

Winter 2020
Issue 40

THE CORDWAINER





2020 QEST Cordwainer apprentice realises a dream

QEST, or the Queen Elizabeth Scholarship Trust is a charitable trust which supports excellence in craftsmanship. Since 2017, the Cordwainer Charitable Trusts have offered a shoemaking scholarship worth £6,000.

In a lovely piece of synergy, this year's winner, bespoke shoemaker Oluwamuyiwa Fadairo, will be an apprentice at John Lobb, the family firm of Freeman William Lobb.

'My first visit to John Lobb Bootmaker was in 2015 and the memories of seeing the process of making a pair of handmade bespoke shoes resonated with me. Immediately, I made the decision that I wanted to learn and make shoes the traditional way. Now this aspiration is reality thanks to the support from QEST and the Cordwainers' Company. I believe I am going into an institution with a wealth of experience and vast knowledge that will give me a solid foundation as I grow to become a Master Shoemaker. I am relishing the opportunity I have been given and with hard work and diligence, my goal is to become part of the new wave of young talented makers taking British crafts to new horizons. Once more, thank you QEST and the Cordwainers' Company for helping me realize a dream.'



Oluwamuyiwa Fadairo

Oluwamuyiwa joins a distinguished band of talented QEST award winners, including Cordwainer liverymen Mary Wing To and Dominic Casey. We look forward to meeting him in person when circumstances allow.

Paul Strand wins Cordwainers' Cup for Excellence

The Cordwainers' Cup for excellence is awarded at the London College of Fashion to a final year student who displays and demonstrates the highest combination of academic merit and commercial acumen required to succeed within the industry upon graduation.

This year's winner, Swedish shoemaker Paul Strand, was a finalist in the 2020 Cordwainers National Footwear Student of the Year Awards and is thrilled to win the cup.

'I am immensely proud and overwhelmed to have won this award, especially as it considers both academic merit and the jury's belief in my potential to succeed within the footwear industry upon graduation.

When creating my graduate collection, I really wanted to push the boundaries of my imagination and produce unique imagery tied to my Scandinavian heritage.



I want to thank Sarah Day, Nafi Mustafa, Ian White, Gee Lai and the entire footwear team at UAL London College of Fashion: their guidance and patience has been paramount throughout my college experience.

This award definitely validates all the hard work and gives me the confidence to trust my instincts as a designer and shoemaker. Thank you to the Worshipful Company of Cordwainers for this acknowledgement. It means the world to me.'

Paul's designs can be seen on Instagram: @paulstrandfootwear



Cultural Merit award for Alexandra



Congratulations to former Cordwainer music scholar and international concert pianist Freeman Alexandra Dariescu, who has been honoured by her native Romania. She has received the Order 'Cultural Merit' in the rank of Knight from the President of Romania, 'in appreciation for the dedication and interpretive talent in the service of art, for the artistic mastery and the special place she has in the cultural-artistic life of the country, for the talent, dedication and professionalism that led to the enrichment of universal culture and spirituality, promoting Romania's image in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.'

Alexandra's performances have obviously been disrupted this year, but visit her website alexandradariescu.com to learn more about her forthcoming concerts and hear her play.

MASTER'S COLUMN



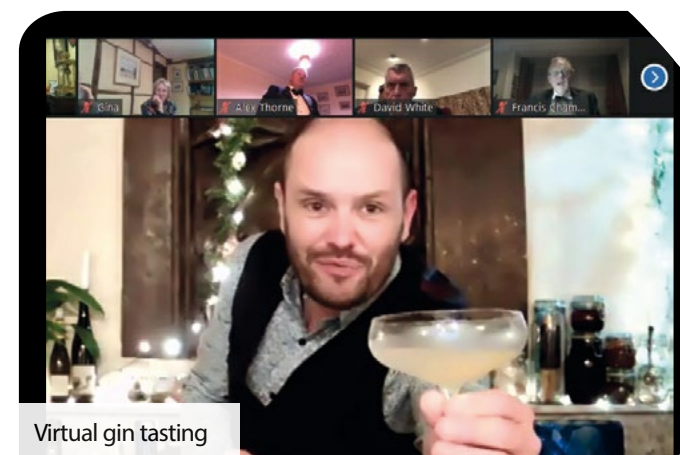
On one level, it has been a start to my year unlike any other, with all in person events cancelled, including unfortunately our Livery Dinner in October. As I write, under the second major lockdown, it is clear that the various electronic alternatives to face-to-face get togethers will have to continue for some time yet. I have attended a number of really quite formal events on Zoom in the last month. One major difference is that all toasts are taken seated. Allegedly this is to avoid people moving out of camera shot as they stand up. I imagine in fact it is save the blushes of those wearing jeans under their dinner jackets!



sponsor Oluwamuyiwa Fadairo, the Qest Shoemaking Scholar for 2020, and you can read more about him and his placement with Freeman William Lobb on page 2.

We also continue to broaden and deepen our relationship with the footwear industry, which is going through a tough time at present. I am delighted that the Court has approved the setting up of an Endowment Fund to coincide with our 750th anniversary in 2022. This fund will be designed to provide money for students taking up internships and apprenticeships within the footwear and associated industries, as well as for start-up businesses. In many ways, therefore, it taps into part of the traditional role of the Cordwainers' Company over the centuries. There will be more to follow on this over the next few months. This exciting development was missing from my first update on Court business, but I hope you found my brief otherwise helpful. I would welcome any feedback on how this could be developed and thank you to those who have already responded.

At the end of this very strange year, I would like to thank Penny, Sue, Nancy and Wendy for their hard work in keeping the Company running smoothly and ensuring that we have all been able to get together on screen if not in person. Angelique and I extend our very best wishes to you all for a happy Christmas and a better 2021.



Virtual gin tasting

On another level, I am amazed how much we have still been able to do. Online meetings are very well attended – thanks to all our committee and Court members who have given up so much time to assist the Company this year.

The quiz evening was huge fun, although I suspect from the closeness of the scoring that Google took a bit of a hammering. The virtual gin tasting put on by the office team recently was something of a triumph and we are planning similar events for the new year, if Covid regulations continue to restrict gatherings. The only silver lining to the Corona cloud is that online events provide the opportunity to welcome people who would, for reasons of distance or health, not be able to attend physical events.

Our charitable works also are flourishing through adversity. Ever more ingenious schemes and events have already raised £5,700 for the Royal Society for Blind Children, our Charity of the Year. As I wrote to members recently, our income has been hit by the pandemic, but we are endeavouring to make every penny that we are able to donate count. As just one example, we were able to

Freeman William Lobb

MASTER'S ACTIVITIES

JULY-DECEMBER 2021

15

VIRTUAL EVENTS
ATTENDED

110

ZOOM MEETING HOURS

03

TRAIN JOURNEYS
NORWICH - LONDON

01

TRIP FROM NORTH POLE



Cordwaining during Covid

University students seem to have had a particularly hard deal this year, especially those on courses that involve a strong element of practical work. We asked the course leaders at Capel Manor, London College of Fashion, De Montfort University and the University of Northampton how they have adapted to teaching in the age of sanitisers and face masks. They have all demonstrated a flexibility as lithe as the leather they work with to ensure that footwear design students thrive on a mixture of online lectures and small practical classes. 'Blended learning' is the phrase of the semester and as LCF course leader, Liveryman Sarah Day remarks, 'We certainly didn't want any of the students to lose the passion they had developed in their learning for our wonderful world of footwear.'



Masked makers at Capel Manor

At Capel Manor College, Liveryman Line Hansen and her team extended their teaching into the summer holidays in order to accommodate the sheer amount of time need to teach smaller groups of students in socially distanced classes.

'We did a lot of teaching online, with the materials being sent to the students on the saddlery course. Luckily, most of the saddlery can be done by hand, although it takes a little longer and can be the cause of very sore fingers if one is not used to it. The first year group came in for four weeks over the summer to finish off their saddles, while the second years came in for nine days to complete what we could not quite achieve online.'

More recently, we are having to work with small groups, all of us in face coverings while practically swimming in sanitiser. We all have contingency plans in place so we can switch to online if necessary, or individuals can follow the lessons live online via the two fabulous iPads that we have been able to purchase with the support from the Cordwainers. In early November we took delivery of a long-awaited skiving machine, purchased thanks to support from the Company.'



Capel Manor's new skiving machine



PPE at Northampton University

Socially-distanced shoemaking

In Northampton, course leader Freeman Jane Schaffer reports on a new mix of online learning and face-to-face teaching.

'The majority of the teaching is face-to-face where possible, particularly our technical and practical workshops. We have reduced numbers in the sessions; each studio/workshop has been assessed and a maximum number of students and staff allotted for safe social distancing. Practical demonstrations are given to smaller numbers of students and repeated when necessary. Some of our machines have been taken out of service so we can observe social distancing and students have personal aprons provided by the university, along with disposable gloves.'

It's a similar situation in Leicester, where De Montfort course leader Freeman Phil Stewart says 'The studios and workshops have been redesigned for a one-way system and the footwear workshop is limited to two students at a time. Because of these restrictions, year one undertake practical making teaching in term one, and years two and three will be making footwear in term two. In case there is a full lockdown, we have planned a course that delivers the learning experience that the students expect and compensates for the lack of the practical element.'

Liveryman Sarah Day sums up the situation in the education sector. 'The first lockdown forced staff to think outside the box in order to deliver content and keep students focused on finishing the year with a flourish. We became digital gurus overnight and stole ideas from our children regarding social media and online communication. Fortunately, we need not have worried, because



Cutting-edge class at LCF

the students rose to the challenge and richly rewarded us with amazing work which was submitted for assessment in July. They dug deep to find ways of communicating creative outcomes to construct shoe models and experimental components.



'It's our strange 'new normal' and we are trying very hard to get used to it.'

(Freeman Jane Schaffer, Northampton)

After the efforts of the staff, it became clear very quickly that digital didn't faze this generation of students who were, of course, weaned on iPads and mobile devices. How myopic of us oldies not to realise this was the digital freedom they had been waiting for all along!

We look forward to better days ahead, but one silver lining in the black cloud of the coronavirus is that it has propelled creative thinking and brought us closer together as a shoemaking community.'

Industry in turmoil

Freeman Lucy Reece-Raybould, Chief Executive of the British Footwear Association, reports on the state of the footwear industry.

The past nine months have had a huge and significant impact on the footwear trade, throwing even the biggest players in the industry into turmoil. We have seen factories and stores mothballed under the first lockdown and the government furlough scheme has become a lifeline for countless businesses.

As regards the effect of the pandemic on the UK footwear industry as a whole, there are both winners and losers. The former are those who were already well prepared with an established digital offering and an optimal mix of on and offline channels.

With certain businesses reporting some year-on-year growth from their online

divisions, others showed significant sales increases from web-based sales, and most see e-commerce as not just as a lifeline during lockdown, but as a vital part as the future, too.

Product successes have come from the comfort sector, with businesses selling out of slippers and 'house-shoes'. As Cordwainers are all too aware, there are no social events to dress up for, and consequently the occasion sector has been hardest hit.

The BFA has actively challenged and will continue to challenge, the government's guidelines for the reopening of retail. We lobbied hard to change the initial 72-hour quarantine requirement for shoes being tried on in stores and saw it replaced with a more realistic cleaning process. We have also helped members adapt with confidence to the new safety Covid-19 requirements.

Alongside this, the BFA also provides regular sector updates to government

and plays an active part in the Trade Advisory Groups, sharing sector needs for the Free Trade Negotiators. Our information for the Japan deal was complimented as being the best from any sector.

The BFA will continue to support the footwear industry in the coming months as the post-Covid world takes shape and as retailers, sourcing companies and manufacturers alike reorganise themselves.



OUR CHARITIES

Raising funds for the new RSBC Life Without Limits Centre

In 2020-2021, we will be raising funds to support our long-term charity beneficiary the Royal Society for Blind Children (RSBC). The Events Committee will be organising a variety of fundraising events throughout the year, which we hope all members will be able to participate in or support. We have already had a great start with Past Master Jeremy Blanford's cycle challenge, an online quiz, and the sales of the fantastic facemasks produced by the Mistress Cordwainer.

In 2021, the RSBC will be opening their new Life Without Limits Centre, located in the existing Northern and Shell building on Lower Thames Street in the City of London. The RSBC hope this new centre will be an inspiring place for guests of all ages to visit and an aspirational modern workplace for RSBC's staff, with wellbeing and efficiency at the heart of the design.

The centre has been developed for both sighted and vision-impaired people, with careful consideration given to layout, materials, lighting and acoustics. It will feature inspiring and playful details such as tactile feature walls, interactive displays and bold colours. The centre will provide a safe space for blind and partially sighted young people and their families to meet,

socialise, play, learn and get the support they need from the RSBC. There will be a variety of facilities and resources at the centre, including a training kitchen, a playroom, study spaces and a flexible training suite for skills workshops.

The RSBC's long and deep relationship with the Cordwainers will be displayed on the 'Discovery/History wall'. The funds we raise during 2020-21 will contribute to the centre's Hub, a unique computer room intended for employability skills training, assistive technology training and other educational purposes, which will create a real and measurable impact on the lives of RSBC's blind and visually impaired young people.

Nancy Treves Charity Manager



Events Committee Update

The best-laid plans of the Events Committee have been thrown into confusion this year, but ever optimistic, we are looking forward to a number of events, both virtual and (fingers crossed) in-person, for the Company to look forward to in 2021.

We are planning to hold a silent auction, kicking off in February/March and due to run through until April/May – there will be some excellent items up for bidding, so watch out for more information around this in the New Year.

We are hoping to host a virtual recital by one of our Cordwainer music scholars during the spring.

And for all of you keen runners (or anyone wanting to shed their lockdown pounds), we have a few places available in the London Marathon in aid of the RSBC, due to be held in October 2021.

So, dust off your running shoes and let Nancy know if you are interested.

On behalf of the Events Committee, a very Happy Christmas to everyone!

Liveryman Catherine Blanford, Chair



Past Master Jeremy Blanford cycled 100 miles around Kent in August, raising more than £3,000 for the RSBC

IN MY SHOES



Helen Kirkum, the inaugural Cordwainers National Footwear Student of the Year is undoubtedly a winner with form. Her MA collection won a Vogue talent award, while her latest collaboration with the men's ready-to-wear designer Bethany Williams, re-mastering the Adidas Superstar, has been nominated for the Beazley Designs of the Year 2020 Prize and is showcased in London's Design Museum. (Vote for it here: www.designmuseum.org/exhibitions/beazley-designs-of-the-year/fashion)

www.designmuseum.org/exhibitions/beazley-designs-of-the-year/fashion

It isn't the first time a museum has displayed a Helen Kirkum creation. Designs previously featured in exhibitions in Bordeaux, Philadelphia, and Hong Kong. Most of all though, she is known for being at the forefront of sustainability with creations hewn out of salvaged trainers that are pre-loved and pre-worn. Freelance since 2017, Kirkum creates bespoke trainers alone in her studio in Hackney Wick aided only by two sewing machines and a sander. Her one-of-a-kind creations that can take four or five days to make, command prices upwards of £1,300. **Liveryman Elisa Anniss** asks Helen about her career and the Cordwainers.

How and when did you become a Cordwainer?

In July this year, via Zoom. Since 2014, I have really enjoyed being invited to Company events including delivering the keynote speech and being a guest judge at the Footwear Awards.

What is one of your earliest shoe-related memories?

When I was young, I always used to mismatch my Converse, wearing different colours on each foot or drawing all over them. I also remember making a self-portrait by collaging all my pairs of shoes onto the floor and arranging them by colour and making an abstract face.

You studied at the University of Northampton and then the Royal College of Art. What did you learn at each place that has stayed with you?

At Northampton I learned about traditional methods of making shoes, the properties of leather and how to use it. I worked in the Grenson factory and I remember working with their amazing pattern cutter and learning a lot from him about how to adjust and understand patterns. At the RCA I challenged and unlearned what I already knew and discovered new and experimental constructions and ideas.

You were the first winner of the Cordwainers National Footwear Student of The Year Award. How did it help you on your way?

It was amazing to be the first-ever winner. The prize money paid for the first year of my MA at RCA, which really helped me to push my career and keep learning. I also made really valuable connections through Cordwainer events.

Recycling, re-using, reworking. We hear a lot about this now. What first led you to this concept?

When I was studying for my MA, I visited a recycling centre. There, I saw the mass of clothes, accessories and shoes that are donated, on a daily basis. It was completely shocking to me. From that instant I thought that I must utilise this material rather than put something else brand new into the world.

What do you think is the most pressing issue that the footwear industry globally needs to address regarding sustainability?

I think the obvious one is to make less. It is also for the things that we do make to have meaning and purpose. Of course, we must make changes to be more sustainable, use eco-friendly materials, produce locally, and reduce our use of hazardous materials.

What first sparked your interest in trainers?

It's a mix of things really. I was always interested in trainers and as my personal style developed, I wanted to know how to make them. When I arrived at the RCA, I didn't know how to make them and really wanted to learn, so I started by cutting up old ones to see how they were made. I remember many friends wouldn't give me their old trainers to cut up, even if they were completely ruined and I started to realise people can become very attached to their trainers. This special connection made me love them even more and made me want to celebrate their materiality even when they were damaged and old.

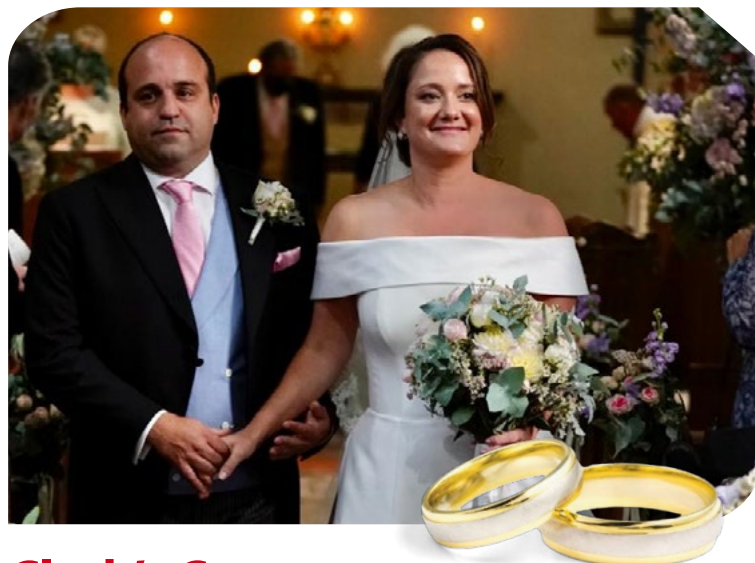
Is it unusual being a woman designing trainers?

There are lots of incredible female trainer designers, but women in the trainer world have seemed to get less publicity. In my experience, it can feel like women, for some reason, are only thought fit to design shoes for women, whereas men can design shoes for whoever they please. But I am hopeful that this narrative is changing.



Births Congratulations to Liveryman Sian Williams on the birth of a son, Finlay Curzon Marshall, born 21 August 2020.

Marriages Congratulations to Past Warden Henry Fairweather and Alexandra Sterling who were married on Saturday 26 September 2020.



Clerk's Corner

Unsurprisingly, it has been a frustrating few months for the office team. Clothworkers' Hall re-opened to staff in September and we began returning to the offices on a part-time basis in a Covid-secure manner, looking forward to seeing some of you and beginning to plan for some small social functions. It was not to last and the offices closed again on 4 November, with no prospect of any social functions in person, as far ahead as we can see. However, we are reviewing the situation constantly in the light of updated government guidance and as soon as gatherings are permitted again we will organise something, however small!

However, as in every situation, there have been some silver linings. Our online quiz and gin tasting were both very successful and gave us all an opportunity to catch up with fellow Cordwainers, even if it was via a computer screen. We have also had far better committee attendance – often 100% – as a result of people not needing to travel to London, so this is something that we will look to continue, even when things get back to some kind of normality. It has also been wonderful to have contact with members who live remote from London, including several from overseas from whom we had not heard for some time previously. Please continue to stay in touch with us; we love hearing your news.

Despite the upheaval, business has continued largely as normal, including with our own Leather Livery grouping. The annual Leather Clerks' meeting took place virtually in November with the Cordwainers chairing this year. It is so helpful to have access to this highly supportive network, as well as to the Fellowship of Clerks, and to know that everyone is facing the same challenges in these trying times; all Clerks are happy to share ideas and best practice and this generosity really is testament to the strength of the livery community.

Regarding our new home, there has been no update from the Clothworkers yet as to whether they will be able to start work on their hall site in January 2022. Further information will be available in the next edition of The Cordwainer.

Penny Graham, Company Clerk

Events Calendar

Social events will be subject to confirmation from the Office

2021			
06 Jan Wed	12th Night Court Dinner ONLINE	18.00	G
12 Jan Tue	Wine Committee	11.15	
14 Jan Thu	Charity Committee Master and Wardens Meeting Court Court Supper	14.00 16.15 17.15	
TBC Jan Mon	Cordwainers/Carpenters Bridge Comp		
03 Feb Wed	Trade & Education Committee Audit Committee	11.00 14.30	
02 Mar Tue	Events Committee	18.30	
09 Mar Tue	Management Committee	11.00	
TBC 12 Mar Fri	Civic Dinner (formerly Past Wardens' Dinner)	18.30	B
23 Mar Tue	CET Trustees Meeting Master and Wardens Meeting Court Came's, Minge's and Shawe's Anniversary Sermon - St Olave's Apprentices' Supper TBC	13.00 15.00 15.30 17.15 18.30	E E
TBC May Wed	Inter-Livery Clay Shooting Competition		
20 May Thu	Inter-Livery Golf 'Prince Arthur Cup' (Walton Heath)		
01 Jun Tue	Events Committee	18.30	
TBC Jun	Royal Free Nurses Trust – General Meeting Royal Free Nurses Trust Awards	12.30-14.00 14.30-16.30	
04 Jun Fri	Inter-Livery Rifle Competition (Bisley)		
09 Jun Wed	Management Committee	11.00	
10 Jun Thu	Cordwainers National Footwear Awards (Clothworkers' Hall)		A
TBC Jun	Cordwainers/Curriers Golf Day (Pitdown)		
TBC Jun	Inter-Livery Croquet		
23 Jun Wed	Charity Charity Committee Court Election Day Common Hall Election Day Supper	14.00 16.30 18.00 19.00	B B
24 Jun Thu	Election of Sheriffs (Guildhall)	11.00	
7 Jul Wed	Audit Committee	10.30	
14 Jul Wed	Oath Day Common Hall (Upper Reception Room) Fisher's, Minge's and Wild's Anniversary Service – St Katharine Cree Church (V TBC) Supper in Livery Hall	16.15 18.00 19.00	D A A

A - All Liverymen, Freemen, Court and Company Widows invited.
B - All Liverymen invited.
C - All Freemen and Junior Livery invited.
D - All Freemen and Liverymen invited.

E - Court and Freeborn children (aged 14-20) invited.
F - All Liverymen, Court and Company Widows invited.
G - Court and invited Guests.

Wheels and tyres: Land's End to John O'Groats by bike

Past Warden Sasha White joins the ranks of distinguished Cordwainer cyclists, having cycled from Land's End to John O'Groats in August, raising over £17,000 for the Samaritans on the process. Sasha and his sons David and Jack cycled 981 miles over 14 cycling days – a tremendous achievement for all of them.



The Clerk is delighted to hear from all Cordwainers. Please remember to tell the office about changes of address and your family news.



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