



FIRMIN

established 1677

FIRMIN & SONS LTD

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“Birmingham’s oldest company is even older than was thought”

The Lord Mayor of Birmingham, Councillor Len Gregory accompanied by the Lady Mayoress, Mrs Gill Gregory visited Birmingham’s longest established business Firmin & Sons Ltd in New Town Row to take part in marking a little piece of history.

It had been known that Firmin were established by 1677, from an entry in the “List of Merchants of the City of London” of the same date held in the Guildhall Library.

Recent research by the company’s sales manager Tony Kelly, has uncovered a much earlier date, from several entries in the accounts of the Worshipful Company of Girdlers (Belt Makers) one of the Livery Companies in the City of London. These records survived the Great Fire of 1666 and are held in the manuscripts department at the Guildhall Library.

The entries clearly indicate that the business was established by 1655, including the name of the first apprentice one George Robotham starting his eight year apprenticeship. This followed the payment of two pounds and six shillings (£2.30) by the founder of the company Thomas Firmin to the Girdlers Company.

The business that went on to become the world famous manufacturer and supplier of ceremonial badges, buttons, accoutrements and uniforms can therefore be said to have been established by 1655.

The Lord Mayor was presented with a copy of the research by the Managing Director, Philip Frost, with a request that it be lodged in the Birmingham Reference Library.

Firmin moved to Birmingham, St Paul's Square in 1882 and to the present factory in 1970.

During their tour of the factory Councillor Len Gregory and Mrs Gill Gregory took time to make a "Button for The Queen" and saw work going into preparations for the Royal Wedding, The Queen's Birthday Parade of Trooping the Colour and the forthcoming Diamond Jubilee.

Through 16 reigns from King Charles II to HM Queen Elizabeth II, Firmin & Sons can be said to be one of the 10 oldest companies in the United Kingdom and is among the 500 oldest in the world.

They are older than Hudson's Bay Company - 1670, Lloyds of London - 1688, and the Bank of England - 1694