



The Flame



FIREBIRDS AGM AT CUTLERS' HALL 4TH MARCH 2024

PHOTOS BY PETER GREEN (FRAMEWORK KNITTERS)



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.



DEAR FIREBIRDS,

Thank you to all of you who contributed to this edition of the Flame, giving us a splendid variety of articles.

It was lovely to see so many of you at the AGM, despite some Firebirds not being able to make it because of a derailment or illness. Thank you to Lady Mountevans, our President, for attending. You will find Angela Chamber's report on page 3.

Sarah Mosse's article on page 4 might send you to Google, wanting to find out in which year of the Chinese Zodiac you were born.

Read Janice Evans' article, on page 5, if you are thinking of travelling by sleeper train to Scotland, and don't get jealous when you read Sheila Higgs' article about her Grand Road Trip, starting on page 6.

Georgina Hall warns you to be careful what you wish for on page 9 and if you want to see a 'weepy', El Moss has a suggestion for you on page 10.

John Nugée is telling us about contemporary French guilds on page 11 and on page 12 Von Spofforth is writing about achievement and fulfilment.

As the last Zoom Tea Party was not well attended (3 Firebirds were able to join in), you won't be surprised that we shall not do another one unless circumstances change ... maybe when we are all on Zimmerframes.

The final article is about the 80th United Guilds Service at St Paul's, making reference to the Dean's sermon.

Do remember to check out our website; Peter has changed the format. This makes it easier to keep up-to-date. Be impressed – have a look.

If you enjoy reading the Flame, please think about how you could contribute. I would love to hear from you.

Wishing you all a very Happy Easter

Erika Gloyn (Masons)
Editor

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FORTHCOMING FIREBIRDS EVENTS



Friday 3rd May 2024 Leighton House Museum

This is an art museum and historic house in Holland Park, West London. It was awarded the European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage in 2012.

Full details coming soon.

September 2024

Firebirds Biennial Lunch

Details tba

FORTHCOMING PHOENIX EVENTS

May 2024

Phoenix visit to Northern Ireland.

Monday

1st July 2024

Phoenix Masters are inviting Firebirds on a day out to Blenheim Palace

Thursday

10th October 2024

Phoenix AGM Brewers' Hall

FIREBIRDS AGM 4TH MARCH 2024

by Angela Chambers (Pewterers)



GETTING READY FOR THE AGM - PHOTO BY ANGELA CHAMBERS

Firebirds were delighted to return to Cutlers' Hall for their AGM. Vicky Nugée, Chair, conducted the meeting efficiently and, true to form, business was completed within 30 minutes. All those unable to attend due to illness, medical appointments and the vagaries of the rail networks were very much missed by the Firebirds present.

Before lunch Firebirds were delighted to catch up with friends over a glass of wine, which was served in the hallway with its dark neo-Jacobean oak wall panels.

As always, the service during lunch at Cutlers' Hall was faultless and it was a real treat to be seated in the Court Room. Lunch included smoked salmon as a starter, followed by chicken casserole and both were accompanied with white or red wine. Coffee and chocolate mints were served at the end of the meal.

Cutlers' Hall has many noteworthy treasures, including a sword said to have belonged to the son of Edward III, better known as the Black Prince. However, elephants can be seen everywhere at Cutler's Hall because, historically, blade handles were made of ivory. Today the Company is active in the conservation of elephants. Some of the permanent display

relating to elephants includes the Company's ivory gavel of 1603 and the Company's Alms Box, in the form of an elephant dating from 1642. Other examples to be seen in the Hall are the unforgettable elephant shaped loo brush holders!

Another successful Firebirds' event.

(For more photos see Firebirds website www.firebirds.london)



HAVING FUN - PHOTO BY PETER GREEN

2024 THE YEAR OF THE DRAGON

Text and photos by Sarah Mosse (Broderers)

Coming home from visiting the family in Australia, we spent a wonderful day in Singapore and enjoyed some amazing sights.

This is the year of the Wood Dragon in Chinese culture and the lunar year began on 10th February. There are 12 signs of the Chinese zodiac, in order they are Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Goat, Monkey, Rooster, Dog and Pig. If you were born in one of the following years you are a Dragon: 1928, 1940, 1952, 1964, 1976, 1988, 2000, 2012 and of course 2024.

If you are born in the year of the Dragon, you will be delighted to hear you are considered to be charismatic, intelligent, confident, powerful and you are naturally lucky and gifted. What you might not be

so happy about is that you have a tendency to overindulge!! As a Dragon your best other half should be a Rooster, a Rat or a Monkey. Your rivals are a Dog and a Goat. Your best colours are emerald green, gold, silver and purple and your gemstone is a Ruby and, to finish, your lucky numbers are 8, 14 and 24.

It really is amazing what you can find on the Internet!



DRAGON WITH ITS MAGIC PEARL



INSIDE THE FLOWER DOME IN SINGAPORE

HIGHLAND ADVENTURE ON CALEDONIAN SLEEPER TRAIN

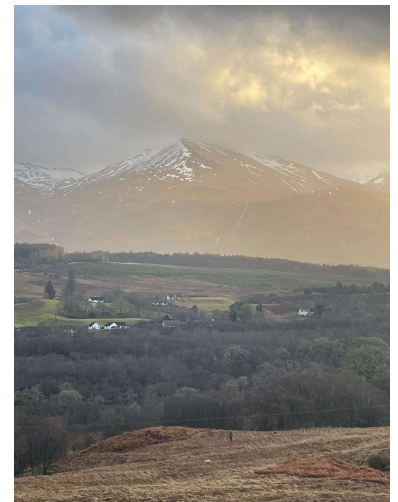
Text and Photos by Janice Evans (Hackney Carriage Drivers)



We made our way through the crowds on the concourse at Euston Station heading for Platform 1 and the Caledonian Sleeper Club lounge before boarding the train that connects London to the West coast of Scotland. It was 7.30pm and we were looking forward to setting off on our adventure to Fort William.

The train was set to depart at 9.15pm so we had the time to relax in the lounge before boarding at 8.45pm. On boarding we were shown to our cabin where we left our luggage and made our way to the club car to enjoy a drink. The staff there were very chatty and welcoming which made for a great start to our trip.

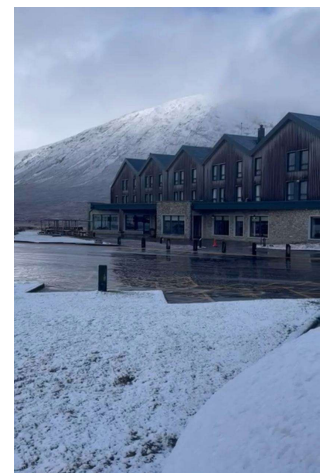
The train rocked and swayed as we made our way back to the cabin. We looked forward to settling in for the night before arriving in Fort William. Unfortunately, though, we had not made any allowance to share our cabin with each other and our luggage! It was a major exercise to get ready for bed in a room not big enough to swing a cat!!



Our sleeping arrangements were two bunk beds. I offered to take the top bunk but unfortunately after several attempts to climb up into the bed, and the help of my husband Colin, I was defeated, and we swapped places. We laughed as he tried to manoeuvre himself into a horizontal position. He said, 'How can we be expected to climb Ben Nevis when we cannot even climb into a set of bunk beds?'

We managed some sleep and woke at 6 am. It was time for Colin to descend the top bunk! Getting dressed was not easy either. I am sure at one point we both had a leg in the same pair of trousers. Anyone over 6 feet in height would have to stick their feet out of the train window.

To start our day, we had a hearty traditional Scottish breakfast in the club car. Whilst we were tucking into square sausage, eggs and beans, we were taking in the most breathtaking views, as the train wound its way through the Highlands.



The scenery in the West Coast of Scotland really did take your breath away. We hired a car and visited Ben Nevis, Mallaig, Glenfinnan (viaduct for the Harry Potter Hogwarts Express), Loch Ness (no sight of the monster), Inverness and the Caledonian Canal on day one. The next day we visited Glencoe's snow-capped Mountain range and drove through a heavy snowstorm, a fantastic experience which led us to a beautiful West Highland retreat, the 'Kings House Hotel', where we stopped for coffee and scones by their roaring fire whilst waiting for the storm to clear. An amazing trip!



THE GRAND ROAD TRIP 2024

Text and Photos by Sheila Higgs (Lauderers)

Our Christmas and New Year holiday with family in Houston included the Grand Road Trip.



WE LEFT HOUSTON ON THE MORNING OF 27TH
DECEMBER



PETRIFIED FOREST IN LOUISIANA



THE HIGGS'S IN NEW ORLEANS



NEW ORLEANS RIVERBOAT

Our first stop was New Orleans. On our arrival we went straight to dinner at Jack Rose's restaurant. After a good night's sleep we had breakfast Beignets at Café du Monde sitting by the Mississippi River.

Nashville was our next Stop. Two nights there gave us time to walk the famous sites in the town.



THESE BOOTS ARE MADE FOR WALKING



HIGHLIGHT



JOHNNY CASH MUSEUM

Our next stop was Memphis, where we visited Elvis's home Graceland, which is stunning.

It was interesting to find out things about Elvis that one doesn't generally know. He was a family man, with a passion for cars, planes and horses and a proficient horseman who loved to ride his horse on his land at Graceland.

We spent hours at the house and viewing Elvis's cars and planes.



GRACELANDS



ELVIS AND HIS PARENTS



ELVIS'S FAMILY TREE



LISA MARIE



CHEVROLET



ELVIS'S PINK CAR



JERRY LEE LEWIS, CARL PERKIS, ELVIS, JOHNNY CASH

Whilst in Memphis we visited the iconic Sun Studios, famous for achieving fame for household names from the 50s. We were lucky enough to arrive at the Studios in time for the last tour of the day.

Then we had the opportunity of playing at being 'Stars', jamming in the studio where the \$1,000,000 quartet played on 4 December 1956.



SUN STUDIO



JAMMING

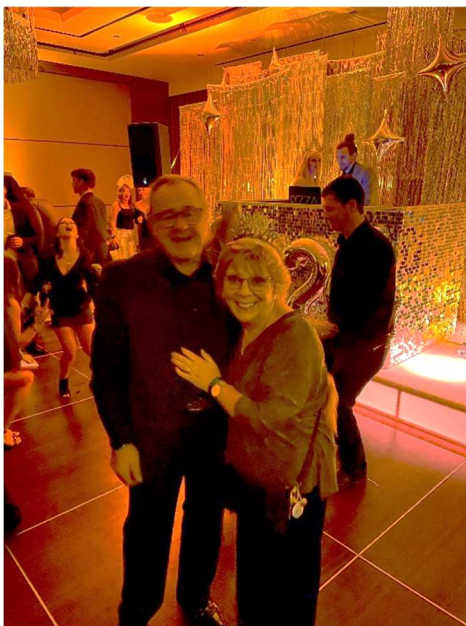


THE DRUMMER

After an overnight stop at Little Rock, Arkansas, home of the Clintons, the next leg of our journey took us to Dallas to celebrate New Year.

We had dinner at the Rye Restaurant. It was not quite what we expected - we were all dressed up in our glitter only to find the other diners were in jeans!!

We returned to our Hotel, The Drey, and joined their New Year celebrations.



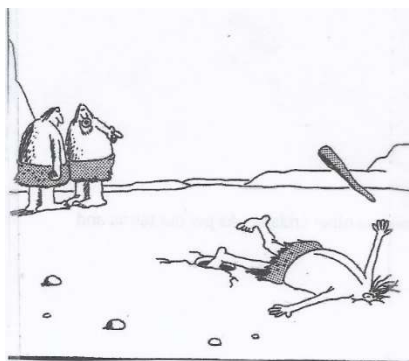
NEW YEARS EVE 2024

New Years Day saw us travelling back to Houston.

2000 miles, 5 States in 6 days, unforgettable fun!

BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR!

By Georgina Hall (Water Conservators)



All my life I have wanted to be taller and finally I find myself nearly 3" taller. In January I fell down a mole hole in a field whilst walking with friends. The hole was over 12" inches deep and I ruptured my Achilles tendon.

As I lumbered on to the table to have my leg plastered, I was told I didn't fit the profile of patients who they usually saw -- young, sporty and male. My imagination went wild. I had a vision of the Achilles fracture clinic waiting room full of Adonis males and me. Wow, it couldn't all be gloom and doom!

The reality the following the Tuesday was a real comedown. Mostly old men and one obese teenager with his mother. Adonis Day must be a Monday! At the clinic I learned that my right leg was to be non-weight bearing and I was given crutches. From then on I embarked on a huge learning curve. You may be interested in how I coped and the aids that are available.

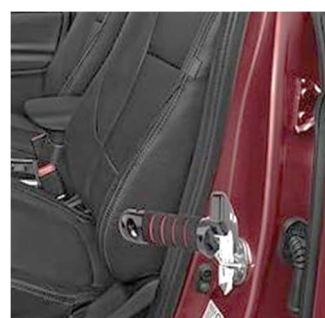


I found hopping about on crutches extremely difficult and I was really struggling, I put out a call to my local friends if anyone had a walker they were not using that I could borrow. What turned up, from a friend of a friend, was a real game changer - a knee scooter. I was soon zipping around on the flat, both inside and outside the house.

On a subsequent visit to the clinic I progressed to an orthopaedic boot, much better as I could now put weight on my injured leg, but the boot made my leg nearly 3" longer than the other leg. With the boot, the scooter was now very uncomfortable so it was back to crutches and now walking. A lop-sided 5' on one side and 5'3" on the other. At the end of the day I ached all over. The physio suggested I got an Even up© cover for my shoe. Your trainer fits in the frame and it can be adjusted to 3 different levels. This too was a game-changer, bringing my other leg up to the same height and making walking easy.



My final assistance aid is a car mobility support handle. Anyone who struggles to get out of cars would find this aid very useful. The handle fits into the door latch of the open car door and will take your weight as you get in and out of a car. (The handle does other things, too, which would not be used on a day to day basis.)



Now, male readers look away here. When your other leg gets cold in a sock and you are in a skirt, put on a one legged pair of tights. You probably do this anyway, making every 2 pairs of tights become 3 pairs. When you have a ladder, cut the laddered leg off a pair of tights, leaving the pantie bit still attached to the other leg. Hey presto, you have a pair of one legged tights. For normal wear, two such pairs will give you 2 legs and 2 pantie bits and you have made up another pair!

My hope is that, at some time, you may find the information above useful for either yourself, a friend or relative when having mobility issues below the knee.

Update, I am back to being 5' again. My journey at being taller is well and truly over! The orthopaedic boot will come off on March 26th and I have been told not to forget to bring my other shoe to the clinic!

FILM REVIEW

by El Moss (Horners)

ONE LIFE

Starring Anthony Hopkins, Johnny Flynn, Helena Bonham Carter

One Life is a film about Nicholas Winton, who in 1938 assisted with the rescue of 669 mostly Jewish children who lived in Czechoslovakia and were at risk from the Nazis.

In 1938, Britain, with France and fascist Italy, allowed Germany to annex the Sudetenland. The Jewish population were put into refugee camps. Nicholas Winton, who was a stockbroker, decided to try and rescue as many children as he could. The children, once in England, were fostered by families. Advertisements for foster families were put in newspapers, one of which was the Sunday Mirror owned by Robert Maxwell, himself Czechoslovakian.

Winton never told anyone what he had done and during the war he served in the RAF and disappeared into obscurity.

The second half of the film fasts forward to the 1980s. The Sunday Mirror decided to look through their archives and came across the story through the advertisements for foster parents. Esther Rantzen hears about this and asks Winton to appear on *That's Life*. She tells the audience about some of the humanitarian work he did. A few days later he gets a phone call from Robert Maxwell's wife asking him if he still has a list of all the children he has rescued. He gives his file to her and leaves. A few months later he is asked back on to *That's Life* where Esther Rantzen asks the audience if anyone there owes their life to Nicholas Winton. Needless to say the first six rows stand up. I can honestly say that coming out of the cinema there wasn't a dry eye to be seen.

This is a powerful and emotional film. Anthony Hopkins' subtle performance grounds the film. He is ably supported by Johnny Flynn who plays the young Winton and Helena Bonham Carter as Winton's mother.

The film is really a sequence of events. It is not in itself exciting, but you are glued to the screen. It is also a history lesson and one we must never forget.

If I had one gripe about the film, it is that it didn't tell us enough about his background. I had to find out that his German/Jewish parents emigrated to the UK in the early 1900s and that he spoke German fluently. Nicholas Winton was born in 1909 and died 2015 aged 106 years.



**NICHOLAS WINTON WAS KNIGHTED BY
QUEEN ELIZABETH II IN 2003 FOR
SERVICES TO HUMANITY.**

COMPAGNONS DU DEVOIR

A FRENCH GUILD ASSOCIATION WITH A DIFFERENCE

by John Nugée (Past Upper Bailiff Weavers)

The Worshipful Company of Chartered Architects recently hosted a supper talk to introduce us to a contemporary French Guild. The talk was held in their very smart hall adjoining Temple Bar and I joined several Phoenixes and Firebirds there to learn more.

The Guild we were introduced to was **Les Compagnons du Devoir et du Tour de France**, one of a number of such guild-type organisations in France. These organisations are clearly descended from the same tradition as the equivalent English guilds – organisations of fellowship, training and control of their industries. They largely lost their medieval purposes in the 19th Century.

At the end of 19th Century, France decided to modernise the guilds and give them a new purpose. The Compagnons and their sister guilds were re-founded as state-sponsored vehicles for training apprentices in traditional crafts. As a result they are now very different from the concept of a 21st Century English livery company or guild. They are multi-trade, multi-location associations, operating nationwide across all of France. As an example, the Compagnons du Devoir have a presence in over 40 cities and own and run about 60 'houses' or centres.

The main work that the Compagnons do is arrange structured apprenticeships. Accepted apprentices spend 7 years, each year in a different French city, working under the guidance and care of a senior Compagnon. The Compagnons cover a number of different skills. Our speaker was a stonemason, who spent his 7 years in 7 different cities with 7 different apprentice masters learning the stonemason's art and in the process learning a lot about the varied geology and types of stone all over France.

At the end of this 7 year tour, one presents a masterpiece and if it is approved, one is accepted as a Compagnon. Then you are recognised as a qualified craftsman and able to bid for work all over France. Compagnons are expected to teach the next cohort of apprentices.

There are lots of differences between the French guild-like organisations and our Livery Companies. For instance, I did not sense any significant emphasis on charitable works, especially not outside their crafts and disciplines. However, the central traditional role of the medieval guilds, fellowship for craftsmen and a structured education for the next generation, seems to be alive and flourishing in France.



**PETER MURRAY, PAST MASTER ARCHITECT
FRENCH AMBASSADOR HÉLÈNE DUCHÈNE
PIERRE BIDAUD, A MEMBER OF LES COMPAGNON
DU DEVOIR ET DU TOUR DE FRANCE
CHRIS WILLIAMSON, MASTER OF THE
WORSHIPFUL COMPANY OF ARCHITECTS**



CLAIRE CHITTY, BEADLE, QUEEN CAMILLA AND HER LADY IN WAITING

ACHIEVEMENT AND FULFILMENT

Text and photos provided by Von Spofforth (Chartered Accountants)

Mrs. Claire Chitty – When I first met Claire, her husband like mine was a member of both the WCO Horners and WCO Chartered Accountants. She was a career cardiac nurse and had spent 20 years as a heart rhythm specialist nurse based at London Bridge Hospital. She ran independent clinics, diagnosing, assessing, prescribing long term management for people with a variety of heart conditions but latterly supporting patients and staff at two other Hospitals.

During the pandemic Claire worked as a Nightingale, opting out of private medicine and working for the NHS. (I did send an article that she had written; some of you may remember.) However, for some time she had been thinking of a career change and finally announced that she wanted to



QUEEN CAMILLA – HONORARY FANMAKER

be a livery clerk. Decision made, she was not one to sit on her laurels. She promptly took some further training in basic accounting, in addition to her already experienced background, to assist taking on a new role.

She says that she may never have been brave enough to make the transition to Clerk if it hadn't been for her role with City Consorts. Claire was in at the beginning and was and still is their Hon. Secretary. She says, she learned very quickly then to be ultra organized and keep calm in tricky situations, dealing with difficult and sometime unreasonable Clerks and Past Masters.

Just over a year ago she became the Clerk to the Worshipful Company of Fan Makers based in their Office's at Saddlers' Hall. When Queen Camilla became an Honorary Fanmaker, Claire was there – all she said to me was, 'What a good day'. What an achievement and experience!

(Von is the Founder and Past Chairman of the City Consorts. Ed.)



THE UNITED GUILDS SERVICE AT ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

15th March 2024

by Bill Gloyn (Past Master Mason)

In 1943, during the dark days of the Second World War, the leaders of the Great Twelve Livery Companies decided to hold a service for all the Livery Companies and Guilds in St Paul's. The intention was to help lift the spirits of those left in the City after the Blitz, which inflicted serious damage to the cathedral and devastated the surrounding area. It is recorded as being the first time that all the Companies worshipped together.



This year was the 80th service held in St Paul's and it was attended by a congregation of several thousand. The service is full of pageantry - the Officers of all the Companies, as well as many other dignitaries, are in full regalia. There are fanfare trumpeters, the cathedral choir is at its best and the organ at its loudest. That encourages the congregation to join in lustily with the hymns. Among many clergy present were the Bishop of London and three other bishops.

This year the sermon was preached by the Dean, The Very Reverend Andrew Tremlett, Liveryman of the Masons' Company. It was notable as it recalled the visit that he had paid to Portland last September (see article in the last Flame) to bless the Wren memorial stone. He also referred to the tercentenaries of both Sir Christopher Wren, the architect, and of Edward Strong, Past Master Mason, who was the Master Mason during most of the building of Wren's masterpiece.

In turning from the past to the present, the Dean then looked at the current situation in the Ukraine and pondered on what that great statesman Sir Winston Churchill would have made of the views currently being expressed by world figures on the future of the conflict.

A livery event would not be complete without suitable refreshment. The members of the Masons Company joined with those of at least nine others for lunch at Painter Stainers' Hall for excellent food and wine and the fellowship of old and new friends.

The Dean's sermon was very thought provoking and it was noticeable that the congregation was sitting up and listening.

Here is an extract from his sermon:

'It is now one month since the death of the Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny: murdered either through the direct action of the Putin regime or through the shocking conditions in which he was held.

In a country where freedom of expression has largely been extinguished, Navalny's was a singular voice speaking out against the corruption of a system whose actions have led to the deaths of many tens of thousands in Ukraine, the displacement of millions and the very real prospect of war in the margins of Europe.

Less well known are the foundations on which Navalny built his life and his commitment to truth. Speaking at the end of his trial in 2021 he said:

If you want, I'll talk to you about God and salvation... The fact is that I am a Christian, which usually rather sets me up for constant ridicule in the Anti-Corruption Foundation, because mostly our people are atheists, and I was once quite a militant atheist myself. But now I am a believer, and that helps me a lot in my activities, because everything becomes much, much easier... There are fewer dilemmas in my life, because there is a book in which, in general, it is more or less clearly written what action to take in every situation.

Navalny continued:

It's not easy to follow this book, of course, but I am actually trying... 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.' I've always thought that this particular commandment is more or less an instruction to activity.

And so, while certainly not really enjoying the place where I am, I have no regrets about coming back, or doing what I'm doing... Because at some difficult moment I did as required by the instructions, and did not betray the commandments.'