



NEEDLEMAKERS' NEWSLETTER



SPRING 2026

FOREWORD

WELCOME to the latest round up of news from the Worshipful Company of Needlemakers.

This newsletter celebrates our fabulous Mansion House Banquet and reflects on the range of social and fellowship events that we have shared, along with our charitable work and the extended involvement of the Needlemakers in London and the City.

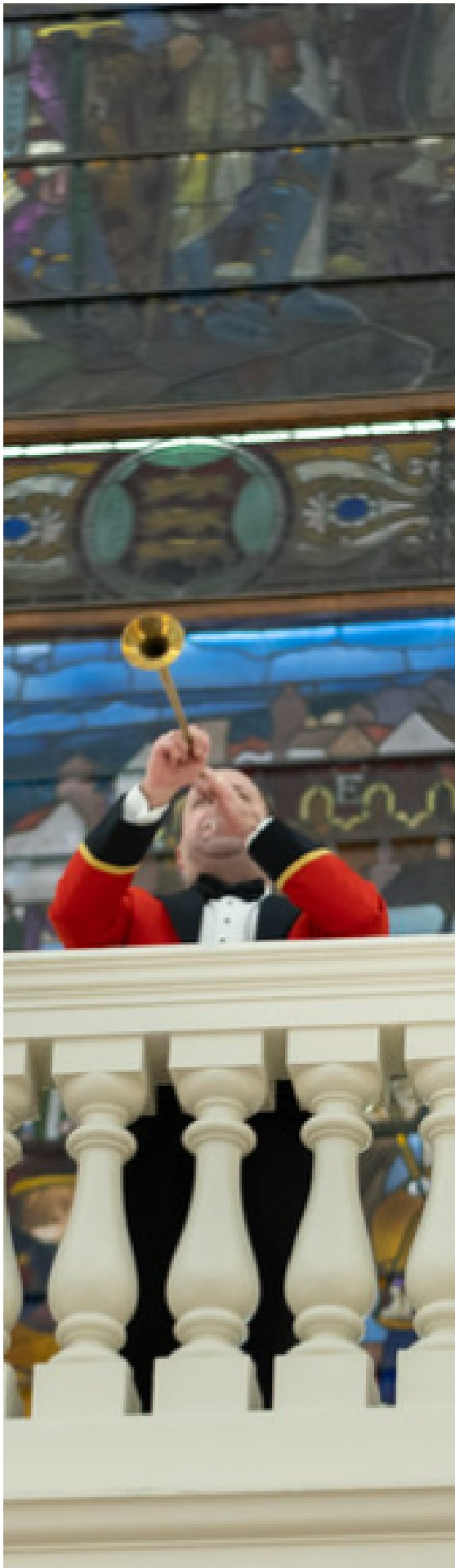
Many thanks to all without whom the production of this newsletter would be impossible, particularly all the contributors and those behind the scenes, including Charles Barrows, Chris Clark and the Clerk.

Thanks too to Andy Sillett for the excellent photographs of the banquet.

Assistant Kimball Bailey
March 2026



Clockwise from bottom left: Charles Barrows, Dr John Shaw, Maddy Shaw, Melissa Longley, Kimball Bailey, Pamela Goldberg, John Goldberg, Angie Lewis, Philip Grant



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A MESSAGE FROM THE MASTER

Master NICK MACRAE reflects on a busy – and forward-looking – few months for the Needlemakers, stressing our philanthropic activity, the development of the Advanced Needle Technology programme, and of course our splendid fellowship, not least the Mansion House Banquet.



DEAR FELLOW NEEDLEMAKER

THE NEW YEAR has started with a flurry of activity for our Company. While I was sorry to miss the January lunch due to ill health, it was a great pleasure to hear how much it was enjoyed by all who attended, particularly the entertaining talk by the Director of the Churchill Archive, Allen Packwood. It also marked the admission of four new Liverymen (Ravi Chand, Naomi Farhi, Mark Hargreaves and Maddy Shaw), and one new Freeman, Josh Burke, the co-founder and CEO of Cascade MedTech, winner of our inaugural Needlemakers' Award in Advanced Needle Technology.

Now that a patent application has been made, Josh was able to share more details regarding SecuDrain, Cascade's next-generation surgical drain securement device designed to replace traditional suture fixation with a safer, more reliable, and standardised solution. Every year millions of surgical drains are inserted globally, yet fixation remains inconsistent and prone to failure, contributing to dislodgement, leakage, infection risk and unnecessary complications. SecuDrain provides secure, adjustable, needle-free fixation that improves patient comfort while reducing variability in practice. We have also had a chance to see the prototypes.

I am delighted at the response there has been to the second year of the Needlemakers' Award, applications for which have once again been received from across the UK, seeking support for a range of innovative projects offering significant potential benefits in healthcare and bioscience. The winner is expected to be announced before Easter following interviews by a panel of experts, and my thanks are due to those on the Industry Committee's ANT Working Group who have worked hard to attract and evaluate such a strong array of initial applicants.

I am personally thrilled at the expanded visibility that the Needlemakers' Award is giving to our Company. We are, as a result, attracting new members from across the scientific community, and forging ever-stronger ties with other livery companies, in particular the Worshipful Company of Entrepreneurs and the Society of Apothecaries. Indeed Josh, together with Liveryman

Ian Quirk, will be speaking at a symposium organised by the Apothecaries later this March, and both also spoke at the Entrepreneurs' EASI Showcase in January, which was a major public airing for our winning company and its product.

Josh said "The EASI25 Showcase was a valuable milestone for Cascade MedTech, providing meaningful discussion with fellow mentees and mentors, allowing us to test our strategic thinking and refine how we communicate SecuDrain's value proposition. Presenting the prototype in person enabled real-time feedback from clinicians, engineers and investors."

Aside from the January lunch, we have continued to hold a range of more informal events. In late January, together with around 40 Needlemakers and their guests, we made our way to a room in the Clocktower at St Pancras Station for an enchanting recital by Simon and Saoko Blendis, featuring music for



A surgeon-led MedTech company driving meaningful change in healthcare



JOSH BURKE
CEO



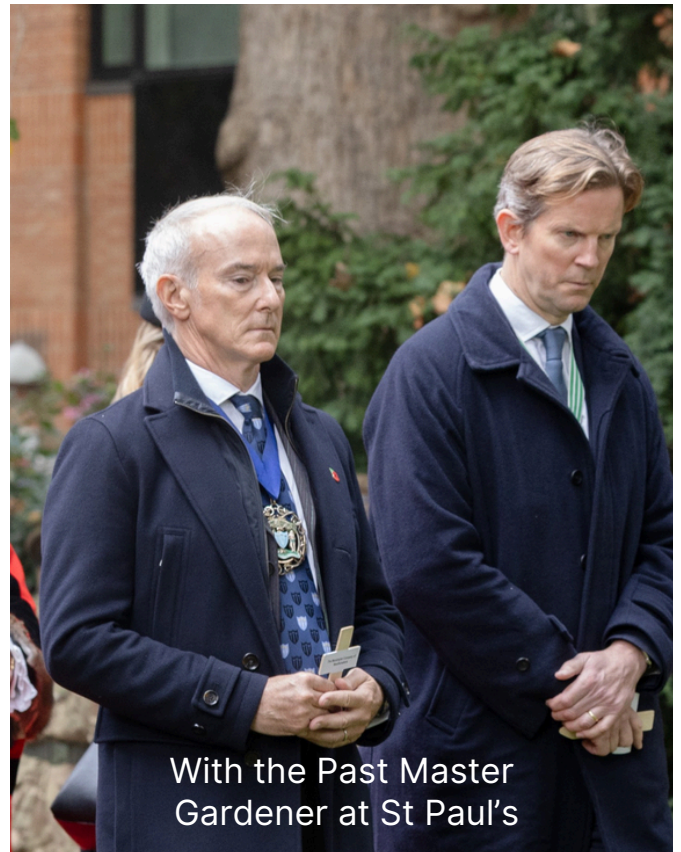
EMILY MILLS
CMO

EASI Mentors
John Burton & Ian Quirk



violin and piano from Max Jaffa's light classical collection. The evening was dedicated to the late Past Master Brian Hatfield, and Past Master Pamela Goldberg started the evening with a tribute to Brian's irrepressible humour and love of music. With thanks to Liveryman Emily Sumners for her exceptional organisation, we relaxed over drinks and canapés afterwards. Not wanting to blow my own trumpet, but the grand piano in the Clocktower is in fact my very own, and was sounding in excellent condition in the hands of a professional pianist! A longer article features later in this newsletter, along with pieces on our tour of the FCDO and our trip to ring bells at St James Garlickhythe.

I also enjoyed listening to the webinar introduced by Pamela Goldberg and given by Alison Morton OBE, CEO of the Institute of Health Visitors. In particular, we heard about the scholarships our company is supporting for those taking part in the Dame Elizabeth Fradd Programme for IHV Leadership Fellows, and the vital work this programme is doing to equip these leaders with the skills and confidence they need in their challenging sector. Equally fascinating was the webinar on Wren Churches, hosted by Liveryman Philip Grant with speakers including Canon Anthony Howe, Rector of St James Garlickhythe (one of the 51 churches rebuilt by Sir Christopher Wren after the Great Fire in 1666) and Andrew Coles, MD of Coles Conservation architects, who is managing the conservation project at St James'. He highlighted the renovation work at St Lawrence Jewry, where among many other fascinating facts we learned that the weathervane is made out of a (non-functional) incendiary bomb! If you were unable to join, a reminder that all webinars can be viewed via the links on our website. [The Worshipful Company of Needle-makers](#) | [Members](#) | [Webinar Links](#)



With the Past Master Gardener at St Paul's

I am very much looking forward to Common Hall on 24th April. Held on a triennial basis, I find the name is sometimes confusing, particularly to those who have never attended one before. It has been suggested that it is akin to an AGM, but I prefer to cast it as a showcase. First, part of our Court Meeting is open to Liverymen, shedding light on the workings of the Court. We will then be joined by a small number of beneficiaries of our philanthropic giving, and will hear directly from bursary winners and other recipients about the impact our support is having on them, as well as being able to pose questions. This will be followed by lunch in the beautiful Haberdashers' Hall and, weather permitting, the chance to enjoy their courtyard. As this falls on a Friday, I do hope this might enable a good number of our Company to attend. Guests are welcome to join the lunch, at which there will be an update from the winners of our Needle-makers' ANT Award.

I have mentioned our newest Liverymen; we also have had a busy programme of interviews for more prospective members, and continue to build that pipeline. On the downside, we were sorry to hear of the death of Liveryman Barrie Roberts in February and send our best wishes to Sarah and their family at this difficult time.

I hope you enjoy this latest edition of our Newsletter, and my thanks to editor Kimball Bailey and all contributors for bringing it to us and for being a shining example of the teamwork that helps our company thrive.

All the very best.



Nick Macrae
Master Needlemaker
2025-2026



Loving Cup and toasts with the Lady Mayor



SEEKING NEW MEMBERS

Many new Needlemakers are personal friends or colleagues of current members, some long-term, some only recent joiners ourselves.

IT BEHOVES US ALL to encourage new members. We pride ourselves on being an open Company and, perhaps above all, a friendly one, something which we can certainly demonstrate. These new members represent the lifeblood of the Company. Not only have we been able to encourage members with interests in traditional crafting skills, it has also been a pleasure to see how our efforts with the Advanced Needle Technology programme have encouraged new members from that background to help widen our support for biotech and innovation. Either way, an interest in our rich history is welcome.

Contact clerk@needlemakers.org.uk with any questions about the membership process or facilitating an application.



*Congratulations to three of our newest Liverymen:
Ravi Chand (L), Madelon (Maddy) Shaw, and Mark Hargreaves (R), and above right
new Freeman Josh Burke from 2025 ANT Award-winning Cascade MedTech*

FOSTERING FELLOWSHIP

Derek Foster, our Senior Past Master, celebrates 70 years with the Needlemakers this year. He oversaw a great deal of change, both during his year as Master and as our Treasurer for over 25 years. Derek was also the first to organise a Master's Holiday! Assistant CHARLES BARROWS spoke to him about the changes he has seen.



Derek in his year as Master

DEREK IS NOW 93, and started work in the City of London back in 1951 as an accountant with Moores, Carson & Watson, a firm that eventually became EY. Clement Attlee was Prime Minister, having taken over from Winston Churchill after the Second World War, and the City of London had yet to be rebuilt after the Blitz. Derek recalls that there were very few buildings standing between Bank and Moorgate and the one he particularly remembers is St Giles' Without Cripplegate, one of the few remaining City medieval churches that survived both the Great Fire in 1666 and the blitz.

It is hard to imagine the view today now that the area has been completely rebuilt.



St Giles' Without Cripplegate in the 1950s

Likewise, it could be said that the Needlemakers was a very different Company when Derek was clothed in 1956. His father, Wilfred (see picture right), had become a Liveryman a few years earlier and was Master in 1967/68.

The Court met quarterly at lunchtime (and long lunches they were, too), always at Innholders' Hall. There were no women in the Livery, and no Committees; the Charitable Trust didn't exist; there was no Master's Holiday; and Masters were appointed in turn, with no formal selection process. The company was run largely by the Clerk and the Master for the year.

How did they do it? How does one radically change an institution such as the Worshipful Company of Needlemakers?

The key, of course, is to find other like-minded members to work with you on the change. Three members of the Court, Jeffrey Bayman, John Miller and Derek were Masters over four years, with Derek installed in 1986.

While these three had recognised the need for change, the trigger for it to happen was the receipt of a large legacy from the estate of a former Master, which led to the formal establishment of the Charitable Trust in December 1983.

This also necessitated a more disciplined approach to investment decisions – until then, the company's funds were embarrassingly small!

As a result. in 1985 the Court established three committees, Finance, Charity and Membership, to oversee the running of the company and to report to each Court meeting.



Wilfred Foster, Derek's father, in his year as Master, along with his wife Edith, together with Sir Gilbert Inglefield, Lord Mayor of London, with his wife Lady Inglefield (Barbara)

A few years later, the Court agreed to the acceptance of women, with the clothing of Veronica Stokes. Veronica was our Honorary Archivist for many years. In 1992, when Derek's younger brother, Alan, was Master, the Court established criteria and procedures for the selection of Master, in place of the previous "Buggins' turn" arrangement.

Derek was Treasurer for over 25 years, and was a member of the Finance and Charity Committees. He was therefore directly involved in all these changes.

The format and timing of events has changed considerably over the last 70 years, from the original four Court lunches and the banquet, with no informal events.

All Court meetings and lunches were held at Innholders' Hall. Gradually this changed with a move to use other Halls: Stationers', Butchers', Tallow Chandlers' and Vintners' to name but a few. This change was due to Innholders' Hall being too small to accommodate the growing numbers attending.



Derek with Joan at the Banquet in his year as Master

The timing of the meetings changed as well. Due to his commitments at the Old Bailey, Alan King-Hamilton QC, who was Master in 1969/70, was not able to make all Court meetings and lunches, and so dinners were held instead.

And another significant change: Derek organised the first Master's Holiday. In those days it was difficult to meet other Needlemakers. Liverymen came to the lunches and dinners with friends or business colleagues, and had little opportunity to meet other Liverymen. The Master's Holiday changed all that. As those who have been on them will testify, the holidays are a wonderful opportunity to get to know other Needlemakers better.

The first Master's Holiday was in Portugal. Another Needlemaker who lived in Lisbon knew the area and had useful contacts to help with its organisation. About 25 people stayed in Estoril, near Lisbon, and had a wonderful time. It was arranged that Derek should take a letter from the Lord Mayor of London to the Mayor of Lisbon expressing fraternal greetings. This was duly presented at the Lisbon equivalent of Guildhall.

Derek retired early in 1989 to look after his first wife Joan, who suffered from MS, which is why she is seated in the photograph of them. After Joan died in 2002, Derek married Lucienne in 2008, and they now live in East Ewell in Surrey.

Derek lived through a huge amount of change – to the City of London, in his work, and also with the Needlemakers. We have a lot for which we can thank Derek and his generation of Liverymen. They modernised the Needlemakers and made it fit for purpose for subsequent generations.

We wish Derek and Lucienne our very best wishes and hearty congratulations on Derek's 70th year as a Needlemaker.



Estoril, location of the first Master's Holiday

BURSARY AT KING EDWARD'S SCHOOL

At our January lunch at Grocers' Hall, Immediate Past Master SUE SUMNERS read a letter from JAMES SCOLES, our bursary student at King Edward's School Witley. We support the school in many ways (including funding two music bursaries a year), and James's heartfelt thanks for the life-changing support he has received, expressed below in his own words, were deeply meaningful.



AS SUE SAID IN her introduction, the Needlemakers value traditions, fellowship, and the occasional fine meal. But they are not the only things that define us. At our heart, we are about charity and service; about investing in people, skills, and opportunity; about making a difference.

Sue shared James's words which we believe reflect on who and what we are as a Company.

"Master, Wardens, Liverymen and Guests,

"My name is James Scoles, and I am one of the students you help fund for their schooling.

"I come from Suffolk and have had a series of traumas in my early years. I lost both my mum and dad within a year of each other, before I turned 11. I now live with my grandmother.

"Before I started secondary school, your Past Master Colin Tiffin suggested a school called King Edward's School Witley as a possibility for me to attend as a supported student. I am very glad he did as I wouldn't have had the many benefits the school has given me over the past seven years.

"I have been on choir trips across Italy, where I have sung in amazing places such as the Vatican and Milan Cathedral. I have been able to go to Iceland and Berlin and experience the different cultures there.

"Most importantly, I have made friendships that will last a lifetime. None of this would have happened without your generosity. You truly have changed my life for the better.

"While being at King Edward's School, I've learned a lot about myself. I've evolved from the constantly angry kid who wanted to be by himself, to a more kind and thoughtful man.

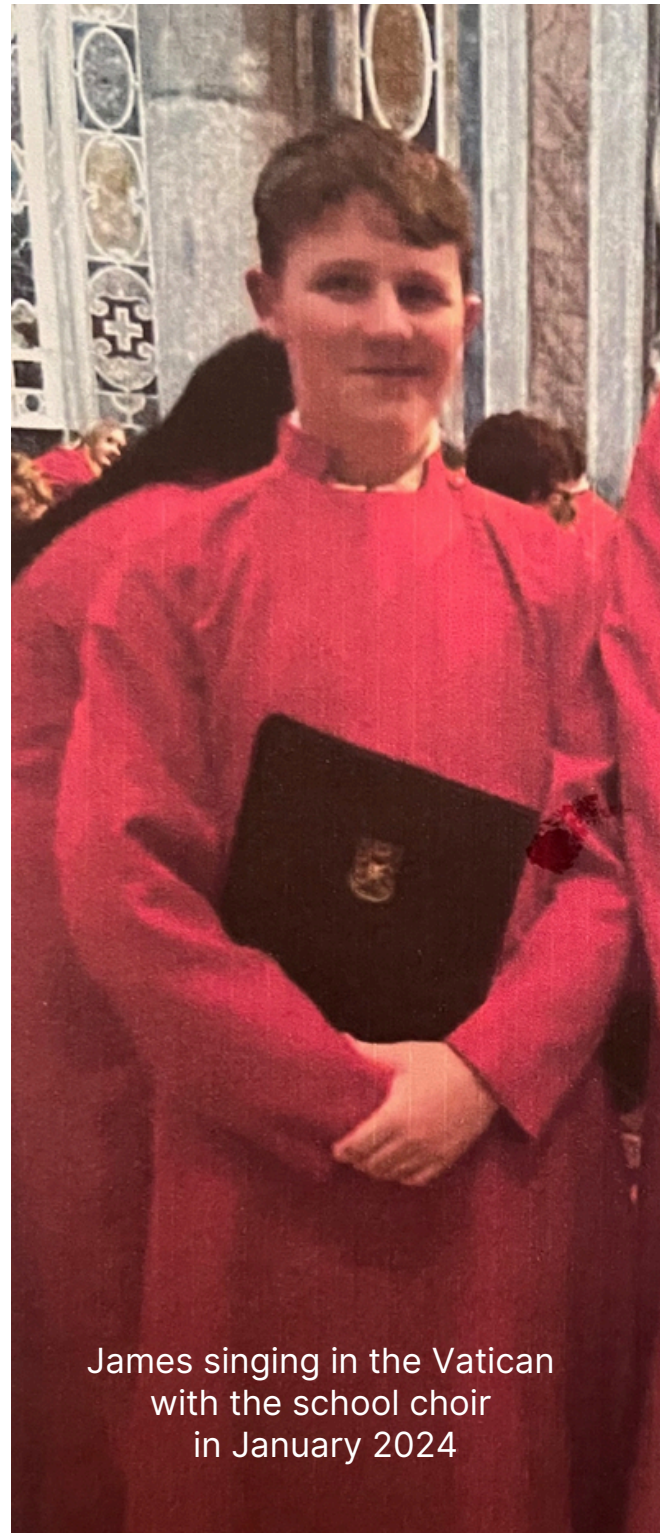
"I've decided that, after King Edward's, I want to study Quantum Physics at Bath or Southampton, and have offers from both universities, depending, of course, on my A-level results.

"I wouldn't be where I am today without you. Words cannot even begin to describe my gratitude and thanks to every single person among you who gives generously to change the lives of young people such as myself.

"Thank you, all the Liverymen of the Worshipful Company of Needle-makers, for being one of the best things that has happened to me.

"Sincerely,

"James Michael Scoles"



James singing in the Vatican with the school choir in January 2024

LIVERYMAN BARRIE ROBERTS

1938 - 2026

In Memoriam

George Barrington Roberts – always known as Barrie – who passed away in February was a strong and loyal supporter of the Livery.



Barrie and Sarah at the Mansion House Banquet

PAST MASTER PAMELA GOLDBERG recalls his clothing in 1995; his widow Sarah's father, Eric Dangerfield, had been Master in 1979-1980, and we were delighted that a precedent was set when Sarah was admitted to the livery in her own right in 2007, when Henry Milward was Master. Until 2005, husbands and wives had not been admitted together...

Pamela writes that she was always grateful for Barrie's and Sarah's consistent support during her year as Master. He was a quiet and private person, never one to push himself forward, but always there when needed, kind and thoughtful.

Henry remembers him as being a stalwart of the Master's Holidays: Prague, Vienna, the Loire, his own trip to the Douro, St Petersburg, Florence, Albi, Edinburgh, Andalusia and Bath. Pamela also recalls an interesting and jolly time with both Barrie and Sarah on her own visit to Berlin and Dresden.

Barrie was a proud Lancastrian whose career was in banking, primarily in the City. He retired from NatWest after many years in 1991.

Our thoughts and prayers are with Sarah and their family. "May his memory be a blessing."

THROUGH THE EYE OF HISTORY

The Forge Mill Needle Museum has just acquired two photograph albums which give a fascinating history of the British Needle Company from the early 1920s through to the 1950s and 1960s. Museum Curator and Liveryman JO-ANN GLOGER describes the archive project that has been carried out with the help of the Needlemakers.



The "Machine Eyeing" shop: early mechanisation of the process (1925)

WHENEVER I talk about needlemaking, I always like to start with the fact that at one time Redditch made 90 percent of the world's needles – it's a nice memorable fact, but hidden in that statement are some rather complex issues. Like 'how was it done'? How did the small needle companies develop, compete and expand the business enough to produce needles on such a large scale?

So you could imagine my absolute delight when two photograph albums came into the museum's possession. The albums give a pictorial record of the British Needle Company, which became one of the largest in Redditch. The photographs span from the early 1920s through to the 1950/60s, and show how the company evolved and came to prosper over the decades. To have this span of photographs is very rare.



The “Hand Eyeing” shop where the eyes were put into the needles using a “Fly Press” (1925)

But what really made the photographs fascinating for me was that they were true ‘snapshots’ of the working conditions: they are not staged; they were taken simply as a private record of the company and its workforce; they were not intended for publication or to be used in publicity. There are no workers in Sunday best on show here!

The early images show dark, cramped spaces, with bare brick and wooden floors, with which their Victorian counterparts would have been very familiar.

What also made the albums a real treasure was the fact that the museum holds the documents and records from the BNC in our archives, so there was now an obvious project to pair the two together again – the photos were, in many ways, the missing link.

The photographs in the albums were very ad hoc, so the first step was to establish a chronological order and then work out the categories that had been recorded. The photos were never meant to be published, so it was taken for granted that you knew the business of needlemaking! What also surprised me was the care that was taken to name the people in the photographs – this is unusual.

The archive really would never have been possible without the care and diligence of one man, Captain Edward Keesey (ex-Royal Naval Air Service), who had made it his mission to record and document all aspects of the company. In 1921 he was the general manager of the company, and by 1934 had risen to company director. Unsurprisingly, one of his main interests was photography!

His letters and correspondence show someone who took an interest in the welfare of his workers and maintained a passion to make his company one of the best. I included many original documents, and the HR section is very revealing with some wonderful letters (many of which would result in tribunals today!).

My favourite letter is to Jim Davis, who was giving up his job as a needle finisher because of his bad leg at the age of 73; he was given a pension of 12/6d – but only if trade didn't take a bad turn! It didn't – he was ok.

View the archive on the museum's website www.forgemill.org.uk and click on the archive tab. It is a rare and important insight into the workings of a needle company, and I am most grateful to the Needlemakers for making this project possible.



The "Pointing Mill":
putting the points on
the ends of the
needles (1925)

WEARING OUR POPPIES WITH PRIDE

All of us will have seen members of the armed forces, past and present, collecting at this time of year as an act of remembrance for the Royal British Legion, supporting veterans and their families. This year they were joined by members of a range of livery companies, along with the Sheriffs, at stations across the City. And several Needlemakers were there...



The Master and Assistant Charles Barrows with Shirley Creed, Master Chartered Secretaries

MASTER NICK MACRAE was allocated to Moorgate Station.

I headed over to Moorgate for the lunchtime shift, but was met by the Master Musician who explained that the Royal British Legion's station captain was missing in action. We searched for them high and low, but to no avail. Lacking poppy supplies and means of collecting payment I decided to re-deploy to Bank where my friends the Master Tin Plate Worker and his consort were very much up and running. Bob the captain wasted no time kitting me out and teaming me up with the Master of the Chartered Secretaries and Administrators



Outside the Bank of England

and a volunteer from nearby Bloomberg. With me carrying the merchandise and my companions a coin bucket and a contactless machine (the payment choice for the vast majority which attracted generous donations), we were raring to go. Positioning ourselves strategically just across from the main entrance to the Bank of England, we soon attracted custom from a good mix of lunchtime office workers, bemused tourists and a stream of passers-by. We quickly learnt that a smile and an easy manner paid dividends. We spun a poppy on a clip as a "Pet Poppy", which significantly increased our sales, not only direct to dogs and cats. We even had a taker for a poppy-themed supermarket trolley coin – something for everyone! After two hours of brisk business, I had to head off to an appointment in Canary Wharf, and met another volunteer there who lived in Swindon and had willingly given a day of her time to help the RBL in London.

She had deliberately selected "Any Station" and, despite her early start, was pleased to have been allocated to the hustle and bustle of Canary Wharf. Of course the overriding reason for all the volunteers was to do our bit to support and recognise our armed services, but in looking back at the experience I was struck by the goodwill of so many of the public and the sense of purpose and camaraderie that volunteering invariably engenders.

ASSISTANT KIMBALL BAILEY was at Cannon Street.

I came round the corner from the tube station and immediately heard the thrilling sound of massed pipes and drums, and was reminded of the fact that pipes are a weapon of war rather than just a musical instrument. These volunteers, from across the south of England, played for several hours and encouraged many to stop and listen – and thus gave the collectors some sitting ducks to approach for donations.



Captain Chris Groves RN, Master Tin Plate Worker, and the collection team at Bank

At 11.00, the pipes and drums stopped, and a single bugler played The Last Post, followed by a two-minute silence that was extremely moving, even in a crowded London thoroughfare.

Other collectors who I met included several veterans of the Parachute Regiment, all with stories to tell, including Cameron and Elgar (pictured right), and one chap sporting his Falklands tie who had been Col. "H" Jones' driver. Sarah, a volunteer from Kent, told me that they were hoping to raise £1.5m, just in the City, just on this one day. I can see how this would be achievable.

I felt I had actually made a contribution when I made my first sale of a poppy, after which the floodgates opened as people left their offices for lunch and stopped to listen to the stirring music. I even managed to use the technology provided – the card reader – as well as rattle a bucket. Armed Forces Day was a success.

ASSISTANT CHARLES BARROWS was at Bank.

I arrived early, just after 7.00am, to find a number of Navy volunteers already busy taking money; one group at the Royal Exchange underground exit and another directly outside the main doors of the Bank of England.

Many people patted their pockets as they passed us, demonstrating they had no change. We waved the card machine at them and a surprisingly large number stopped, got their credit cards out, picked one of the many varieties of poppy pins on offer, smiled at us, had a quick word and then went on their way. Good for them!

The Lady Mayoress joined us for a while to encourage and thank the volunteers.



As a reservist herself she was, of course, in uniform. We chatted and she remembered that she needed to get in touch with the Immediate Past Master about a needle charity she is keen for us to support. She will be calling Sue in the near future...

At 9.00am a few Bank of England employees brought out a huge table, full of poppy pins, lanyards and badges. Even more money was taken.

I was reminded that the President of the Royal British Legion, Lieutenant General James Bashall CB CBE, spoke at our Mansion House Banquet back in 2023. I mentioned his name to someone who was collecting at Bank and he told me that he and James served in Basra together. What a small world.

It was heartwarming to see how many people made time to donate, diverting their attention from reaching the office. A tourist asked me what it was all about and I found myself quite moved as I explained the association with the fields of poppies in WW1. The Royal British Legion are certainly doing their bit to ensure "Poppy Day" remains relevant and is a fantastic opportunity to collect money.

FREEMAN ADRIAN TASKER was at Farringdon.

It was a prompt start to ensure we were set up ready for the morning rush of commuters. There was a number of volunteers, Liverymen, local office workers and members of the military. Farringdon was assigned to the Royal Engineers whose day job is bomb disposal, so all had left Carver barracks in Saffron Walden to be in central London. The London commuters were most generous and freely donated to the charity; many who were already wearing their poppy were delighted to donate again. As the morning drew on, the numbers and demographic changed, from workers rushing to the office to more families, as it was half term. It was great explaining to number of youngsters the reason why we were collecting and the significance about wearing a poppy. By lunchtime, my shift was completed, and I was ready for a warming cup of coffee. The Sheriff, in full regalia, made an effort to get to all the stations in the square mile, and posed for photos with donors.

If you are available to assist next year I highly recommend it as it is a rewarding experience, and gratifying to know you are raising not only funds for but also awareness of veterans and the service they provide.



David Mogg and Sunil Kakkad at Monument (above); Kimball Bailey at Cannon Street (left); pipes and drums at Cannon Street (below)



YES MINISTER

IN OCTOBER 2025, a group of Needlemakers enjoyed a fascinating visit to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) in King Charles Street, Westminster. Assistant RUSSELL DAWES was among those who braved the inevitably tight security.



THE FCDO, an architectural masterpiece designed by George Gilbert Scott in partnership with Matthew Digby Wyatt, was conceived as “a kind of national palace or drawing room for the nation”, featuring ornate decoration intended to impress foreign dignitaries. The tour lasted approximately one and a half hours and provided us with a rich insight into the history and significance of the department. Our guide, Graham Holland, was extremely engaging and full of facts and anecdotes, and he

ensured that the visit was both informative and smooth-running from start to finish.

The Durbar Room, perhaps the most impressive (read “ostentatious” – Ed.) relic of the pride of the East India Company, was stunning. Among the many other highlights, and there were a lot, was a visit to the Office of the Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP, the Foreign Secretary, who had just left to attend PMQs in the house, a privilege not usually afforded to tour groups.

The magnificent Grand Staircase features superb murals of Britannia in her various aspects: Bellatrix (war), Pacificatrix (peace), and Sponsa (the Seafarer).

The history of the building, from Palmerston to the present day, was fascinating, and covered the transition of British India to the repurposing of state rooms for the management of NATO. And it was a bonus to peer through the back gate to see the front door of Number Ten.

The event was meticulously organised by the Functions Committee, with special thanks to Nolan Shaw and Pippa Rousselet. We subsequently enjoyed a very pleasant pub lunch at the Clarence. The whole visit was a resounding success, offering Needlemakers an enjoyable day, marked by excellent organisation, an enlightening tour, and a delightful meal.



*Above: the Grand Staircase;
Right: the main entrance;
Top Right: the Durbar Room*

MANSION HOUSE BANQUET: OH WHAT A NIGHT!

In early March, the Needlemakers and their guests gathered for one of the most cherished dates in our calendar, our Annual Banquet at the magnificent Mansion House. Liveryman VICTORIA PAGE was among them.

AND WHAT AN evening it turned out to be. We were delighted to welcome our guest of honour, Dame Susan Langley DBE, the Lady Mayor, joined by the two Sheriffs, and their consorts.

From the moment the first glass was raised, everything went entirely to plan. Exceptional food (the kind you secretly wish you could have seconds of), superb wines and a banqueting orchestra who played us through musical theatre, film and opera – topped by the traditional Post Horn Gallop from the Minstrels' Gallery.



The Master with guest speaker Abigail Pogson



Master, Warden and Consorts

By the time the notes drifted away, spirits were high, and we were ready for speeches which were a highlight in their own right. The Lady Mayor, Master Nick Macrae, and guest speaker Abigail Pogson, the new CEO of the Barbican, all shone a spotlight on the vibrancy of needle usage today, including the importance of our Company's philanthropic work across both arts and sciences.

From the Needlemakers' Award for Advanced Needle Technology to our ongoing charitable initiatives, the message was clear: we honour our history not by standing still, but by staying relevant, curious, and engaged with the world around us.

Needlemakers and guests rounded off the night with a traditional stirrup cup before heading out into the London night.

Here's to another year of tradition, innovation, and excellent company.



Naomi Farhi, John Voyce and Helen Tomkys



Jill Cox



Raz Kaushik



Craig Russell and Victoria Page investigate tradition



Martyn Chase



Henry Milward

CLOCKTOWER CRESCENDO

On a rainy Friday night in January, a group of Needle-makers gathered at a spectacular apartment within the St. Pancras Clock Tower which was crammed to the rafters for a delightful evening of music. Simon Blendis (violin) and Saoko Blendis (piano) performed wonderfully to celebrate the life of Past Master Brian Hatfield. Liveryman EMILY SUMNERS was there.



THE EVENING BEGAN with drinks and canapés, giving us the opportunity to enjoy the apartment's iconic setting and the superb views over a rather wet King's Cross. Many of our group had previously enjoyed a virtual tour of the Sir Gilbert Scott building, given by Clock Tower owner Peter Tompkins, and were delighted to experience the property in real life.

Moving to the main room under the clock, the Master welcomed us and introduced our performers, and Past Master Pamela Goldberg spoke of Brian Hatfield's love of music.

Simon Blendis then provided a brilliant introduction to the music we were to hear, from the library of legendary violinist and entertainer Max Jaffa.



Already the custodians of Max Jaffa's violin, a Peter Guarnerius, Simon and Saoko were offered his sheet music library by his family some years ago. With time on their hands during lockdown, Simon and Saoko were able to explore the violin and piano pieces, uncovering both well-known scores and hidden gems. This led them to record an album, 'Love is Like a Violin', from which we heard a delightful and eclectic selection of pieces, played on Max Jaffa's violin accompanied by Saoko on the Master's piano. A wonderful evening was had by all.

The one question we had was how on earth the Master got his rather fine Weinbach piano up the stairs and rather tiny lifts into the Clocktower in the first place. Extensive research (asking Ivan) revealed that it was Daniel Barenboim's usual piano

movers who took it from their then home in Berlin to London, and will probably have dangled it over the edge of the staircase, as they apparently had to do when carrying it to Berlin. It must have been terrifying.



The playlist is below, and the full album can be listened to here: <https://open.spotify.com/album/6vGSvT1die2J2orz6sYsHs>.

Love is Like a Violin, Laparcerie; Jura Jura, Korda/Bakony; Valsette, Rene Costy; Spitzbub, Joe Rixner; Much Ado about Nothing Suite Op.11, Korngold; Fascination, Marchetti; Estrellita, Ponce; Serenade No.1, Drdla; The Violin is a Lady, Curzon; Jeannie with the Light Brown Hair, Foster; Gipsy Carnival, Yasha Krein; Londonderry Air, Anon; Encore: Dobra Dobra.

CLSG – 2025 PRIZEWINNER

How appropriate, in a year when our Master is a keen supporter of all things musical, that Livia Silverthorne should be awarded the 2025 Needlemakers' Prize at the City of London School for Girls for her outstanding contribution to music. Hon. Almoner GILL LOFTUS met her.



LIVIA WAS presented with the Needlemakers' Prize by the Lord Mayor's representative, Sir William Russell, during the Prize Day ceremony in Guildhall on 6th October. This was a proud moment for Livia who, in addition to our book token, received one of our very special needle cases.

She is currently an enthusiastic member of the School Camerata Choir which has performed in various venues together with male students

from City of London School and, recently, with the King's College Choir. In October 2025 they were invited to sing at a church in Lille, France, under the direction of the CLSG's Director of Music, Richard Quesnel.

Livia is currently a Year 10 student and wants to study Music and Maths at university.

Livia is pictured above with IPM Dr Sue Sumners and Hon. Almoner Gill Loftus after a delicious tea in Guildhall Library.

RINGING THE CHANGES

When Neal Dodge of the Royal Jubilee Bell Ringers spoke at our January 2025 lunch at Cutlers' Hall, he undertook to demonstrate his group's skills. Liveryman CHRIS CLARK talked to some of those who joined them in November about the art and practice of change ringing, including Assistant PIPPA ROUSSELET, who organised the event.



L-R: PM Simon Fradd, Hon. Almoner Gill Loftus, Helen Tomkys, Sunil Kakkad, Emily Sumners, PM Michael Foulkes, Assistant Pippa Rousselet, IPM Sue Sumners, David Sumners and Chris Frankland

THE ENTHUSIASTIC TEAM of Needlemakers arrived at the church of St James Garlickhythe for the demonstration of change ringing. Neal opened with a short history of bell ringing, explaining that the use of tower bells associated with Christian worship is thought to have arrived in Britain during the 8th century. They were used to regulate the monastic day, call monks to prayer and celebrate joyous occasions, like weddings, and announce curfews and fairs. By the 16th century, secular bell ringing had evolved into an activity for young men and was regarded as a sport, alongside leisure activities such as cock fighting and fireworks.

Originally, bells were swung by a simple lever, but the invention of the bell wheel allowed greater control and higher swing levels. This allowed bell ringers to develop techniques that enabled the order in which bells are struck to be varied to create different compositions. This is how the expression 'ringing the changes' arose, and the phrase has been adopted into everyday modern language.

It became customary for ringer groups to hold competitions. Indeed, this popularity brought a reputation for drunken revelry among the practitioners.

Incidentally, it is campanologists who conduct the scientific and musical study of bells, as distinct from bell ringers who sound them!

To finish the history lesson, Neal terrified the visiting party by showing some changes known as 'bobs'; their proximity to the sounds led some to wonder what was coming next. It is complicated to a layman, but a 'bob' is a specific command by a bell ringing conductor that alters the pattern of bells at the lead end of the ringing sequence, in order to create more unique changes.

Next, everyone climbed the spiral stone staircase to the ringing chamber for an impressive demonstration by the Jubilee Bell Ringers. Climbing further still, they were able to look down on the bells as they were rung.



The Jubilee Bells



IPM Sue Sumners ringing the changes with Dickon Love of the Jubilee Bell Ringers

The eight bells of St James were cast in Whitechapel in 2012 and formed the centrepiece of the late Queen's Diamond Jubilee that year. Each bears the Royal Arms and is named after a senior member of the Royal Family. They were mounted on a specially designed tower on a barge at the head of a flotilla of 1000 boats before being installed at St James.

In 2013, the bells became record breakers with the longest peal of church bells in the City of London. It consisted of 18,432 changes in a method called 'Superlative Surprise Major' and was completed non-stop in ten hours 17 minutes.

The finale for the visiting party was being allowed to have a go at bell ringing themselves. Before that, however, they were regaled with tales of hapless ringers being hoisted 60 feet into the air by out-of-control bells, or narrowly avoiding being bludgeoned by plummeting clappers that buried themselves into the floor of the ringing platform. They learned with relief that a trap door above the bells can be closed to avoid inflicting our amateur attempts on the neighbours.

Happily, our team reported that they not only survived, but also very much enjoyed their experience among the bells – though it was admittedly a loud one.

The sound of bells is the sound of the City – and its soul.

After the strenuous efforts of the visit, climbing stairs and ringing bells, they repaired to the Samuel Pepys pub for a well-earned supper and reflections on their introduction to bell ringing.

This was an appropriate venue, as Pepys wrote in his diary how the bellmen rang bells to alert the public of plague.

In addition to encouraging readers to enjoy Pepys, may the Editor recommend 'The Nine Tailors' by Dorothy L Sayers – a fine read and (spoiler alert!) very appropriate for those wanting to know more about a Triple Bob Major.



David Sumners and Helen Tomkys



PM Simon Fradd with Neal Dodge of the Jubilee Bell Ringers

WELCOME TO OUR NEW FRIENDS

We welcome new Liverymen and Freemen, highlighting some of the new faces and bidding them all a hearty welcome.



Mark Hargreaves

Liveryman; proposed by Charles Barrowss

MARK HARGREAVES lives in Gloucestershire with his wife Melissa, to whom he has been happily married for 30 years. They have three children: Sorrel, Mungo and Clemmie. For the past 17 years, Mark's home has been the village of Pauntley. He has been deeply involved in community life, having been a Parish Councillor and a Governor at three local schools, and is currently a member of the St John the Evangelist Church Council. He loves singing in a choir – he serves on the Choral Committee of the Ross Penyard Singers – and also enjoys tennis, shooting, skiing and swimming. He is a member of the Whitefriars Club, one of London's oldest literary dining societies. Professionally, Mark has spent his career in publishing and the data industry, including over 18 years at Experian. He is now CEO of FirstLink, a business compliance data solutions company, where he brings together his experience in data, leadership and strategic growth.



Craig Russell

Freeman; proposed by Kimball Bailey

CRAIG RUSSELL is a scientist working on AI for drug discovery at Recursion Pharmaceuticals. He holds a PhD in Engineering from Cambridge, where he built microscopes for imaging developing zebrafish in 3D and invented software to analyse the resulting volumetric data. After a research stint at the National Physical Laboratory working on biological image analysis, he returned to Cambridge to join the European Bioinformatics Institute – home to projects including the Human Genome and AlphaFold – applying machine learning and novel AI methods to biological data, including work on the European COVID-19 Data Platform. He then moved into industry, where his work focuses on using cutting-edge AI to understand how diseases work, find new treatments faster, and build a "virtual biological cell". Craig now lives in Camden with his wife, Roxine Staats, also a Freeman.



Josh Burke

Freeman: proposed by Martyn Chase

JOSH BURKE is a UK colorectal surgeon and clinical academic based in Manchester with a specialist interest in surgical innovation, patient safety and device development. He has led national and international collaborative research projects and has published widely in surgical outcomes, drain practice and failure-to-rescue pathways.

Josh co-founded Cascade MedTech with Freeman Emily Mills to address unmet needs in surgical workflow, device design and perioperative decision support. The company's work combines frontline clinical insight with structured design control and regulatory strategy to develop practical, scalable solutions for the modern operating theatre. Josh and Emily were delighted for Cascade to have won the inaugural Needlemakers' ANT Award in 2025.

Alongside his clinical work, Josh is actively involved in surgical leadership, innovation mentoring and early-stage venture development, with a focus on translating clinician-led ideas into commercially viable, regulation-ready technologies.

In his spare time he still plays 11 a side football after winning the Medical World Cup (as a centre half) with Great Britain in 2018 (Czech Republic) and 2019 (Mexico).



Gupernam (Guppy) Dhariwal

Freeman; proposed by Terry Neville

GUPPY DHARIWAL was born in the Punjab and came to England with his mother in 1954, aged four. At that stage, neither of them could speak any English, but by the age of 11 he gained a place at King Edward VI Grammar School in Nuneaton where he enjoyed rugby, cricket and athletics. He was the only Indian child in the school. He also joined the cubs (where he was a natural Mowgli) and the Air Training Corps where he learned to fly, glide and shoot. He went to Imperial College in 1968 to study Electrical Engineering, and then on to Newcastle University. Having gained a degree, he worked as an engineer with GEC Electrical Projects, designing steel mills. He subsequently trained as an accountant, becoming chief accountant in 1982 at GEC, and spent 16 years in industry with STC, Cannon Industries, Satchwell Controls, Simon Engineering and Amstrad, where he worked closely with Lord Sugar.

In 1998, following a cardiac arrest and triple bypass, Guppy joined Aston University as Director of Finance and Business. He retired for the first time in 2009 but went back to work as FD/CEO of Metalysis (a Cambridge University spinout) and OceanLed Marine Ltd in 2014. He finally retired in 2016.

Guppy is married to Naranjan (Jan) and has two children and five grandchildren. His interests include golf, cars (member at Goodwood), watching rugby and reading.

UPCOMING EVENTS

13 March: Woodwind Competition at GMSD + Supper

20 March: United Guilds Service + Lunch

13 April: Treasure Hunt + Supper

16 April: Big Curry Lunch

24 April: Common Hall + Lunch at Haberdashers' Hall

7 May: Master's Holiday in Ghent

19 May: City Briefing

21 May: Livery Choir

22 May: Highgate Cemetery Tour + Pub Lunch

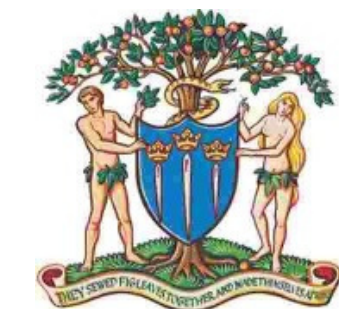
24 June: Election of Sheriffs + Lunch

2 July: Awards Dinner at Saddlers' Hall

27 September: Sheep Drive and Livery Fair, Southwark Bridge

29 September: Election of Lord Mayor + Lunch

1 October: Installation Dinner at Vintners' Hall



Contact Clerk@needlemakers.org.uk