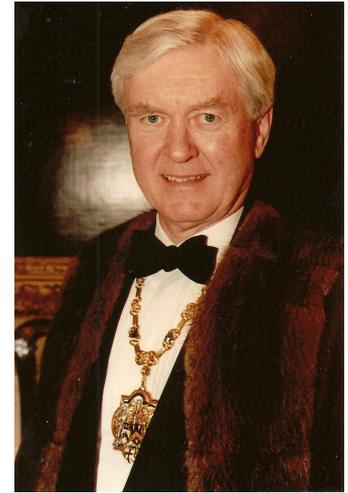


GERALD ARCHER GARNETT (R50-54)

He was born on 1 March 1937 and describes his housemaster the Rev'd Rupert Kneese as "a big burly heavily jowled man with streaming white hair, thick horn rimmed glasses which part hid the fact that his eyes looked in opposite directions, and a voice that bawled 'Boy' while pointing at him with fist curled and index and smallest fingers extended. His chapel services afforded little relaxation for he had a wonderful ability with his one good eye to spot any boy who was not kneeling and would interrupt himself when delivering prayers to call out - "Smith, if I can go down on my knees to pray to the Lord then you certainly can"."



Having completed his two years National Service in the Royal Air Force in Singapore, Gerald qualified as a chartered secretary and, in due course, became company secretary of Rank Hovis McDougall PLC and, following its takeover, deputy secretary of Rexam PLC, formerly Bowater PLC. Both companies were in the FT100 Index when he joined them and he doesn't feel entirely responsible for their having fallen out of the Index at the dates he left them!!



He is a Past Master of the City of London livery company, the Worshipful Company of Armourers & Brasiers, and he has fascinatingly provided the following detailed information on his membership and rise to Master.

He was introduced to the livery company during his first term at the College, when he received a letter from his maternal grandfather asking if he wished to become a member of the Worshipful Company of Armourers & Brasiers. Knowing nothing of that body and being unable to consult his parents quickly (for telephoning home was taboo then except for emergencies) he felt obliged to reply promptly to the effect that he would be delighted to join his grandfather's club. He received by return of post a

letter sternly pointing out that "the Armourers & Brasiers is not a club – it is a City livery company and you would do well to remember that in the years ahead"!

His parents later chuckled somewhat apprehensively at this but Grandpa was as good as his word/letter for it transpired that Gerald was to be made an apprentice Armourer & Brasier under his direction. This process contrasts with the normal entry by patrimony or redemption of which more anon. Accordingly at the next school holiday – and importantly before he was 14 years of age – he had to present himself at Armourers' Hall, a splendid building near the junction of London Wall and Moorgate, to go through the formalities. These involved being ushered into a meeting of the Court ie the board of directors, and being confronted by a sea of ancient faces that included his grave looking grandfather and an uncle who gave him a broad wink. The Clerk (akin to a chief executive officer) of the Company read out a declaration of all things that must and must not be done during what was to be a theoretical 7 year apprenticeship to his grandfather. The prohibitions were the more interesting and probably brought smirks – apprentices undertook not to fornicate, visit lewd houses or marry and neither to haunt taverns, playhouses or other establishments where gaming occurred. In essence they were to become good Christians and honest workmen.

He next shook hands with the Master (the chairman of the board) and was directed towards the Father of the Company (the most senior Past Master) for he had been forewarned he would have to pay £2.2.0 ie two guineas in 'old' money and £2.10 today (but quite a lot in those days), into the Armourers' Poor's Box held by the Father for disbursements to charity. Unfortunately the Father, who really was old and bent over, suffered from 'the shakes' and Gerald realised he would have great difficulty in inserting what should have been two £1 notes and a crown coin into the slim slit on the top of the box. His horror arose when he realised he had forgotten all about that and, instead of having the notes to hand, had to scabble around for his wallet. He found a £1 note and a 10 shilling note and, with all eyes upon him, feverishly went through his pockets for the 12 shillings balance. Miraculously he came up with the odd half a crown, a crown, a shilling or two plus a few sixpences and, with the Father's incapacity resulting in the box moving jerkily, eventually got rid of it all. Gerald remembers he had purchased a train return ticket from Essex but now had insufficient money to buy a ticket on the underground to return to his main line station; so he walked.

Nothing much happened over the following six years until, approaching 21, he was required to attend at Armourers' Hall to become a Freeman of the Company. This too involved making a declaration at Court, with both grandfather and uncle present, and if, as was likely, any monies (known as fines or fees) were payable to the Armourers it seems that grandfather probably stumped up. A bonus that day was that Gerald was invited to a formal dinner in the Hall and sat next to his grandfather. It was the day and age when white tie and tails, decorations etc were de rigueur throughout the livery companies and he had acquired all the kit thanks to his mother who, having seen her father and brothers go through the system, knew 'what's what'. The problem was – where does one change in the City from everyday mufti into white tie etc? The answer was at Liverpool Street main line railway station, which unbelievably had changing cubicles for hire in the main concourse from where Armourers' Hall was 10 minutes walk. As to the dinner the only significant detail remembered of the outstanding evening was when grandfather placed his hand over the top of one of Gerald's wine glasses to indicate to the hovering wine waiter that 'enough was enough'.

A short time later Gerald was required to apply to become a Freeman of the City of London and he attended the Chamber of the Guildhall with the Armourers' Beadle – a man who is much involved in ceremonial and often in charge of what are termed the 'Hall staff' (of cleaners, receptionists etc). The short ceremony involves a declaration that the applicant will be true to the Queen, obedient to the Lord Mayor, keep the City harmless, keep the Queen's peace and 'know of no gatherings nor conspiracies against the Queen but warn the Lord Mayor thereof'. A wide slim piece of parchment, bearing the Guildhall seal, is handed to all Freemen as proof together with a slim red book, embossed in gold with the Corporation of London's coat of arms, entitled Rules for the Conduct of Life. This outlines 36 rules of a godly/religious nature, with cross-references to the bible, to be followed in one's life and contains an insert warning freemen that in no circumstances must the Freedom of the City be used for business purposes. Nowadays that is more honoured in the breach.



In those days, the 1950s and '60s, the Armourers would make charitable donations from some of its excess reserves but had little other direction. Accordingly 'entertainment' was the name of the game and Freemen would be invited to an annual dinner, perhaps a formal reception and occasional long lunches that followed Armourers' and City functions eg the election of the Lord Mayor and Sheriffs, historic annual church services. The infrequency of these resulted in the young Freemen having difficulty in remembering one another and someone suggested an informal dinner at The Olde Cock Tavern in Fleet Street which some 20 attended. This was a great success and it was agreed that a greetings telegram be sent to the Master from the assembled company. Accordingly one of the number later returned to his flat in South Kensington to use his telephone to send the telegram. It was duly received at Armourers' Hall and the Master was so delighted that he used it as part of his formal speech at a dinner referring to the fact that the Armourers were in good heart throughout the world because he had received a telegram from a group of them in Freemantle, Australia! What he had not appreciated was that, although the telegram bore a Freemantle address, it represented nothing more than the local South Kensington 'phone code which was replaced some years later by the numerals we use today. They never did find out if the Master later twigged all this.

In his early 30s Gerald was invited to lunch at the Armourers in response to their suggestion that he might be 'promoted' to the livery. Others similarly were there and all were seated amongst members of the Court and polite conversation ensued. It seemed that provided one knew how to 'take soup' correctly one was 'in' and, as that was not too difficult, he was shortly elected a liveryman. Nowadays freemen have to pass muster via the Interview Committee. More generally it should be noted that one may only become a liveryman of a City company if one has first become a Freeman of the City – hence attendance at Guildhall some years earlier.

Some 20 years rolled by during which two of Gerald's uncles were elected Master. This was the era when Court members addressed each other by their surnames or military rank. More generous 'entertainment' as a liveryman ensued and the Court realised the Company could no longer continue indulging itself as a smart dining club and thus was born a charitable trust - named the Gauntlet Trust - for the prime purpose of supporting materials science (a branch of chemistry that has a natural affinity with the metal bashing work of armourers of yore); the making of donations to City charities was to continue. He became one of the trustees of this for a three year term and was later to form part of a committee to select a new Clerk. In his early 50s he received a letter from the Clerk inquiring if he wished to be considered for election to the Court. He replied 'yes' but not yet awhile because of business commitments and was asked to let the Company know when he

would become available. A couple of years later he informed the Clerk that life was easier and subsequently attended for an interview which seemingly went well for he was elected to the Court in 1994.

Court meetings were unlike any other. The whisper was that a new member of the Court should not speak for at least a year (it used to be two) and should very much act the new boy. Indeed some years earlier a new member ventured a comment upon the minutes of the previous meeting and was ignored by the Master who turned away and said "Speak to him afterwards, Clerk"! Gerald remembers in his first year much time at meetings was spent inspecting different colour cloths, furs and embellishments – all laid out on the long Court table – for the purposes of ordering new gowns for the Master, Upper Warden, Renter Warden and Clerk. There was and is much more besides.



Three years later he was elected Renter Warden – the word 'Renter' arising from the fact that the holder was responsible for collecting the rents on the numerous properties that livery companies owned – and then Upper Warden, a quiet year before the expected elevation to Master. That duly happened and he was fortunate, as it turned out, to be Master from July 1999 to June 2000 and hence became what was to be known among the companies as a Millennium Master (whose 'old boys' society recently celebrated its 10th anniversary at the Tower of London – but not as inmates!).

The duty of the Master is primarily to ensure the continuation of the Armourers in his year of office and, if possible, to make progress and/or instigate initiatives where these are needed. There are numerous Court, executive and committee meetings to chair/attend – and Gerald was on the Interview Committee for seven years becoming its chairman for four – and a lot of 'entertainment' that nowadays is very much more akin to business. Formal dinners will be attended by representatives of academia, the armed forces, City figures and industrialists, professional advisers, the Masters and Clerks of livery companies with which the Armourers is associated and some liverymen who may occasionally invite a personal guest.

It is the responsibility of the Master to find guest speakers and Gerald's guests in his year included two OFs – the late **General Sir Patrick Howard-Dobson (R33-40)** (who had commanded 20 Armoured Brigade and hence had a natural affinity with the Armourers & Brasiers) and the **Rev'd Malcolm Johnson (G50-55)** (who as Chaplain to the previous Lord Mayor, Lord Levene, was the first guest speaker in Armourers' Hall in the millennium year). Others were his best man, Thomas Seager Berry (also a liveryman of the Merchant Taylors' Company who were "tailors and linen armourers of London"), and Lady (Mary) Archer (no relation!), one of the country's leading scientists who spoke brilliantly on the history of materials science. It is not known when or if a woman had previously formally replied to the toast to the guests in the Hall.

In the 1960s/70s he played in and administered the OF squash side in matches in London and participation in the Londonderry Cup and regrets that the game has lost some of its popularity.

In recent years he has been branch chairman of his favourite political party in the constituency whose MP is the current Home Secretary and spent some time on the local parish council. Otherwise it's "tempus fugit" in retirement interspersed with the garden, travel, enjoying membership with his wife as a Friend of the Royal Opera House and, despite living in Berkshire, watching and supporting Essex cricket where he can.

Gerald has also provided the following additional background information :-

"The livery companies started as craft guilds for social and religious interchange but increasingly for the protection and improvement of their craft. In 1322 the Guild of St George of the Armourers was instituted which laid down regulations for the control of the armourers' trade and a Royal Charter was obtained in the 15th century. In the 16th century the brasiers (workers in copper and brass) became involved and a new Charter was obtained in 1708 to form the Armourers & Brasiers' Company. As armourers to the fighting services the Company played a special role in the defence of the City and its connections with the armed forces persist to this day and particularly in the award of prizes for excellence to young service personnel. It also has long traditions of charity and hospitality.



Total charitable giving grew and the Gauntlet Trust currently donates some £250,000 per annum of which two-thirds relate to materials science for the purpose of benefiting UK industry/GB Limited. This ranges from primary to post-doctoral levels and includes schools and 20 universities throughout the UK. It also extends the use of materials science in commercial and industrial ways, entering into partnership schemes with the likes of Rolls Royce, and liaises closely with the Royal Society, the Institute of Physics and the Royal Society of Chemistry. The Armourers' latest venture was to institute an annual prize of £25,000 for the best proposal for the commercial use of materials – a concept that is probably unique in the livery companies. The income that is required to finance the above derives from dividends and interest on stocks and bonds part of which arose from the sale some years ago of property eg almshouses no longer needed for impoverished armourers, and from members' donations and bequests. It is not generally known that the livery companies donate over £40 million annually for educational and charitable work.

The Armourers retains little property these days apart from its magnificent Hall. This has a splendid entrance hall that leads via a dividing staircase to the dining hall, drawing room, Court room, library, meeting room, overnight accommodation for the Master, Clerk and Beadle and a large Court changing room. There is also a suite of offices for administration purposes, a huge kitchen with servery and cellars. There is some evidence that the Armourers made use of the current site of the Hall (then an Inn known as the Dragon and Five Shoppes) from 1346, took a lease on it in 1428 and acquired the freehold in the 16th century. Conversions took place, which survived the Great Fire of 1666 and it was enlarged in 1795. In 1839 the Hall was completely rebuilt, narrowly survived the blitz of World War II and is as seen today. The Hall is a listed building and every alteration needs the approval of English Heritage and thus a sizeable part of the Company's income is devoted to Hall upkeep, which is offset in part by hall lettings to other livery and City institutions.



Following a request in the will of a member who was Master three times in the 16th century a "godly sermon" is preached annually on St George's Day in the City by "a godly learned preacher of King's College in Cambridge or some other learned man". As no one had been invited from King's for many years Gerald hoped to remedy that and wrote, on advice from his Upper Warden who was the Archdeacon of Gloucester, to the College to inquire if one of their clergy would preach the sermon in the millennium year. As a result the Rev'd Dr Emma Hebblethwaite, the Chaplain and Praelector of the College, accepted. Here again it is not known if a woman had previously preached at this service. It is coincidental that she had earlier been the incumbent at St Michael's Church, Framlingham which, by further coincidence, possesses one of the very rare 12-branch 18th century brass chandeliers that are to be found in England outside the three in Armourers' Hall used for candlelit dinners.



The Master also travels to functions of all three armed forces, universities and other academic institutions to present prizes, to cities where similar bodies have existed for centuries and he is invariably regarded as the face of the Company. It is axiomatic that Masters are always right in their year of office and each is permitted one foible but the Court is there to prevent a repeat!"

He has also provided the following background information to his own family's involvement with the Armourers & Brasiers :-

"At the beginning of this commentary it was stated that I was to be apprenticed to my maternal grandfather. Entry was normally by patrimony and in respect of sons only – daughters were 'let in' in the 1980s and are recorded as entering by patrimony for the word 'matrimony', apart from being inaccurate, was felt a step too far and, that apart, might lead one to believe that the daughter had entered via her mother. In my case my maternal grandfather had four children – three sons (of whom two became Master as stated earlier) and a daughter – my mother. As women were taboo and as grandfather felt it unfair that his daughter's side of the family could not participate in the Armourers he was able to include me as her elder son and that could only be achieved by apprenticeship. Entrance via that route was stopped some years ago for it was felt that too many

were gaining admission. Entry by redemption exists to enable the Court to elect as Freeman those whom it feels will benefit the Company because of special skills and consequently a number of top class material scientists (one of whom has progressed to becoming the present Master and knighted last year) and some younger officers from the armed forces are among those who have entered.

My family involvement with the Armourers goes back to 1870 when my great grandfather, Reuben Archer, was apprenticed to his elder brother Elisha. It is not known why these two brothers entered the Armourers for they were printers and stationers and, arguably, might have joined the Stationers and Newspaper Makers Company. Possibly 'precedence' had something to do with it for the livery companies have jealously guarded their positions in the pecking order and the Armourers at No.22 rate higher than the Stationers at No.47. In that respect the wealthy Great Twelve tend to reign supreme in the hierarchy and include such household names as the Fishmongers, Grocers, Goldsmiths, Merchant Taylors etc. Today there are 108 City livery companies of whom 34 'Modern' Companies have been formed since World War II. Only 38 have their own Hall.

My grandfather was therefore Archibald Archer. He was born in 1877 and his bushy moustache and general stern but affectionate manner towards his large family epitomised his Victorian upbringing. He became Master of the Armourers in 1935 (and followed by his brother, Edwin, in 1941 – a very quiet year for obvious reasons) and died at age 96. He would have been on the Court for some 35 years – an incredible period – for he became the Father of the Company and did not retire from the Court until he was about 90. It seems unkind to remark that election to the Court depended upon 'dead men's shoes' for that was so until the Court decided that one Past Master, ideally the oldest or the most senior, should retire unofficially each year.

Today livery life is less formal but much busier and wives play a larger part such that the Master's wife, for example, replies to the toast at the Court Ladies' Dinner. Some Masters purposely retire from business in order to cope with the duties and time required and others go part-time; a very few continue to work full time as normal yet it is evident they physically can not take on all the duties of a livery Master and often rent overnight accommodation near the City. The fair sex is now permitted entry in the large majority of companies in identical manner to the menfolk and they are increasingly noticed at livery events – a few have become Clerks and there is even the occasional Master which can only increase in the years ahead. White tie and tails for formal dinners have generally been superseded by dinner jacket/black tie (except when the Lord Mayor and Sheriffs attend who will themselves be members of a livery company) and woe betide the liveryman who sports a 'clip-on' bow-tie for it is said that all Clerks of livery companies can spot a clip-on at 20 paces!!"