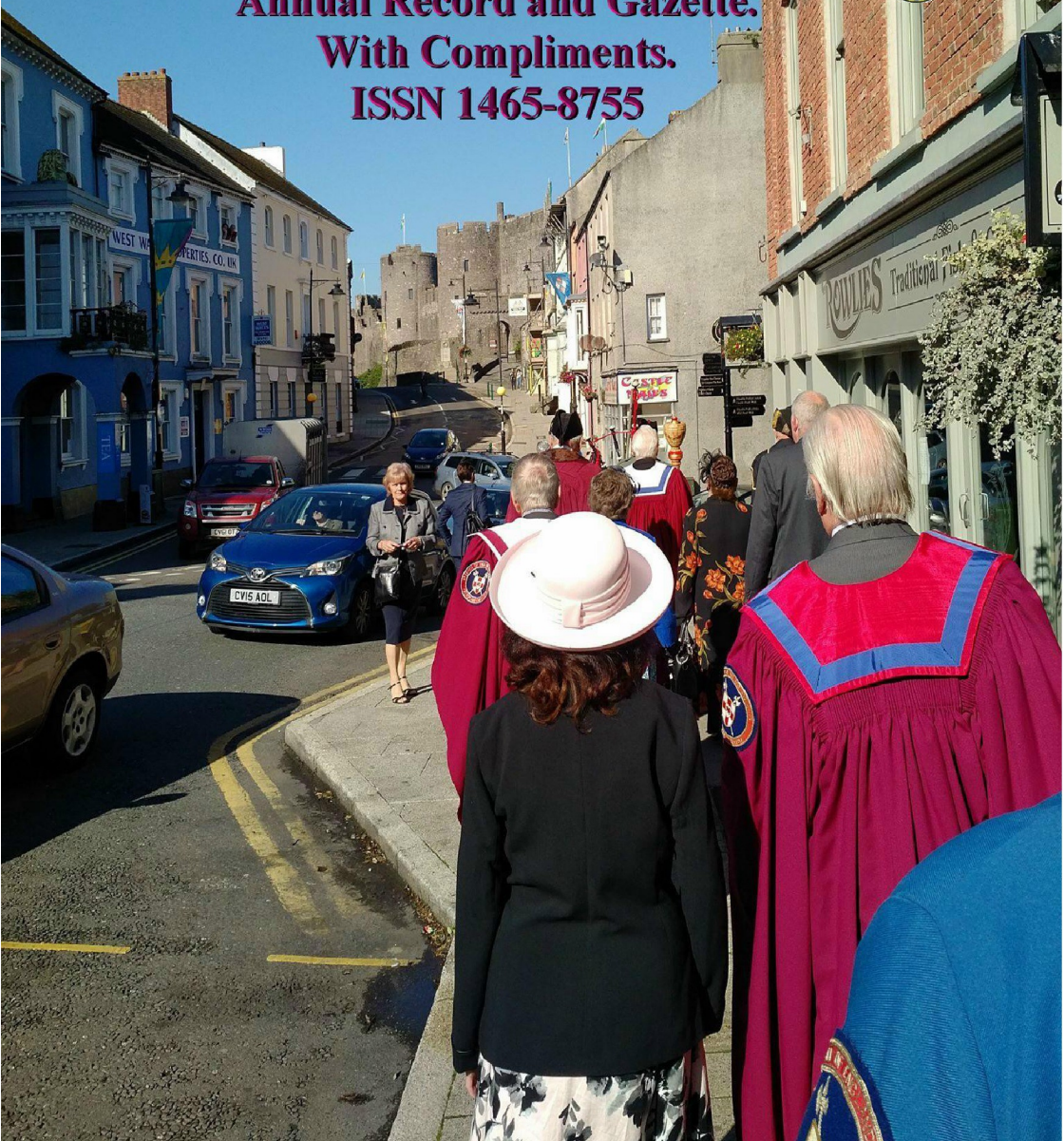




Freemen of England and Wales.

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Presidents Letter.

It is my pleasure to give this message for the first time as your President. Our Pembroke AGM is past with Roy Folland and his team organising the weekend once again with great efficiency giving enjoyment to all. I am sure all who attended will remember Pembroke with many happy memories and affection as well as the beauty of South West Wales. Our thanks go to Roy and his team for ensuring we had such a wonderful time.

Ron Leek has completed his two year term as President and we are grateful for the way he, assisted by Janet, have guided the Association over these years and the fifteen he served as our Secretary. We are also grateful for the President's Lady's jewel which Janet has produced with such love and care. It will serve as a reminder of their term in office to all future Presidents and their ladies. Our Secretary, Nick Johnson, for the past two years is also stepping aside although he will remain as a Warden. We thank him for all his work over the past two years.

Your new Executive was elected at the AGM and we look forward continuing to the work of the Association over the next year. There have been some problems in bringing new blood into the Executive and filling all the posts. This has resulted in some holding dual duties. There are some qualifications required for candidates to these posts and we will be bringing forward minor amendments to the Constitution to eliminate some of these problems. I am pleased to say that since the AGM a volunteer, Lee Hensley from Gloucester, has come forward for the post of Secretary. Some time ago we agreed that assistants could be appointed with a view to taking over the post on the Executive. It would be helpful if volunteers would come forward. I am glad to say we had one following the AGM.

The question of communication was raised in the Forum at the AGM. While good information is available, some of it is difficult to access. Your Executive will take this on board and see if we can improve the access to such information.

I suggested at the AGM that we should consider coordinating records of the Freedom throughout the Country. The contribution of the Freedom in town and cities is not well known, nor is it by any means recognised. Without the major contribution of Guilds from towns and cities throughout the country we would not enjoy the many freedom and stability which we have today. We have many records nationally and locally and they are not always fully recorded or coordinated. One of our objectives as a Charity is "To advance public education in the history and legal customs of the ancient towns of England and Wales with relation to the legal institution of the Freedom". We shall work with national and local bodies including our constituent members to try and provide an improved data base. To achieve this we require the cooperation of Guilds in letting us know what they have available locally within their Guild and their local government sources. For some Guilds this may be easy and for other more difficult. We will not be able to catalogue all the information of the Freedom, but should be able to provide a central source with significant information. A group of us will be meeting with employees of the National Archives to ensure that our records are included in these available nationally. There are specific grants available for both cataloguing and digitising. This will assist future historians and Freemen with information which is accessible.

We also recognise many Freemen wish to research their own family history. There are many ways to progress this, but Freemen have a unique advantage in their own Guilds. In Berwick we have just spent a year researching this and produced a book. This refers first to Berwick, but most sources are available to other areas. A copy is now in the FEW archives and it is worth enquiring what is available in these archives regarding your own Guild.

I look forward to working with you over the next two years. We have an experienced Executive which will ensure the Association will function well over this time. I will always be available to Guilds and individual members. FEW will never interfere in an individual Guild, but will provide advice and support where it is requested. We should remember that FEW's first act after it was formed was to ensure there were alterations to the 1972 local government Bill which in its original form would have abolished all charters and with them the Freedom.

Jim Evans

Open Forum 2017

- 1) Howard Crapper commented that not everyone has a Dinner Jacket and that fact might put people off coming to AGMs or even joining FEW. Caroline Shelley said that she thought it was nice to see a man in a Dinner Jacket. Valerie Pettifer said that her two sons were always keen for opportunities to wear Dinner Jackets. Denise Laver thought that some people do not like having to wear a Dinner Jacket, and this was one reason why her Court Leet operates a lounge suit dress code. Steve Morson suggested that perhaps a line in the Programme should say "Black Tie Preferred". Lee Kinnersley pointed out that many of the young persons that he knows enjoy wearing Dinner Jackets, and are proud to do so. Ron Leek asked if the consensus of those present favoured "Black Tie Preferred" or (say) "Black Tie Obligatory". A show of hands for each suggestion favoured the former.
- 2) John Edwards said that his Guild had experienced problems with Volunteers with ailments threatening to sue. A general discussion then took place regarding various aspects of the differences between direct employees and unemployed volunteers (who may claim reasonable expenses). Howard Pate said that Chester have bar staff who are paid employees of the Guild, and Tommy Mattison added that Alnwick have a caretaker who is directly employed. John Edwards mentioned that Stafford have a number of volunteers who carry out numerous gardening chores for the Guild, and for which they are thanked and given a small amount of cash to cover their expenses. Jim Evans commented that if you actually pay money to volunteers, then they become employed, but if the money is classed as expenses, then there should be no problem. John Tolley advised that expenses for mileage to volunteers has a financial limit, and that appropriate records must be kept as without proper records, issues of mileage may become a big problem. Steve White pointed out that registered charities can find employment law guidance on the Charity Commission website. Steve Healy added that the law on how to employ paid workers, and the advice on staff and volunteers that are contained on the Charity Commission's website, states that compliance with employment law is necessary when you employ people.

- 3) Denise Laver raised an issue that she has observed concerning a general failure for emails to be acknowledged, as many seem to go unanswered. In an effort to highlight this problem, she asked that members remember the FEW motto, and to always be courteous and reply to emails.
- 4) Steve White asked for volunteers to fill Executive positions that had become vacant. Steve Morson replied that he would be willing but was unable at present due to a domestic caring priority. Denise Laver thought that poor communication was part of the problem in getting volunteers, and she questioned just how members get these positions, as it (the Exec) seems to be a little club. Gwen Lancaster said that today is the day to ask for volunteers to join the Executive, and Ron Leek informed the Forum that there were two positions to be filled - that of Honorary Secretary, and also that of the Officer without Portfolio.

Minutes of the 51st AGM

of the Association of Freemen of England and Wales

held on Saturday 16th September 2017 in the Cleddau Bridge Hotel, Pembroke Dock.

Although produced as a meaningful record of the proceedings,
these minutes in no way constitute a verbatim transcript of the meeting.

Attendees: William James Allen – London, Geoff Anderson – Alnwick, J. David Appleby – Alnwick, Stewart Bristow – Lincoln, Alex Christison – Berwick, Nic Christison – Berwick, Howard Crapper – Oxford, Shirley Crapper – Oxford, Suzanne Crofts – Haverfordwest, Megan Crofts – Haverfordwest, Charles Davies – Haverfordwest, John Edwards – Stafford, Jim Evans – Berwick, Pat Evans – Berwick, Ian Evans – Berwick, David Fairnell – Berwick, Alan Fallows – Shrewsbury, Robin Folland – Pembroke, Roy Folland – Pembroke, Eileen Forth – York, Terry Griffin – Stafford, Hazel Hague – York, Mervyn Hall – Alnwick, Lee Hensley – Gloucester, Michael Herriott – Berwick, Capt. Stephen Healy – Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Nick R. S. Johnson – Hale, Phillip Kinnersley – Stafford, Gwen Lancaster – Berwick, Denise Laver – Altrincham, J. Alan S. Laver – Altrincham, Janet Leek – Alcester, Ron Leek – Alcester, Spencer Loveridge – Sudbury, Paul Lucas – Haverfordwest, Carl Mattison – Alnwick, Jimmy Mattison – Alnwick, Tommy Mattison – Alnwick, Steve Morson – Coventry, Denis Nixon – Alnwick, Martin Otter – Shrewsbury, Howard Pate – Chester, Elsie Pate – Chester, Valerie Pettifer – York, Ian Phillips – Pembroke, Graham Phillips – Pembroke, Angela Robinson – Shrewsbury, John Rowlands – Pembroke, Alan Shelley – Sudbury, Caroline Shelley – Sudbury, Bobby Shepherd – Alnwick, Alec Stephenson – York, Beryl Stephenson – York, John Tolley – Altrincham, Gordon Varndell – London, Nicholas Ward – Pembroke, Gillian Ward – Pembroke, Matthew White – Grimsby, Stephen White – Grimsby, Wyn Williams – London, Charlotte Yeates – Berwick

Together with the Deputy Mayor of Pembroke Cllr Linda Brown, the President, Ron Leek, processed into the Pembroke Suite preceded by the FEW Mace, having been announced in Welsh and English by the Acting Macebearer, Hon Secretary Nick Johnson. The President, before calling the meeting to order, welcomed the Deputy Mayor and asked her to address the members and guests present prior to her having to immediately leave due to other pressing engagements. Following the address by the Deputy Mayor, members

and guests stood as the President escorted the Deputy Mayor from the building. Upon his return, the President then called the meeting to order and declared the AGM in session.

Apologies for non-attendance were recorded from Tom Gibson, Honorary Editor; Martin Hanks, Warden for the South West; Derek Austin, Warden for the South Midlands; James Shepherd (Alnwick), William Strawn (Alnwick), Eric Bulmer (Durham), and John Barden (London).

Following a proposal which was seconded, the Minutes of the 50th AGM held on September 17th 2016 in the Merchant Adventurers Hall, York, were approved as a correct record of the proceedings, and were signed by the President. There were no matters arising.

Ron Leek presented his President's Report. A copy is appended to these minutes.

Jim Evans presented his Deputy President's Report. A copy is appended to these minutes.

Gordon Varndell presented his Immediate Past President's Report.

Steve White presented his Vice President's Report. A copy is appended to these minutes.

The Vice President was asked by the President to introduce the Wardens and ask them to give their Reports.

North East: Capt. Stephen Healy. A copy is appended to these minutes.

North West: Denise Laver. A copy is appended to these minutes.

North Midlands: John Edwards. A copy is appended to these minutes.

West: Howard Crapper. A copy is appended to these minutes.

East: Valerie Pettifer. A copy is appended to these minutes.

South East: Nick R.S.Johnson. A copy is appended to these minutes.

South Midlands: In his absence Derek Austin's Report was also read out by the Vice President. A copy is appended to these minutes.

Principality of Wales: Roy Folland. A copy is appended to these minutes.

North: In the absence of newly-appointed Warden Roger Sutton, the Vice President gave a Report. A copy is appended to these minutes.

Stephen White presented the FEW Accounts. Following a satisfactory outline of the Accounts by the Vice-President, it was proposed by Michael Herriott and seconded by Stewart Bristow that they be taken to be a true and accurate record, and agreed unanimously. A copy is appended to these minutes.

Eileen Forth presented her Membership Secretary's Report. A copy is appended to these minutes.

Alan Fallows presented his Hon Archivist's Report. A copy is appended to these minutes.

In his absence, Tom Gibson's Editor's Report was presented by the Hon Secretary. A copy is appended to these minutes.

Alan Shelley presented his Officer Without Portfolio Report. A copy is appended to these minutes.

President Ron Leek advised the meeting that the next administration had two, as yet unfilled positions, and asked whether there were any volunteers to fill the positions of Honorary Secretary and Officer without Portfolio. Lee Hensley (Gloucester) offered to take the position of Honorary Secretary, provided that he could have some assistance from President Leek, who had sixteen years experience in that role. Lee's offer was accepted, and he was warmly thanked by the President.

The new President, Jim Evans, was then installed in office by the outgoing, and now Immediate Past President, Ron Leek. After pronouncing the Oath of Office, the new President was robed by Ron, and presented with the President's Medallion of Office. Jim then made a short address, thanking everyone for the confidence now placed in him.

Ron then received his Immediate Past President's Medallion and robe from Gordon Vardell, following which, Ron presented Gordon with his Past President's Medallion, and presented Gordon's Consort, Eileen with her Past President's Lady's silver pendant. Janet Leek presented Pat Evans with the President's Lady's Brooch.

The President then asked the Secretary to read out the Nominations for Executive office that he had received. The Secretary informed the Meeting that only one nomination has been received for each of the following Executive positions, and that therefore an election would be unnecessary for these. For the year 2017 - 2018, they are :- Deputy President – Steve White; Vice President – Alan Shelley; Hon Treasurer – Stephen White; Hon Membership Secretary – Eileen Forth; Hon Editor – Tom Gibson; Hon Archivist – Alan Fallows. No nominations had been received for the positions of Honorary Secretary and the Officer without Portfolio, and consequently the Secretary, who was not seeking re-election, then surrendered his robe and medallion to the new Vice President, Alan Shelley, and was immediately re-robed with his Warden's robe by Warden for the East, Val Pettifer.

The 2017- 2018 Wardens were confirmed as:- North East – Capt. Stephen Healy; North West – Denise Laver; North – Roger Sutton; North Midlands – John Edwards; South Midlands – Derek Austin; East – Val Pettifer; South East – Nick Johnson; West – Howard Crapper; Wales – Roy Folland; South West – Martin Hanks.

Any Other Business:-

a) The new President, Jim Evans, informed the Meeting that the next Annual Court in March 2018 would take place in Gloucester, and the next AGM in September 2018 would take place in Warwick.

There being no further business, the President declared the 51st Annual General Meeting closed, and processed from the Pembroke Suite accompanied by his Lady, Pat Evans.

President's Report.

My two year tenure of this prestigious office as President of FEW will shortly finish, when I hand over at the end of this AGM, to my illustrious successor Capt. Jim Evans. I have thoroughly enjoyed the whole experience of heading up this great Association, which has brought me into contact with both the officers and many ordinary grass roots members of the numerous Member Gilds which have invited my wife Janet and myself to attend their various functions, leaving us with very happy memories of their conviviality and hospitality. My thanks go to all of them.

It has been a further pleasure to me, to have been able to work with the current excellent team of Executive Officers, and thereby to have ensured that the day to day administration of the Association has run smoothly. Debates have often been protracted, but have always resulted in the best decisions being reached, and I thank each of them for their expertise and companionship. I must especially thank the Hon Secretary, Nick Johnson, who is not seeking re-election, for wholeheartedly carrying out the two year commitment which he made, when undertaking the secretarial role. Throughout, he has ensured that I have been kept up to date on all Association and related legislative matters, and his attention to detail in ensuring that any terminology used by the Association is unquestionably correct, needs endorsing. Thank you, Nick.

I must also extend the Association's sincere thanks to its super team of Wardens, who maintain close links, both socially and administratively, with each of the Member Guilds in their respective areas. This is a somewhat time consuming task, which they freely and happily undertake on all our behalves. Thank you, Wardens.

A preliminary start has been made on a drive to recruit more FEW Individual Members, with some of our Member Guilds having been contacted, with the objective of publicising our Individual Memberships amongst their own members. Once meaningful feedback is forthcoming, then the intention is to extend this approach more widely.

In determining that FEW was correctly complying with Charity Law, the Executive Committee became aware, that for many years now the Association has been unnecessarily appointing Custodian Trustees at each AGM. The decision has therefore been taken that these appointments not being a requirement, are now discontinued. Thanks must go to all those individuals who have accepted such appointments in the past.

To ensure the continuity of regular FEW Court and Annual General Meetings, Host Guilds are always needed. Written information and practical advice are readily available to any Member Guild thinking of volunteering as a future host.

In conclusion, with this year being no exception, there is often a lack of nominations for Executive Officer positions. It is worth noting, that taking on any office is not particularly time consuming, as the Executive Committee only meets four times a year, with two of these meetings always being held alongside Court and Annual General Meetings.

Deputy President's Report.

I was asked to attend the AGM of the Court of Deans of Scotland on behalf of the President. It was a very enjoyable day in Brechin with the AGM in the Mechanics Hall and the formal dinner in the evening. I convey the greetings of the President and FEW which were cordially received. It was hoped that the link between our two organisations will continue to grow.

I attended the internment of the ashes, in his grandfather's grave, of David Moor our former FEW Archivist and Chairman of the Berwick Guild. I also attended the funeral of John Heslop, the long-term Master of the Durham Guild. This was held, appropriately, in the Town Hall at Durham and was a humanist service.

Stephen Morson, the immediate past Master of Coventry Guild visited Berwick and we were pleased to have the opportunity to discuss aspects of our two Guilds and to show him something of our Town.

I also received a visit from Eric Bulmer, the new chairman of the Wardens of Durham along with his Guild Secretary. We discussed a visit from Durham Guild to Berwick and the possibility of Durham hosting a FEW Court Meeting and / or AGM. This was followed by a visit from Durham Guild to Berwick when we were pleased to host them to a lunch and dinner with the opportunity to walk round Berwick Walls, one of only two fully walled towns in the UK. Our Area Warden, Steve Healy, joined us for the visit from Durham Guild. Berwick Guild will visit Durham in 2018.

In July I was in Wales on holiday and on the way back visited Pembroke and Gloucester. In Pembroke we had dinner with Roy Folland and discussed various matters concerned with the FEW AGM in September. In Gloucester I had lunch with Lee Hensley and discussed the possibility of the Chartered Freemen and Women of Gloucester hosting a FEW Court and /or AGM. Lee has since confirmed that Gloucester will host the Court in 2018 and the AGM in 2019.

At the President's request I contacted the Clerk of Warwick Court Leet who had indicated they could hold the FEW AGM in 2018. I gave them a copy of the Host Pack and various pieces of advice on hosting an AGM. They offered to host the 2018 AGM. In the meantime Grimsby also offered to host the 2018 AGM. After consulting with all members of the Executive, the offer from Warwick was accepted.

Following information received from the Vice President, a "Host Pack" has been prepared for Guilds intending to host an AGM. This combines the various items in the Directory with other good working practices from previous hosts.

I continue to give talks about the Freedom in various venues. These are now extended into South East Scotland. I have also written a new 150 page history of the Berwick Guild which is being edited at the present time.

Vice President's Report.

This year marks 7 years since I was re-appointed Vice President at the 2010 AGM held in Berwick-upon-Tweed, the year following my re-appointment as Honorary Treasurer. These last few years have not been particularly easy for me with my own health issues, my sons broken leg and car breakdowns all preventing me from attending various meetings and I am grateful for your forbearance, particularly the Wardens who have not had their full quota of meetings which I should have chaired. And earlier this year, just when we finally thought things were back to normal we received the news that my mother-in-law was terminally ill with a brain tumour.

I mention this because Ruth was known to quite a number of you since my father in law, Ted Ellis, was one time Hon Secretary of this Association and they attended every meeting for many years. We were told to expect up to 3 months, she died in July, 2 months after celebrating her 90th birthday.

I was able to report last year that, following appointments of Denise Laver as the Warden for the North West and Val Pettifer for the East that we now had all Warden areas covered. This changed though towards the end of May when I received a letter of resignation from Colin Hardcastle who cited, particularly, his health issues as an impairment to his fulfilling his duties to a satisfactory level. He had reached the age of 70 so will have to apply for a new driving licence if he can demonstrate that he is fit enough to drive. He reminded me that it was on a visit to Grimsby with his father, many years ago, that he was “almost run over by my wife” in the Asda car park and he saw the Freeman of England badge on the radiator grille. That sparked his interest and he joined the Association shortly afterwards. Colin has served the Association well, over many years from Warden to Press Officer to President and we should remember him for that; he will retain his individual membership.

I am pleased to report that I have appointed Roger Sutton, a former High Bailiff of Henley-in-Arden as Colin’s successor; he lives in Pocklington and is a Journeyman member of the York Guild.

I reported to The Court that I had managed to locate a book on eBay entitled The History of the Preston Guild and that I had bought copies for Denise Laver and our Archivist for a bit of light reading.

Following that, I received a notification from a Paul David Jagger advising that The 3rd Lord Mayor’s edition of The City of London Freeman’s Guide was available so I purchased copies for Nick as Warden for that area and the Archives.

I would commend all of our Officers and members to be on the lookout for any such relevant books which might otherwise be “lost”.

As always, I am grateful for the work that the Wardens do, and their ability – like a well-rehearsed orchestra – to carry on even when the conductor isn’t waving his baton.

Something else that I do, and have done since I rejoined the Executive, is to look after the “new” website since the old one had become defunct. It is, perhaps, showing its’ age a bit since there are now different hosting platforms available but I find this one fairly easy to manage and it is maintained for a modest annual fee. I am always pleased to receive ideas for new material to include.

Some further work has been done updating The Website. The cover for the latest Journal, (187), has been added and the content for the one prior to that (186). A new page was been created this year containing downloadable Membership Application and Regalia Order Forms. The notice for this years AGM was posted along with a downloadable booking form. Alan Robson very kindly provided a tribute to Alan Alderson, who was a Freeman of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, who died last October just after his 100th birthday. Alan was the original Treasurer of FoE from 1966 until 1986 which is when I took the job on for the first time.

Our Facebook page, which receives regular posts from Tom Gibson, (also the prime mover behind the Freemans Railway Society page), and Nick Johnson, is also now picking up an increasing number of items from our member Guilds and so provides a

steady stream of fresh information. The number of “likes” now stands at 247, up from 239 last March, and any addition to the website is also notified through Facebook. Tom keeps busy posting up York Guild news or other items which are either of a very urgent nature or simply won't fit into the next Journal owing to space limitations, such as the obituary for John Heslop, Freeman of Durham, who died in April, his funeral being attended by Jim Evans and Stephen Healy. John was well known to many of our members and so a tribute will also be added to the website. A few of our members also post on the Railway page.

I continue to be very pre-occupied with my own local Freeman - which now includes the potential redevelopment of a 3 acre site adjacent to our market, and other working commitments; but, as previously noted I have produced an up-to-date draft of The Association Directory and this was discussed at the Officers Meeting in June, resulting in a number of revisions, but it is out of date again and will be moreso after this weekends events have concluded. This was always the problem with the paper version which used to be issued to Guilds but at least sending out by email, or making available on-line, should result in less paper wastage.

Reports from the Wardens.

Warden For The North East.

Alnwick:

The Chamberlain's Common Council and Freeman of the Borough of Alnwick continue 'business as usual' with nothing of particular over the Summer. They have had one admission to the Skinners and Glovers Company since the last report. Speaking about their property in Alnwick, I am told one cottage is to be demolished and a replacement property built, while a further entirely new property is to be built on a brownfield site. These properties, like others, are owned and leased by the Freeman.

I do commend the Alnwick Freeman for the way in which they calmly, quietly go about their business, following traditions peculiar to that Borough and to individual companies over many centuries. I note too, their continued support of the FEW AGM and their considerable presence here yet again. No mean feat to reach Pembroke from north-east England, courtesy of the various rail operators. I do understand one long-held tradition has been broken this year mind, in that one of the Freeman has brought his partner and she too, is most welcome.

Berwick-upon-Tweed:

Berwick-upon-Tweed Freeman are a little more visible and active in civic and community matters at present. We previously reported on their involvement with the Berwick Barracks Heritage Hub and this is progressing well, with a grant from the Berwick Freeman

I like to think it is because I started making noises about archiving in my last report, but in reality I know they were already working at some of this - the Freeman are currently sorting the papers of the Freeman's Trust; thereafter, they will address a sizeable photographic collection they have been given; then their own Guild archives and a mass of supporting papers recently discovered. The photo collection actually represents a common situation, they were left to the Berwick Freeman with the specific condition that they were never placed in the County Archives, or allowed to leave the Town.

Berwick gained its first Sheriff in 1119 – the 3rd oldest in the country after London and Bristol. The Freemen will be heavily involved in celebrations to mark the 900th anniversary in 2019 and early planning is already underway. Berwick-upon-Tweed was also a *kotore* (trading post) of the Hanzatic League the ancient trading alliance of European and Scandinavian merchants. There is a new Hanzatic League, a move actively supported by the Freemen who will be joining soon. Their 2017 Summer outing took two coachloads to the Beamish Open Air Museum and they also hosted a visit from the Durham Freemen.

Durham:

I must first of all note the absence of Mr Eric Bulmer, Chairman of the Wardens, from this meeting. Eric is currently recovering from an accident and felt the distance involved was a little too much at this stage. We wish him well and look forward to seeing him again soon. A reciprocal item to that in the report on Berwick's activities is of course also relevant here, noting that a contingent of Durham Freemen and partners journeyed north to visit their counterparts in Berwick-upon-Tweed.

The Guild recorded the death of a senior member of the Mason's Company in August, Robert Ainsley Elliott.

On a happier note, the month saw two new admissions, one about 60 years late, the other 40. Norman "Syd" Johnston and Anthony Pritchard, both retired, qualified for membership of the Masons' and Joiners' companies respectively, on the basis of having completed recognised apprenticeships within the city, but never pursued it, until now. Norman is 85 and Anthony 64. Never too late and good on Durham for following it up.

A face-lift for a dancing facility, catering for children and young adults from vulnerable backgrounds, has taken a big step forward – thanks to a donation from the City of Durham Freemen. TIN Arts, set up at the end of the 1990s, offers inspiration to people of all ages with a learning disability, autism or additional needs to realise their potential through dance and the wider performing arts.

Newcastle upon Tyne:

Nothing to report.

Warden for the North West.

Chester:

The President is David Starbuck-Edwards, and the Deputy President is Ian Dutton. Chester Freemen assisted at the Lord Mayor Making at Chester Town Hall, and processed to the Cathedral on Civic Sunday, as well as acting as sidesmen during the Service. Chester Freemen took part in the highly popular Midsummer Watch Parades in June. There was an excellent turnout of Freemen, and the great crowds watched from the vantage points of the Rows as we processed, with other local groups, through the city. These were occasions. Chester Freemen conducted two tours for visitors around the city in July, concentrating on sites associated with the freemen, such as the Guildhall and the Freemen and Guilds church, St. Peter's. The Guildhall is being refurbished, with the possibility of becoming a quality restaurant next year. Meanwhile, the Freemen and Guilds hold their meetings at the offices of Cheshire West and Chester Council. The Annual Banquet weekend is 13 – 15 October 2017

Hale:

The Lord Mayor of Hale was historically the oldest (longest serving) tenant farmer which meant they held the role for life or until they decided to pass it on to the next farmer. As the tenant farmers became less in the 70s/early 80 it was changed to an elected Lord Mayor for 3 years from the body of Freemen. In memory of the change, 5 Copper Beach trees were planted in what was known as 'The Freemen's Copse'. Over the years it became overgrown and forgotten about.

In November last year, Lord Mayor Paul Turton got a small group together to clear the area and to form a 'Freemen's Memorial Garden' where they have planted about 500 daffodils in memory of those lost to cancer and hope to be adding wild poppies in memory of those lost in conflict. Paul's plan is that by adding a range of flowers and small shrubs, there should be something growing and in flower most times of the year. It is not just for Freemen but also for anyone in the Village who wants recognition of a loved one but also as a view of beauty for anyone looking through the fence from the park. Paul hopes that this will be continued by future Lord Mayors and Freemen.

Hale is fortunate to have one of only approximately 4 'Duck Decoys' in the world.

Historically, the Freemen's council had one meeting per year on the decoy (usually with a few drinks) to inspect and keep an eye on it. Through various changes in council funding (that is the local authority not the Freemen's Council) this could no longer be achieved. It is currently 'managed' by a group of volunteers who Paul contacted to try to reinstate the 'Freemen's Inspection of the Duck Decoy'. This has not yielded a result as yet.

This October will see the appointment of the next Lord Mayor of Hale, Mr James Ross, who will serve for three years. The Annual Court will be held at the beginning of 2018, in January.

Altrincham:

Altrincham Court Leet has been growing over the past few years and now it was felt the next step was to formally develop a Guild - The Guild of the Freemen of Altrincham, from which future Provosts, (Mayors) and the Court Leet would be chosen.

This July saw the result of much planning when Altrincham put on a Weekend to celebrate the Altrincham Charter of 1290 and the establishment of the Guild of the Freemen of Altrincham.

Reflecting on the month of July the years 1290, 1937 and 2017 are key to developments. Altrincham was granted the status of a free borough in 1290 by Hamo de Massey, lord of Dunham. The original charter is in the possession of Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council. In November 2016 it was given a health check and it has been reported that the 727 year old document is a good today as it was when it was given. A facsimile now is insitue in Altrincham Town Hall

In 1937 King George VI granted to Altrincham a Charter of Incorporation, thus raising the town to the status of a municipal borough. The granting of Altrincham's new Charter coincided with the beginning of the new reign of George VI.

2017 – The formation and inaugural service of the Guild of the Freemen of Altrincham.

Altrincham Court Leet were delighted to receive many visitors to the town for the weekend. It was delightful to see some representatives from Guilds & Courts .

The weekend started with ale and wine tastings around the Historic Market Area – eight establishments visited. Many of the visitors were intrigued by by the reformation of the Market Hall into a vibrant place to eat & drink.

The Saturday there was a chance to view the Altrincham Charter and to go on a Discover Altrincham Walk before attending the Inaugural service for the Guild. At the service I was made President of the Guild. After the service everyone paraded back to the town for fine refreshments before returning to homes and hotels in order to get ready for the Altrincham Charter Dinner.

The Sunday the Provost of Altrincham invited guests to a church service at his chaplains place of worship.

On display at the dinner was the list of all the Mayors of Altrincham from 1452 – 1973 then the Provosts from 1977 – to the present. It shows Our incredible history and has to be remembered that ALL Mayors of Altrincham were selected by the Court Leet until 1937

Altrincham Court Leet are keen to recognise many worthy people in order to give them the Freedom. “To be recognised by one’s own locality is a great honour and most humbling”

“I was awarded the Freedom of Altrincham, which I gather goes back centuries to the Ancient Court of Leet, and I wear it proudly with my other insignia.” Long may we recognise such wonderful people.

Altrincham Court Leet holds three assizes a year. Michaelmas being important as it’s the Mayor-making assize. The Court continues with its wish to protect historic and cultural values for local communities. Silver Lions, Trading certificates & have ale & wine tasting events are part of this. This next year we will be instituting the Golden Blade - The Bryan Massey Endeavour Award – in memory of the Lord Baron Steward of Dunham Massey 1980 - 2016.

In my role as the Warden for the North West, I have received a few calls regarding FEW and Chester. I contacted a Freeman living in New Mills, which is close to where I live and now have her on my mailing list for events. I have been trying to encourage people to become individual members.

Warden for the North Midlands:

My good intentions of visiting all the guilds in my area have sadly not materialised, but that does not seem to have had much effect on their fortunes.

Derby is making slow but steady progress in re-awakening their guild and in that case I may have helped a little. Following conversations with me and our President at the last Stafford annual dinner, they embarked on some rule changes under the terms of the 2010 act. They have introduced qualification via grandparent, a route found in many other locations. While this may not seem a major step, it does allow interested people to be sworn in when their parents have not elected to take up their rights. In the case of Derby it is hoped that it will provide a significant increase in membership. They have yet to explore the apprenticeship route.

I must commend the small core of people for reviving Derby guild that had been dormant for some time. However, they need to alter the mind-set of a number of freemen and widows of Derby that there is nothing to the freedom other than collecting £20 each year. Indeed, that also appears to be the sole motivation of the majority of freemen in Newcastle-under-Lyme. A small number of dedicated folk have kept things moving and dealt with the administration. While the queue at St Giles church for the annual hand-out

gets bigger, other activities have declined. Unfortunately, despite several phone calls, I have been unable to discuss the current situation with them.

Shrewsbury, Bridgnorth and Stafford all have thriving social and civic activities and in these places it is not a matter of financial benefit. Maybe paying people to be sworn-in as freemen and women is counter-productive to the heritage aspect of the role.

The relatively new Shrewsbury web site continues to provide interest and information about their activities and may have gone some way to countering some of the negative attitudes that seemed to pervade the local press a few years ago. I have been unable to attend their events this year, but did attend a while back their regular dinner at Shrewsbury School, which is linked to the 'Shropshire Society in London'. They have a number of projects in hand including restoration of one of the harbours in the quarry that forms a focal point of the famous Shrewsbury Flower Show.

I get regular invitations to the Bridgnorth banquet and it looks as though this year I may be able to accept. It is good to meet members of a friendly thriving guild that has a good social programme as well as being considered essential to local civic events. Their good relations with successive mayors have given them a high profile in the town. That is also true of Stafford, where they are invited to mayor-making, Battle of Britain, remembrance, carol service and many other civic events. Maybe, just having burgesses' robes to add to the spectacle is an incentive, but it does seem to have worked. We have not yet been invited to act as the mayor's bodyguard with pikes, swords or halberds, (as they do in Shrewsbury), but one day the burgesses hope to get back the role of carrying the silver civic maces, as they did until the early 20th century. Just as in so many things, 'insurance is king' even taking precedence over history.

The trustees of the Stafford Freemen's allotments are reaping some benefits from their windfall compensation from Severn Trent's developments on their site. A new shop for gardeners is being erected and there is now a solar power supply in the community building. Sadly, that is also needed for CCTV surveillance of the numerous acts by miscreants including arson, vandalism, theft, drug taking, squatters, etc., which have bedevilled the trustees recently. Even being reported for destroying a badger sett, (which we didn't), leaves you asking why on earth you volunteered for the job. However, the good feeling of maintaining 800 years of history, while providing good food, healthy exercise and a pleasant social environment for a very diverse group of ages, cultures and ethnicities is ample reward.

Warden for the West.

I would first like to thank all the Freemen and Guilds in the West for their warm personal welcome to me and FEW. It is so marvellous to be greeted with friendship.

The Freeminers of the Forest of Dean have this month, unveiled a stone and steel memorial to the miners lost in underground accidents. The 7ft (2.13m) monument made of steel and stone stands next to Pan Tod Beacon on Ruardean Hill, in Gloucestershire and records the names of 50 men lost to cave-ins and rock falls.

The Chartered Freemen of Gloucester continue to raise their profile in the City. Excellent press coverage of their driving sheep through the City and across the Bridge certainly caught the attention of many. Regular admission ceremonies of new Freemen continue. It

grieves me that my wife and I will be unable to attend their annual dinner in November due to Remembrance commitments in Oxford.

In Oxford, the Freeman Apprentice Awards this Spring were even better than ever as interest in the scheme continues to catch the imagination of both employers and Apprentices alike. New categories appear in line with demand. The Freeman enjoyed good press coverage from this event. It is no coincidence that this Autumn the Freeman of Oxford will be admitting another Apprentice to become a Freeman.

St Georges Day saw nine Oxford Freeman in gowns included in the Civic Parade to Church. We were honoured to have the company of the Deputy Lord Lieutenant, Sister Frances Dominica Frances, the founder of the worlds first Children's Hospice at Helen and Douglas House.

The Freeman were later pleased to host a St George's Day Lunch Service where the Lord Mayor, Sheriff and Deputy Lord Lieutenant were magnificent in their presence.

The Port Meadow WW1 Memorial Committee have placed an order for a stone memorial for the 17 Royal Flying Corps men who died in training during WW1. We hope to announce a Spring date for the unveiling and a high profile dignitary is being sought. The fund raising went really well and over £10,000 has been raised.

I have been pleased to attend Freeman events at Northampton, where great imagination is used to make a successful Charity weekend and also at the new Freeman Guild formation and Gala Dinner in Altrincham.

Warden for the East.

Lincoln

Since taking on my duties as Warden for the East I've realised that historically Lincoln was not in my area, as it's not geographically in East Anglia. However, I'm finding that my connections with this City are very rewarding and as the Lincoln Freeman are also happy with the arrangement, I see no reason to change anything.

In January my husband and I were invited to attend the City of Lincoln Freeman Gild Annual Dinner, hosted by Angela Priestley-Gibbins, now Master of the Lincoln Freeman. We were made very welcome, and although we regularly drive past signs for Lincoln as we head north for York, this was our first stay in the city. I have to say we were very impressed with it, especially as on the Saturday morning a group of us were treated to a fantastically detailed tour of the historic Lincoln Guild Hall where we learnt masses about its history; much of which was rather grisly!

In the evening we attended the annual dinner, complete with entertainment of a very high calibre, plus won numerous prizes in the massive raffle. There were many familiar faces there from York, Coventry and Leicester, plus we were introduced to numerous Freeman from Northampton and Lincoln, which subsequently led to an invitation to the Northampton annual banquet., which we dually attended.

I had hoped to attend the Lincoln Freeman Investitures and AGM on the 8th April 2017, but it was not to be. Not only had I just arrived back from a trip to New York on the previous day, but the investiture also clashed with the Gild of Freeman of the City of York annual banquet, for which I had been asked to produce a painting that was to be auctioned to raise funds for the Masters Charity. As you can imagine it was important that I arrived on time with said painting, and in the event I did, but only by the skin of my teeth! I'm pleased to say that the painting raised £260 on the evening for the St Leonards Hospice.

In June another opportunity arose to visit Lincoln, although this time it was not organised

by the Freemen. The Heritage Skills Festival was the joining together of 26 of the 110 City of London Livery Companies, and the Lincoln Cathedral Works Department. The weekend event featured a display of traditional crafts and skills essential for the preservation of the Cathedral and other ancient buildings, as well as keeping heritage and skills alive. However, fate in the shape of my studio business once again conspired to stop me and I was unable to attend. Very disappointing!

The next Lincoln Investitures are scheduled for Saturday 14th October 2017 and I will definitely be attending in my capacity as Warden for the East, although this does mean I can't attend the Annual Chester Banquet as the dates clash. Other events that I will attend are the Lincoln Annual Banquet on the 27th January 2018, and the Lincoln AGM on the 14th April 2018, which again clashes with the York Banquet, but I'm confident I can attend both.

Sudbury:

The highlight of the year in Sudbury has to be the Guided Walk over The Meadows. Our wonderfully knowledgeable guide, Mr Adrian Walters has the illustrious title of; Clerk/Ranger to The Common Lands and Freemen of Sudbury, and an invitation was sent out to all Freemen and Widows and guests, to join him on a guided walk around part of the Common Lands before the AGM. It was a glorious day, and my husband and I thoroughly enjoyed the walk along the banks of the beautiful River Stour, and across the meadow, which took nearly two hours. Adrian was an absolute font of all knowledge, and not only pointed out many points of interest in the surrounding landscape, but could name all the flora and fauna along the way.

After the walk we headed back into town and took a very welcome cup of tea and slice of cake in the Sudbury Institute Club, whilst chatting to many of the Sudbury Freemen. In the evening we attended the AGM in Sudbury Town Hall, where I was made very welcome by Michael Wheeler, Chairman on behalf of the Committee. Before the AGM kicked off, the Payment of Common Money; each Freeman receives £4.00 and Widows £2.00 was made, a tradition that has its roots somewhere in the distant past! Michael Wheeler started the AGM by formally introducing me to the gathered assembly, and after the meeting there was quite a lot of interest shown in the role of the FEW. I was also presented with a pen, and a book entitled 'Inn to Ashes' which tells the story of the Rose & Crown and the Four Swans, two iconic market town inns that hosted the great and good of Sudbury, and the men and women that served in them. All in all it was a lovely day out, and I look forward to returning in 2018.

Colchester:

In April this year Sandy French contacted me with an invitation to attend a meeting of the Colchester Conservators. The meeting was held in the Nottage Centre, Wivenhoe, and the following individuals were present; David Bacon, Chair, Sandy French, Secretary, Terry Youngs, Finance and Michael Downes who described himself as the 'good egg'.

There was some discussion regarding interest in setting up a social guild/committee, but it was clear that finding volunteers to organise events was proving very difficult. I was given a copy of a recent newsletter, which also included plans for a talk in 2017 on the History of the Freemen in Colchester, but so far there has been no news on this. Another sticking point seemed to be their out of date constitution, and worries over insurance for events. So problems all round!

A questionnaire had been sent out to the Freeburgess of Colchester asking for their feedback on what they wanted regarding the organising of social events, plus an appeal for volunteers to take on the administration of the Facebook page, as I got the impression they wanted to run it themselves, rather than me, but to date there has been no movement at all on this. Then finally on the 27th June this year, I received an email from Sandy French informing me that she has resigned from the Conservators as she feels disillusioned, which to be honest was no great surprise. Although she had copied other conservators into the email, there has been no attempt by anyone at making contact with me, but I will try when I get time to focus on it.

Warden for the South-East.

The Rochester Oyster and Floating Fishery:

On Saturday 8th July 2017, the Admiralty Court of the Mayor and Citizens of the River Medway, announced by the Principal Water Bailiff Mr Dean Caston, were convened by Statute under the auspices of the Mayor, Cllr David Wildey in the Rochester Guildhall, and then commenced its business with Acting Registrar Perry Holmes requiring Freeman Chamberlain Shane Hales to take the Oath and be sworn in, followed by the sixteen members of the Jury who were then sworn in and were required to sign the Register of Jurymen.

The business of the Court included two presentments from the Chamberlain, including the opening of the oyster grounds in October 2017, and the reconfirmation of the new 'No Take' Zone on the north shore of the River Medway.

The fishing boats and dredgers of ROFF, accompanied by a large number of inland cruisers owned by friends, colleagues, and fellow Freemen from Rochester Cruising Club and Allington Marina, then beat the bounds from Rochester up river to Hawkwood Stone, before returning to Rochester Cruising Club for refreshments.

The Guildable Manor of Southwark:

I have nothing to report from the Guildable Manor. For some inexplicable reason, they do not communicate with me.

Gild of Freemen of the City of Lincoln:

In April, I was able to deputise for Warden Val Pettifer at the Annual Investiture Ceremony and the AGM which was held in the Guildhall.

During the process of election for President, the outgoing President (who was not seeking re-election) and the Master asked me to act as Presiding Officer and Returning Officer during the ballot for a new President. In the election, Stewart Bristow was elected overwhelmingly by the Freemen present, as the new President of the Gild.

Warden for the South Midlands.

Coventry Freemen's Guild regular events such as: the Banquet; Apprentice of the Year Competition; and the Christmas Dinner continue to have good attendances. Heritage Open Days weekend attracts many visitors to our ancient Guild room in St Mary's Hall.

Following the success of his 'Coventry's Medieval Story' colouring book, depicting street scenes of medieval life, Past Master Peter Wilford's new project will cover St Mary's Guildhall – once sponsorship and funding is in place. The Guild visit programme has restarted under Junior Warden Matt Johnson, with recent trips to the gothic revival styled Almshouses in Bedworth, the Coventry Watch & Clock Museum, and Stratford Races.

New Guild members easily exceed deaths through the year, but we are always happy to welcome members to our monthly committee meetings with a view to joining the Court.

Leicester Gild of Freemen had their Common Hall meeting on 13th April. The first Lady Master in the history of the Gild, Lynn Roffee, stepped down having completed her three year term as prescribed by the Gild Rules. She continues as Chairman of the Board of Deputies, who look after the Freemen's Holt bungalow complex. As there were no nominations for the Officer roles of Clerk and FEW Representative, these remain vacant. Contact for Gild matters is thus new Gild Master Brian Mudford. The Gild continues to receive civic invitations, and supports the Lord Mayor at his Civic Service, Armed Forces Day, and Remembrance Sunday. The annual banquet in June this year was also supported by Freemen from Coventry, Oxford, London, Lincoln and York – all helping to make the event financially viable.

Northampton Guild of Freemen continues to support Northampton Civic events such as: the Mayor Making Ceremony; Civic Sunday Service; Freedom Ceremonies; and Remembrance Sunday. Only hereditary candidates are currently eligible for the Freedom. The fourth annual Charity weekend based at Moulton College continues to attract attendance from other Guilds. A new Facebook site covering activities is found by searching for 'Northampton Freemen's Trustees'.

Alcester Court Leet & Court Baron usual staple events such as the Pancake Races and Assizes were augmented by some novel fund raising events such as 'Super heroes vs. Super villains' by High Bailiff Ian Whitehead.

Henley-in-Arden Court Leet & Court Baron. I hope that FEW Officers and representatives enjoyed their day at the March Court meeting in the Henley-in-Arden Guildhall, a fine example of a smaller Guildhall, maintained by the Court Leet under current High Bailiff Norman Kench.

Warwick Court Leet continues the traditional events of Assizes, Ale Tasting and visits to other regional Courts Leet, augmented again this year by the Beer, Cider and Music Festival held at Warwick Race Course. This event is the principal source of charity funds, and was well supported – despite publicity signs 'disappearing' before the weekend. This year the Leet was also supporting the 13th August Retro Warwick Car Show, now rebranded as the Warwick Classic Car Show. Local press reports covering this oversubscribed event in the Market Place helped raise the public profile of the Court Leet.

Warden for Wales.

The Gild of Freemen of Pembroke:

On Saturday 10th June 2017 the Gild was represented by the Master at the unveiling of the Statue of Henry V11 which is situated at the Pembroke Mill Bridge. Henry V11 was born at Pembroke Castle on the 22nd August 1457.

At the Court Meeting on July 20th the former Mayor of the Town, Cllr Dennis Evans was admitted as a Burgess of the Gild of Freemen of Pembroke in recognition of the service he has given to the community of Pembroke.

At an Admission of Freemen Ceremony on Tuesday August 22nd with the Chairman of Pembrokeshire County Council Cllr. Paul Harries, his Lady, the Town Clerk, the Chaplain of the Gild, members of the Gild and in attendance the seven applicants who had applied

to the Pembroke Town Council to be enrolled as Freemen of the Town of Pembroke, the Master of the Gild opening the proceedings gave a warm welcome to all, following which the Gild's Chaplain was invited to open the proceedings with prayers. Each of the applicants having taken the Oath and signed the Oath and Declaration they were each congratulated and presented with framed Certificates by the Chairman who then expressed his pleasure at the presence of the relatives and friends of the newly-admitted Freemen. The next meeting of the Court will be the AGM and will take place in the Chamber of the Pembroke Town Council on the 26th October 2017.

The Haverfordwest Gild of Freemen:

Officers and Wardens of Haverfordwest Gild of Freemen attended the annual Civic Service at St. Mary's Church, Haverfordwest. In June in support of the Mayor. Councillor Alan Buckfield.

In July three new Burgesses were sworn in by Gild Master Charles Davies. They included the current chairman of Pembrokeshire County Council, Councillor Paul Harries, who holds the position during his term of office; Canon Geoffrey Gwyther, who recently retired as Rector of St. David's Church, Prendergast, and County Chaplain to the Royal British Legion, and retired Chief Superintendent John Daniels, former Divisional Commander of the Pembrokeshire Area of Dyfed Powys Police and a prolific fund-raiser who is secretary of the local committee of Prostate Wales.

Preparations are well in hand for Haverfordwest Gild of Freemen's annual weekend in October when the AGM will take place at County Hall, followed by the Annual Banquet at The Wolfscastle Country Hotel and the Sunday Service at St. Martin's Church Haverfordwest. It is hoped that the new Bishop of St Davids - the first lady Bishop for the Diocese, the Right Rev Joanna PEMBERTHY will give the address. Guest speaker is former Newcastle Emllyn vet, Mr Dick Thomas, a well-known and popular after-dinner speaker. In November, robed members of the Gild's Court of Wardens will assemble at the town cenotaph on Salutation Square for the annual British Legion Armistice Day Parade and Service of Remembrance and wreath-laying ceremony. The Royal Signals at Cawdor Barracks, the British Legion, youth groups and other organisations will be on parade.

Report for the North Area

With Colin's resignation in May, and his successor having only just been appointed, the last Warden Report for the North was presented to the Court Meeting in June. I would like to just bring you up to date with developments in...

Great Grimsby

Under the provisions of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill (HL) the Enrolled Freemen of Grimsby were balloted on proposed changes to the Rules of Admission to the Pastures Roll. Firstly, a unique rule in Grimsby allowed for a man marrying a Freeman's daughter to be admitted a Freeman, it has been resolved to afford the same right to a woman marrying a Freeman thus giving both spouses equality. Secondly, the 1835 Pastures Act, based upon the prevailing Custom, allowed for admission following a 7 year Apprenticeship; since such apprenticeships were abolished many years ago this has now been amended to a "recognised modern apprenticeship". We are initially looking at a scheme encompassing the renewables sector since the Wind Farm business has taken root in the Humber Estuary and Grimsby in particular. We are seeking

legal advice on a third change – reducing the age of admission from 21 to 18 years since the custom (which stated 21 years) could be interpreted as “voting age”.

Stephen P. White

Annual Report And Accounts For The Year Ending 31st March 2017

SIGNIFICANT INFORMATION

The Association was established under a Constitution adopted on 28th September 1985 and amended on 23rd September 1989, 19th September 1992, 21st September 1996, 17th September 2005, 17th September 2011 and 15th September 2012. The Association was registered as a Charity, with Registration Number 293536, on 29th January 1986.

ASSOCIATION EXECUTIVE OFFICERS – 2016/2017 (TRUSTEES)

President	- Mr R E Leek
Deputy President	- Capt J Evans
Vice President	- Mr S P White
Immediate Past President	- Mr G A Varndell
Honorary Archivist	- Mr A G Fallows
Honorary Journal Editor	- Mr T Gibson
Honorary Membership Secretary	- Mrs E Forth
Honorary Secretary	- Mr N R S Johnson
Honorary Treasurer	- Mr S P White
Officer without Portfolio	- Mr A Shelley
Custodian Trustees	- Mr S P White (as Hon Treasurer, Chairman pro-tem) - Mr A Robson - Mr C Hardcastle - Maj J C Barden

BANK - NatWest Bank Plc 39 Grimsby Road Cleethorpes North East Lincolnshire
DN35 7GB

AUDITORS - Forrester Boyd Chartered Accountants
26 South Saint Mary's Gate Great Grimsby North East Lincolnshire
DN31 1LW

PRINCIPAL OFFICE

The Association does not have a Registered Office. All enquiries should be addressed to the Honorary Secretary: Mr N S R Johnson 37 Stanhope Gardens Ilford Essex IG1 3LQ

TRUSTEES' REPORT

The Trustees present their report and the accounts for the year ended 31st March 2017.

TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ACCOUNTS

Charities law requires the Trustees of the Association to prepare an Account of Receipts and Payments and a Statement of Assets and Liabilities for each financial year. In addition, the Trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the Charity's transactions and to disclose with reasonable accuracy, at any time, the financial position of the Association. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Charity, and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

OBJECTS OF THE ASSOCIATION

The primary objects of the Freemen of England and Wales Association are to advance

public education in the Freedom and to promote research into the history and legal customs of ancient towns of England and Wales and the legal institution of the Freedom, to publish the useful results of such research and, in furtherance of this object, to provide advice and information concerning the legal institution of the Freedom within each of those several places in England and Wales, being former boroughs or other places where that institution is to be found.

ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS DURING THE YEAR

After the euphoria of the 50th Anniversary celebrations in York last year, 2017 has seen the Association revert to its normal steady pace of working, with the regular activities of both itself, and its Member Gilds continuing as usual.

New Individual Memberships show a small increase in numbers, and in order to boost this, the first phase of a membership drive encouraging Member Gilds to approach their members with the objective of taking out more Individual FEW Memberships has recently been commenced. Initially, five Gilds have been contacted, and feedback is now awaited from them. Further to this, it is pleasing to note that more new Freemen, particularly ladies, are receiving the Freedom in their towns and boroughs, thereby swelling their Gild membership numbers, and it would seem highly appropriate that these people could at the same time, also be advised about Individual FEW Membership.

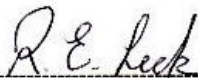
Queries from both members and the general public, regarding the Freedom and its working in various places, are regularly dealt with by the Hon Archivist, who if possible, should always be the first point of contact when requiring any such information.

The Association's Wardens continue to work tirelessly in maintaining positive FEW links with all the Gilds in their particular areas, further to which, they also help these Gilds in forming active social contacts with their neighbours. Their comprehensive reports to both the Courts and AGMs show the depth of the work covered, and the successes achieved. Sincere thanks must go to all of them. Following appointments made at last years' AGM all Warden positions were occupied for the first time in a number of years.

FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES AND AFFAIRS

The attached accounts show the transactions for the year and state of affairs, which the Trustees consider to be sound.

Approved by the Trustees on the 15th September 2017 and signed on their behalf by:-



Ronald E. Leek
FEW President



Stephen P. White
FEW Honorary Treasurer

In all aspects, 2016/17 can be looked back on as being a most memorable and successful year for the Association.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

- 1. Subscriptions**

Subscriptions are as they are received in the year; arrears may occur one year and made up the next. The increase in subscription rate from £8 to £10 is still catching some members out. The Membership Secretary will report further on this subject.
- 2. Donations to Funds**

Any payment received over £10 basic subscription is applied to the Legal, Regalia or General Fund as directed. The total income is broadly in line with 2015/16.
- 3. Sales**

Income from sales items has varied, but is better than 2015/16, as indicated by the detailed figures and even after allowing for sales of the 50th Anniversary Items.
- 4. Interest Received**

Interest on our COIF Account reduced to 0.300% from 0.450% over the year which is low, reflecting the Bank of England base rate, but may be regarded as a secure investment. There were no withdrawals from COIF during the year.
- 5. Income Tax Recovered**

Gift Aid is claimed on all eligible receipts other than purchases. Bank interest is now received gross following a change in banking policy but is negligible.
- 6. Administrative Expenses**

This includes postage, archives, stationery, printing and on-going website hosting costs. A little more than in 2015/16, postage being the largest cost again.
- 7. Purchases**

The only purchases of sale items during the year were the Anniversary Souvenirs.
- 8. Journal**

Three Journals were produced, the same as in the previous year, (total 68 pages in 2016/17 and more pictures, 64 pages in 2015/16). Both Printing and Postage costs have increased by around 6%, or 10p per copy.
- 9. Annual General Meetings**

Costs include those directly incurred by FEW and those reimbursed to Hosts. A small surplus was made by the Host last year and paid to FEW which has more than offset the direct costs: the costs for 2017 not yet known.
- 10. Legal & Regalia Expenses**

There were no Legal expenses in the year; the £1,069 Regalia expenses were in respect of replacing the missing gold chain to the President's Medallion and 4 missing Warden's Medallions. These costs have been set against the Self-insurance Fund.
- 11. Court & Executive Officers Meetings**

These costs relate to the Executive Meetings held in Grimsby, Leicester and Lincoln, and the Court Meeting held at Henley in Arden in March 2017.

MOVEMENT OF DESIGNATED FUNDS - 2015/16 to 2016/17

	2015/16	2016/17
Legal Fund		
Balance brought forward, 1st April	4,180.44	4,384.24
Donations received	174.80	169.50
Tax recovered	29.00	26.50
Addnl Tax recovered	-	-
LESS: Costs Incurred	-	-
Balance at 31st March	<u>4,384.24</u>	<u>4,580.24</u>
Regalia Fund		
Balance brought forward, 1st April	661.10	411.71
Donations received	158.20	153.25
Tax recovered	22.75	24.00
Addnl Tax recovered	-	-
LESS: Purchases made	-430.34	-
Balance at 31st March	<u>411.71</u>	<u>588.96</u>
Regalia Self-Insurance Fund		
Balance brought forward, 1st April	5,865.00	6,886.00
Amount Provided	1,021.00	1,130.00
Amount set against Fund	-	-1,069.60
Balance at 31st March	<u>6,886.00</u>	<u>6,946.40</u>
TOTAL DESIGNATED FUNDS	<u>11,681.95</u>	<u>12,115.60</u>

STATEMENT OF ASSETS & LIABILITIES AS AT THE FINANCIAL YEAR END

	31.3.2016	31.3.2017
Monetary Assets		
GENERAL PURPOSE FUND		
National Westminster Bank - Current A/C	371.60	383.91
National Westminster Bank - Reserve A/C	864.66	367.01
COIF Charity Deposit Fund	39,000.00	38,000.00
	<u>40,236.26</u>	<u>38,750.92</u>
DESIGNATED FUNDS		
National Westminster Bank - Current A/C	281.95	715.60
National Westminster Bank - Reserve A/C	6,400.00	5,400.00
COIF Charity Deposit Fund	5,000.00	6,000.00
	<u>11,681.95</u>	<u>12,115.60</u>
DEBTORS / CREDITORS		
Amounts owed to FEW at 31st March	2,303.91	2,053.95
LESS: Amounts owed by FEW at 31st March	-448.05	0.00
TOTAL	<u>53,774.07</u>	<u>52,920.47</u>
Other Assets		
Stocks of resale items (cost, not realisable value)	1,735.07	3,975.90
Officers' regalia (insured/replacement value)	20,421.00	22,593.00
Other Assets	195.00	195.00
TOTAL	<u>22,351.07</u>	<u>26,763.90</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>76,125.14</u>	<u>79,684.37</u>

Liabilities

Short Term

At 31st March 2017, the only short term commitments were in connection with usual ongoing transactions such as unrepresented cheques and purchase of Regalia.

Long Term

At 31st March 2017, the Officers of the Association have not made any long term commitments.

Membership Secretary's Report.

Guilds

We have 38 Guilds on the books with currently 3 Guilds are still to pay subscription for April 2017.

Individual Membership

The current membership stands at 341.

Since September 2016

11 Members Deceased

8 New full individual Members

1 New Associate member

2 Members have resigned due to ill health

9 Members deleted under rule 9 of the Constitution

1 has been reinstated

Current Payments

Late payments. Reminders are being sent out but responses are very slow.

Arrears

At Present not counting September 2017 to September 2018 there are 29 members in arrears. The breakdown is:-

Sept 2016 to Sept 2017	4 are in Arrears
Sept 2015 to Sept 2016 + Sept 2016 to Sept 2017	1 is in Arrears
April 2017 to April 2018	17 are in Arrears
April 2016 to April 2017 + April 2017	8 are in Arrears
April 2015 to April 2016 + April 2016 + April 2017	4 are in arrears

Looking at these figures at least 5 will be deleted under rule 9 of the Constitution

Hon Archivists Report.

The calls upon the archives have again been light since my last report but with steady referrals from our Hon Secretary, I have attended to enquiries from Derby Council, Maidstone, Pevensey, Warwick Council and the BBC.

I must admit to varied success with these enquiries dependant upon their nature. Personal enquiries may enable me to guide prospective applicants toward the proper authorities but the endeavour to attain the freedom must be their own and there is no substitute for local knowledge.

Information to Councils and Gilds regarding the hereditary freedom is, of course, our forte and I can be confident in my advice there; but advice regarding Court Leets is more difficult.

I find that in these circumstances I can only apply a logical (and personal) view of what any seignorial court leet may, or may not, do and how they should be organised. It may be assumed that it is a brave court leet that asks me to advise them on what they should do,but I will do my best to be helpful.

In view of the differences between Gilds and Leets, I would suggest that perhaps those Leet members of FEW may wish to produce a co-ordinated guide of their individual leet structures and ancient rules of operation which we could publish to aid future enquiries.

I had previously indicated that I would be endeavouring to up-date the list of contents of the archives and this is now under way. I find that there are multiple copies of correspondence on file received from different officers files. As a prelude to possible modernisation of these papers I will reduce the bulk of any duplicates during this process.

The archives are now being moved from my home to my new offices and I am setting aside a room specifically for any Freemen items that are in the possession of FEW. I am also including any personal freemen's papers and memorabilia into the FEW archives from today, to preserve their use, and would welcome any other member's donations of books and papers, etc, in the same way.

A summary of the archives will be added to the list of assets of FEW under preparation by the Hon Secretary and all will be accessible by anyone wishing to research them.

Hon. Editors Report.

This last year has seen the expected three editions of the Journal published with contributions from a number of member Guilds that do not often send items. I thank all who have contributed articles and pictures to each of the Journals. I remind you all that while I anticipate that the next edition shall be full with the reports of this weekend, the one following in the new year will, if those in the past are any indication, be the easiest for Guilds to get any news into.

Officer Without Portfolio's Report.

Mr President, fellow freemen. I am delighted to be back here in Pembroke. especially with its past connection to the de Clare's the founders of my Family freedom of Sudbury. A year ago in the pleasant surroundings of York we celebrated fifty years since the formation of our Association. At that time we had very little idea of what a disruptive year would follow. What with Brexit and the unsettling politics surrounding that, we have also seen the sad demise of several principal members of our society of freedom. Sadly for me. they included two personal friends in Ray Holl a leading light at Coventry and John Grimwood, the founding President of the Sudbury Freemen's Society. Even while we are in this interim period before actually leaving the EU. there will be some potential changes that can affect our activities. Regarding freemen's property, a recent EU directive has called for Environmental Impact Assessments' (EIAs) to be submitted before any physical action takes place on the lands. Michael Clove, as the new chief of Defra, has indicated several changes to the subsidies we currently receive for land holding. It now appears that any monies received in future, Will need to be 'earned'. I shall be keeping an eye on government policies where they may concern freemen's property and will report in due course. In the meantime, we are about to see some changes closer to home and within our Association. We welcome the appointment of Jim our new President. as President Ron will now become IPP. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ron for his effective and enjoyable period of office. Sadly. Nick Johnson has decided to vacate his role as Secretary and I would draw your attention to the very

efficient way he has not only supported the Executive but also for his kind assistance given at all times.

Fortunately, over the past year my health has greatly improved and I have been able to attend all court and executive meetings including those of my own gilds. Once the FEW secretarial function is sorted, we can again look forward to another bright and constructive period led by our new President, Captain Jim Evans.



President Ronald Leek swears in his successor, Captain James Evans in front of the executive, wardens and delegates at this years AGM meeting.

Photograph by Stephen .P. White.

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Cover Picture: The procession to church through Pembroke. By Stephen White.

Back Cover: The robed delegates at the AGM. Courtesy Martin Caveney

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Please note the closing date for the editor to receive items for the next issue (No. 189) is the 26/1/18.

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