



Upholder News

The Marketing & Communications Committee
Newsletter Issue 13, Summer 2025

On behalf of the Immediate Past Master Rob Ward and the Marketing & Communications Committee, welcome to our Summer edition of the Newsletter.

The Main Event – The Circle of Life

The Circle of Life Project

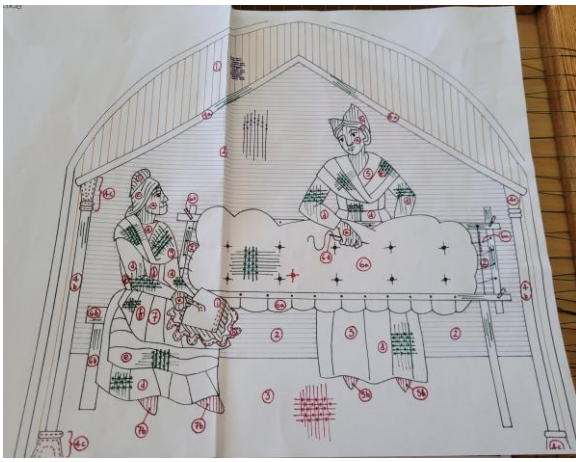
To honour the 400th anniversary of the granting of the Worshipful Company of Upholders' Royal Charter, a celebration will take place at the Guildhall in London on 9 July 2026. This will feature the unveiling of a national embroidery project, commemorating the Company's rich history dating back to 1360, with Royal Charter granted in 1626 by King Charles I.

At the heart of the celebration is the creation and unveiling of the **Circle of Life** and a **Funeral Pall**, two masterworks that embody the Company's heritage in upholstery, funeral directing, and soft furnishing. The project engages over 80 stitchers in 12 Cathedrals across England together with Fine Cell Work (a charity involving prisoners in textile crafts) and combines historical reverence with modern artistry.

Designed by Aidan Hart, designer of the anointing screen used at the Coronation of King Charles III, and managed by the Royal School of Needlework (RSN), applying the rare medieval embroidery technique *Opus Anglicanum*, featuring gold and silver wirework.

The Circle of Life Embroidery

This piece will be a circular wool cloth over 2.3m in diameter housed in a bespoke timber and glass display. Around the outside will be twelve detachable panels representing aspects of the Upholders' history including mattress making, funeral rites, and the Great Fire of London. An inner circle will consist of silhouettes of each contributing Cathedral. Additional details including the Upholders' crest, sparvers (the tent-like symbols from our arms), and crosses will be stitched by Fine Cell Work.



The twelve Cathedrals involved are: Derby, Durham, Exeter, Lichfield, Lincoln, Liverpool, Norwich, Salisbury, Southwell Minster, St. Albans, St. Paul's and Winchester. Each Cathedral team is responsible for one panel depicting the Upholders' legacy and the embroidered silhouette of their own Cathedral. Monthly progress reports on the project are being posted on our website.

An additional wool cloth, adorned with interchangeable panels and symbols, will serve as a funeral pall. It will be available to Upholders'

Liverymen for use at their own funerals for a nominal fee, blending personal tribute with communal tradition.

Historic Technique: Opus Anglicanum

The revival of Opus Anglicanum, Latin for "English work" is central to the project. This style of embroidery dates to the 13th and 14th centuries and features elaborate stitching in gold and silver. RSN tutors have been training volunteers online, with the teams now producing stunning practice pieces and some starting on the project itself.



Mattress making at Lichfield

Touring the Nation

Once complete, the Circle of Life will tour each participating Cathedral over three years, allowing the public to admire the art and craftsmanship. A commemorative book will accompany the tour, documenting the designs, photography, history of the Upholders, and names of contributors.

The Upholders Charity

The Upholders Charity has received funding for this project from various sources including other Livery companies and a very significant donation from the Julia Rausing Trust but continues to seek further donations.

Should you wish to support this exciting project please contact me or our Treasurer, Michael Tang.

Stephen Tanner (senior.warden@upholders.co.uk)

The Festival of Upholstery

10 & 11 October 2025



We are keen to welcome all members of the Livery to the [Festival of Upholstery](#) and would encourage you to check our website for what is happening over the Friday and Saturday. We have lots of demonstrations and speakers throughout the two days, our programme can be seen [here](#).

Social Event

Please do join us for our social event on Friday evening where the Gurkha head chef at Sandhurst will cook us a 2-course Gurkha curry with welcome and table drinks. This will be followed by acoustic singer One-Eyed-Man. You can book tickets to this event [here](#).

Craft Courses

Prior to the 2-day event there are a number of craft courses running which you can book onto:

Suitable for beginners/those with no experience of the specific craft:

[A Two-Day Introduction to Passementerie with Clare Hedges](#). Join Clare for a two-day, hands-on introduction to the heritage craft of passementerie at the Festival of Upholstery. With over 25 years of experience, Clare will guide you through creating beautiful cords, tassels, buttons, and ornament by hand. Her approachable teaching style makes intricate techniques accessible, perfect for those with no experience. You will leave with new skills, stunning handmade pieces, and a deeper appreciation for this historic and endangered craft.

[Danish Paper Cord - Seat Weaving with Rachael South](#). Explore the art of Danish paper-cord weaving, celebrated for its durability and refined look. Learn the distinct qualities of paper cord and how to work with it efficiently. Master the techniques of preparation and setting up for weaving on small footstools. This simple material was featured in some of Denmark's most iconic furniture designs from the 1940s to the 1960s. Renowned mid-century designers like Hans Wegner and Niels Moller incorporated the cord into many of their most famous pieces. Students will leave with their own footstool upon completion of the course.

[Pleated Lampshades Masterclass with Joanna Heptinstall](#). On this busy and creative two-day course, you will learn all the techniques for making a super-precise knife-pleated shade. Your tutor Joanna will take you step-by-step

through the key stages: binding the frame; measuring and cutting; accurately folding, pinning and hand-stitching the pleats; applying a traditional informally pleated lining; and then trimming using a useful and versatile bias binding trimming or your choice of decorative braid. Throughout the course Joanna will give masterclass demonstrations showing how the method can be adapted for other styles of decorative pleating, including fan, sunray and box pleats.

At the end of the course, you will take home your own finished pleated lampshade in your own fabric, plus the skills to make many more. Suitable for beginners and professionals alike.



For those that have some experience in upholstery and want to take their springing technique to the next level:

[Scandinavian Springing Techniques with Katja Torvinen](#). This three-day course teaches a traditional Scandinavian method of using graduated springs for better comfort, support, and durability. Participants will learn how to position and tension springs of different heights to create an even, well-balanced seat—perfect for Scandinavian chair designs. The course focuses on techniques commonly found in many mid-century and early 20th-century Northern European designs, where seats often have a noticeable rake rather than a flat base. You will get hands-on experience working with taller springs, learning how to manage their height, tension, and positioning to create a stable, comfortable, and long-lasting seat. We will explore how spring dynamics change with different angles and how to make informed choices. Ideal for upholsterers looking to deepen their understanding of more complex spring work.

Tour of Sandhurst

For those who are interested in the fascinating history of the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, there are tours available on both days. Conducted by retired senior Army Officers, the tour promises to be a fascinating insight into the history of the impressive building and the training of our world-renowned Army Officers. Tickets for these tours (proceeds go to the Sandhurst Trust which goes back to the Officer Cadets training at the Academy) can be found [here](#).

We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the event. If you would like to help run the Upholders' stand on one or both days, please let Warden to the Trade Kirsty Lockwood know (festivalofupholstery@gmail.com).

Kirsty Lockwood
Event organizer and Warden to the Trade

Past Master Judy Tayler-Smith Attends Garden Party at Holyroodhouse

Around 250 guests were invited to Holyroodhouse on Tuesday 1 July to witness the presentation of the keys to the City of Edinburgh to King Charles III.

His Majesty received a Royal Salute and inspected a guard of honour, formed of The Royal Company of Archers, The King's Bodyguard for Scotland, at the Palace of Holyroodhouse. He was then presented with the keys to the City of Edinburgh in an ancient ceremony that traditionally welcomes the Monarch to the Scottish capital.

Past Master Judy, together with her husband, Simon, was amongst those invited to watch the ceremony from the palace garden in recognition of her work in the local community. Judy was invited in her role as Deacon to the Wrights of Glasgow. She and her fellow Deacons, along with the Deacon Convener, enjoyed lunch together at the Trades Hall in Glasgow before travelling by coach to Edinburgh.

For afternoon tea Judy and Simon enjoyed free range egg mayonnaise, crushed peas and broad beans, watercress sandwiches; cold smoked Tobermory trout, lemon cream cheese bagel; sunflower tart; Scottish raspberry shortbread and Twining's Garden Party Tea.



To Arms!

15 years ago, the Company numbered several Armigers on its Court. William Hunt the Windsor Herald was a frequent guest at our functions and there was an active dialogue between the Royal College of Arms and our Company

Over the years, we have forgotten the nature, use and function of our Armorial Bearings but I hope this article will give Liverymen a better understanding and appreciation of our heritage.

Armorial bearings have existed since early medieval times when they were used to identify knights who, when dressed in suits of armour, were difficult to identify. Since knightly duties were associated with gentility, Armorial bearings became synonymous with members of noble families. The College of Arms was formed in its current format in 1555 to formalise and regulate the issue of Armorial bearings and once awarded, to govern their right to hereditary transfer to direct descendants.

The right to Armorial bearings was therefore passed down on a hereditary basis on similar grounds to noble titles, using male primogeniture. Since the Monarch was empowered to award titles, it therefore followed that the award of Armorial bearings, which often signified those titles, was equally a matter of Royal Prerogative enacted through the College. The College of Arms premises rebuilt in 1670, next to the site of the old Upholders' Hall, also houses the High Court of Chivalry, which is still empowered today to act in enforcing the use and application of heraldic devices and law. Its most recent ruling was in favour of Manchester Corporation, whose arms were being misused by a theatre.

Historically, corporations were formed by Royal Charter, which established each organisation as a distinct legal person. This independent legal identity and its creation by Royal Assent, therefore placed such corporations on a similar footing as those individuals receiving a noble title, hence corporations were similarly entitled to be awarded Armorial Bearings, provided they met the prerequisite criteria.

The College of Arms which acts on behalf of the Monarch in granting arms, is structured thus and has no jurisdiction in Scotland:

Earl Marshall - The Duke of Norfolk

Three Kings of Arms - Garter, Clarenceux, Norroy & Ulster

Six Heralds of Arms - York, Windsor, Lancaster, Somerset, Chester, Richmond

Four Pursuivants - Cross, Dragon, Bluemantle, Portcullis.

The College also authenticates the hereditary transfer of Arms and has a very experienced genealogy section and historic archive. It also arranges for the potential grant of new Arms, using the following process:

Would be applicants are invited for interview at the College of Arms with a Herald, to discuss the suitability of the applicant (Petitioner) to be granted Arms.

If agreed, the Herald will formulate a unique design for the Armorial Bearings, conforming to the established heraldic conventions. It is important to understand that the record of the Arms

granted is in words, written in text; these terms have specialist heraldic definitions, to avoid ambiguity. The grant is not defined in pictures, symbols or illustrations.

Once a suitable unique design, defined in heraldic wording, has been agreed between the College and the Petitioner, the College will construct a petition to the Sovereign (to the Earl Marshall acting as the Sovereign's representative) requesting the grant of Arms.

If successful the Arms will be granted in Letters Patent, confirming the right of the Petitioner and his direct descendants to bear the Arms. The letters patent will also if requested include the right to a Badge and a Pennant.

Prior to grant, the Petitioner chooses a heraldic artist whose style appeals, to produce an "Exemplification" of the proposed Arms to be granted in the Letters Patent, they may also produce exemplifications of the Badge and Pennant if granted. These artistic representations, whilst featuring in the Letters Patent are only examples of how the Arms might be drawn, any other design that is compliant with the heraldic definition stated in the text is equally valid.

The grant is recorded in the archive at the College of Arms and is a unique identification of the single legal person eligible to bear these Arms at any time (The Armiger). Because a corporation, such as ours, established by Royal Charter is also a legal person, the same eligibility applies.

The rights to use (bear) these Arms are strictly controlled by law and enforceable by the Court of Chivalry. The only legal person eligible to use the Arms is the Armiger and, on his death, his eligible descendant. In corporate terms, the Armiger means an officer of the company acting on company business authorised by the company. As an example, a Master, Warden or Clerk of our Company writing on behalf of the company may use headed paper emblazoned with the Company's Armorial bearings. A Past Master inviting a personal guest to an event may not. Similarly, Liverymen, Freemen or a Master/Warden's consort may not use the Arms.

Elements of a coat of arms include:

- Crest, the device on the Helm, in our case the King Eider Duck. (Note it is a common error to refer to Armorial bearings as a "Crest". The crest is only the small element on top of the Helm.)
- Helm, the knight's helmet and visor
- Shield or blazon, the device that carries the Charges.
- Charges, the various design elements shown on the Shield, in our case the Sparvers etc
- Supporters, only corporate entities and the nobility are entitled to supporters either side of the Shield on their Arms. In our case the two sheep.
- Mantling, the decorative scrolling, if any, around the arms.
- Motto, contrary to common misconceptions, the Motto forms no part of the grant of arms and has no formal significance. It is merely part of the exemplification, hence the use of any motto, or none is equally valid.

The subject of Armorial bearings and Heraldic law is complex technically, historically and legally. The above therefore of necessity represents a brief and simplified summary.



The letters patent relating to the grant of the current armorial bearings, when the Upholders' Company was granted the addition of supporters and king eider duck crest.



A close up of the Company badge.

The letters patent relating to the subsequent grant of the Upholders' Company badge and pennant.

Past Master Julian Squire

The Master's Summer Event :

28 Go Mad in Glasgow!

Twenty-six Upholders accompanied by their partners and two Furniture Makers mustered at The Maldron Hotel in Glasgow on the evening of 3rd May to begin The Master's Summer Event.

As we have come to expect from the Master, a full programme was planned and given his well known liking for the Arts & Crafts Movement and, we were to discover, a penchant for Charles Rennie Mackintosh, it was no surprise that our first stop was the famous Willow Tea Rooms, a short walk from the hotel.

The interior has undergone a substantial refit in recent years bringing back to life the original vision of Mackintosh and George Walton. Our numbers gave us the advantage of having the place to ourselves including a guided tour, dinner in the Salon de Luxe and access to the Billiard Room a privilege not always granted. The history included a good deal of detail about Miss Cranston the original proprietor and supporter of Mackintosh and we would have done well to have paid more attention as we were later to discover.....



The Willow Tea Rooms, Glasgow

Day two began with a trip to Pollock Country Park where the Burrell Collection has been housed since 1983. According to the Burrells' specific wishes, it was to be housed where people could appreciate the art in a countryside setting. The Burrell Collection has a staggering 9,000 items all collected by Sir William Burrell a private collector and son of Glasgow. Highlights include one of the most significant holdings of Chinese art in the UK, medieval treasures including stained glass, arms and armour and over 200 tapestries which rank amongst the finest in the world, and paintings by renowned French artists including Manet, Cezanne and Degas.

This magnificent collection in its purpose-built home surrounded by beautiful parkland, is ranked amongst the most significant civic museum collections in the UK, comparable to the National Gallery and the V&A in London.

After a fine lunch the party moved on to House for an Art Lover, unsurprisingly another CR Mackintosh gem. However, to get there our coach driver had to negotiate a path through hordes of Glasgow Rangers supporters after an "Old Firm" game that had taken place at Ibrox that morning.

The history of this building is quite fascinating as it was originally a design concept for a competition promoted by a German magazine but was not fully realised until 1999 many years after his death. Further details may be found here:

<https://www.houseforanartlover.co.uk/discover/house-for-an-art-lover/>

Our day concluded with dinner at Ardnamurchan Restaurant which served a Scottish themed menu including the much-feared wild Haggis!

The following morning which was uncharacteristically bright and sunny, we assembled for a relatively early departure to Dumfries House & Gardens (<https://dumfries-house.org.uk/>) home to both the finest collection of Chippendale furniture in the world and some of the King's flagship educational initiatives.

The journey was expected to take around 50 minutes and to keep the party occupied the Master had devised a quiz which centred very firmly on information that we ought to have picked up from our previous two days of "Mackintoshinalia". A few managed to earn prizes but we were collectively generally a bit hopeless. However, it was certainly a very entertaining way of discovering how little we knew! (Needless to say, both the Clerk and the Clerk Emerita were obviously paying attention as both were worthy winners of prizes!).

On arrival at the House, we took tea and shortbread before being split into two groups for a guided tour of the House with its wonderful collection of 18th Century furniture, before reconvening for a memorable lunch in the Great Steward's Dining Room. This had a special significance as the chairs were upholstered in the very special horse-hair fabric produced by our own Anna Smith's Company, John Boyd Textiles.

After lunch, we toured the extensive gardens with the assistance of the Head Gardener before rounding off with a visit to the textile and building crafts workshops to learn more about the heritage crafts with which the King's Foundation is working so hard to preserve.

Our final day began with another rather less eventful journey to Stirling where it is rumoured that the Master spent some time being educated at the University, so we were expecting great things for this symbolic homecoming.

We were again bathed in warm sunshine and mercifully midge free. The most obvious place to start was the imposing Stirling Castle. We were blessed with a guide whose knowledge and enthusiastic delivery really brought the rich history of the castle to life.

The castle also houses the Unicorn Tapestries which have a particular resonance with our own Circle of Life project. The tapestries were painstakingly recreated over a 14-year period from similar ones currently residing in New York. The original works belonged to James V and his French wife Mary of Guise (parents of Mary Queen of Scots), and they are truly stunning.



One of Stirling Castle's Unicorn Tapestries

In the afternoon we crowded into the tiny shop and workshop of Stirling Bagpipes one of only a handful of artisan pipe makers left. Allan Waldron the proprietor, maker and all-round bagpipe guru gave a fascinating insight to how these ancient instruments are made, revealing that the modern bag is now often made of GoreTex rather than the traditional sheep or goat skins (incidentally these are always from the ram as the ewe's skin is prone to excessive stretching).

On return to Glasgow, we donned our black tie and cocktail dresses with badges for a memorable evening at The Trades House with Past Master Judy Tayler-Smith in her role as Deacon of the Incorporation of Wrights in Glasgow at her Box Opening Ceremony. The Incorporation of Wrights in Glasgow, one of the 14 Incorporations within the Trades House of

Glasgow, are a woodworking and craftsmanship-focused group. The ceremony celebrates their heritage and it's a chance to acknowledge the work of the Wrights and their contributions to Glasgow.

There was some fine musical entertainment and most convivial time was had celebrating this unique occasion which was a fitting end to a memorable few days.



The Magnificent Queen Elizabeth Walled Garden, Dumfries House

Immediate Past Master Rob Ward

Bob Fowlds' Bursary Interim Reports

Sharon Powell – Stage 1 at London Metropolitan University

My course began October 4th 2024 and consists of one day per week (Friday) of classroom-based learning from 10-5pm. a group of eight students.

The main areas of learning in stage one of the course are: upholstery, basic restoration techniques, sewing (machine skills), and the study of materials used in upholstery and soft furnishing.

To date I have enjoyed all aspects of this course and have gained a great deal of confidence in my work. I have endeavoured to put everything that I've learnt to use by, producing more cushions and working on my other chairs. I have also purchased most of the tools and materials that I have used in the studio and wood workshop, so far. London Met is a great place to learn, and I am glad that I took the plunge to apply and would highly recommend the course.

I would like to thank The Upholders' Charity and Bob Fowlds Trustees, for choosing to provide me with a bursary to pursue this first stage of the AMUSF qualification. I am very happy to have been given this chance, and it has turned out beyond my expectations.



Honor Loxton-Scott – Stage 1 at St. Albans Upholstery School

Honor is also undertaking the AMUSF Stage 1 course at St. Albans Upholstery School. Honor says “I’d like to start by saying how much I’m enjoying Stage 1 of the AMUSF Diploma at St Albans Upholstery School. I’d also like to express my sincere gratitude having received The Bob Fowlds Memorial Bursary. This generous contribution has not only provided much needed financial support but also empowered me to pursue my passion with confidence and dedication. The bursary has provided an opportunity to acquire the creative and practical skills required to build my upholstery business. To that end, I would like to thank the Upholders' Charity for believing in my potential and investing in my future”.



Regine Romana – Stage 1 at Shoreditch Design Rooms

The first six months of my upholstery course at Shoreditch Design Rooms have been both challenging and extremely rewarding. The second year of training is a big step up from Stage 1 as we are working on larger and more complex pieces. It is, nevertheless, a truly enjoyable, educational experience, allowing me to learn more advanced technical skills while gaining a deeper understanding of the craft.



The course, with its diversity of projects, is providing a solid, valuable foundation in both the practical and theoretical aspects of upholstery. Each project is making me eager to learn more and deepened my commitment to the craft. Looking forward to the next stage of my learning.

Amy Munford – Stage 2 at St. Albans Upholstery School

Through my second year at St Albans Upholstery School, I have found myself growing in both skill and confidence. This year has been filled with rewarding challenges, and I have particularly enjoyed seeing my work evolve as I build on the foundations from last year. The opportunity to apply traditional and modern techniques to different pieces has been incredibly fulfilling, and I have developed a further appreciation and understanding of upholstery.

One of my main projects has been working on a Parker Knoll chair, which feels like problem and puzzle solving — carefully piecing together each element to create a beautifully restored piece.

Alongside this, I have also been working on a Victorian nursing chair, which did initially feel quite daunting. It has allowed me to revisit traditional techniques with the added challenge of deep buttoning with traditional materials, unlike the easily manageable foam used last year in the box/chest project.

Overall, I am thoroughly enjoying my second year. Each project has presented its own set of challenges, but rather than feeling overwhelmed, I now embrace the problem-solving aspect of upholstery. I look forward to coming to the workshop each week, knowing that I will be continuing work on something meaningful, reviving life into furniture to make it something

special again. I feel more confident in my abilities, and I am excited to continue learning and refining my craft as the year progresses.



Samantha Mosse – Stage 2 at Horsehair & Hessian

Firstly, I extend my sincere gratitude for the opportunity to pursue this course through the scholarship. The past six months have been an enriching experience, allowing me to develop my skills and expand my knowledge in upholstery. As I entered the second year of the diploma, my first major project focused on modern upholstery. This has been an exciting challenge, as it introduced us to new materials and construction techniques. For my modern upholstery project, I chose to work on a Parker Knoll Sofa, incorporating a unique design element—a single large tea cushion.

Currently, I am deep into my second project—a traditional nursing chair—which has been my favourite so far. This project allows me to work with traditional upholstery techniques, utilizing stitching and stuffing methods to shape the piece.



In addition to my coursework, I am continuing to develop my own business, focusing on creating a garden swing seat. The knowledge I have gained throughout the diploma has been instrumental in helping me refine my designs and construction methods, ensuring I produce high-quality pieces.

Once again, thank you for your support in allowing me to be part of this incredible learning journey.

Thank You London Met!

UPHOLSTERY TEACHING AT LONDON METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

In January 2023 the Upholstery Department at London Metropolitan University received the sad news that due to changes at the School of Art, Architecture and Design our Department would be closing. Obviously, the upholstery teaching team and I, were absolutely devastated, not only are we all passionate about the work we do, passing on both traditional and modern upholstery techniques, but as many of the team are alumni students ourselves, we are only too aware of the legacy our teaching centre holds within UK upholstery training.

We have now been uniquely supported by the Worshipful Company of Upholders for 35 years; this year is our 35th anniversary so I thought it would be of interest to offer a brief history of the course the Livery has chosen to support and inform everyone about our exciting future!

Upholstery and other furniture trade classes were started by the vestry of St Leonards in Shoreditch, in 1893, classes were offered to the "local youth". The classes were eventually formalised and named the Shoreditch Municipal Technical School, with a location at 25-37 Hoxton Street. This first school offered young boys a direct route from training into the furniture and upholstery workshops which were in proliferation in this area of East London at the time. The courses proved so popular the whole Institute was relocated to Pitfield Street in 1897, with a new name "The Shoreditch Technical Institute".

1893 The Vestry of St Leonard's, Shoreditch started trade classes for the local youth

They were held at 35 and 37 Hoxton Street and became known as the Shoreditch Municipal Technical School

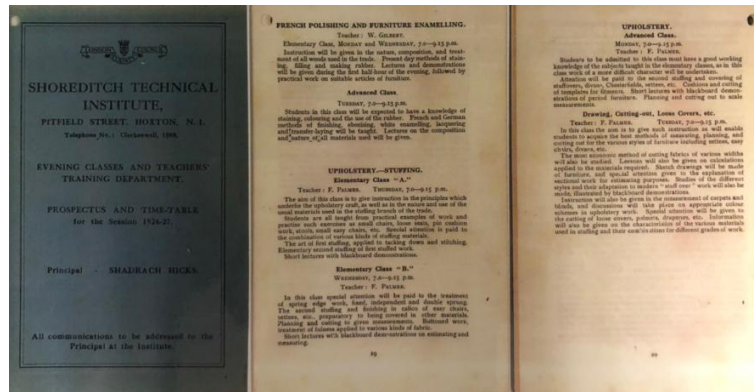
1897 The former Haberdashers' Aske's School in Pitfield Street became the new premises

The new institution was renamed the Shoreditch Technical Institute



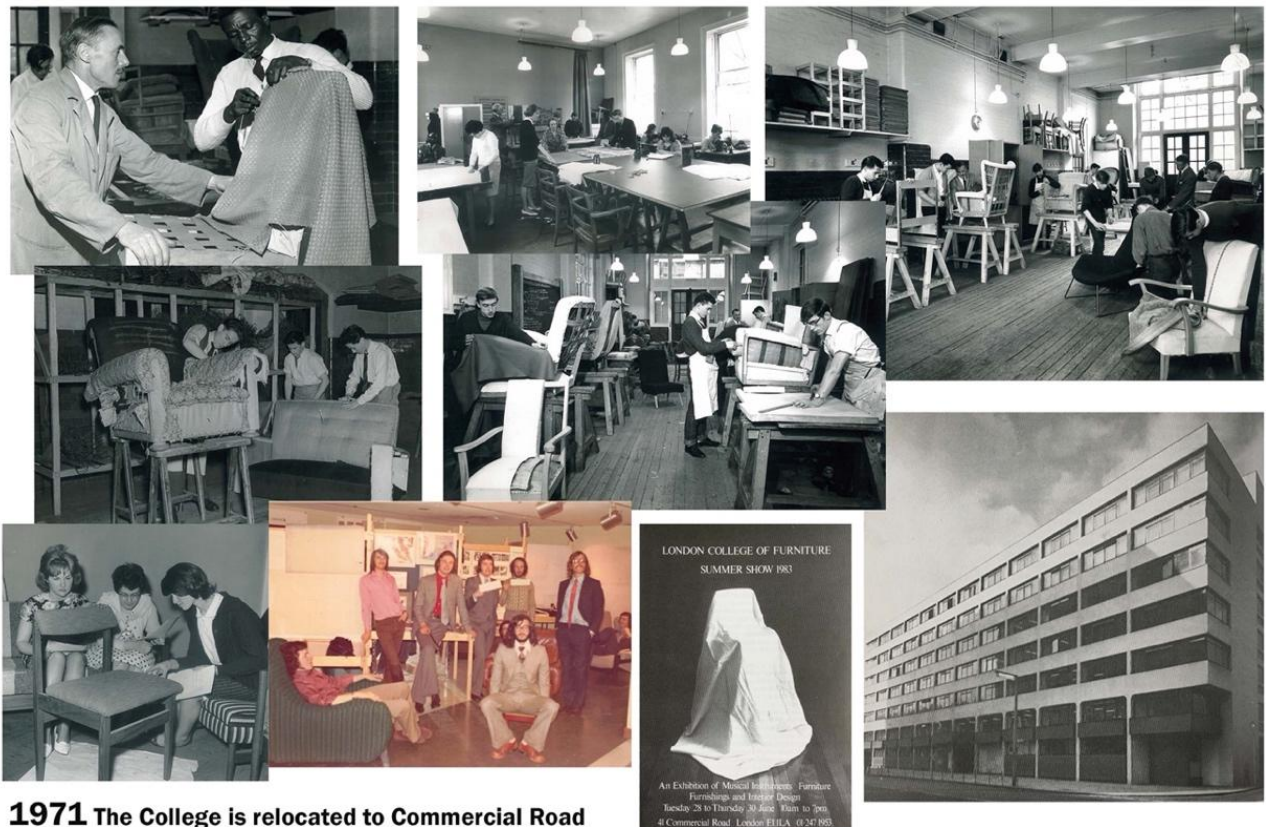
1951 The institution was re-established as the Technical College for the Furnishing Trades

A prospectus for the upholstery course from 1926-27 noted the syllabus to include Elementary Upholstery A, B and Advanced. The College proved very successful and was later renamed the Technical College for the Furnishing Trades in 1951. In 1964 another name change consolidated the College further to the now almost legendary, London College of Furniture. 1971 proved a pivotal year as the whole College was rewarded with a state-of-the-art new building on Commercial Road E1. The new building resulted in an expansion of courses on offer including upholstery, furniture making and design, soft furnishings, interior design musical instrument making and, furniture restoration to name a few.



In the upholstery department tutors included Harry Hunt, Robert MacDonald and Bill Morton. As the courses flourished the College became a centre for training for those wishing to enter the upholstery industry professionally.

1964 The College is renamed the London College of Furniture



1971 The College is relocated to Commercial Road

In 1990 the London College of Furniture joined the City of London Polytechnic and two years later this new partnership became known as London Guildhall University. The course continued as before, and the upholstery department flourished with high numbers of students enrolling to study the City and Guilds qualification. Many students were learning while working "on the job". The high student intake meant that throughout the upholstery industry

many began their training at the London College of Furniture or London Guildhall University, before entering the industry professionally.

This same year the Worshipful Company of Upholders, began to offer our upholstery students prizes for their traditional work. These prizes have continued from this time and represent a unique supportive relationship with the London Livery Company and the only upholstery training course in the UK which is offered from a public university and located in East London, so close to the City. Another connection between the Livery and our course is the people who have either taught or trained here, who are also connected to the Livery, these include past Course Leaders, Past Master Malcolm Hopkins and Master Certificate awardee; and Franco Marinelli, Liveryman and Master Certificate awardee. Our students understand the importance of the prizes they receive for their work which the Livery offer each year to our students, many cherish their certificates, and I have seen one or two on workshop walls. I was fortunate enough to receive one of these prizes myself, whilst completing my Upholstery City and Guilds training at London Guildhall University.

1990 The London College of Furniture joined the City of London Polytechnic

1992 The City of London Polytechnic is renamed London Guildhall University



2002 London Guildhall University merged with the University of North London forming London Metropolitan University. This is the first merger between two universities in the UK

A final change came to the upholstery courses in 2015, the City and Guilds qualifications were phased out and the University began to teach the AMUSF diploma course. These courses were welcomed by the industry and students alike, as a formal qualification which we continue to teach today. We are the largest AMUSF teaching centre with pre covid numbers hitting 90 enrolled students per academic year. This year, despite students being told about the closure, we have enrolled 70 students. This is a credit to our teaching staff and the excellent reputation the course has maintained for over 100 years.

2015 The Upholstery Diploma begins teaching with AMUSF accreditation



THE FUTURE

This piece began on a gloomy note, but I have saved the good news until last! I personally lobbied the senior management team at London Metropolitan University to see if there were any alternative solutions to the closure. I also contacted The Master, Roger Wates who came and passionately appealed to Anne Markey, the Head of School, but it was not to be. My plan B was to find a new location for the course, and I quickly approached three alternative locations, it was important that our course continued within the public Higher/ Further Education sector as it enables us to offer access to a diverse range of students, including those who may not be able to pay full fees. I was greeted with real interest and a very positive response from two of these colleges and one quickly became a firm favourite in terms of space, location and reputation. Very fortunately, at the exact same time I was given a contact by Past Master Wendy Shorter-Blake, for the CEO of the London Design and Engineering University Technical College. A visit followed and the management voiced an enthusiastic interest in our course. The additional good news was, if we decided to go with them, they would offer us a brand-new state of the art upholstery department and the opportunity not only to bring the AMUSF course, but to also teach the new Upholstery T Level courses to 16–19-year-olds. After a meeting with the tutors, it quickly became clear that this was a prospect too exciting to turn down.

The move is going ahead and we are currently working on a website for the new college, the East London Furniture Institute (ELFI), which will sit within LDE UTC. The new workshops will be placed in our natural environment, alongside the furniture and wood working workshops. And happily, located in East London at Royal Docks.

We are delighted with the outcome and that this move represents a real continuation in our historic legacy. We hope the Livery will continue to support our students and I look forward to inviting you to the new college for the annual prize giving.

Rachael South

Upholstery Course Leader (LMU), Liveryman, Worshipful Company of Upholders

With thanks to Peter Fisher, Special Collections, LMU

The History Society

A Visit to the Roman Temple of Mithras

On a damp evening in early February eighteen people met at the Mithraeum Museum to see the Roman ruins of the Temple of Mithras which had been discovered in 1954. They were found by the renowned archaeologist Professor W F Grimes during excavations being carried out following the Blitz in 1941. Back then, while workmen were digging the area, they uncovered these ancient roman ruins which it soon became clear was a temple of considerable size.

At the beginning of the visit, we saw new artworks by Jonathan Baldock followed by a large wall displaying many objects and artefacts which had been found. Important dates were written on the stairwell as we descended to the lower levels. On entering the temperature-controlled area where the temple is situated, we marvelled at the size and structure of this former building. The temple captured the mystery and intrigue of the Roman cult of Mithras which used to meet on this site. Hazy light and the sound of footsteps chanting and secret whispers transported us back to London AD 240. It was well worth a visit.



Past Master Michael Gilham was particularly interested in making this visit. For in 1954 when the site was discovered by workmen preparing the bomb site for the erection of Bucklesbury House offices, which was the name of the previous building prior to being replaced by the present Bloomberg building, Michael and a friend heard on the radio of the discovery, and having an interest in archaeology immediately set out to investigate. There was no security on the site, so they were free to scavenge amongst the soil mounds coming away with numerous artifacts including part of a leather sandal, pieces of pottery and glass etc. Michael kept them for many years but eventually gave them to a friend's son who was studying archaeology.

After our visit, we all wandered round to Brown's Restaurant nearby and enjoyed a dinner together. A happy and enjoyable evening was spent chatting with friends.

Cynthia Acors

History Society Tour of Trinity House

On 23rd June an enthusiastic Upholders' History Society group, led by Jackie Williams, assembled on the sunlit steps of Trinity House (TH) on Tower Hill in London for a guided tour of TH, a spot of lunch and a guided tour of the surrounding area – 'Saints, Sailors and Samuel Pepys'.

We learnt that TH is a Charity dedicated to safeguarding shipping and seafarers, providing education, support and welfare to the seafaring community with a statutory duty as a General Lighthouse Authority to deliver reliable, efficient and cost-effective aids to navigation services for the benefit and safety of all mariners; also the full title of TH: 'The Master, Wardens and Assistants of the Guild Fraternity of the most glorious and undivided Trinity and of St Clement* in the Parish of Deptford Strond.'

*St Clement, Patron Saint of Sailors, drowned tied to an anchor.

Originally in Deptford, TH was incorporated by Royal Charter, granted by Henry VIII. It was renewed in 1685 and then provided with an updated mandate in the Merchant Shipping Act of 1995. The current Headquarters was built at Tower Hill in 1796 but was gutted by an incendiary bomb in the Blitz on 29th December 1940.

Faithfully restored in 1953, the artefacts on display inside constitute only the larger original paintings, as well as gifts and acquisitions since 1940, as all the smaller paintings and most valuable artefacts were destroyed by the bombing, having been returned to TH from storage in the basement of the Tower of London the day before and due for transport to a safe place on 30th. Very unfortunate timing. The larger paintings remained safely stored at Bayham Abbey in Kent until the end of the War.

However, moving from the large Entrance Hall, up the double staircase, in succession through the Court Room, with its magnificent painted ceiling, *trompe l'oeil* panels and second largest single loom carpet in Britain, the Luncheon Room, the Reading Room and, finally the Library, all linked by the Quarterdeck corridor, we were treated to an interesting and knowledgeable commentary by Neil, our guide.



The most striking painting extends the length of the upstairs wall overlooking the staircase and depicts a meeting of the TH Court of Elder Brethren in 1794 accepting the plans for the new building from Samuel Wyatt (brother of the more famous James). Painted by Gainsborough Dupont, nephew of Thomas Gainsborough, all the Brethren are wearing wigs except for the seated bald figure at the far right, Captain James Huddart, who was omitted from the original as he was absent from the meeting, but added as an extra panel after he created an enormous fuss. It is unknown whether his wigless state was intended as a slight or simply a reflection of the 1785 powder tax, which led to wigs rapidly falling out of fashion.

Today, it remains the Elder Brethren who steer the TH Corporation, which is the UK's largest endowed maritime charity, donating over £4m/year. Income is generated from rents on land owned by TH and from the use of TH for business meetings and social events. All Elder

Brethren must first have been one of the approximately 700 Younger Brethren, who are drawn from various sectors of the maritime community – about 70% from the Royal or Merchant Navy and around 12% from Pilots or Harbour Masters.



The painted ceiling in the magnificent Court Room

By contrast, its General Lighthouse Authority is funded by 'Light Dues' levied on commercial vessels calling at British Isles ports and paid into the General Lighthouse Fund under the stewardship of the Department of Transport. From this Fund the primary purpose of TH, the guidance of ships safely through some of the world's busiest shipping lanes, such as the Straits of Dover, is achieved, additionally enabling mariners to locate their position to within 5 – 10 metres through differential GPS radio navigation services at all times and in all weather.

Reflecting the history of this, we saw models and paintings of early lighthouses and subsequent lightships, the first lighthouse being built at Lowestoft in 1609 and the first rock-based lighthouse, the Eddystone, being commissioned in 1698. The current and fourth iteration of the Eddystone lighthouse, designed by Sir James Douglass, was completed in 1882. We admired lively seascapes of vessels under sail, marble busts of seminal figures in TH's history, fine ship models, the ship's bell from *HMY Britannia*, as well as Prince Philip, the late Duke of Edinburgh's full Master's uniform.

Samuel Pepys, whose administrative skills were instrumental in the creation of the Royal Navy, was twice Master, but it was the Duke of Edinburgh who was the longest serving Master in TH's history (1921-2021) and who has been succeeded by Princess Anne, the Princess Royal, both of whose portraits hang in the Library, along with those of Earl Mountbatten, his father, the Marquis of Milford Haven (particularly striking) and Sir Winston Churchill. The Library, where social events are held (an Upholders Dinner is to be held there in September), also houses a fine collection of silver, including a massive ornate silver gilt wine cooler, presented by William IV, a trowel depicting the 4 Eddystone rock tower lighthouses and a silver salt in the form of the first Eddystone lighthouse; a glittering display.

Appropriately, this is where our edifying tour ended and, after thanking Neil for his clarity and expertise, we repaired for lunch.

Richard Matthews

You can see more of Trinity House and its wonderful works of art at the September Court Dinner on Friday 19 September 2025.

Guided Walk of Tower Hill

The walk began in Trinity Square Gardens to see the memorials for the merchant sailors who died during the 1st and 2nd World Wars. The guide also pointed out 10 Trinity Square which

is now the Four Seasons Hotel, but previously was the headquarters of the Port of London Authority. Above the front entrance is a sculpture of Old Father Thames, holding a trident which points eastwards in a homage to the trade between nations.

On the way out of the gardens we saw the memorial for the nobles who were executed having fallen foul of the monarch.

The next stop was in Seething Lane Garden, situated between St. Olave Hart Street church and 10 Trinity Square. It is on the site of the Navy Office where Pepys worked and features highlights from his life, including a bust of Pepys and carved pavers that depict scenes from his life. It was from this site that Pepys witnessed the Great Fire of London. The garden is also where the Knollys rose ceremony, organised by the Watermen and Lightermen, takes place annually. The ceremony dates back to 1381 when Lady Constance Knollys erected a footpath between two properties in Seething Lane without permission. The fine was a red rose from the Garden. The rose is transported from the Garden on the cushion of church of All Hallows by the Tower to the Mansion House where the "rent" is paid to the Lord Mayor.

The final port of call was All Hallows by the Tower, which is believed to be the oldest church in London. During clearance work in 1940, after the church was gutted by bombs, a wall collapsed revealing a Saxon arch made of stone and Roman tiles. Clearly, recycling is not a modern phenomenon. It is the church where Pepys and his wife worshipped and where they are buried. It is also where the King of Norway worshipped during the 2nd World War.

It was a fascinating walk which was much enjoyed by all.



Looking towards All Hallows by the Tower from the Trinity Square Memorial

Pam Lorraine

Thursday 9 July 2026

The Master, Wardens and Court of Assistants ask you to save the date of Thursday 9 July 2026 for Luncheon, Exhibition and Unveiling of the Circle of Life at Guildhall, to celebrate the 400th Anniversary of the Granting of our Royal Charter by King Charles I.

Follow progress being made on the Circle of Life Project by visiting one of the Cathedrals taking part (booking essential via The Clerk) or take a look on our Circle of Life page on the Upholders' website:

<https://upholders.co.uk/circle-of-life/>



**The Worshipful Company of Upholders
Events Calendar 2025**

Friday 19 September

September Court Dinner
Trinity House

Tuesday 21 October

Upholders' Banquet
Mansion House

Sunday 28 September

Sheep Drive & Livery Fair
Southwark Bridge

Monday 17 November

Flock & Feather Event & Auction
Furnituremakers' Hall

New Members' Evening

Monday 8 September 2025, 6.00 for 6.30pm

The Master and the Upholders' Membership Committee are pleased to invite you and your guests to our twice-yearly recruitment event.

Come along to the New Members' Evening at the East India Club with friends and family and introduce them to the Company.

These events are designed to stimulate interest in our Livery and to entice potential members to join us. Even if you do not have a guest, please come and join us so that our guests can enjoy the friendship and hospitality of the Company.

With grateful thanks to all who contributed to this issue.

Photo credits this issue:-

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