

The Worshipful Company of Tallow Chandlers, close associates to The Coachmakers for more than 70 years



Tallow Chandlers' Hall is set deep in historic London. It sits on the buried walls of the Roman Governor's Palace, and is but a stone's throw from the London Stone, ancient heart of London.

The Tallow Chandlers originally moved into a Dowgate Hill property in July 1476. It bought what was probably a merchant's house from Dame Margaret Alley for £166 13s 4d. However, it was burnt down during the Great Fire of London in September 1666. Two large beams of the predecessor medieval hall that survived the Great Fire remain in the cellars under the present Beadle's office.

Today's Hall dates from 1672. Designed (it is believed) by the Company's Surveyor, Captain John Caines under the guidance of the Surveyor and polymath Robert Hooke. Construction and decoration work continued until about 1677.

Much refurbishment work has been carried out since then. Over the years, the original musicians' gallery has been sadly lost. Bomb damage in World War II also necessitated repair and rebuilding of parts of the Main Hall.

However, the basic size, shape and layout of the Hall has changed little since 1672. It is now one of the most well preserved - and certainly among the most popular - of the London livery halls.

The Tallow Chandlers is one of the 110 Livery Companies of the City of London. The Livery Companies are thriving, and in fact their number is still increasing. The Tallow Chandlers' Company was formed in about 1300 by oysters (tallow melters), as a religious fraternity in honour of Our Lady and St John the Baptist.

The Company was formed to regulate oils, ointments, lubricants and fat-based preservatives and to manage candle making using animal fats (tallow). It was one of many livery companies managing the interests of, and policing, a particular area of commerce.

Its influence was not exclusively confined to tallow. Its role broadened out to encompass various other domestic goods, until it oversaw products including sauces, vinegar, soap, cheese and herrings.

The Company was also intimately involved in the service of London. By 1415 tallow candles played a key role in the compulsory street lighting for the City of London. By 1469, it was already supplying the City Watch with 60 men.

However, the end of the 17th century saw a decline in the Company's fortunes. At first, new candle making materials, such as spermaceti and paraffin wax, replaced tallow. The subsequent introduction of gas lighting in the 1800s and electric lighting in the 1900s further eroded the company's long established position. However, the facility of tallow as a raw material for the industrial manufacture of soap greatly expanded as the Victorian chemical industry developed. In 1853, Home Secretary Lord Palmerston removed the duty on tallow in order to cut the cost of soap in support of the growing concern with hygiene and cleanliness.

Such change was not exclusive to the Tallow Chandlers. Few Livery Companies maintain their original role of policing a specific area of commerce. There are some exceptions; gold is still assayed at Goldsmith's Hall, pharmacists sit their exams at Apothecaries' Hall, the Vintners are still involved

in wine regulation and the Watermen still control professional standards on the Thames.

Today, the Company exists as a charitable and social body supporting various London based charities and retaining strong links with the lighting and edible oil industries, through various candle manufacturers, FOSFA International (the Federation of Oils, Seeds and Fats Associations). It has also formed new trade links with the mineral oil industry through BP.

Admission to the company is by a process combining invitation and interview. Once admitted, a candidate becomes a Freeman. Historically, the award of the Freedom marked the end of a seven-year period of apprenticeship as a Tallow Chandler. A Freeman could then serve under any master, or set up shop independently. Freeman of the Company are also entitled to become Freeman of the City of London.

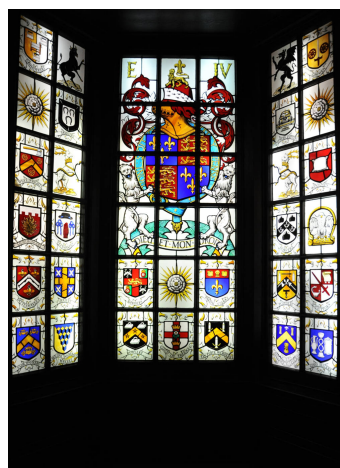
The Company maintains close links with the historic chandlery trade's modern descendants. The Assistant Clerk of the Company is the Honorary Secretary of the British Candlemakers' Federation, while firms including Price's Candle Works and church candle supplier Charles Farris are represented in the Livery.

The Company supports FOSFA International with various academic awards and the use of hall amenities. FOSFA members derive some of the raw materials of their trade from tallow, making them the modern inheritors of the tallow trade. The Tallow Chandlers Company has also built up close links with energy company BP, on the basis of a shared interest in heat and light.

The Company was, in 1872, one of the original proponents of the City and Guilds Institute, and today remains a strong supporter of the various vocational qualifications that it offers.

Since the late 1940s, the Coachmakers Company has had a long and fruitful association with Tallow Chandlers and has enjoyed its hospitality for many years. Our original Hall (in Noble Street, where there is a blue plaque confirming its location), was destroyed in the Blitz and for various reasons was never rebuilt. Although we have become a peripatetic livery, we still felt we needed a 'home'. With its generosity, our 'home' is the Tallow Chandlers' Hall and although we share that home with other liveries, the Tallow Chandlers has placed a stained glass window depicting the Coachmakers' coat of arms in the alcove (often referred to as the naughty step!), in the main dining hall.

Our Election Court meetings are held at Tallow Chandlers, as are the annual Christmas Carol dinners. The Company's treasures are held at Tallow Chandlers', which are confirmed every 12 months at the beginning of the newly elected Master's year. When Group Captain Gerry Bunn retired as Clerk in 2009 (en route to become Master in 2012), a reception held at Tallow Chandlers was a natural choice.



This image of the stained glass window located in the alcove off the main dining hall shows the crests of the various Livery Companies associated with the Tallow Chandlers. The Coachmakers' coat of arms can be found bottom left.