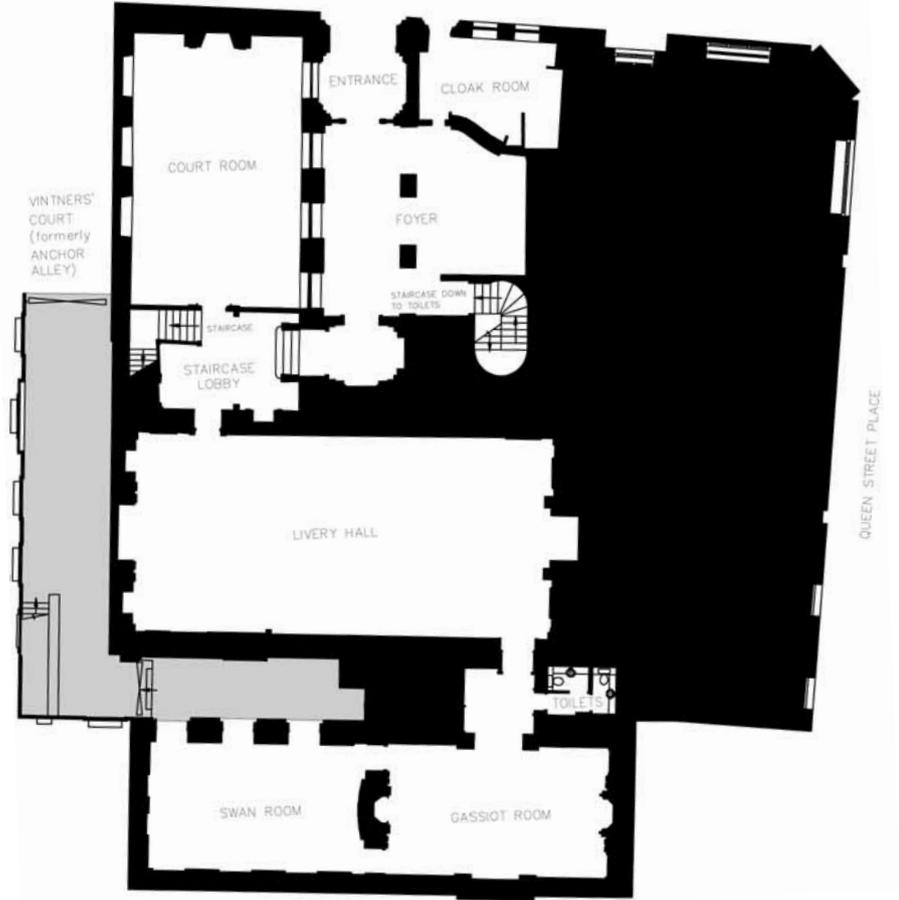


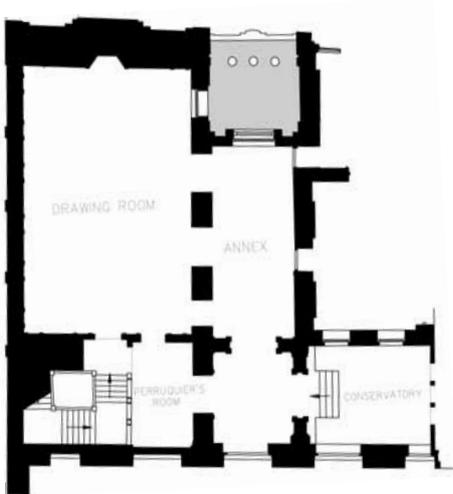
A photograph of an ornate, dark wood chair with a red and gold patterned seat and backrest, positioned in a grand, wood-paneled room. The room features a large painting of a man in a white and red outfit, a vase of flowers, and a white swan on a table in the background. The floor is covered in a patterned rug.

A SHORT GUIDE TO  
VINTNERS'  
HALL

*FRONT COVER: the Court Room and Master's Chair. The Court Room is one of the oldest continuously-used rooms in the City of London. Most of it dates from 1671, when it was rebuilt after the Great Fire*



*Ground floor*



*First floor*



A SHORT GUIDE TO  
**VINTNERS'  
HALL**

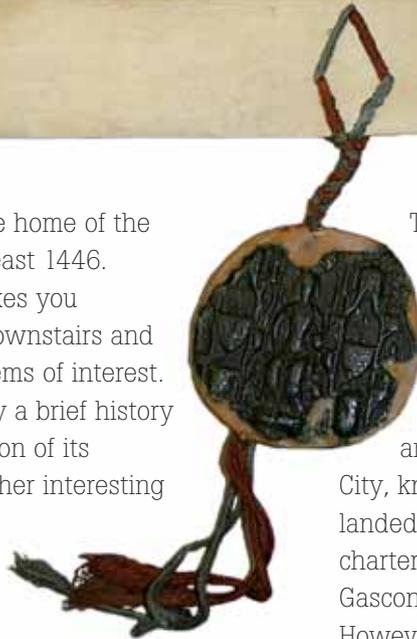
*Vintners' Hall, 2013*



The Royal  
Charter of  
1363



Welcome to Vintners' Hall, the home of the Vintners' Company since at least 1446. The first part of this guide takes you through the various rooms, downstairs and then upstairs, pointing out items of interest. This is followed at page 31 by a brief history of the Company, an explanation of its relevance today, and some other interesting aspects of the Company such as its involvement with swans on the River Thames.



The word 'vintner' means wine merchant. Wine from Gascony (Bordeaux), then part of the dominions of the English Crown, was England's principal import in the early Middle Ages. The Vintners' Company came into existence to supervise the wine trade, and its members congregated in this part of the City, known as the Vintry, where the wine was landed and sold. The Company received its first royal charter, granting a monopoly of the wine trade with Gascony, from Edward III on 15th July, 1363. However it is known to have existed much earlier. Until the Reformation, it was also a religious



*The Company's painting of St Martin Dividing his Cloak with the Beggar. Attributed to Van Dyck, it hangs in the Court Room*

fraternity, dedicated to St Martin of Tours, which provided its members with a proper funeral, and prayers for their souls after death. Many wine fraternities in England and abroad were associated with St Martin. The Company's church, St Martin Vintry, stood a little to the north-east of Vintners' Hall. Its site is now under Upper Thames Street.

Today, the Company has around 535 members, some 28% of whom are wine merchants, and 116 of whom are ladies. Senior members are known as Liverymen, and junior members as Freemen. The Company is governed by the Court of Assistants, under the chairmanship of the Master, supported by three Wardens. The Company has had a Beadle since at least 1446 and a Clerk since 1537. St Martin is still the Company's patron saint.

## The Site and Exterior

The site of the Hall was bequeathed to the Company in 1446 by Guy Shuldham, one of its members. He was only a trustee, and the Company was almost certainly using the buildings on the site for many years before that. The Hall was burnt down in the

Great Fire of London, in September 1666. Rebuilding began almost immediately, and the Court held its first meeting in the new building in 1671. In 1815–19 Southwark Bridge was built, and in 1822 the south side of Upper Thames Street was widened by twenty



*Vintners' Hall from  
Thames Street, by  
Wilson, c.1790*



*Vintners' Hall courtyard, c.1810, by George Shepherd. The doorway leads to the present Dining Hall. On the right is the Court Room. The wing opposite is now Five Kings House.*

feet. Both projects affected the Hall, which lost some of its rooms, and was given a new facade and entrance gates. The present facade dates from 1910.

Visitors are often misled by the adjoining building, whose elaborate pillared facades face both Upper Thames Street to the north, and the Thames to the south. Both facades have the Vintners' arms on the pediments. This is not Vintners' Hall, but Vintners' Place, an office block built by the Company in 1992, immediately west of the Hall. It replaced ten former buildings, separated by narrow lanes, and occupied by forty-three different tenants. The Hall itself, being

substantially late 17th century, is much smaller. Its street frontage is so restrained as to be easily missed.

The medieval Vintners' Hall had the standard layout of a large domestic house at that time, a layout that can still be seen in many Oxford and Cambridge colleges. Entrance gates led into a courtyard, with ranges of rooms to left and right, including a day room or parlour. On the far side of the courtyard was the dining hall, with a garden beyond. Much of this layout still survives. Gone for ever are the entrance gates, the north ends of both side wings, and the north part of the former courtyard. These

*Vintners' Place, next to  
Southwark Bridge*



are now under Upper Thames Street. However the rest of the courtyard now forms the Entrance Foyer; the dining hall, now the Livery Hall, is still opposite; the range of rooms on the left has become Five Kings House, let out as offices to tenants; and the range on the right, or at least its

principal room, the parlour, is now the Court Room. Both the Court Room and the Livery Hall still follow almost exactly their ground plans in medieval times. Sadly, the garden with its much-admired mulberry trees was built over in the nineteenth century.



*Vintners' Hall,  
1829*



*The Entrance Foyer*

## The Entrance

Within the gates sit two Coade Stone swans, purchased by the Company in 1800/01. Over the entrance is a stained glass lunette depicting the Company's coat of arms. A memorial to the 20 members of the Company who lost their lives in the Second World War is just inside the gates on the left hand side. It is of slate, by Richard Kindersley. Note in particular the name of TP Coode DSO, Royal Navy. He was the Fleet Air Arm pilot who led the successful Swordfish attack on the German battleship *Bismarck* on 26th May, 1941.

The foyer was redesigned in 2002. At the far end is a 17th century limewood carving of St Martin Dividing his Cloak with the Beggar. The *trompe l'oeil* behind it of Tours, by Janet Shearer, was added in 2004. To the left is a memorial to the 14 members of the Company who lost their lives in the First World War. It was carved in 1920 by Esmond Burton (Master 1948).

The portraits are of Henry White (Master 1891), by William Edwards Miller, 1901; Air Chief Marshal Sir Christopher Courtney GBE, KCB, DSO (Master 1964), by Cowan Dobson; and a Mr Van Horn, a great wine drinker of the 18th century.

*Vintry Ward Schoolboy. Coade Stone, c.1840*



*St Martin  
Dividing his  
Cloak with the  
Beggar.  
Limewood  
Carving, 17th  
century*

This is by Joseph Highmore, 1743, with a contemporary explanatory panel.

Also displayed here are a collection of silver wine labels bequeathed by Frederic Anderson; a late 19th century bronze figure of a grape picker, given by Past Master John Davy; and a Coade Stone figure of a charity schoolboy. This used to stand outside the Vintry Ward School in Brickhill Lane, bombed in the Second World War.

The Elliptical Staircase to the basement was built in 1972. Its two alcoves contain marble busts. One, dated 1861, is of Henry White (Master 1891) by Joseph Durham, sculptor of the Albert Memorial. The other is of Christian Tawke (Master 1828) by Edward Hodges Baily, 1845. Shortly before, Baily had completed his monumental figure of Admiral Nelson in Trafalgar Square.



*The Staircase Lobby*

## The Staircase Lobby

You have now descended to ground level as it was in 1666. The fireplace and much of the panelling date from the rebuilding after the Great Fire. The *trompe l'oeil* painting over the fireplace, with simulated prints of St Martin and of the Company's coat of arms, was painted by Jeremy Taverner, a Freeman of the Company, in 1711. The painting of Elhanan Bicknell (Master 1853), by Thomas Phillips, was presented by his grandson in 1928. The Jacobean chest of drawers at the foot of the staircase was bequeathed by Esmond Burton (Master 1948).



*Elhanan  
Bicknell*



*Trompe l'oeil painting by Taverner, 1711*



*The Court Room*

# The Court Room

The Court Room, to the right of the Staircase, is one of the oldest continuously-used rooms in London. Here the Company's governing body, or Court, holds its meetings. In this room the Master Vintner, Sir Thomas Bloodworth, is believed to have met General Monck on 12th April 1660 to plan the restoration of the monarchy a few weeks later.

The greater part of the fabric dates from the rebuilding in 1671 after the Great Fire. The panelling is by Symes. The windows were enlarged in 1704 but, in 1717, those on the west side were bricked up

as a fire precaution. The first window on the right as you enter the room was formerly an entrance from the courtyard; it is the only window without a carved surround. The chandeliers date from 1861. The ceiling was replaced in 1909.

Most of the painted shields in the cornice are nearly contemporary with the room. They show the coats of arms of prominent members of the Company, many of them Mayors or Lord Mayors. They were overpainted with other designs around 1908, and rediscovered in 1956-7.



*Shields in the cornice*



*Clock, by  
Speakman,  
presented in  
1704*



*The clock face (detail)*

The many fine pieces of furniture include the Master's Chair, first mentioned in 1800 but possibly bought in 1770-1; a marquetry-cased clock, by William Speakman, given by John Cannon in 1704, the year he was Master, and repaired in 1825 by Parkinson & Frodsham; and the pier glasses near the fireplace, given in 1719 by Richard Collett (Master 1718).

The fine painting over the fireplace shows St Martin and the Beggar. (For an image, see page 4.) It is attributed to Van Dyck, although it may be by Rubens. It is first mentioned in the archives in 1702-3. When the Hall was burgled around 40 years ago this painting was stolen. Fortunately it was discarded on the pavement outside, and recovered the next day. An almost identical painting, but many



*The Master's Chair*



*The Red Wine Cellar*



times larger, is at Windsor Castle. Another version is in a parish church outside Brussels.

The portraits include Charles I; Charles II; Mary II; Prince George of Denmark (Consort of Queen Anne); Robert Shaw (Master 1636); Sir Thomas Rawlinson (Master 1687 and Lord Mayor 1705); and John Wright (Master 1797), by Opie.

The late 19th century Persian (Meshed) carpet was bought by the Company in 1949 for £850. It had

formerly been in Guildhall Art Gallery, where it was used during the Jubilee celebrations for King George V and Queen Mary in 1935. It was cleaned and restored in 2012.

Beneath the Court Room is the Red Wine Cellar, also constructed in 1671. This is rarely open for visitors. It contains the Company's finest wines, used at its dinners and entertainments. As might be expected, these are stored and served to the very highest standards.



*The Livery Hall*

# The Livery Hall

The Livery Hall (dining hall), like the Court Room, is believed to have been rebuilt after the Great Fire on the footprint of its medieval predecessor. The alcove in the north-east corner, now containing plate, was the former entrance from the courtyard. The room still contains late seventeenth century carving, for example the heads under the windows, and the coats of arms in the west screen, below the Royal Arms. The east screen dates only from 1822.

The ceiling was installed in 1932-33, to replace the former ceiling which was collapsing because of death-watch beetle. It was designed by George Alexander Gale, later the Company's Surveyor, and modelled on the ceiling of the Old School Room at

Winchester College. Being of concrete and steel, it saved the Hall from almost certain destruction by German incendiaries in 1940. In 2013, as part of a general refurbishment of the whole room, it was repainted in a new design by Dolby & Taylor.

The coats of arms around the ceiling commemorate distinguished members of the Company, including eleven Vintners who have served as Mayor or Lord Mayor. The Royal Arms, of Coade Stone, were purchased in 1802 for £32 19s. At that date they showed the arms of Hanover. In 1837 they were altered to the current Royal Arms.



*The new ceiling, 2013*



*The centre of the new ceiling*

The wooden Sword Rest near the entrance is of 1705. It was made to accommodate the City Sword when Sir Thomas Rawlinson (Master 1687) dined at the Hall during his Mayoralty. It is carved with his arms, and the arms of the City and the Company. It is still used for the City Sword when the Lord Mayor dines at Vintners' Hall.



*The Sword Rest, with  
the City Sword*

The small stool in the alcove nearby was provided in 1956, to make access easier. The chandeliers were bought from Oslers in 1874, and originally lit by gas. Although the Hall was not badly damaged during the Second World War, much of the Victorian stained glass was blown out. The opportunity was then taken to eliminate what remained, together with some other Victorian alterations.

Some of the Company's plate is permanently displayed in alcoves. Most of the early plate was sold after 1666, to pay for the rebuilding of the Hall after the Great Fire, but note in particular, at the west end, the Coconut Cup, a rare piece of pre-Reformation silver, hallmarked 1518-19; and the Gittens pot, a stoneware jug with silver-gilt mounts and an

inscription recording its presentation by Past Master David Gittens in 1563. A recent acquisition is the collection of tastevins, displayed at the east end and arranged so as to replicate the Company's coat of arms.

The engraved window at the north-western end of the Livery Hall was given by Paul Wates of Wates City Ltd, to commemorate the partnership of his firm with the Company in the building of Vintners' Place. The engraving links the Vine and Winemaking with Joy and Charity, as in George Herbert's poem. The designer was Beverley Shore Bennett and the engraver

Hugh Whitwell. The four banners were carried in the Lord Mayoral procession in 1879, when both the Lord Mayor, Sir Francis Wyatt



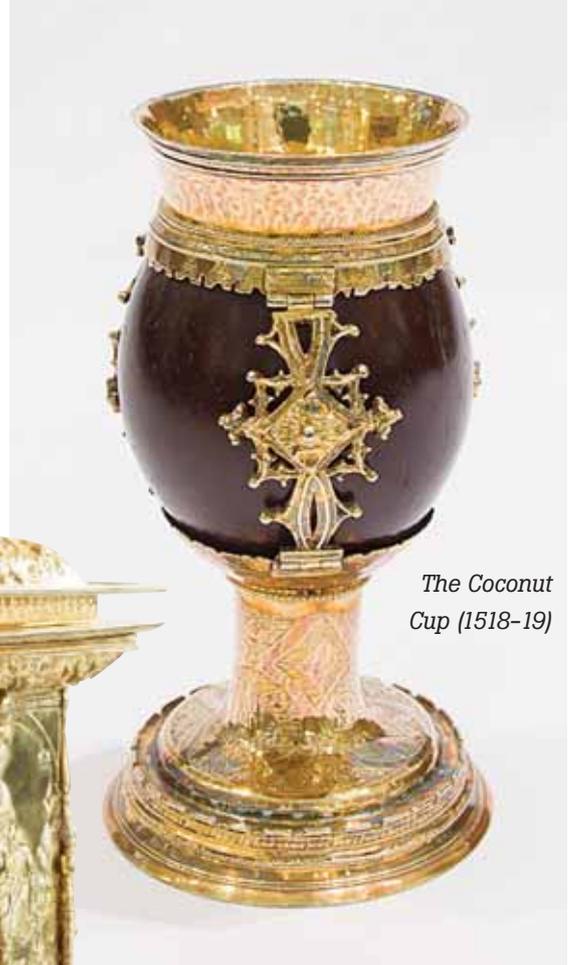
*The Plate Stand  
at the west end*



*The west end of the Livery Hall, by John Crowther, 1880*

Truscott (Master 1880), and one of the Sheriffs, Edmund Kelly Bailey, were Vintners. They bear the arms of Truscott, Bailey, the City and the Company, and have been in their present position since 1933.

*The Powel Salt (1569-70), by Affabel Partridge. The Company's greatest treasure, it is not normally displayed*



*The Coconut Cup (1518-19)*



*The Gassiot Room*

# The Gassiot Room and the Swan Room

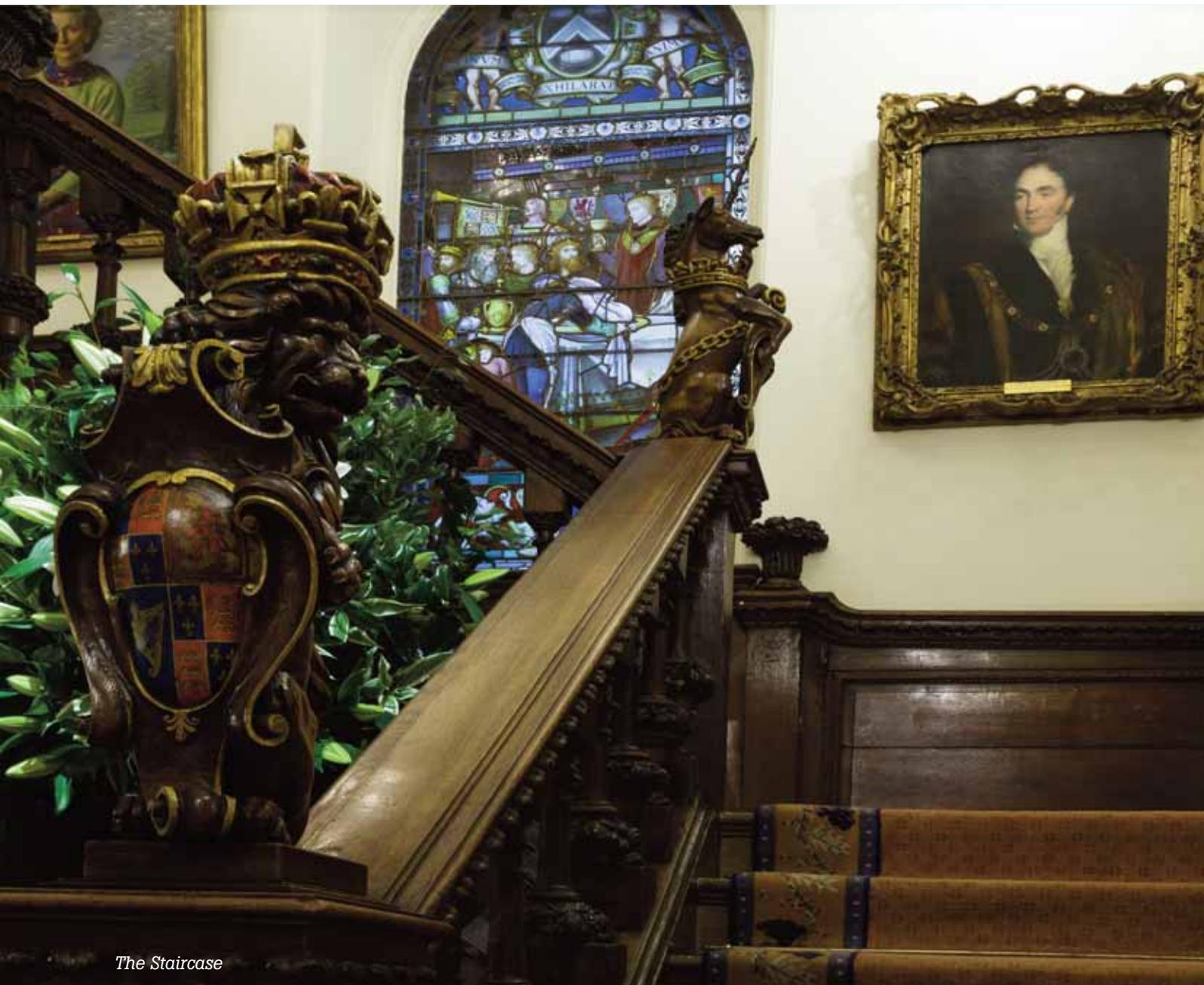
These two rooms are reached from the far (south-east) corner of the Livery Hall. When Vintners' Place was built in 1992, they were created to replace other rooms which had to be demolished. The Gassiot Room (named after Charles Gassiot, Master 1894) had originally been built in 1899 as the Smoking Room, on a site some twenty yards west of its present position. In 1992 it was 'moved' to its present site. It is now used as a small dining room and meeting room. Two recent paintings are a still life, 'Vintners' Gifts', by Paul Brown, depicting various aspects of the Company, the gift of Patrick Cooper (Master 1998); and a Julian Barrow painting showing Court members in the year 2000.

The Swan Room is designed to have an 'outdoor' feel, with its view of the courtyard, and its marble floor for wine tastings. It is decorated with the Swan Banner, oars and swan hooks. The portrait of Bruce Todd, Swan Warden in 1964, is by Aubrey Davidson-Houston. The portrait of Richard Turk, Swan Marker for 56 years, is by James Dring. The pastel of Swan Upping, by Patricia Ashmore, was the gift of Guy Gordon Clark (Master 1989). The display case contains archaeological finds from beneath Vintners' Place, together with a fine collection of old bottles on permanent loan from Findlater, Mackie, Todd & Co Ltd.

On the north wall are coats of arms of recent Vintner Lord Mayors: Sir Noel Bowater (1953-4), Sir Denis Truscott (1957-8) and Sir Lionel Denny (1965-6). Facing the french windows are three false arches. In 1996, these were filled with *trompe l'oeil* murals by Colin Failes. These depict views from Vintners' Hall across the Thames at different times during the Company's history. The Company's coat of arms, in stained glass, was commissioned in 1998.



*The Swan Room*



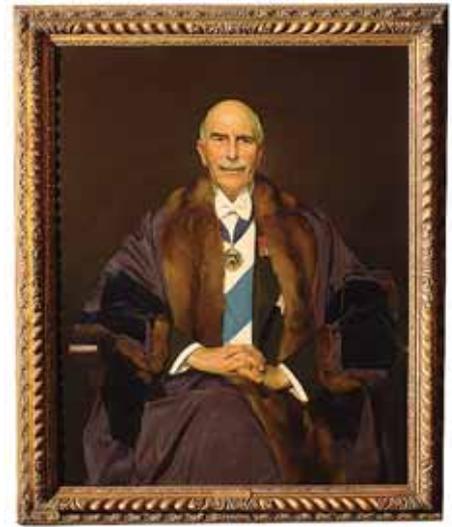
*The Staircase*

# The Staircase

We return the way we came, to the staircase lobby. The staircase was carved by 'Woodroffe' in 1673, for £38 19s 6d. He was almost certainly Edward Woodroffe, Sir Christopher Wren's Assistant Surveyor for rebuilding St Paul's, responsible among other things for the Old Deanery on the south side of the cathedral. The staircase is a charming and almost complete example of its period. It was restored to its late 17th-century appearance after 1945.



*Benjamin Kenton, Master in 1776*



*The Earl of Athlone,  
Master in 1934 and 1935*

The portrait of Benjamin Kenton, Master in 1776 and a benefactor of the Company, hangs next to the Court Room. Every summer the Company holds a church service in St Dunstan's, Stepney, to remember him. This is attended by children from the schools he endowed, four of them wearing clothes of Kenton's time.

Portraits of four Royal Vintners hang near the upper landing: the Earl of Athlone (Master 1934 and 1935), by James Gunn, 1936; Princess Alice Countess of Athlone, by Edward Halliday, 1959; the late Duke of Gloucester (Master 1953), also by Halliday, 1958; and Princess Alice Duchess of Gloucester, by Douglas Anderson, 1972. At the top is the Perruquier's Room, with a vine frieze. Portraits of Past Masters hang there and further up the staircase. These include Brigadier Lorne Campbell of the Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders (Master 1958), who won a Victoria Cross and two DSOs during the Second World War.



*A Corner of the Drawing Room*

# The Drawing Room, Annex and Conservatory



*The earliest deed of the site of Vintners' Hall, written in 1352. One of the witnesses was John Chaucer, father of the poet Geoffrey Chaucer*

We ascend the staircase to the **Drawing Room**. This is above the Court Room, and part of the post-Fire rebuilding. It was redecorated in 1899 by Conrad Schmidt, and again in 1989-90.

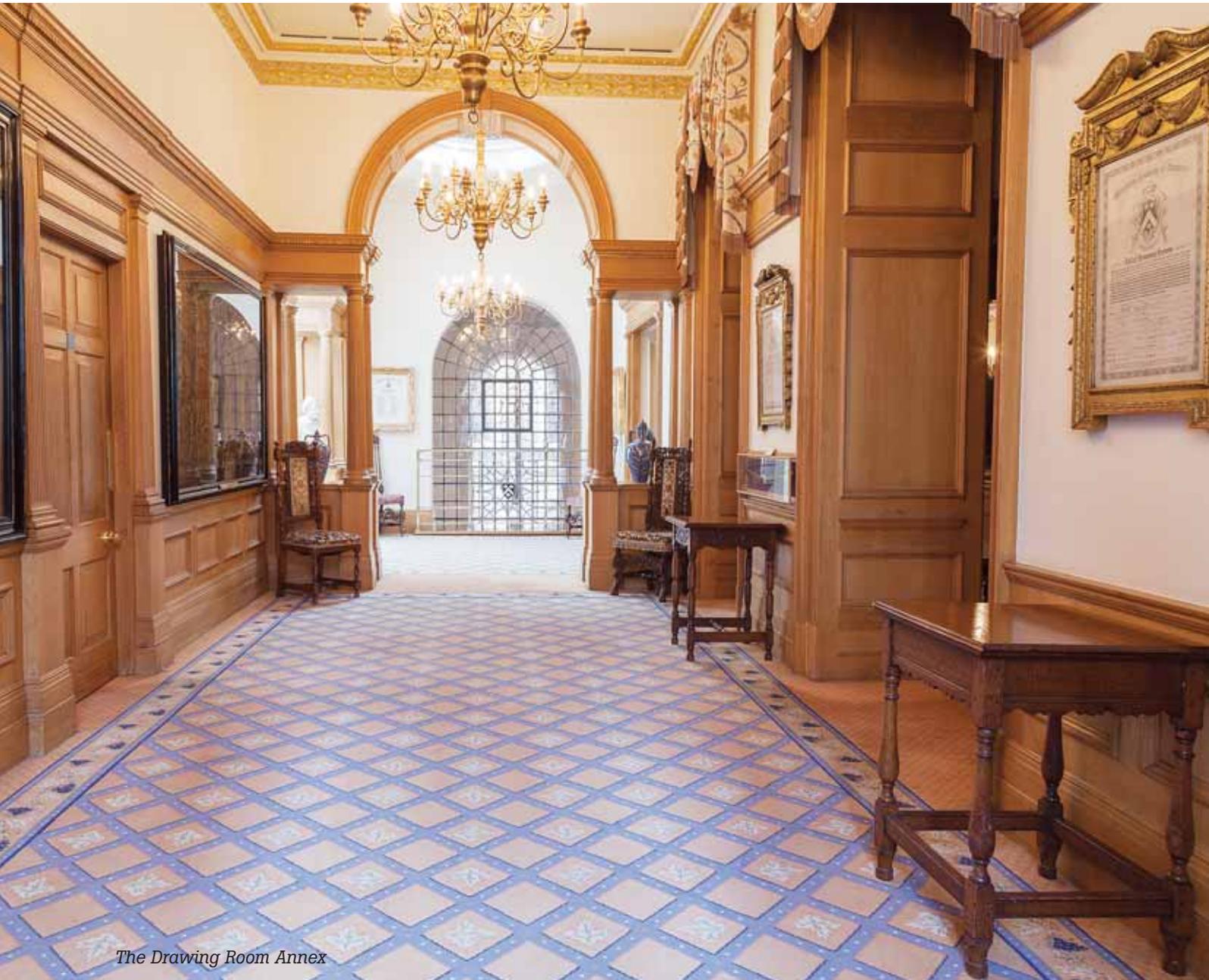
The room contains a fine collection of enamel and porcelain wine labels. Alcoves at the far end house 18th-century glass. The longcase clock, by James Gavell, 1683, was presented by Charles Holden White in 1934 in memory of his brother Cecil (Master 1933). Various Company charters and byelaws line the walls, the earliest dating from 1363. Some have very fine illumination and ornament. The byelaws of 1594 bear the seal and signature of William Cecil, Lord Burghley.

They also bear the 15th-century seal of the Company, showing St Martin and the Beggar. The Boule cabinet opposite contains the metal matrix of this same seal, and of its counterseal, which shows a wine barrel.

Over the Boule cabinet hangs the oldest surviving deed of the Hall site, dated 1352. This will have been received by the Company in 1446, when it acquired the property. In those days all earlier deeds and evidences of a property had to be carefully preserved, to show that there were no breaks in the legal title or outstanding claims. This requirement continued until the 1920s, to the great benefit of historians. One of the witnesses in 1352 was the prominent vintner John Chaucer, father of Geoffrey Chaucer, the poet and author of *The Canterbury Tales*.



*Illuminated Charter of Philip & Mary, 1558 (detail)*



*The Drawing Room Annex*

The **Annex** was created by building over the former entrance corridor in 1989–90. This had been single-storied. The architects were Biscoe and Stanton, and the decorations were by Louise Prince. The join between the old and new panelling can hardly be detected.

The Samurai Sword was presented in 1947 by Lord Louis Mountbatten after he was made an Honorary Freeman of the Company. It had been surrendered to him in 1945.

The Roll of Honorary Freemen includes Margaret Thatcher (Baroness Thatcher of Kesteven, LG OM FRS), on 19th January 2000, one of only 27 Honorary Freemen since 1834.

The Flemish Tapestry of 1466 depicts St Martin and St Dunstan, and bears an inscription in Latin requesting prayers for the parents of Walter Hertford, 'monk of this church'. It is believed to have started life as an altar frontal in Canterbury Cathedral. In June 1783 it was displayed in the Clerk's office, and the publisher and antiquary



*Roll of Honorary Freemen  
from 1979*

being; and all the lawful rules, statutes and ordinances made and freemen of the said Corporation, or hereafter to the same intent to be maintain, perform, obey and support and I will be contributory to all'm belonging or necessarily appertaining to the Company (as other brethren all manner of lawful summons done in the Wardens name by the Cler the said Corporation, having no lawful or reasonable excuse to the

Date	Signature	Master	Date
15/6/79	John...	...	
14/11/83	Henry...	David E....	
21/2/95	Henry...	...	
19/1/00	Margaret Thatcher	...	
14/11/01	...	...	
14/11/01	...	...	

*Margaret Thatcher's  
signature, January 2000*



*The Flemish Tapestry of 1466, showing (l.) St Martin and the Beggar, and (r.) St Dunstan*

John Nichols drew and engraved it for the *Gentleman's Magazine*. In 1840 it was found mouldering in the chapel of the Company's almshouses at Mile End, and returned to the Hall. In 1867 it was framed and glazed. In 2005-6 it was cleaned and conserved by the University of Southampton Textile Conservation Centre.

The hearse cloth nearby, intended to be used at funerals of Company members, was given in 1539 by John Hussee (Master 1528-31). It bears fine English embroidery. This includes the arms of Hussee and of

the Company; the Virgin Mary holding the Body of Christ; St Martin and the Beggar; and St Martin giving alms. The central panel, now very faded, is of Italian silk, with a pomegranate design originally in red and gold. Hearse cloths are extremely rare. Only a dozen are known to survive. Seven are owned by livery companies.





*The Hearse Cloth of 1539, the gift of John Hussee, whose arms can be seen in the lower left*

In 1609 this hearse cloth was sent to Stony Stratford, Buckinghamshire, for the funeral of Michael Hipwell, vintner. He had made it a condition of a bequest to the Company that twenty gowned liverymen should accompany his coffin, with the hearse cloth lying upon it. The hearse cloth was used for the last time in 1931, when Colonel Maldion Byron Bicknell (Master 1930) died in office.



*Detail of the Hearse Cloth, showing St Martin and the Beggar*



*The Samurai Sword*



The **Conservatory** is the final room of our tour of the Hall. It too was formed in 1989-90. The lead cistern with the Company's shield dates from 1701. It once stood in the garden of the Hall. The bronze swan, by Sally Arnup, was the gift of Past Masters David Butler-Adams (Master 2000) and Hedley Newton (Master 2001).

A landing behind leads past the Garter banner of the Duke of Gloucester (Master 1953) to the Hall's gallery. For some reason the banner is framed in reverse.

# The Vintners' Company

## A Brief History

The Vintners' Company is eleventh in precedence of the City Livery Companies, and so one of the 'Great Twelve'. It began as a trading fraternity which undertook religious and charitable duties on behalf of its members. Throughout the Middle Ages the Company controlled the wine trade in London, and dominated that in the rest of the country. Its first charter (15th July, 1363) was the grant of a monopoly of the wine trade with Gascony. However Vintners had been prominent in the City long before this.

William Hardel, the Mayor who witnessed Magna Carta in 1215, was a Vintner. Over 25 Mayors or Lord Mayors have been members of the Company, the most recent in 1965.

By 1437 the fraternity was prosperous enough to obtain from the King a charter of incorporation and a licence in mortmain, i.e.

permission to hold property in its own name in perpetuity. This allowed it to acquire the Hall site in 1446. Many benefactors' wills also provided for the setting up of chantries, to offer prayers for their souls, and the Company

*Alderman William Abraham,  
Master of the Vintners' Company  
in 1442, as painted c.1450 by  
Roger Legh*



*The 1437 Charter*

administered these chantries until Edward VI abolished all chantries in 1547.



By the mid sixteenth century the Company was in decline. The Abolition of the Chantries had deprived it of its religious duties, and the income which had supported them. Also, its countrywide right to sell wine was severely curtailed by an Act of Parliament of 1553. Under the early Stuarts the Company attempted to regain its importance, but suffered from political attacks and from penal taxation when Parliament came to power in the 1640s. At one time there was even a threat of confiscation.

Charles II and James II further curtailed the Company's privileges. The Great Fire of 1666 also caused huge financial loss by destroying both the Hall and many of the investment properties. (In those days there was no fire insurance.) The privileges removed by James II were

restored by William and Mary, but the Company never recovered its former dominance. The last 'search' (inspection) by the Company of retailers of wine took place in 1725. After that, searches were allowed to lapse. Fewer and fewer wine merchants became members of the Company.

The estates, however, grew in value, and the Company was able to extend its charities. This was just as well, because in the nineteenth century the

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## **The Company Today**

The twentieth century was marked by a steady renewal of the Company's support for its trade, culminating in the granting of a new Charter on 20th August, 1973. This extended the Company's powers into the enforcement of EEC wine regulations through a new Wine Standards Board. In 2006 the Board was transferred to the Food Standards Agency.

It has long been obvious that the best way for the Company to help the trade is through grants for education. This started in a small way in 1926, with a yearly scholarship to enable a young person in the wine trade to visit wine-growing areas to study methods of production. In 1953 the Company, and the Wine and Spirit Association, founded the Master of

Livery Companies came under violent political attack. Fortunately the Vintners were able to show both to the Charity Commission and to the City of London Livery Companies Commission (1880-4) that they were spending more on their charities than was legally required.



*Recent winners of the Vintners' Bursaries*

Wine examination. This is held yearly and consists of stringent practical tests as well as theoretical papers. Those who are successful gain the highest qualification in the trade, and are entitled to call themselves Masters of Wine (MW). The Company today makes substantial grants to the Wine and Spirit Education Trust (WSET), which conducts courses at all levels for wine merchants and the general public. It also gives three travelling bursaries to those who excel in the Advanced Certificate of the WSET, as well as the scholarship, which remains in place, and a Vintners' Cup.



*Mei Hong, Vintners' Cup winner in 2012, with the Master*

Until 2005, the various organizations associated with the wine trade were all housed in Five Kings House, adjacent to the Hall. With the refurbishment of Five Kings House in 2005, they mostly relocated to Southwark, to a building owned by the WSET. The Company continues to lend its Hall for wine trade functions and lectures.

The Vintners' Company, like any ancient institution of its type, whilst steeped in history and tradition must also present a credibly modern and relevant face to the world in the 21st century. With its close links to the City of London and its origins in the import, regulation and sale of wine, the Company continues

to maintain strong links with its trade and considers itself 'the spiritual home of the wine trade'.

However charitable giving remains a key aspect of its business today. In addition to the bursaries and scholarships in the field of wine education, the Company supports important trade associations and institutes, and schools. It also makes grants to a wide range of London-based charities, especially those concerned with the social aspects of the misuse of alcohol. At all times, it aims to ensure that its core values of support to the trade, charitable work, welfare, education and fellowship are all applied in the best interests of the community within which it operates.

## The Almshouses

These were originally part of the Hall complex, and were described in the will of Guy Shuldham as 'thirteen little mansions'. They were burnt down in the Great Fire and rebuilt at Mile End. In 1802 they were again rebuilt, through the generosity of Benjamin Kenton. During the 1939-45 War they were again burnt down, and after the war were rebuilt at Nutley in Sussex. In 1997, new pensioners' bungalows were built on the Wine and Spirit Trades' Benevolent Society's site at Eastbourne, and Nutley was sold. Further bungalows were built in 2000, but all were sold in 2013.



*The Company's Almshouses at Mile End, 1854,  
by Thomas Hosmer Shepherd*

© Trustees of the British Museum

## Company Traditions

### The Installation Service

Every July, immediately after the election of the new Master, the Company attends a church service in St James Garlickhythe. The Court walks in procession to and from the church attended by the Clerk, Stavesman, Beadle and Swan Marker, all wearing their gowns, uniforms or badges of office. The Master and Wardens wear their caps and gowns, and by tradition carry nosegays against the stench of the City streets. The way of the procession is swept clean by the Honorary Wine Porter.



*The Installation  
Service procession,  
with the Honorary  
Wine Porter sweeping  
the way*

### The Wine Porters

Wine Porters originally had the exclusive right to 'lower' and 'set up' all wines imported into the City of London, a skilful and dangerous task when wine was imported in enormous barrels. Wine Porters were appointed by the Company, and entirely under its jurisdiction. However the introduction of modern methods reduced the need for Wine Porters, and in 1963 their craft came to an end. The Company retains an Honorary Wine Porter for ceremonial purposes.

## Vintners' Hospitality

One of the earliest legends of the Vintners' Company tells of the Feasting of the Five Kings by Henry Picard, citizen and vintner, in 1357 or 1363. The precise facts are hard to establish, and the identities of the five kings are presumed to be England, Scotland, France, Denmark and Cyprus. An inscribed panel in the Livery Hall commemorates the event. The toast of the Company is still proposed with the words, 'The Vintners' Company, may it flourish root and branch for ever with Five and the Master'.

The Company has entertained many other great persons, among them the four sons of King Henry IV; General Monck; Queen Anne; the four sons of Queen Victoria; the four sons of King George V; and the present Queen. In 1964 the Company held a Swan Feast to celebrate the six hundredth anniversary of its first charter, attended by the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester, Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands, the Princess Royal and Princess Alice Countess of Athlone.



## The Vintners' Song

The Vintners' Song was written by Elkanah Settle for the election of Sir Samuel Dashwood as Lord Mayor in 1702. The music to which the words are now sung was composed in 1908 by Charles Marshall. The Song is sung at Livery dinners and now precedes the Toast of the Vintners' Company. It is followed by five cheers in memory of the Feast of the Five Kings.

The first and last verses give a flavour:

*First Verse:*

*COME, come, let us drink the Vintners' good health,  
'Tis the cask, not the coffer, that holds the true wealth.  
If to founders of blessings we pyramids raise,  
The bowl next the sceptre deserves the best praise.  
Then next to the Queen let the Vintners' fame shine;  
She gives us good laws, and they fill us good wine.*

*Last Verse:*

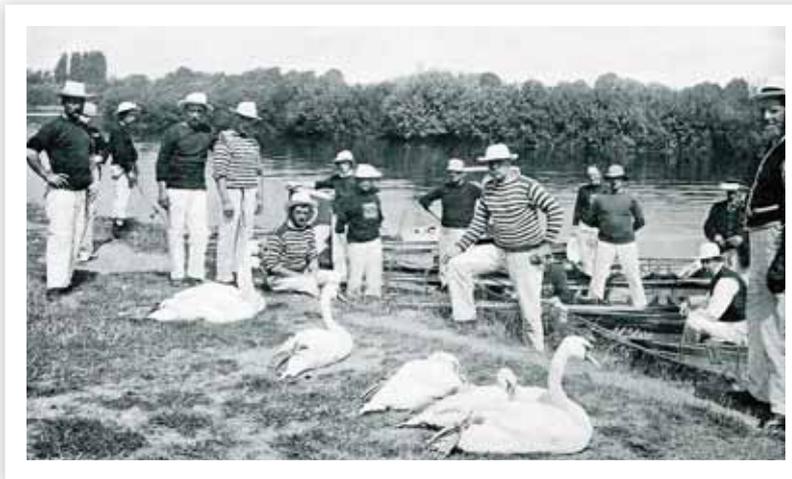
*Let misers in garrets hide up their gay store,  
And heap their rich bags to live wretchedly poor.  
'Tis the cellar alone with true fame is renown'd,  
Her treasure's diffusive, and cheers all around.  
The gold and the gem but the eye's gaudy toy,  
But the Vintners' rich juice gives health, life and joy.*

**The Five Kings panel  
in the Livery Hall**

## The Vintners in Ireland

The Vintners' Company, like the other City Companies, was required to participate in James I's scheme for the Plantation of Ulster. The Company acquired 32,600 acres there (48–50 square miles) known as 'Vintners' Manor' or 'Bellaghy'. In addition the 'Great Twelve' City companies were each required to carry with them several minor companies. The Vintners were allocated the Blacksmiths, Curriers, Fruiterers, Plumbers, Poulterers, Tylers & Bricklayers, Weavers and Woodmongers.

The estate was sold in 1737, subject to a rent charge of £200 p.a. and 'a brace of good bucks'. The rent charge was finally disposed of in 1908. Ulster was not a profitable investment.



## Swans

The Company was granted the Royal privilege to own mute swans on the River Thames over 500 years ago, before its surviving records. There are payments in the earliest account book for looking after swans during the 'Great Frosts' of 1509 and 1522.

Swans continue to be important in the life of the Vintners. Their welfare is entrusted traditionally to the junior warden, known as the Swan Warden; he in turn supervises the Swan Marker. The swans are counted and the cygnets 'marked' on an annual Swan Upping voyage in July. Vintners' swans were formerly marked with two nicks in the beak (the Dyers' swans having one nick, and the Sovereign's swans being unmarked). However since 1997 'nicking' has ceased, and the Company's swans are now 'ringed' with two

Vintners' Company coats of arms. The Company also supports two swan sanctuaries on the Thames.

A Swan Feast is held every year in November. Swan is no longer eaten, though for the sake of tradition it continues on the menu!

*Swan Upping, 1900.  
The Vintners' Uppers are  
in the striped jerseys*

## The Company's Coat of Arms

The Company's arms, *Sable, a chevron between three tuns argent*, were granted by Roger Legh, Clarenceux King of Arms, in 1447. The motto 'Vinum Exhilarat Animum' (Wine Gladdens the Heart) was added in 1822. A crest and supporters were granted in 1957. The crest is, *On a wreath argent and sable a caravel or, laden with tuns proper, the sails gules, the mainsail charged with a cartwheel or, and from the masthead a pennon argent*. The caravel symbolises the Vintners' connection with the wine trade, and in particular with the import of wine from Gascony in the Middle Ages. The gold cartwheel on the red mainsail is a fifteenth-century emblem for St Martin. The supporters are, *On either side a swan, the dexter a cob, the sinister a pen, both nicked in the beak with the mark of the Company all proper, about the neck of each a riband azure, pendent therefrom a bunch of grapes also proper*. Their significance is obvious.



## Further Reading

Anne Crawford, *A History of the Vintners' Company* (London, 1977)

Andrew Robinson, *Vintage Years. The Vintners' Company in the Twentieth Century* (Chichester, 2008)

Sophia Lee and Dominic Naish, *The Worshipful Company of Vintners. A Catalogue of Plate* (privately published, 1996)

The Company's archives are on deposit at Guildhall Library. The Court minutes date from 1608, and are complete except for 1659-69 and 1682-1703. The account books are complete from 1507, though the earliest volume, covering the years 1507-22, is now in the British Library (Egerton MS 1143). The membership records are continuous from 1428.

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Swan Upping