

The Flame



FORTHCOMING FIREBIRDS EVENTS

Tuesday
23rd JULY 2019

Tour of the Old Bailey – this event is now fully booked, but El is taking names for a reserve list.

Thursday
14th November 2019

The Firebirds biennial lunch, to include Phoenix partners, on HQS Wellington. Our speaker is Vivian Widgery; her talk, entitled 'Life at Hansard', will be about the goings on in the Houses of Parliament.

TUESDAY
26th November 2017

Guildhall Christmas Bazaar -
LET'S MEET UP
For details see page 10

MAY 2020

Trip to Paris
At this stage we are asking for expressions of interest. Please contact El on firebirds.events@gmail.com.

PHOENIX MASTERS EVENT
16th – 19th September 2019

The Phoenix Masters are organizing a trip to Oporto. Firebirds partners are included.



DEAR FIREBIRDS,

No doubt you have heard the wonderful news of Charles Bowman having been made a Knight Bachelor in the Queen's Birthday Honours List. Congratulations to Sir Charles and Lady Bowman!

Our first item in this Flame is a write-up by Liz Ward about our visit to the Queen's House and the Painted Hall in Greenwich. Greenwich is a fascinating place, full of history, beautiful art and architecture and impressive views. Truly worth another visit! Thank you El for organizing this enjoyable outing and getting the weather just right.

Nicola Barclay is giving us a snapshot of her life. Nicola is living with a hidden disability and you will find her moving article on pages 4 and 5.

On page 8, El is writing about her recent visit to Lourdes and Hilary's article on getting her garden ready for the open day under the National Garden Scheme starts on page 6. City Trivia has been provided by Vicky, see page 9.

Sheriffs Vincent Keaveny and Liz Green are taking to horseback to ride through the City of London on Wednesday 10th July, to raise money for the Sheriffs' and Records' Fund. You will find more information on how to help them raise money for the fund on page 9.

Have a good summer!

Erika Gloyn (Masons)
Editor

www.firebirds.newsletter@gmail.com

The views and opinions expressed by the authors and those providing comments are theirs alone and do not reflect the views and opinions of the Editor or the Firebirds Committee.



FIREBIRDS VISIT TO GREENWICH

by Liz Ward (Painter-Stainers)

It was a lovely balmy late spring morning when we set off from Westminster pier on the Thames Clipper towards Greenwich to visit The Queen's House and The Painted Hall.

Passing by the familiar City buildings, then the Tower of London, under Tower Bridge and finally Canary Wharf we arrived at Greenwich welcomed by the sight of the famous Tea Clipper, Cutty Sark, and the imposing buildings of the Old Royal Naval College designed by Sir Christopher Wren. Nestled neatly between the domed courts of Queen Mary and King William appears the Queen's House, designed by Inigo Jones for Anne of Denmark, the queen of King James I.

There has been a Palace at Greenwich since the 15th Century and the original brick built Greenwich Palace was the birthplace of Henry VIII, Mary I and Elizabeth I. It fell into disrepair during the English Civil War and was finally demolished in 1694.

In 1613 James I gave the site of Greenwich to his Danish Queen Anne, reportedly in apology for losing his temper after she accidentally shot his favourite dog while hunting! However, she didn't live long enough to see the house completed; that joy was saved for Queen Henrietta Maria, the wife of Charles I.

In 1692 the Royal Hospital for Seamen at Greenwich was created on the site on the instructions of Mary II, who had been inspired by the sight of the sailors returning from the Battle of La Hogue. It was the naval equivalent of the Royal Hospital for soldiers at Chelsea, also designed by Sir Christopher Wren. Architectural highlights include the Chapel which is in the Court of Queen Mary and the Painted Hall which is in the Court of King William. Both have domes above their respective

entrances and sit opposite each other providing a vista from the Thames to the Queen's House with the Royal Observatory behind, at the top of Greenwich Park.

The two storey Great Hall is the centre of the Queen's House, with a floor of black and white marble and a galleried landing from which the rooms radiate. The ceiling is an exquisitely executed pattern of repeated decorative motifs in gold leaf commissioned from the Turner Prize winner Richard Wright, based on his interpretation of the Tulip Stairs.

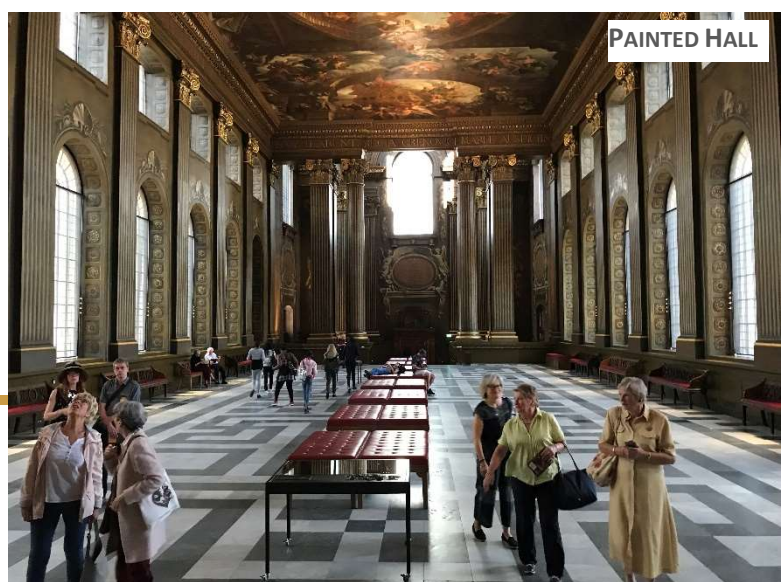
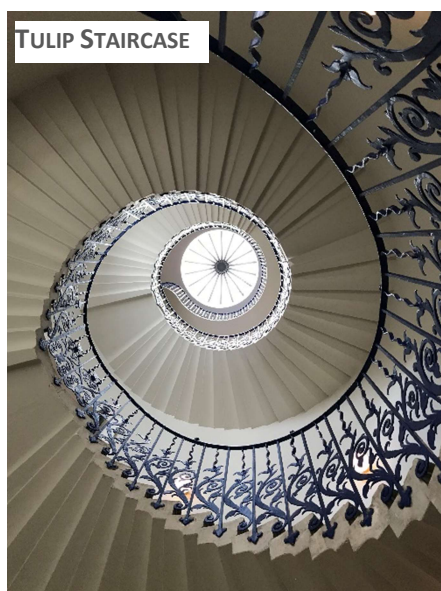
Most of the rooms would have been bedrooms or anterooms, but now house the art collection featuring paintings of the Kings and Queens connected with Greenwich and many admirals and pictures of The Fleet and various battles by Van Dyke, Canaletto and Turner to name but a few. Henrietta Maria commissioned a rather magnificent painted ceiling for her bedroom, the only one in the Queen's House. One leaves the top floor of the house by a stunningly beautiful spiral staircase called the Tulip Stairs, named after the wrought-iron design of the rails. It is believed to be the earliest example of centrally unsupported stairs in England.

After our visit to the house we had lunch at the Old Brewery which was a very welcome interlude; then onto the Painted Hall.

The Painted Hall was built as a grand ceremonial dining room for the Royal Naval Hospital. The artist, Sir James Thornhill, was a past Master Painter-Stainer and his painted interior is considered to be the masterpiece of English Baroque art. It features spectacular wall and ceiling decorations with William III & Mary II, the founders of the Royal Hospital, at the centre celebrating Britain's political stability, commercial prosperity and naval power. The Painted Hall has recently undergone a total restoration and is looking stunningly vivid. There are a number of mirrored tables with which to see the ceiling reflected without getting neck ache, or alternatively you can lie down on one of the red leather covered benches to view it in comfort!

There is a small anteroom just off the Painted Hall where the body of Admiral Lord Nelson was prepared (it had been transported back from Spain in a barrel of fortified wine), before his official lying in state in the Painted Hall. This little room contains a statue of Nelson replicating the one in Trafalgar Square.

We were all too exhausted after this to make the steep walk up to the Observatory, but Greenwich is well worth another visit to see The Chapel and another chance to see the magnificent Painted Hall ceiling again.



Following the piece on Lasting Power of Attorney in the March Flame ...

Hidden disability is very much in everyone's thoughts at the moment. The first thing I did when I was told I had a DavF was to get a donor card and update my will and wishes. I have an LPA for finances, but also Health; I have written down all my passwords and a list of my direct debits. You needn't be old to have things in order.

Here is a snapshot of my life:

Overnight at the Barclays -

It's 01:30, I wake up with a woosh in my left ear, I say 'a woosh' but it's not a singular, it's a continuous. It runs along in time with my pulse (which is also continuous for now)....so woosh, woosh, woosh ... there's no escape from it. There's no peace, there's no quiet, no stillness. It's called Pulsatile Tinnitus, I can hear my own arterial flow as a mess of arteries have made a nuisance of themselves near my ear; it's called a Dural AV Fistula. No stop! Don't google it, you'll frighten yourself.

02:10 I've tried letting Wooster dog sleep on Charlie's side of the bed whilst he's away so at least there are distracting snuffles of similar audibility but the bally dog has nightmares and his faint barking noises make inroads into any small pockets of slumber I selfishly cling to. Woosh, woosh, woosh.

02:45 I try to push a sleepy dog off the bed but he now wrongly assumes this is his rightful place and makes himself a dead weight. If I try lifting the weight, the woosh gets louder, angrier, fiercer. At this point I can't carry much and certainly not 17.5kg of dog.

02:50 An aside:

Sorry just to say Wooster has an active, healthy lifestyle and goes out walking with friends twice a day. He has a long term partner (Minti cat), a simple and consistent diet, (his well-kept coat, stripped twice a year, is evidence of that). His is a happy life. He is a working dog, though not at the moment. Yes, he has nightmares, but after a week of fireworks, that's to be expected. If he got ill it would be quite wrong to lay it at the door of his lifestyle without considering that it could be due to something else.



MINTI AND WOOSTER

03:05 I fetch the cat from the sofa and put her on the dog. There is a pecking order. The dog moves off the bed without question or dispute. I then put the cat back on the sofa. 10 years of University not wasted then!

03:10 I'm looking around for another distraction from the Woosh. I consider The Archers (radio soap). This 'off label' use is brought out 'when required up to 3 times daily' and is most effective when listened to on the 2nd time. I'm not actually listening to the storyline as I've heard it before on the 1st go (no nasty surprises now Rob has gone) and I'm used to the voices. 2nd time around my brain will be looking for things I haven't heard 1st time. I'm popping the earphone in on the right hand side to try and get my brain to focus on that and not the woosh on the left. Earphones on the left just produce a cacophony. Woosh.

03:15 Still awake, may try the Omnibus edition.

03:40 I could take prescription drugs, but I try to save these for the days where the skin on the left hand side of my face feels like it's being burnt off. Woosh, woosh, woosh.

03:45 I don't fight the Woosh, in that way lies madness. I adopted it as part of me and accepted it last year, I even gave it a name: Dasher Barclay - because it sounds like a reindeer galloping across snow. That doesn't mean it has no effect on me, it just means I accept it does. No anger, just sadness.

04:15 An aside:

Dear Friends, I am not a disabled person, I am a person with a disabling condition. Still me!

Dear Observer, I look well (or on occasion absolutely fabulous), what you can't see is my disability because it's hidden. I can't do normal things like go out to a café or use a Hoover or cope with an onion leaping out of the fridge onto the floor. My brain perceives many sounds as a threat, because I now have hyperacusis and I go into fight-or-flight mode (my heart rate rises, I feel fear etc.). Yes, even the sound of an escaped onion can do this.

04:15 Woosh, woosh, woosh. I wonder if I will ever go to the Theatre again. I thought I'd never go shopping again, but Tesco supermarket have dedicated a quieter hour once a week for people like me, who struggle with sensory input. That's later today, so I could write a shopping list ...

I'm going to make Christmas cakes at the weekend with a friend (and I'll take Wooster, of course, before you worry). That's something to look forward to.

200g Ground Almonds

05:00 I've woken with tears running down my cheek. Woosh

Tea then, the panacea for all ills.

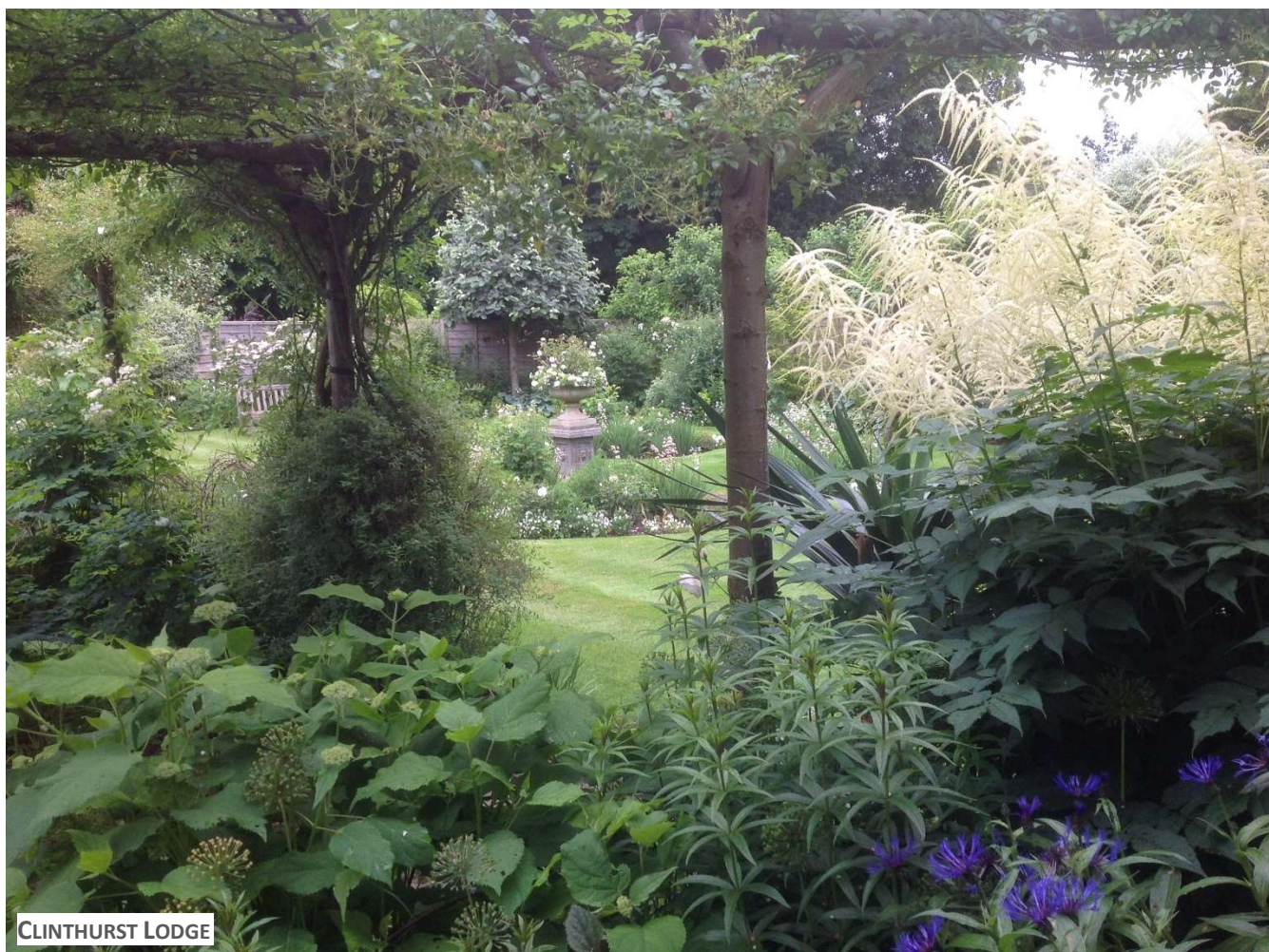
Must put milk on the shopping list!

An aside:

Dear Doctor, I am not depressed, my life is depressing! Subtle difference. I am sometimes sad, I'm allowed to be, something horrible has happened to me.

#woosh #duralavfistula #butyoulookswell





‘HARD WORK AND BOTHER’

by Hilary Goodridge (Arbitrators)

I have been working flat out to get the garden looking perfect for opening for the National Garden Scheme on Sunday 16th and Wednesday 19th June.

We had a private group of 12 visit us only a few days before. It was dry all morning and started to rain the minute they arrived. Despite the rain they seemed to enjoy the garden, especially the 8 and 10 foot delphiniums, the vegetable patch and the white garden. They all ended up for tea and home baked cake in our conservatory.

Thank heavens a friend came to stay last week with his Jack Russell as it managed to chase the naughty rabbit out of my garden; it was eating the flower heads in my white garden that were just about to flower. My lettuces were also very vulnerable. It is sometimes a losing battle with wildlife. The moles have also been very busy in my flower beds. Not so good when they decide to pop up in the middle of the lawn. Mike gets a little upset when a mole heap interrupts his mowing and beautiful stripes.

We have a pair of swallows nesting in my horses' stable. They got rather upset when the recent visitors gathered in front of the stable door. I check that they are on their nest before I go to bed when I check the horses. I hope we have some baby swallows.

We just have some more staking to do after this awful rain, maybe a few more edges to clip, dead head the roses and any other herbaceous plants that may have gone to seed. The dreaded bind weed seems to get everywhere. We have had to remove many dead trees this year. I assume it is drought and honey fungus.

Although the rain is inconvenient, both the garden and field were desperately in need of it. Gardening is certainly a challenge these days. One of them is the threat of box blight. The box moth lays its eggs in the box bushes and the caterpillars gobble the box in a couple of days. It's all a lot of hard work trying to prevent disasters and diseases!

Anyway it's now one week before opening the final countdown.

On my list is putting up signage in the surrounding area; contacting the person in charge of teas for the local children's hospice (the charity of my choice this year); making sure there are enough cups and saucers etc. and cakes and helpers.

The day before: Lawn mowing, final weeding, finish staking and clipping all the edges; assembling a gazebo in the garden in case of rain (useful to store all the chairs between the Sunday and Wednesday).

I try to get to bed in good time, setting the alarm for 6 am. This is when I struggle to get to sleep, worrying unnecessarily.

On the day, we go out and attach 'Today' stickers on all the signage around the area.

Sunday started with rain and two stall holders decided not to come. That's when you wonder why you bother opening at all.

Thinking positive thoughts, we put up tea tables and chairs, put on table cloths.

We opened at 11 am. A few brave people turned up in the rain and then, luckily, the weather cleared and 186 visitors arrived.

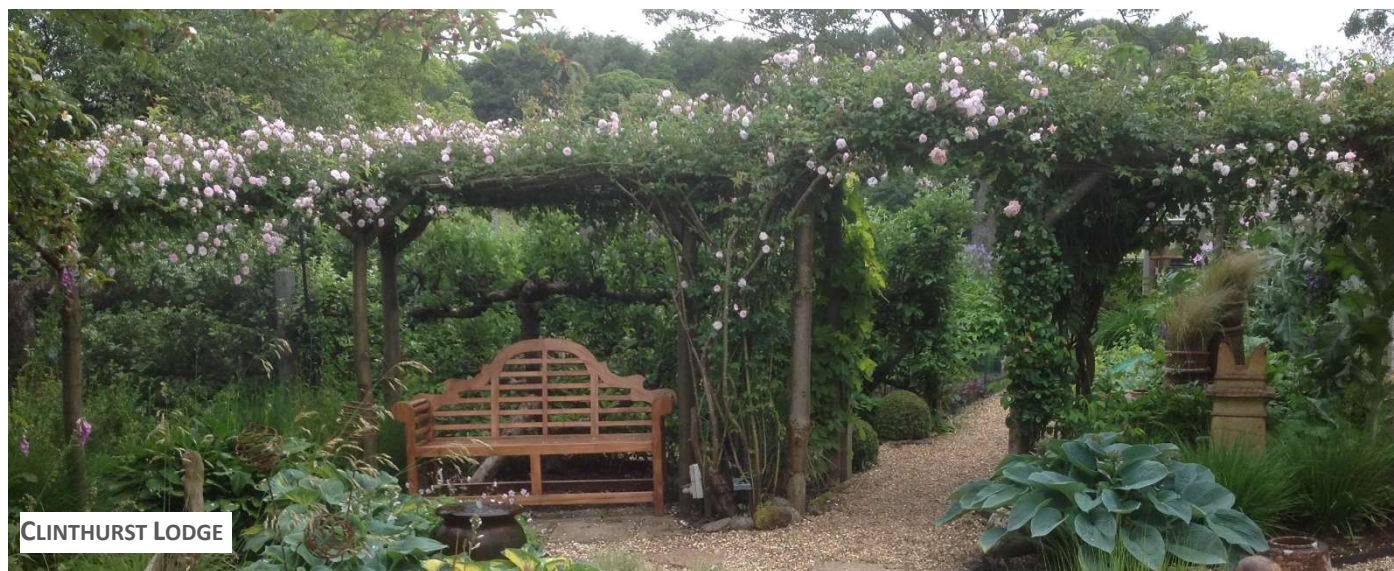
We packed up at 5 pm and celebrated with Pimms and canapés.

The weather on Wednesday was cloudy and dry until the rain came for most of the afternoon. We still had 92 visitors despite the weather, so more celebrations.

We managed to raise around £2,400, which included gate money, teas and selling plants. Over the last twenty five years we have raised around forty thousand pounds for charity. The National Garden Scheme supports mainly nursing charities, such as Marie Curie and MacMillan nurses.

Mike and I have decided not to carry on with the Open Garden National Garden Scheme in the future, except for groups by appointment. We already have several groups booked in.

The NGS are always looking for new gardens to open. Please look at <https://www.ngs.org.uk/get-involved/open-your-garden/> for more information. It's hard work, but very rewarding.





A VISIT TO LOURDES

by El Moss (Horners)

Hugh and I were staying with friends in Gascony, the week before Easter this year. They live 45 minutes from Lourdes and we decided that we must make a visit. We drove there, the Monday before Easter, not knowing what to expect.

Would it be over-crowded? Would the Souvenir Shops be as tacky as people say? Would we find spiritual enlightenment?

Lourdes is a small market town of about 13,000 people in the foothills of the Pyrenees. It has 6 million visitors a year and 270 hotels to house them. Pro-rata, only Paris has more hotel capacity.

Lourdes rose to religious prominence in 1858 after a 14-year old peasant girl, Bernadette Soubirous, saw an apparition of the Virgin Mary at the Massabielle Grotto. She saw the apparition a total of 18 times. On one visit to the Grotto, she was told to dig in the ground and drink the water from the small spring that began to bubble up. Many pilgrims believe that they have been cured by drinking the water or by bathing in it, although it has no curative properties.

The first thing that surprised us when we arrived was that we found a parking space. The second surprise was that it wasn't crowded. We were somewhat astonished by this as Easter was only 5 days away.

Lourdes is built on a hill and to reach the Grotto, we walked down the main road, past the souvenir shops to the park where the Grotto is situated. The shops varied from the supremely tacky to the less tacky. Wherever you look, the Virgin Mary is looking at you, from every nook and cranny! There are BVM statues with flashing lights, BVM rosaries, BVM necklaces but the worst was the BVM shaped water bottle!

Once through the shops, we arrived at a beautifully laid out park. The first thing that greets you at the far end of this park is an enormous church, highly decorated in bright gold. Walking through the park, skirting the church is a large rock formation. Here we formed a queue to file past the Grotto. We noticed that people were touching the damp rock with their bare hands and discovered afterwards that the dampness represented 'the tears of Christ'. After the damp rock, comes the Grotto. It is cordoned off but one can see clearly inside. On the right hand side, behind a sheet of glass, is the part in which Bernadette saw the apparition. Facing the cave, were half a dozen rows of wooden benches with people sitting, looking at the cave, deep in meditative thought.

Although the shops were tacky, a lot of thought had gone into the design of the park – which pleasantly surprised us. Sadly, we didn't find spiritual enlightenment but we did find a hefty 20 euro parking ticket when we returned to the car! We were glad we went, but more importantly, it is a wonderful sanctuary for pilgrims.

The Freedom of the City of London

The first freedom of the City of London was granted in 1237. In late medieval England, being granted the freedom of the city was not a courtesy title nor a simple invitation to wander the city at will. Instead it had enormous practical importance. Once granted, it meant that the recipient was freed from his duty to his feudal lord: he was a free agent and under the terms of the granting of the freedom it meant that he could own land, trade and earn money in his own right. He was also protected from feudal duties, such as the duty of military service, because he had rights under the charter of the city. These rights were so important that they could occasionally conflict with the rights of the monarch.

The city authorities were careful, however, to ensure that as far as possible, the monarch was central to the granting of the freedom. This still applies to freeman today and is reflected in the oath that they swear:

I do solemnly swear that I will be good and true to our Sovereign; that I will be obedient to the Mayor of this City; that I will maintain the Franchises and Customs thereof, and will keep this City harmless, in that which is in me; that I will also keep the Queen's Peace in my own person; that I will know no Gatherings nor Conspiracies made against the Queen's Peace, but I will warn the Mayor thereof, or hinder it to my power; and that all these points and articles I will well and truly keep, according to the Laws and Customs of this City, to my power.

Once he agreed to this, the medieval freeman was given a parchment and a wooden casket in which to keep it; it is believed that many freemen refused to leave their house without taking with them, rather like a passport, the parchment which confirmed their status as free men. Incidentally the Freedom of the City has never been the prerogative of men alone. Ancient reports from Livery Companies bear reference to 'Sisters', a fact which indicates that men and women were equally eligible.



A MODERN CERTIFICATE OF THE FREEDOM OF LONDON – NOTE THAT THE ORIGINAL WOODEN CASK HAS NOW BECOME A RED ENVELOPE.

Some of the rights granted to freemen are bizarre by modern standards; although they were jealously guarded in times gone by. Today they are merely symbolic. So, a freeman is entitled to herd sheep across London Bridge; he may walk about the city with a drawn sword; he can insist on being married in St Paul's Cathedral. If discovered drunk and disorderly by a policeman he will not be arrested, but put in a taxi and sent home. Best of all, if a freeman is sentenced to hang, he has the right to insist that the executioner uses a silken rope.



BANQUETING HOUSE, WHITEHALL, DESIGNED BY INIGO JONES

OPEN HOUSE LONDON

Saturday 21st/Sunday 22nd September 2019

Open House London is the world's largest architecture festival, giving free public access to 800+ buildings, walks, talks and tours over one weekend in September each year.

From 20th August you can view the full building listings. Please note that some buildings (and particularly tours) will require pre-booking.

For information about the event go to <https://openhouselondon.org.uk/>. You can pre-order a copy of the Open House London

Guide 2019 on line. Guides will be dispatched mid-August 2019. The guide is an indispensable companion to Open House London weekend.

Guide pricing:

From 01/05/19 - 01/09/19 = £8.50 (pre-order); from 02/09/19 - 22/09/19 = £10.00

CHRISTMAS MARKET AT THE GUILDHALL

A shopping experience with a difference. Visit the historic Guildhall in the heart of the City of London and kick-start your Christmas shopping.

The market starts on Monday evening, **25th November 2019**, with bubbly and canapes. You'll see the Guildhall at night and have the first opportunity to buy goodies from a fantastic range of stalls. On Tuesday, **26th November**, the market is open all day for shopping. Experience over 100 stalls selling a variety of seasonal gifts, including jewellery, leather goods, exclusive ladies' and men's wear and artisan food. You can also catch up with friends or family over a festive luncheon or Champagne afternoon tea in the beautiful Guildhall crypt. Enjoy live music and a complimentary glass of wine and there will be fantastic prizes to win in the raffle and silent auction.

The market is in support of the British Red Cross and is backed by the City of London, the Livery Companies and Ward Clubs, the Guildhall and the Lord Mayor,

It's easy to get there by Underground, Bank being 5 minutes away, St Paul's and Moorgate both 7 minutes.

Early-bird ticket offers are available at www.redcross.org.uk/guildhall

LET'S MEET UP

Guildhall Champagne Afternoon Tea on 26th November, at 3.30 pm. Please book your tickets on www.redcross.org.uk/guildhall. The price for the tea is £30.00. **IF** you book your ticket before 1st August, the price will be £25.00. There is no need to buy an additional ticket to enter the Market. If 10 people book the tea before 1st August, El will reserve a table. Please let El know on www.firebirds.function@gmail.com once you have made your booking, so that she can make the appropriate reservation when the magic number of 10 has been reached.

THE SHERIFFS' AND RECORDER'S FUND

Sheriffs Vincent Keaveny and Liz Green are taking to horseback to ride through the City of London on Wednesday 10th July, to raise money for the Sheriffs' and Recorder's Fund. The ride is due to start in Guildhall Yard at 9.30 am and end around 12.30 pm at the Old Bailey.



What does the Sheriffs' and Recorder's Fund do?

The British prison population is over 86,000. On release, prisoners receive £46. Lacking money, education, a job, a stable family and a home, over 70% re-offend. Their life is spent in and out of prison.

The Sheriffs' & Recorder's Fund helps to break this vicious cycle. At the critical time when a prisoner is released, the Fund gives small grants to supply a vital need. The fund helps families of those currently in prison. It also gives large grants to prison-based charitable schemes which work towards the rehabilitation of ex-prisoners.

Nearly two thirds of UK prisoners had no qualifications and no job before their sentence. The Fund gives grants for training for jobs and qualifications. Most prisoners come out owning only the clothes they are wearing, which may no longer even fit, let alone be appropriate for a job interview or family occasion. The fund gives grants for appropriate clothing. In many jobs it is essential to have your own tools and equipment – which the State does not provide. The fund gives grants for tools of trade.

When an ex-prisoner is allocated accommodation, it often has very little or inadequate equipment. The fund gives grants for electrical and white goods. Prisoners' partners and children suffer. The Fund provides grants for days out, basic equipment, holidays and financial help at Christmas.

The Fund has two part-time administrative staff, working in an office kindly provided by the Corporation of London. The Chairman and all other staff are voluntary.

The Probation Service and other Social Welfare agencies recommend people for grants, mainly in the first weeks after release, when ex-prisoners are at most risk of re-offending. The Fund immediately evaluates applications and decides which grants to award. Grant money is then handled not by the ex-prisoner but by the recommending Service.

The Sheriffs are looking for your support by either donating (£10.00 only please) or joining the walk with the option of a buffet lunch in Old Bailey.

Help Vincent and Liz to raise funds for the Sheriffs' and Recorder's Fund and click on <https://justgiving.com/fundraising/sheriffs-challenge-2019> to make your donation.
