of which provided lodging for the Beadle. There was a buttery, also an armoury, and it was the duty of the Beadle to keep the arms clean. There was a parlour, and it was here that the Court meetings were probably held, for there is no mention of a Court Room. Information is gathered from estimates and payments for repairs and painting, and from other details of a revealing character chiefly collected from the accounts. It will be sufficient to add that the hall was well appointed and comfortably furnished. It is unlikely that the frontage to

Lambeth Hill was at all imposing, in fact more probable that it was mean in aspect. In earlier times the main doorway had been flanked by open shops or booths, but there is no clear indication that these remained in the year 1657. However, it is noted that the premises on both sides of the hall were occupied by tenants who held leases from the Company.

Livery Events 2003-2004

2003	
Friday, 19th December	Carol Service
2004	
Thursday, 8th January	Epiphany Court and Luncheon
Thursday, 25th March	Ladyday Court and Luncheon
Friday, 26th March	United Guilds Service
Friday, 2nd April	Annual Banquet
Friday, 7th-Monday, 10th May	Prime Warden's Weekend
TBA - probably June	House of Lords Luncheon
Thursday, 1st July	Midsummer Court and Luncheon
Thursday, 30th September	Michaelmas Court and Awards Luncheon

Agricultural Shows 2004

Devon County	13th-15th or 20th-22nd May
Royal Bath & West	26th-29th May
South of England	3rd-6th or 10th-12th June
Three Counties	11th-13th June
East of England	11th-13th June
Royal Highland	17th-20th June
Royal Norfolk	23rd-24th June
Royal Show	27th-30th June or 4th-7th July
Great Yorkshire	6th-8th or 13th-15th July
Royal Welsh	19th-21st July
New Forest & Hampshire	27th-29th July
Edenbridge & Oxted	22nd-23rd or 29th-30th August

**Dates correct at time of going to press*

Prime Warden 2003-2004

Rodney Bole

Rodney Bole who took office as Prime Warden on 31st July 2003. He was Educated at St. John's School Leatherhead, went to Southampton University and gained a degree in Civil Engineering. While at university he rowed in the first eight for two years.



Photography by Michael O'Sullivan

He qualified as a Civil Engineer while working with Sir Alexander Gibb, having been involved in major projects both in the United Kingdom and overseas. In 1972 he joined his father's company of qualified surveyors which, following his father's retirement, he now controls. He has also qualified as a Quantity Surveyor and is a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Arbitrators.

Rodney is still interested in rowing this is only from the riverbank while golf is his main sport, We all wish him a successful year in office.

Victoria Cross and George Cross Memorial

The Company contributes to a memorial to men & women who were awarded the Victoria Cross or George Cross



There had been no national memorial to commemorate the achievements of the holders of the Victoria Cross and the George Cross. The VC & GC Association campaigned for a fitting tribute and it was agreed that a Memorial should be inset in the pavement at the West End of the Nave at Westminster Abbey. An appeal for funds for the project was launched and this Company was

pleased to be one of the subscribers.

There was a Service of Dedication at the Abbey on 14th May 2003 attended by Her Majesty the Queen and many of the holders of the Victoria Cross and the George Cross. The Renter Warden, Rodney Bole, represented the Worshipful Company of Blacksmiths at the Service.

Christopher Jeal



New Liverymen

The Ladyday Court saw Grahame Harris admitted to the Livery sponsored by Court Assistant Emeritus Leslie McGowan. Grahame is retired having been Managing Director of one of the companies in the Reuters Group. Having worked in the City and with a keen interest in

history to become a Liveryman was a natural step.

When Christopher Roberts addressed the Midsummer Court, following his admission to the Livery, he observed that it represented the fourth strand of the City of London in his life. He trained as an engineer at the

City University and afterwards worked for London Electricity in the City before he joined the Bank of England. It was there that he met his sponsor Liveryman 'Bert' Marshall.

We welcome both Liveryman and look forward to seeing them at many Company events.



Reception with the Fourth Warden

The invasion of Norfolk started early on Friday morning as those participants who wished to reach King's Lynn for lunch set off after breakfast. Very flat, Norfolk, said Mr. Coward; what he didn't tell us was what a lot of flatness there was. After Cambridge even molehills seemed large.

The hotel selected was just outside King's Lynn and had been developed over the last ten or so years from a farmhouse and buildings. It is called Knights Hill hotel, and if you know how to use a theodolite a slight incline is detectable round the hotel. Our rooms were comfortable and well appointed; but inevitably there was one unsatisfactory room. After inspecting a couple of others our friends from the southern suburbs of London were placated.

Those arriving for lunch enjoyed a pleasant pub lunch in the olde worlde pub attached to the hotel. The usual increasing circle of people round a table on the terrace in the inner courtyard formed; calling for trays of tea. Eventually we all retired to our rooms to prepare for the evening.

Drinks with Barry & Pat were scheduled for 7 p.m. and at five to several couples were seen just arriving at the hotel. The Iles doglet was not in attendance this year, he must have been ashamed of his behaviour last year at Buxton! Pat

appeared but no Barry. Apparently he thought it was only ten past six, the battery in his watch having run down. At least the Clerk's watch was working, I resist saying more.

It was at this gathering that we realised exactly how many we were. A total of 46, should have been 47 but Linda Jeal was not well but still allowed Chris to come. We wish you a speedy recovery. This is probably the largest attendance at the Prime Warden's weekend to date; why is not clear as there was nothing obviously highly attractive over other years. My opinion is that the very enjoyable nature of the weekends is beginning to become known.

Prime Warden's

Including visits to a Royal and a Restored Stately Home, Chamberlain and a Dinner with

A Relaxing Evening with Good Fayre

It was extremely gratifying that three of our widows attended. They also must find these occasions pleasant. The dinner was fully up to expectations, served with efficiency by a very young staff. When we had been served our first course Richard Sage made a splendid late entrance! Afterwards many retired to the bar for several nightcaps, and the whole of the evening passed in a pleasing alcoholic haze.

A Morning of Local Culture

Next morning breakfast was taken by most people. The chef makes excellent scrambled eggs. Our oldest attending member was seen to polish off a full English breakfast, leaving only a few baked beans!

We then mounted the coach to take us to car friendly King's Lynn. Even John Barber managed to arrive on time, just! Our driver, Gary, was

Houghton Hall



s Weekend 2003

al Palace, an Ancient Port, mpagne with the Fourth Warden with the Mayor

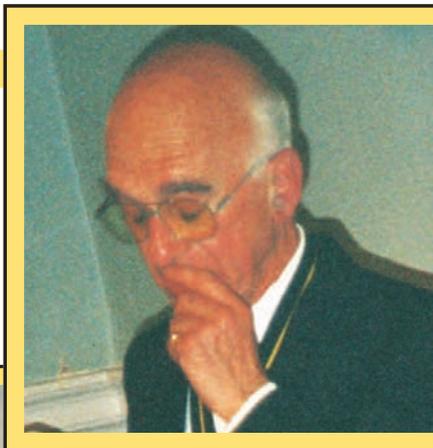
splendid. How he managed to manoeuvre the coach round the narrow streets without causing any damage was amazing. On arrival some went on a conducted walking tour, whilst others went shopping. The vegetables in the market were first class; well they would be wouldn't they? There was also much talk of Cromer crabs.

Sandringham

We then returned to the hotel for a so called light luncheon. A really impressive selection of cold meats and salad vegetables, including the largest pickled onions I have ever seen. It was back to the coach to be taken to Sandringham where we visited either the house or the stud. Both were very impressive. For more details see the guide book. Don Barker and Peter Begent took the opportunity to inspect the Norwich gates which sadly need restorative work due to vandals breaking off pieces. An estimate of time and money to restore them was made. Details on request.

Back to the hotel to change into black tie and then be driven into King's Lynn to the old Guildhall where we were to have dinner. We were joined by the Mayor and Mayoress of King's Lynn and five more Blacksmith connections. We were given a civilised, (i.e. with glasses in hand), tour of the old Guildhall and the old Gaolhouse and saw the civic plate, including the unique and magnificent King John's cup. The waxwork figures in the Gaol did cause one member to shriek in alarm.

The Prime Warden
ponders his welcome
to the Mayor



The Mayor at dinner with The Company

Dinner with the Mayor

Dinner was imaginative, ample and well served, but not by staff rushing around naked as the menu would have us believe. An excellent meal. The Father, having recovered from his indisposition, was with us and in roguish mood. During his toast to the Prime Warden, in reply to cries for a "pome", he gave us half a one, telling us to attend the next Court luncheon if we wanted to hear the rest.

Champagne Sunday

The Clerk's impeccable attention to detail enabled us on Sunday morning to have a leisurely breakfast and gave us time to pack and load the cars ready to go off to John and Jean Shreeves, who have a weekend cottage at Hunstanton. We were originally asked for coffee, but when John heard the numbers he said they couldn't make coffee for that many; we would have to make do with champagne! It's really

the major part of a moated grange which has suffered two disastrous fires in the past. Over the years John and Jean have restored it marvellously. Everywhere, (except the kitchen), looks as though it has been there for years and years. The reconfigured Wren main staircase, the ceilings, the panelling, etc. all are incredible. John found all the craftsmen he needed to carry out the work required in Norfolk; even a specialist polisher who brought the mixed salvaged and new panelling to the same general shade and appearance.

Houghton Hall

Around lunchtime we started to drift off: some homeward bound, some to visit Houghton Hall, where a light lunch was served before the tour of the house. From thence all returned home, as far as we know, safely. Barry and Pat, thank you most sincerely for a delightful, well-planned and most interesting week-end.

The 'Indian' Necklace

The Prime Warden's Lady has a necklace



Photography by Michael O'Sullivan

Major Francis Humphris RAMC MD FRCPE, who was Prime Warden in 1941, 1942 and 1943, had a friend and patient of over 40 years standing, Miss Yvonne Bishop who lived in Greenham Minehead. She possessed an Indian necklace which was much admired by Dr Humphris and he asked her if she would be willing to leave it to the blacksmiths Company in her Will. In the event he died first in early 1947, he received a letter that year saying that she would like to present the necklace to the Company immediately in memory of Dr Humphris whilst the Members who knew him were still alive.

The Court formally accepted the gift at the Michaelmas Court on 9th October 1947.

The above is fact but the remainder is based on recollections. It has always been handed down by word of mouth when a young Liveryman asked an older one about the necklace that it had been looted from somewhere in India during the Mutiny suppression. I can remember our Valuer of Regalia sometime in the late eighties saying he could only put a rough valuation on it based on its intrinsic worth: it should really go to an expert as an art object. This, of course, would cost a large fee and has never yet been done.

Informal discussions with knowledgeable people who have admired it when worn by the Prime Warden's Lady (it has really only appeared in public since 1983) have expressed the opinion that it is probably Persian work of the eighteenth century, maybe even before that. The turquoise is almost certainly Persian because of its fine quality.

From time to time the seed pearls have been restrung and, when necessary, replaced but they are rather fragile.

Peter Rayner

The Banquet

The Blacksmiths go

The Annual Dinner held at Mansion house is always a splendid occasion. This was the fourth time I had attended this event and I had been looking forward to it for a long while. As we don't live in London it also meant a long weekend with our son, a treat in itself.

Some while before the date we had to decide what we were going to wear. For my husband that meant trying his 'white tie and tails', he didn't exactly look like Fred Astair but I got the general impression of a debonair man about town. For myself a visit to an exclusive dress shop yielded just the right outfit for the occasion.

When the day arrived we climbed into our elegant apparel and, accompanied by our guests, waited patiently for the cab to arrive at our son's home. A short ride through the streets of London and we were arriving at the main entrance of the Mansion House where we were warmly greeted. My handbag having been 'frisked' by an electronic machine and my coat whisked onto a hanger, we mounted the stairs to the elegant reception rooms where we collected our personalised programmes.

Having been announced and received by our gracious hosts there followed a reception where the champagne and canapés circulated freely and we were able to have photographs professionally taken. All too soon an ear-splitting gong sounded, summoning us to

dinner. Although 246 people were sitting down to dine we had no trouble finding our place as our programmes held a full table plan with a printed hand pointing to our seat. The excellent meal was accompanied with just the right wines followed by Port and Armagnac, while an ensemble played a selection of well-known music from the balcony above.

Between courses it was possible to take in the splendour of the Egyptian Room where we were dining the classical statues and stained glass windows surrounded us, while magnificent pillars soared to the beautiful ceiling above. A room like this in the heart of London makes one feel proud to be British.

A highlight of the evening was the Ceremony of the Loving Cup, an explanation in our programme tells us that this ceremony goes back to the time when King Edward the Martyr was slain while drinking at Corfe Castle. Toasts to the Queen, other members of the Royal Family and the Lord Mayor and Corporation of London were followed by the Blacksmiths' Song sung by a soloist who was joined by us for the chorus.

A rendition of the Post-Horn Gallop played from both ends of the balcony, followed by the seldom heard Stage-Coach Gallop, was met with huge appreciation. We were also treated to the world premier of the Blacksmiths' fanfare. This was because the musicians, London Banqueting

Banquet 2003

Get their own fanfare

Ensembles, had only been formed in autumn 2002. Our Clerk was approached and agreed that they should play at the Banquet which meant that the Company was the first booking for the ensemble. To mark this event the leader, Stephen Fletcher, composed the Fanfare. I hope that it can become a regular feature.

In the absence of the Lord Mayor, Alderman and Sheriff David Brewer, who is an Honorary Member of the Court of the Company, gave an address. Mr Peter Bottomly MP replied to the toast to the guests. He is the Master Draper and our Prime Warden was a student at Bancroft's

School which is supported by the Drapers' Company.

A further toast to the Blacksmiths' Company 'Root and Branch' was proposed by the Master of the Worshipful Company of Ironmongers.

On conclusion of the Banquet a Stirrup Cup was served in the Salon outside the banqueting room where conversation with new and old friends continued for some time. Finally it was time to leave and we were able to purchase our photographs before departing, tired, replete but with a feeling of having taken part in one of the finest events of the year.

Heather Morrisey, M.Ed.

Photography by Michael O'Sullivan



Renter Warden
Rodney Bole

Prime Warden
Barry Graham

Third Warden
Peter Allcard

Fourth Warden
John Shreeves

The Tonypandy Award 2003

Tony Robinson and his son, Simon, have been awarded the Tonypandy Cup for 2003.

A full description of the work will appear in the 24th edition of the Newsletter as part of the report on the awards luncheon, at which the cup will be presented.

Champion and Best Blacksmith 2003

As in previous years the Company supported the Blacksmith stalls at certain agricultural shows by awarding a cup for the best forging at the participating shows, the recipient of which became the Champion Blacksmith for the year.

The Company also awards a plaque for the best forging to a given design made in a specified time (hot forging). The winner of the competition is known as the Best Blacksmith for the year. Prizes are also given to the runners-up in each competition.

The winner of each competition in 2003 were:

Champion – Len Hutton

Runner-up – Bob Hobbs

Best Blacksmith – Richard Jones

No prizes were given for runner-up in the hot forging competition.

Hereford College student wins Queen Elizabeth scholarship

We extend our congratulations to Adam Greenwell, a student at the National School of Blacksmithing at Hereford on receiving a £10,000 Scholarship from the Queen Elizabeth Scholarship Trust. This will enable him to study for a BA in Architectural and Forged Ironwork. Adam was the recipient of a Bursary from this Company in the year 2001/2002.

Guild of Freemen Dinner

To mark the association between Ray Holl and the Guild of Freemen he proposed that the Courts of the two Companies, with their partners, should dine together while he is President.

The dinner was held at Tallow Chandler's Hall on Wednesday 25th June. Eleven Court Members attended and the seating was so arranged that members of both

Companies were able to get to know one another and more about the Guild, as well as our ancient Company, and their activities. It was a most convivial occasion with speeches by the Prime Warden and the President.

Our thanks go to Raymond Holl for his initiative and the Clerk of the Guild, Brigadier Michael Kuen for making all the arrangements.

Raymond Holl MBE, CEng, MIEE, MCMI

Freeman of the City of London and Coventry

Liveryman Raymond Holl is this year the Master of the Guild of Freemen of the City of London. This shows an indication of his commitment to the City of London although a native of Coventry, where he still lives with his wife Barbara.

He was born there in 1930 and stayed during the blitz and bombing of the City. His commitment was enhanced when through his great uncle, Harry Weston who had been Mayor of Coventry, he became an apprentice with BTH and a Freeman of the City of Coventry at the same time. This was shortly after starting his national service in the RAF.

After leaving the forces he achieved his professional qualification and also lectured at Lancaster Polytechnic which is now Coventry University. In 1974 he joined the Court of the City

of Coventry Guild of Freemen and became Master in 1981/82 and was Master again in 1998/99. He was appointed MBE in the 1987 New Year Honours List.

Over the years the original company BTH went through various new guises and, when Ray retired, was known as Lucas Aerospace. To mark his involvement with the company, having worked on the same site throughout his career, he wrote a book chronicling its history.

He joined the Court of Freemen of the City of London in 1993 and was admitted to the Livery of The Worshipful Company of Blacksmiths the following year. Ray, with Barbara, has been an ardent supporter of the Company ever since. It was therefore most appropriate that in the year that he became Master of



the Guild that he should have proposed a Dinner for the members of the Guild and the members of the Court of the Blacksmiths' Company. That was held on Wednesday 25th June at Tallow Chandlers Hall.

We wish Ray a very happy and successful year as Master and look forward to his continued involvement with this Company.

Court Election Practising Blacksmith joins the Court

When The Worshipful Company of Blacksmiths received its first incorporation in 1325 the conduct of the affairs of the Company was entrusted to four Wardens. Today the management still rests with four Wardens but subsequent Charters have meant that they should be assisted by 21 others to make a total membership of the Court of 25. This number may not be exceeded.

The structure of the Court is that, in addition to the Wardens, there are the Past Prime Wardens 'above the Chair' and Assistants 'below the Chair'. When a vacancy occurs the Liverymen of the Company are advised and invited to put forward nominations. At the same time the Clerk approaches the most senior Liverymen, under sixty years old, to invite them to submit their names for nomination.

Last summer a vacancy occurred on the Court and this process was put into effect. As a result, Don Barker was nomination as a Court Assistant. This was considered at the Michaelmas Court meeting, held in October, and he

was duly elected. He then swore the ancient oath, to obey the Wardens, promote the Company and not disclose the discussions of the Court.

The most obvious duty of the junior Assistant is to carry the Company's sword on ceremonial occasions. Generally, this is confined to the procession before the Company's quarterly lunches and also at the Annual Banquet. It is his duty to defend the Prime Warden against attack. Hopefully, it is a skill unlikely to be called upon!

If historical precedent is followed Don could become a Warden in about eight years with the prospect of becoming Prime Warden after another two years.

We congratulate Don on his election to the Court. As far as we can tell from the Company's records it is likely to be the first time since 1770 that a working blacksmith has been a Member of the Court. That year the Company accepted its decline in being able to exert influence on the craft and also allowed its lease on Blacksmiths' Hall to lapse.

Christopher Jeal

Liveryman Blacksmith – No. 7



Mike Roberts responds to Newsletter invitation

We have asked Mike Roberts for his reflections and recollections on blacksmithing and the Livery. These are his comments . . .

Like quite a few 1942 babies I was an orphan but was brought up by close friends of my mother. So being one quarter Italian with the rest English while my surrogate family was half English and half Swiss. This meant that this infant had a head start on his fellow boys at an English boarding school. My bones and muscles from 12 to 18 were good enough for county athletics. The mile and cross-country were 'my game'.

My other interest, from 18 to 20, was bareback horse riding and, more specifically, rodeo riding. The most dangerous part is getting on in the 'pen' as it is known. The next period, from 20 - 23, was inactive as we had warning of kidney problems. Little did I know it would lead to three years in different hospitals which was to give me the best training ever about life and be so grateful for eyes to see, hands to make things and touch, legs to walk, ears to hear and nose to smell. Still now the best safety rule in my Studio Forge.

School in Switzerland

So by the age of 23 I had the best surrogate family in the world. My blood grandfather and four before him had all been metallurgists in non-ferrous, to finally a great surgeon and skilled nurses. As soon as I got out of a wheelchair I enrolled for three years at Basel Metal School in Switzerland in metal working and welding. My hobby was chasing round Europe making friends (which I still have today) who had forges called Kunst Schmiede. This term is now accepted in England as Art Blacksmiths.

In 1964 it was my dream to respect our forefathers high working standards but create designs in the year we live. In England I studied for two years with Alan Knight (a Silver Medallist) and, for me, Wally Charles the father of contemporary texture on metal in England and also a Silver Medallist.

I can still remember the public's

comments on my 'funny' shapes in metal at my first show, the Three Counties, in 1968 in the Ornamental Metal section (a term I still dislike). I still remember the comments of Frank Day picking up a piece of my forged brass work. "No, Mr Day, its not cast brass". "No Mr Roberts, you're a white smith not a real smith". Disaster I thought but six months later Vulcan sent me a real metal friend for life. His first comments on my polished yellow metal "My my I haven't seen forged brass for years. I can help you improve it!"

Tommy Tucker's Influence

This man was my darling blacksmith instructor Tommy Tucker. We talked about getting the seven modern blacksmiths together. In 1977/78 Tommy rang and said that a man called Richard Quinnell is forming a group of modern smiths. So Tommy and I went to Leatherhead.

Seven months later Wally Charles, Alan Evans and myself drove north to Ron Carter's Trapp Forge for the first meeting forming the British Artist Blacksmiths Association (BABA). For the next ten years I was treasurer and exhibition organiser. After four years Tommy and I couldn't believe the standard of work and creativity and after six years the traditional 'boys' aren't cutting our throats any more remarking, "You know some of this modern stuff is well made". In 1987 my surrogate family needed me and so I had to retire from working with BABA.

In 1992 Tommy and Ken Miller rang to say that WCB had awarded me a Bronze Medal for a bronze work of an art blacksmith. I wonder if Frank Day is looking down. Tommy's front teeth nearly fell out and with his wife Joan stayed at my family's home every autumn for nine years and Tommy pleaded with me to become a Liveryman and get involved with the Company. As a Liveryman and sitting on Tommy's hospital bed I promised him I would get involved with WCB.

In 1998 I had just sat down at Painters' Hall with disbelief with a Company Silver Medal in my hand followed by the roar and crescendo of

noise as Tommy Tucker and Ron Carter received their Gold Medals. It seemed seconds later that hands clapped me on the back and a voice said "We have got a job for you". This was Past Prime Warden Geoffrey Hughes a man who works so hard for the blacksmiths at county shows. The job was to head the assessment panel for the Tonypany Cup and after five years I am amazed how close the panel has become and have found winners so close to the dream of Past Prime Warden Delwyn Dennis of one man and his work.

Getting ready for the BABA 25th anniversary conference the comments are that WCB is no longer that old 'fuddy duddy lot'. I had a phone call from a young girl smith "Oh Mike I have got a WCB grant". I said, "Don't waste it". "No way", she said and added, "I won't let the WCB down". Two young smiths got a grant from the Prince of Wales Trust.

I wish I could tell Tommy his dream of BABA and WCB walking hand in hand. Well I had better not, as Tommy will keep my hand on the phone for an hour and a half.

"Leave the tent open while judging" I said. It gives 3-6 hours more for the public to see the lads' midnight toils to get it to the shows. Stumbling over a fire iron trying to judge it I hear 'Joe Public' say, "its just unbelievable the amount of creativity and new ideas here. You do not see many types of old work now. I was talking to a young girl who had made a beautiful fountain. A real 'girl' blacksmith.

BABA at 25 is great and WCB is great (and 650 years older).

The early 80's at most county shows there was a Liveryman called Arthur, his hands always full of WCB paperwork and always a great smile, like my grandfather he too was a doctor of metals and for years our workaholic Craft Secretary. For me its been very special knowing Dr Arthur Sage.

Lastly thank you Tommy for nagging me into Livery. Thanks also to Geoffrey Hughes the Tonypany job has taken me to England, Wales, Scotland and now Ireland. Its been fun and how the panel members have put up with me I'll never know.

Harmonious Blacksmith

An alternative explanation

by Jeffrey Smith

I was very interested to read Peter Rayner's article 'Handel's Harmonious Blacksmith' in the April issue of the Newsletter. I also live in Edgware, not very far from Maurice Greenberg, and, being a music lover, I was a little surprised to read the sentence 'Why would Handel be out in the country in the Edgware district?'

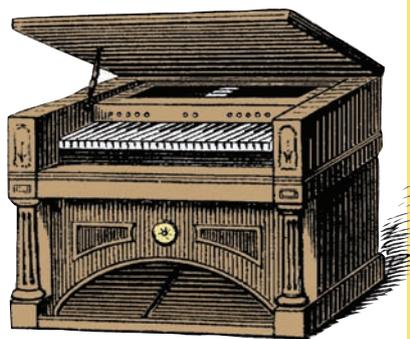
It is certainly well known in music circles, that Handel actually lived in Edgware for three years from 1717 to 1720, during which time he was Master of Music to, and resident guest of, James Bridges, 1st Duke of Chandos, at the Chandos Estate, now Canon's Park. Among the Duke's investments was the Foley Ironworks, but it was the South Sea Bubble which bankrupted him in 1720, the year in which his palace was completed. What remains of the estate is now in the hands of the North London Collegiate School.

Although it is known that among Handel's compositions while he was in Edgware were the Chandos Anthems and the opera *Acis and Galatea*, which was first performed there, it is not certain whether the Harpsichord Suite were actually written in Edgware, or after he returned to central London. The story is told that Handel was out walking one day, in Edgware, when it started to rain. He took shelter in William Powell's smithy, which is when he purported to have heard the melody which subsequently became known as the *Harmonious Blacksmith*'.

This is a very nice story, but it is no more than that. In fact, the name was never used by Handel, and only came into existence many years after the piece was originally written – a century to be exact. It was 1820 when the first recorded use of the name was noted. In Bath, there was a music dealer, who had previously been a blacksmith. He was forever singing, and became known locally as the 'Harmonious Blacksmith'. As the tune which he always sang was the 'Air with Variations for Handel's Suite No 5 for Harpsichord', it was only a matter of time before the name transferred itself from the man to the melody. In yet another story, a man named Robinson, who happened to own the Royal Phoenix Ironworks, was also a famous singer. Apparently, he was nicknamed 'The Harmonious Blacksmith', but what the connection with Handel was, if any, does not form part of the story.

Since the name is known to have no connection with either Handel or the music, but is something to do with blacksmiths and ironworks, perhaps one or more experts in these fields can take it from here.

Jeffrey Smith



Comments by Peter Rayner

Your letter to the Editor of the Newsletter has been passed to me and first I apologise for the inordinate delay in answering. I have been occupied with private matters. Despite being fond of Handel and moderately fond of the harpsichord I found that I did not have a copy of the work in question and obtaining one took time as many of the recordings were not available in this country.

Again I must apologise for sloppy research as the fact that Handel lived in Edgware for three years is given in dictionaries of biography. However I think this strengthens the case. I think we can dismiss the shower of rain; Handel must have passed the forge on a number of occasions and there are very few people indeed who can resist watching a blacksmith at work.

Let us consider first Robinson. He owned the Royal Phoenix Ironworks. Such a man could be known as an Ironmaster, but if the works were small may easily be known as a blacksmith. He was a famous singer. A combination of occupations quite probably produced the nickname "Harmonious Blacksmith"; analogous to the "Welsh Canary" and similar. You do not mention a date but if after 1820 Robinson can certainly be dismissed as a coincidence.

The Bath music dealer, who also was, had been, a blacksmith could also be a case similar to Robinson. You say he sang the Air from suite no.5; but do you mean he hummed or lahed it, for it has no words. Did this dealer indulge in the barbaric custom of adding words? I am not a musicologist, just an ordinary person fond of music, probably an advantage in this discussion, but after listening to the Air several times with this purpose in mind I find it difficult to add words or for that matter even hum the melody: especially the last variation! I suggest both this chap and Robinson can be dismissed as coincidences.

I certainly agree that Handel never gave this nickname and that it became attached much later, even probably after Handel's death. This of course often has happened to other composers and other pieces. We must also remember that although today we hold composers, (and painters), in high regard this was not so in the 16th and 17th centuries, and earlier and later. They were considered artisans and classified as tradesmen such as plumbers, bricklayers or blacksmiths. Hence the existence of the Livery Companies of Musicians and Painter Stainers.

To return to the possible source, inspiration. William Powell's anvil gave out notes in B and E, the F in the Newsletter is a misprint. A blacksmith may work at the anvil on his own or with one or two strikers. The strikers merely strike the hot iron on the anvil at the direction of the blacksmith who manipulates the metal. This striking must be done rhythmically otherwise chaos results. Sometimes the strikes are alternately to the metal and then to the anvil. In all cases there is a regular series of notes which may vary as to what is being struck and where. If one is familiar with blacksmithing of this type it is quite easy to detect a similar rhythm in the Air. I suggest that at sometime somebody listening to the Suite said that sounds like a blacksmith at work and others agreed.

All this is hypothesis of course, but it is fun to speculate.

P.N.G. Rayner

The Worshipful Company visits City Bell Foundry

No Forging but a stimulating Craft

You step off the bustling pavement of the Whitechapel Road into number 34 and you literally step back in time into the Grade II listed building that houses the Whitechapel Bell Foundry. Whitechapel Road is a typically straight road created by the Romans to give access to the eastern counties.



Prime Warden and Past Prime Warden listening to Alan Hughes

Today it reflects the many cultures of London as there is a Mosque on the opposite corner.



Members of the Company absorb explanation of bell making technique

The Company was founded in 1570 (the year before this Company received its Charter from Queen Elizabeth) but historians have traced back to one Master Founder Robert Chamberlain who was in Aldgate in 1420. The room that you enter lists the bell founders from him to date. The reception room houses

drawings, models, photographs and memorabilia relating to the Company.

The thirty members of the company who visited the Foundry on Thursday 12th June were greeted by Alan Hughes the fifth generation of his family to control the business. His love of the company and its products as well as his enthusiasm for the casting of bells became apparent as he took us round the very small premises.

He showed how a template is made to the size of the bell and how, on moulds, a mixture of clay, sand, brick dust, horse hair and manure is built up and then 'smoothed' to the size of the bell. He could not explain how such a strange cocktail had been developed but the origins of bell casting could be traced back to monks before the first millennium. A second mould is developed to make a 'sandwich' to await the pouring of the molten metal.

We then moved to learn how bells are tuned. Smaller ones are tuned to five pitches and larger to eleven. It is a process largely carried out by ear and the use of a tuning fork. To bring the bell to the correct tone small parts of the inside are 'chiselled' away. The bells are initially sharp and have to be lowered in tone. Too much in any of the elements and you have to start again. This means casting another bell and scrapping the first.

The foundry cast the bell known as 'Big Ben', one of the largest cast and we were assured that it was not 'tuned' and therefore is discordant.

After he had explained the principle of how bells work in their frame and peals achieved Alan Hughes than invited the party to see the forge. The working smiths were soon in animated discussions about how to keep coal dry and avoid 'spitting' and some useful tips were passed on.

As well as casting bells the company makes the frames and ancillary equipment. We were taken to the workshop under the eaves where the wooden components are manufactured. Many of our party had to be careful in that area as there is a series of beams 5' 9" above the floor so



care had to be exercised. All the frames, and the wheels, have to be capable of being broken down into units that can be raised through the series of trap doors that lead to a typical belfry. By the same token the bell must also be able to be lifted through the same openings.



Alan Hughes explains the process of bell making

An examination of hand bells, how they are cast polished and have leather handles attached was also given. We made our way through doors and up and down narrow staircases, incredulous at the working conditions, and emerged into the yard to be treated to the sound of a great bell tolling. We returned to the Georgian Foundry House for a finger buffet.

It was a fascinating evening which gave an insight into something that we probably take for granted. We also learned that the foundry was established on the eastern side of the walled City, inside Aldgate, with those other crafts that produced noise and fumes. This included the blacksmiths of the time so that we could consider that, although just outside the City, this ancient Company had briefly 'come home'.

Christopher Jeal

Peter Moore Memorial Cup

Presented to the City & Guilds Association

A memorial to the late Liveryman Peter Moore, whose obituary appeared in the 20th issue of "the Newsletter" has been presented to the City and Guilds Association by an anonymous donor. The memorial which is in the form of an engraved tankard will be presented to current "Bo" driver at the annual dinner of the Association. The first tankard was presented to Mr Tom Williams at the Annual dinner on 26th March 2002.

Bursaries

Awards 2003-2004

We received 19 applications from students at the National School of Blacksmithing at Hereford and 10 applications were received from students of blacksmithing at Warwickshire College. Funds for Bursaries are very limited and for the year only twelve Bursaries could be given. The applicants are assessed based on the application forms and by interview as well as seeing them work at the anvil.

The breadth of the backgrounds of the applicants is always amazing and their determination to succeed. "Even without a bursary I WILL become a blacksmith" was the assertion of one student.

The bursaries have a wider impact upon the students than purely financial. In many instances it is their ability to express themselves through the medium of the craft which enables them to overcome many difficulties, for example dyslexia or deafness. In addition, as a result of our grants one old forge, acquired by a student, will be brought back into life and we are confident that another will be brought back into use next year.

The members of the Charity Committee appreciate how many demands there are from so many good causes which Liverymen receive, but support the craft with which we are all involved through open membership of this ancient Company. The Chairman of the Education and Training Committee wrote to all Liverymen recently but the response was negligible. It is sad to record that John Barber has secured more bursaries from people who have no direct involvement with the Company than our own Liverymen.

It is not too late and the Clerk will happily supply standing orders and Gift Aid Declarations.

The John Webb Cup

Liveryman John Webb was a member of the Craft Committee and conducted the negotiations to secure the introduction of the use of a Company Trade Mark. Following his death his widow, Russ, wanted to create a permanent record of his involvement with the Company and offered to present a Cup in his name.



She presented the Cup formally to the Company at the Ladyday Court meeting. She has agreed that it should be awarded each year for the best student blacksmith at Warwickshire College. In this way it will complement the Stanley Allcard Trophy that is awarded to students at Hereford.

Its initial award will be to Simon Wilkinson and Russ Webb will make the presentation at the Michaelmas Court and Awards luncheon.

Bursers Appreciation

We have received many letters of appreciation from bursers and below we give extracts from a couple:

Adam Greenwell

A little while before my father had been made redundant and because I started my first year when I was only sixteen, my local authority could not provide any financial help. Money was very tight for my first year and without your financial help my second year at Hereford would have been almost impossible. I have also had a great deal of help from the staff of the college who encouraged me in many ways. They even found out why I had found school so difficult. They gave me a test and found that I'm dyslexic, simply knowing why I found some school work very difficult has helped me a great deal. So thank you for taking the time to read of my success and thank you for having made that success possible with your financial help.

Ben Horrobin

Please find enclosed photographs of a gate I have finished and a historical project, which is near to completion.

The gate uses traditional techniques such as fire welding, tennons, riveting, collars, repousee and scrollwork. For a traditional gate of this craft skill it has been valued at £1,200. I shall give it to my parents for their cottage in Somerset. I learnt a lot from making the gate, which is something I enjoyed greatly.

The historical project is based on a 14th century church door of St. Saviours Church in Dartmouth, Devon. I have already sent you a section from my research for the piece.

I will be visiting Gdansk in Poland for my work experience soon. I am very excited, as I am sure that it will be a very educational trip.

Thank you again for your support.

www.blacksmithscompany.org.uk