

With the surrounding buildings completely flattened the area was substantially redeveloped, to the benefit of our Insurance hall which now enjoys a large Piazza to the side (*Three Nun Court*) allowing plenty of light through the stained-glass windows.



The Hall after the fire raid on the City during the night of 29 – 30 December 1940

Now to the future.....

Today the Insurance hall offers modern banqueting and conference facilities, but still maintains many of the original features which make it so unique, for example the lampshades in the Great Hall bear symbols from the CII Coat of Arms:



“CONSILII SCIENTIA” - Counsel and Knowledge

The CII Museum on the 2nd Floor (renovated in 2010) retains many original features, including a painted frieze by C. Walter

Salamander representing **Fire Insurance**

Chains representing **Accident Insurance**

Anchors representing **Marine Insurance**

Gard (or Wheat sheaf) representing **Life Insurance**

Hodges which again represents the four areas of insurance. These latter works included changing the original ‘Court Room’ to re-house the highly acclaimed CII Library.

You cannot fail to notice the extensive collection of firemarks from across Europe which adorn the main staircase. At over 2000 items these comprise the largest collection in the world and feature some of the finest examples of both marks and fireman’s badges.



The Great Hall is used for many events, i.e. one-day conferences, industry updates, filmed presentations, dinners, to name but a few. The Insurance Hall is also the home of the Personal Finance Society (PFS), The Insurance Institute of London, The Worshipful Company of Insurers, the Worshipful Company of Fire-Fighters and the Insurance Charities. The building is also the natural home for the London Region of the PFS.

This booklet was compiled by the Personal Finance Society, with thanks to H. A. L. Cockerell's publication 'Sixty Years of the Chartered Insurance Institute 1897 – 1957'

For more information in respect of CII history please visit www.cii.co.uk/cii/about/history.aspx

*Chartered Insurance Institute, 20 Aldermanbury, London, EC2V 7HY
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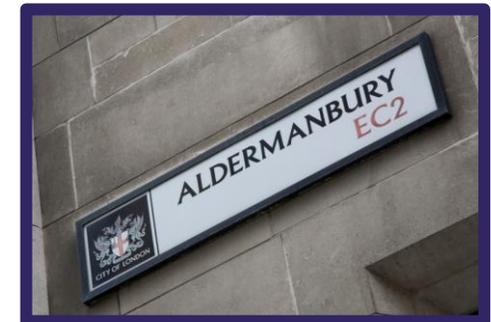


Your Personal Introduction

to

The Insurance Hall

20 Aldermanbury
London, EC2V 7HY



Welcome to the Head Office of the Chartered Insurance Institute and the Personal Finance Society.

Both the Insurance Hall and the site it stands on are steeped in history, we would therefore like to take a few moments of your time to reveal some of the highs and lows, legends and facts associated with this prestigious City landmark.

Once upon a time.....

Over a thousand years ago Aldermanbury was the home of Kings. Rumour has it that the Insurance Hall stands on a site originally occupied by a Saxon Palace, conjecture maybe, but we know for certain that a medieval manor house occupied the site and which by the 14th Century had become an Inn called 'The Axe'. The Inn survived in various forms until the current Insurance hall was built.

Until the railways came The Axe had been a famous coaching inn and terminus for the Liverpool Express coaches. The Axe served as the Head Quarters for the Wagoner's and Carriers on the Midland runs, it was destroyed by the Great Fire in 1666 and rebuilt to become a meeting place for wool merchants. It is also

rumoured to have been a brothel for a while. However, such rumours probably exist for most old inns and is no way a reflection on the current occupants! It is interesting to note that the commercial sign of The Axe, which originally hung outside the Inn in 1698, is today situated above the entrance to the CII museum on the second floor landing.

Today, staff and visitors are warned to be on their guard when visiting the first floor landing as the ghost of 'The White Lady', a murdered Nun from 'The Axe's' heyday, has apparently been seen to float along the corridor (every five years) possibly seeking retribution.

'Three Nun Court', the narrow passage seen below to the right of the building in 1934, ran to a walkway known as 'Church Alley', around the church of St Michael, Bassishaw which may have stood on the site of an earlier Convent. First built in about 1190 and also destroyed by the Great Fire of London in 1666.

Amongst many historical associations Aldermanbury was the birthplace of the Guildhall and the meeting place of the City Fathers from the 12th to the 15th Centuries. In fact the first folio of William Shakespeare's works was published by his friends within two of its houses. You may care to visit the memorial within St Mary's Garden in Love Lane (turn left out of the main entrance).



From a water-colour by W. Warman in the Royal Academy Exhibition, 1934

Into the 20th Century.....

Jumping now into 1932, the Charterred Insurance Institute was in urgent need of accommodation and so purchased the site

(which was by then a warehouse and the aforementioned dilapidated Axe public house) by way of a building fund. Those companies that subscribed to the Building Fund are represented in the magnificent stained-glass windows in The Great Hall which now represent a unique historical record of Insurance Companies that existed in the early 1930's – familiar names, most now long gone.



Despite its 'Olde Worlde' charm, the building you see now was designed in the early 1930's by architects O. E. & M. H. Collins. They designed a building of traditional appearance with a Tudor flavour which contrasted favourably with the old and dreary warehouses then predominant in Aldermanbury and yet, in its exterior at least, made no concession to 20th Century modernity. The hall in fact was the most up-to-date fire-resisting type with all-electric heating!

On 28 June 1934 the Hall was opened by His Majesty King George V. Soon after this King George V consented to become

Patron of the Institute, and the highest possible recognition of the value of its work was thus achieved.



King George V declaring The Great Hall open, 28 June 1934. Beside His Majesty on the dais stands Her Majesty Queen Mary.

We remain proud of our Royal connection; Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II is the fourth Monarch to assume Patronage of the Institute. The portrait in The Great Hall was unveiled by CII President Michael Bewes on 20 September 1989.

On 3 September 1939 the Second World War broke out and accommodation at the hall was made available to the Corporation of the City of London for a first-aid post. The steel-topped table in the kitchen became an operating table.

Later in the War the Institute's rooms were let to the Polish Ministry of Education for use as a School of Foreign Trade and Port Administration.

The fire-resisting construction of the hall was soon put to the test by the air raids of 1940. The great fire raid on the nights of 29 – 30 December swept across the textile warehouse area, of which Aldermanbury was the centre, from Coleman Street to Aldersgate, leaving a scene of devastation on three sides of the Hall. The halls of many City Guilds were gutted.

Our building withstood the onslaught and stood proudly above the ruins, practically intact, chiefly to the remarkable devotion of Mr G. E. Chapman, the CII house steward who, despite being ordered to leave the area, stayed at his post to put out the fires and is rumoured to have kicked incendiary bombs off the roof.