

## Recent Activity of the Feltmakers' Historical Committee

The Company's Historical Committee, inaugurated some five years ago, partly to investigate the significant gaps in the Company's knowledge of its history exposed by Rosemary Weinstein's official record produced in our 400<sup>th</sup>. celebratory year, has been concentrating its efforts on the seventeenth century in particular. The reasons for that are principally that the official records such as the Book(s) of Members have disappeared in the mists of time for that period, and at the same time, our establishing of our own credibility in that period brought us into significant growing pains in our relationship with our 'parent' company the Haberdashers.

***The Company's Hall.*** It is tantalising to speculate what might have been if we had managed to keep a Hall in the city, such as the one we occupied in Queen Victoria Street in that century. Alas, the Great Fire of London put paid to that, and Alastair Hay's thoroughly researched paper on that topic which can be borrowed by contacting the Committee Chairman, is a fascinating read. The Committee is investigating putting up a Blue Plaque on the relevant site in the street just down from St Paul's Cathedral, so that at least we can leave our mark somewhere.

***Commissioned Research.*** The absence of ongoing records of the Company's welfare in the 17<sup>th</sup>. Century and the sophistication of research skills needed to delve into the archives of the Guildhall and the National archives at Kew, led the Committee to conclude that a professional archivist was required, if solid material was to be unearthed. Fortunately for us, Stephen Freeth, until recently Keeper of the Guildhall Archives was available to give us some research time to burrow into the gaps. Thanks to the generosity of a small band of Feltmaker historical wellwishers, funding was assembled which enabled Stephen Freeth to conduct that research and his findings have been extremely rewarding and fascinating. Three papers have been produced: the Feltmakers' relations with the City 1603-1668, The Feltmakers rolls of Masters, Wardens and officers in that period, and the Lists of apprenticeships in the same period. The information in the latter two papers is not complete but the two papers provide helpful lists of names where before the Company had only fragmentary information. The Committee is working on seeing what is the best way of making this material more widely available. The fascinating story of our relations with the Haberdashers in the 17<sup>th</sup>. century has been touched on. If resources permit, it is hoped to commission Stephen Freeth to take this further.

***The Book of Members.*** Unlike later centuries, we do not have a complete roll of who our members were in the 18<sup>th</sup>.Century. We know we could muster as many as five hundred plus in the Livery from the Association Oath Roll of 1696 and the Abjuration Roll of 1673. But who they all were is a mystery being unravelled by Jane Way's patient work going through the Court Minutes for 1725 to 1772. This research will be particularly helpful for budding genealogists seeking to look up their forebears in that period.

These are three of the areas that the Historical Committee has been, and is continuing to look at. There have been other pieces of research, and the Committee has a 'shopping list' of projects it hopes to tackle in due course. Livery members with an interest in things historical to do with the Company are always welcome to express an interest, and indeed to join the Committee or become an amateur researcher for the Committee. The Chairman is always keen to receive further expressions of interest.

Rowland Brown  
Chairman of the Historical Committee  
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