



## **THE MERCERS' COMPANY**

### **The Master**

**Xenia Dennen**



Xenia Dennen, Master of the Mercers' Company, is the granddaughter of Field Marshal Earl Haig who was admitted to the Freedom of the City and the Mercers' Company on 12 June 1919. She has been a Mercer since 2005.

Her work and interests have focused on the language, literature and history of Russia thanks to a line of Scottish engineers on her father's side, the first of whom, Charles Baird of the Carron Company, Falkirk, was invited by Catherine the Great to come to Russia in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century in order to produce effective cannons for the Russian navy.

After graduating from St Anne's College, Oxford University, Xenia Dennen studied Russian politics and Russian 19<sup>th</sup> century political thought at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), where she earned her living as the part-time research assistant to Professor Leonard Schapiro from 1968-1981.

Her interest in Russia led her to help found Keston College during the Cold War in the late 1960s with Canon Michael Bourdeaux, Sir John Lawrence (press attaché in the USSR during the Second World War), Professor Leonard Schapiro and Peter Reddaway (then an LSE lecturer). This small research institution (now called Keston Institute) studied the true facts about the religious situation in the USSR and the other communist countries of Eastern and Central Europe, thus undermining communist propaganda, and became the *bête noire* of the KGB; for example, Keston's researchers produced evidence that no such thing as freedom of conscience, guaranteed in the Soviet Constitution, actually existed. She founded and edited Keston's academic journal from 1973 until 1981. In 2002 she became Keston's chairman. She has worked as a translator and writer, and has written many articles and reviews on subjects connected with Russia. Since 2006 she has produced and edited a magazine for Keston members.

As well as being Keston's Moscow representative from 1992 until 2000, she has taken part since 1999 onwards in the field work for an encyclopaedia, published in Russian and in English by Keston, on the current religious situation in the Russian Federation.

Her favourite sport is sailing, and she is a music lover who trained as a singer, focusing on the French and Russian repertoire. She is married to a former Archdeacon of Hackney, now retired, and has two sons who are both journalists.