



## COMPANY COMMENT

The Honourable Company of Freemen of the  
City of London of North America  
[www.freemenlondon.org](http://www.freemenlondon.org)

### IN THIS ISSUE

<u>Regular Items</u>	Page
• From the Master	1
• The Worshipful Company of Vintners	2
• City Ceremonies – Swan Upping	3
• Upcoming Events	4
• Admissions to the Freedom	5
• Members in the News	5
• Communications	5
• Website information	5

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### From the Master

As this issue is about to go to press, we are just into the New Year and I would like to take the opportunity of wishing all our members and loved ones a very happy and successful 2004.

Let us hope that we are leaving behind those catastrophic events which we have endured over the past few years and are entering a period where understanding and tolerance will replace violence in dealing with differences between nations, and between people with their political or religious beliefs. I am happy to see in some recent events that things may be moving in this direction.

Going back to late 2003, mention must be made of our last meeting, the “Art Deco 1910-1939” evening reception attended by a large group of members and friends at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto on October 29<sup>th</sup>. The ROM was the first of three North American museums chosen to host this exhibition following its record-breaking success at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. After a tour of the exhibition, a private cocktail reception with hors d’oeuvres was held, which included a talk from the lead curator of the exhibit. It was certainly a very enjoyable evening and my thanks go to David Moorcroft for his efforts in organizing this great event.

Now, looking ahead there is a formidable program of events in the pipeline.

The Annual Dinner and AGM is the key annual event of the year. This will be our 25th Anniversary and I am delighted to tell you that our principal guest will be the Lord Mayor of London, Alderman Robert Finch. The date has been brought forward to Friday 30<sup>th</sup> April to correspond with the timing of the Lord Mayor’s visit to Toronto. More details will be available shortly and I am certain we will beat last years attendance record on this key anniversary..

There are other events before then, which you will find listed in later pages. We have to thank David Moorcroft, John Smith and Geoffrey Wright for their efforts in arranging these and further functions.

There are a couple of events in which I am personally involved. One is the “Last Night of the Proms” on June 16<sup>th</sup>. As a Toronto Symphony Orchestra subscriber, I have bought a block of seats on behalf of the Honourable Company at considerable discount, so sign up for this fun evening when the notice is posted. There’s always a party spirit in the second half when the Brits wave union jacks and join in with “Rule Britannia”, “Jerusalem” and “Land of Hope & Glory.

The second event is a repeat of last year’s Summer Barbeque at my waterside country home near Port Severn. I mention it now because we failed to give sufficient notice last time. Those who did come would like a repeat.

At our last Court meeting, we invited Michael Charles to attend as a guest. Michael had recently become a Freeman and we were able to persuade him to take on the job of Hon. Treasurer for 2004-5. Congratulations Michael!

On that same subject, I have to thank John Smith for continuing as Hon. Treasurer in addition to his duties as Deputy Master. In both roles he has given the Court and me enormous support.

In this current freezing spell, it is difficult to believe that spring will come. However, I am planning a new vegetable garden at the moment and that really helps!

Best wishes for the coming season from Elaine & myself.

Geoffrey Mayo Master

## **A Brief History of a City Livery Company – The Worshipful Company of Vintners**

### **Introduction**

In this issue we turn our attention to one of the oldest Worshipful Companies, and, by evidence of the success of our wine tasting events, one of the favorites of our Members. The Worshipful Company of Vintners is one of the Twelve Great Companies - number 11 in the order of precedence and is notable in that its “mysterie” has never been contested by another guild Company, unlike the battles that surrounded the mergers that created the Mercers, Drapers, Skinners, Merchant Tailors, Haberdashers and Ironmongers.

Together with the Worshipful Company of Dyers and the Crown, the Vintners’ Company shares the sole rights to Swans on the River Thames and organize the activities during the week in July when the swans are marked in the “Swan Upping” Ceremony. We go into this in more detail under City Ceremonies.

### **Early History of Viniculture**

The trade in wine goes back into prehistoric times, and emerges with civilization itself, coming from the Middle-East. The techniques of wine making were already well understood in Mesopotamia (the area between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers) and Assyria as early as 7000 BC and vines were cultivated in Egypt and Phoenicia by 3000 BC. Wall paintings in Ancient Egypt have allowed us to learn of the sophistication that existed even then in the art and craft of winemaking. In Mesopotamia, the lower reaches of the rivers were not good for vines so both grapes and wines were transported down the rivers for those that lived in the lower reaches.

By 2000 BC, winemaking had reached Greece and by 1000 BC had reached Italy, Sicily and North Africa, and was introduced into Spain and the Southern France and throughout the rest of Europe by the Romans in the next 1000 years. In these later years, vines, viticulture and wine made its way to China, possibly from the area that is now Uzbekistan by General Chang Chien during the Han dynasty and became established in Xinjiang and Shaaxi Provinces

### **History of the Worshipful Company**

The wine production and trade in Britain was introduced by the Romans, and it seems that wine making continued into the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Centuries AD but ceased in the 14<sup>th</sup> due to significant climate change. However it is clear that English winemaking was insufficient to meet demand even in this period and wines were imported from France and Northern Spain.

In London, already the Centre of Trade and Commence, those who traded in Wines would meet at their local church

– in the case of the Vintners (or Vintonners – as their Crest of 1667 shows) – St. Martin in the Vintry. In the 12<sup>th</sup> Century there are already references to ‘lawful merchants of London’ fixing the price of wine. The Vintners’ first Charter is dated 15<sup>th</sup> July 1364 and granted a monopoly for the trade with Gascony. The powers were far-reaching, providing duties of search throughout England together with the exclusive right to buy herring and cloth to sell to the Gascons.

By the mid-15<sup>th</sup> Century, wine imports represented nearly one-third of England’s entire import trade, making the Vintners’ Company one of the most powerful Livery Companies. Unfortunately this was to change under Edward VI (1553) who severely curtailed the Vintners’ countrywide right to sell wine. The Company was a strong supporter of Charles I, and as a result was attacked politically and financially through taxation by the subsequent Parliament. Charles II and James II were also not well disposed to the Company and then, as a result of the Great Fire, the devastation to the Hall and many of its properties where wine was stored, resulted in great financial loss to the Company and its Liverymen and Freemen. Even with the support of William III and Mary, the Company didn’t recover and abandoned its powers of search in 1725.

Under James I, the Company became a lead partner in the “Plantation of Ulster”. This was a scheme using the confiscated lands of the Earls of Tyrone and Tyrconnell to settle a substantial area of Ulster with a colony of English and Scots, usually old soldiers who had served in the Irish wars and retired civil servants. The total land to be settled consisted of 3,798,000 acres (now the County of Londonderry), but the scheme was very poorly implemented and in 1609 an effort was made to interest the London Livery Companies. The Vintners’, in collaboration with eight other Livery Companies, assumed responsibility for about one tenth of the area, with the other eleven Great Companies taking responsibility for the other lands. Vintners’ Manor Estate (now Bellaghy) was settled under the responsibility of the Company. It was sold in 1737. This exercise was also financially unrewarding to the Company.

The Livery Companies exercised great power in the City and, where they had secured a National mandate, across the country. In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, they came under political attack and only survived by demonstrating adequate charitable activity and good estate management. The Vintners were also able to retain the privilege of selling wine without licence in the City, within three miles of its walls and in specific ports and thoroughfare towns between London and these Ports.

### **Current Activities**

The Vintners’ Company continues to be strong and influential in the wine trade. This culminated with the grant of a new Charter on 20<sup>th</sup> August 1973. This authorised the Company to establish the Wine Standards Board and the

## Issue 4/2003

British Government has delegated certain responsibilities for enforcing the EU Wine Laws to the WSB. The management of the WSB is the joint responsibility of the Company and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. The result is that the Company has effectively regained the responsibilities of search and oversight that were first required of it in 1364!

The Company was instrumental in setting up the Wine and Spirit Education Trust and the Institute of Masters of Wine and it continues to devote a significant proportion of its resources to furthering wine education. These are not its only charitable activities as it supports: two schools in Stepney, providing Arts Bursaries; Christ's Hospital School; and they also provide a University Scholarship. In addition, it is especially concerned with drug and alcohol abuse, and supports charities in London that try to deal with these problems.

One unique characteristic of the Vintners' Company is the addition of "Swan Warden", who is responsible for arranging the marking of cygnets in the "Swan-Upping" ceremony annually in July. There is more on this subject in City Ceremonies

The Company also puts on the annual "Swan Feast". Swans were a medieval delicacy – 'stuffed with herbs and pork fat, sealed in a paste of flour and water and roasted for 2-3 hours until tender'. Fortunately for the swans, the medieval delicacy now appears less appetizing. The legs and wings are muscly and tough, and the birds are very rarely longer eaten.

### The Hall

Guy Shuldham bequeathed the original hall and the site in 1446 in a location between Upper Thames Street and the River Thames. It is likely that this site was actually used by the Vintners' Fraternity for some time prior to this, as it clearly already had a Great Hall, kitchens, a parlour, a counting house and 13 little mansions. The Great Fire was once more the great destroyer. The financing to rebuild took considerable effort to generate and severely stressed the finances of the Company. Eventually, this was a grander design than the destroyed building, comprising two wings attached at the river end by the Great Hall. It was 5 years before the Company could re-occupy the site.

Some of the rooms adjoining Upper Thames Street were lost in 1822 when the street was widened and a new façade and gates were added. The present façade was completed in 1910.

The Hall was one of the fortunate ones to survive the Blitz and other bombing of World War II, and is one of very few to remain essentially the same as the building of 1671, albeit carefully and tastefully modernized and restored.

### The Coat of Arms

02/03/2004

## October - December 2003

The Company's Coat of Arms carries an heraldic shield at its centre depicting three tuns - large barrels that were used for the transportation of wine. Surrounding the shield is a dexter supporter of two swans, clearly referring to the Company's rights and association with swans. Each swan has a garland of a bunch of grapes around its neck. Surmounting the Shield at a medieval ship - a Caravel - which was used in the shipping of wines from Gascony. The motto is "Vinum exhilarat animum" which means "Wine gladdens the heart".

### Links to the Honourable Company

The Vintners is the Livery Company of Christopher Lupton, who lives in Warwick, NY

### Information about the Company

Information about the Worshipful Company of Vintners can be obtained by writing to the Clerk or the Beadle, Major Stephen Marcham MBE.

"A History of the Vintners' Company", written by Anne Crawford was published in 1977 by Constable, London. The third edition of "Vintners' Hall", written by Elizabeth Glover, was published by The Worshipful Company of Vintners in 1996

*This article was created from the website of the Worshipful Company of Vintners ([www.vintnershall.co.uk](http://www.vintnershall.co.uk)) and supplemented with material from "The Guilds of the City of London", Ernest Pooley, published by William Collins, 1945, the World Atlas of Wine by Hugh Johnson, published by Michael Beasley Ltd, 1971, ISBN 0-8553-002-3 and The Oxford Companion to Wine, edited by Jancis Robinson, and published by Oxford University Press, 1994, ISBN 0-19-866159-2.*

### City Ceremonies – Swan Upping

As we are giving the history of the Worshipful Company of Vintners in this issue, it seems appropriate to give the history and ceremony of Swan Upping.

### History

The mute swan was much prized as a food delicacy since early times, and, from the 12<sup>th</sup> Century, it was so sought after that it was given Royal status. Since then, if a privately owned swan escaped, it became the property of the Crown. In records of 1378, the office of the "Keeper of the King's Swans" was already in existence. The Crown went even further in 1482, when, in a proclaimed law, all swans owned by persons who paid less than 5 marks a year in freehold taxes, were forfeit to the King. To own swans was thus a demonstration of wealth, and swans were the bird of choice at major ceremonial banquets until superseded by turkey at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

The purpose of Swan Upping is to mark the beaks of the swans to show and prove ownership. Cygnets are marked with the same mark as their parents. The rules for marking the cygnets have changed over time, in the marks used, in the time during which marking can be done, and in the area of the River Thames covered. In Elizabethan times, the right of marking was subject to a fine of 6s 8d, and anyone not so authorized but caught with a swan hook was subject to a fine of 13s 4d. Interfering with swans breeding, including the theft of eggs, resulted in one year's imprisonment and a fine at the pleasure of the crown.

The Worshipful Companies of Dyers and Vintners are the only private owners of swans on the Thames today. Royal Swans are unmarked, and the Dyers use one nick while the Vintners use two. These marks are much simplified from those used in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, when the Borough of Windsor, Eton College and others paid the fine for marking. In Berkshire, 140 Swanmarks were registered and recorded in the Journal of the Berkshire Archeological Society.

**Current Practices**

The Ceremony of Swan Upping takes place in July when the Royal Swan Keeper and the Swan Wardens of the Dyers and Vintners assemble with their flamboyantly dressed teams board their skiffs at Sunbury-on-Thames and finish 5 days later at Abingdon Bridge in Oxfordshire. In the early 1990's over 150 cygnets were recorded, with about 50% being to the Crown and the two Worshipful Companies having about 25% each. Not only are the cygnets marked and ringed, but the parents and cygnets are weighed and measured at the same time, and their condition is noted.

In ownership of the swans, the Crown and the two Worshipful Companies have the right to take, from their marked swans, birds for ceremonial banquets. However, as Swans are no longer considered a delicacy, this is very rare and great care is taken to avoid reduction of genetic diversity and population depletion.

*Information included in this article was obtained from the Thamesweb internet site at [www.thamesweb.co.uk/windsor/windsor1999/upping.html](http://www.thamesweb.co.uk/windsor/windsor1999/upping.html) and the History of Swan Upping on the Royal Windsor site at [www.thamesweb.co.uk/swans/upping2.html](http://www.thamesweb.co.uk/swans/upping2.html)*

**Upcoming Events**

**Charity Evening with the Globe and Mail**

Location Royal Bank Plaza  
40<sup>th</sup> Floor South Tower  
Date and Time 7<sup>th</sup> April 2004, 5:30 pm  
Dress Business attire  
Cost – (all proceeds to Charity) \$45.00  
G&M people attending: Phillip Crawley (Publisher)  
Andy Willis (Columnist)

**Annual Dinner 2004**

Location The Albany Club  
51 King Street East, Toronto  
Date and Time 30<sup>th</sup> April 2004, 6.30 pm for 7.00 pm  
Dress Black Tie and Medals or Dark Business Suit  
Cost TBD

**Board of Trade Summer Brunch**

Location Board of Trade Country Club  
Woodbridge, Toronto  
Date and Time 6<sup>th</sup> June 2004, 12 noon  
Dress Casual  
Cost TBD

**Last Night of the Proms**

Location Roy Thompson Hall, Toronto  
Date and Time 16<sup>th</sup> June 2004, 7 pm  
Dress Informal  
Cost Refer to Master for tickets

**New York Reception (with St George's Society of NY)**

Location The Tavern on the Green, Central Park  
New York  
Date 12<sup>th</sup> September 2004  
Dress Informal  
Cost TBD

**Burns Night Event**

Location TBD  
Date 26<sup>th</sup> January 2005  
Dress Black Tie

**Admissions to the Freedom**

**Dr. Michael Charles**

We are pleased to report that Dr. Michael Charles has been admitted to the freedom and attended the Admission Ceremony at the Guildhall in November 2003.

**Mr. Alfred Stevens**

It is rewarding when sons of Freemen attain the freedom themselves. Alfred Stevens has been admitted to the Freedom and will be attending at the Guildhall in April for the Admission Ceremony.

**Member's News**

**Godfrey Jacobs**

We have had good news, confirming the return of good health of our London Clerk, Godfrey Jacobs following surgery. His service as our London Clerk is unseen by most Members, but his efforts to keep Freedom applications on track, and innumerable other matters concerning the smooth operation of our relationships in London are all orchestrated by and through Godfrey. We are pleased to see him back at full strength.

## Company Website

The Honourable Company refers members and friends to the Company Website, which carries information about the Company and its activities. Our calendar of events and this newsletter, together with membership information, our history and other useful links are provided for your convenience. The Membership Form for the Honourable Company can be downloaded in Adobe Acrobat format under "How to become a Member".

The site address is [www.freemenlondon.org](http://www.freemenlondon.org). We welcome your comments and your ideas for the addition of useful information.

## Information on the Livery Companies and Guilds

The easiest way of finding out about the City Livery Companies, City Companies without Livery and City Guilds is to visit their websites. With 66 of 103 Livery Companies, 2 of 6 City Companies without Livery and all three Guilds having websites, this is now much easier. The easiest way to find these sites is via the City of London site at [www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/leisure\\_heritage/livery/linklist.htm](http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/leisure_heritage/livery/linklist.htm). Not all of the site addresses are self evident, some being under the ".co.uk" subgroup and others under the ".org.uk" address subgroup. "Google.co.uk" search engine also returns these addresses effectively.

## Communications with your Company

### Honorary Clerk

Most matters concerning the Honourable Company (except membership) should be addressed to the Honorary Clerk.

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### Membership Secretary

For membership, the main point of contact with the Honourable Company is through the Membership Secretary. A lot of information about membership is also available on the Honourable Company's website:

**[www.freemenlondon.org](http://www.freemenlondon.org).**

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#### **West Coast Chapter:**

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