

Institute of Physics

LONDON AND SOUTH EASTERN BRANCH REMS SECTION

Visit to the Halls of the Livery Companies of London Thursday 27th April 2006

This visit has been organised by Robert Thorne

The Worshipful livery Companies or Guilds were associations of craftsmen or merchants formed by the wealthiest and most influential citizens of the day for mutual aid and protection of the furtherance of their interests. They established monopolies and set standards for the quality of their work. There is evidence of their existence in the tenth century. However in the Middle Ages a dozen of the great livery companies were listed and later in 1515 were placed in order of seniority by the Lord Mayor of London.

The term livery was originally a grant of food or clothing and evolved to mean the distinguishing robes worn to identify the various guilds. The term worshipful was applied because the guilds met for Christian Worship. Over the years their numbers increased and reached a peak of their influence in the fifteenth century. Their power declined with the increase in government legislation until today there is only one – the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths – still involved in the regulation of the trade for which it was formed; the remaining Guilds serve mainly ceremonial, advisory and social aspects.

The Goldsmiths occupied fifth place in the order of seniority established in 1515 having been granted a royal charter in 1327. It is recorded that in 1130 they owed considerable dues to the Exchequer. They currently operate the London Assay Office, which is responsible for testing articles made of gold or silver to assess the quality of the precious metal they contain and mark them with distinctive stamps.

The programme for the day consists of two sessions, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. The first starts with a tour of Carpenters' Hall on Throgmorton Avenue followed by a gentle stroll to look at various Halls including Armourers and Brasiers, Girdlers, Insurers, Ironmongers, Plasterers, Pewterers, Wax Chandlers, Goldsmiths and Grocers. After lunch at the Cross Keys on Gracechurch Street, formerly a splendid banking hall, our walk will resume looking at Fishmongers, Glaziers, Skinners, Tallow Chandlers, Dyers, Innholders and Watermen and Lightermen ending up with a tour of the Merchant Taylors' Hall on Threadneedle Street. The nearest tube station is the Bank.

Our guide for the day will be Murray Craig BA, who holds the post of Clerk of the Chamberlains Court, a position dating back to 1294. He is an expert on the world of the Liveries and will explain the history, traditions and ceremonial aspects of the companies together with the architectural features of their building.

The programme is;

- 10.15 – 10.45 Assemble at Liverpool Street Station, at the Costa Coffee Shop lower concourse at the platform 1 end.
- 10.45 – 12.45 Phase I morning session
- 12.45 – 14.00 Lunch at the Cross Keys
- 14.00 – 16.00 Phase II Afternoon session

The cost for the two phases (excluding lunch) is £8.50. Numbers are limited to 25

