

# Landmark national embroidery project to mark 400 years of historic City of London Livery Company

*A historically significant national embroidery project will be unveiled in London in July 2026*

LONDON, CITY OF LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM, May 18, 2026

/EINPresswire.com/ -- A historically significant national embroidery project bringing together 12 English cathedrals, more than 100 volunteer stitchers and two leading craft organisations, will be unveiled at Guildhall in the City of London in July 2026.

The [Circle of Life](#), a two-metre circular embroidery artwork, is being created by the Worshipful Company of [Upholders](#) and The Upholders Charity to mark the 400th anniversary of the Company's Royal Charter, granted in 1626. The Upholders Company is one of the ancient Livery Companies of the City of London, with origins dating back to 1360.



“

To see [Opus Anglicanum] being learned and practised in our own time is quite special”

*Julian Squire, Past Master*

Designed by internationally recognised iconographer Aidan Hart, who also designed the Royal Anointing Screen used at the Coronation of King Charles III, the Circle of Life is being created using Opus Anglicanum, a medieval English embroidery technique using silk, gold and silver thread. Once sought after by popes and kings, the technique is rarely practised today. The Circle of Life project is reviving Opus Anglicanum, inspiring new generations of stitchers to

use the method, and will be the most significant work of its kind produced in more than 500

years.

The project brings together cathedral volunteer teams from St Paul's, Durham, Liverpool, Lincoln, Exeter, St Albans, Winchester, Salisbury, Southwell, Derby, Norwich and Lichfield. The Royal School of Needlework is providing practical training, technical oversight and project management, while Fine Cell Work, a charity enabling people in prison to redefine themselves through needlework, is supporting the contribution of prison-based stitchers.

The completed embroidery will consist of 25 panels, including 12 detachable outer story panels depicting the history, trades and symbolism of the Worshipful Company of Upholders, 12 fixed inner panels honouring the participating cathedrals, and a central panel featuring the Company's armorial bearings. Detachable elements from the artwork can be mounted onto a separate luxury wool pall for the funerals of members of the Company and project contributors.

Julian Squire, Past Master of the Company and project lead for the Circle of Life, said: "The Worshipful Company of Upholders has two main trades – upholstery and funeral directing – and the Circle of Life brings these together. Embroidery sits naturally within the upholstery tradition, while funeral directing has long relied on the same textile skills. Creating an embroidered funeral pall felt the perfect way to unite two of our most important trades and mark our 400th anniversary with something both significant and enduring."

He added, "When I began researching an endangered embroidery heritage, Opus Anglicanum stood out immediately. It was once the finest embroidery, exported around the world from England, yet it had almost disappeared from use. To see it being learned and practiced again in our own time is quite special."

Funding for the Circle of Life has been led by significant support from the Julia Rausing Trust, alongside contributions from The Drapers' Company, The Broderers' Company, The Upholders Charity, individual members of the Worshipful Company of Upholders and members of the public.

The Circle of Life will be unveiled at Guildhall on 9 July 2026 before embarking on a national



A work-in-progress section of the St Paul's Cathedral panel for the Circle of Life, stitched using Opus Anglicanum. The panel depicts the Worshipful Company of Upholders' original Livery Hall being consumed by the Great Fire of London.

[exhibition](#) tour across participating cathedrals and public venues. The tour will begin on 10 July at Gallery 101, International Headquarters of The Salvation Army, a site of particular significance as it stands almost exactly where the original Upholders' Hall stood before it was destroyed in the Great Fire of London.

A commemorative book by Steph Hagan will document the project, with proceeds supporting The Upholders Charity.

Ahead of the invitation-only unveiling, a free public exhibition in The Old Library at Guildhall Art Gallery from 10am to 12 noon will explore the making of the Circle of Life and the heritage behind it. Displays will focus on the history, crafts, trades and activities of the Worshipful Company of Upholders, the role of the participating cathedrals, and the planning and creation of such a significant piece of Opus Anglicanum embroidery.



Volunteer stitchers working on the St Paul's Cathedral panel for the Circle of Life, forming part of the 25-panel circular artwork marking the 400th anniversary of the Worshipful Company of Upholders' Royal Charter.

#### About the Worshipful Company of Upholders

The Worshipful Company of Upholders is one of the ancient Livery Companies of the City of London. It was formed on 1 March 1360 and incorporated by Royal Charter granted by King Charles I in 1626.

The term "Upholder" is an ancient word for upholsterer. The Company's historic associated trades include upholstery, soft furnishings and funeral directing, and today it continues to support its trades, charitable causes, the Civic City and the wider Livery movement.

<https://upholders.co.uk/>

#### About The Circle of Life

The Circle of Life is a national embroidery project created by the Worshipful Company of Upholders and The Upholders Charity to mark the 400th anniversary of the Company's Royal Charter in 2026. The project brings together 12 English cathedrals, more than 100 volunteer stitchers, the Royal School of Needlework and Fine Cell Work.

Designed by internationally recognised iconographer Aidan Hart, the two-metre circular artwork

is being created using Opus Anglicanum, a medieval English embroidery technique using silk, gold and silver thread. The finished work will be unveiled at Guildhall in the City of London on 9 July 2026 before embarking on a national exhibition tour. Limited tickets for the champagne reception, luncheon in the Great Hall, and the unveiling of the Circle of Life by a Royal guest (TBC), are available to purchase for £155 per person.

#### Participating Cathedrals

The 12 participating cathedrals are St Paul's, Durham, Liverpool, Lincoln, Exeter, St Albans, Winchester, Salisbury, Southwell, Derby, Norwich and Lichfield.

#### About The Upholders Charity

The Upholders Charity is associated with the Worshipful Company of Upholders and supports education, training and the relief of hardship among retired upholsterers. Its work includes bursaries, awards, prizes and grants for individuals and institutions connected to the Company's associated trades.

Kate Everett

The Write Impression LLP

+44 7818 060893

[email us here](#)

Visit us on social media:

[LinkedIn](#)

---

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/913459550>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2026 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.