



# The Flame



## 2024 CHRISTMAS AFTERNOON TEA AT THE DILLY HOTEL PICCADILLY



## FORTHCOMING FIREBIRDS EVENTS

**Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2025**

**Firebirds AGM  
at City Livery Club  
Bell Wharf Lane**

**May/June 2025**

**Visit to Kensington Palace  
Full details tba**

**September 2025**

**Visit to the Magic Circle  
Full details tba**

## DEAR FIREBIRDS,

I hope this Winter Flame is going to warm your hearts with Firebirds news, photos and stories.

The response to creating a 'Where have I been?' Photo Quiz has been excellent and we have 10 photos for you to puzzle over. You will find the answers to the Quiz on the Firebirds website: [firebirds.london](http://firebirds.london). Click on the first photo and you can scroll through all the photos with some additional information.

Those of you on WhatsApp will have seen the photo of the Dilly Christmas Afternoon Tea posted by Sheila Higgs. As I forgot to ask a willing reporter to report on this Firebirds outing, I had the pleasure of doing it myself. I loved the surroundings inside and outside.

Diana Reese reports on the successful Biennial Lunch at the Bleeding Heart. Everybody had such a good time that nobody remembered to take photos!

Rose Mahony wrote a wonderful story about her worst and best Christmas presents and I am sure it will stir your memories.

All those who went on the Phoenix trip to Ireland will be interested to read Bill Gloyn's article 'A Legacy from the Plantation of Ulster'.

We end with El Moss's book review of Apeirogon – a book which will give you food for thought.

I wish you all a blessed Christmas time and happiness and good health for 2025.

With best wishes

Erika Gloyn (Masons)

Editor

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## Jane Ayres' Take on Christmas in 2022

Well, happy Christmas mateys,  
you can't get on a train,

The Border Force is striking, so  
you can't get on a plane,

The nurses on the picket line  
feel underpaid and wronged,

And if you need an  
ambulance, the wait could be  
prolonged,

No turkey on the table, the  
blighter's got the flu,

Here's a Yuletide sausage, one  
will have to do,

Let's raise a glass of water, with  
blankets on our knees,

And drink to festive merriment,  
as we gently freeze.

*(Hope you have no travel  
problems over Christmas, don't  
need medical attention, have  
enough turkey, sausage and wine  
and warm festive merriment. Ed.)*

The answers to our 'Where have I been?' Photo Quiz are on the Firebirds website.  
Go to [firebirds.london](http://firebirds.london)





## TEA AT THE DILLY PICCADILLY

by Erika Gloyn (Masons)

It is difficult to miss the Dilly Hotel Piccadilly as it is conveniently situated just a few minutes from Piccadilly Underground Station, opposite an enormous Waterstones Store. I mention Waterstones as I found it very useful for buying a few Christmas presents!

Arriving in the hotel lobby, an impressive Christmas Tree exuded warmth and Christmas cheer. From there a lift took us upstairs for our Christmas Afternoon Tea in their amazing Terrace Restaurant. After having had our annual Christmas Teas at Fenwick's for so many years, it was not easy to find a new venue, but El chose a 'winner'.

We all liked the new venue, the staff were very attentive and the tea was lovely. The afternoon went quickly and as always there didn't seem enough time to catch up with everyone.

It was an early start to the Christmas Season and we even had our first Carol Service that evening. Bill was singing, I was listening. The Service was at St Margaret's Westminster and I decided to walk from the Dilly to Westminster. The walk gave me almost childish pleasure. The air was cold and dry and the Christmas lights were twinkling and dancing against the darkening sky at Piccadilly Circus and down Lower Regent Street. If I were John Betjeman, I could have written a poem!



# BEST AND WORST CHRISTMAS PRESENT

by Rose Mahony (Plasterers)

## Worst Christmas presents

There have been a few!

A hot contender for the prime position is a pack of flesh coloured stockings sent to me for Christmas 1962 by an aunt who lived in Chicago.

At the time, the fashion was for very dark brown hosiery, so I dyed them - I thought successfully. I wore them to the local youth club New Year's Eve party only to find that they had disintegrated en route. Since Goths and designer distress were many years away, I suffered acute embarrassment and a pretty tricky start to 1963.

Other disappointments relate to an uncle who always sent my older brother a postal order for 5 shillings while I got half a crown!

However, the first prize must go to my earliest memory of Christmas disappointment which came at the age of 4 years old.

As fellow baby boomers will remember, Christmas in the early 1950s was a fairly modest affair and I was very excited about a strangely shaped present under the tree with my name on it. It had a long stick and a thick bit at one end. I thought it might be my very own umbrella, which I quite fancied. When it was opened it revealed a toy carpet sweeper!

I think the plan was that I could help mummy about the house, like good little girls should, but I was absolutely outraged!

Many years ahead of my time, I knew that housework was not something I wanted to do and the situation was not helped by my brother receiving an engine for his model railway.

## Best present

This is easy – my daughter Josephine, born on Christmas day 1971.

She has been an almost constant source of joy. I still apologise to her every year for the fact that she has to share her special day with everyone else ...



Our Biennial Lunch, to which all Firebirds and Phoenix Masters were invited, was held on Tuesday 24th September. There was an enthusiastic response to the initial invitation, but sadly Covid struck again, and our numbers were somewhat diminished. On the day, 34 of us were welcomed to the No 1 Dining Room, Bleeding Heart Yard with a glass of Gusbourne sparkling wine. The party had begun! Bleeding Heart Yard itself has an interesting history, which was graphically described on the backs of our menu cards. I'm not sure you should believe everything you read! After our very welcome glass of fizz, we were seated and served a delicious 3 course meal. The attentive staff ensured that neither a Firebird nor a Phoenix went home thirsty. Once we had finished our meal, we were able to continue mingling, glasses in hand, exchanging news and views. It really was a most convivial occasion, which seemed to be enjoyed by one and all.



## The Legend of Bleeding Heart

### LADY HATTON AND BLEEDING HEART

Lady Elizabeth Hatton was the toast of 17<sup>th</sup>-century London society. The widowed daughter-in-law of the famous merchant Sir Christopher Hatton (one-time consort of Queen Elizabeth 1st), Lady Elizabeth was young, beautiful, and very wealthy. Her suitors were many and varied and included a leading London bishop and a prominent European ambassador. Invitations to her soirées in Hatton Garden were much sought after, and her annual winter ball on January 26, 1626, was one of the highlights of the London social season.

Halfway through the evening's festivities, the doors to Lady Hatton's grand ballroom were flung open. In strode a swarthy gentleman, slightly hunched on the shoulder, with a clawed right hand. The party hushed, for it was Lady Hatton's most recently jilted lover. He took her by the hand and danced her once around the room and out through the double doors into the garden.

A buzz of gossip arose. Would Lady Elizabeth and the European Ambassador (for it was he) kiss and make up, or would she return alone?

Neither was to be. The next morning, her body was found in the cobblestoned courtyard, torn limb from limb, with her heart still pumping blood onto the cobblestones. And from thenceforth, the yard was to be known as

*The Bleeding Heart Yard.*



# THE FIREBIRDS PICTURE QUIZ



**1) Jane de Halpert (Shipwrights)**

'A mix of weather but today proved perfect for a mountain meander'



**2) Anne Loffs (Upholders)**



**3) Anne Loffs (Upholders)**

4) Sarah Mosse (Broderers) – 2 photos



A. Which country are we in?

B. What is this town famous for?

C. What is the importance of the picture of the trees? Why are they there?

D. What is the name of the bridge?





**5) Diana Fieldwick  
(Patternmakers)**

4 photos

These spectacular views are from this tiny 13th century church. It is the fourth smallest parish church in the UK, and is believed to be the highest working church in southern England.





6) Sue Thompson (Actuaries)



7) Sue Thompson (Actuaries)





**8) Diana Reese (Bakers)**



**9) Vicky Nugée (Weavers)**



**10) Erika Gloyn (Masons)**



# A LEGACY FROM THE PLANTATION OF ULSTER

by Bill Gloy (Past Master Mason)

As those who had the pleasure of visiting Northern Ireland on the recent Phoenix trip will know, in 1609 James I demanded that the City of London and the Livery Companies should support his plan to send Protestant, English speaking settlers to Ulster. The intention was to quell the rebellions that had been taking place there for many decades. The Great Twelve leading companies each had to head a group of the smaller companies to collectively fund the plantation of an area decided by ballot.

The Mercers' were joined by the Cooks', Masons and Broderers – with the Innholders withdrawing after a few years. That group continued to hold property and interests in the area around Kilrea until early in the twentieth century. It had not been a financially successful venture but it did establish a friendship between the companies which has lasted to this day. It is believed that it is the only such group still in existence.

Besides the inevitable annual dinners, the Associated Companies – as the group had become known - set up a charitable organisation with each of them contributing annually to a cause chosen in rotation. This year it was the turn of the Masons' Company. After a widespread invitation to apply for the grant of £20,000, the ultimate winner was Worcester Cathedral; for a project to repair and restore the Grade 2 listed County War Memorial, which is in the cathedral grounds. The steps around it were in a very poor state and the grant supported the cost of three apprentice stonemasons undertaking the work and gaining important experience towards their next qualification. That is in accordance with the intention of the charity – to support training of young craftspeople.



The Master Mason, Upper Warden and other members of the Company met with the newly appointed Dean in September to formally inspect the work and see the commemorative stone that is to be installed in a nearby wall.

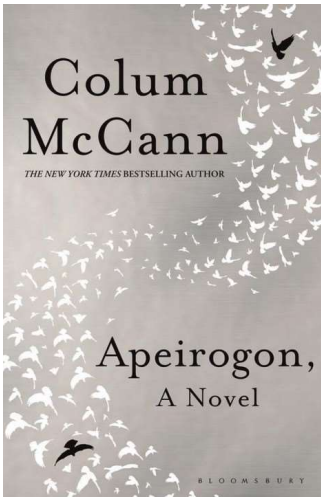
The War Memorial is the centrepiece of the annual Worcestershire Remembrance ceremony which this year featured the newly restored stonework, which will soon weather to match the rest of the monument.

The enormous charitable work of all the Livery Companies is sadly understated but was certainly recognised in this project.



ABOVE – INSPECTION OF THE WORK  
RIGHT – REMEMBRANCE SERVICE 2024





## BOOK REVIEW

by El Moss (Horners)

### **Apeirogon** by Colum McCann

This is a story about Rami an Israeli and Bassan a Palestinian. They both live in Jerusalem, Rami lives in West Jerusalem and Bassan lives in East Jerusalem.

They each lost a daughter in the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. Rami's 13 year old daughter was killed by a Palestinian suicide bomber and Bassan's 10 year old daughter was killed on her way home from school by a rubber bullet shot by an Israeli border patrol officer.

Both Rami and Bassan are members of the Parents Circle Group. The group consists of eight Israelis, three Palestinians and a Swedish reporter. They become the most unlikely of friends. The group then call themselves Combatants for Peace.

The book is about grief and forgiveness, about family and politics and is based on facts told to the Author. He weaves their story through their lives and the problems that surround them. It is also about hope - that people divided by so much can be friends.

P.S. When this was written (2020) there was some semblance of hope but now the sad thing is that after 7th October 2023 there appears to be no hope.

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## BEING MADE TO THINK

by Erika Gloyn (Masons)

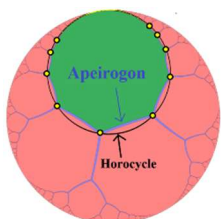
When I first read El's review of *Apeirogon*, I was intrigued. Having had a long spell of reading 'cosy thrillers', *Apeirogon* invited me to change course.

I am still only half way through it and it is not an easy read, but I will finish it. The book makes you think; if nothing else, it reminded me of how interesting maps are and how little I knew about the borders of Israel, Jordan, Syria, Turkey, Lebanon, Irak, Iran and Saudi Arabia. Countries which are in the news all the time, especially now.

In my on line research on *Apeirogon*, I came across 'literopedia', a website that is 'dedicated to all thing literature'. The text below is part of their summary:

### **'Hope and the Possibility of Peace**

At its heart, *Apeirogon* is a hopeful novel. Even though Bassam and Rami have suffered immeasurable loss, they continue to work towards a vision of peace, not as political leaders, but as fathers who understand the human cost of conflict. McCann explores the possibility that, even in the darkest times, peace can be achieved through empathy, dialogue, and a shared understanding of human suffering.



The structure of the novel - its fragmented and multi-layered storytelling - mirrors this theme of hope, suggesting that while the road to peace is not linear, it is still a path worth pursuing. The infinite number of fragments in an apeirogon (the geometric shape referenced in the title) symbolizes the multiple perspectives and the ongoing, often painful, journey toward reconciliation.'