



The City Gilds of Chester: The Bricklayers' Company.

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(Read 16th March, 1915).



HIS Company ranks sixth on the list of the twenty-three existing City Companies, and bears the title of "The Bricklayers' Company." It has not always been known by this name; in the 16th century it was described as "The Company of Bricklayers or Tylers," but the latter title ceased to be used and the combined trades were called "Bricklayers." The London Gild still retains its original title of "Tylers and Bricklayers."

In an account of the twenty-six companies which at that time existed, the Company was described as that of the "Cappers, Pinners, Wyredrawers, Linnen Drapers and Bricklayers,"¹ but in 1602 it was known as the "Linen Drapers and Bricklayers' Company."

In a list of the City Companies entered in Vol. I., p. 73, of the *Skinner and Feltmakers' Company*, it is stated that: "The Cappers,² Pinners,³ and Wire-

¹ *Harleian MS.* 2150, f. 376.

² Makers of caps, answering to the French "Bonnétiers."

³ One who makes pins—or, one who pins, fastens, or transfixes with a pin. (*Murray's English Dictionary*).

drawers,⁴ or, as they are otherwise styled, Linen Drapers and Bricklayers, though they are formed into two distinct Companies, were formerly but one. According to tradition this curious combination of trades arose owing to a bricklayer—who at that time was Mayor of the City—taking to wife a lady who was a linen draper, and thus the Linen Drapers became incorporated with the Bricklayers.”⁵

Towards the end of the 17th century various differences appear to have arisen between the members of the two trades; the Linen Drapers appealed to the Mayor, who, after hearing their complaints, decided, 1679, that the “Lynen-drapers and the Bricklayers should be separated as one Company, the latter being troublesome and unserviceable to the former.”

THE REGISTERS.

At the present time the Bricklayers' Company has in its possession two registers, or minute books, each of folio size, but varying in actual inches.

The first book commences in 1738, is 12½ inches by 8 inches, and is bound in vellum. It contains particulars of income derived from the members' subscriptions, etc., but particulars of expenditure are very meagre, and cease altogether in 1773. This is not exceptional, as in each of the companies' books I have had access to I find the items of expenditure, with their full details, quaint expressions and words, cease about the middle of the 18th century. The first eighteen pages contain the rules of the Society. At the end of the book are two pages occupied by the enrolment of apprenticeship deeds, etc., the first of which is dated December 24, 1681, and the last entry February 5, 1724. These

⁴ See *Journal Chester Arch. and Hist. Soc.*, Vol. XX., p. 6.

⁵ *The Skinners and Feltmakers' Books*, Vol. I., p. 73.

entries are all in the same style of writing as the rules at the commencement of the book, and would therefore incline one to believe that they had been removed from some earlier book and inserted in the present one; but careful examination shows the paper to be of the same make and watermark throughout. The entries, therefore, have evidently been copied from an earlier book of which, unfortunately, nothing is now known.

At a meeting held May 30, 1885, "It was unanimously resolved that instead of having new leaves put into this book, or getting a new book, future entries of the Meetings of the Company be recorded on the blank leaves commencing on the leaf after 'Order 23' of the Company, made May the first, 1741, to be headed at commencement page 1." This order was not strictly carried out as the page was numbered 29. This volume therefore continued in use until 1896, when Volume II. commenced; the latter measures $13\frac{3}{4}$ inches by $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches, is bound in parchment paper boards, and bears written on the cover:—

"THE BRICKLAYERS COMPANY
IN THE CITY OF CHESTER
BOOK No. 2
1896"

Inside the cover and on the first page is a list of the members; on the second page is an entry:—

"The earlier book belonging to this Company and marked No. 1 is attached to this book."

No doubt the idea of lacing the two books together was to secure the disused book from going astray, but it is unfortunate that this was done, as it is the cause of the older book being pulled to pieces and the covers of the new book defaced. Upon my drawing the attention of the Steward to this he immediately said that he

would lay the matter before his Committee, and I understand the books have now been separated.

From the foregoing remarks it will at once be understood that there is now no record of the Company between the year 1679, the time when the Bricklayers were separated from the Linen Drapers, and 1738, when the first of the books now in the Company's possession commences. Fortunately the rules and a few of the apprentices' enrolment deeds were copied into the new book.

About the beginning of the nineteenth century there were twenty-five City Companies. Twenty-one of these were governed by Aldermen and Stewards; three, including the Bricklayers' and the Goldsmiths' Companies, by Masters and Wardens; and one Company by Wardens only. The London Companies are all governed by Masters and Wardens.

THE COMPANY'S CHARTER.

Although there is no mention of a Charter in the existing books of the Company, Randle Holme III., the Chester City Herald, informs us that the Bricklayers or Tylers were incorporated by Queen Elizabeth, and the Charter of Incorporation was confirmed by King James.⁶ The early books of the Linen Drapers' Company may shed some light on the matter. The London Company of Tylers and Bricklayers were also first incorporated 10th Elizabeth, August 3 [1568].⁷

THE OATH OF THE MASTER OF THE SOCIETY AND COMPANY OF BRICKLAYERS WITHIN THE CITY OF CHESTER.

"I, A—— B——, shall be true unto the King of England [the word England is crossed out and Great

⁶ *Harleian MS.*, 2033.

⁷ *The Livery Companies of London.*

Britain written above] and his heyres and to the Maior of the Citty of Chester, and to the Libertyes thereof, and also to the Company of Bricklayers within the said Citty, and truly and duly maintaine the same with all my might and power. And all good and lawfull ordinances that the Master and Wardens with the maior part of the said Company hath made, or hereafter shall make for the well ordering and good of the said Company I shall and will keepe doe and observe and cause to be kept and observed at all times according to the utmost of my skill and abilitye. Soe help me God.”

THE OATH OF THE WARDENS OF THE COMPANY.

“I, ——, shall be true unto the King of England and his heyres and to the maior of the Citty of Chester and to the Libertyes thereof. And also unto the Society and Company of Bricklayers in the same Citty And their Councell keepe And the good governm^t of the same Company well and truly maintaine with all my might and power And use my best dilligence and endeavor to cause the Orders and Decrees made, and to be made by the Master, Wardens, and the Maior part of the said Company for the profit and benefitt of the said Company to bee well and truely p'formed maintained and kept from time to time and at all times as the Cause shall require And shall yeild and give up right and true accompt of all and singular such Sume and Sumes of money as I shall receive or disburse for or on behalf of the said Company unto the Master of the said Company for the time being and to such others of the same Company as shall bee appoynted to receive the said Accompte And at such time and place as the said Company or the more part thereof shall limitt or appoynt. And shall in all things use duely and truely execute the office of a Warden of the said Company soe long as I shall remaine a Warden thereof

And shall and will during the said terme doe and p'forme all other things needfull and requisite for the benefitt and behoofe of the same Company and the good Governmt thereof. Soe help me God."

THE OATH OF EVERY BROTHER.

"I shall be true to the King of England and his heyres and to the Maior of the City of Chester for the time being and to the Libertyes thereof And also unto the Society and Company of Bricklayers within the same City And shall be dutiful and obedient unto the elder brothers of the said Company And I shall conceale and keepe secrett and not disclose such Counsell as at any time hereafter shall be debated or spoken of at any of our meetings being lawfull to bee concealed and p'taining to the profit of the said Company or the redress or reformation of any disorders or abuse committed against the said Company or against the benefitt or good government thereof And incase my behaviour touching the said Company or any member thereof shall be disorderly, soe as the same Company or the greater number thereof shall thinke mee justly fineable or punishable for the same then I shall stand to abide and obey such order or Decree as shall bee set downe in that behalfe And shall in due time truly pay all and singular such ffine or ffines as shall be assessed against mee for or by reason of any such disorder or abuse And also shall and will beare and pay Scott and Lott with the said Company according to my haveing And all Orders and Decrees made or to bee made by the Master and Wardens and maior part of the said Company and sett downe in the Book of Orders for the same Company shall and will from time to time and at all times hereafter well and faithfully observe maintaine and keepe to the utmost of my power And I shall come to all Meetings and Assemblyes to bee made by the said Company or the

greater part of them upon due warning thereof unto mee given by the Wardens of the said Company for the time being or either of them unlesse I have reasonable or just cause to the contrary And I shall at every Assembly or Meeting of the said Company give and yeild my best advice and counsell for and touching the good government and common weale of the said Company of Bricklayers within the said Citty soe often as I shall bee thereunto called or required And all things concerning the good Rule and Civill government^t of the said Company I shall well and truly p'forme to the utmost of my power. Soe help me God."

THE COMPANY'S MEETING HOUSE.

The Company, combined with the Linen Drapers, met at the Common Hall⁸ in 1666, and continued to do so until they separated in 1679. The latter continued to meet there until 1682, as sub-tenants of the Smiths, Cutlers, and Plumbers' Company. It is not known where the Bricklayers' Company held its meetings during the period 1679-1689; but during the latter year the accounts of the Smiths, Cutlers, and Plumbers' Company show that the Bricklayers as a distinct company had become their sub-tenants, and continued to hold their meetings at the Smiths' Hall until 1702.

The books now in the possession of the Bricklayers' Company throw no light on the Meeting House. In the various years it is mentioned we simply read:—

"Paid to the Hall o 1 o"

This sum evidently refers to a gratuity given to the Hall Keeper, as was the case with the Skinners and Feltmakers' Company. According to the Smiths, Cutlers and Plumbers' Company's Books, the Bricklayers paid them a rental of five shillings a year.

⁸ For full particulars of The Common Hall see *The Smiths, Cutlers and Plumbers' Company*, by F. Simpson, *Journal*, Vol. XX., p. 56.

ELECTION DAY AND QUARTER DAY.

RULE I. [c. 1681].

“It is ordered concluded and agreed upon by and with the consent of all the Brothers of the Company of Bricklayers in the City of Chester that from henceforth and for ever their Election Day for the choosing of Master and Wardens of the said Company shall be upon the first day of May yearly and that day to be accounted & their first quarter day, And the second quarter day to be upon the five and twentieth day of July and the Third quarter day to be upon the first day of November and the fourth quarter day to be upon the Second day of February yearly for ever.”

The Company continued to hold their Annual Meeting on the 1st of May until 1777, when they held it on the 29th of May; this continued until May 31, 1884, when it was proposed by Alderman Joinson, seconded by Brother George Johnson, and resolved—“That henceforth the Meetings of this Company be held annually on the Saturday evening nearest the 29th of May instead of half-yearly, and that two shillings be paid by each of the brethren at every such meeting.”

At a meeting held August 24, 1903: “It was decided that owing to the outbreak of small-pox in the neighbourhood where most of the members resided the Annual Meeting should be adjourned.”⁹

At the Annual Meeting held May 27, 1916, the members present were reminded that England was engaged in “The Great War,” the greatest war the world had ever experienced. The Steward (Brother

⁹ The epidemic was somewhat violent in the Handbridge district, one street in this locality being temporarily isolated.

Stanley Gerrard) pointed out that five brethren were serving their King and Country in France, and it was decided to keep them clear on the books until their return. The toast of the evening was to "The absent brethren" who had answered their country's call, the hope being expressed that each would have a safe return. Brother R. G. Gerrard also called the members' attention to the proposed Roll of Honour mentioned by His Worship the Mayor (Alderman John Meadows Frost) in November last; and urged the members to send in the names of any relatives serving with the colours, and especially those belonging to the Company of Bricklayers.

ATTENDING THE MEETINGS.

The second Rule, or Order, of this Company was that every brother should attend the meetings.

RULE II. [c. 1681].

"Also it is agreed by the consent of the said whole Company that if any Brother of the said Company be warned by the Wardens of the said Company or either of them to come to any meeting of the same Company at a time and place appoynted every Brother makeing Default and not coming according to order (unless hee can make sufficient excuse) shall forfeit and pay to the use of the said Company the sume of one shilling."

At a meeting held May 29, 1796:

"It was then and there agreed by the said Company that in future any Brother absenting on the 5th November shall forfeit 1^s/- and on the 29th May shall forfeit 2^s/- exclusive of the City plate.

It is further agreed by the said Company that for the non-attendance of the Master of the said Company he shall forfeit 5^s/- and for the non-attendance of the Head Warden 3^s/-."

“THE WARDENS TO BEE FINED FOR NEGLIGENCE IN NOT GIVING DUE WARNEING.”

RULE III.

“It was also agreed [1681] by the consent of the said Company that if the Master of the said Company shall appoynt a time and place for a meeting of the Brethren and require the Wardens of the said Company to give notice and Warneing thereof that then every warden of the said Company that shall through negligence make defaulte in giveing due warning to any of the same Brethren shall forfeit and pay to the use of the said Company for every such defaulte the sume of Two Shillings.”

At a meeting held May 29, 1796, the fine for omitting to give due notice of meetings to the brethren was reduced to one shilling for every brother omitted.

“NOT TO DEPART FROM A MEETING WITHOUT LICENSE.”

RULE IV. [1681].

It was also

“Agreed upon by the said whole Company that if any Brother of the Society shall appeare at any of their assemblyes and shall afterwards depart and goe away from their meeting house before the said assembly shall bee dismissed (except he have License given him so t[o] doe by the Master of the said Company) such Brother shall forfeit and pay to the use of the said Company the sume of Two shillings.”

At a Meeting held 1681, it was decided that every brother should wear his cloak, or gown, when present at meetings or burials.

RULE V. [1681].

“It is ordered and agreed upon by the whole Company that if any Brother of the said Company being warned to come to any of our meeitngs and doe not come in a Gowne then every such Brother for every

such Default shall forfeit and pay to the use of the said Company the sume of Two shillings."

ATTENDING FUNERALS.

RULE VI. [1681].

"Also it is agreed upon and concluded by the said Company that if it should please Almighty God to call unto his mercy any Brother or Sister of the same Company and the Brothers shall be warned by the Wardens or either of them to come to the funeral, then every Brother that shall make Default in coming according to the warneing or that shall misbehave himselfe there shall forfeit and pay to the use of the said Company the sume of Three shillings and ffoure pence."

The books do not contain any interesting items of expenditure at funerals such as are found in the earlier books of the Smiths, Cutlers, and Plumbers'.¹⁰

In the Bricklayers' accounts we have:—

1738	November y ^e 11 th	Disburst at the funeral of Bro W ^m Harvey's wife	„	14	0
1752	May 31 st	To Warning the Company to the Funeral of Robert Orden's wife	„	„	6
	June 1 st ,	Spent at the Funeral of Mr Thos Yates	„	2	0
1760	Feb. 26.,	Expended at the Funeral of Mr Hugh Jordan	„	6	6"

ADMISSION TO THE COMPANY.

The members of this, like most other companies, originally followed the titular trade of the Company.¹¹ At the present time there is not a single member of the Company following that occupation.

The fees for admission to the Company have varied during course of time as is shown by the following:—

¹⁰ See *Journal*, Vol. XX., p. 25.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

RULE VII. [1681].

“It is ordered and agreed by the whole Company that if any brothers sonn desire to bee admitted into the said Company having served at the Trade the terme of Seven years hee shall pay to the use of the said Company before his admittance the sume of Thirty Shillings and every other pson that hath duely served an Apprentiship with any of the brothers shall pay to the use of the said Company before his Admittance the sume of Three pounds.”

June 3, 1723. The charge for admission was increased to four pounds for a Brother's son, and eight pounds for those persons obtaining admission to the Company by servitude.

May 1, 1728, the fee was again increased. It was then ordered:—

“That all persons hereafter who shall desire to become a Brother or Brethren of this Company Shall pay for his or their admittance as a fine to this Company the sume of Ten pounds, Brothers sons excepted when shall be free born and such Brothers son or sons to pay five pound.”

At a meeting of the Company held February 15, 1749:—

“Thomas Harvie was admitted a Brother of the Company of Bricklayers within the City of Chester and he being a Brothers Son tho' not Free born paid to the Company as a fine for his admission as a Brother thereof the sum of Seven pounds.”

At the same time Edward Boden was admitted and paid a similar sum.

December 10, 1776. James Boden was admitted to the Company “and paid for his admission the sum of Three pounds ten shillings.”

In 1789 the Fee was again increased, for we find at a meeting held November 20 of that year:—

“It was ordered and agreed upon with the Consent of the Majority of the Brothers of the Company that in future no Bricklayer shall be admitted into the said Company as a Brother without paying a fine for his admittance the sum of Twelve pounds Twelve Shillings to the said Company of Bricklayers in the said City of Chester.”

This rule was, however, soon broken, for we read that William Boden was admitted a Brother, November 8, 1791, “And he being a Brothers son and Free born paid to the said Company as a fine for his admission as a Brother thereof the sum of Six pounds Six shillings.” The reduced fee may readily be accounted for as at this time there were only five members in the Company, three of whom were closely related to the new member.

The following year it was decided with the consent of the majority of the Company:—

“That in future and from this date no person shall be admitted into the said Company as a Brother without paying a fine for his admittance the sum of Fifteen pounds, except a Brother’s son who shall be admitted for the sum of Seven pounds ten shillings to the said Company of Bricklayers in the said City of Chester, As witness our hands this Eighteenth Day of January in the year of our Lord One thousand seven hundred and ninety two.”

This increase of entrance fee is clearly accounted for by the fact that the members of the Company were to participate in Owen Jones’ Legacy, due at Midsummer this year, which they eventually did to the extent of £203 11s. od.¹² October 13 of the same year, the

¹² See Owen Jones’ Bequest, p. 79.

admission fee was again altered: a Brother's son was admitted for a fee of £3 10s., if by servitude only the fee was £7.

At a meeting held May 27, 1893, it was agreed, on the proposition of Brother Joseph Joinson, seconded by Brother Robert Lewis, "That in future persons may claim the freedom of the Company through their grandfathers providing they are Freemen of the City of Chester."

May 29, 1897, it was decided "That all members joining the Bricklayers Company shall be admitted at a fee of ten shillings and paying for the stamp." This was a very wise step, and no doubt did much towards putting the Company on its present sound basis.

"BROTHERS TO BE LOVEING ONE TO ANOTHER AND
NOT TO INTERRUPT ONE ANOTHER IN
TELLING THEIR MATTERS."

RULE VIII. [1680].

"It is ordered and agreed by all the said Company that no Brother shall behave himself disorderly in their meetings or at any of their Assemblies nor disturb or interrupt any of the same Brothers in the telling of his tale or opening of his matter before the Master and Wardens and the rest of the said Company, nor give to any the lye, nor to call any of the Brothers worse than his proper name in wrath or anger But every Brother is to take his place according to the time of his being admitted a Brother of the said Company And likewise to behave themselves lovingly gently and in the ffear of God one towards an other And to be ruled and governed by the Master and Wardens and maior part of the said Company for the good and benefit of the whole Company And every Brother that shall doe otherwise shall forfeit and pay to the use of the said Company for

every offence by him committed to the Contrary the sume of Three shillings and ffoure pence."

"NOT TO SUE AT LAW WITHOUT LICENSE OF THE
MASTER."

RULE IX. [1680].

"It is ordered and agreed by the consent of the whole Company that noe Brother of the same Company shall comence any Accc̃on or suite in Law or Equity against any other Brother of the said Company for any matter whatsoever untill hee have made the Master of the same Company acquainted with the case of his intended suite who is to endeavour to take up and end the Controversy in a friendly way or by Arbitrac̃on if hee can or else the plaintiffe may afterwards seeke his remedy by Law. And if any Brother shall offend in doinge Contrary to this order hee shall forfeit and pay for every such offence to the use of the said Company the sume of Three shillings and ffoure pence."

"AN ORDER FOR PAYING QUARTERIDGE."

RULE X. [1683].

"It is fully agreed by the consent of the whole Company that every Brother of the said Company shall upon every Quarter Day beginning upon the first and twentyeth day of July 1683 pay the sume of one shilling of lawfull money of England to the Wardens of the same Company for the use of the same Company by the name of Quarteridge money towards discharging of the necessary charges of the said Company And that every Brother which shall refuse or neglect to pay his Quarteridge at any Quarter Day shall forfeit and pay to the use of the said Company for every such neglect the sume of Two Shillings."

A further entry, dated November 1, 1683, says:—

"It is agreed that for the present only four pence a quarter shall bee paid to the Company; and now agreed to pay sixpence a quarter."

This entry makes one wonder whether the brothers had to pay fourpence or sixpence, but in the accounts for the year 1767-8 there are several entries which cast considerable light on the matter. During the year named John Brooks appears to have been paying quarterage for eleven of his workmen; sixpence each for ten, and for a man named Percivall, half a quarter, threepence, making a total of 5s. 3d. Several other entries show that each employer paid fourpence per quarter for himself and sixpence each for his men.

May 1, 1756. It was decided:—

“That for the future the quarterages should be paid for half yearly To wit on every Fifth Day of November, and First Day of May.”

CONCERNING JOURNEYMEN.

RULE XI. [1680].

“It is ordered and agreed by the consent of the whole Company that noe Journyman shall be sett at worke untill hee bee enrolled in the Companyes Book kept for that purpose And that every Journyman shall pay at his entrance one shilling and at every Quarter's-day afterwards sixpence to the use of the said Company And it is further agreed that noe brother of the said Company shall sett any Journyman at worke after hee is inrolled in the said Companys Booke without the consent and leave of his former master under whom hee was enrolled upon paine of forfeiture of Tenn Shillings to the use of the said Company for every such offence committed contrary to the true intent & meaneing of this order And it is further Agreed upon by the said Company that if any Brother doo hereafter set att worke and imploy any Journiman or Journimen that hee or they who set him or them att work shall pay his or their quarterage of sixpence the quarter in case the

said journiman shall or doe worke in his Masters service above one weekes time upon pain of forfeiture of ffive shillings."

"A BROTHERS SON EMPLOYED AS A JOURNIMAN."

RULE XV.

"It was ordered by the consent of this Companie that every Brothers sone who shall at any time hereafter worke as a Journiman with any Brother of this Campanie bee hee ffather to the Journiman or otherwise shall pay to this Company the sume of six pence a quarter in such manner as journimen who are not ffreemens sones have heretofore paid & now doe pay and that every master who shall hereafter imploy any such ffreemens sone or sones as his or their journimen shall pay to the use of this Companie the said sume of Sixpence the quarter in case the said journiman shall or did doe worke in his Masters service above one weekes time upon pain of fforfeiting to the use of this Companie the sume of two shillings and sixpence."

SELLING OF BRICKS.

At a meeting held June 25, 1737, owing to

"A complaint being made this day that some Brothers of this Company have sold and do frequently sell Bricks to several journimen Bricklayers not free of this Companie who lay the said Bricks as of themselves & for their own profit and not as journimen or Servants to any Brother of the Company for Remedy whereof it is fully consented unto and Agreed upon by the Brothers of this Company that if any Brother or Brothers of this Company that is any Brother or Brothers thereof shall at any time hereafter sell any bricks to any journiman or journimen Bricklayers which Brick shall be by him or them made use of or laid in building within the Libertyes of the City of Chester as aforesaid that such Brother or Brothers so offending in the premises shall pay to the Master of

this Companie for the time being for the Companies use the sum of five pounds.”

“EVERY BROTHER SHALL PAY SUCH FINE AS SHALL BEE DUELY ASSESSED UPON HIM.”

RULE XIII. [1680].

“It is agreed that every Brother of the said Company who shall bee duely fined for any offence or misdemeanour by him comitted against the said Company for breach of any order belonging to the said Company shall at or before the next meeting of the said Company after such ffine imposed upon him duely and quietly pay the same ffine to the use of the said Company or else p̄mitt and suffer the Wardens of the same Company to Distraine upon his goods for the said ffine And that every Brother of the said Company who neglecting to pay his said ffine shall refuse to suffer the said Wardens to Distraine for the same shall forfeit and pay to the use of the said Company the sume of Three shillings and ffour pence for every such refusal besides the former ffine imposed upon him.”

“NOT TO TAKE WORK OUT OF ANOTHER BROTHERS HANDS.”

RULE XIV. [1680].

“Ordered by the Consent of this Companie that if any Brother of this Companie att any time hereafter shall bee employed or sett att worke that noe other Brother shall seeke or goe about to undermine or take the said worke out of the first Brothers hands soe employed without first haveing obtained and gott the first Brothers consent thereunto upon paine and forfeiture to the use of this Companie the sume of Tenn Shillings.”

“APPRENTICES TO BEE ENROLLED.”

RULE XII. [1680].

“Also it is agreed by the whole Company that every

Brother that hath taken any apprentice or hereafter shall take an Apprentice, such Brother shall enrole his Apprentice in the Companyes Book kept for that purpose at the next meeting of the said Company And shall pay to the Clerk of the Company for the time being for such enrollant the sune of ffoure pence."

At the end of Volume I. there are twenty-four such entries; the first being:—

"John Walton sonn of William Walton of Hanly bound apprentice unto Matthew Browne for seven yeares from the 24th Day of December 1681.

William Coulton son of Margret Coulton bound apprentice to Alban Gray for seven yeares from the 8 day of July 1681.

John Shaw son of Larent Shaw bound to Peter Platt for seven yeares from ye 17th day August 1681.

John Roberts son of Robert Thomas bound apprentice to Alban Gray for seven yeares from the 29th of September 1691.

Timothy Davie son of Roger Davie of Soughton upon the Hill bound apprentice to Thomas Harvy for seven yeares from the Twenty ninth day of September 1694.

Joseph Butler son of Benjamin Butler late of Whitechurch in the County of Salop Deceased by Indenture Dated y^e fourth day of ffebruary 1716 bound apprentice to Joseph Roydon for seavon yeares from y^e second day of ffebruary 1716."

The last entry is:—

"John Rutter son of Robert Rutter of the City of Chester Labourer by Indenture dated the fifth day of ffebruary 1724 and in the Eleaventh year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord King George over Great Britain &c bound apprentice to Samuel Price for seven yeares the first day of January 1724."

The various Companies' books bear evidence that people residing at a distance from the City were eager to apprentice their sons to Freemen who were members of a City Company, so that they might thereby become free to the City and a Company.

“NO BROTHER TO TAKE AN APPRENTICE WHO IS A MARRIED MAN.”

RULE XVI. [1680].

“Ordered by the unanimous Consent of this Companie that if any Person who now is or hereafter shall bee a Brother of this Companie shall take any person to bee an apprentice who is or shall bee a Married man at the time such pson shall bee bound an Apprentice that in such Case such Brother soe offending shall forfeite & pay to the use of the Companie the sume of five pounds.”

This rule was strictly necessary as cases are found in the various Companies' books in which middle-aged men with families, who were not freemen, endeavoured to arrange—and in many cases succeeded—with members of a Company that they should be apprenticed to them so that they might become free to the City and Company by servitude, and their families through them by heritage, though it was not intended to serve a day to the trade.

“NOT TO TAKE TWO APPRENTICES UNTIL THE FIRST HATH SERVED HALFE HIS TYME OF SEVEN YEARS.”

RULE XIX.

June 3, 1723. It was ordered by the consent of the Company,

“That noe person who now is or hereafter shall bee a Brother thereof shall take a second Apprentice till such time as the first Apprentice shall have served three yeares and halfe of his terme of seven yeares And every Brother offending against this order shall pay to

the Master of this Companie for the time being for the Companies use the sume of five pounds.”

RULE XX.

May 1, 1728. It was agreed by the majority of the Company,

“That no Brother thereof for the future shall take any Apprentice and shall afterwards Assign or turn over y^e same Apprentice to another Brother of this Companie upon peraltie of any Brother offending shall pay to the use of the Companie five pounds.”

INDENTURES TO BE DRAWN UP BY THE CLERK.

RULE XXIII.

May 1, 1742. It was agreed,

“That every Brother of this Company who shall at any time hereafter take any Apprentice or Apprentices by Indentures shall be drawn by the Clark of this Company who hath the keeping the seal of this Company to seal such Indentures which shall be brought and inrolled in the Companys Book att the next Meeting of this Company after the execucon of such Indentures And that no Brother of this Company shall employ any person than the Clark of this Company to draw any such Indentures upon payn and forfeiture to pay five shillings to the use of this Company.”

At a meeting held March 24, 1739, it was reported to the Company,

“That one Edward Smith who had been formerly bound an Apprentice to one Peter Bowden a journeyman Bricklayer who lived within the City of Chester had petitioned the Mayor, Aldermen and Justices of the peace within the said City to be admitted a free-man of the said City and Corporation which the said Mayor, Aldermen, Justices and Council refused to grant unless the said Edward Smith could get and obtain the consent of this Company by reason the said Edward Smith was not bound an Apprentice to a

Brother of this Company but to the said Peter Bowden a journieman Bricklayer who had not any right to take an Apprentice to the said Trade And the said Company being this day peticoned to give their Consent that the said Edward Smith may be Admitted a ffreeman of the said City of Chester this Company upon consideraçon thereof refuseth to consent that the said Edward Smith may be Admitted a ffreeman of the said City by reason that he was not lawfully bound Apprentice to some Brother of this Company but to the said Peter Bowden a journiman Bricklayer who was not entitled to take an Apprentice."

Smith appears to have continued working as a journeyman bricklayer in the City, much to the annoyance of the Company, for at a meeting held May 1, 1742, a complaint was made that,

"Edward Smith who was not bound an Apprentice to any Master or Brother of this Company who now is or are or have been doth work as a journey Bricklayer within the City of Chester under pretence or colour of working under some Brother of this Company, this Company upon Consideraçon thereof do forbid Every Brother of this Company not to imploy the said Edward Smith as a Journiman Bricklayer either in the City of Chester or in the Country And if any Brother of this Company shall imploy the said Edward Smith to work as a journey man Bricklayer either in the said City or County such Brother offending agt this order in imploying y^e said Smith to work att the said Trade shall pay to the Wardens of this Company for the Companies use the Sum of five pounds."

The following year, 1743, Mr. Price was fined £1 1s. for taking an apprentice contrary to a former order given. In 1756, Joseph Butler was fined 10s. 6d.

"For taking Wm Beckett an Apprentice before the usual time. To wit a year earlier than usual."

In April, 1757, John Pemberton was fined a similar sum for a like offence. April 20, 1759, John Brookes paid a fine of 10s. 6d.,

“For taking John Walley as his apprentice before his other apprentice had served half his time.”

THE HORSE RACES.

This, like the other City Companies, regularly subscribed to the Horse Races. At a meeting held February 19, 1713, the Company, at the request of the Mayor and Corporation, agreed to contribute a yearly sum towards a piece of plate,

“To be run for on the Roodee on St. George’s Day yearely for ever.”

In the Company’s books we find year after year :—

“Paid to St. George’s Plate 6^s 8^d”

This subscription continued until 1773, after which year it ceases to be mentioned.

THE MIRACLE PLAY, AND MIDSUMMER SHOW.

There is no mention in the books now in the possession of the Company of the Miracle Play or Midsummer Show; neither would there be any account referring to either of these plays in the earlier book now lost. This is not to be wondered at as the Bricklayers and Linen Drapers separated and became distinct companies in 1679; a year after the Midsummer Show was finally abolished by an order of the Corporation.

May 21, 1602, the following order was received by the Linen Drapers and Bricklayers’ Company from the Mayor, John Ratcliffe :—

“Whereas the Companye of Bricklayers within this Citty are to be at charges in settinge forth of the Showe or Watch at Mydsomer of Balaam and Balaam’s Asse, whereunto as well the freemen of the Lynnen drapers, brickmakers, and brick laiers of this Citty,

as also the forreners [non freemen] inhabiting within this Cittye, and using the trades aforesaid, have been accustomed to bee contributarye. These are to authorise Robert Ridley and George Antrobus, Aldermen of the Companye of Bricklayers, and Robert Goodaker and Thomas Markes, Stewards, to collect of every of the said persons aforesaid all such somes of money as they have been heretofore accustomed to paye and as hath been accustomed to bee collected towards the charges aforesaid."

THE COMPANY'S BANNER, OR COLOURS.

The Company's books contain little or no information in regard to the colours. The Company had colours, as we find in the books year after year the following entry:—

“For carrying the Colours 1 0”

the pay varying from 6d. to 1s. 6d. From 1738 down to the present time there is no account of a new colour being purchased.

THE COMPANY'S SEAL.

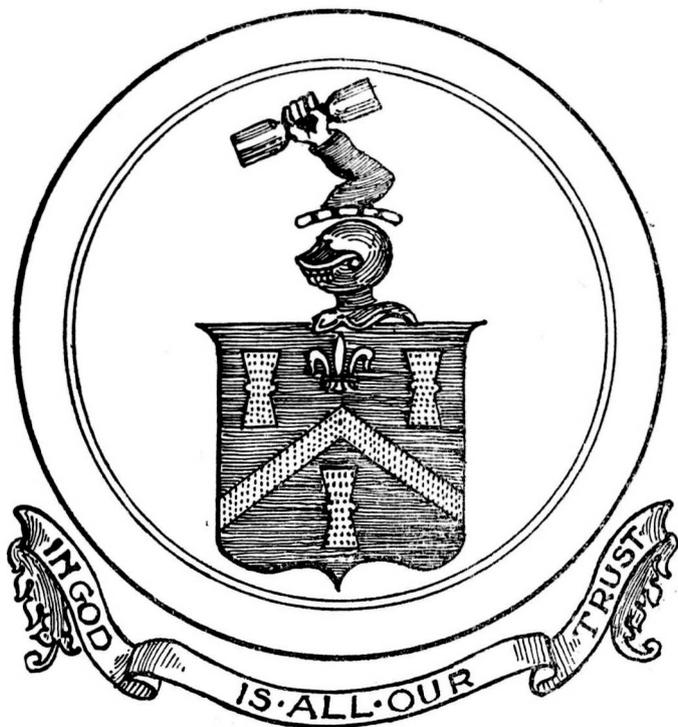
The books now in the possession of the Company contain no account as to when the seal was purchased. The silver plate upon which the design is engraved is unusually thick, circular in form, and measures $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter. The collar attached to it is $1\frac{5}{8}$ inches in length. This is attached to a wooden handle. The design of the seal is that of the arms and crest of the Company:—

ARMS. Azure a chevron or; in chief a fleur-de-lis argent, between two brick axes palewise of the second; in base a bundle of laths of the last.

CREST. On a wreath a dexter arm embowed, vested per pale, or and azure, cuffed argent, holding in the hand proper a brick axe or.

MOTTO. "In God is all our trust."

The arms and crest of the Chester Company are similar to those of the London Company of Tylers and Bricklayers.



H. F. Davies, A.R.I.B.A., del.

According to Randle Holme,¹³ the Chester City Herald, the Bricklayers or Tylers were incorporated by Queen Elizabeth and confirmed by King James.

OWEN JONES' BEQUEST.

The Bricklayers, like each of the other City Companies, participated in the benefits derived from Owen Jones' Bequest, but not to the extent of some of the

¹³ *Harleian M.S.*, 2033.

companies. When the Bricklayers were combined with the Linen Drapers and formed one company they received an equal proportion of the interest accruing from that bequest. At that time the Company ranked fifth of the City Companies, but when the Bricklayers were separated from the Linen Drapers, the former retained their place as fifth Company and the latter were placed sixth. The two companies were then completely distinct in every way except in regard to the benefits accruing from the bequest of Owen Jones; in this they were regarded as one company, and when their turn came to receive that money it was paid in equal proportions to the Company of Linen Drapers, and Bricklayers.¹⁴

In the Company's accounts for 1768 is a list of the members of that time, ten in number. A marginal note states:—

“This year Owens money was rec'd by the Company—To Wit abōt Midsummer 1768.”

There is no record as to the amount received or what became of it.

In the disbursements for that year we find:—

“July 25th To warning the Company and when Owens money was received, o r o.”

In 1782, an Order, identical in terms with one made by other Companies¹⁵ on or near the same date, shows that Owen Jones' Bequest then amounted to £10,260 6s. It refers to “The Aldermen and Stewards of this Company,” but is signed by John Meredith, Master, and John Shone, Warden.¹⁶

¹⁴ For copy of Owen Jones' Will, see *Journal*, Vol. XVIII., p. 143.

¹⁵ For instance, the Skinners and Feltmakers, July 22nd, and the Barber Surgeons, July 25th, 1782. The Order is printed in full in *Journal*, Vol. XVIII., p. 145, and Vol. XXI., p. 128.

¹⁶ See page 81.

October 20, 1792,

“The Company of Bricklayers received one half (the Company of Linen Drapers receiving the other half) of Owen Jones Legacy which became due at Midsummer in the present year the said one half amounted to £203 11 0 and was paid to the following brothers of the Company.

Mr John Meredith Senr	Master	
Mr John Meredith Junr	} Wardens	
Mr William Bowden		
Mr John Shone		Mr John Boden
Mr Edward Boden Senr		Mr Will ^m Gibson
Mr Edward Boden Junr		Mr James Boden
Mr John Hughes		Mr John Jones
Mr Joseph Bowden		

Each member therefore received about £17. That is the last entry in the Company's books in reference to this bequest.

Through the kindness of the officers of the various City Companies the writer has been allowed to study the history of these ancient companies probably more than any other person. It is only by such study that one begins to understand the part they played in the City's history. Owen Jones' Bequest was, no doubt, much abused in days gone by, and people derived benefit from it who were not, according to the wishes of the benefactor, entitled to do so. Owen Jones left the estate at Minera, near Wrexham, to the poor brethren of the Chester City Companies; unfortunately, many men who were well supplied with the necessaries of this world also managed to get a share. This was not the intention of the donor; his aim was to help deserving brethren who from various causes, due to no fault of their own, were reduced in this world's goods, and whom the revenue derived from his bequest

might ease in the declining days of life. To-day this bequest is called "Owen Jones' Charity"; why, the writer fails to understand. The word "charity," so far as the writer can gather from a copy of the will, is not mentioned, and it is certainly unfortunate that the word—through course of time—should have crept in. This is the view of most freemen of the city with whom I have come in contact. It is no more a charity than gifts made by will to-day, to people living under more affluent circumstances.

THE CHESTER AND NANTWICH CANAL.

The Bricklayers, like all the other City Companies, agreed to subscribe to the making of the Chester and Nantwich Canal, the Act for which passed the House of Lords, Tuesday, March 10, 1772. The Company took part in the ceremony when the Mayor cut the first sod, Monday, May 4, 1772.

The Company also took part in civic functions, and the accompanying of the Mayor to church. It also took part in the annual "Walking of the City Boundaries." Various items are entered in the Company's books of the cost on these occasions, such as:—

"May 1 1750 Expences at Riding the Boundaries of the City	,, 8 6
Sept 30, 1757, P ^a for 3 horses on Riding the Bounds	,, 6 0
July 25, 1764 To riding the Bounds paid for 2 horses	,, 2 0"

THE ANNUAL DINNER.

The Annual Dinner took place on the Election Day for Master and Wardens of the Company. The Company's books, unlike the earlier books of some other companies, contain no detailed accounts of the cost of these gatherings. Many of the Inns at which these

convivial meetings took place have been pulled down, or the license has been confiscated, and the names by which many of them were known are now forgotten, such as:—The Queen's Head, Bridge Street, 1799; The Black Dog, Bridge Street, 1800; The Black Horse, Bridge Street, 1826; The Coach, Handbridge, 1830; The Edgar Tavern, 1837; The Royal Oak, Shipgate Street, 1844; The Rising Sun, Bridge Street, 1851; The Cross Keys, Northgate Street, 1880; The Green Dragon Hotel, Eastgate Street, 1887; The City Arms, Frodsham Street, 1908.

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THE PRINCE OF WALES' VISIT TO CHESTER, 1869.

On October 9, 1869, a Special Meeting of the Company was held at the Cross Keys, to make arrangements as to the said Company joining the procession on the Visit of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, on the occasion of the opening of the new Town Hall on the 15th of that month.

“Jonathan Joinson Sen' being the senior brother in the said Society was duly elected Alderman; and the Steward was ordered to purchase Rosettes, etc. for the members and to arrange a definite time for joining the procession.”

QUEEN VICTORIA'S JUBILEE.

At the Annual Meeting of the Company, held at the Green Dragon Hotel, Eastgate Street, June 16, 1887, it was decided to send an address, prepared by Brother Alderman Joinson, to Her Majesty Queen Victoria, on Her Majesty's attainment of the fiftieth year of Her reign, a copy of which was entered in the Company's books:—

“To the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty. May it please your Majesty

We your Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, the Alderman, Stewards and Brethren of the Ancient

Guild under the title of 'The Company of Bricklayers of the City of Chester' which has existed from time immemorial, and as one of the Companies remaining of what formed part—according to the earliest accounts—of the constitution of the City of Chester as a Mercatory Guild or Corporation of Merchants and Artificers humbly beg leave to approach your Throne with our sincere congratulations on the occasion of your Majesty's attainment of the fiftieth year of your beneficent reign—a reign which has been especially distinguished by remarkable progress in the study, practice and application of the Arts and Sciences, and the great development of Education, Trade, Manufacture and Commerce.

Together with all your Majesty's loyal Subjects we acknowledge with heartfelt gratitude the blessings of Almighty God in prolonging the duration of your reign.

We venture to be permitted to express our veneration for all these public and private virtues uniformly and eminently possessed and displayed by your Majesty, and which, whilst adding lustre and stability to your Throne, have through your Majesty's illustrious example, by Divine blessing, greatly contributed to the advancement of true religion and virtue.

We desire also to recognise with heartfelt gratitude your Majesty's constant and unwearied efforts to promote the happiness and welfare of all your Subjects throughout your widespread dominions.

We earnestly trust that your Majesty may long be spared to rule over a loyal, contented and affectionate people.

Given under the Seal of the Company at their Annual Meeting held this sixteenth day of June in the year of our Lord 1887.

J. JOINSON,
Alderman."



The foregoing address having been forwarded to Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Home Department on the 17th day of June, 1887, accompanied by a letter with a request of the Company that he would please to favour them by presenting it to The Queen for her gracious acceptance, the following reply was received from the Secretary of State :—

“ Sir,

“ Whitehall, 2nd July, 1887.

I have had the honour to lay before The Queen the loyal and dutiful Address of Alderman, Stewards and Brethren of the Ancient Guild of the Company of Bricklayers of the City of Chester on the occasion of Her Majesty attaining the Fiftieth Year of Her Reign And I have to inform you that Her Majesty was pleased to receive the same very graciously.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your Obedient Servant,

J. Joinson, Esq.,
Alderman,
Chester.”

Henry Matthews.

EXTRACTS FROM ACCOUNTS.

“ 1739	October 27	Spent when War was proclaymed agst Spain	0	10	0
		P ^d for horse hire that day	0	4	0
1740	November 5 th	Spent that day	1	5	0
1746	October 9 th	To expences on Thanks- giving day	0	1	3
1748	Sept 10	To Warning the Company to wait on the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland	0	0	6
	Nov: 5	To warning the Company	0	0	6
		To Drink	0	8	0
		proclaiming peace	0	6	0
1753	Nov: 5.	Paid for a New Green Bag for the Books	0	1	6

1756. May 24	Spent when War was declared agt France viz—For Horse hire 3 ^s /- carrying colours 1 ^s /- Spent at Master Yates 10 ^s /4 ^d	0 14 4
1757. Nov 17.	Paid for a writing from the Pentice abt̄ the Company	0 2 0
1760. Nov 1.	Proclaiming King George the 3 rd , Three horses	0 4 6
	To carrying the colours & expences	0 7 11
1762. Nov 13	Spent when War was declared agt̄ Spain	0 8 5
1763 March 31	To meat drink &c at the proclamation of peace	0 6 0
	To Horse hire & carrying the colours	0 7 0''

ALDERMEN AND STEWARDS.

The names of Masters and Wardens of the Company are not entered in the Society's books between 1800 and 1814; or from 1825 to 1831. About 1826, the titles of Master and Wardens were altered to those of Aldermen and Stewards, but, so far as can be gathered from the Company's books, there is no minute authorizing the change. At the Annual Meeting, 1832, the Company elected two Aldermen, whereas previously there had only been one; and in 1881 the Company elected one Steward instead of two as had previously been done.

The following names of the Aldermen and the Stewards are of those chosen on the election day to fill the office for the ensuing year:—

	<i>Aldermen.</i>	<i>Stewards.</i>
Edward Harvey ¹⁷	—	1738
Thomas Harvey Junr	1739-42	—
Edward Price	1742	—
George Harvey	—	1739

¹⁷ Edward Harvey was a man of some originality, for when signing the Annual Accounts he usually wrote "I am satisfied."

	<i>Aldermen.</i>	<i>Stewards.</i>
John Woodward	—	1739-40
John Ledsham	—	1740-1
John Stubbs	—	1741-2, 1747-9
Robert Arden ¹⁸	—	1742-3, 1749-50
Samuel Price ¹⁹	1743-55	—
John Meredith	1778-1800	1743-4, 1753
Joseph Butler	1759	1744-5, 1753-4
Thomas Yates	1755-58	1745-6
George Harvey	—	{ 1746-7, 1754-5, 1762-3, 1770-1
John Woodworth	—	1748
Thomas Harvie	—	1750-1
Edward Boden	—	{ 1751-2, 1761-2 1769-70, 1773, 1778, 1781, 1783-7, 1789-90
Richard Venables	—	1755-6, 1763-4, 1771-2
Joseph Orden	—	1756
John Yates	—	1757, 1764
John Brooks	1768-77	1757-8, 1765-6
John Pemberton	—	1758-9
John Brown	—	1759-60
John Pemberton	1760-2	—
John Meredith Junr	—	{ 1760-61, 1767-73, 1773-7, 1788, 1791-2, 1798, 1800
John Woodworth	1763-7	—
John Yates Junr	—	1765, 1772
John Brown	—	1766-7
Robert Harvey	—	1768-9
Thomas Cowper	—	1777, 1781
James Boden	—	1778

¹⁸ Died 1755.

¹⁹ Died during his year of office and was succeeded by Thomas Yates.

	<i>Aldermen.</i>	<i>Stewards.</i>
John Shone	—	{ 1779, 1782-7, 1790-1, 1795-6, 1799
Edward Boden Junr	—	1779-80, 1793-4, 1798
Thomas Hayes	—	1780, 1782
John Jones	—	1788-9, 1794-5, 1825-6
William Boden	{ 1814-21, 1834-40, 1855-80	{ 1792-3, 1799-1800 1850, 1853
John Hughes	—	1796-7
William Gibson ²⁰	1822-4	1797
John Wordsworth	—	1814
Benjamin Davies	1832-3	1814-15, 1819-21
John Simpson	—	1815-18
Thomas Simpson	1832-53	1816 18
Nathaniel Bolton	—	1819-21
Thomas Wood	1844-66	{ 1822-3, 1828-33, 1838-9
Charles Gill	—	1822-3
Thomas Goff	—	1824
Peter Linet	—	1824
Peter Nield	—	{ 1825-6, 1834-7, 1845, 1849
William Gill	1841-3	1827
John Cathrall	—	1827
William Woods	—	{ 1828-33, 1856, 1859, 1866, 1870, 1876, 1880
Gilbert Gerrard	—	1834-9, 1844, 1848
Tho ^s Goff	—	1840, 1844-5
Joseph Nield	—	1840
John Gibson	—	1841, 1846, 1849
Robert Lewis	1906, 1908-16	{ 1841, 1846, 1850, 1853, 1857, 1861, 1874

²⁰ Died 1824.

	<i>Aldermen.</i>	<i>Stewards.</i>
John Thomas	—	1842, 1847
Jonathan Joinson ²¹	1881-1905	1842, 1847, 1851-2, 1854-5, 1857-8, 1861-2, 1865, 1868-9, 1873, 1878-9
Charles Price	—	1843
John Johnson	1881	1843, 1851-2, 1854-5, 1858, 1862, 1865-6, 1869, 1880
John Meredith	—	1856, 1859, 1867, 1871, 1876
William Williams ²²	1884-1888	1860, 1864, 1871, 1877, 1886
William Johnson	—	1860, 1863-4, 1872, 1877
Edward Lewis	—	1863
William Gerrard	—	1867, 1871
William Lewis	1907	1868, 1873, 1878-9
John Royle	—	1870
George Johnson	1890-1911	1874
Richard Gilbert Gerrard	1912-16	1875, 1882-98
William Boden Junr ²³	—	1875
Joseph Joinson	—	1899
Stanley Gerrard	—	1900-16

On the election day, May 1, 1739, the Company was composed of the following members:—

Thomas Harvey Junr	Master
George Harvey	} Wardens
John Woodward	

²¹ Died, July, 1905.

²² Died 1889.

²³ Died, 7 January, 1880.

William Bridges	John Langsdale
Hugh Jordan	William Ledsham
Thomas Yates	John Ledsham
Edward Harvey	John Stubbs
Sam' Price	Robert Orden
John Meredith	Joseph Butler
George Pickford	

In 1783, the members of the Company had dwindled in number to five:—

John Meredith	John Shone
Edward Boden	James Boden
Edward Boden Junr	

and so remained until 1787. In 1792 the Company had increased its strength to twelve members, whose names are given as participating in Owen Jones' bequest for that year. In 1912 there were twenty-six members, and to-day, 1916, the secretary informs me there are thirty-one members, not one of whom, so far as he could learn, follows the trade of a bricklayer.

The Company appears to have gained a new lease of life, and so strong is its position at the present time that it has every prospect of a long existence, instead of falling, like so many of the other old city companies, into decay. Much of its success is due to the indefatigable work of Brother R. G. Gerrard, one of the Aldermen of the Company, who has been a most active member for nearly half-a-century. In 1903 Brother Gerrard founded the "City Tontine Sick and Burial Society," which now has a roll of about 200 members. His son, Stanley Gerrard, joined the Company 3rd June, 1899, and was appointed permanent Steward of the Company May 26, 1900, which office he retains at the present time.