

SIR PETER GADSDEN, GBE, AC, FREng 1929 – 2006

It is with great regret that we record the death of Sir Peter Gadsden, the Founder Master, on 4 December 2006.

Peter was born in June 1929 in Canada where his father was a Clergyman looking after a parish of 750 sq. miles. Five years later he moved to Ireland and then, at the age of 10, to Shropshire which thereafter he considered his home.

Peter was educated at Wrekin College and became School Captain. During National Service he was commissioned into the King's Shropshire Light Infantry and then he studied Geology and Mineralogy at Jesus College, Cambridge from 1949 to 1952.

The next two decades saw much travelling around the world being active work in the mining industry and becoming known as Trader Gadsden. He married Belinda in 1955 and they were blessed with four daughters.

His involvement in the City started in the sixties and he became a Liveryman in the Clothworkers' Company in 1965 and bought a flat in the Barbican in 1970.

He was elected to Common Council in 1969 and a year later fought and won a contested election for Sheriff. During his year as Sheriff a vacancy arose for an Alderman and he went on the hustings again and was duly elected as Alderman for Farringdon Without. At the very young age of 50 he became the 652nd Lord Mayor of London in November 1979.

Fully in character Peter put everything into his year as Lord Mayor and married the traditions of the City with the more modern requirements of the Business City which are still developing today.

In the 70s the first soundings for the foundation of an Engineer's Livery Company were being taken but came to nothing. In 1982 these soundings began to be more warmly received and more support was beginning to be forthcoming. Peter addressed the Annual General Meeting of the Fellowship (later Royal Academy) of Engineering in March 1983 and a few weeks later the Fellowship approved the formation of an association to petition the Lord Mayor of Court of Alderman of the City of London

for recognition as a Livery Company. With this support Peter then became the Sponsoring Alderman and the real work of forming the Worshipful Company of Engineers began. With Peter's enthusiasm and contacts the petition was approved and the Company was granted Livery status on 1st November 1983. This was undoubtedly the most rapid formation of a Company and Peter became the Founder Master for some 18 months until April 1985. I have written a fuller history of the early days which is published elsewhere but suffice to say that Peter's influence was absolutely invaluable in the formation of the Company and its continued development into what it is today.



*The Presentation of the Grant of Livery on
November 1st 1983 by the Lord Mayor, Sir Anthony
Joliffe, to the Founder Master, Sir Peter Gadsden*

'Thoroughly with Enthusiasm' is the title of Peter's biography which he took from the motto of his Coat of Arms and is a most apt description for his whole approach to life.. He was always very supportive of the Company and attended many functions. In September 2005 he enjoyed showing us part of his Northumberland estates as we drove on the A1 from Newcastle to Alnwick. In September 2006 during the Company's visit to Cornwall he was in his mining element during the visit to Geevor Tin Mine. Never stinting in his support he was pleased to provide a report on the visit which is published in this edition of The Swordsman.

Peter will be sorely missed in the Company of Engineers and our sympathies go out to Belinda, their four children and seventeen grandchildren.

Raymond Cousins