BECOMING A MEMBER OF
THE WORSHIPFUL COMPANY OF SPECTACLE MAKERS

The purpose of The Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers is to support the prevention, and treatment, of vision impairment and the improvement of eye health for all.

The Company was incorporated by Royal Charter in 1629 and is proud of its history and heritage as a City Livery Company. It is also proud of its continuing links with the optical world and professions associated with visual health. However, at least 25% of the Company’s members come from other walks of life.

Applications are actively welcomed from anyone who has an interest in the work of the Company and in the traditions of the City of London, no matter what their current profession or occupation may be.

The process of becoming a member and the rules of the Company still follow the original Royal Charter of 1629 and the Book of Ordinances of 1630. This explains why some of the terms used may be unfamiliar. If you have any questions at all, please contact the Clerk, Helen Perkins:

Telephone: 020 7236 2932
Email: clerk@spectaclemakers.com
Website: www.spectaclemakers.com

CATEGORIES OF MEMBERSHIP

Historically, a person joining a guild of craftsmen, or “Company”, typically worked for seven years as an Apprentice, until they were judged to be ready to become a Freeman of that Company. Freemen might subsequently become part of the governing group, the Livery. Wearing a special gown and/or badge (being literally “clothed of the Livery”) was a mark of their experience and standing in their profession and in their community.

Today the Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers has only two categories of membership – the Freedom and the Livery.

The first step in membership is to become a Freeman (for new qualifiers, this can include a fixed term membership for 3 years). Details are set out in Section 1.

To become a Liveryman, you must be not only a Freeman of the Company but also a Freeman of the City of London. Not all members go on to the Livery but only Liverymen can vote in elections within the City of London and hold positions of authority on the Court of the Company. The steps towards Admission to the Livery are set out in Section 2.

Being a Freeman of the Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers does not of itself mean that you are qualified as a practitioner in any field relating to eye health and no such implication should be given.
SECTION 1 – BECOMING A FREEMAN

1. This is the first step for anyone wishing to join the Spectacle Makers’ Company. Applications are only accepted from those over the age of 18.

2. You can apply for the Freedom by right if:
   
a. You are already a member of any of the following bodies:
      
      The Royal College of Ophthalmologists;
      
      The College of Optometrists;
      
      The Association of British Dispensing Opticians; or
      
      The British and Irish Orthoptic Society.
   
b. You have passed the Company’s Level 2 (or higher) examinations for Optical Technicians or Optical Support staff.
   
c. You have a degree in optometry, vision science or another optical subject.

3. You can apply for the Freedom by recommendation if you are recommended and seconded by two current members of the Livery. The Clerk can help you with this.

   Note: according to the traditions of the City of London Corporation, those who join by right or by recommendation are said to have joined the Company “by Redemption”.

4. You can also apply for membership of the Company “by Patrimony”. This route is available only if you are the child of a Freeman of the Company who was already a Freeman before the date of your birth.

5. If you wish to apply for membership, you simply complete the form and send it to the Clerk with a copy of your birth certificate and any documents showing a change of name. This is a requirement of the City of London. The Clerk can arrange for counter-signature by current members of the Company, if you do not know any members yourself. The form goes forward to the next meeting of the Court for approval and, if approved, an appointment is made for you to make the Declaration which is required of all new Freemen. This has to be done in the sight of the Clerk.

6. On admission, you will be asked to pay your first subscription fee, called “Quarterage”, to cover your first year of membership, plus an initial administrative charge. This amounts to £135 in total. You then renew your membership at the next renewal point by paying the quarterage for that year. The current rate for Freemen is £120 per annum (from 1 June 2017). Quarterage is collected on 1 June each year and notice of the rate is given at least 8 weeks in advance. Quarterage can be paid by cheque, bank transfer or by setting up a direct debit arrangement.

7. The Application Form asks for personal information, including contact details and a CV, so that the Court can consider your application properly. Such details will be used by the Company and its agents for the purposes of keeping in touch with you. Information will not be transferred to third parties for marketing purposes. You are asked to give your consent as part of the application process and you can later opt out or change your instructions.

8. All applicants are required to make a declaration about their fitness to be a member of the Company. This is non-negotiable.
HOW TO APPLY

1. Fill in and sign the application form.

   If you are applying to join by recommendation, you will need to be sponsored by two Liverymen. If you can obtain the signatures of two Liverymen on your own account, that is fine. If you do not know two Liverymen, do not worry. The Clerk will arrange for you to have contact with Liverymen who may be willing to support you.

   Employers and others can help you by paying upfront for three years of membership of the Freedom, at a slightly discounted rate. We call individuals who take up this offer “Journeymen”. The idea is that this will start you off in your career and give you access to other Freemen who may be able to help you. The admission requirements are just the same as for other Freemen but please contact the Clerk for more information and current costs for Journeyman membership.

2. Send the completed form to the Clerk, together with the following identity documents:

   - a scanned copy of your FULL original birth certificate (this will show the name, address and occupation of at least one parent). The Clerk will ask to see the original before you make your Declaration and are admitted to the Freedom.
   - proof of any change of name since birth (e.g. certified copy of marriage certificate or deed poll)
   - The photo page of your passport OR a scanned copy of your driving licence and a bank or utility bill which shows your current residential address
   - naturalised British subjects must also produce their naturalisation papers

3. The full address for receipt of applications is:

   The Clerk
   The Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers
   Apothecaries’ Hall
   Black Friars’ Lane
   London EC4V 6EL

   The form and supporting information can be sent by email to clerk@spectaclemakers.com with originals to follow.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The Clerk will acknowledge receipt of your documents and will put the application forward to the next meeting of the Court. Once the application has been approved by the Court, the Clerk will contact you to arrange a date for you to make the Freeman’s Declaration. You are not a Freeman until you have made your Declaration. When you make your Declaration, you will be asked to pay the initial fee covering your first year’s membership.

You can either attend the formal Presentation Ceremony, which is held once a year in Apothecaries’ Hall in late October, or make a private appointment to see the Clerk and make the Declaration in private.

All new members must first be a Freeman of the Company. In exceptional circumstances, if you are already a Freeman of the City of London, it may be possible for the Court to agree to admit you as a Freeman and then clothe you as of the Livery later the same day.
SECTION 2: FREEDOM OF THE CITY OF LONDON

1. Most applicants will need to make two visits to the Chamberlain’s Court in Guildhall. To make an appointment with the Chamberlain’s Court, telephone 020 7332 1369. The email address for queries is chamberlains.court@cityoflondon.gov.uk

2. At your first Application Visit you will table your application for the Freedom. You must produce:

   (a) A copy of your certificate of Freedom of the Spectacle Makers’ Company.
   (b) Your FULL birth certificate (See Note below)
   (c) Proof of any change of name since birth (eg certified copy of marriage certificate, deed poll).
   (d) Naturalisation papers (if applicable).
   (e) A cheque for £100 made payable to “The Chamberlain of London” as payment of the admission fee (called “the fine”).

3. There will then be a delay of at least a month, whilst the City of London Court of Aldermen considers your application. You will then be contacted by the Chamberlain’s staff and invited to make a second appointment to return to Guildhall and receive the Freedom of the City, at a Freedom Ceremony.

4. You will be able to claim the Freedom of the City without having to make the first visit (i.e. your application will not have to be laid before the Court of Aldermen), if:

   - you are on the electoral roll for a Ward within the City of London, and have been on the roll for at least 12 months. In this case, you can simply arrange an appointment with the Clerk of the Chamberlain’s Court to be made Free of the City. In your initial telephone call, you should tell the Clerk’s staff that you are a “Ward List” applicant. You will not have to pay the fine of £100.

   - you can claim the Freedom through Patrimony, because one of your parents was a Freeman of the City at the time of your birth. When making your appointment, you should state that you are applying through Patrimony. Unlike those on the Ward List, however, you will have to pay the fine of £100.

NOTE: The Full Birth Certificate contains precise location of birth and full parental details: the short version does not. If you only have a short form Certificate, or have lost your birth certificate, and you were born in England or Wales, you can obtain a certified copy of the Full Certificate from UK Official Services by applying online:

https://www.gov.uk/order-copy-birth-death-marriage-certificate

This website also provides links to the official registry services in Scotland and Northern Ireland.
SECTION 3: ADMISSION TO FULL MEMBERSHIP AND BEING “CLOTHED AS OF THE LIVERY”

Liverymen are full members of the Company, and enjoy all the benefits that association with a Livery Company of the City of London can bring, such as participation in the elections of City Sheriffs and the Lord Mayor of London and much wider networking.

To become a Liveryman, you must first be a Freeman of both the Company and of the City.

1. Once you have achieved Freedom of the City of London, please inform the Clerk. The Clerk will need to know the date of issue of your certificate.

2. Your name will be added to the Livery Waiting List. Clothing as of the Livery happens only three times a year, at the end of the Court meeting in March, June and December. The timing of admission to the Livery is at the discretion of the Master and Wardens and by invitation only.

3. When the time comes, the Clerk will contact you to confirm that there is now a vacancy within the Livery and to check dates with you. To be admitted to the Livery, you must appear in person before the Court of Assistants in Apothecaries’ Hall to make the Liveryman’s Declaration required by the Ordinances of the Company dated 1630, and to be clothed “as of the Livery”.

4. There is a one-off payment for admission to the Livery (the “fine”), payable immediately before admission. The fine is currently £900.00, inclusive of VAT. This includes your Livery badge, on a Spectacle Makers’ ribbon, and your first Livery lunch.

5. In addition, Liverymen pay a higher rate of Quarterage. The increase takes effect from the 1 June next after admission to the Livery. The current rate of Quarterage for Liverymen, from 1 June 2017, is £300.

APPLYING FOR FREEDOM AND LIVERY AT THE SAME TIME

You can use one application form to apply for membership of both Freedom and Livery at the same time, but please note that:

- The Livery cannot be claimed as of right. All applications for admission to the Livery will need to be countersigned by two Liverymen. The Clerk can help with this.
- It is an honour to be invited to join the Livery. Applicants are invited by the Master and Wardens and there may be a waiting list of some months.

If you initially apply only for Freedom of the Company, but later decide to apply for the Livery, we may ask you to complete a second application form.

HOW DO I APPLY?

Fill in and sign the application form. If you can obtain the signatures of two Liverymen, that is fine; but if you do not know two Liverymen, do not worry. The Clerk can arrange introductions as appropriate. Send the completed form to The Clerk, The Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers, Apothecaries’ Hall, Black Friars Lane, London EC4V 6EL together with copies of your identity documents (as set out on page 3) and, if you have it, your certificate of Freedom of the City of London. The form and supporting information can be sent by email to clerk@spectaclemakers.com with originals to follow. The Clerk will acknowledge receipt and advise you of the next steps.