



THE
DRAPERS'
COMPANY
— 1364 —

Drapers' Hall
Throgmorton Avenue
London EC2N 2DQ

www.thedrapers.co.uk
020 7448 1305

More than six centuries ago a group of merchants came together to promote their trade in woollen cloth in the City of London. As their guild and fellowship grew, they made philanthropy part of the plan.

A TIMELINE OF THE COMPANY'S HISTORY

1200 – 1500

The precise origins of the Drapers' Company are not clear. Whilst evidence of drapers working in the City can be found throughout the 13th century it is not until 1361 that formal recognition of the guild was awarded by the Mayor with the foundation of the Brotherhood of our Lady of Bethlehem.

To fully secure their monopoly over the drapery trade, the guild petitioned for a Royal Charter which was granted by Edward III in 1364. This first Charter granted the Drapers definite authority from the Crown to organize and govern their guild as well as the much-coveted monopoly of the retail sale of woollen cloth in London. By this they came to set standards for the trade, such as pricing and the "Drapers' ell", or standard measure, by which all cloth was sold; and oversaw the training of draper apprentices.

After 1405 the Drapers became responsible for the conduct of the City's cloth market, Blackwell Hall which was situated in Basinghall Street, east of Guildhall. It was here alone that foreigners (those from outside London but from within the British Isles) and strangers (those from overseas) could sell their woollen cloth

The expanding cloth trade in the 15th century gave the Drapers a powerful position in the City. Against this background, in the 1420s, the guild decided to build a Hall of its own rather than to continue to meet in members' houses, taverns or other guilds' halls. Maybe too, the election of Draper William Crowmere as Mayor in 1423, and the prestige this brought the Company, encouraged the project. The site chosen was land in St Swithin's Lane bequeathed in 1490 to the guild by Draper Henry Eburton. Finance to build the Hall was raised from corporate funds and from individual members, the average contribution being 20 shillings though some contributed far more than this including William Crowmere who gave £30. Work began in 1425 with the first dinner being held in the Hall in 1430.

In 1438 the guild received its Charter of Incorporation recognizing the guild as a legal corporate fraternity, with perpetual succession and a Common seal. The Charter stated that the Company now had the right to: '...unite, found, create, erect, and establish in the City one Gild or Fraternity in honour of the blessed Virgin Mary...and the same enjoy to them and their successors to all future times...'

One of the privileges granted by the 1438 Charter of Incorporation was the right to elect a Master, as well as the four Wardens authorised in 1364, to govern the Company. The first to hold this office was John Gedney a wealthy and influential City merchant who was elected Mayor in 1427 and again in 1447, one of only nine men to serve twice as Mayor before 1545.



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On receiving its Charter of Incorporation, the Company sought a coat of arms. This was granted by the Garter King of Arms in 1439. It was devised to symbolize the Company's patron, the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Drapers were intensely proud of their first Grant of Arms and their gratitude was expressed by the entertainment of the Garter King of Arms at the Hall who was also presented with a scarlet hood in addition to his fee.

During the 15th century, 17 Drapers were elected Mayor, four of them twice or more. One such Draper was Simon Eyre, who joined the Company in 1419 and was elected Mayor in 1445. Eyre was the primary funder of the City's granary at Leadenhall, and in later years he was responsible for establishing a free school there. In his Will, he gave generously to both the City (bequeathing £5,000, for the benefit of the poor) and the Company (bequeathing 3,000 marks).

John Norman, twice Master of the Company, was elected Mayor in 1453 and is credited with starting the tradition of the annual Mayor's show on the river. Usually, Mayors rode on horseback to Westminster to receive approval from the monarch. However, Norman suffered with lameness and so travelled to see the King by barge. This set a precedent, and for the next 400 years all new Mayors would make this journey by boat.

Draper Sir William Stocker was elected Mayor in 1485 – he holds the dubious record for the shortest period in office: just four days. He died from sweating sickness, a disease resembling influenza that often was accompanied by the plague or typhus prevalent in England in the late 15th and 16th centuries.

Little research to date has been undertaken into the history of women in the Company. 'Sisters' are mentioned in the earliest extant ordinances of 1371 and in the earliest extant Wardens' accounts of 1414-40. However, in 1493 the first Sister is mentioned by name: Elynore Sampton paying quarterage, the term used for membership subscription for the guilds.

1500 – 1700

By the 16th century, the Drapers' Company, and many of its members, had gained significant power and wealth in the City in large part brought about by the flourishing cloth trade. It was at this time that the Company, after long and tedious bargaining, in 1503 acquired the advowson, the patronage, of the church of St Michael in Cornhill. Having worshipped at the church at St Mary Bethlehem, and latterly at St Mary le Bow, the Company no doubt was seeking a place of corporate worship where it held position and influence.

This growth of wealth and income enabled the Company to expand its commitment to relieve the poor, first expressed in the ordinances of 1371 which stressed that if a member of the fraternity 'fall into trouble by misfortune so that he have not the wherewithal to lie he shall be helped by the said Brotherhood'. Such commitment was enhanced by the growing trend of members entrusting their charitable trusts to the Company to provide for the poor of London. Whilst this was often for the distribution of bread, fuel or clothes, in 1508 almshouses are first mentioned in the Company's archives, when a tiler was paid for work at 'the Almshouses' which were either alongside or within part of Drapers' Hall in St Swithin's Lane. These were shortly followed by almshouses founded by Sir John and Lady Milborne at Crutched Friars, and by Lady Askew in Beech Lane.

It is in 1521 that the term 'Assistant' is first applied to those members of the Court who were neither Master nor Wardens. Whilst not having been specifically mentioned in the first charters, there is clear evidence that the Master and Wardens governed the Company with the support of a Court made up of members elected from the Livery by the Court itself. Collectively, the Court were responsible for the administration of the Company and its investments and for supervising the retail drapery trade. The minutes also reveal they spent much time resolving disputes amongst members, overseeing apprenticeships, responding to precepts from the Mayor, arranging dinners for members and, most significantly, increasingly administering the trusts bequeathed to the Company.

A series of rich and powerful Masters came to dominate the Court of Assistants in the 16th century. Several were generous philanthropists, others were Members of Parliament; most were successful merchants trading overseas, with many being members of the trading companies founded in this period. One such individual was Thomas Howell who was elected Warden in 1527 but who died before he could be elected Master. Much is known about Howell because one of his ledgers has survived amongst the archives at Drapers' Hall and because he bequeathed a generous trust to the Company. Howell was frequently abroad and lived for the last years of his life in Seville where he died in or about 1537. His primary trade was the export of a wide variety of English cloth utilizing paid factors to act on his behalf in foreign ports (such as in Spain, Calais, Danzig, Lisbon and San Domingo), importing goods such as oil, damask and silk satin from Spain, Rochelle wine and raisins, alum and woad. The ledger contains an account of his property and commercial transactions between 1519 and 1527 as well as two of his Wills. It was by a third Will that the Company was bequeathed 12,000 ducats (some £2,700) for the benefit of orphan maidens.

Sir William Chester represents the zenith of late medieval mercantilism. He was twice Warden of the Company, seven times Master, Lord Mayor and a Member of Parliament. Chester was well-known for promoting long-distance travel and was a major investor in new markets including Russia, Persia and equatorial West Africa. He was a member of a number of trading companies and helped finance John Hawkins's slaving expeditions in 1564-5. In 1541, the Company opted to use his business acumen by entrusting him with the task of negotiating for the purchase of Thomas Cromwell's house in Throgmorton Street, which was to become Drapers' Hall.

Negotiations for the purchase from Henry VIII of Thomas Cromwell's former house were finally concluded in 1543 with acquisition of the house, and its garden, for 1,800 marks (approximately £1,200). This acquisition was in part financed by the legacy of Thomas Howell. The first meeting at the new Hall took place on 7 August 1543; it was agreed that the old hall in St Swithin's Lane should be let.

Plague and sweating sickness regularly haunted London from the 14th to the 17th century. During the summer of 1551, the City suffered one such attack. The mortality among the Drapers may be estimated from the fact that seven Liverymen died in four days. The wife and child of the Clerk, who lived within the Hall, also succumbed and, as a consequence, the Court meeting that July was held in the garden presumably because of fear of infection in the Hall.

The accession of Elizabeth I, prompted the Company in 1560 to seek an Insuperimus Charter confirming their rights and privileges.



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In 1561 the grant of arms was renewed and 'for a testimony and further increase of their Worships' the King of Arms gave them a helm and crest, with a golden ram upon it, and two supporters in the shape of pelleted (black spotted), golden lions. Perhaps as a concession to anti-popery following the Reformation, the image of the Blessed Virgin Mary was omitted from the title letter of the grant.

Bequests to the Company were not solely made by members. In 1574, William Lambarde founded almshouses in Greenwich, named Queen Elizabeth's College in honour of his Queen. The Letters Patent which incorporated Queen Elizabeth's College stipulated that the Master of the Rolls was to act as President, while the Wardens of the Drapers' Company were to serve as Governors. Priority was 'first the aged, then the sick, lame or maimed, after that the blind, then the victim of a sudden casualty, after that the ones who were continually sick and, finally, those overcharge with children'.

In gratitude to the Wardens for agreeing to take on the governorship of his almshouses, Queen Elizabeth College, in 1578 William Lambarde commissioned a silver gilt, standing cup which he presented to the Company. The cup is attributed to Affabel Partridge, goldsmith to Elizabeth I. It is beautifully engraved including the coats of arms of England (for the governing Charter of the Almshouse), the Master of the Rolls at the time (for the President), and the Company (for the Governors). Around the rim is engraved the inscription: 'A proctour for the poore am I remember them before thou dye'. This inscription, and the cup, has come to symbolize the *raison d'être* of the Company, to look after the poor and needy. Hence the Lambarde Cup is always placed in front of the Master when dining at the Hall to remind them of their duty as Master.

London and its livery companies were regularly called upon by the Crown for money, men and arms. Calls became particularly more determined with the threat of aggression by Spain. In April 1585, for example, the Queen called for 4,000 Londoners to be trained of whom the Company was charged with delivering 347, each to be armed from the Company's own armoury. The following year they were ordered to buy 1,776 lb of gunpowder for use as and when required (sensibly stored in the garden away from the Hall).

Hostilities with Spain came to a head in 1588 and the threat of invasion. Levies were raised in the City including, for the first time, a specific assessment dedicated to 'sea-affairs'. Two watchmen in armour guarded the Hall; three dozen leather buckets and a grappling-hook were provided against the risks of fire. News of the defeat of the Spanish Armada was met with wild celebration in the City. The Company celebrated in their own fashion: they presented Sir Francis Drake, the hero of the battle, with the Freedom of the Company.

The Reformation not only brought religious changes but arguably too had an important impact on educational provisions with education being seen as an important way to improve society. The Company was no stranger to this developing trend. As early as 1551 it had started to financially support scholars at Oxford and Cambridge. However, it was in 1593 that the first school was entrusted to the Company's care starting a tradition of supporting education that has become an enduring key purpose through to the modern day. By his Will, Thomas Russell founded a free school at Barton in Staffordshire. The Company was charged with selecting the Master and Usher (to be paid from Russell's endowment of £21 a year) and visiting the school annually.

The turn of the century brought a period of transition for the Company. Following a long period of financial exactions, exacerbated by outbreaks of plague and food shortages,



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the Company was in a sound financial position. An overhaul of its administration was initiated resulting, for example, in the creation of a proper record of leases and benefactions. The accession of James I also prompted the application for a Charter of Reincorporation which was duly issued in 1607. This Charter is of great importance, for it remains operative to this day. Significantly, although the Drapers still styled themselves the Guild or Fraternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, all other references to religion were dropped. The Charter was concerned both with business and the administration of business. No less important, the oligarchical nature of the rule of the Company was now officially established. Reincorporation was an expensive business: the Charter cost more than £250. Six years later, the Grant of Arms too was confirmed with the motto 'Unto God only be honour and glory' added to the original arms, supporters and crest.

In 1609 the Company became embroiled in two significant overseas initiatives: the plantations of Virginia and Ulster. Whilst the former merely entailed the subscription of funds to the Virginia Company, the latter led to the purchase of an estate and the establishment of an enduring relationship with the estate's town, Money more, and ultimately with Draperstown, a market town developed by the Company in the 19th century.

In 1614, 1615, 1621 and 1623 successive Drapers were elected Mayor of London causing the Company to commission elaborate pageants to be performed in the Lord Mayor's Show accompanying the Mayor as he rode through the City to Guildhall. The Company turned to the fashionable writers of the time such as Thomas Middleton and Anthony Munday (who was himself a Draper) to create these pageants, and to craftsmen such as Gerard Christmas (also a Draper) to carve and sculpt the physical artefacts of the pageants. Pageants inevitably were costly. That commissioned for the mayoralty in 1615 of Sir John Jolles (twice Master and a considerable benefactor to education and to poor Freeman) cost more than £700; that for Martin Lumley in 1623 amounted to £639 including "£8.10s. for fyreworks" and "2s.6d. given to a boy who should have beene a Drumer but was Disappointed".

The annual cycle of events and dinners was regularly disrupted particularly in time of plague. The prospect of Civil War in 1642 too prompted a similar decision. The Court minutes noted 'in regards to the present troubles and distractions both in Church and Commonwealth and the great fears and dangers which are shortly like to be within this City and Kingdom (if the Lord in mercy prevent it not) the times are and will be more fit for fasting and humbling souls before God than for feasting and rejoicing...'

The Company weathered the ensuing years of civil war and Commonwealth (1642-1651) and the inevitable hefty calls for money made by both the King and Parliament. Ever prudent, it carefully omitted any mention of contentious matters in its minutes and did not actively side with either side. However, the biographies of members of the Court at the time reveal there were profound political differences. Two such individuals were Thomas Adams and Christopher Packe. Adams was elected Master in 1640 and Mayor in 1654. A well-known Royalist, in 1646 he was committed to the Tower on the charge of treason against the Commonwealth and three years later was stripped of his Aldermanry. Christopher Packe was twice Master in 1648 and 1654 when he was also Mayor. He was knighted by the Protectorate in 1655. In 1660, following the return of the monarchy, Thomas Adams was knighted for his loyalty and restored to his Aldermanry. In contrast, Sir Christopher Packe was now deprived of his Aldermanry and was one of the very few who was specifically excluded from forgiveness in the 'Act of Oblivion'. Both, however, remained faithful to their Company. During his lifetime, Sir Thomas Adams founded a free school in his hometown of Wem, which the Company supports to this day. He also bequeathed a legacy of £200 for the poor of the Company. Sir Christopher Packe left the Drapers a handsome silver cup which is still among the Company's plate.



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No doubt, much valued stability would have been provided to the Company by John Walter who served as Clerk to the Company from 1616 for 40 years. On his retirement in 1656 he was elected on to the Court of Assistants, a very unusual honour no doubt in recognition of his long service as Clerk, though sadly he died shortly afterwards. By his Will, the Company became trustees of the two almshouses that he had founded during his lifetime in the parishes of St George the Martyr and St Mary Newington, both in Southwark.

1665: a year of tragedy when the Great Plague struck London. The Company decided to forgo its Election Dinner and instead donated monies to poor families afflicted by the plague. In total, £215 was distributed amongst the poor of the Company and £168 to non-Drapers.

1666: a second tragedy struck the following year as the Great Fire swept through the City between 1st – 6th September destroying some four-fifths of the buildings in the City. Drapers' Hall and around half of the Company's 200 properties were destroyed. George Inice, the Clerk at the time, had the presence of mind to save most of the Company's records and silver by stowing them in the common sewer in the garden. Despite its losses the Company was determined to continue to pay such pensions and charities as they could.

The chief preoccupation in the aftermath of the fire was the rebuilding of Drapers' Hall. In November 1667 Edward Jarman's plans for the new Hall were approved. In plan the new Hall followed the example of its predecessor with the main rooms grouped around a courtyard though incorporating a livery hall larger in length.

The rebuilding of the Hall took several years during which time the Company hired Carpenters' Hall, immediately adjacent to the garden, for its events. By the end of 1671 work had ostensibly finished though the furnishing and adorning of the rooms took far longer. Any contributions towards the hefty costs were warmly received such as wainscoting for the Parlour presented in 1677 by Sir Joseph Sheldon, former Master and Mayor. The Company was so appreciative of the gift that they commissioned a portrait of Sheldon by Gerard Soest which hangs today in the Court Dining Room.

Not all benefactors to the Company were members such as Sir William Boreman, a Clerk of the Green Cloth to Charles II who died in 1686 bequeathing to the Company the school he had founded in Greenwich.

1700 – 1900

In 1704, Grinling Gibbons, sculptor and wood carver, was elected Warden of the Company. His membership is just one example of the ever-growing phenomena that members of the Company were becoming Free not through apprenticeship but rather by Patrimony or Redemption; and that increasingly too Drapers did not work in the cloth trade.

In his Will of 1728, Francis Bancroft left lands in Essex, Suffolk and London, and the residue of his personal estate, to the Drapers' Company for the purpose of building a school for 100 boys and almshouses for 24 old men who were members of the Company. A five-acre site was acquired in Mile End Road where Bancroft's School and Almshouses were opened in 1737.



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Just over a century after the rebuilding of Drapers' Hall, fire struck again in 1772 causing considerable damage both to the building and its contents. The opportunity was taken to create a new frontage in Throgmorton Street and to transform the interior design of the rooms. However, the footprint of the previous Hall was retained centred around the Courtyard. The Company turned to its surveyor, John Gorham, to design the new Hall. Eminent craftsmen such as George Richardson and Joseph Nollekens were employed for the decoration and ornamentation within.

Not all grant-making was focused on London or indeed Great Britain. In 1781 the Court granted £200 to an appeal for financial aid to the West Indies following the 'late dreadful calamities in Jamaica and Barbados', noting that the sum granted by Parliament had fallen infinitely short of affording the immediate and necessary aid'. The calamities spoken of were the result of a great hurricane which had struck the Lesser Antilles the previous October. It remains the deadliest Atlantic hurricane on record.

England entered into war against the French in 1793. As in previous centuries, the Company chose to provide financial support though in this instance primarily for those fighting, and their dependents, rather than for the government. Some £4,757 was granted to charities providing extra clothing to British troops and for the relief of widows and children of those killed in action. The use of French wines at Company events was forbidden during the duration of the war.

The Company chose to recognise the heroic endeavours of the several successful Naval commanders not least of all Admiral Lord Nelson who was presented with the Freedom of the Company in 1798. This was in recognition of his victory at the Battle of the Nile and 'as a mark of the high sense which this Company entertains of his Meritorious Services'. After his death, a portrait of Nelson by Sir William Beechey was commissioned.

Since purchasing the estate in the early 17th century, the Company had let its Irish lands to a chief tenant. However, with the turn of the century the Company took back direct management of the estate and in 1817 the first of a series of visits were conducted initiating a programme of development and building.

In 1820 John Thomas Thorp was elected Lord Mayor. To date, he is the last in a long line of Drapers to serve in this office. As was customary, Thorp was accompanied by the Drapers' barge in the traditional river procession to Westminster for his inauguration as Mayor, one of the very last outings for the barge which was sold, and not replaced, in 1831.

The 19th century brought forth an increasing public interest in the administration of charitable trusts by livery companies. The first significant formal review was conducted by the Charity Commission whose report was published in 1837. Overall, the Company emerged creditably enough with criticism being levelled against the management of only three of its 48 charities. The identified issues were duly resolved.

The purchase of Drapers' Hall from Henry VIII in 1543 had been, in large, possible with the use of Thomas Howell's legacy. Prompted by the Charity Commission, the Master of the Rolls reviewed Howell's original Will and, recognising that Howell's original objects for the charity had largely become obsolete, set in motion the process to establish a new Scheme for regulating the future conduct of the Charity. The first step towards this came in 1846 when a private act of parliament sanctioned the sale by the charity of the site of Drapers' Hall to the Company, it being acknowledged that the building itself already belonged to the Company. By a subsequent scheme, two girls' schools in Wales were founded.



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In 1858 two educational initiatives began, both in Tottenham: Drapers' College, founded by the Company for sons of Liverymen; and Elmslea, founded at the bequest of Thomas Corney (Master 1857) for female orphans. Ultimately, the two were merged as Tottenham High School for Girls and passed to Middlesex County Council.

In 1866 a period of alterations and improvements at Drapers' Hall was embarked upon conducted by the surveyor, Herbert Williams, and interior designers, John G Crace & Son. The frontage in Throgmorton Street and the Courtyard were rebuilt; the Livery Hall was enlarged; a grand marble staircase was installed; and the decoration of individual rooms was transformed.

When purchasing Drapers' Hall in 1543, the Company acquired a large garden which, over subsequent centuries, it carefully maintained and which it opened to public use. However, as a garden the land was unprofitable. In 1873 plans commenced to lease the garden for building and an agreement was made with the Carpenters' Company to construct Throgmorton Avenue.

The latter quarter of the 19th century saw the Company commit itself most ardently to the furtherance of technical education. In 1878, it joined with the City of London Corporation and 15 other livery companies in the foundation of the City & Guilds of London Institute. The Institute was devoted to the training of craftsmen, technicians and engineers. Thereafter, numerous grants were made to colleges and schools around the country towards technical classes and the building of technical schools and laboratories.

1878 also saw the move of three of the Company's almshouses from Bow to Bruce Grove, Tottenham where they merged together to form Edmanson's Close almshouses. The original three almshouses had been founded by Sir John Jolles in 1617; John Pemel in 1681 (for poor widows); and John Edmanson in 1703 (for decayed sailmakers and their widows).

A Royal Commission of Enquiry into livery companies was announced in 1880 requiring companies to provide details of their foundation, charters, membership, constitution, property, income and charitable activities. The resulting report was published four years later but produced no new legislation. The Royal Commission clarified that they were not public institutions, their corporate income was their absolute property and it revealed that they were astute and careful managers of their trust income, the majority of which was for almshouses and pensions to poor members of the company and educational support in the form of scholarships and exhibitions and administering schools.

In 1885, following the move of Bancroft's School to Woodford, Essex the previous year, the school's former land in Mile End Road was sold to The Beaumont Trustees for £22,400. Here the People's Palace was to be built, an institute that aspired to improve the quality of life for the people of the East End of London through education and entertainment. The Company quickly made a grant of £20,000 towards the cost of the building of technical schools within the Palace. By the end of the century the Company had granted a further £70,000 towards the development of these technical schools and had agreed to provide members of Council for the governance of the institute. The technical schools, considerably expanded, are today called Queen Mary University of London and continue to receive charitable grants from the Company.

The next wave of major alterations to Drapers' Hall commenced in 1897 and was prompted by the desire to let office space along Throgmorton Street. The Court approved the radical plan to demolish and rebuild the entire Throgmorton Street frontage of the Hall, creating more room for offices to be let and the opportunity to alter the Livery Hall. It also resulted in the removal of the main staircase to a new location on the north-west of the Courtyard. Whilst the Company's surveyor, Charles Reilly, designed most of the work, for the more sophisticated aspects of the alterations, the Company turned to Thomas Graham Jackson RA, whose particular focus was the new entrance into the Hall, the main staircase and landing and the Livery Hall. Herbert James Draper was commissioned to paint scenes to adorn the new ceiling in the Livery Hall.

1900 – TODAY

By 1900 the Drapers' Company had sold most of its Irish lands with the estate's two towns, Moneymore and Draperstown, remaining as a testimony to the part the Company played in the development of Northern Ireland over a period of almost 300 years.

The anniversary of the granting of the Company's first Royal Charter was celebrated for the first time in 1914. This 550th anniversary was marked by the publication of the first two volumes of the Company's history by the Rev A H Johnson, copies of which were presented to each Liveryman; and by the holding of a grand ball at the Hall.

In October 1919 HRH Prince Albert, later King George VI, became a Freeman of the Company. The Master at the time was the Rev John Neale Dalton, KCVO, CMG, former tutor and chaplain to King George V.

Whilst the outbreak of the World War I had gone unmentioned in the Company's minutes, the records during the course of the war are littered with details of its impact in particular on the administration of the Company and its charitable trusts, charitable giving, properties and entertainments. In 1920, a permanent memorial was installed on the main staircase in Drapers' Hall to remember the 19 Drapers, sons of Drapers and staff of the Company who died whilst serving in the war.

The reality of war returned to Drapers' Hall following the outbreak of World War II. In October 1940 a land mine exploded on the Dutch Church in Austin Friars, destroying the church and causing much damage to neighbouring property including Drapers' Hall. Thankfully, whilst many windows had been blown out and ceilings fallen, no profound structural damage was suffered. Once repairs had been completed, the Company was able to offer hospitality to those livery companies who had been less fortunate. This included the Carpenters' Company, reciprocating the Carpenters' hospitality 275 years previously after the Great Fire of London.

In May 1947 HRH Princess Elizabeth, later Queen Elizabeth II, became a Draper by Patrimony. She was presented with a brooch which is a replica of the Master Draper's Jewel. The Master at the time was Sir Albert Stern KBE, CMG, a banker by profession who was instrumental in World War I in the development of the armoured tank. Through the Drapers' Company, Sir Albert was Chairman of the governors of Queen Mary College from 1944 until 1963, and played a vital role in the rebuilding and development of the university.



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In 1955 the Company hosted in its Hall a dinner given by the Trustees of Colonial Williamsburg in honour of Sir Winston Churchill. Out of this dinner grew a friendship between the Company and the College of William & Mary in Virginia and the establishment of an exchange student scheme for law students at the College and at Queen Mary University of London.

In 1959, the Drapers' Charitable Fund was created as a means to better administer and to further the charitable grants made by the corporate Company. Since its creation, additional monies have and continue to be added. The Fund has wide objectives and purposes supporting causes which fall into three main categories: education and young people; social welfare; and textile and heritage.

In 1961 the almshouses founded by John Walter in St Mary Newington were moved to a new site nearby in Brandon Street, prompted by demolition for the Elephant and Castle road-widening scheme. This purpose-built accommodation was extended 10 years later to accommodate the residents from John Walter's second almshouse in Glasshill Street. The almshouses are known as Walter's Close.

To celebrate its sexcentenary in 1964, the Company once again commissioned a new history (written by Tom Girtin) and held a grand ball for the Livery in the Hall. However, it also chose to mark the anniversary by making significant grants amounting to £250,000 to a carefully selected number of charitable projects. Gifts too were given to members; televisions were purchased for each of the almshouse residents. A Supplemental Royal Charter too was obtained.

Since its foundation in the 14th century, women were apprenticed through and became Freemen of the Company. However, it was not until 2001 that women gained equal rights of membership to their brethren Drapers including the right to apply to become Liverymen and to be considered for election on to the Court of Assistants.

Very occasionally, the opportunity is found to rekindle lost traditions. One such occasion came in 2003 with the purchase of a barge, The Royal Thamesia. It is regularly used at a variety of occasions including the annual Countryside Live event on the River Lee and ad hoc events such as Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee River Pageant and the Vogalonga in Venice. The barge is managed by the Bargemaster, selected by the Court from the Livery, and run in partnership with the charity, City Barge.

In 2008 the Company was granted a fifth Supplemental Charter providing various amendments to the previous Charters. The final clause was the power to amend which means that it will not be necessary for the Company to ever again seek a new or Supplemental Charter should amendments be required. Agreement merely will have to be obtained from the Privy Council. This 2008 Supplemental Charter brings to an end a history of Drapers' Charters dating back to 1364.

The Company embarked on a new venture in 2010 with the opening of Drapers' Academy in Harold Hill, Havering. This all-ability secondary school, catering for boys and girls aged 11-18, is sponsored by the Company and Queen Mary University of London. New buildings for the school were opened by HM The Queen in 2012.



THE
DRAPERS'
COMPANY
— 1364 —

Drapers' Hall
Throgmorton Avenue
London EC2N 2DQ

www.thedrapers.co.uk
020 7448 1305

Following the successful opening of Drapers' Academy, the Drapers' Multi-Academy Trust was established in 2014 by the Company and Queen Mary University of London. The MAT provides a formal, legal entity that is able to sponsor Academies and Free Schools under the Government programme. The schools currently governed within the MAT are: Drapers' Academy, Drapers' Brookside Infant and Junior Schools; Drapers' Maylands Primary School; and Drapers' Pyrgo Priory School all on Harold Hill. The Company provides a substantial block grant to the MAT which is allocated to these schools at the discretion of the MAT board.

2014 also saw the marking of the 650th anniversary of the granting of the Company's first charter. A celebratory fayre was held in the Hall bringing together the several schools, colleges and organisations with whom the Company is closely affiliated. HM The Queen attended a special luncheon with the Court of Assistants and HRH The Duchess of Gloucester (a member of the Company) attended a service of thanksgiving at St Michael's Cornhill and afterwards met members of the Company and residents of the Company's almshouses.

In 2017 the Company celebrated a further anniversary: the 70th anniversary of HM The Queen becoming a member of the Company. At a special Court of Assistants, which Her Majesty attended, The Queen was elected an Assistant of the Court.

More than six centuries ago
a group of merchants came
together to promote their trade
in woollen cloth in the City of
London. As their guild and
fellowship grew, they made
philanthropy part of the plan.