

The Worshipful Company of Blacksmiths



RULES GOVERNING COMPANY AWARDS

INTRODUCTION

The traditional crafts always attract attention particularly when they are demonstrated. The craft and mystery of the blacksmith is one of the oldest and will always draw large crowds at county shows for example and other displays.

The Worshipful Company of Blacksmiths came into existence to control the quality of blacksmiths and their ironwork in the City of London and within a four-mile radius. The early Wardens also had to ensure that blacksmiths did not disturb their neighbours with noise and fumes, while also ensuring that apprentices were properly trained and well treated.

It can be seen that this latest edition of the Rules Governing Company Awards continues this right and tradition to assess work, even though circumstances may have changed radically.

As Chairman of the Craft Committee I hope that this booklet helps to clarify how skills can be recognised over the career of a blacksmith. It has been a source of great satisfaction to the Court of the Company that these awards are so sought after by professional smiths.

I know from listening to the discussions about individual applicants and their work that the assessors are determined to maintain the highest possible standards for the craft. This reflects their own commitment to the craft, and we are grateful to them all for the time that they willingly give to encourage the development of the skills of individuals and the craft.

Richard Regan

Chairman

The Craft Committee

The Worshipful Company of Blacksmiths

London, November 2009

THE BLACKSMITHS CRAFT-SETTING THE STANDARD

THE COMPANY AWARDS

The original remit of the Company was to ensure that blacksmiths who worked within the City of London produced good quality, serviceable goods which were value for money and to "drive charlatans from the City. The four Wardens appointed had to ensure that blacksmiths did not offend their neighbours with noise and fumes and ensure that apprentices were properly trained.

Whilst the Company no longer has the right to take such drastic action against those who under-perform it continues to promote high standards in the craft by rewarding those blacksmiths who produce work of a consistently high quality through the presentation of Company Awards.

The Court of The Worshipful Company of Blacksmiths, on the advice of the Craft Committee, awards a range of Certificates, Diplomas and Medals. These recognise various degrees of ability and quality of workmanship achievable by training and experience of blacksmiths working as individuals and when working as a team.

The awards range from a Certificate of Competence and a Journeyman's Certificate for apprentices starting out on their careers to the highly prestigious Gold Medal. This is awarded only to those blacksmiths who have achieved a lifetime of producing consistently high quality work and made a significant personal contribution to the craft.

At County Shows, judges may recommend to the Company the award of a Certificate of Competence based on the work exhibited and examined by them. The recommendation must be forwarded to the Clerk of the Company who will be able to arrange for the preparation and issue of the Certificate.

TOOLS, MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES

When the Company was formally incorporated at the end of the thirteenth century it had, undoubtedly, developed from a Guild of blacksmiths in the City of London. The tools and materials available to the working smith were very limited. The only malleable black metal available to the working smiths was wrought iron, an expensive material requiring large amounts of charcoal in its production. The only available tools were hand tools and muscle-power. For heavier forgings an assistant could help by acting as a striker, alternating a heavy hammer blow with the lighter hit from smith's hammer which indicated where the striker should aim the next blow.

The modern blacksmith's shop has little in common with its medieval counterpart, with its electric welders, power hammers, drills, grinders, hydraulic presses etc. The materials stored in the steel rack may range from mild steel to bronze and stainless steel. It should not, however, be concluded that the differences in the tools and materials used by the ancient smith and his modern counterpart have any bearing on the quality of the work produced or in the skill level of either smith.

The Company recognises the importance of appropriate training and the teaching of the skills and techniques used by the early smiths. Working the metals by hand gives apprentices a valuable insight into the properties of the materials which will stand them in good stead in the future. These ancient skills need to be developed to a high standard before apprentices move on to the more modern techniques.

In common with other City Guilds the Company, in its early days, required an apprentice to produce a "proof piece" to demonstrate skills as a craftsman before they could be admitted to the freedom of the Company. At the discretion of the Company, an applicant for a Diploma of Merit may have to provide a proof piece demonstrating the ancient skills of the blacksmith.

Historically, before a blacksmith could be considered a competent smith and able to teach apprentices of his own, he had to come before the Wardens and demonstrate his skills by making his 'masterpiece'.

When candidates are assessed for awards, many different aspects of blacksmithing are taken into account. All ironwork should start with a vision of the finished article. This will normally be in the form of a drawing which may be produced by the smith or by a third party such as an architect, or specialist designer for blacksmiths.

Where the smith has produced the design it should be appropriate for its location and use and show an understanding of aesthetics and form. It is important that the smith is able to read and interpret a drawing and reproduce precisely what is on the drawing. If any aspect of an architect's design is impractical to manufacture or "won't work" the smith should be able to recognise this and inform the designer accordingly.

The appropriate materials must be selected for the piece and correct techniques used to produce the required results. All processes, regardless of the methods and tools employed, should display a high standard of workmanship and finish. The strength and safety of structural or public pieces must be given high priority and appropriate insurance cover maintained. The finished article should be appropriately priced, fit for purpose and of a much higher quality than merely "merchantable".

Candidates for awards will be expected to demonstrate that they employ good working practices with regard to health and safety in the workplace and that their businesses are run in a competent manner.

The examination for any award will always be carried out by a blacksmith who has, at a minimum, attained the award that he is assessing.

RULES GOVERNING AWARDS

The Court of the Worshipful Company of Blacksmiths, on the advice of the Craft Committee, awards a range of Certificates, Diplomas and Medals and Special Awards These recognise various degrees of ability and quality of workmanship achievable by training and experience of Blacksmiths working as individuals and when working as a team.

The awards range from a Certificate of Competence and a Journeyman's Certificate for apprentices starting out on their careers to a Gold Medal for consistent work of very high quality in prestigious commissions given to blacksmiths who have also given exceptional personal service to the craft over their lifetime.

All recommendations must be forwarded to the Clerk of the Company who will ensure that the necessary assessments are made by professional blacksmiths. He will advise applicants on the progress of their awards.

At present Company awards are confined to blacksmiths in the United Kingdom.

1 Certificate of Competence

The Certificate of Competence may be awarded to applicants who show evidence of competence in the basic skill of a Blacksmith including forging, forming, punching cutting and joining, fire welding, twisting, split work and upsetting. They must be able to use these skills in the production of a simple piece of forged ironwork.

The recommendation to award a Certificate of Competence may be made by an Accredited Judge and can include work exhibited and examined at a show.

The recommendation must be forwarded to the Clerk of the Company who will be able to arrange for the preparation and issue of the Certificate.

If the recommendation is for the work of a student at a college or other training establishment, the Clerk will confirm that the tutor supports the award before it is confirmed.

2 Apprentice Certificate

The Apprentice Certificate may be awarded to applicants who have spent one year serving as an apprentice to a Master Blacksmith in a forge. It may also be awarded to a student or trainee who has been trained at a recognised college for the same period.

The applicant will be expected to show evidence of competence in the basic skills of a Blacksmith including forging, forming, punching, cutting and joining, fire welding, twisting, split work and upsetting. They must be able to use these skills in the production of a simple piece of forged ironwork

A confirmation of ability in these skills is required from the Master Blacksmith or College instructor

3 Journeyman's Certificate

An applicant for a Journeyman's Certificate will normally have served a recognised apprenticeship and will be expected to be competent in all the skills required for an Apprenticeship Certificate. They will also be expected to be proficient in making tools and in some of the following functions: working with a power hammer, simple industrial blacksmithing and decorative ironwork including repoussé work.

A Journeyman's Certificate can be awarded on the basis of a certificate signed by an LWCB instructor in a College recognised by the Company or a Medal holding Master Blacksmith for whom the applicant has worked.

4 Certificate of Merit

An applicant for a Certificate of Merit will be expected to show competence in all the basic skills and abilities required for a Journeyman's Certificate but in addition he or she must be able to show imagination and design skill and use these skills in the making of more complicated articles than produced for a Journeyman's Certificate.

5 Diploma of Merit

Associate of the Worshipful Company of Blacksmiths (AWCB)

This award is intended for a Blacksmith with several years experience during which he or she has been able to show competence in making different types of articles involving many techniques. He or she should also show that they have mastered techniques which they have frequently applied in their work.

A smith at this stage may develop an individual style but must be able to follow accurately the designs of others. The range of individual commissions may be modest with the occasional larger pieces having been produced.

An applicant must supply photographs of their work and if satisfactory the work will be examined by an Associate or Fellow of the Worshipful Company

6 Bronze Medal

Fellow of the Worshipful Company of Blacksmiths (FWCB) and title of "Master Blacksmith"

This award is intended for a Blacksmith who is the holder of a Diploma of Merit has evidence to show that they can produce articles significantly above the standard normally associated with decorative and general blacksmiths. In addition to the skills achieved at the Diploma level, the applicant should be able to show that he or conversant with all blacksmithing techniques.

The commissions should include larger projects than required for a Diploma of Merit and would normally be expected to include work in the public sector such as ecclesiastical commissions. These may have come from the private or public sectors and may include restoration work, but a Bronze Medal would not be awarded on the basis of restoration work alone.

The work should show individual influence on design with less input from external sources than required for a Diploma of Merit. A wide portfolio should be available to support the application and be representative of current projects.

Often at this level an amount of team work may be encountered, especially with the larger commissions. If this is the case it must be demonstrated that the applicant is capable of performing all the skills and techniques used in the making of the piece(s) examined. If the applicant's main function is to manage the team then only a Company Award (see page 10) will be considered

An applicant must supply photographs of his or her work and if satisfactory the work will be examined by two Master Blacksmiths.

7 Silver Medal

Fellow of the Worshipful Company of Blacksmiths (FWCB) and title of Eminent Master Blacksmith"

The applicant should be a Bronze Medal holder and be able to show that he or she is conversant with and regularly uses all forging techniques and can produce forgings involving intricate design.

He or she should be able to demonstrate their personal contribution to design as well as developing his or her own individual approach.

An applicant for this award is expected to have completed commissions of prestigious importance. It is considered that the range of commissions undertaken should be very broad compared with those for a Diploma or a Bronze Medal, a larger proportion of them being of outstanding quality both private and in the public sector.

Consideration will therefore be given to most (but not necessarily all) of the following attributes:

Design work

A blacksmith should be able to work on his or her own designs which should show flair and imagination as well as technical excellence.

Public works

Great importance will be attached to work that is in the public eye and this must be of an exceptionally high standard.

Restoration

Assessors will be pleased to see samples of outstanding restoration work, particularly that which is of a public nature.

Knowledge

A blacksmith should be able to show that he or she has a good knowledge of the craft and its history.

The applicant must show an up to date knowledge of Health and Safety Regulation, workshop management and demonstrate good business practice.

An applicant must supply photographs, which have not been used in a previous application, of his or her work and if satisfactory the work will be examined by two Eminent Master Blacksmiths

8 Gold Medal and title of Supreme Master Blacksmith"

The Gold Medal is awarded to Blacksmiths who have made an outstanding contribution to the craft and community over many years and is awarded at the sole discretion of the Wardens of the Worshipful Company.

The minimum technical standard of work required is equivalent to that required for a Silver Medal and a current holder of a Silver Medal will not, normally, be expected to submit samples of their work for further inspection.

The Gold Medal is open to working and retired Blacksmiths. They must be nominated by two blacksmiths who should submit an application form giving detailed reasons for their recommendation.

Considerable importance will be attached to the Blacksmith's reputation respect in which he or she is held within the community and amongst the craft.

Initially the nomination will be submitted to the Awards Sub-committee which will decide whether a further inspection of work is required before passing the recommendation to the main Committee for further consideration.

9 Industrial Diploma of Excellence (Company Award)

The Worshipful Company of Blacksmiths, like many other Livery Companies City of London, exists primarily to support and protect the interests of individual craftsmen. The Company recognises however that developments in the market place for forgings made by blacksmiths has meant that the structure of the craft has changed in recent years

Today many commissions involve large and heavy forgings. These may more than one person to handle them and if undertaken by an individual would either be impossible or take an unacceptably long time to complete. In such circumstances the forging may be undertaken by a team of blacksmiths working in a company.

The Worshipful Company recognises the high quality of work made by such teams and awards an Industrial Diploma of Excellence to such companies and expects the team to produce work of a standard at least equivalent to that required for a Bronze Medal.

The Worshipful Company further recognises that members of a team in a company may change with the result that the standard of the work may deteriorate. Certificates for this award therefore clearly indicate the year in which the award was given.

A company may apply for an award in subsequent years although if the members of the team do not change the work of the forge would not necessarily be examined every year.

Companies applying for this award must supply photographs of the products and, if satisfactory, their work will be examined by two Master Blacksmiths

10 Licentiate of the Worshipful Company of Blacksmiths (LWCB)

This award is for teachers holding appointments for blacksmithing and related subjects such as design, technical drawing and metal finishing.

The applicant must have at least an AWCB qualification and have been in a teaching post at a recognised college for blacksmithing for at least three years. Alternatively, if he or she does not have the AWCB qualification but has been in a teaching appointment for five years, he or she must be able to produce evidence of the ability to produce work of at least Bronze Medal standard in a wide range of pieces.

Other requirements will be the ability to provide course documentation, lesson plans and a course syllabus.

Applicants should obtain a letter from their employing authority describing their work experience. The Company will appoint a Licentiate and a Master Blacksmith to examine the applicant's work and observe the applicant during one of their lessons in progress.

SPECIAL AWARDS

11 Companion of the Worshipful Company of Blacksmiths (CWCB)

This award is given to men and women who may not be blacksmiths but who have given outstanding service to the craft over many years.

Nominations will be submitted to the Craft Committee for consideration but the award is at the discretion of the Wardens of the Worshipful Company.

12 Tonypandy Cup

Past Prime Warden Lt. Colonel Delwyn Dennis, presented this Cup to the Company in 1998. It was given in memory of Lord Tonypandy (George Thomas, Speaker of the House of Commons) who was an Honorary Member of the Court of the Worshipful Company of Blacksmiths.

The Cup may be awarded annually for a piece which is considered to be an outstanding example of the skill of a blacksmith or blacksmiths. The Company welcomes suggestions from any source for work that meets the criteria "outstanding". A special panel has been set up to assess the nominated pieces.

Nominations incorporating as much information as possible should be sent to the Clerk of the Company

13 National Champion Blacksmith

The National Champion Blacksmith is the smith who wins, or is runner-up, at a maximum number of competitions at recognised or affiliated County Shows. The National Blacksmiths Competition Committee, on which the Worshipful Company is represented, approves the participating shows.

The Worshipful Company of Blacksmiths presents to the winner the National Champion Blacksmith Cup, and a cash prize. The Reserve National Champion Blacksmith also receives a plaque and a cash prize.

At least one of the judges at each of the nominated shows is on the list of Accredited Judges of the Worshipful Company of Blacksmiths.

14 Best Blacksmith

The Best Blacksmith award is given to the smith who receives the highest total of points from all the County Shows which run a hot or live forging competition. The National Blacksmith Committee approves the shows which stage such a competition.

The Worshipful Company of Blacksmiths presents to the winner a plaque and a cash prize. The Reserve Best Blacksmith also receives a plaque and a cash prize.

At least one of the judges at each of the nominated shows is on the list of Accredited Judges of the Worshipful Company of Blacksmiths.

GENERAL COMMENTS

The possession of a Medal from the Worshipful Company automatically enables the holder to receive preferential rates for membership of the Worshipful Company of Blacksmiths. This includes Freedom of the Company, Freedom of the City of London and Admission to the Company as a Liveryman.

Proposal forms for all the Awards and Certificates of the Company can be obtained from:

The Clerk, Jill Moffatt
9 Little Trinity Lane,
London EC4V 2AD
Email: clerk@blacksmithscompany.co.uk

When completed the form should be returned to him together with relevant documents such as photographs.

Applicants do not have to be connected with the Worshipful Company nor will an award commit them to the Company in any way, except to maintain the standard of work at the level of their Award.

The Clerk will acknowledge the receipt of an application and the details will be passed for assessment by blacksmiths of the appropriate standard. The recommendation of the assessors will be considered by the members of the Craft Committee.

If successful, the applicant will be advised but the final authority for the award has to come from the Members of the Court of the Worshipful Company of Blacksmiths in accordance with the Company's ancient Charters.

The Clerk will advise the applicant of the outcome of the recommendation to the Court and confirm the arrangements for the presentation of the award.

For the Diploma of Merit and the award of Medals as well as a Licentiate, the appropriate letters of attainment may not be used until after the Court has confirmed the award.

It is not permissible for the Company's Coat of Arms to be used on notepaper, printed material or promotions of any kind.

London, November 2009