

Company Archives: IMAGES AND INFORMATION

Hard on the heels of the new Company website, an exciting new development is the creation of the linked Musicians' Company Archives Project website. Pastmaster Paul Campion is the driving force behind the initiative to collate and facilitate direct access to the wealth of the Company's archives and treasures. Freeman David Herbert has been instrumental in setting up this new, associated, website to help make such access a reality. We asked David to tell us more.

Stored securely in the Guildhall Library are bound volumes containing the handwritten minutes taken at every Court Meeting of the Company since 1772. Offering a fascinating look into how things were done differently in the past and how many things have stayed the same, they give an overall feeling of being 'at the meeting'.

The Archive Project Team has been working for some time on how best to publish, not only the raw information held within these 'Minute Books', but also an indication of the Court's proceedings, attitudes, finances and tolerance (or otherwise) to issues within the Company. We are now set to pursue these goals in three separate, but interconnected ways.

First, the work already started with the Institute for Historical Research at UCL and ROLLCO (Records of London's Livery Companies Online – see *Preserve Harmony Issues 48 and 49*), is continuing in the safe hands of Liveryman Dr Frances Palmer. Facts are being taken from the Court Minute Books (names, dates, fines etc.) and added to the centralised database of Freemen and Apprentices - already published by the IHR at: www.londonroll.org

Second is the photographing of every page of each Minute Book and publishing them chronologically on a new and separate website set up for the purpose. In this way, each page can be read as written 'on the day' by the Clerk. The number of pages is still not exactly known, but (up to the year 1914) somewhere in the region of 2,400 seems likely. The address for this new website is www.wcomarchive.org.uk and it already contains many images from the first few books.

The Musicians' Company's website remains at wcom.org.uk and work is underway to present an easy linkage between the two sites. The importance of a seamless integration between these resources has underpinned the new site's development from the very beginning. (Image 1)

The third channel, and perhaps the most ambitious part of the project, will be to convert each page into a computer readable format such that it can be searched by existing, readily available PC software. This means the pages will be much easier to read than the handwritten script of the original – sometimes written in immaculate calligraphic style... and sometimes not! (Image 2)

The technical challenges of this are being addressed, and no doubt volunteers will soon be required to take part in the conversion and transcribing activity. Once the required layout details have been established, Project

Team member Liveryman Emma Ryder Richardson will be co-ordinating the volunteer 'army' (hopefully we can, indeed, assemble an army), dealing with the allocation of Minute Book pages and reception of the transcriptions. The Archives website already contains charts showing the progress of this activity – at the time of going to press we are 0.1% complete... so, we are well on the way!

The Archive Project Team is pleased and thankful to welcome on-board Freeman Jan Yerbury, whose eye for detail and calm persistence will be much utilised as the transcribing part of the project progresses and indeed in areas of historical research.

The Archive website also includes 'Treasures', which will contain images of items such as original scores and manuscripts, artworks, documents and other items of importance, value or just interest to the Company and its members. Sir Edward Elgar's *Elegy* is familiar to most members, especially due to its inclusion in the Company's Annual Evensong at St Paul's Cathedral. Elgar's original handwritten score is owned by the Company and is now one of the first manuscripts available to view on the Archive website. Explanatory notes, further historical documentation regarding its provenance and indeed a 1933 sound recording (conducted by the Composer) are also now available online. (Image 3)

The information, evidence and images presented on this Archive site will be of great value to historians, genealogists, City researchers and, of course, Company Members who may be trying to find mention of past family members, or those otherwise fascinated to look through some of the Company's history. As our new repository of **all** archive material, copies of past issues of *Preserve Harmony* will also now be stored on the Archives website. Access and download will be just as before, but simply from a different address. As mentioned above, easy links will be in place between both systems. (Image 4)

If any readers of *Preserve Harmony* have documents or items they feel might be of relevance and importance to the Company (and wouldn't object to them being photographed for the website), please contact the Project Team *via* the site's "Contact Us" page. Any views on content, layout and organisation of the Archive website are also welcome. Future issues of *Preserve Harmony* will contain updates on our engrossing and expanding project - or visit the new website at: <http://www.wcomarchive.org.uk>

HOW MANY DID YOU RECOGNISE?

Answers to the images on pages 8 and 9

Top Row

- 1 HRH The Duchess of Kent receiving the Honorary Freedom of the Company.
- 2 Outreach activity at Treloar School.
- 3 An anonymous member of our Company.
- 4 The 25-year Maisie Lewis celebratory concert

Second Row

- 5 John Christie Award winners Alison Hagley & Gerald Finley.
- 6 Jazz at Ronnie Scott's.
- 7 Our first Lady Master, Petronella Burnett-Brown and her husband Anthony, the Company's first wife and husband Court members
- 8 A Professional Musicians' Advisory Panel symposium

Third Row

- 9 A Christmas choral tradition directed by Stephen Cleobury.
- 10 "Hell-bent for the Royal Academy", Alison Pearce.
- 11 The first lady member of the *Preserve Harmony* team, Patricia Norland Prindl.
- 12 Quincentenary memorabilia.
- 13 Pancake racing in Guildhall Yard

Bottom Row

- 14 Kneller Hall musicians in Afghanistan.
- 15 The Summer Banquet fire at Stationers' Hall
- 16 Military bands.
- 17 Maggie Alford receives the Company's Gold Medal.
- 18 The initiator of Company Jazz, Jeffery Lockett.
- 19 *Preserve Harmony* Founders Adrian Davis & John Iles

Far Left Corner

- 20 Henry Willis 4, the current father of the Company
- 21 The Brooke Swan Car, complete with steam organ.
- 22 Ivor Mairants, provider of our first guitar prize