

Modern Livery Companies Being at 76's & 77's

The definition of a Modern Company in one formed since 1926.

Before that date, there was a "long gap" before the Master Mariners (78 in the order of precedence) came along, with the endorsement of George V, who bestowed the title Honourable on them.

The first of the new is well known, and not in contention, but the one before is more complex. Logic dictates it was company 77, the Carmen. But their date of charter or incorporation in 1517 was certainly not the last before the Master Mariners. In fact many of the old companies came along after the Carmen, until finally the Fan Makers in 1709 (precedence 76). It was after them that livery companies went into decline, and no more new companies were formed for nearly 220 years.

The growth of London beyond its City walls, and hence lack of control by the liveries over their crafts and trades were a principal reason for the malaise, and it was the creation of City & Guilds (in 1878) which played a major part in stopping the rot.

So the Carmen were an aberration, and I'm not sure why their precedence is so low. They are certainly much older than many of the companies senior to them in precedence. That of course is true elsewhere (famously Weavers at 42), but the Carmen are more confusing being assumed, by their precedence, but wrongly, to be the last of the old. That curious accolade belongs to the Fan Makers.

The complete list of Livery Companies by precedence can be viewed at the A-Z menu tab, and from the above it will be seen that companies from 78-110 are termed Modern. This term can confuse, for some post war liveries represent very ancient trades, notably the Farmers. Others, eg the Tobacco Pipe Makers and the Lightmongers, are resurrections of earlier defunct guilds.

The Master and Wardens of the Modern Companies dine together twice a year, usually on the second Monday in March and September. (see Diary tab).

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