

Felicity M D Harding, MBA: Master Spectacle Maker 4 October 2017 – 3 October 2018



Felicity's love of the City of London stems from her childhood. She was educated at St Paul's Girls' School, supported by a bursary from the Mercers' Company. Her father, The Rev Dr Chad Varah, CH, CBE, was Rector of St. Stephen Walbrook, the Lord Mayor's Parish Church, where he founded The Samaritans. He was also Prebendary of St. Paul's Cathedral, Chaplain to the Grocers' Company and an honorary member of the Worshipful Company of Carmen.

Her late brother Andrew, one of triplets, was a celebrated cabinet maker. In 2012 he was granted the title of "Honorary Liveryman", the highest accolade that the Worshipful Company of Furniture Makers can bestow.

Felicity trained as a medical social worker at Southampton and London Universities. She worked part-time in clinical practice and then as a university tutor, a research worker for the King's Fund, an agony aunt and a hospice social worker. Moving to Winchester in 1985 she worked for Hampshire County Council becoming Area Director for Health and Social Care. She completed a part-time MBA at Portsmouth University on her 50th birthday. She also undertook consultancy work in public administration in Anguilla and Japan.

Her professional experience was put to good use in her retirement when Felicity became a trustee and then Chair of Vision Aid Overseas until 2010 and a non-executive member of National Victim Support until 2007. Felicity remains actively involved as an Ambassador for Samaritans.

Felicity was admitted as a Freeman of the Spectacle Makers' Company in 2008 and was clothed as of the Livery the following year. She joined the Court in 2012 and chaired the Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers' Charity until May 2017. She is the third lady Master in the history of the Company.

Outside her livery and charitable commitments, Felicity enjoys the theatre, opera, music and two reading groups. Her husband, John Harding CBE, is a Freeman of both the Spectacle Makers' and the Educators' Companies. He was formerly the Chief Probation Officer for London and served on the Parole Board for England and Wales. They have two sons and four grandchildren.