



Professor James Patrick Carley FRSC

Master

Worshipful Company of Barbers

I was born in Victoria B.C., Canada, that most colonial of cities, and grew up with a strong attachment to England, ‘home’ as we still called it in my youth. After a B.A. at the University of Victoria, I spent a year in Germany, in theory to learn the language, but mostly riding horses. Missing the ocean I returned to Canada to do a M.A. at Dalhousie University in Halifax and this was followed by a Ph.D. at the University of Toronto. It was in a graduate class in Middle English Philology (sic!) that I met my future wife, Ann Hutchison, although we did not marry until almost a decade later. Like me, Ann is a medievalist and is currently Academic Dean at the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies in Toronto.

My first teaching positions were in the United States, but I returned to Toronto in 1985 to take up a position at York University, where I was named a Distinguished Research Professor in 2000. I retired from York in 2013 when a chair in the History of the Book was created for me at the University of Kent.

Although most of my formal academic career has been spent in North America it has been punctuated by many research leaves and I suspect I may hold a record for visiting fellowships at English Universities: Darwin College, Sidney Sussex College, Christ’s College, and Trinity College in Cambridge; All Souls College, Magdalen College, and Oriel College in Oxford. I also spent a term as an Academic Visitor at the London School of Economics and Political Science. My days of pluralism are now ended, however, and I am a permanent and much contented Honorary Research Fellow at Lady Margaret Hall in Oxford. Most of the books and articles I have written are academic studies of the means by which medieval manuscripts survived Henry VIII’s cultural revolution, the violent dissolution of the English religious houses. Although no David Starkey (another Barber) I do, however, appear from time to time as an expert witness in various media, print, radio, and television, and I have written popular books, one on Glastonbury Abbey and another on the Books of King Henry VIII and his Wives. I am under contract with Penguin to produce a book on the Tudor Antiquary John Leland and his travels in the entourage of Henry VIII. In the past I used to have many hobbies; riding, tennis, gardening, canoeing on an island property we owned in Georgian Bay, Ontario, but now Leland seems to be my chief passion, following in his footsteps my main diversion. I am lucky to have an understanding wife.

In 2002 I was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and in 2013 I was awarded the Pierre Chauveau Medal from the Society for “a distinguished contribution to knowledge in the humanities other than Canadian literature and Canadian history”. In 2012 I received a Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Medal for ‘services to scholarship in Canada and internationally’.

My link to the Worshipful Company of Barbers came through a family connection: I joined the company in 1996 and was promoted to the Livery in 2001. Once a member of the Court my ascent was inevitable, although it remains a matter of constant wonder to me. As Master one of my goals is to foster links between the livery companies and the Commonwealth, Canada in particular.