



THE WORSHIPFUL COMPANY OF COOPERS

Membership Application and Admissions' Process

The Coopers' Company is an open and diverse organisation, with members coming from all walks of life, backgrounds and professions who share the values of charity, education and fellowship.

December 2023

Foreword

Thank you for expressing an interest in joining The Worshipful Company of Coopers. We are delighted you are considering becoming a member.

Members are very proud to be part of our Livery Company, and the work we do.

The purpose of this booklet is to explain the membership application process and provide information about the Coopers' Company, which you may find useful.

More details about the Company and its history and heritage can be found on our website www.cooperscompany.co.uk

or follow us on <https://uk.linkedin.com/company/worshipful-company-of-coopers>

If you have any questions, please email the Clerk at:- clerk@cooperscompany.co.uk

The livery movement uses some unusual language which mainly dates back centuries. For an explanation of some of those terms please refer to the [Glossary at Appendix II](#).

Introduction to the Company

The Worshipful Company of Coopers is one of the oldest Livery Companies in the City of London and takes precedence as number 36 in the ranking of over one hundred such companies. We gained our Royal Charter in 1501.

Historically the Company had the responsibility for ensuring that standards of cask making were maintained, for the training of apprentices, as well as looking after coopers who had fallen on hard times.

Today, the Company has four main pillars of charity, education, fellowship, and the City of London whilst remaining focussed on the ancient craft of cask making.

Unlike many of the ancient Livery Companies, our craft is very much alive today with coopers working in the whisky, beer, wine and cider industries. We continue to keep close connections with the industry and endeavour to promote the craft.

Charitable giving is an integral part of all livery companies objectives and is particularly important to the Coopers. The Company donates over £100,000 each year to charitable causes particularly supporting the young, the elderly and the vulnerable, mainly in the East End of London where our historical roots lie.

We tangibly support the education of young people and the training of apprentice coopers.

The Company's support of its two educational establishments, The Coopers' Company and Coborn School and Strode's College, remain at the heart of the Company's raison d'être.

We are an open and welcoming Company, rightly proud of our fellowship. This allows all members to participate in a varied calendar of social activities from the white tie banquet at Mansion House to cask rolling at Guildhall Yard.

Our Hall, dating from the 17th Century, is one of the finest in the City, and attracts admiration from members and visitors alike. It is the focus of our fellowship, the perfect place for social events, lectures, business meetings and functions, get-togethers, and for our members to entertain private and corporate guests.

Many of our members hold a keen interest in the history of the Company and our Curators maintain a fascinating collection of artefacts of the Company and the craft in Coopers' Hall.

To be part of our Company is a very special privilege and it is hoped that once you have read through this booklet you will feel the same.

The City of London and its Livery Companies

The Livery movement is unique to the City of London and dates back many centuries with the Companies operating under a Royal Charter - our own from 1501.

There are currently 111 Livery Companies with more being approved as time moves on. All have at their heart charity, education, fellowship and support for the Lord Mayor and Sheriffs of the City of London.

The City of London Corporation is the local authority for the City which is divided into 25 Wards each with an Alderman and several Common Councillors depending upon voter numbers. We are the only Livery Company located in Bishopsgate Ward on the east side of the City.

The City of London Corporation is led by the Lord Mayor supported by two Sheriffs, all three having been elected by the Livery to serve for one year. They are at the forefront of the City's efforts to ensure that it remains as a world centre of excellence.

To become a Freeman of the City of London, which is a necessary stage in becoming a Liveryman, is a great honour and you would join many people from around the world.

Further details of the livery movement and the City of London can be found at:-

www.liverycommittee.org

Membership Levels

We have two levels of membership: Freemen and Liverymen which, despite their historic terminology, are in fact both gender neutral and open to all to share our values of charity, education and fellowship.

Freemen

All members start as Freemen, the first step to becoming a Liveryman. Freemen may participate in most Company activities and are kept fully in touch with what the Company is doing.

Liverymen

Liverymen are full members of the Company; they may attend all Company events, including some major events (which are Livery only), and most importantly can serve on the many committees of the Company. Becoming a Liveryman is a necessary step in a member's progression within the Company and can result in joining the Court and serving as Master in due course.

Liverymen are enfranchised to vote at the annual elections for the Lord Mayor and Sheriffs of the City of London.

It is impossible to be fully involved in the life of the Company without being a Liveryman.

There is an expectation that a Freeman will become a Freeman of the City of London and then a Liveryman of the Company without undue delay.

If you are currently a Freeman of the City of London, then you will be recommended to become a Freeman and a Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Coopers in a single ceremony.

Routes to Membership

Each Freeman and Liveryman is equal in all respects but with three prescribed routes in joining:- Redemption; Servitude; and Lineage.

The vast majority of members join by Redemption, however for individuals who have been apprenticed to a member of the Company we have Servitude and for individuals with a parent who is a member of the Company we have Lineage.

Membership Application Process

Prospective New Members

All applicants require a Sponsor who is a Liveryman to support their application and to sign the Application Form.

Many applicants are invited to join by existing members who will act as their Sponsor, however, those with no connections to the Company will also need a Sponsor and the Clerk will help with this.

Although it is not a prerequisite for those who already have a Sponsor, an ideal first step for all potential members is to attend a Open Evening at Coopers' Hall (these are held twice yearly in spring and autumn) or the City Open Day when the building is open to the public.

You might also attend our Cask Rolling Competition in Guildhall Yard or St Abdon's Day celebrations (our patron saint) at the Hall (ask the Clerk for details).

Annual Costs

There are costs for being a member of the Company, given the benefits it provides, but we work hard to ensure that these remain affordable. Conscious that the financial situation of our members will vary over their lives, the annual cost (known as Quarterage) of being a Freeman or a Liveryman is age related. The cost of being a Freeman is 90% of the cost of being a Liveryman (see Appendix I).

There is also a Fee payable on becoming a Freeman equivalent to the one year's annual age related Quarterage. The Clerk will advise you on the current rates for your age.

Application for Membership

Application Forms are available from the Clerk who will provide all of the information you will need.

Please ask your Sponsor or the Clerk if you have any questions.

The Application Form is interactive, it should be completed electronically and emailed to the Clerk for processing.

It is important to complete the Application Form in totality as the information is entered into our Membership Database and gives us a good idea of your skills, motivation and aspirations.

All successful candidates for membership must be age 21 or over on the day they are admitted.

Our Membership Fee and Quarterage structures are age related therefore your date of birth is essential to ensure that you are invoiced correctly.

It is particularly important to provide your personal (rather than work) email and mobile numbers as we invariably use email to keep in touch with our members and sometimes find that we are not informed when work contact information changes over time.

When the Application Form is completed, please return it, via email, to: –

the Clerk: clerk@cooperscompany.co.uk

Clerk's Briefing

Once the Clerk has received your application form, he may arrange for you to attend a Clerk's Briefing. The meeting will take place at Coopers' Hall at a mutually convenient time and will include a short tour of the Hall where you will be able to see some of the Company's treasured artefacts.

The purpose of the Briefing is to ensure that you understand what a Livery Company is, what the Coopers' Company does and how you can participate once you become a member. It provides an opportunity for you to ask questions and prepare for the Membership Interview.

Membership Interview

Candidates will usually be asked to attend a Membership Interview which the Clerk will arrange.

The Interview Panel will normally consist of the Chair of the Membership Committee, the Upper Warden and one other Court Member.

The Interview usually lasts around 30 minutes and the principal purpose is to explore with you your reasons for wishing to join the Company and the ways in which you would like to be involved and contribute to its work.

The Interview Panel will also discuss with you your aspirations and timing for going forward to the Freedom of the City of London and hence the Livery. The Membership Interview is a good opportunity for you to ask questions about the Company and its activities.

There are two possible recommendations that the interview panel can make, as follows:

- Recommendation for Freedom; or
- Recommendation for Freedom and Livery – this is the most likely outcome for those who already have the Freedom of the City of London.

Court Approval

The Interview Panel's recommendations are presented to the Court for approval. If successful the Clerk will offer you dates on which Freedom or Freedom and Livery ceremonies will take place.

When you have confirmed a date for the ceremony, the Clerk will arrange to invoice you for your Freedom Fee and Quarterage.

Details of current Fees and Quarterage are set out in [Appendix I](#) of this booklet.

Before the Freedom Ceremony can take place, the Freedom Fee must be paid and direct debits set up for the Quarterage. Note that the Freedom Fee can be spread over two years if you wish.

Freedom Ceremony

Freedom Ceremonies take place at Coopers' Hall normally during Court Meeting when you will be asked to repeat the Ancient Oath that Freemen have taken through out the ages.

You will receive your certificate and be introduced to the Court Members followed by an invitation to dine as a guest of the Court in Coopers' Hall.

The Clerk will send you a Membership Pack which contains all of the information you will need to allow you enjoy being a Freeman of The Worshipful Company of Coopers.

Society of the Livery

Unique in the livery movement is the Society of the Livery of the Coopers' Company (known as "The Society"), which was formed in 1827 following a dispute between the Court and the Livery. This resulted in the formation of The Society thus ensuring that the Livery's views are heard and any concerns addressed.

The Society remains an integral part of the Coopers' Company, it nominates the Upper and Under Wardens for the Court and organises many social events and functions.

Once your Freedom Ceremony has taken place you are expected to join the Society as by doing so you will automatically be invited to attend these social events which take place throughout the year.

These events are a great way of meeting fellow members of the Company.

Contact: cooperssocietymembership@gmail.com

Freedom of the City of London

All Freemen of livery companies in the City of London are entitled to apply for the Freedom of the City which is a prerequisite to becoming a Liveryman. The expectation is that a Freeman will apply for the Freedom of the City immediately after being admitted to the Freedom of the Company and will become a Liveryman without delay thereafter.

The process involves an Application to the Guildhall and payment of the fee (£175 in 2023).

The Clerk will help you with this process and provide a special application form for Freemen of the Company.

Your application must be approved by the Court of Aldermen. This can take up to two months.

Once it is approved, you will be informed by Guildhall, and it is then up to you to arrange a date to return to Guildhall for that Freedom Ceremony.

Please inform the Clerk by email of the date that you have arranged.

Details about the procedure can be seen at:

<https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/about-us/law-historic-governance/freedom-of-the-city>

Becoming a Liveryman

You are eligible to be "Cloathed" as a Liveryman once you are:

- a Freeman of the Company.
- a Freeman of the City of London:- and
- approved for the Livery by the Court.

When you are in a position to move to the Livery, the Clerk will send you dates on which "Cloathing" Ceremonies will take place.

When a date is agreed, the Clerk will send you an invoice for your Liveryman's quarterage and amend your direct debit (calculated pro rata and less any Freeman's quarterage pro rata).

Details of current fees and quarterage structure are set out in [Appendix I](#) of this booklet.

Cloathing Ceremony for Liverymen

"Cloathing" Ceremonies for Liverymen normally take place at the Company's annual general meeting, known as Common Hall in May or June each year or alternatively at Coopers' Hall during meetings of the Court.

You will be asked to repeat the ancient oath taken by Liverymen throughout the ages and following the Ceremony you will be presented with your certificate and introduced to the Court and other members of the Livery.

This is followed by an invitation to join the Livery for dinner at Common Hall or to dine with the Court at another date as our guest.

You are now a full member of the Company – Congratulations!

Charitable Giving

At the core of all Livery Companies is charitable giving.

We understand that an individual's ability to donate varies, but we encourage our members to contribute as much as they can to the Coopers Charity CIO, the vehicle through which all external grants are made. This will allow the Company to continue to help those most vulnerable in society into the future.

The Clerk will provide you with details of how you can make your donations whether as a regular monthly payment, a one-off payment or as a bequest.

APPENDIX I

COMPANY FEES AND QUARTERAGE

The Company operate an Age-Related Structure in which Fees and Quarterage vary with age.

1. The age related groups are:-

Younger	21 to 32 years of age
Middle	33 to 45 years of age
Older	46 years of age and over

2. Livery Quarterage:-

Younger	25%	of Older Livery Quarterage
Middle	62.5%	of Older Livery Quarterage
Older	100%	of Older Livery Quarterage

3. Freedom Quarterage:-

Younger	90%	of Younger Livery Quarterage
Middle	90%	of Middle Livery Quarterage
Older	90%	of Older Livery Quarterage

4. Freedom Fee (spread over 2 years if member prefers)

Younger	100%	of Younger Freedom Quarterage
Middle	100%	of Middle Freedom Quarterage
Older	100%	of Older Freedom Quarterage

The age is as at 1st April in the year concerned and payments are made either annually or monthly by direct debit.

APPENDIX II

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Part of being a member of a Livery Company is an acknowledgement of, and pride in, our long and distinguished history. We reflect this by maintaining the best of our traditions and terminology, whilst pursuing a mission that is as relevant in the 21st century as it was in the 16th.

This can sometimes appear confusing, and we hope that this glossary of terms will help unravel some of the mystery.

Court

The governing body of the Company, comprising the Master, two Wardens elected by the Livery and seventeen Court Assistants appointed by the Court, one of whom is elected annually as Renter Warden. The Court meets on a regular basis.

Master

The most senior member of the Company, nominated by the Court from among its number and elected by the Livery at Common Hall, he/she serves for one year, commencing in mid-June.

The Upper and Under Wardens

Court Members elected annually by the Livery at Common Hall; both serve for just one year. Usually, the Under Warden is elected to serve as Upper Warden the following year. The Upper and Under Wardens serve on behalf of the Livery. The Under Warden is usually also President of the Society during that year.

Renter Warden

Is junior to the Upper and Under Wardens and serves for one year and is Master presumptive.

Deputy Master

On completion of their year in office, the Master becomes the Deputy Master and stands in for the Master as and when required.

Past Master

Someone who has already served as Master. There are five Past Masters on the Court.

Court Assistant

A member of the Court, other than the two Wardens, but usually applied to those who have not served as Master. There are twelve Court Assistants.

Honorary Assistant

The title given to a Past Master who has stepped down from the Court.

Clerk

The senior employee of the Company and its Chief Operating Officer.
(email: clerk@cooperscompany.co.uk)

Common Hall

Held in a larger Livery Hall than Coopers' Hall on the Monday before Pentecost, this is the Company's 'AGM' attended by Liverymen, at which elections are held and reports given by the Court upon its activities in the preceding year and its plans for the future.

The Livery

The name given to the group or body of Liverymen.

Liveryman

A full member of the Company; gender-neutral, referring to both men and women.

Freeman

Someone at the first-level of membership; gender-neutral, referring to both men and women.

Fees

The sums of money due for becoming a Freeman.

Quarterage

The annual (not quarterly) subscription for being a Freeman or a Liveryman (paid by direct debit either annually or monthly).

Sponsor

A Liveryman, who knows the applicant reasonably well, who can recommend the applicant for membership of the Company and who will encourage the applicant to attend events and participate in the activities of the Company.

Cloathing

The ancient term for the ceremonial admission of a Freeman to the Livery.

Freeman by Redemption

The principal route of entry into membership of the Company.

Freeman by Servitude

A route of entry into membership of the Company for those who are or were apprenticed to a member of the Company.

Freeman by Lineage

A route of entry into membership of the Company for children born to a person who had the Freedom or the Livery of the Company at the time of their birth.