



The Worshipful Company of
Clockmakers

THE CLOCKMAKERS' ROYAL CHARTER 1631

[rendered into modern English by Keeper Emeritus, Sir George White]

King Charles I at the request of the clockmakers within and around the City of London and with the agreement of the Lord Mayor, the Recorder and the Aldermen of the City of London decrees:

1. That a body should be set up for ever, 'by the name of the Master, Wardens, and Fellowship of the Art or Mystery of Clockmaking of the City of London', to include all English-born clockmakers, whether freemen or not, who live within the City, or a radius of ten miles around it.
2. That under that name, the Company should have perpetual succession.
3. That as a body, the Clockmakers' should be entitled to acquire and dispose of property of all kinds.
4. That as a body the Company should have the same power as an individual to plead and defend any cause in any court.
5. That for business purposes, the Company should have and use a common seal, which it may alter or re-make at any time.
6. That the Company should be able (and must) elect a Master, according to the terms set out below.
7. That three Wardens must also be elected from the Fellowship.
- 8i. That ten or more freemen of the Fellowship must be elected as Assistants.
- 8ii. That the Assistants' role is to 'assist and aid the Master and Wardens' in any matters concerning the Fellowship.
- 9i. That the Master Wardens and Assistants (the Court) may make decisions concerning the Fellowship by a simple majority, though this majority must include the Master and one Warden.
- 9ii. That the Court may create reasonable laws and ordinances (in writing) from time to time, which they believe to be honest, and good for the Company. These may relate to suitable oaths to be administered, to the governance of the horological trade (with particular reference to protecting the public interest), to maintaining the influence of the Company and to punishing and reforming abuses in the trade within the City and ten miles around it. Abuses may include the making or offering for sale badly made or deceitful goods.
- 9iii. That furthermore, for the good of the public and of the Fellowship, the Court may regulate all aspects of the present and future conduct of the trade throughout the whole of England.

10. That by the same simple majority (of which the Master and one Warden must be two), the Court may establish punishments and penalties for the breaking of their rules, which may include, set fines, variable fines, the destruction of badly made work or any other lawful means they may choose.

11. That the Court may keep money raised by fines for the use of the Fellowship and impose other punishments without interference from the Crown.

12. That all the bye-laws created by the Court must be obeyed, provided that they are reasonable, legal and according to the custom and usage of the City.

13. That for the future, any clockmaker within the geographical area set out, who takes an apprentice, must do so through the Clockmakers' Company, whether they are freemen of it or not. This is to ensure that the Company ultimately achieves complete control of its trade.

14i. That David Ramsay shall become the first Master of the Fellowship, he being or having been a clockmaker by profession.

14ii. That David Ramsay shall remain in office until the following Michaelmas Day and continue until a successor is elected according to the terms set out below.

15i. That similarly Henry Archer, John Wellowe and Sampson Shelton shall become the first Wardens, they being or having been clockmakers by profession.

15ii. That the appointed Wardens shall remain in office until the following Michaelmas Day and continue until successors have been elected according to the terms set out below.

16i. That James Vautrolier, John Smith, Francis Forman, John Harris, Richard Morgan, Samuel Lynaker, John Charlton, John Midnall, Simon Bartram and Edward East shall become the first Assistants and remain in office for life, unless any are removed for misbehaviour or for any other good reason.

16ii. Such a removal may again be made by a simple majority of the Court, provided the Master and one Warden are amongst them.

17i. That before he may act, David Ramsay must first take an oath on the New Testament and before the Lord Mayor for the faithful execution of his office.

17ii. That the Lord Mayor should have the power to administer such an oath to the first Master and to the first three Wardens.

18i. That annually thereafter the Court (by a simple majority, including the Master and one Warden) should and must elect one freeman of the Fellowship to be Master either on Michaelmas Day, or on the following day if Michaelmas falls on a Sunday.

18ii. That the election must be according to the rules set out below.

18iii. That the chosen candidate must be both a freeman of Company and must be or have been a professional clockmaker at the time of his election. His term of office as Master is the year ensuing, unless he dies or is removed.

19i. That before the elected Master takes office, he should take his oath 'to well and truly execute the said office' before the last Master and at least two of the Wardens. Having done so, he remains in office until his successor has taken his oath.

19ii. That power is given to the Master and Wardens to administer such oaths successively.

20. That the Court may similarly elect three other freemen to be Wardens on an annual basis, according to the rules set out. The candidates must however be or have been professional clockmakers.

21i. That before the elected Wardens take office, they must take their corporal oaths to 'well and truly execute' their offices, before the Master and at least two Wardens. Having done so, they remain in office until their successors are sworn.

21ii. That power is given to the Master and Wardens successively to administer such oaths.

22i. That if a Master should die in office or be removed, power is given to the Court to elect and swear a successor within one month. Their choice is restricted to one of the Wardens or Assistants. The election must be by a simple majority, including one Warden. The new Master will remain in office until the swearing in of his successor, the following Michaelmas. New Masters may be elected as often as it becomes necessary.

22ii. That the Master may be removed from office for a reasonable and just cause by a majority of the Court, which must include one Warden.

23i. That if one, two or three Wardens die in office or are removed, power is given to the Court to choose and swear replacements, according to the rules laid down. The new Wardens will remain in office until their successors are sworn the following Michaelmas. New Wardens may be elected as often as it proves necessary.

23ii. That any Warden may be removed for a reasonable and just cause, by a simple majority of the Court.

24i. That if an Assistant dies or is removed for 'evil government or misbehaviour' or any other reasonable cause, the Court may elect a successor from the Fellowship by a simple majority, which must include the Master and two Wardens. The successor may not act as an Assistant until he is sworn before the Master and Wardens.

24ii. For this purpose, successive Masters and Wardens are given power to administer the oath or oaths in perpetuity.

25. That the Court, or a simple majority of the members (which must include the Master and one Warden), may have the power to administer any oath or oaths which they think necessary for the good of the Company, to any freeman, citizen or outsider that they chose to involve with the Company's affairs.

26. That the Master, Wardens and Assistants (or any two of them, provided one is the Master or one of the Wardens) or their legally appointed deputies, may go in the company of an officer or officers of the Crown to enter any kind of ship, or land-based premises, where they suspect horological items are present. There they may examine all items, whether imported or not. If they find them to be faulty, badly made or deceitful, they may remove and destroy them, or, if they believe it to be achievable, they may see that they are put into a saleable condition. They must ensure that anything which is badly or deceitfully made, of insufficient quality metal, or made by anyone who has not served a full apprenticeship is seized in the name of the Crown. Then in the presence of the Mayor, Sheriff or chief officer of the place where the seizure is made, they must show why the object has been taken. With his permission, they may then destroy it. This power covers the whole of England and Wales and relates to anyone who is making, mending, buying, selling, (wholesale or retail) or who is in any way connected with any branch of the horological trade.

27. That if the chief officer is unable to judge the case made out before him, then the condemned object must be brought to the Company's Hall or meeting place and put before the entire Court. A decision may be made by a simple majority, which must include the Master and one Warden. The object may then be destroyed or defaced to make it unsaleable, though its owner may first appeal to the Lord Mayor.

28. That if a legally constituted Search is obstructed, either by being locked out or denied a view of the objects the members came to inspect, they have the power to break in to buildings, chests, boxes (or anywhere else that they believe work, wares or tools may be concealed) and seize them.

29. That the Master, Wardens and Assistants may present either those who offend in such matters, or information about them, to the Court of the Exchequer for punishment.

30. That no foreigner shall attempt to work within the area covered by the Charter, unless he is naturalised or with is working with a legally recognised professional clockmaker.

31. That no Englishman or foreigner who has imported any horological artefacts or parts into England or Wales, should attempt to market them before the artefacts have been brought to the Clockmakers' Hall or meeting place. There they must be inspected, approved by the Court and duly marked. The penalty for failure to observe this rule is seizure of the goods, in addition to any other penalty the law provides for contempt of a Royal command.

32. That if the owners of such goods are not satisfied with the judgement of the Court, they may appeal to the Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen of the City of London. Pending appeal, the Master and Wardens must keep the objects safely and the Court must delay destroying or defacing them.

33. That the Master, Wardens and Assistants or any of them, (with the assistance of an officer or officers of the Crown) may search for any imported horological objects, which they believe are being offered for sale, but which have not been inspected and duly marked. They may seize any they find for the benefit of the Crown and prosecute the offenders.

34. That to cover the trouble and expense of the Court, the Company may retain half of all forfeitures, without the need to make an account to the Crown.

35. That all Crown and civic officers and officials must assist the Company in executing and enjoying all matters covered by the Charter.

36. That the Master, Wardens and Fellowship may choose 'one honest and discreet person' to be known as 'the Clerk'.

37. That Thomas Copley shall serve as the first Clerk. He shall remain in office for life unless there is a just reason to remove him for a misdemeanour.

38. That after the death of Thomas Copley, the Master, Wardens and Assistants may by simple majority (as before), elect another 'discreet person' to be Clerk.

39. That Thomas Copley's successors should continue in their office at the pleasure of the Master, Wardens and Assistants.

40. That Thomas Copley's successor must first take an oath before the Master, Wardens and Assistants, or the majority of them, to 'well and truly execute' his office, to 'his best skill and knowledge, and according to the tenor and true meaning' of the Charter.

41. That the Master, Wardens and Assistants, or the majority of them, are given powers to administer oaths to the named Clerk and to his successors. Also to any Beadle or to other officers of the Company.

42. That the privileges contained in the Charter may be enjoyed, regardless of any previous laws or statutes.

Made patent and signed on the King's behalf on 22nd August, 1631