



The Furniture Makers' Company
the furnishing industry's charity

The Furniture Makers' Company
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MEMBERSHIP

JOINING THE LIVERY



Members at a social event

The Furniture Makers' Company is the City of London livery company and charity for the furnishing industry.

Our vision is for a thriving British furnishing industry with a talented workforce delivering high-quality products, which supports those in need from within its ranks and those who have served it in the past.

We achieve this through three pillars of activity – education, excellence and welfare.

EDUCATION

We have developed a comprehensive and enriching education programme to develop, steward and inspire the next generation of designers, makers, retailers and leaders to make it stronger and more prosperous than ever before.

EXCELLENCE

We recognise excellence and the highest standards in design and production through our coveted Guild Marks - the Bespoke Guild Mark, Design Guild Mark and Manufacturing Guild Mark.

Each Mark raises the profile of British design, innovation and manufacturing, helping to build a thriving industry for the future, as well as bringing prestige and publicity for award holders.

WELFARE

Our charity has been supporting the welfare of employees in the UK furnishing industry for more than 100 years, through good economic times and bad.

We are here to help anyone from the industry, past or present, who has fallen on tough times by awarding financial grants.

WHY JOIN THE FURNITURE MAKERS' COMPANY?

The Furniture Makers' Company is a modern livery company whose membership comprises of individuals and businesses that make up the diverse, vibrant and creative UK furnishing industry. It is a force for good and our members are the fuel that fire the engine and help us fulfill our vision. On joining The Furniture Makers' Company, you will be warmly welcomed into a friendly and supportive community of furnishing industry colleagues and professionals.

WHAT IS A LIVERY COMPANY?

City of London livery companies comprise London's ancient and modern trade associations and guilds. The earliest guilds date back to the 12th century when people working in the same craft in London grouped together to regulate competition within their trade and maintain high standards.

The term livery company was introduced when guilds started introducing their own clothing and regalia – or livery – to distinguish their members from other guilds. Today, there are 110 livery companies that support matters of trade, education, charity and fellowship within their sector. They also play an integral part in the City's governance.


The Furniture Makers' Company was founded as a guild in 1951 and granted livery status in 1963, becoming the 83rd livery company of the City of London and only the sixth to be formed since the reign of Queen Anne ended in 1714. It was incorporated by Royal Charter in 2013.

WHO CAN JOIN?

Unlike some other livery companies, all our members must be associated in some way to the furnishing industry. This helps us maintain industry relevance and facilitate meaningful business connections among our membership.

You could be a designer, manufacturer, distributor, craftsman, retailer, supplier, lecturer, PR practitioner or journalist – all are welcome. We encourage and welcome diversity – sectoral and cultural – within our membership and would be happy to hear from you, even if you have now retired.

What our members tend to have in common is a passion for the furnishing industry, a philanthropic desire to 'give back' and a wish to meet and converse with like-minded individuals.



The annual celebratory dinner at the Mansion House, commemorating the Master's installation



Wendy Shorter, upholsterer and educator

WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?

Joining a livery company brings with it a wealth of opportunity to be part of a unique and historic British institution and give back to a sector which has given you a career.

The specific benefits you receive will depend on the level of involvement you undertake. As with all memberships, what you get out will be determined by what you put in.

DEVELOP YOUR NETWORK

We have a full calendar of social events, business orientated seminars and activities that provide members the opportunity to meet, get fresh perspectives, widen their knowledge and help them to develop professionally and personally.

RAISE YOUR PROFILE

City of London livery companies are long standing, respected institutions and membership brings kudos and regard, elevating you and your business' brand image. Membership also provides superb PR opportunities for individuals to shout about.

GET ACCESS TO EXCLUSIVE EVENTS

We organise a wide variety of formal and informal events during the year, providing members the opportunity to meet, dine and share unforgettable experiences in some of the City of London's historic and magnificent venues, including the annual dinner at the Mansion House celebrating the installation of the new Master.

FUN AND FELLOWSHIP

The livery offers the opportunity to socialise on a regular basis and nurture lifelong friendships and invaluable business relationships.

GIVE SOMETHING BACK

As the charity for the furnishing industry, we offer members the opportunity to make a positive impact on the industry by supporting our charitable activities. You can also collaborate with other members through rewarding committee work that support our many initiatives in the areas of education, excellence and welfare.

EXCLUSIVE DISCOUNT TO HIRE FURNITURE MAKERS' HALL

Tucked away between Liverpool St, Moorgate and Bank underground stations is the heart and home of the Furniture Makers: Furniture Makers' Hall. The stunning venue has three dedicated spaces with state-of-the-art audio-visual facilities that cater for business meetings to grand dinners. Members get preferential room hire and catering package rates.

JOINING AS A FREEMAN

Whether you are interested in obtaining the Freedom of the City, want to become a liveryman or you aspire to one day be installed as Master of our great company, every single person starts their Furniture Makers' journey as a freeman.

We welcome applications from those in the industry who share our aims and values and are suitably qualified to join, either by their professional training and education, their skills and experience, or their association with the industry.

Most of our members are proposed by an existing member who is likely to be a business contact or colleague. If you need help with obtaining a proposer, we can help by putting you in touch with a senior member who will take you through the process.

On expressing your desire to become a freeman, we will invite you to join us for an informal interview with other new candidates at Furniture Makers' Hall. There you will meet with the membership chairman and other senior members so they may get acquainted with you and assess your suitability for joining. This is also your opportunity to find out more about our organisation and ask any questions you have.

Individuals who meet the professional criteria will also be asked to evidence their desire to promote the aims of the Company and participate in its professional, social and charitable activities.

If all goes well, we will then arrange for you to attend a formal admission ceremony at Furniture Makers' Hall with other new freemen, during which you will sign the declaration and be personally welcomed into the livery by the Master and wardens.



Alan Styles, managing director of Axminster Tools



Daniel Hopwood, interior designer

HISTORY OF THE FREEDOM OF CITY

One of the oldest surviving traditional ceremonies still in existence today, is believed to have been first presented in 1237.

The medieval term ‘freeman’ meant someone who was not the property of a feudal lord but enjoyed privileges such as the right to earn money and own land. Town dwellers who were protected by the charter of their town or city were often free – hence the term ‘freedom’ of the City.

From the Middle Ages and the Victorian era, the freedom was the right to trade, enabling members of a guild or livery to carry out their trade or craft in the Square Mile.

A fee or fine would be charged and in return the livery companies would ensure that the goods and services provided would be of the highest possible standards. In 1835, the Freedom was widened to incorporate not just members of livery companies but also people living or working in the City or those with a strong London connection.

WHAT’S NEXT - OBTAINING THE FREEDOM OF THE CITY OF LONDON

Having been admitted to the Company as a freeman, in time we will assist you to proceed with the next stage of membership, which is becoming a liveryman.

Freemen are encouraged to immerse themselves into Company life by joining committees and attending events before considering applying to become a liveryman. Members who decide to progress from freeman usually do so because they wish to enhance their profile and give their time and talent to help us plan and meet our objectives in education, excellence and welfare.

On applying to become a liveryman, you will first have to be interviewed by the membership chairman and other senior members as part of the selection process. Following the interview, we will support you to attain the Freedom of the City of London.

Although most of the historical, practical reasons for obtaining the Freedom of the City have disappeared, you must get the Freedom before becoming a liveryman, and full member of the livery. To this day, the Freedom of the City remains a unique part of London’s history to which many people who have lived or worked in the City have been proud to be admitted.

BECOMING A LIVERYMAN

On confirmation that you will become a liveryman, you will be invited to attend an admission ceremony at Furniture Makers' Hall.

Following a morning visit to Guildhall, where you will be presented with the Freedom of the City of London, you will return to our hall and be welcomed into the court room at one of the Company's quarterly court meetings. You will then be clothed in a gown - the livery of the Company – and sign the declaration.

After the formal ceremony, new liverymen will dine with the court. Being admitted as a liveryman is a special occasion in a person's life and, as such, your partner or a designated family member will also be invited to see you become a liveryman.

LIVERYMAN PRIVILEGES

As a liveryman of the Company, you will be invited to participate in some of the City's historic ceremonies and events. A red-letter day in the annual City calendar is the United Guilds' Service held at St Paul's Cathedral, where the Masters of all 110 City livery companies process, gowned and robed, to a sermon delivered by a senior cleric. Liverymen can also vote in the annual elections for Sheriffs of the City of London and the election of the Lord Mayor. Liverymen also get to experience some of the more light-hearted traditions such as the annual sheep drive. In time, after showing your dedication to the Company through committee work and active participation in events, you may consider running for election to join the Company's court of assistants. The court oversees the governance of The Furniture Makers' Company. It is made up of the Master, junior and senior wardens, Past Masters and several court assistants.



Fara Butt, sales and marketing director at Shire Beds



Kitchen, bedroom, bathroom sector recruiter Simon Acres

INTERESTED IN TAKING THE NEXT STEP?

If you are interested in joining The Furniture Makers' Company as a freeman or progressing in your membership journey, we invite you to get in touch with our membership manager to find out more.

We hold several prospective new member meetings each year, where you can hear more about the benefits of membership. There is plenty of opportunity to ask questions and to meet other members in a social setting. If you are interested in attending a session, please contact us.

MEMBERSHIP RATES

Membership is awarded to the individual and once obtained remains with the individual on payment of the annual fees regardless of whether they move company, trade or retire, allowing for a long-term relationship. Should you require fee invoices to be made payable by your business, please arrange with the membership manager.

Please consult the latest membership rates card for the current rates of membership.

For more information, please contact our membership manager:

020 7256 5558

membership@furnituremakers.org.uk

www.furnituremakers.org.uk/membership

