

THE WORSHIPFUL COMPANY OF CARPENTERS

Master 2017-2018



Rachel Felicity Bower

Rachel was born in Hythe, Kent, one of the ancient Cinque Port towns, in 1947. She trained as a dancer at Elmhurst Ballet School, but having neither the real talent nor total dedication needed to succeed as a ballet dancer, she left school at 16. A little while, and a secretarial course later, she arrived at Knight Frank & Rutley as the PA for their Building Surveying team, who looked after some of the most lovely buildings in the country. She has worked in the buildings and construction industry ever since as an administrator of one kind or another.

The bulk of her career was spent as the Education Officer for the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) in Spitalfields, where she ran two major Building Conservation Courses – one for historic building professionals (known as SPAB Scholars) who are architects, surveyors and engineers - and the other for historic building craftsmen and women – the William Morris Craft Fellows (William Morris, the great radical socialist, poet and designer, was also a craftsman). The last 24 years have given her the greatest respect for craftsmen.

Serving on the external advisory committee of the Carpenters' Building Crafts College, she was invited to join the Freedom of the Company, soon after it had taken the decision to open the Livery to women. She became a Liveryman in 2007. When the College later began offering stone letter-cutting evening classes, she jumped at the opportunity to sign up for a couple of years, finding them a complete tonic after a day's work and doubling her respect for craftsmen.

Rachel married Adam, a chartered surveyor whom she'd met at Knight Frank in 1972. They bought a Listed, but semi-derelict Regency house in Islington, which has been a hands-on project ever since. They have two daughters – Kate and Hannah (now also a Carpenter) – and two very young granddaughters.

Rachel's interests are chiefly art, architecture and London history, but when she retired in 2013, she began researching their respective family trees, which is both absorbing and time-consuming. Genealogy has been put aside for a year, but she was pleasantly surprised to find relations who have been members of five different Livery Companies and two who have held City office. Her own contribution to the City was working for an M&E engineer on the Barbican Arts Centre when it was still a big hole in the ground!