**THE WORSHIPFUL COMPANY OF FARMERS**

**The Apprentice in the Twenty First Century Livery Company**

*The purpose today of the apprenticeship scheme is to enable youngsters to have some exposure to the Company to see what it does and to qualify for entry at a future date. The scheme involves signing the apprentice up on a form of Indenture and assigning him or her to a “Master” – not the Master of the Company but anyone who is a Liveryman. It may be a child, grandchild or godchild but it is not necessary for the Apprentice to be related to their Master. The Indenture is lodged with the Chamberlain’s Court which oversees the whole process.*

The Worshipful Company of Farmers has since its foundation adopted a modern version of the traditional livery company apprenticeship. Even before the foundation, in 1947 a register was compiled of farmers willing to take on apprentices. In 1952 it was agreed that apprentices could be taken by any member for a period of between four and eight years and subsequently be admitted to the Company. The Fine on being apprenticed in 1952 was two guineas. A ceremony for “binding the apprentice” which involved the presentation of a bible embossed with the Company’s arms was devised; the ceremony (which is on lines drawn up by the earliest livery companies) is still used today.

Arnold Quinney Hitchcock was the first apprentice to complete his indentures, be admitted to the livery of the Company and subsequently become its Master. “Freedom by servitude” remains an important means by which new members to the Livery can come forward. It is however no longer the case that apprenticeships are restricted to those intending to be agricultural workers, although there is an expectation that the Apprentice Master will arrange for the apprentice to learn something of the art of farming. The status of Apprentice gives the youngster a link with the Company and the possibility of joining as a Freeman after the apprenticeship has been served. The Apprentice is eligible to receive the Freedom of the City of London when his or her term has been fully served. It is not now a qualification, not linked to any training and there is no programme of activities.

The Company is lucky enough to have a fund – The Brooks Apprentices Fund – a gift from Past Master Attfield Brooks which is available to Apprentices. Moderate sums are available which can be used to provide financial assistance with educational travel, personal development or to attend Company functions.

Liverymen considering having an Apprentice bound to them must not be put off by what seems a complicated process and by the terminology used. The Clerk will advise. A suggested “flow chart” is as follows:

1. Check that the Apprentice is eligible. They need to be above the age of fourteen years (an apprentice under eighteen requires parental consent) and below the age of twenty one years at the time of binding. They must be bound willingly! The term of service is to be not less than four years nor more than eight years (you decide – see the age considerations in 6 below).

2. Assemble the paperwork. You will require a full birth certificate (or adoption order) of the Apprentice and a copy of the Freedom of the City Certificate of the Apprentice Master. You will be asked for details of the Apprentice’s Father (name, address and occupation).

3. Agree with the Clerk a future date of binding. This will be at one of the four days in the year when the Court meets and will be followed by a Livery Luncheon.

4. Arrange with the Clerk for the Indentures to be prepared. The Chamberlain’s Court prepares two copies, one for the Apprentice Master’s signature and the other for the Apprentice. The Clerk signs both copies. On the back of the Apprentice’s indenture is the Apprentice Master’s Testimony to be signed by him when the term has been completed (see 6 below).

5. On the chosen day the Apprentice Master and Apprentice attend the Court and the Master [of the Company], wearing his robes, oversees the traditional ceremony for binding of apprentices.

There is a “Fine” to be paid by the Apprentice Master (£130 in 2017).

The Master [of the Company] in his speech at lunch will welcome the Apprentice to the Company.

6. Following the apprenticeship a decision needs to be taken whether the apprentice wishes to take advantage of the opportunity to become a Freeman of the Company by Servitude.

An apprentice cannot be admitted to his Freedom until he or she has reached the age of 21, even if the term of the indentures expires earlier, nor can they be admitted before the full term is served even though that means serving beyond age 21.

The Apprentice Master comes to Court (the Apprentice does not need to be present) to confirm that his Apprentice has been diligent during his apprenticeship and to recommend he become a Freeman; the Court agrees to this “by Assent”.

At this stage the Indenture is completed to enable the ex-apprentice to proceed to the Freedom of the City of London.

There is a “Fine” to become a Freeman of the Company by Servitude (£430 in 2017) which is significantly less than the Fine by the alternative route of Redemption.

7. You are eligible for the Freedom of the City by Servitude if you have served the customary term of apprenticeship and are above 21 years. An appointment is necessary to attend the Admission Ceremony at Guildhall at which friends and family are welcome. Guidance is provided about the documentation required.

8. A Freeman of the Company by Servitude may, once in possession of the Freedom of the City, progress to become a Liveryman of the Company by Servitude. The ceremony (“Clothing”) is the same as for other classes of Liverymen but again the “Fine” (£230 in 2017) is significantly less than for Liverymen by Redemption. There are in the Company over thirty Liverymen by Servitude.

Graham Bamford

Clerk January 2017