

This note is one of a series placed in the Almanac for the guidance of livery masters, wardens, and their clerks, especially new ones, seeking advice on a particular topic. They are not prescriptive, and how individual companies choose to conduct their affairs is, of course, entirely up to them. Most are written by a past chairman of the Livery Committee, of whom you may read more at the foot of the Contact page.

Modern Companies – a guide to livery companies formed since 1926 Or “Being at 76’s & 77’s”

Figure shown in parenthesis shows the order of precedence of the company named.

What is a Modern Company?

The Modern Companies are all those livery companies created in the 20th century and thereafter. The first of these are the Master Mariners (78) formed in 1926. At 2020, the most recent are still the Educators (109) and the Arts Scholars (110) granted their livery in 2014.

But the significance of the defining of this group is not so much when they were created, but that the surge of new, modern companies (now 32 in total, nearly a third of all livery companies) came after a long gap of over 200 years since the Fan Makers (76) were formed in 1709.

The term *Modern Company* can confuse, for some 20thC liveries represent very ancient trades, notably the Farmers. Others, eg the Tobacco Pipe Makers and the Lightmongers, are resurrections of earlier defunct guilds.

What do they do?

The only formal gatherings of all the Modern Companies are the twice yearly dinners held for their Masters and Senior Wardens (ie two from each company), and clerks do not normally attend, other than the clerk of the host company. These dinners are usually held on the second Monday in March and September, and organized by the next most junior company in turn, working down the order of precedence. The Master of that company hosts, chooses the venue, and invites a speaker. (a more detailed description is at a separate note)

What happened to 77?

If the Master Mariners (78) are the first of the new, logic dictates that it was company 77, the Carmen, who were the last of the old. But their date of charter or incorporation in 1517 clearly predates the Fan Makers in 1709 (precedence 76). So the Carmen were an aberration, and I'm not sure why their precedence is so low. They are certainly much older than many of the companies senior to them in precedence. That of course is true elsewhere (famously the Weavers at 42), but the Carmen are more confusing being assumed, by their precedence, but wrongly, to be the last of the old. That curious accolade belongs to the Fan Makers.

Why the “long gap”?

In the 18th century the livery companies went into decline, and no more new companies were formed for nearly 220 years after the Fan Makers. The growth of London beyond its City walls, and hence lack of control by the liveries over their crafts and trades were a principal reason for the malaise, and it was the creation of City & Guilds (in 1878) which played a major part in stopping the rot.

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And why the surge in the 1970's?

At the time of the Wilson Labour governments, there was concern that the wealth and privilege of the City and its institutions were threatened. The livery companies would have appeared to socialist minded ministers as anachronistic and out of date. Some of their names did not help.

So a deliberate effort was made to encourage new companies to form, representing modern trades and professions, such as Accountants, Actuaries, Arbitrators, Architects and so on. With the help of many chartered regulatory bodies, clearly this effort was successful, and though new guilds are still being formed (10 so far in 21st century, and five in the pipeline), there are now few professions left that do not have their own livery company.

List

For a list of the Modern Companies, please go to the [List of Livery Companies](#) by precedence (at A-Z menu bar), and as should be clear by now, they are the ones from 78-110.

Nigel R Pullman
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21st February 2015 (updated March 2019)

Was this note helpful? Do you have comment? Email nrpullman@btinternet.com