



from the

MASTER & WARDENS

The newsletter of The Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers



**Sworn in, Cheered on:
The Presentation Ceremony 2025**

In this edition

The Master's Year	2	Handing over to a New Clerk.....	19
The New Master, Fiona Anderson	5	Affiliated Services	20
The New Wardens	7	Around the City.....	25
The Annual Service	8	Freedom and Livery News.....	29
Prizes and Medals	9	Charity	33
Presentation Evening	10	Society Fun	35
The Master's Weekend, Oxford	12	A Very Sporty Year	37
Meet a Member, Richard Rawling.....	15	Dates for the Diary.....	40

The Master's Year



A Change of Guard

I made my declaration as incoming Master on 2nd October 2024, followed by a wonderful Court Lunch and warm welcome. This marked the start of a busy and memorable year. That evening, we attended the Musicians' Company Evensong at St Paul's Cathedral. The drinks reception afterwards offered us our first opportunity to meet fellow Masters and Consorts, with many other Livery Companies also represented at this service.

The Master's Badge acts as a magnet. "Do talk to me now" seems to be its unspoken message. Of course all Masters have one. With 113 Livery Companies, all of whom change their Masters across the year, along with the Lord Mayor and Sheriffs, the opportunity to meet people across the City, the Livery and the Corporation is incomparable. The Mistress's badge has the same effect.

We have had "the Best of Years", spreading the Company's key messages and promoting eye health. We were honoured to have Professor James Fujimoto, the inventor of OCT, to deliver the annual Spectacle Makers' Lecture, on his way back to MIT from Japan, where he had just received another prestigious international award.



Master Mike Harris presenting the Company's Gold Medal for Innovation to Professor James Fujimoto

We also hosted our much-anticipated "Eye Health for the Livery" evening for other Livery Companies at St Thomas's Hospital. A highly successful visit to Hoya allowed Carole and me to demonstrate to a group of Consorts that we do more than make spectacles, they have lenses too!

As I write this I am conscious of my fellow Past Masters, whose counsel and support across my nine years on the Court enabled me to be Master, and in whose footsteps I have followed in the events of my year. My thanks must also go to the hard-working Wardens and Court. Thank you all.

I am happy to pass on a thriving and financially stable Company with a growing membership, and one that looks forward to celebrating its 400th year. The Company is in safe hands with our now established Administrator, James Moffatt, and our Clerk Designate Ollie Finn, who I am sure will be a worthy successor to Helen.

I thought that I would share with you a few of my highlights.

Visits and Affiliations



The Master with the Affiliated Services at the Livery Dinner

I am proud to have visited all our Military Affiliates this year. I began by presenting awards at Welling ATC ceremony, where I was hosted by the 31st (Middlesex Yeomanry & Princess Louise's, Kensington) Signal Squadron. We received a fascinating briefing on modern warfare and a demonstration of their capabilities. I was honoured to present a number of service medals.

This was followed by a Court visit to the centrifuge facility at RAF Cranwell, at the invitation of our affiliated RAF Centre for Aerospace Medicine. We learned about the latest engineering and human physiology research before watching the pilots experience 5G acceleration, all passing and moving on to flying fast jets.

Our final visit was to 16th Medical Regiment in Colchester where we saw demonstrations of their abilities to treat and stabilise front-line casualties and care for their soldiers' overall health within a multidisciplinary team. The cocktail party and tour of their much-loved Dakota transport plane were greatly enjoyed.

Across my Master's year, it has become clear that modern warfare has changed dramatically-drones have changed everything! They were even flying around at the Lady Mayoress' recent reception for Livery Masters and Consorts at Mansion House. It has been a pleasure to spend time with those who serve.

Engagements Across the City

One of the great privileges of my Master's year was to be invited to a working lunch with the Judges at the Old Bailey, hosted by Sheriff David Chalk. Their Honours were excellent company, and I was privileged to observe proceedings in what now has become an infamous case, the Marten-Gordon retrial.

The Lord Mayor in my year, Alastair King, came from Aberdeen and so chose that city for his Masters' Weekend. We were hosted by the Seven Incorporated Trades of Aberdeen and joined by HRH The Princess Royal. The weekend later included a Ceilidh. The Lord Mayor's memory of the occasion aligns with ours, and at the first note from the band everyone moved onto the dance floor and remained there for the rest of the evening!



The Lord Mayor's Ceilidh - Spot the master!

As my year drew to a close, I was joined by the then Upper Warden, the Clerk, Liveryman Hailey Wainer and Freeman Vaishali Thakrar at Mansion House for what has become a Company tradition: presenting the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress with a gift of spectacles.

Promoting Eye Health and Charity

Throughout my year, I have attended several events at Parliament, including meetings with optometrist and MP Shockat Adam and sessions of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPE) on Eye Health and visual impairment, which aims to influence government policy. I was also a guest at receptions in both the Lords and Commons, hosted by SeeAbility, Fight for Sight and the APPE. It has been inspiring to meet so many people making such a difference in the worlds of visual impairment and employment of visually impaired people.

Charity remains at the heart of what the Livery does, and my year as Master is evidence of that. Watching the European Club Champions' League matches of Goalball hosted for the first time in the UK at Oundle School by the Fen Tigers Club, supported by our Charity, was a highlight. Equally memorable was waving off our sponsored taxi for the Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers' "Children's Magical Taxi Tour" to Disneyland Paris, driven by cabbie Paul Thomas. Departing at the crack of dawn from Canary Wharf for Disneyland Paris, with a Big Breakfast for all participants, and the Sheriffs in attendance, was truly magical - all ably compered by our very own Beadle, Liveryman Peter Thompson. Paul Thomas then kept me up to date throughout the weekend via regular postings from the taxi's dash camera!



WCSM's Magical Taxi

These are only a few examples of the incredible work of the Spectacle Makers' Charity this year. Donations and legacies have a tangible impact, supporting not only the charities who benefit from grants, but also early-career professionals and students who will shape the future of eye health. The Charity's recently released Impact Report showcases the remarkable breadth of this work - I encourage everyone to read it on our website and please, please, look again at how you can support the Spectacle Makers' Charity. If everyone

in the Company gave just £1 more a week, the Charity could double its grant giving ability.



Company Highlights

We were delighted with your support for our key events this year, - from the Livery Dinner at Merchant Taylors' Hall, with the now Lady Mayor, Dame Susan Langley, as our guest speaker, to a memorable Master's Weekend in Oxford.



The Master with the Lady Mayor

The year also saw the handover of chairmanship of our Spectacle Makers' Society from Gaynor Foulkes-Taylor to Ian Anderson at Ironmongers' Hall in March. Thank you to Gaynor for everything she did during her term of office.

A Year to Remember

This has been a year of friendship and fellowship for both Carole and me-making new friends from every background across the Livery and City.

I am immensely proud to have served as Master of our wonderful, inclusive Company, known throughout the City for its warmth and openness.

Finally, a successful Mastership is always a partnership between Master and Clerk. For that reason, I wish to extend my heartfelt thanks to Helen for her unfailing support - not only throughout my year as Master, but through all my years on the Court.

Mike Harris, Deputy Master



THE NEW MASTER, FIONA ANDERSON



The Master, Fiona Anderson

"If it can happen to me it can happen to you".

Little did I imagine when I started my career as a Dispensing Optician that I would ever become Master Spectacle Maker, and I am absolutely delighted, honoured, humbled and grateful to be so!

I'd like to begin by thanking the Court of Assistants for trusting me to lead us through this next year. I'd also

like to congratulate David Baker who was installed as Upper Warden and Leon Davies as Renter Warden on 1st October - we as the Master and Wardens will strive to do our very best for the membership of our wonderful Company and promote it at every opportunity we have. We also pay tribute to Mike Harris, Deputy Master, for his service over the last year. I am extremely grateful to The Rev'd Christopher Trundle, who will serve as my Honorary Chaplain. I am very fortunate to be supported by not one but two Consorts - my husband Eddie Anderson, and my good friend Liveryman Ian Anderson (no relation!). And it goes without saying, my thanks to Helen, James and Ollie for their support throughout the year.



The Two Consorts: Eddie (left) and Ian (right)

Let me take you back in time. My optical journey started in 1983 when I left school and started my training as a full-time student at Glasgow College of Technology (now Glasgow Caledonian University) on the Ophthalmic Dispensing Course. Two very happy and challenging years were spent learning the art and science of ophthalmic dispensing, then the pre-registration year in practice beckoned when I moved north to Aberdeen. After qualification I remained with the Duncan & Todd Group, where I spent 25 long and happy years in various roles as Practice Manager, Area Manager and on leaving, the Group Training Manager.

After this I freelanced for a couple of years before becoming a director of two independent practices, one in Aberdeen city centre and one in Ellon, Aberdeenshire. Since 2023 I have returned to freelancing and currently provide locum services to several optical practices around Scotland, from Shetland in the very far north, to the south in the Central Belt.

Throughout my career I have been an advocate for lifelong learning, and those of you who know me will be very aware of one of my stock phrases: "every day is a school day". This led me to diversify throughout my career and move into learning and development, firstly within the Duncan & Todd group, and then more widely. With my own professional body, the Association of British Dispensing Opticians (ABDO), I worked as a theory and practical examiner and CET/CPD author and facilitator. I have also been involved in 'the wider world of optics' as ABDO President and President of the International Opticians' Association.



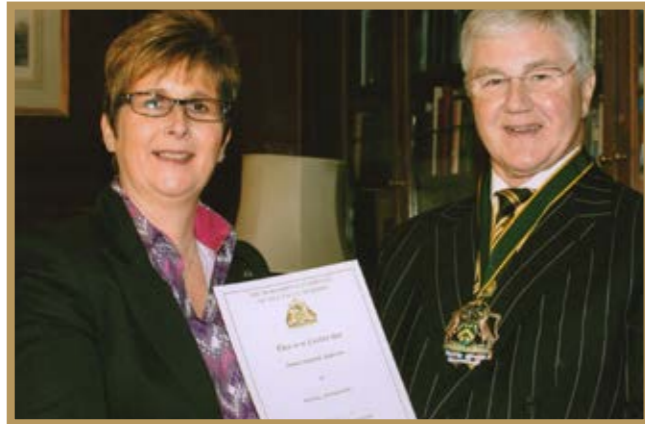
Fiona speaking from the pulpit as ABDO President

I served on the Board of Trustees of the European Academy of Optometry and Optics, and still sit on one of the European Council of Optometry & Optics' education boards.

One of the most rewarding parts of my career journey has been combining my vocation with one of my passions: travel. I have been most fortunate to have been invited to present at conferences and trade fairs around the world. Sometimes I really have to pinch myself when presenting a lecture in China or facilitating a discussion workshop in New Zealand; never did I envisage as I began my career that this was the route I would take! This has been an enormous pleasure and honour, allowing me to meet a number of industry giants (including many members of the WCSM), whom I have greatly admired and in my own small way have tried to emulate.

My own journey with WCSM began before my Freedom admission in 2011, when the Company's Education Trust was engaged by a division of the Scottish Government (NHS Education for Scotland) to support the provision of the General

Ophthalmic Services contract. This started in 2006 as a nationally commissioned service by the devolved government, which entitled (and still entitles) all residents to universal eyecare which is “free” (i.e. government funded via national insurance contributions) at the point of service delivery. I was involved in delivering training to optical assistants working in optical practice. They undertook a blended learning programme at levels 5 and/or 7 in Scotland (Ofqual equivalents are GCSE and Cert HE), which was supported with ‘hands-on’ workshops and training days, held in person, to develop skills and understanding. Assessment was by either in-person or online examinations. It was a great delight when, on several occasions, the Master of the day travelled north – accompanied by the Clerk, and often some Court members – to a presentation ceremony held at the Royal College of Surgeons, Edinburgh.



The Master receives her Freedom from John Marshall

In October 2011, I duly made my Freeman’s declaration, followed quickly by my City Freedom the following year. My Livery Clothing, in December 2012, was such a wonderful day: my husband Eddie and my parents joined me, and of course we took the opportunity to spend a few days in the capital and some Christmas shopping was done!

I attended several events and very much enjoyed being a part of the Company, and then became involved a bit more when I was invited to serve on the WCSM Education Trust and then crossed over to the new Spectacle Makers’ Charity. I firmly believe you only get out what you put in, so I was very happy to be admitted to the Court of Assistants on the same day as Past Master Liz Shilling in 2019, the following year I became a Senior Assistant, and in 2023 I became Renter Warden, on the path to becoming Master.

Throughout my own journey I have been blessed with constant support and encouragement, including from my family and from my colleagues and friends in the Spectacle Makers’ Company. So, in my ‘year’, what do I want to accomplish? Well, I would love to see the Company continue to develop with a new and growing crop of Freeman, and those existing Freeman we have moving up to the Livery. This pipeline of talented individuals will contribute to the longevity of the Company, and the depth and breadth of their skills and knowledge will stand us in good stead for the future, most notably as we head towards our 400th Anniversary in 2029.

I would also like as part of my Master’s year to highlight the work of our Charity – in bold letters on the Charity page of the website it clearly states:

We are a grant giving organisation supporting better vision for all. We aim to improve the lives of people with vision impairment and support those who treat eye health.

As Master, I hear first-hand the difference a bursary can make to a young eye health professional in training, sometimes providing essential funds for equipment or travel to university or a placement. Often these early career professionals never forget the help they received and remain loyal to the Company for all their career. Similarly, a grant to a researcher or charitable organisation to further their work can make such a difference. So I intend to promote our Charity and encourage you all to give what you can – it is an essential part of Livery life, and the impact these grants and bursaries can have cannot be overstated.



Fiona Anderson as ABDO President with then-Master Felicity Harding

I would like to end by encouraging you all to get involved, grow our membership by engaging with your network, and give to our Charity. I am hugely grateful to colleagues, Past Masters, our Corporate Supporters and the Clerk and Assistant for making my role smooth and easy to perform. It really is a privilege to be your Master, and I will carry out the role and its many duties to the best of my ability.

Being installed as Master Spectacle Maker in 2025 adds to the significance of this year, in which I also celebrated my 60th birthday. This moment marks the pinnacle of my career as a Dispensing Optician, and I feel immensely proud and grateful to be called Master.

Yours aye

Fiona Anderson, Master, 2025-2026



THE NEW WARDENS

As Upper Warden I am delighted to be our Master’s right-hand man. I followed Fiona as co-ordinator of our monthly Eye-to-Eye Zoom meetings which, by the way, I highly recommend dipping into if you haven’t already – it’s easy to sign up to the meetings on the Events page in the Members’ Area of our website and... it’s free!

I previously served as Chair of the Membership Committee and, before that, I ran our version of the Livery Companies Apprenticeship Scheme. This led to a successful apprentice being put forward for the Master Certificate Scheme, which has since been taken on and expanded, enabling us to nominate several candidates each year who attend the awards ceremony where they receive their certificates from the Lord Mayor.

My association with WCSM began in 1988 after I qualified as an optometrist, having studied at Aston University. I joined my father’s practice in 1994 (he was also a Freeman) and have been a member of my Local Optical Committee ever since. I have had a parallel career as a freelance writer, mostly on optical topics, for instance in journals such as *Optician* (the *Optical Connections* series) but I also write on cricket and football. *How Glasses Caught a Killer*, a collection of articles from *Optical Connections*, was published in 2015, and a second book, *Window of the Soul: A Brief Exploration of the Human Eye* followed in 2018. Recently I retired from an eight-year stint as Editor of *Ophthalmic Antiques*, the journal of the Ophthalmic Antiques International Collectors Club.

For relaxation I enjoy (if that’s the right word!) watching Tottenham Hotspur in the winter and Middlesex CCC in the summer, that is when I’m not watching my teenage sons, Avi and Daniel, playing cricket. My wife Julie, and Avi, recently became Freeman, Avi being the third generation of Bakers in the Company.

David Baker, Upper Warden



David Baker, Upper Warden (left), Fiona Anderson, The Master (centre) and Leon Davies, Renter Warden (right)

I am honoured to have been elected Renter Warden of the Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers in October. As Professor of Optometry & Physiological Optics at Aston University and an Honorary Professor at the University of Bradford, my career has blended clinical practice, research and leadership. I am a GOC-registered optometrist, and hold fellowships with the College of Optometrists, the American Academy of Optometry, and the Higher Education Academy.

My service to the profession has included roles as Chair of the Board of Trustees and President of the College of Optometrists, clinical leadership at the 2022 Commonwealth Games, editorial positions in leading journals, and co-creating the Villa Vision mobile eye-care service. At Aston I have led research and education programmes, mentored numerous undergraduate, doctoral and postdoctoral researchers, and overseen quality assurance across UK and international programmes. My research focuses on presbyopia and restoring ocular accommodation, and I have published extensively and secured competitive research funding.

Beyond optics, I enjoy participating in musical theatre and chair a performing arts charity; pursuits that keep me creative and connected to my local community. I am married to Rachel, and we have two teenage children. I look forward to serving the Company and promoting better vision for all.

Leon Davies, Renter Warden



THE ANNUAL SERVICE

We are once again grateful to the Rector, Verger, Director of Music and Choir, and all the team at St Bride's, Fleet Street, who so warmly hosted our Annual Service of Remembrance, Thanksgiving and Rededication this October. Their support ensured a moving and joyful occasion for members and guests alike.



The service starts at St Bride's

Our service remains unique among the Livery companies, combining worship with the Declarations of the new Master and Wardens and their ceremonial robing, in a service open to all. First introduced by Past Master The Venerable John Morrison, this tradition continues to symbolise fellowship, continuity and renewal within the Company.

The congregation joined in the hymn *Praise to the Lord, the Almighty*, as the Book of Benefactors was placed upon the altar. During the Act of Remembrance, we honoured the founders-Edward Gregorie, Robert Alt and Thomas Fisher-and those members who passed away during the past year, accompanied by the choir's beautiful performance of *My Eyes for Beauty Pine* by Herbert Howells.



The Master read from *Matthew 2: 1-12*, and the outgoing Honorary Chaplain, the Reverend Christine Smith, spoke about the links between vision, craftsmanship and compassion at the heart of the Company's work. The St Bride's Choir gave inspiring performances of John Rutter's *Open Thou Mine Eyes* and Orlando Gibbons' *O Clap Your Hands*.

The highlight was the Declaration of the new Master and Wardens - Fiona Anderson, David Baker and Leon Davies, who each pledged to serve with integrity in the coming year.

After the Blessing and the National Anthem, the new Master and Wardens led the procession back to Apothecaries' Hall, where members and guests gathered for the Installation Luncheon.



Fiona gives her first speech as Master



The female Masters of the 21st Century with the Clerk at the October Court Lunch



PRIZES AND MEDALS

We have continued our commitment to recognising educational excellence this year, expanding our reach to every UK school of optometry and honouring outstanding early-career research through a prestigious medals programme.

At Cardiff University, this year's WCSM prize was awarded to Maia Warrack, who was recognised for demonstrating the key skills required to succeed in a multidisciplinary team, going beyond her studies and actively contributing to the enhancement of the School community and student experience.



Maia Warrack receives her prize from Liveryman Moawia Bin-Sufyan

During the ceremony, Liveryman Moawia Bin-Sufyan addressed graduates on behalf of the Company, celebrating their dedication and professionalism. "Our mission is simple yet powerful: to support better vision for all," he said. "Nobody should be held back because of their sight." He went on to commend the graduating cohort for their compassion and resilience, reminding them that "sight isn't just about reading or walking unaided — it's about restoring dignity, connection, and a sense of self".

The Company also presented two Master's Medals for early-career research. These are awarded annually to researchers whose work demonstrates significant potential to advance the understanding or treatment of eye disease.

The 2025 Master's Medals were presented to Fabian Yii (University of Edinburgh) and Dr Siyin (Shane) Liu (UCL).

Fabian Yii was recognised for his paper "*Fundus Refraction Offset as a Personalised Biomarker for 12-Year Risk of Retinal Detachment*". As part of his PhD, he developed an AI model capable of predicting individual refractive error from retinal photographs, providing proof of concept that the derived metric could help predict who is at greater risk of retinal detachment in future years.

Dr Siyin (Shane) Liu received the Medal for his paper "*Genetic and Demographic Determinants of Fuchs Endothelial Corneal Dystrophy Risk and Severity*". His study of nearly 900 patients identified a strong correlation between the length of CTG repeat expansions in the *TCF4* gene and both the age of onset and severity of this corneal disease, findings which may influence future genetic screening and treatment approaches.



The Master presents a WCSM Master's Medal to Fabian Yii of the University of Edinburgh



The Master presents a WCSM Master's Medal to Dr Siyin (Shane) Liu of UCL

Fiona Anderson, Master Spectacle Maker, congratulated the winners:

"This medal-winning research demonstrates how fast our understanding of eye health is evolving. The results point to a future where innovative research, combined with new technology, will lead to more personalised diagnosis and treatment."

All student prize-winners are offered a three-year association with the Company as Journeymen, free of charge, providing them with opportunities to build professional connections and contribute to the wider eye health community.

WCSM Members Honoured at the College of Optometrists Diploma Ceremony

The College of Optometrists celebrated outstanding professional achievement at their Diploma Ceremony on Tuesday 18 November, welcoming new Life Fellows, Honorary Fellows and Fellows by Portfolio.

The Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers was especially proud to see several members recognised. Liverymen John Dixon Salt and Professor Ed Mallen were awarded Life Fellowships. Two members of the WCSM leadership were awarded Honorary Fellowships: our Clerk Helen Perkins, and Past Master Liz Shilling. The Company warmly congratulates all Fellows and celebrates their continued commitment to advancing eye care.



Clerk Helen Perkins and Past Master Liz Shilling receive their Honorary Fellowships



Liverymen John Dixon Salt and Ed Mallen receive their Life Fellowships



PRESENTATION EVENING 2025

The Presentation Evening has continued to evolve, from an occasion focused on celebrating SMC qualifications to a warm gathering of welcome and recognition, where members, guests and future members come together to share an evening of information, fellowship and celebration.

At Grocers' Hall on 7 July, three new Liverymen were clothed, ten new Freemen were admitted, and this year's Company awards were presented. As always, those joining the Company represented an impressive range of backgrounds and experience, all united by their support for better eye health and the Company's values. This year's cohort of new Liverymen included individuals from across the eye care sector, each contributing to the profession in different ways-whether through clinical practice, research, education or leadership.

The Master was delighted to welcome them, especially those with long-standing family or professional connections to the Company. Among the newly admitted Freemen, we were particularly pleased to recognise individuals whose work has advanced understanding, education and patient care across eye health.

The evening also included the presentation of the WCSM Military Award, recognising exceptional personal development and commitment, to Second Lieutenant Alex Farrow. The Award was received by Lt Almasi, also of 31st (Middlesex Yeomanry & Princess Louise's Kensington) Signal Squadron.

As in previous years, the Company also recognised apprentices who have recently completed their apprenticeships in spectacle making. Their enthusiasm marks a strong beginning to their careers in the sector, and the Master warmly congratulated them on taking this important first step.

If you would like to learn more about any of the new Freemen or Liverymen, you can visit the Directory in the Members' Area and search by "recently joined".

With new members joining from across the multidisciplinary team and from charities, research, education and industry, the Company continues to grow in breadth and experience. Anyone who fulfils the criteria and wishes to support the work and life of the Company is encouraged to apply for Freedom, with details available on the website. Remember: anyone who holds a recognised eye health qualification is eligible to apply By Right. There is no need to wait to be invited and no formal proposer or seconder is needed for this sort of Freedom



The Master Welcomes Freeman Chris Fawcett

application. Anyone whose mother or father was a Freeman at the time of their birth can also apply without a proposer or seconder, through the right of Patrimony.

For individuals connected by family links, guests who have been to an event and believe this is a Company for them, or anyone else who wants to support the work and life of the Company, the route is By Recommendation of two existing Liverymen. Contact the Clerk or the Membership Committee and they can make introductions as needed.



New Freemen make their declarations



Specsavers Apprentices extend the hand of friendship



Specsavers Apprentices with the Master



New Liverymen Michelle, Andrew and Claire are welcomed by the Master



The Master welcomes freeman Siobhan Scannell



Presentation of the WCSM Military Award, received on behalf of 2nd Lt Farrow by Lt Almasi



THE MASTER'S WEEKEND: OXFORD

Dreaming among the Spires of Oxford

The Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers recently enjoyed a memorable Master's Weekend in Oxford – a few days filled with learning, hospitality, and good company. The city's historic colleges and cobbled streets provided an ideal setting with a wonderful weather for this year's Master's Weekend for a gathering rooted in tradition and shared curiosity.



Spectacle Makers with Professor Thomas Charles-Edwards at Corpus Christi

The weekend began at Corpus Christi College, where guests were welcomed with an excellent afternoon tea in the peaceful college hall, tucked away in a courtyard of weathered stone buildings. The warmth of the staff and the charm of the surroundings set the tone for the days ahead. Professor Thomas Charles-Edwards, former tutor to the Clerk, Helen, and a fellow of both Corpus Christi and Jesus Colleges, then led a fascinating tour. His deep knowledge, combined with stories from Helen and Jonathan, brought the College's long history vividly to life.

From there, the group moved on to the Bodleian Library – one of Europe's oldest libraries and a true Oxford landmark. The guided tour revealed the Library's remarkable past and offered a rare chance to visit Duke Humfrey's Library, a space usually closed to non-students. The experience concluded at the Radcliffe Camera, whose domed ceiling and baroque architecture or which made for an unforgettable sight.



In the library at Corpus Christi College

Saturday began with a highlights tour of the Ashmolean Museum, where expert guides brought the Museum's extraordinary collections into focus – from ancient artefacts to Renaissance art. Afterwards, guests had time to explore Oxford at their own pace. Some lingered over lunch on the Ashmolean Rooftop Restaurant terrace, admiring the city's famous skyline, while others visited the Treasures exhibition at the Weston Library, taking in manuscripts, maps, and letters that traced centuries of human thought and creativity. Other events were also planned, including a show of archaeological findings from excavations currently underway at Hertford College, and punting on the River Isis. A few simply strolled through the streets, enjoying the quiet beauty of the colleges and chapels.



Radcliffe Camera



A reading stone from the Hertford College archaeological dig magnifies text



Messing about on the river



Spectacle Makers enjoying the sights!

The weekend's highlight came on Saturday evening with the Master's Dinner at Hertford College. Sincere thanks are due to Jamie Clark, the Bursar; Simon Robinson, Head of Catering Services; and the college Porters, whose hospitality could not have been warmer. The Dinner, held in Hertford's grand hall beneath portraits and candlelight, was a wonderful occasion. Guests enjoyed an excellent meal, lively conversation, and the convivial atmosphere.

After dinner, the group moved to the courtyard terrace and adjoining hall, where a magnificent display of fruit, cheese, and desserts awaited, accompanied by wine, port, and more conversation. This "second dessert" became the perfect moment for laughter, reflection, and new connections – proof that shared interests often bring people together in unexpected ways.



The Master speaks at Hertford College

The Oxford weekend was far more than a social occasion. It was a celebration of fellowship, learning, and the enduring values of the Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers: service, vision, and a belief that no one should be held back because of their sight. It will be remembered with great affection as a weekend of discovery, good humour, and lasting friendship.

James Sheldrick



Past Masters at the Drinks Reception



The Bodleian Courtyard and tower



MEET A MEMBER RICHARD RAWLING

Rawlings Opticians & Hearing Care recently celebrated their 130th anniversary. During that period, every Managing Director has been a Liveryman of the Company. We asked 4th generation Spectacle Maker and current Managing Director Richard Rawling about his family's dedication to the improvement of vision, their long association with the Company and the changes he and his family have seen in primary eye health care over more than a century.



4th Generation Liveryman Richard Rawling

Tell us a bit about Alfred, who founded the group back in 1895.

Alfred John Rawling was a jeweller and watchmaker. He had served his apprenticeship in Wisbech in Cambridgeshire and moved to Croydon with his mother who was Matron at Reedham Orphanage in Purley. He set up shop in September 1895 at the front of the newly rebuilt YMCA and lived at the back of the shop, using the YMCA for meals and recreation. In addition to selling and repairing jewellery and clocks he sold spectacles, which was quite common at the time. The Clerk has mentioned to me that even today, there are several current members of the Company whose earlier family members were jewellers and joined by Patrimony, like I did.

Alfred's interest in spectacles led him to train as an Optician. He purchased sight testing equipment in 1903 and became one of the first people in the country to qualify as a scientific sight-testing ophthalmic optician, having passed the examinations of the Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers in June 1904. We still have

his certificate hanging on the wall in our Purley practice. Given current regulations, it is hard to remember that optician wasn't a regulated profession back then, and anyone could have a go.



137b North End Circa 1900



AJ Rawling



Tram with Rawling sign in front of Crystal Palace, circa 1933

He took just 6 shillings (30p) on his first day of trading. Early sales included spectacles for 3 shillings (15p) (first recorded on 26th Oct '95), "eyeglass chains" for 6d or 9d (3p or 4p), "astigmatic glasses" (on 31.12.1895) for 6 shillings and 6 pence (32p) and spectacle cases and repairs.

But he was well ahead of his time in understanding the power of advertising, and was one of the Victorian entrepreneurs, so he made sure the Rawlings name appeared anywhere and everywhere – including on trams. The British Optical Association Museum at the College of Optometrists even has a Corgi replica of one of those trams in its collection. Railways and trams had led to major growth in the towns of Croydon, Purley, Maidstone and Winchester and Alfred realised there was an ideal opportunity to make his family name known as the most important provider of eye care services to those growing populations. He was a great marketer, interested in innovation and an early adopter of technology. One of the stories is that he set up a lantern to project the image of an eye into the centre of the road in 1920s Winchester as a marketing stunt, but it had to be stopped because it frightened the horses!

Family was vital to the success of the business: his sister Kate helped him in the practice, his four sons all became opticians and my great aunt Ruth handled all the book-keeping. She was an amazing character, a single female unafraid to travel the world at a time when single women travelling alone was a rarity, and she had amazing adventures. All the Rawlings have lived life to the full and their stories inspire us to this day.

Richard, what is your first memory of being in a Rawlings practice?

As a child I would often visit the local practice in Caterham where Alfred was based and my memory is of the friendly people who worked there. It was easy to see the friendly family business ethos and to see why patients came back again and again. The equipment was also very intriguing to a young boy, although I was rarely allowed in the consulting room, so I saw more of the focimeter and frame heater as well as the mysterious frame adjustment tools and pliers, as I often watched the dispensing optician working on frames to adjust and fit them.

How does that compare with the Purley branch today?

Technology has transformed the way that practices work and computers, iPads, OCTs and diagnostic equipment have made the examination and dispensing far more detailed than simply a test of sight and prescription. AI is also becoming a part of improved diagnostics across all areas of healthcare, including optics, and is incorporated in many of the tools we use. So much has advanced the way that we do business, with a huge benefit to customers' eye health and improved visual outcomes.

When did you first become aware of the Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers?

In my teens I was aware of my father dressing up in black tie and attending dinners in the most amazing locations in London which seemed a kind of secret society. As I grew up I occasionally joined him, even before I had become part of the business. It was often the place I saw some of the more extended members of our family and recall visiting Mansion House in the year that Michael Rawling was Master and being overawed by the location and the scenes I saw. I felt like I was stepping back in history and becoming part of a hallowed society.

Your second cousin, Michael Rawling, served as Master of the Company in 1983-84, following in the footsteps of his father, Douglas Rawling, Master from 1969-71. What did you learn from them?

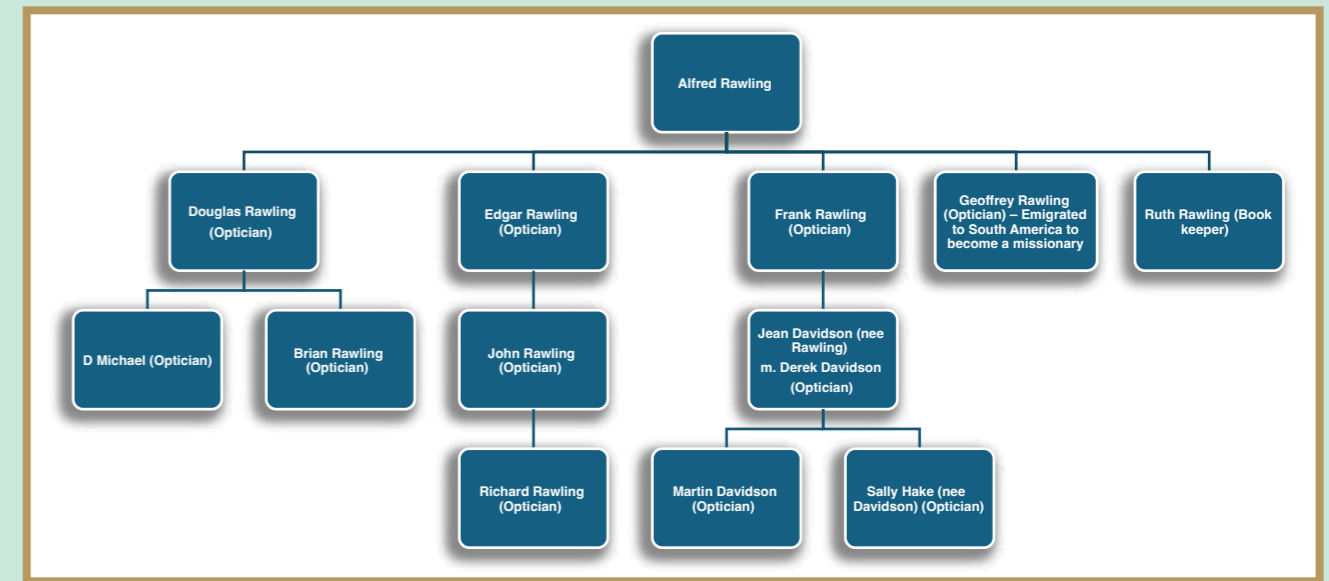
I never knew Douglas as he had retired long before I was part of the company, but Michael, and the four other

family Directors including my father John Rawling, had set an ethical and moral culture to the business that still holds true today. They were passionate about improving health care and serving their local communities and I am proud to be carrying on the business with their values of community and service still at the very centre of what we do. I also saw the compassion and humanity of caring for both the local communities and the people who worked for Rawlings.

All of them were people who really got stuck in to everything they could – Michael was a founding member of the Board of Governors of the Faculty of Dispensing Opticians as well as serving on the Association of Optometrists General Council and the Croydon Local Optical Committees. He was also a Trustee for a local almshouse and school and, like Douglas before him, he was a passionate member of the Rotary Club.

Great uncle Douglas was the first Master still to be in practice as an Ophthalmic Optician when he was installed – but that wasn't all. As well as working, he was a JP, a Special Constable, he was involved with the YMCA, he was the first Chair of the Friends of the Mayday Hospital in Croydon and even founded a Men's detachment of the Red Cross.

My father was a local councillor for over 25 years, becoming Chairman (Mayor) twice, set up the East Surrey Museum, was trustee of numerous local charities, governor of several local schools, and was an expert and RHS Judge on rhododendrons, camelias and magnolias. I'd love to know how any of them found the time to do everything they did!



Rawling Family Tree (Please note the family tree only shows those who became opticians or were involved in the business)

What would your father, John, think if he saw you and the group today?

I think he would be pleased by the way we have expanded and moved into new areas, both physically with our newer branches, and professionally with audiology and the various extended healthcare schemes of which we are a part, whilst maintaining our family feeling both for patients and for staff. He was passionate about contact lenses and the benefits they provide and we have been at the forefront of contact lens supply as well as myopia management. The Rawlings group is now larger than ever before and includes 12 practices across Surrey and Hampshire. We have invested in technology and will continue to do so. I hope he would be proud of what I have achieved along with our group of Owner Directors, all of whom have different skills and specialities: myself; Claire, Tim and Sara Shipway; Rachael Smith; David Barker; Deborah Blanc; and Simon Callaghan. The average age of the Board is probably 20 or 30 years younger than it was in my grandfather's day but we have the combination of new ideas alongside the voice of experience.



Directors of Rawling Opticians

What do you think is your biggest achievement, what's the thing that makes you most proud?

I think my biggest achievement has been in steering the company to greater success and growth over my 20 years as Managing Director whilst still staying true to our ethical and moral approach to everything. We operate in the modern world with all of its commercial, regulatory and legislative requirements, yet we remain at heart a family business that cares for its staff and customers, supports charity and provides community care to all. I have always felt a huge personal responsibility to ensure that the company remains successful and that when I leave the company, it will be in a better place than when I started. On present performance I can confidently say that we are achieving this, having doubled our turnover over this time.

I am also very proud of having raised almost £3,000 for the Childhood Eye Cancer Trust (CHECT) last year by completing a personal ambition to skydive out of a plane at 15,000 feet.



Richard Rawling on the Charity Skydive

And what about the next generation?

The official name of our group at Companies House is still Rawling & Sons (Opticians) Limited but, like the Spectacle Makers' Company, while our name gives us heritage and stability, it doesn't cover everything we do and how we operate now. I have a daughter-and I'm hugely proud of her. She is already committed to healthcare, following her own path as a doctor. She has helped out in practice, of course, as did my mother and as my wife still does – it's in the family after all.

I'm really passionate about growing talent for the future outside the family too. Our Board of Directors is made up of a meritocracy of those who have excelled in their fields and is still made up of Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians alongside our Finance Director. They have also brought in family of their own and our Chairperson, Claire Shipway, has encouraged her son and daughter-in-law to become Dispensing Opticians and they now look after our operations and HR respectively. We do everything we can to help our people be the best they can be and have been recognised as Gold level Investors In People. Our 130th Anniversary party had a few official guests, including from WCSM, but the biggest pleasure was bringing together everyone, from every single practice, for a real family party.

So what can we expect from Rawlings Opticians & Hearing Care in the next 20 years?

I've mentioned the change in name already. Being able to care for vision and hearing is very important to us and important for the people we serve. We get to know our patients really well, they trust us and we want to be their first port of call for anything that might be worrying them, in terms of their senses.

I hope to continue to grow the business further and bring new diversification to our offering. The future is changing so quickly and technology is bringing so much change that it will be hard to imagine how optics will be different in 10 years, let alone 20. What I do know is that whatever we do, we will bring our family values to care for those that we can help.



**HANDING OVER TO A NEW CLERK
FAREWELL TO HELEN, WELCOME TO OLLIE**



I came to the Spectacle Makers from the Worshipful Company of Gardeners, where I was Clerk for just over two years. Although every one of the 113 Livery companies is unique – each has its own culture and traditions – I am fortunate to bring with me some knowledge of Livery life and its terminology and customs.

I am, however, new to the world of optics and eye health. We in the office don't need to be eye health specialists ourselves. As our members, you provide the expertise from across all branches of eye health (and further afield), with each and every one of you contributing to the unique multidisciplinary network that makes up the Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers. But it is important for me to understand what our members do, and some of the opportunities and challenges you face, so during this handover period, I'm grateful to have been introduced to so many facets of the eye health sector. I've toured factories, dropped in on high-street optical practices, visited an eye health clinic, met some of our corporate supporters, attended the Low Vision Day at St Thomas' Hospital, and much more.

Thank you to everyone I've met so far for your warm welcome and good wishes. The Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers is widely known for its friendly members and its strong sense of community and camaraderie. I can certainly vouch for the truth of this, after just a few weeks in post.

I look forward to meeting and getting to know many more of you over the coming months. If you're ever planning to be near Blackfriars, and you might have a spare 30 minutes to pop in to the office, do let us know. You will always be welcome.

Ollie

The Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers can have only one Clerk. As I write, I am therefore still your Clerk Designate. In this capacity I am fortunate to be working alongside Helen Perkins, before she retires in December after serving ten years as Clerk to the Company. I am trying to absorb as much as I can from Helen, and I am grateful to her, to the Master and Wardens, and to many other people for planning and taking me through such a thorough induction and handover process. Provided all goes to plan, it will be my great honour to be admitted as the 25th known Clerk to the Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers at the Court meeting on Tuesday 9 December.

Farewell to Helen, our 24th known Clerk

It is with mixed emotions that we acknowledge the retirement of Helen, whose distinguished career has been marked by both her dedication to her role & The Company over the previous ten years.

Over the course of her tenure, Helen has contributed significantly to the advancement of our shared mission, demonstrating the utmost professionalism, integrity, and a steadfast commitment to excellence. Her leadership and guidance have left a lasting legacy, inspiring colleagues and members of our Company.

The Company is regarded within the City as highly welcoming and inclusive, in no small part thanks to her dedication. Her work to strengthen our governance, broaden our connections and support the Court and Masters through their years of office has had a lasting effect. The move away

from education and training and the development of our corporate support base were significant transitions, handled with care and clarity, and the benefits of these changes will continue to be felt for years to come.

Helen's commitment to the role has been widely recognised, not only by those within the Company but also by colleagues across the Livery and the profession. Her recent Honorary Fellowship of the College of Optometrists is a fitting reflection of the respect in which she is held (see page 9). Alongside her professional contribution, Helen has brought warmth, kindness and a genuine commitment to helping others succeed.

As Helen, with Jonathan by her side, embarks upon this new chapter, we extend our sincere gratitude and best wishes for continued fulfilment in the years ahead.

The Master



Visit to the 16th Medical Close Support Regiment Colchester

In June the Master Mike Harris, Mistress Carole, the Learned Clerk Helen, Deputy Master Liz Shilling and Past Master Mistress John Shilling visited Melville Barracks in Colchester. This is the home of 16th Medical Close Support Regiment, with whom we have had an affiliation for 24 years.

It was a very hot day and we enjoyed the sunshine and exercise walking to the exhibition field, where we saw new ways of treating and transporting casualties in the theatre of war. Everything from wheel-barrow type stretchers to infectious disease helicopter transfers.

We were greeted and escorted by Major Murphy, Head of Nursing who gave us an informative tour of the regiment's functions. The importance of drones to modern warfare was evidenced by the fact that members of this regiment all learn how to fly drone technology. We were shown operating theatre-style tents that could be set up to treat casualties with an orthopaedic, anaesthetic and vascular surgeons working with nurses and others to treat battlefield injuries, save life and enable evacuation. I was pleased to see there were allied health professionals in the form of diagnostic radiographers, physiotherapists and operating theatre technicians, who all play their part in the multidisciplinary team.

In the early evening we transformed ourselves into black tie and met under the Dakota aircraft at the front of the camp for the Officers' cocktail party. It was a jovial experience where we met many territorial medics from across the UK. The Master and Mistress were able to look all over the Dakota (DC3) and were able to see the restoration work that had already been done, alongside the plans going forward to keep her preserved and at the front of this camp.

It was a memorable day and strengthened our links with this amazing regiment who deliver lifesaving care after parachuting in to position!

Liz Shilling



The Master and WCSM contingent with officers in front of the Dakota plane

A Year in View: 31 (Middlesex Yeomanry and Princess Louise Kensington) Signal Squadron, 2025

Who we are. Based in Uxbridge and Coulsdon, we are a Squadron of 71st (City of London) Yeomanry Signal Regiment, part of the Royal Corps of Signals. Having service personnel living and working across London, in fields ranging from the NHS to cyber security, we undertake Army Reserve training in our evenings and weekends, aiming for a minimum of 27 days per year. Our operational role is to provide communications platforms and specialists, and defensive cyber expertise to 3rd (United Kingdom) Division, the British Army's Warfighting Division. This year, our people have operated in South Korea, Kenya, Gibraltar, and extensively in the UK.

Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers' visit to the Squadron – January 2025. As part of one of our weekend exercises, Major Phil Jones, the Squadron Commander, invited the Master and other Spectacle Makers to Uxbridge Army Reserve Centre. Members of the Company met officers and soldiers, received a brief on the Squadron and its role, and witnessed vehicle maintenance taking place. They also sampled the delights of an All-Ranks Dinner, courtesy of RAF Northolt – an unforgettable experience!



Members of the WCSM tour the Squadron's garages, where the communications vehicles are housed, and maintenance conducted



Officers of the Squadron host the Master and other Spectacle Makers in the Army Reserve Centre's mess, prior to delivering a brief explaining the Squadron's role

Winning Defence Cyber Marvel (DCM) 5 – February 2025.

The UK Armed Forces' premier defensive cyber competition, the fifth iteration pitted 33 international teams against each other, focussing on network security. The Regiment's team deployed to Kenya, to further a long-standing collaboration effort with the Kenyan Defence Force. Exercise supporters deployed to South Korea, where exercise control was based. The Regiment in defensive cyber, eight members of the Squadron deployed on this exercise, one of whom, Lance Corporal Ryan Dodson, came to the Squadron with no technical cyber skills at all. Having finished in top five positions consistently over the previous four iterations, the Regimental team finished first, an achievement which has bought significant clout across military and civilian stakeholders.



The Regimental Defence Cyber Marvel team, alongside counterparts from the Kenyan Defence Force, and British and Kenyan officials



Second Lieutenant Harold Hawks, formerly of the Squadron and Team Lead for the Regiment, presents a plaque to his Kenyan Defence Force counterpart

Exercise PHOENIX WARRIOR – March 2025. Our battle skills-focussed exercise, PHOENIX WARRIOR takes members of the Regiment and Squadron away from their primary role as communicators and develops infantry skills. Essential on the battlefield, this includes clearing buildings, conducting patrols, and planning infantry operations. This iteration was planned by the Squadron Sergeant Major, Warrant Officer Second Class Stu Pinington, and took place in Copehill Down, on the Salisbury Plain Training Area, focussing on operating in the urban environment.



Members of the Squadron conduct building clearance drills, honing their skills for operational deployments



Copehill Down, on Salisbury Plain Training Area, is used by the MOD to provide a realistic simulation of the urban environment, benefiting military training

Awarding of the Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers' Military Award – July 2025. Annually, the Company presents their Military Award to a member of the Squadron who has shown the greatest commitment to personal growth and development that year. This allows the Company and Squadron to recognise exceptional individuals who have committed significant portions of their time to their Army Reserve careers and also offers further opportunity to strengthen the relationship between Company and Squadron. This year, it was awarded to Second Lieutenant Alex Farrow, for commitment to developing both civilian and military careers (as seen on page 11).

Exercise PHOENIX DIVER – September 2025. Exercise PHOENIX DIVER was a Sub-Aqua Adventurous training Package held for two weeks in Gibraltar, organised by **Captain Ian Mackay**, formerly of the Squadron. This gave complete novices the opportunity to throw themselves in at the deep end, undergoing training and gaining qualifications. As a duty, Army Reserve personnel were paid for their attendance, against a small personal contribution. As equipment, instructors, and facilities are all service provided, these exercises are far cheaper to attend than in a civilian form.



Captain Ian Mackay (left), formerly of the Squadron, reaping the benefits of all the hard work to plan Exercise PHOENIX DIVER, a two week Sub-Aqua adventurous training expedition for the Regiment



Members of the expedition give the ok signal during safety drills

Annual Continuous Training – October 2025. Alongside our normal Tuesday evening and weekend training, we hold a two-week annual training exercise, either abroad or at home in the UK. We use this opportunity to bring everyone together and consolidate all of our training, developing our fighting skills and the relationships of everyone in the Regiment in equal parts. This year, we stayed in the UK, based in Folkestone, Kent. Our exercise programme consisted of navigation, radio communication, and a three-day live fire shooting programme. For performance on the latter, **Signaller Sharanveer Hira** was awarded top shot overall. We were also fortunate enough to host the Master and Clerk Designate of the Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers, as well as past Master and President of the Middlesex Yeomanry Association, Lieutenant Colonel Don Grocott.



Part of the Regiment's Annual Continuous Training involved the Annual Combat Marksmanship Test, conducted to certify that Army personnel are current and competent in live fire drills and marksmanship



A Rear-Link Detachment, blending in to the Kent foliage, provides High Frequency communications across the battlefield. Annually, the Squadron conducts training to familiarise soldiers with the establishment of these detachments, and developing drills to make them harder to detect

Why we do it. Army Reserve service, conducted alongside civilian careers and personal lives, is very much a spare time endeavour. Motivations are difficult to quantify, but a minority are financially motivated: the vast majority are motivated to serve because of the impact to community and country. In return are leadership training, testing and arduous environments, and opportunities which are truly unforgettable. The Army also provides plenty of opportunity for members of the Squadron to do things outside the unit, such as sports, adventurous training, language courses, and much more. The Army Reserve is a fantastic place to meet new people, learn new skills, travel the world, whilst being paid to do so.

Captain Sirvan Almasi, Squadron Second-in-Command



Cadets at the National AeroSpace Centre

NASC 2025: A Week of Discovery, Flight, and Friendship for RAF Air Cadets

Every August, RAF Syerston becomes the epicentre of inspiration for hundreds of young cadets from across the UK. The National Air & Space Camp (NASC), the flagship event of the Royal Air Force Air Cadets (RAFAC), offers a week-long immersion into the world of aviation, aerospace, and defence. This year, nearly 300 cadets and 150 Cadet Force Adult Volunteers (CFAVs) took part in a packed programme of activities designed to educate, challenge, and excite. This included Flight Sergeant (FS) Molly Hewett, Sergeant Marnie James, Corporal Elkie Kirby (15), Cadet Charlotte Trillow (15) and three other Welling Air Cadets. From gliding and drone piloting to engineering challenges and career fairs, NASC is more than just a camp, it's a launchpad for future careers and lifelong friendships.

A Royal Start and a Career-Focused Future

Flight Sergeant Molly Hewett, a seasoned cadet, kicked off her week with a moment of pride: receiving her King's Coronation Medal on the coach journey to camp. "It was a great week spent in camp, made even better by receiving my medal," she said.

Hewett's highlight was Industry Day, a cornerstone of the NASC experience. With over 70 industry partners present and the UK's third-largest military air display taking place, the event drew more than 3,000 attendees. "Most of them were cadets,"

Hewett noted, "and it allowed young people to discover the various roles available to them within the industry."

The careers fair showcased everything from aerospace engineering to cyber defence, giving cadets a rare opportunity to speak directly with professionals and recruiters. Hewett described the day as "my favourite," and it's easy to see why: few events offer such a comprehensive look into the future of air and space careers.

Learning, Flying, and Finding New Passions

For Charlotte Trillow, NASC was a transformative experience. "It was an amazing camp," she said. "Part of what made it so great was the people, not only the other cadets, but also the staff, who made such a great opportunity possible."

Trillow praised the staff for their support and approachability. "If I didn't know where I was meant to be, I could ask any member of staff and they would help me," she said. That sense of community extended beyond logistics. "Even if you didn't know anyone doing the same activity as you, everyone was so nice and no one was left out."

Her week was filled with diverse activities, including a space masterclass and an engineering course. But it was gliding that truly captured her imagination. "It was so much fun," she said. "I got two badges: Blue Space, which I earned by completing the blue space course, and Blue Wings, which I got through gliding."

Trillow also appreciated the balance between structured learning and downtime. "In the evening, we had free time to do what we wanted," she explained. "It allowed me to spend time with my friends even if we weren't doing the same courses, and helped me get ready for the next day."

Her favourite day was, once again, Industry Day. "Many air, sea, and army cadets from different parts of the country attended," she said. "It allowed me to learn about how different, but also similar, cadets' experiences were." The variety of stalls and companies opened her eyes to new possibilities. "I learned about jobs in the RAF I never knew existed," she said. "Because of this day, I discovered new opportunities for me in the future. I may want to be an Engineer Officer in the RAF."

Drones, Displays, and Discovery

Elkie Kirkby's enthusiasm for NASC was infectious. "I enjoyed it so much that I wanted to stay for another week," she said. "And plenty of my friends said they wished they could stay longer too."

Her week began with the Blue Drones syllabus, a new addition to the camp. "We were the first group of cadets to try it," she said. "It was so much fun, my favourite part was flying the drones." Though she wished for more time in the air, the experience left a lasting impression.



Air Cadet in a glider

Monday brought Kirkby's first gliding experience. "I was a bit nervous at first," she admitted, "but my pilot Charlie said if I liked roller coasters, I'd enjoy gliding. And she was right, I loved it!" Charlie's encouragement made the flight memorable, and Kirkby's confidence soared.

Tuesday's visit to RAF Waddington was another highlight. Cadets toured the fire station, sat in a fire engine designed for aircraft emergencies, and explored a museum housing recovered military aircraft. "We saw how the controls worked and learned about the equipment," Kirkby said. The afternoon visit to a hangar where Red Arrows planes were being restored added a layer of awe. "We learned about their formation, the most experienced pilot leads at the front, and the two newest pilots fly right behind," she explained. "We also found out how to tell when a plane is nearing retirement."



Cadets in Red Arrows hangar

Industry Day on Wednesday was packed with learning and excitement. "We visited different stalls to learn about various industries, like the police," Kirkby said. "We saw the equipment they use for emergencies and found out about the fitness levels needed to join." The afternoon airshow featured a Chinook, Spitfire, Typhoon, and the Red Arrows in a dazzling 25-30 minute display. "It was brilliant, the first time I'd seen them," she said.

Thursday brought Bronze Wings training, with staff offering clear, supportive instruction. "Everyone in my group passed," Kirkby said proudly. Friday's Raytheon challenge tested teamwork and engineering skills. "We had to build a wing within a budget and time limit," she explained. "The team whose wing held the most weight won, and my team won!"

The week wrapped with advanced synthetic training, where Kirkby flew a simulator around circuits. She earned both her Bronze Wings and Blue Drones badges, capping off a week of achievement.

A Camp That Builds More Than Skills

Across all three cadets' experiences, one theme stands out: NASC is more than just a training camp. It's a place where young people discover passions, build friendships, and glimpse the future they might one day help shape.

Evening free time gave cadets a chance to relax, bond, and prepare for the next day. "It was great to hang out with friends and get my uniform ready," Kirkby said. Trillow echoed the sentiment: "It allowed me to connect with others and reflect on what I'd learned."

From medals to masterclasses, gliders to Red Arrows, NASC 2025 proved once again why it's the RAFAC's most anticipated event. For Hewett, Trillow, and Kirkby, and hundreds of others, it was a week of flight, friendship, and future dreams taking shape.

And for anyone wondering whether the next generation of aerospace leaders is ready to take off, the answer is a resounding yes.

Flt Lt Kristen Cottier



Spectacle Makers Among the Flock

On Sunday 28 September 2025, the annual Sheep Drive, hosted by the Worshipful Company of Woolmen, took place across Southwark Bridge in London, in support of the Woolmen Charity and the Lord Mayor's Appeal.

We were pleased to see twenty members of our Company participate in the drive. The format remains one of historical fun: the ancient "right" of Freemen of the City of London to drive sheep toll-free over the Thames is celebrated each year, reinstated in recent decades as a charitable occasion.



The Master and Mistress leading the flock

Some participants opted for fancy dress, and the whole event combined tradition with a light-hearted spirit. Numerous tourists and Londoners alike looked on as flocks of gowned and badged Livery Masters descended onto Southwark Bridge for their drives.

In addition to the sheep-drive itself, the Livery Fair on Queen Street and Queen Street Place brought together wool-trade stalls, rare breeds, shearing demonstrations, and information about the work of the City's Livery companies in modern sustainable trades.

Our thanks go to the Woolmen's Company, the staff and volunteers, and all fellow Freemen for making the day a success. As the Spectacle Makers, we were proud to be part of this tradition, combining fellowship with charitable endeavour - and contributing alongside the wider City community to an event with genuine historic roots and contemporary relevance.

However we had one extra angle of Charity this year. Liveryman James Russell did the drive as a sponsored event, raising extra money for charity. As a member of the Friends of Godmersham Church - Jane Austen's local church which stands next to ABDO College, there was a need to raise money for the restoration of both a plaque to the Austen family nurse and a 12th Century plaque of St Thomas Becket. In James's own words:

"We were sponsored by the Archbishops' Council and American Jane Austen fans to complete the work but there was some shortfall. I decided to get myself sponsored and, since a huge road traffic accident eight years ago limited my physical abilities, I thought the 'Sheep Drive' would fit. With the backing of the National Churches Trust and my lovely team of The Friends of Godmersham Church we managed to raise £1,400."

Next year's Sheep Drive will take place on Sunday 27 September. If you are interested in participating, please look out for an update from the Office next year.



Spectacle Makers in full force

The Lady Mayor's Show 2025

This year's Lord Mayor's Show – or rather, the Lady Mayor's Show – marked a special moment for the City, celebrating the first female Lord Mayor in over ten years.

The Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers once again took part, joining fellow liveries on the Senior Livery Companies' float. Representing the Company were the Master, together with representatives from our Corporate Supporters: Rayner, Jules Collis; Seiko, Michelle Lloyd-Bibb; Hammond & Dummer, Claire Ranger.

We were also represented by Past Master Liz Shilling and the Clerk on the Lady Masters' float, and by the Upper Warden, who was a guest of 71st Signal Regiment at their pit stop during the Lady Mayor's Show.

The crowds were as enthusiastic as ever, lining the familiar route through the City despite the November chill. It was a fine opportunity to celebrate the City's long traditions and the continuing role of the Livery companies within it.

Our thanks go to the Master and our Corporate Supporters for representing the Company so well on the day – and for ensuring the Spectacle Makers were once again clearly visible in this great annual celebration.



The Master and Spectacle Makers



Gog and Magog amongst the Young Freemen



The Lady Mayor's Show in full swing



Upper Warden with 71 Signal Regiment



The Spectacle Makers on the return leg



Wizardry in Wood

The Worshipful Company of Turners held their Wizardry in Wood exhibition at the stunning Plaisterers' Hall from Tuesday 28 October to Friday 31 October 2025.

Beautiful and exquisite items made from wood are on display and for sale with working demonstrations and virtual presentations throughout the three days.



Wizardry in Wood examples

A coffee and cake bar in the main Hall was very much appreciated.

Meeting up with fellow members of our Livery was an unexpected pleasure and the Turners' Company was delighted that other Livery companies were supporting their craft.

Gaynor Foulkes-Taylor



Spectacle Makers at Wizardry in Wood

Four Liveries' Event

On Monday 8 September, the Clockmakers' Company hosted the Four Liveries' Event, at the Science Museum. The evening provided the opportunity to see a watchmaker in action, and practise perlage, the horological art of machining metal to create an overlapping circular effect.

The Science Museum contains the Clockmaker's own Museum Collection, and as such, their Liverymen were able to explain the significance and provenance of the most important and beautiful time pieces.



Four Liveries Masters and Consorts



The Master learning about perlage

WELCOME TO OUR NEW FREEMEN, ADMITTED SINCE 1 JUNE 2025:

Zabir Ali
 Ross Stuart Bailey
 Julia Ruth Baker
 Avi Jacob Baker
 Russell Philip Bickle
 Nicholas John Black
 Neil Frank Buffin
 Jose Antony Calvo
 Alexis Penelope Sherrie Casdagli
 Timothy Daniel Cole
 Howard Pearse Collins
 Colin Philip Davidson
 Amanda Jane Davidson
 Christopher Duggan
 Nicholas Andrew Richard Easey

Geoffrey Christopher Fawcett
 Jennifer Susan FitzSimon
 Karen Debra Gennard
 Randeep Singh Gill
 Anita Ruth Glasby
 Kamlesh Jivan Gohil
 Daniel Nicholas Green
 Paul Dominic Jones
 Steven Philip Lee
 Mark William Marland
 Owen David Miles
 Diane Jane Nash
 Alison Ng
 Helen Clare Taylor
 Louise O'Toole

Stefan Anders Poole
 Samuel Robert Simpkin Ranger
 Mark Andrew Sanderson
 Rohan Prakesh Satpute
 Siobhan Mary Scannell
 Keval Paresj Sejar
 Keith Carden Sibanda
 Samantha Louise Strong
 Vaishali Thakrar
 Philip Sherwood Roper Thompson
 Charlotte Timbury
 Cindy Tromans
 Shawn Philip Warren-Willcox
 Don Mathew Williams

NEW LIVERYMEN CLOTHED ON 11 JUNE 2025



Neil Michael Patrick Hanley



Priti Kotecha



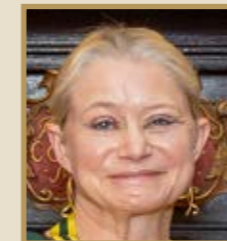
Stephen Christopher McClay



Deepali Modha



Susan Patricia Mollan



Claire Deborah Ranger



James Alexander Gillespie Sangster



Roy Stoner



Thomas Edward Stoner



Karan Bhavesh Vyas

NEW LIVERYMEN CLOTHED ON 7 JULY 2025



Michelle Lloyd-Bibb



Andrew John Pitman



Claire Slade



LONG SERVICE

Congratulations to the following members who have reached significant anniversaries of their admission to the Freedom in the period 1 June 2025 - 1 December 2025. The Master and Wardens thank them for their continuing support.

70 YEARS+

Nigel John Austin
Raymond Peter Wilder
Michael Wolffe

40 YEARS

David Elks
Amanda Jane Lees
Carole Jane Griffiths
Dominic Morrison

60 YEARS

James Christopher Barrie
Robert William Chappell (Past Master)
Alex Excoffen Duchemin

25 YEARS

Catherine Bernadette Baker
Elaine Patricia Grisdale
Robert Gurth Hughes
Elizabeth Ann Shilling (Past Master)
Christine Margaret Tomkins (Past Master)

IN MEMORIAM

Derek Ray Davidson
Richard Henry Jeffery
Phyllis Elizabeth Northcott

Eye Health Barbie – or Sarakshi, the Model of Modern Optometry

It began with a visit to the British Optical Association Museum ahead of its reopening in September. During the tour, Neil Handley mentioned his difficulty finding an affordable “Eye Doctor Barbie.” Rising to the challenge, the Clerk tracked one down online. The only complication? She was located across the Atlantic.

This is where transatlantic Livery connections came to the rescue. Reade Fahs, Liveryman and Executive Chairman of National Vision, the second-largest optical retailer in the United States, kindly enlisted the help of his resourceful assistant, Jerilyn Johnson. Thanks to Jerilyn’s swift action, Eye Doctor Barbie journeyed first to National Vision’s headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia, before on to the WCSM Office in London.

On arrival, her outfit proved more catwalk than clinic... a white coat, high heels, and a miniskirt. The Clerk found a “sew-your-own” scrubs kit, and Liveryman Rowena McNamara, orthoptist and dressmaker, stepped in with consultation from her students at City St George’s University. Noting that modern practitioners favour trousers, Rowena designed a bespoke outfit, turning Barbie into a model of modern optometry.

Before her presentation, the Master, a Dispensing Optician, ensured Sarakshi’s spectacles were perfectly adjusted. On 29 October 2025, she was officially presented by the Master to Professor Leon Davies, Chair of the College of Optometrists, with Rowena and Helen in attendance.

Her name, Sarakshi, combines the Sanskrit Sara (“essence”) and Akshi (“eyes”) - together meaning “Good Vision”: a fitting tribute to global collaboration and the spirit of modern eye care.



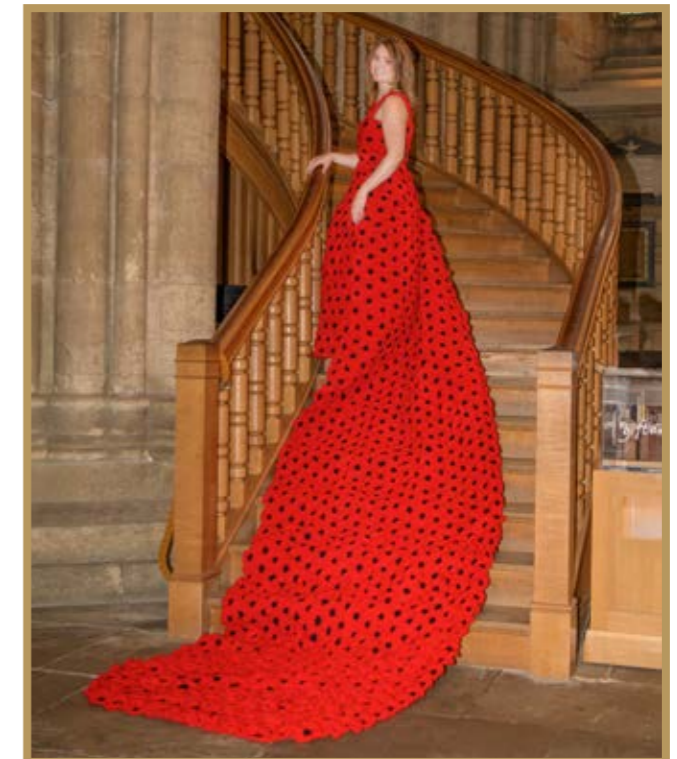
Sarakshi in her new home at the BOA Museum

A Dress of Remembrance: Freeman Charlotte Potter at Ripon Cathedral

It has been a busy few months with rehearsals and concerts across the country, but for me, November is the month I look forward to most, with performances marking Remembrance. 6 November saw me performing again at Ripon Cathedral, and on 8 November I returned to Durham Cathedral for my fourth year to sing with the Band of the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers at the Army Benevolent Fund’s Festival of Remembrance.

This year, my performance at Ripon Cathedral was made even more special as the ladies from the Ripon Community Poppy Project created a gown of over 2000 knitted poppies for me to wear at Ripon’s Festival of Remembrance. The dress appeared online in The Times and had coverage on BBC Look North, which was fantastic for the Poppy Project charity. When not being worn by me, the dress has been on display in the window of Ripon Specsavers, who are big supporters of the Ripon Community Poppy Project. I look forward to wearing it again next year!

Charlotte Potter, Freeman



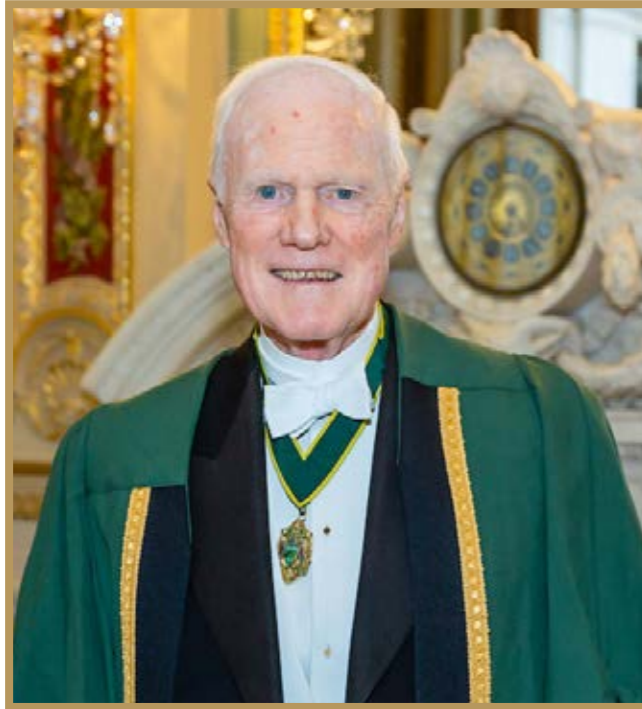
Charlotte in the handmade poppy dress at Ripon Cathedral



The handmade poppy dress at the Ripon Specsavers



Reflections on stepping down from Court



Past Master Don Grocott

On 1 October 2025 I left the Court, having already somewhat rashly promised the Editor of this journal that I would write a short reflection in the hope of explaining a little of life on Court and some of the changes I have seen.

It is time to move on and make way for fresh thinking – that is, after all, what a small committee that I chaired twenty or more years ago recommended: Past Masters not to stay on in perpetuity and there to be stages in the progress of Assistants through Court to enable review of their performance. There were some very wise heads on that committee. Most were called John. After our conclusions were finalised, I had an “Interview without Coffee” with the then Master. That was not the outcome I had hoped for then but, subsequently, those, and several more ideas to move the Company forward, were adopted, and I have been pleased in recent years to see growth in our membership and much more proactive communications. It is a great privilege to serve on Court, both as an Assistant whose advice is heard and, for the three years as Warden and then Master, when your decisions shape the Company.

The best parts of being on Court for me were the new and lasting friendships I made and the joy in seeing the success of those I encouraged onto Court – particularly those who have had an even more significant effect on the Company than I did. I shall, of course, miss Court. It is quite different from what seemed the rather intimidating forum in front of which I first appeared to be clothed. I was tongue-tied and uncomfortable. I managed to repeat that sub-optimal performance when I was invited to join the Court as an Assistant. It has become a

less formal place – we used to address each other in Court as “Assistant John Surname” – but we still seem to overawe some who stand before us. Yet in Court there is informal and convivial discussion tempered with appropriate challenge. Consensus is almost always reached.

Is it then sensible to aspire to join Court? Yes. It has been the most rewarding time in my membership of the Company. It has strength in its diversity in that Assistants come from different backgrounds and so Masters do not have a continuum of view or approach. They are identifiably different and so the heartbeat of the Court changes and with it, the Company. Court offers the opportunity to introduce new ideas and experiences. My service in the Reserve Army has enabled me to introduce more Spectacle Makers to a part of life many have not seen before. So it is for other members of Court.

As a final reflection, it is customary to talk of retiring to the backbenches. The Spectacle Makers’ backbenches have been made more effective by regular emails and online access to information, the advertisement of vacancies on committees and encouragement to members to get involved as Stewards, helpers and local event organisers. The “Meet the Master” and “Town Hall” online sessions each year provide opportunities for questions from all members and a direct way of engaging with the Master and Wardens. Of course, there continue to be events from Eye-to-Eye meetings to Livery Dinners, where we can enjoy opportunities to have a word, initiate a debate, press an idea... Those are amongst the special privileges of membership of our nearly four-hundred-year-old Company. Those are privileges I hold dear and I know I shall continue to enjoy them ‘after Court’.

Don Grocott



Don receives a gift from the Master in thanks for his service to the Company on the Court

Looking Ahead to 2029: Supporting Better Vision for All



Liveryman Dr David Parkins, Chair of the Board of Trustees, recently updated the Company on the Charity’s plans as the Company approaches its 400th anniversary in 2029. Central to these ambitions is the introduction of a new bursary programme to support people with visual impairment in seeking future employment. Achieving this goal-and sustaining our wider work-will depend on increasing regular donations and identifying new funding sources.

In the year to 31 March 2025, the Charity awarded £82,616 in grants and bursaries, continuing its long-standing commitment to improving eye health in the UK and abroad. This support extends to a wide range of organisations working to ensure better vision for all, as well as individuals undertaking training and professional development across the eye-care sector.

This year, 21 students received bursaries of up to £1,000 to pursue diploma or undergraduate study at Level 4 and above, all aimed at careers in eye health. The Charity also provided development awards for ophthalmologists in training and ophthalmic nurses, helping them to present research and undertake short-term fellowships overseas.

To strengthen its impact, the Trustees-who meet quarterly-will move to theme-based grant assessments from February 2026, reviewing applications according to the following annual cycle:

- February: Information and support
- May: Non-UK healthcare and training
- September: Employment and education
- November: Wellbeing (arts, culture and sport)

As preparations begin for the 400th anniversary, the Charity hopes supporters will be inspired by its work and consider how they can help. Regular or one-off donations, Gift Aid, membership of the 100 Club, or a legacy pledge all make a meaningful difference.



To donate or learn more, please visit www.spectaclemakers.com/Charity or scan the QR code.
www.spectaclemakers.com/Charity

On behalf of the Trustees and all those whose lives are improved through your generosity, Dr Parkins extends his sincere thanks to every supporter and donor.

Glaucoma-NET: Driving Change in Nigeria

At one of the recent Eye to Eye talks, grant recipient Glaucoma-NET’s Fatima Kyari offered an engaging insight into the growing impact of Glaucoma-NET, a collaborative network working to improve glaucoma awareness, diagnosis and care across Nigeria.

Fatima outlined how the network brings together patients, clinicians, researchers and policymakers to address one of the leading causes of irreversible blindness. With support from the Spectacle Makers’ Charity over a three-year period, Glaucoma-NET has already rolled out a national Glaucoma Toolkit, expanded training programmes, and coordinated a dedicated website to support knowledge-sharing between eye-care teams.



The release of the Glaucoma Guideline and Toolkit

Her talk highlighted how this combination of international partnership and strong local leadership is creating clear, positive momentum. From community outreach to influencing policy, Glaucoma-NET is helping to strengthen services and widen access to sight-saving care. It was an inspiring update on work that is set to benefit thousands of people across Nigeria.

A Grand Day out to visit the National Science and Media Museum in Bradford!



The Spectacle Makers' Charity recognised

In 2023, the Spectacle Makers' Charity provided a grant towards audio description for their new Sound and Vision Galleries.

Our visit allowed us to see their new state-of-the-art facilities which are fully accessible and inclusive, so that sight impaired and severely sight impaired people now can experience and enjoy them at the same time as their peers.

Funds also supported the training and upskilling of staff, so that our grant has a long-lasting impact not just for the Bradford Museum but for the Science Museum Group sites as a whole.

We thoroughly recommend a visit to experience the galleries.

With grateful thanks to Katie and Charlotte for the warm welcome and informative tour.

David Parkins



Charity Chair with a Dalek



Wallace and Gromit at the NSMM



Twickenham Rugby Stadium Tour

Twickenham Rugby Stadium isn't just a place for unforgettable matches-it's a welcoming home for rugby fans and newcomers alike.

Twickenham Stadium is easy to spot. Its striking design stands out, giving you that "big match" feeling right from the start. Walking up to the entrance, you'll see statues and plaques celebrating England's rugby heroes, setting the stage for our tour. Tours run like clockwork, and our guide, Martin, greeted everyone with a smile.

We got a peek behind the curtain into the players' world, including the tunnel and changing rooms. Martin shared fun and inspiring stories about team talks, dramatic victories, and quiet moments of reflection.

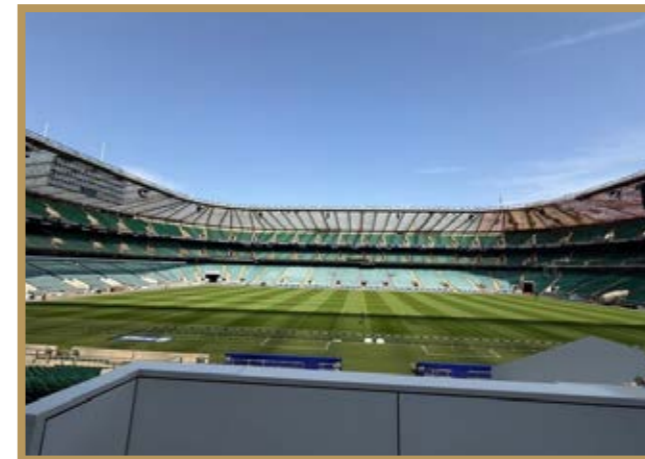
After visiting the changing rooms, we lined up and walked out to the edge of the stadium bowl. Looking up at those 82,000 seats is awe-inspiring - imagine the cheers and excitement when the teams walk out! The pitch is perfectly kept and replaced every year with a hardy mixture of real and artificial grass.

Next, we visited the Royal Box-Twickenham's VIP area. Here, the seats are extra comfy, and the view of the pitch is brilliant. Martin told us about famous faces who have watched games from here and shared entertaining stories that made everyone smile. Even though most of us won't ever watch a match from this spot, it was fun to imagine!

Our tour also included a visit to the World Rugby Museum. This is packed with historic jerseys, old rugby balls, and hands-on exhibits. The Museum brings rugby's story to life, and there's something for everyone-whether you love learning about the game's origins, seeing rare memorabilia, or testing your skills at the scrum simulator.

Twickenham Stadium's tour is a real treat for anyone interested in rugby or British sporting history. It's fun, friendly, and full of inspiring stories about teamwork and tradition. Whether you're a rugby expert or just curious, you'll leave with a smile.

Amanda Lees



Spectacle Makers at Twickenham



Wapping Walk

On 10 October, a pleasant day, 15 members and friends joined a walk from Wapping Station to St Katherine's Dock. Guided by Deborah Anderson (no relation), we learned about the first tunnel under the Thames, built by Brunel, who famously held a luncheon in it upon completion.

Deborah brought the area's history to life, describing the wharfs—now mostly luxury flats—and the surviving inns, including the Town of Ramsgate, used to transport fish to London while avoiding city taxes. We visited Execution Dock, where pirates, smugglers, and mutineers, including Captain Kidd, were hanged; the last execution took place in 1830.

The Dockers' Strike of 1889, involving over 100,000 labourers, halted the Port of London, one of the world's busiest, causing ships to backlog in the Thames. Relief funds, including £30,000 from Australian dockers, supported workers' food and rent. The strike ended when traders needed their goods and perishable items began to spoil.

The tour concluded at St Katherine's Dock, cleared from housing to build the modern dock. The Dickens Inn, the only original building, was saved for its 18th-century history as a tea factory or brewery.

The walk and talk were both interesting and informative. For those interested, afternoon tea was arranged at Bakers' Hall, including a brief tour of the Livery Hall, the third hall built for the Bakers' Company on the site.

Ian Anderson

The Spectacle Makers' Annual Quiz

The annual Spectacle Makers' Quiz took place on 26 August, with over 30 people joining in for an evening of friendly competition. What has now become a regular tradition brought members, friends and family together - some in local groups meeting in person, others joining online and being sorted into teams on the night.

Last year's winning team, led by Liz Shilling, set the questions this time around. They covered everything from plants and animals to City trivia, optical dingbats and a few teasing anagrams. The mix made for a relaxed and enjoyable event, with plenty of laughs and the occasional moment of unexpected expertise.

As usual, the quiz ran a little longer than a normal Eye-to-Eye, but no one seemed to mind. It was a light-hearted evening, a good chance to get to know other Spectacle Makers, and a reminder of why this has become such a popular fixture in the calendar. Please look out for the Quiz next August, and if you can host a local team, please do get in touch with the Office.

ROUND 1

THE NAMES IN THE FRAMES: NAME THE SPECTACLE WEARER

1. A Jewish comedian and filmmaker known for wearing a classic black Moscot frame.
2. This person said their metal framed spectacles allowed them "the vision to free India".
3. This person made horn rimmed spectacles synonymous with rock 'n' roll in the 1950s.
4. This cooking expert has used their name to market vividly coloured spectacle frames, in collaboration firstly with Ronit Furst and now with MAC and PURE Eyewear.
5. In 1912 this person's life was saved by their pince-nez case, when an attempt was made to assassinate them.
6. This person, famous for iconic, big, round spectacles was an interior and fashion designer who was signed to IMG (International Management Group) as a model, in 2019, at the age of 97.

To check your answers, please go to page 40

Inter-Livery Pétanque

On 31 July, the Worshipful Company of Distillers held their annual Inter-Livery Pétanque in Vauxhall. Having won the trophy last year, the Spectacle Makers were back to defend their title. Despite the cloudy weather, the rain held off and the competition was able to go ahead.

Our team, comprising Sue and Nigel Haig-Brown and Clerk's Assistant James, were hard to miss in their Spectacle Makers' sweatshirts. Their first match was nail-biting, and they were only just pipped to the post by the Distillers' second team with a score of 5-4. The second match, playing for the Silver against the Entrepreneurs, did not go so well. However, we managed to win the third match.



James, Nigel and Sue at Pétanque



Inter-Livery Petanque teams WCSM & Distillers

The day ended in a final between the Playing Card Makers and the Butchers. The final was close - so close it kept going into the evening, with the final boules being played by torchlight!

It was a wonderful day and great to see members of other Livery companies outside of the usual setting and in a much more informal environment.

Inter-Livery Tennis

Our Livery company was well represented in the Inter-Livery Tennis tournament in mid-September at the Queen's Club.

Samuel Ranger and his partner Jess fought bravely to reach the quarter-finals. The standard of tennis was extremely challenging; therefore, qualifying for the latter part of the tournament was a significant achievement.

The Feltmakers deserve our thanks for organising the day and the special hospitality at Queen's.

Bob Ranger



Sam Ranger and his partner Jess at Queen's

Annual Golf Day

This year's Spectacle Makers' golf day was held on the Old Course in the RAC's Woodcote Park grounds. In a change from previous years, our golf society joined up with the Worshipful Company of Turners, with a view to boosting numbers playing on the day. The initiative worked well, with 27 players from the Turners, Spectacle Makers and their guests enjoying a day of great fellowship, while the 30 degrees plus heat proved somewhat challenging for some of the golfers!!

The winner of the Masters' Trophy for the best overall individual score was Paul Shimell, who was the only player to beat their handicap on the day. David Kirk won the Society Claret Jug for the best net score on Par 3 and Par 5. Ian Davies came second overall and Kevin Gutsell third. We are very grateful to Nikon and Stepper who provided sponsorship for the event and to the Master for his donation of a bottle of Champagne for the winner. Due to this sponsorship, the event made a small profit, which will be donated to the Spectacle Makers Charity. We were also grateful to the Master Turner, Col Andrew Ewens TD, who presented the prizes.

Most Livery companies have golf societies and many run events which are open to all. If any members of the Company are interested in playing golf at some fabulous courses for the Spectacle Makers, please contact Past Master Ian Davies at iandavies@me.com.

Discussions are already taking place with the Turners' Company for next year's event and details will be made available just as soon as we have them.

Ian Davies



Golf Prize giving



Spectacle Makers and Turners

Doggett's Coat and Badge

The Master and Mistress Spectacle Maker enjoyed a memorable day on the River Thames on 10 September for the 311th Doggett's Coat and Badge Race. They were among the guests on board the *Edwardian* paddle steamer, which followed the competitors along the course from London Bridge to Cadogan Pier, Chelsea.



Doggett's winners and HM bargemaster welcomes Masters and Mistresses

The historic race, founded in 1715, is the oldest continuously contested rowing event in the world and remains one of the highlights of the City's river calendar. Today, it is organised by the Fishmongers' Company. From their vantage point on the water, the Master and Mistress joined representatives from the Livery companies and river community in cheering on this year's young watermen as they competed for the famous red coat and silver badge. This year's winner – Coran Cherry - represented Poplar, Blackwell & District Rowing Club (the Assistant to the Clerk's own rowing club). It was Cherry's fourth and final attempt, winning with a time of 27 minutes 01 second.



Doggett's Coat and Badge Winner Coran Cherry at Cadogan Pier



The Winner, Coran Cherry, with former Doggett's winners wearing their coats and badges



COMPANY AND SOCIETY: DATES FOR THE DIARY

Please book for events via the members' area of the website. New events are always announced in the WCSM e-newsletters. Timings and dates are subject to change, and more events will be added throughout the year, so please log on regularly to the members' area for the latest information. The Master encourages you to Just Add One! Bring a guest and share the fun and friendship of our Livery.

Friday 19 December 2025 - Monday 5 January 2026	Office closed
Tuesday 6 January, 6.30-7.30pm	Eye-to-Eye: Virtual Tour of the British Optical Association Museum
Thursday 8 January, 2.30-5.30pm	Sleeping Beauty Pantomime at the Palladium (Sold Out)
Tuesday 3 February, 6.30-7.30pm	Eye-to-Eye: Geoff Lawson – International cricketer and optometrist
Tuesday 17 February	Shrove Tuesday Inter-Livery Pancake Race, Guildhall
28 February/1 March	Informal gathering at 100% Optical
Sunday 1 March	WCSM session at 100% Optical, Excel Centre
Monday 2 March	Inter-Livery Bridge Tournament at Drapers' Hall
Tuesday 3 March, 6.30-7.30pm	Eye-to-Eye: Reserve Armed Forces
Wednesday 4 March	Four Liveries Event, hosted by the Lightmongers' Company
Monday 9 March, 12.30-3.45pm	Court Luncheon at Vintners' Hall (booking by Liverymen only)
Monday 16 March	Visit to two Livery Halls
Friday 20 March	United Guilds Service at St Paul's Cathedral, followed by a buffet lunch at Apothecaries' Hall
Tuesday 7 April, 6.30-7.30pm	Eye-to-Eye: Charity Professional Development Award winners
Tuesday 14 April	Society day out in Bath, Somerset
Monday 20 April	2026 Livery Dinner at Plaisterers' Hall
Tuesday 5 May, 6.30-7.30pm	Eye-to-Eye: Inside Focus Birmingham
Thursday 14 May	Inter-Livery Clay Pigeon Shooting Competition
Monday 18 May, 5.45-7.45pm	Eye Health for the Liveries, educating Masters and members of other Livery at St Thomas' Hospital
Saturday 23 May	Master's Zip Wire challenge at Penrhyn Quarry, North Wales
Tuesday 2 June, 6.30-8pm	Spectacle Makers' Town Hall Meeting on Zoom – your chance to ask questions about your Company
Thursday 11 June, 12.30-3.45pm	Court Luncheon (booking by Liverymen only)
Wednesday 24 June	Election of the Sheriffs at Common Hall (Liverymen only), followed by lunch at Barber-Surgeons' Hall
July (TBC)	River Trip in Henley
Thursday 30 July	Distillers' Inter-Livery Pétanque Competition, Vauxhall
Mid-August (date TBC)	A Trip to Bletchley Park, Milton Keynes
August (date TBC)	The Spectacle Makers' Annual Quiz
Tuesday 1 September, 6.30-7.30pm	Eye-to-Eye: Master's Medal 2025 recipient: Myopic individuals and myopic populations
Friday 4 - Sunday 6 September	The Master's Weekend in Glasgow
Thursday 17 September	Presentation Evening welcoming new Liverymen, Freemen, and Charity and military award winners
Wednesday 23 September	A Trip to Titsey Place, Oxted
Sunday 27 September	Sheep Drive (bookings open in April)
Tuesday 29 September	Election of the Lord Mayor (Liverymen only), followed by lunch at Barber-Surgeons' Hall
Wednesday 30 September	Annual Service of Remembrance, Thanksgiving and Rededication at St Bride's, Fleet St. (all welcome), followed by the Court Luncheon (booking by Liverymen only)
Tuesday 6 October, 6.30-7.30pm	Eye-to-Eye: The regulation of time: Implications for patients with sight impairment
Tuesday 3 November, 6.30-7.30pm	Eye-to-Eye: Meet the New Master
Saturday 7 November	The Lord Mayor's Show
December (date TBC)	The 5th Annual Spectacle Makers' Lecture – details to follow
Tuesday 8 December, 12.30-3.45pm	Court Luncheon (booking by Liverymen only)

Key: **bright green** = booking by Liverymen only, **light green** = Society events, **orange** = Inter-Livery events, **NO SHADING** – open to all.

Booking for all events will be online and places will be allocated on a first come, first served basis. A waiting list will be in operation if an event sells out quickly. If you are having any trouble booking via the website please contact administrator@spectaclemakers.com, or 020 7236 2932.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS - The Editor would like to thank everyone who has provided photos and articles for this edition, including Wendy Allen, Sirvan Almasi, Fiona Anderson, Ian Anderson, David Baker, Kris Cottier, Ian Davies, Ollie Finn, Gaynor Foulkes-Taylor, Don Grocott, Mike Harris, Phil McCarthy, James Moffatt, David Parkins, Helen Perkins, Charlotte Potter, Bob Ranger, James Russell, James Sheldrick, Liz Shilling, our Corporate Supporters and our Company photographer, Mark Witter. Please respect the originator's copyright in each case.

ROUND 1 - P36 Quiz Answers

1. Woody Allen
2. Mohatma Ghandi
3. Buddy Holly
4. Dame Prue Leith
5. Theodore Roosevelt
6. Iris Apfel