



Freemen of England and Wales



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Presidents Letter.

This is to be my last letter to you. Eileen and I have certainly enjoyed the last two years meeting our friends from the past and making new ones for the future. We have attended a lot of venues over the two years including some new ones which I have already reported on, the latest one being an invite to the "Court of Deans Scotland AGM" held in Berwick upon Tweed on the weekend Saturday the 23rd and Sunday 24th of May. This was first for us but certainly I hope not the last. We had a great time with the Guilds and one which I hope can be repeated. From this I have already received an invite for next February 2015 to visit the Guild in Aberdeen and I am sure that this will not be the last invitation to the Scottish Guilds. We have also had a request from another Guild to join the Association and the news of this one will come at the AGM in September.

I would like to thank all the Guilds/Gilds that we have visited, we have had a wonderful time with each and everyone of you. Eileen and I have tried to accept all the invitations to visit but inevitably one or two did clash and these were passed on to the Deputy President. We on the Executive have been working hard on your behalf and I am pleased to say that all seems to be going well at the moment.

My whole aim throughout my period of office was to try and reach the Freemen of all Guilds/Gilds that take the Freedom scroll and after the ceremony they promptly disappear. We have no idea where these Freemen are and this is why Eileen and myself have been with other organizations just to spread the word of the Freedom, we are letting them know who we are and what we do especially for the community. We talk to the Freemen that we see on a regular basis but all we are doing going down that route is preaching to the converted.

I have been asked by some Gilds/Guilds for my ideas in generating new interest in the Freedom, to this end I have written a paper giving ideas, this is now four A4 sheets long. One Master in the Midlands has already seen this and thought it a good paper and added things to it relevant to their area, any one wanting to see it, to alter it, to add to it or just to criticise are quite welcome but I really hope that some of this will be taken on board and used.

I have mentioned before about the Museum displays, I am sure that we can make this work. Northampton, Leicester and Coventry have taken this idea on board and are willing to go with it once they can put everything into place with their respective areas.

The new function that I have spoken about in the past is one brilliant idea by the incoming Master of York for the year 2015 to 2016 and I wish her every success with it on this her

special birthday. I can now tell you it is to be titled WITCH HAZEL night, it is to be hosted by the new 2015 Master of the Gild of Freeman of the City of York Mrs Hazel Hague with the full support of the York Gild of Freeman, it is promising to be a very good affair with food, music, entertainment, raffles, even face painting has been arranged, fancy dress if you wish and anything else that can be thrown in. All are invited, men women, children, Freeman, other Guilds. I certainly hope that you will support this. The venue is booked and it is a new purpose built building and the date is Friday the 30th of October 2015 so put this in your diaries so that you do not miss out. To find out more about this contact Hazel Hague City of York or Tom Gibson Clerk to the City of York Freeman. Please support this new and bold venture it promises to be fun. Thank you for all your support to Eileen and myself over the 2 years we have really enjoyed the work.
Gordon.

Minutes of the Court Meeting held on Saturday 14th March 2015 in the Guildhall, Northampton

- 1) The list of attendees: Derek Austin – Coventry, Michael Ayres – Leicester, John Edwards – Stafford, Capt. Jim Evans – Berwick-upon-Tweed, Eileen Forth – York, Colin Hardcastle – York, Nick Johnson – Hale, Ron Leek – Alcester & London, Anthony Piddock – Stafford, Cllr Brian Sanforth – Northampton, Carole Sibley – Northampton, Terry Sibley – Northampton, John Tolley – Altrincham, Gordon Varndell – London, Trevor Ward – Northampton
 - a) The meeting was called to order, and the President entered the chamber preceded by the FEW Mace, carried by a Freeman of Northampton. The President welcomed everyone present, and then introduced Mr David Kennedy, Chief Executive of Northampton Borough Council, who gave a most informative and interesting address about the Guildhall; Northampton; its Shire; and the administrative and historic past.
- 2) Apologies for absence were received from Stephen White, Vice President and Hon Treasurer; Alan Fallows, Immediate Past President and Hon Archivist; Tom Gibson, Hon Editor; Alan Shelley, Officer Without Portfolio; Capt. Stephen Healy, Warden for the North; Roy Folland, Warden for Wales; Howard Crapper, Warden for the West; Martin Hanks, Warden for the South West; Hazel Hague, York.
- 3) The minutes of the Court Meeting held on Saturday 15th March 2014 at Freeman's Holt, Leicester, were approved as a correct record, and were signed by the President.
- 4) There were no matters arising.
- 5) Gordon Varndell presented his President's Report. A copy is appended. Colin Hardcastle pointed out that although he was in agreement with the principle of FEW putting on an exhibition publicising itself and its Gilds, he was not sure about the suitability of the Goole museum, and noted that together with the FEW Hon Editor, Tom Gibson, he had visited Goole and produced a report noting the concerns. A copy is appended. The meeting, in giving its approval to the idea in principle, was informed that such an exhibition would be subject to further

intensive consideration by the Executive, before full and formal details were published in a future Journal.

- 6) Ron, as Deputy President, had only been called upon to deputise for the President on one occasion. This was to attend and thoroughly enjoy with his wife, the pre-Christmas celebration of the Guild of Freemen of Berwick-upon-Tweed.
- 7) A copy of the report from Vice President, Stephen White, who was unable to be present due to illness, is appended to these minutes.
- 8) No Immediate Past President's Report was presented in Alan Fallows' absence.
- 9) It was noted that Colin Hardcastle, Warden for the North East, had chaired this morning's meeting of the FEW Wardens, and he called upon Derek Austin, Warden for the South Midlands to give a resumé of the topics covered. Derek reported as follows:-
 - a) The minutes of the last Wardens' Meeting in Stafford formed the basis for the agenda.
 - b) Noting that the FEW Constitution had been published in the last FEW Journal, the Wardens request that it should always be in the form of a more useable detachable centrefold.
 - c) The Wardens' Duties booklet needs revising and bringing up to date.
 - d) Noting Vice President Stephen White's current incapacity due to illness, thereby making it difficult for Warden's Reports to be entered on the FEW website, Wardens are encouraged to temporarily provide their own direct input.
 - e) Further to d) the website itself needs updating.
 - f) The Wardens are in agreement with the Executive's findings that it is not practicably possible to combine Court Meetings with a major event of a Host Guild.
 - g) There is still a shortage of Wardens' Robes. The return of those held by resigned Warden Norman Offield, and possibly Freddie Trowman, is urged.
 - h) Fuller details are requested, concerning members resident in areas away from their home Guilds, who wish to join in with the activities of Guilds in their areas of residence.
 - i) Wardens' cards are necessary.

Wardens' Reports were then presented as follows:-

Nick Johnson, Warden for the South East, and Acting Warden for the East. Copy appended.

John Edwards, Warden for the North Midlands. Copy appended.

Derek Austin, Warden for the South Midlands. Copy appended.

Colin Hardcastle, Warden for the North East. Colin noted that Trinity House, Hull, which he had visited promoting FEW membership, had not yet made any approach.

Copies are also appended of the reports from absentee Wardens Roy Folland – Wales; Howard Crapper - West; and a brief note from Capt. Stephen Healy – North.

- 10) In Stephen White's absence, no up to date Hon Treasurers Report was presented. A copy of the Income and Expenditure Accounts for April to December 2014 was presented.
- 11) Eileen presented her Hon Membership Secretary's Report. A copy is appended.

- 12) A copy of Alan Fallows' Hon Archivist's Report is appended, together with a copy of his associated report "Land Registration and Legal Opinion concerning Freemen's Lands".
- 13) A copy of Tom Gibson's Hon Editor's Report is appended. It was emphasised to the meeting, that contributors to the Journal should be very aware that the Summer and Autumn editions of the Journal always include the reports and minutes from either Court or Annual General Meetings, leaving little or occasionally no space for Gild reports and other general items. This means that with only three editions each year, the Spring issue alone provides real space for such items, and contributors are therefore encouraged to ensure that their submissions are always received in good time before the closing date for this first issue of each year
- 14) A copy is appended of Alan Shelley's Officer Without Portfolio's Report.
- 15) In order to formalise FEW policy on claimable expenses incurred on behalf of the Association, the meeting considered the draft Expenses document drawn up by Colin Hardcastle, which he had based on the formal Civil Service practice, and which had been approved earlier by the FEW Executive. John Edwards considered that the document was somewhat over the top, and that all it should do was to ensure a simple and fair approach to claims. After discussion, which noted that as it was a registered charity FEW must have a formal policy, and the further noting from current experience that expense claims within FEW have always been few and virtually unknown, the document was adopted, with just a slight change to the wording relating to car travel expenses. A copy of the new policy document is appended.
- 16) The question was considered "Why is there always a lack of new nominees each year for FEW Executive Officer positions?" The meeting was unable to suggest any real reason, other than perhaps general apathy, and the feeling that the current officers are doing a good job. The meeting was reminded however, that due to previous lack of nominations, two of the current team of officers are of necessity already holding two offices each, a totally unsatisfactory situation.
- 17) Any Other Business:-
 - a) Capt. Jim Evans noted that he had provided several copies of the details and booking forms for this year's AGM to be held in Berwick-upon-Tweed from Friday 11th to Sunday 13th September.
 - b) The new guide document for assisting AGM Host Gilds in arranging and costing an AGM weekend was queried. It was noted that Stephen White was working on this, and that it was well in hand, but that as the two Gilds hosting this and next year's AGMs were already well versed in organising these events, then there was no immediate urgency to finalise the guide.
- 18) The 2016 AGM will be held in York. This will be a very special occasion – the 50th Anniversary of FEW. Details yet to be finalised.
- 19) There being no further business, the President declared the Court closed – precisely at the scheduled finish time of 4.30pm.

Presidents report

Eileen and I have been very busy since the September AGM 2014, we have attended a lot of functions large and small. I have also been giving talks to some Gilds and other parties We were invited this month the 21x of March to the voting and installing of the Pasture

Masters of Beverley where we met the Mayor of Beverley Councillor Paul McGrath and the Member of Parliament For Beverley and Holderness.

I was interviewed on the Humberside Radio and also interviewed by the Humberside Daily Mail newspaper

We would like to thank all the Guilds/Gilds that have invited us to their functions, we enjoy meeting you all. We work hard to keep in contact with as many people as we can. We still have ongoing interest from Goole Museum wanting to put a display on about the Freeman, Tom Gibson our Editor has added something in his report. Beverley have said that they would like to display so the Goole curator is now in contact with Beverley and I am to be kept informed. I have another meeting scheduled for the 16' of April with a view to showing some literature to be displayed on the new information boards. (these will measure one meter x one and a half meters approx in size and this will be done free of charge). The security is as safe as it could be with two major glass cases for display if there is sufficient regalia to display, there is also provision for Robe display plenty of wall space for displays. For those wanting to contact Goole Museum the curator is Debbie Hardy Tel No 01482 392777 this number is (Mon to Thurs) The Museum No is 01405 768963 this number is (tues to Sat) Please try to be a part of this, there is an old saying that is quite true. (From little, acorns)

York have asked me to pass on details of their Banquet I have enclosed details with this report.

The other event I have been keeping details on are from the 2015/16 Master of York Mrs Hazel Hague. It is to be called WITCH,HAZEL NIGHT to be held at the end of October date and venue are now confirmed there will: be. music, food, games and other things I have been told some of the details and it looks to be fun, it is a fun family occasion and all are invited, Freeman, non Freeman, women and children and all will be welcome.

Vice Presidents Report.

Vice President, Stephen White, was unable to be present due to illness but had reported to the Hon. Secretary by email that he had been able to do some work on the website. Not all of the newsletters are there yet because the size of some of them is too large to upload and Tom is looking at a way of "reducing them down". Another Paper has been submitted by Alan Shelley and a revised obituary, and better photograph, of John Speake received from Alan Fallows, thanks to both. Some diary dates have been notified but I could do with some from all areas.

Wardens' Reports.

Warden for South East England & London

SOUTHWARK, London.

The annual Court Leet of the Guildable Manor of Southwark was held in the Church of St George the Martyr on Borough High Street on the 12th November 2014. The new Foreman was installed with due ceremony followed by the Officers. The Clerk, Tony Sharp, provided a brief history of the Manor, prior to the arrival of the party from the Old Bailey.

There are now over one hundred Jurors and nineteen new members were admitted in 2014, including five Livery Masters, indicating the Manor's growing status amongst the Livery of the City of London. Alderman Ian Luder CBE, who was Lord Mayor of London in 2008/9, is the current Foreman for 2015.

I have received three requests from FEW individual members in the last year, to be put in touch with the Guildable Manor, in order to join and become Jurors. It is often the case that these FEW members live many, many miles from their own Shire and are desirous of becoming involved in a Guild nearer their own home. I am obliged to our Deputy President, Mr Ron Leek, for facilitating the approaches for these members. The annual Charter Day with the View of Frankpledge and Quit Rents Ceremony will take place on Tuesday 17th March 2015 at St George the Martyr Church in the presence of the Queen's Remembrancer, Mrs Barbara Fontaine, who began her legal career as a solicitor. She became the QR on October 20th 2014, and is the first woman to hold this ancient role.

ROCHESTER

On February 4th 2015, I attended by invitation the monthly Jurors Meeting of the Rochester Oyster & Floating Fishery at the Rochester Guildhall. With their full permission, I took some photographs of the Jurors assembled, which with other photographs have now formed part of an article that I put together with the ROFF Chamberlain, Shane Hales, about ROFF. This has been placed on the FEW Facebook page for public consumption. The article is intended to be educational, and goes some way in fulfilling Object 1 of our Constitution in that regard.

Acting Warden for the East

COLCHESTER

Following the death of Mr Robert Bacon in November 2014, who was the Senior Conservator of the Resident Freemen of Colchester, on March 7th I visited his widow Ann, and two of her sons, David and Nigel, both of whom being individual members of FEW. They expressed some anxiety regarding continuity of the Freemen, and furthermore they not been able to find their father's files and papers appertaining to the Freemen until the evening before my visit.

The Freemen meet twice during the year, once in August when they are called to the Town Hall to receive their money at the Ceremony of the Giving, and also at the Ceremony of the Granting of the Freedom in September to witness new Freemen being installed by the Mayor of the Borough.

The admission of "foreigners" from outside the borough led to a great deal of corruption in the 18th century, when freemen formed part of the council and their votes were vital. Freemen ceased to be part of the council under the 1835 Municipal Corporations Act but other rights, such as benefit from the common lands within the borough were preserved. There are currently about 50 freemen living within the original borough boundaries but other freemen who have sworn their oath live elsewhere in the country and indeed around the world. If unable to attend the Ceremony of the Giving, they have thirty days to claim their money in person.

David Bacon informed me that he had discovered from his father's papers that the FEW annual subscription for the Freemen is paid annually out of the Freemen's Fund, which is controlled by the council. I had to advise him that Colchester Freemen were three years in arrears, and that the four Conservators should speak to their Borough Council to find out why subscriptions were no longer being paid. I await developments.

The new Senior Conservator is Mr Peter Nason, a local professional photographer.

Four years ago a local newspaper, the Daily Gazette, ran the following story on Monday 3rd October 2011 - with the following headline in their news section - "Town bestows twenty seven honours...but we can't say who to"

"An historic honour dating back centuries has been bestowed on twenty seven people - but

their names cannot be revealed for the most modern of reasons. The title "freeman" of the borough of Colchester has been bestowed for centuries. Nowadays, it is an honorary title for people who can trace back their roots in the town for generations."

"This year due to sexual equality legislation, for the first time since the 1300's women can receive the title - changed to "burgess" rather than "freeman" - and 22 stepped forward. However, Colchester Council says it cannot reveal their names, or those of the five men who received the honour, because it would break the Data Protection Act."

"The act says data may only be used for the specific purposes for which it was collected and the council says releasing their names in public would break the rules and its hands are tied."

Incidentally, the Freemen of Norwich in February 2014 released on YouTube, through a company known as Mustard TV, a televised video recording following their similar ceremony with interviews of Freemen and name captions. So no issues in Norwich with Data Protection. One wonders if Colchester Council fear good publicity.

<http://www.mustardtv.co.uk/browse/freemen-of-norwich-citys-medieval-ceremony/#.VPuISKh6m4o.mailto>

(tap the image of the three men to run the video)

SUDBURY

Following contact with Mr Michael Wheeler, the Chairman of the Sudbury Freemen's Society, on May 1st coming I have been invited to witness, and hopefully with permission photograph the Sudbury Freemen's Society quinquennial Turning On Day, where the Mayor passes the grazing land fit for the cattle on the Common Lands.

Also, I have been kindly invited to their AGM on July 7th.

Warden for the North Midlands

I am not sure whether there is more going on in my local guild than in the others in my area. Perhaps it is simply that I know more about it, perhaps the others do not tell me about their activities, or perhaps they see my existence as irrelevant or intrusive.

Shrewsbury and Bridgnorth do submit reports to the Journal, so I won't duplicate those. Either way, I apologise for the fact that my report is rather Stafford-centric this time.

Obviously, the FEW AGM weekend was a major part of our programme and, as reported elsewhere, it seems to have been a success. Even to the extent that one delegate suggested that Stafford should run it every year – a suggestion that we do not propose to embrace, but it was much easier the second time! We hope that: with talks on the Staffordshire Hoard and the town's mayors and charters, we covered the historical aspect; with the visits to Shugborough and Stafford, we showed a little of the area; with the entertainment on both evenings, we covered the social element; with the banquet and other meals, we satisfied most people's nutritional demands and we even managed to squeeze in various meetings and the AGM that provide the excuse for the whole shebang. We know there were problems, but hope they did not spoil the event for most delegates. We manage to break even on the costs, (eventually).

Unfortunately, this year for various reasons, we did not have representation from Bridgnorth, Newcastle, or Shrewsbury at the Stafford Annual Dinner, but the event was enjoyable as ever. We have just about reached the capacity of the venue, which in itself is gratifying. The changes made to the qualifications have permitted more burgesses to be sworn in, which has been beneficial to the Guild.

The major activity this year has been by the Trustees of the Freemen's lands, namely the 'Coton Field', which has about 150 allotments worked by both freemen and other

townsfolk. Indeed, the right to an allotment, (Burgess Plot), is about the only remaining formal benefit of the Stafford freedom, since King John gave the land to “his burgesses of Stafford” in 1206.

Severn Trent Water is expanding its services to the town, notably to accommodate the needs of some 1000 more military personnel, who will soon be joining M.O.D. Stafford. Part of this involves expansion of a pumping station on our land, (which they seem never to have paid for since the 1930s), plus the installation of a major pipeline across the site. Negotiations to minimise damage and obtain appropriate compensation and restitution of the allotments have exercised the trustees, who clearly have obligations to current and future burgesses. The rights of the freemen, under various Staffordshire Acts, against the utility's rights under the Water Acts have been important factors. It is hoped that now we have been able to talk directly to the contractors' engineers, rather than office-bound middle men, progress will be made. Hopefully, the compensation will provide enough money to improve site facilities, if not enough for us to buy back the Stafford Guildhall, which we should never have lost.

Throughout this period there has been regular reference to both Charles Sparrow's and Alan Shelley's papers on the FEW Website. These are valuable resources that we commend to other guilds, as they cover many precedents and historical situations which can influence third parties. Even our MP has involved the House of Commons Library to provide information.

There are a number of members of guilds outside my area, who live locally and we will be inviting them to our events where appropriate. However, I am less sure whether I will be able to assist the gentleman, who wants me to take an area Guild to 'The Court of Human Rights', as there was not a lot about that in my job description.

Warden for the South Midlands

As the activities of the Coventry and Leicester Guilds are regularly reported in the Journal, I will only highlight that the Coventry Guild banquet weekend is scheduled for 8th -10th May, and the Leicester Gild weekend 5th -7th June 2015.

Northampton Freeman's Guild are progressing well, with the fifth issue of their Northampton Freeman's Chronicle, and indeed the first time a FEW Court meeting has been held here today. Their second annual Charity Weekend takes place over 17th - 18th April at the Moulton College venue used last year. Friday sees a fish & chip supper, with the annual dinner on Saturday evening. Further details will be available from their officers here today.

Alcester Court Leet's regular calendar of events has seen the Town Pancake Races last month, with the first of the annual Court Leet Assizes of ale last week. New activities this year include a Race Night, and a Murder Mystery event and dinner tonight in the Town Hall.

Henley-in-Arden Court Leet saw the return of John Rutherford for another term as High Bailiff, due to the regrettable illness of the Low Bailiff Dawn Leech. An Inter-Court Leet sports evening was scheduled for last Wednesday, and a Court Leet Day Assizes and Artisans Market is planned for 6th June in the medieval Guildhall and gardens.

Warwick Court Leet held its 460th annual meeting last October in the fully refurbished Jury Street Courthouse in Warwick, where two new jurors and a new Office of Low Bailiff were duly sworn. Next open meeting to town residents will be the Spring Court scheduled for 26th March. To commemorate the 1100th anniversary last year of the town's fortification by the Saxon Aethelflaed, a useful booklet 'Dark Age Warwick & the Warrior

Queen' is now available from town bookshops.

Warden for Wales

The Gild of Freemen of Pembroke

As Warden for Wales I was invited to attend the Haverfordwest Gild of Freemen's AGM weekend which was held on the 4th of October at the County Hall, Haverfordwest. The Annual Banquet was held in the evening at the Wolfscastle Hotel, On Sunday the Benefactors Service took place at St. Martin's Church and was followed by a wine reception in the church hall.

On the 9th of October the Master represented the Gild at the opening of the St. Michaelmas Fair, this involved a parade from the town hall led by the Mayor, Pembroke Town Councillors, Mayors and Sheriffs from other towns in the county. Following the opening of the fair there was a reception and dinner held at the town hall, which was hosted by the Showman's Gild.

The AGM of the Gild was held on the 23rd of October in the Chamber of Pembroke Town Council. During the election of officers the Master vacated the Chair which was taken by Mr Phil Lloyd. It was moved, seconded and accepted that the existing Officers be re-elected. The dates for the Court Meetings for 2015 were agreed and will take place on the 19th March, 23rd July and the AGM on the 22nd of October. On the 15th of November the Annual Service will be held at St. Mary's Church, Pembroke and will be followed by the Annual Luncheon at the Cleddau Bridge Hotel.

On Sunday November the 9th representatives of the Gild took part in the Service of Remembrance at the Pembroke Town Cenotaph, the Dept. Master laid the wreath on their behalf.

The Annual Service was held on Sunday 16th November 11.00am at the Ancient Parish Church of Saint Mary The Blessed Virgin Pembroke, the service was taken by Canon Roger Jones, Chaplain of the Gild, the guest preacher was the Ven. Ken Sharpe, following the service the Annual Luncheon was held at the Cleddau Bridge Hotel.

The Honoured guests attending were the Chairman of Pembrokeshire County Council and his Lady, the Mayor and Mayoress of Pembroke, the Mayor and Mayoress of Pembroke Dock, the Master of the Haverfordwest Gild of Freemen and his Lady and the Ven. Ken Sharpe and his Lady.

Wardens for the West

It has been an exciting period for Freemen in the West . Sunshine and no floods for a start . In Oxford we have recently admitted four new Freemen including one Lord Mayor's Childe and one new Freeman travelling all the way from Canada just to attend and flying back the next day .

The Freemen of Oxford Apprentice Awards saw fine aspiring young people apply and we had five finalists from varying trades and skills . The Apprentice of the Year was one David Sawyer who specialises in high tech Sensor engineering manufacture . His employer said David was their first Apprentice and the results have been so spectacular that another Apprentice has already been enrolled . The event drew press coverage and was attended by both Lord Mayor and Sheriff.

An amazing illustrated talk and vintage film footage was enjoyed by Freemen last week of Oxford's Port Meadow Airfield in WW1. The Royal Flying Corps (before the formation of the RAF) trained pilots on the Town Meadow , while the Colleges provided accommodation . An extremely dangerous occupation but the growth in importance of military aviation in those early years is demonstrated in the number of aircraft . In 1914 ,

the military had some 400 aircraft and at the end in 1918 they had well over 22,000. I was delighted to visit Chippenham and meet the Treasurer of the Burgess Guild of Chippenham. Robert (Bob) Judd could not have been more welcoming and I thank him for his hospitality . The Guild is very small in numbers with less then 10 members ,who all live in Burae houses . A committee of outside Trustees manage the Charity funds. One of the Guild members is also a regular expert on the Antique Road show and is a leading light on the restoration of the Burae Houses.

The Chartered Freemen of Gloucester report that the City Council are reining in on expenditure of Freeman affairs and this is something repeated elsewhere as council budgets come under further pressure .

I am pleased that Freemen from Gloucester will make a visit to Oxford on Saturday 15th August where a civic reception and a tour of the town awaits.

Oxford Freemen have just launched their own Twitter account (@OxfordFreemen) - yes, we have now embraced social media! Is this a first for the Freemen of England & Wales ? And finally , a rare £1 silver “Declaration Pound ” struck in Oxfords brief period as Royal Mint, during the first year of the Civil War , has recently been sold at auction for £46,000. If anyone has one then I will be pleased to exchange it for a proper pound .

Warden for the North

I had two aims from the meeting:

- 1) An update on preparations for Berwick (I will catch up directly with Jim on my return)
- 2) To re-ignite the discussions about Morpeth, specifically with Alan and Coin. Advice on file possibilities of reviving their Freelage is contrary from the two and perhaps they can find a few minutes aside to explore the issue further and let me know if it is worth pursuing.

Honorary Membership Secretary Report

Guilds

We have 39 Guilds on the books with currently six Guilds in Arrears. One of these we have deleted for non payment under rule 9 of the Constitution (Huntingdon)

Individual Membership

The current membership stands at 359. Since September 2014

1 New full individual Member

3 New Associate Members

3 Members notified as deceased

1 Notified Change of address

2 Members have been deleted under rule 9 of the Constitution

Current payments

Late payments, again I have to say reminders are being sent out constantly. Currently 26 members are in arrears. Some of these paid by Standing order All have been reminded and as yet there has been no response from them.

Archivists Report

Action has been taken to close the current contract with 12CP Barristers as instructed by agreement of the Executive as we feel that we have concluded our requirement for current advice. A refund of £960 was obtained as not all estimated hours required for Opinion were used.

A full report reference this update to Freemens Rights of Pasture etc has been provided for

this meeting and I will be at the AGM in Berwick to answer any in-depth questions that members may have.

I have been kept informed by Stafford of difficulties from Severn Trent Water who wish to encroach over their allotments for upgrading work. I have sent such advice as I could but feel confident that Stafford Freeman have the matter under control. No doubt John will update you in his report.

I fear that we have very little in our archives that will be of benefit to the proposed display at Goole Museum. It seems that individual Gilds will need to be asked for help with their own regalia and charters etc to make displays attractive and full enough to suffice the museums requirements. I suppose this is as it should be; after all it is with the Gilds that history lies, not with FEW.

Report re Land Registration and legal opinion concerning Freemens Lands.

At last years AGM I was requested to approach a firm of specialist barristers for an updated opinion regarding the status of claims for over-riding interests held by various freemen over their historic lands often referred to as Commons.

This revisiting of the question of freemens rights was ostensibly brought about by the judgement of Justice Lewison in a case concerning Tewkesbury Council in 2011 where his summing up confirmed the recognition of the fact that freemens rights of pasturage were exclusive. Under these circumstances it was felt worthwhile gauging current legal positions.

The first reaction was a confirmation of our long-held belief that Charles Sparrows assertion that pasturage rights equated to title to the land is quite unsustainable. It is now affirmed that the freehold title for any such pasturage lands should reside with the town or city council and the freemens rights are an over-riding interest against that title.

It is that confirmation that gives our first setback within the Land Registration Act 2009 In that over-riding interests are unregistrable under that Act against land that had already been registered under freehold title by the Council. It was also confirmed that as the deadline for registration had passed there was no recourse for further action considered to be available.

The perennial question that freemens rights were common rights was also addressed. On this point we were at odds. It was, and still is, my assertion that freemens rights were exclusive rights in common between the freemen, but I could not convince Counsel of this exclusivity. The prevailing Opinion was that these were common rights which may have been surrendered by the acceptance of monetary payments in lieu of actual pasturage. I will concede that some rights were exclusive for only parts of the year and this may have clouded the opinion of Counsel. This also leads to the ruling that any right capable of registration under any of the Commons Acts is barred from registration under the Land Registration Act.

A further consideration would also be the cost and reward of any action. It was considered that any compensation for loss of pasturage rights would be insufficient to warrant an action. This is especially reinforced by the case of *Peggs v Lamb 1994 re Huntingdon*.

The ruling upheld the current view that the body of freemen in each place is now so much a minority that any benefit derived from the rights held, whether under charitable trust or Individual payment, should be distributed for the benefit of the population at large and not just the freemen.

The conclusion is, therefore, that any rights registered under Commons registration, whilst they may have been made in error, and have barred any right of alternative registration,

have nevertheless provided a degree of recognition and protection of those freemens rights. Such rights confirmed under Local Acts are even better protected although the result is much the same.

The question remains that there are two places where satisfactory registration has not been finalised but does show promise and despite the aforementioned opinions your Officer Without Portfolio (who has, incidentally, provided you with an excellent precis of "The dilemma of Common Lands") and I concur over the question of exclusivity of these rights and will continue to investigate any avenue available to us In an effort to prove that point.

Hon Editors report.

The last Journal (180) was a slim edition, I only received enough material to fill 12 pages so added the constitution to increase the page count to 16. The spring edition (Which this was) does appear to be the one to get "News from the Guilds" in, the other two of the year being mainly filled with the minutes and reports from the Court Meeting in the Summer edition or AGM in the Autumn one with little or no space left for other matters. This has been true of the edition issued at this time of year since I became editor though.

The closing date for articles to go into the next edition (181 Summer) is the 22nd of May 2015, which will include reports etc from the March Court in Northampton, it is also the last edition before the AGM so the 4 page booking form should be included.

In addition to my Editorial duties, the president asked me to visit the Museum in Goole with the Warden for the North East who had asked me, separately, in any case, on behalf of F.E.W. Both of them being aware that I have, in the past, worked on the management team of an award winning museum, they felt my observations might be invaluable. I have written a report of the visit itself, including the information given to us by the most helpful custodian during the visit, copies have been sent to the Warden and all members of the executive.

Goole Museum.

At the request of the President I accompanied the Warden for the North East, who had asked me separately, on a fact finding visit to the Goole Museum. In the past I have been a member of the management team of an award winning Museum and attraction in York so both felt I may have an insight into the proposed display at the museum. I was happy so to do. We met with Mr. Peter Appleyard, custodian of the Museum, who made us most welcome and provided much of the information about the museum presented here as well as showing us the space being offered to F.E.W. I have also provided some background information for those unfamiliar with Goole and taken the pictures included in this report. We visited on the 19/2/15.

Background information:

Goole is a town, civil parish and inland port located approximately 45 miles (72km) from the sea at the confluence of the rivers Don and Ouse in the East Riding of Yorkshire, England, although historically within the West Riding of Yorkshire. According to the 2011 UK census, Goole parish had a population of 19,518. The port is highly versatile and capable of handling nearly 3 million tonnes of cargo per annum, making it one of the most important ports on the east coast of England. Unusually in terms of English place-names, "Goole" has its origins in Middle English. It derives from the word *goule*, meaning "stream, or channel", or possibly outlet drain. Not recorded in the *Domesday Book*, its first mention was in 1362 as *Gulle*.

Goole railway station is on the Sheffield to Hull Line, the terminus of the Pontefract Line. Service is provided to Hull Paragon Interchange, Doncaster, Sheffield and Leeds, and the

commuter stations in between. Goole is south of the M62 linking it with Kingston upon Hull in the east and the West Yorkshire urban belt in the west. The M18 runs west of the town, connecting it with South Yorkshire, the South and the Midlands. There are bus services to surrounding towns and villages.

Goole Museum:

There are a number of car parks close to the Museum, although we were concerned that on asking for directions to the Museum (200yds away, but out of sight, as we discovered) the two locals asked did not know it existed, but could direct us to the library when we asked for that instead. The Museum is one of two in the town, the other being the Yorkshire Waterways Museum, but the only one in the centre of Goole, it is affiliated with the East Riding Museums service and is an Accredited Museum. The Museum can be found above the library on Carlisle Street (DN14 5DS), close to the Market Hall and in the historic heart of the town. Access is through the library entrance, a lift or three flights of stairs give access to the three large rooms. There is no admission charge. The permanent display is themed on the social history of Goole during the 19th and 20th centuries with an emphasis on shipping and sea faring, it includes some activities for families. There is also an art gallery and research room. The temporary display space changes every two or three months and consists of Glass cases and wall displays from the collection. A small area is given over to community displays lasting one or two months, it is this area which we are being offered. We were told that they receive approximately 7000 visitors per annum, including occasional school groups and families, it is estimated that in the region of 90% of those visitors were locals, although this last figure was not based on any research.

Community display area:

The space we are being offered is immediately inside the museum entrance, opposite the staff position. It consists of a glass case measuring approx 5ft long x 2ft 6inch wide the internal depth of the display space of it being about 6 inches high. Additionally space for a maximum of three A3 sized display boards (although 2 preferred) is on the wall behind the case. This is quite a limited space and we will need to carefully consider what we put in it and if it should be limited to the FEW story rather than open for all member guilds to provide artefacts, a matter for the court perhaps.

What the Museum will provide us:

The display space as described above for two months. (Pencilled in to begin in September).

Insurance for our materials and artefacts whilst they are on display.

There is both a fire detection system and a security system. (Environmental controls in the display cases were not in evidence).

Local publicity, usually on their website.

<http://www.museums.eastriding.gov.uk/goole-museum/>

What we would need to provide:

All display materials and artefacts. (Including appropriate Labels).

Transport for the above to the Museum.

Insurance for the above during transport to the Museum.

Someone to assemble the display.

Removal of the display on the appointed date to make space for the following display.

Transport for all the Materials back to storage locations.

Insurance for the Materials during transit.

Curatorial: With appropriate control over what we display, a compact, informative

exhibit could be made, though it would need to be tightly themed. We need to control the amount of Material we use and copies of more valuable documents would be more appropriate rather than originals.

Labelling: The Museum, as is common in the industry, adopts a standard font for all display labels for artefacts. In this case they would expect all our labels to be in. "Gill Sans MT font, size 18, with the heading in **Bold type.**"

Additional observations:

Should this proposal go ahead we shall need to look at what is and is not included in the Exhibit, a common problem in many such displays. This is, perhaps, the most difficult and time consuming of the tasks involved which usually would be taken over a number of months, even years. However we only have a small display space available, there fore the largest consideration during this task will probably be, who will make the decisions about what is and is not included a task that will require a knowledge of the materials and the over all theme we want to present. We shall also need someone to coordinate the project, bringing all the strands (Exhibit content, labels, transport, arranging to build exhibit, dismantle it, liaise with museum, insurers etc) together.

Footnote:

I can only describe above what we found on the visit, the information we were given on the day and draw on my experience of creating such exhibits in compiling the above. I hope it is useful in advising decision making and in guiding how this project might, if so decided, proceed.

Tom Gibson. Hon Editor.

Addendum: Since visiting the museum, the President informs me that there may be a second cabinet available to us with additional wall space. However this is not the information we were given by the Museum's custodian at the time of our visit.

Officer Without Portfolio

I apologise for my absence and send my fraternal greetings to all attending the meetings. This report is something of an 'Aide Memoir'. I hope you will bear with me.

When I was first elected in 1990 to the 'Executive' of F.E W., then the 'Freemen of England', it was as Deputy President (until 1995). My overriding purpose was in support of the traditions and to protect the privileges of freemen throughout the nation. This had been the doctrine of our founder Harry Ward, closely followed by Colonel John Kenyon who campaigned for the strength of unity amongst the guilds. There was clearly a perceived (and often expressed) 'threat' from the Authorities to diminish freemen's privileges.

Another good reason in my joining the Executive was to represent my fellow freemen of Sudbury and to voice, where possible, the shared views of my mentor Allan Berry. I am very proud of those busy days as Deputy President visiting gilds, some of which, Ipswich and Newcastle-upon-Tyne, are no longer with us! Having organised the Wardens to cover all areas, we all had happy and constructive meetings on a regular basis. I produced handbooks and instructions, arranged venues and agendas.

With the need (and persistence of David Clark) to make Wales inclusive, I was involved in the new design and corporate recognition. This also included a tri-fold introductory handout to publicise our organisation. Frank Pocklington at Leicester then printed this as a glossy.

Changing ideologies and ethos, coupled with personal health problems, caused me to step

down from the Executive in 1995. My loyalties to Harry Ward's doctrine, to the FEW and to the Freeman of Sudbury have never diminished. Quite frankly, I was disinclined to proceed as President without knowing I would have full and proper support. My Deputy was destined to be Richard Bishop of Altrincham Court Leet and I was unhappy with the direction things appeared to be taking so I politely resigned.

Freemen's Image: Guild masters will be aware of the near schism among the officers of FEW and the circulation of a critical paper in 2001 by eminent senior members of the Association. This very nearly led to a break up of FEW. We should also be aware that the Stewards of Newcastle-upon-Tyne have subsequently criticised the Association for being "more interested in dressing for pomp and ceremony than the business of fundamental affairs"!

The spectacle of freemen parading in their regalia and the mingling of guilds representing various borough towns is of great interest to the general public. People are keen to learn about the history of freedom. Our fraternity is undeniably an important element of what we are about and socialising is to be encouraged. But this cannot be our first priority.

The Fundamentals: By association, member guilds have greater strength. The purpose of the Association was to protect the heritage and traditions of Freedom. The objective of our constitution is based upon the need to advance public education in the history and customs of towns and their freedom. This specifically forms the major element required to provide charitable status and by necessity needs to be regularly observed.

It is of constant importance that freemen with inherited rights should be vigilant to changes in legislation and avoid any complacency. Freemen must not assume that 'nothing can affect their inherited rights'. "At the Bar of Parliament it is quite fatal for Freemen to be shown to have been silent and without coherent action or policy" (Charles Sparrow commenting on inaction by York Freemen, 1987).

York Bill (1986-88) Action by York City Council was intended to extinguish inheritance of all freemen's rights over the York Strays. If successful this would have likely set a precedent for the removal of freemen's rights elsewhere. Section VI of the Bill included "the removal from the Freemen and Pasture Masters of York, their ancient statutory rights in connection with the use and management of the lands known as the Strays". Although the Bill passed successfully through the House of Lords, Mrs Lynn Golding, MP for Newcastle-under-Lyme who argued 'the misuse of Private Bills', blocked it.

Freemen should be very wary: Those who study or practice law will be familiar with Halsbury's Laws and the All England Law Reports. When the York Bill was being considered by the Select Committee in the House of Lords – The Earl of Halsbury of that eminent legal family, referred to the Enclosures Acts of the 18th and 19th centuries proceedings – "Inhabitants of freeholds – ancient messuages in the City of York and rights associated with these buildings. Two key points – the ancient messuages can no longer be identified, no freemen can point to his house associated with the awards passed under the Enclosure Acts. Also, rights under these trusts are not being exercised. No one in fact is pasturing his or her beasts on any of these Strays any longer. No freeman can say on oath – I am exercising my grazing and have been doing so for years past as my father did before me and I am a freeman resident in an ancient messuage in such and such ward". The House agreed and the Bill was passed in favour of the City Council.

This proves how tenuous our position is. Had that the Commons passed the Bill, freemen's rights and privileges would have been called into question and swiftly removed elsewhere. On that occasion the Association virtually cleared its coffers, including the Regalia Fund to put close to £20,000 into the defence. That was a huge amount at the

time but it was considered a life or death situation. Colonel Kenyon and Charles Sparrow had sleepless nights and put all their time into the actions of the Bill. So much so that all other legal activities were put over to Robin Walker and David Moor, including the Commons Registration reforms.

During the past ten years or more and in the trail of my old friend Allan Berry, I have been concerning myself over several national developments. To provide some disseminated information I have posted various papers, several of which are published on the FEW Website as 'Viewpoints from the Officer Without Portfolio'. With ongoing pressures from changes in law, the freemen's traditions remain at risk, with the exception of London where it is more readily protected. A steady erosion developed as a result of the general upset caused by the Commons Registration Act 1965 and the 1972 Local Government Act and with the subsequent statutory Acts that curtail freemen's privileges.

I have produced another paper which I entitled "The Dilemma" that briefly explains some of the activity during the 1970s. Our exclusive grazing rights and beneficial property came under unwarranted scrutiny. This is attached to my report for publication in the next upcoming journal.

I hope I can encourage the freemen interested in their history, to peruse some of my, albeit personal, views in the papers on the FEW Website. The Website, in my opinion can contribute the necessary element of general education required for our 'charitable status'. In conclusion, I would emphasise that consideration of the past and a little attention to an understated but productive image is necessary within the developing and modernising society of today. The ideals of our Association should never allow it to simply become a flashy social club.

There are several guilds that provide a charitable influence on their communities and this should be widely encouraged along with improving the relations with town councils. It is these aspects that offer the best protection of our rights and traditions and in general of our future.

Alan Shelley

Freeman, Executive Member and Trustee of the Sudbury Freemen's Society

Freeman, Guildsman and Liveryman of the City of London

Representative of all Commons and Commoners on Gloucestershire Local Access Forum (Elected under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000)

Honorary Life Conservator of Highleadon Green, Forest of Dean (Elected under the Commons Act, 1899)

The Dilemma

Registration of the Freemen's Lands under the Commons Registration Act 1965

Town lands were not Commonable!

The unique nature of traditional historic freemen's lands posed a huge problem when town councils were required to register "all commons".

Pasturage lands acquired/inherited by the freemen of many towns and cities in England and Wales were transferred into the 'ownership' of newly elected councils following the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835. The rights to graze those lands remained 'exclusively' with the freemen. Control over these lands became a joint cooperative partnership.

In some places 'Pasture Masters' elected by the freemen's bodies, were appointed to manage grazing of the lands. In many towns, the council's reached agreement by payment of compensation, to extinguish the grazing rights (for ever). Such payments were used

either to purchase new land or as in the majority of cases, charitably invested into stocks and shares.

When posed with the requirements of the 1965 Act to register all common lands and any rights applying, the freemen were faced with a dilemma – “Would unregistered rights be unprotected? And “Could unregistered land become vulnerable to undesirable developments? Under such duress most freemen’s lands were registered under the 1965 Act.

Government in 1978 set up a ‘Common Lands Forum’, to assess the outcomes of the CRA 1965. The “Freemen of England” arranged a meeting in February 1979 at which representatives of the freemen of York, Newcastle, Oxford (Ernest Crapper) and Sudbury (Allan Berry). They met with representatives of the Department of the Environment, the National Association of Local Councils and the Commons Preservation Society. Chairing the meeting Harry Ward, as President of the Freemen of England, explained that freemen had not expected freemen’s lands to be regarded as commons by the Royal Commission when making their enquiries.

The City of London had secured the exclusion of Epping Forest from registration.

Freemen pressed for their lands to be excluded from legislation, quoting examples of the errors, conflicts and confusion caused by the failure of the Commons Registration Act to make proper provision for freemen’s lands.

References were made to difficulties, problems and inconsistencies arising at Berwick, Haverfordwest, Stamford, Beverley and possibly at Godmanchester, Huntingdon and Newport. Concern was expressed over the effects on Local Acts. Mr Paul Clayden of the Commons Preservation Society said that freemen have a good case for removing their lands from the Commons Register. They would have had a good case for not registering since their rights are not strictly common rights. The National Association of Local Councils regarded the policy as being one towards preservation rather than development. The Department for the Environment indicated that they understood and would consider the freemen’s difficulties!!

Conclusion

The Act of Registration of 1965 was an undesirable event and the exclusivity of the freemen’s rights was not fully appreciated. However, subsequent legislation, including the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, The Registration Act 2002, the Charities Act 2006 and the Commons Act 2006 all have elements of repeal and reform. Had freemen’s rights not been registered under the 1965 Act, it is highly probable that much more could have been lost. The new Charities Act repealed any prescriptive rights, the charters of which are no longer recognised in law. It was commons registration that prevented encroachment of a new highway over a part of Sudbury’s land.

Many aspects of the 1965 Registration Act are unsatisfactory and the recordings (rather than proper registrations) remain weak from protection in law. Nevertheless, and accepting the dilemma, the ‘registered’ freemen have some ‘recognition of their rights’ which otherwise may have been lost through a lack of any protection. It appears to be unlikely that any better protection can be sought under the present administration of the Registration Act 2002.

NB It also seems unlikely that any freemen’s rights attached to unregistered land could be protected. Rights over lands, while real property, cannot imply full ownership or any complete control in a current assessment of the law. Lands vested into Charitable Trusts (acting on behalf of freemen’s bodies) should have been excluded from registration. But I guess that is too late now to retract. Alan Shelley, February 2015

Expenses or reimbursements whilst on F.E.W. Business.

A policy document. By Colin Hardcastle.

Preamble: Expenses may only be allowable to persons identified in Rule 10[a] [i] and [ii] when acting solely and exclusively on FEW business as defined by Rule 2 [i] and [ii] as authorized by the Court pursuant to Rule 12[b]. No expenses shall be claimable by any spouse, partner, consort or companion who are not themselves on FEW business.

1) Type of expense:

- 1.1 Travel by private car may be paid at the rate of up to 35 pence per mile calculated to and from the claimants home to the place visited by the most direct route.
Ancillary costs e.g. parking fees [but not fines], road, bridge or tunnel tolls may be paid on production of receipts. '
- 1.2 Travel by train should be limited to standard class on production of rail tickets. Additionally, the costs of getting to and from rail-heads and venues from a claimants home should be allowed on production of receipts.
- 1.3 Travel by omnibus would be paid on production of tickets together with any additional costs as in 1.2
- 1.4 In the unlikely event that an air or sea journey is anticipated, prior approval **must** be sought.
- 1.5 If it be necessary for a meal to be taken whilst in transit or at a venue, the reasonable cost would be allowable.
- 1.6 Should it be necessary for overnight accommodation to be used, the reasonable costs would be allowed.
- 1.7 Consumables such as postages, telephone calls, broadband time, stationery, printer ink cartridges used **solely and exclusively** for FEW business should be allowed on production of bills or other receipts
- 1.8 Claims will not be accepted for loss of earnings or personal income.

2) Reimbursement;

Preamble: Reimbursement is defined as “to indemnify, repay”. There is a legal phrase of 'repayment of monies for a consideration that has failed'.

Where any person identified in Rule 10 [a] [i] and [ii] when acting or intending to act **solely and exclusively** on FEW business as defined by Rule 2[i] and [ii] has prepaid for a service such as travel costs or accommodation costs (often to secure better or concessionary rates) is unable to use the service so pre-paid through no fault of his/her including Acts of God and other *force majeure*; should seek to recover the sums paid (preferably from the payee) but any shortfall should be recoverable from FEW as he/she would be deemed to be acting as an agent of FEW.

3) Ex Gratia payments; Preamble; An ex gratia payment is made at the discretion of an organisation in exceptional circumstances.

Any claim by any person identified in Rule 10[a] [i] and [ii] when acting solely and exclusively on FEW business as defined by Rule 2[i] and [ii] for any ex gratia payment in respect of emergencies, often at home (child care, dependant care etc.), should be submitted in confidence to the Executive meeting who will make a recommendation to the Court without breaching confidences or causing embarrassment to the claimant.

Hon Secretary's Notices.

**** 2015-2016 Executive ****

At the closing date of 22nd May 2015, the following nominations had been received for FEW Executive Officers for the period 2015-2016:-

President:	Ron Leek
Deputy President:	Capt. Jim Evans
Vice President:	Stephen White
Hon Secretary:	Nick Johnson
Hon Treasurer:	Stephen White
Hon Membership Secretary:	Eileen Forth
Hon Archivist:	Alan Fallows
Hon Editor:	Tom Gibson
Officer Without Portfolio:	Alan Shelley

As there is only one nomination for each office, no election will be necessary at the 2015 AGM, and the above named will therefore be confirmed in office.

**** AGM 2015 ****

The 2015 AGM kindly hosted by the Gild of Freemen of Berwick-upon-Tweed will be held on Saturday 12th September in the Guildhall, Berwick-upon-Tweed. Full details and booking form are included in this Journal.

AGENDA

49th AGM

- 1) Attendees to sign Register and be seated.
- 2) Call to Order, and President's Procession into the Chamber.
- 3) Opening of AGM and Welcome.
- 4) Apologies for Absence.
- 5) Minutes of the 48th AGM held on Saturday 20th September 2014 in the Yarnfield Conference Centre, Staffordshire, and circulated in the Annual Record and Gazette, Journal No 179, Autumn 2014.
 - b) Approval of Minutes.
 - c) Matters Arising, not forming any other part of this agenda.
- 6) President's Report.
- 7) Deputy President's Report.
- 8) Vice President's Report.
- 9) Wardens' Reports.
- 10) Hon Treasurer's Report.
- 11) Hon Membership Secretary's Report.
- 12) Hon Archivist's Report.
- 13) Hon Editor's Report.
- 14) Officer Without Portfolio's Report.
- 15) Installation of new President.
- 16) Executive Officers 2015-2016.
- 17) Wardens 2015-2016.
- 18) Any Other Business.
- 19) Closure of AGM, and President's Withdrawal Procession.

News from the Guilds.

Alcester .

At the Annual Court Leet on 9th October 2014 in the Town Hall, Vaughan Blake was installed as High Bailiff, and Tim Forman was elected as Low Bailiff. Seven new jurors were sworn in and paid the 'Frankpledge Penny'. The guest bench included the Bailiffs of Bromsgrove and Henley-in-Arden Court Leets, and the FEW Area Warden. The Steward John Hill read a paper on 'Protocol and Propriety' to remind elected members of the Court of their responsibilities, and FEW Hon Secretary Ron Leek was elected Foreman to oversee the Court Officer elections. Immediate Past High Bailiff Steven Brown reported a successful year, with over £8000 being distributed to local organisations and charities.

On 26th October 2014 the Court Leet annual Church Service was held in St Nicholas church, preceded by what is probably unique amongst local Court Leets and Freeman Guilds: the High Street is closed to traffic and the robed procession to church is led by the Union Flag and the Alcester Victoria silver band and includes: other Court Leets; the British Legion; scouts and cubs, the Lions; L'Ordre de Chevalier Bretvins etc, etc, – duly organised by Parade Marshal Terry Pegrum. After the service, which included the Alcester Male Voice Choir, the Lord of the Manor Lord Hertford reviewed the Parade before refreshments were taken in the Town Hall.

Other regular events since then included: the High Bailiffs Dinner; Town Pancake Races; and the Town Crier competition; with special events for 2015 including a Race Night; quiz night; and VE anniversary celebration.

See website www.alcestercourtleet.co.uk for forthcoming events.

Berwick-Upon-Tweed.

This year Berwick is marking the 900th year since becoming a Royal Burgh of Scotland. From April to October there are a series of events commemorating different aspects of past life in Berwick. Included in these celebrations are the AGMs of the Court of Deans of Guildry of Scotland and of the Freeman of England and Wales. There is already a considerable number booked in for the FEW AGM which promises to be a great event. The banquet is in the Guild Hall which has a restricted seating of 120, so book early.

The Riding of the Bounds takes place on 1st May each year as it has for many hundreds of years. This year the Chairman of the Guild sashed one of the principles and the Guild took part in the march from the Barracks to the Town Hall, outside of which the horses assembled to take the traditional syrup cup before riding the bounds of Berwick. The Guild members followed in a bus and then took their traditional meal.

The Mayor's Parade took place the morning after the Court of Deans AGM and the Court joined the local Guild in their robes at the head of the procession. There was a good turn out of Deans as well as local Freeman in the parade.

As part of Berwick 900 there is a family's project. The Guild provided seed money and a grant has been obtained to employ a coordinator. Volunteers are being trained in methods of obtaining family histories. Several family histories will be investigated by the volunteers and the results published on a website. The website will also give information upon investigating family trees for families with Berwick connections. The Guild is gathering family trees which have already been put together for Freeman and will publish these with Guild families investigated in the project on their own website. 100 years ago we were in the second year of WW1. The two local army regiments were fighting in Gallipoli and Flanders with considerable loss of life. Two of the weekends during Berwick 900 are devoted to Berwick during WW1 and WW2. Family stories of these wars are being collected with a view to these records being available in the future. In addition to the main Berwick War memorial in Castlegate there is a Guild War Memorial in the entrance to the Guild Hall. Present Guild members are investigating those named and there may be an expedition to Belgium and France to see graves later in the year. The local newspaper will publish some of the articles put together for those killed.

In the past net fishing for salmon was one of the principle industries in Berwick. While in Scottish hands at the time of James III about 12,000 salmon were exported at a value of £2,200. At that time salmon was a staple local food and employers were not encouraged to serve salmon to apprentices more than three times a week. This year one net station will be open at Berwick as a tourist attraction with the salmon caught returned to the river.

The summer outing of the Guild will be to Falkirk Wheel and Stirling on 20th June. We shall take part in the service and parade to the War Memorial on Remembrance Sunday where we shall lay a wreath. Our AGM is on 13th November, as our normal date of 14th November is a Saturday. Our winter event is on 5th December.

In addition to the normal four Freedom Ceremonies this year there has been an additional ceremony and there will probably be another later in the year. These additional ceremonies are held as people from all over the world return to Berwick to take up their rights. Sometimes these visits do not coincide with the four statutory dates. This year there are many additional visits. The Guild has also had to order additional robes due to demand.

Coventry:

On 10th February a Ladies Night dinner was held in St Mary's Hall crypt, where a three course silver service meal was enjoyed by 46 Guildsmen and their ladies. This annual event thanks our ladies for their help and support to the Guild during the year, and each lady received a commemorative Coventry spoon courtesy of our Master Colin Harris and his lady Carole, and a red rose courtesy of Freeman Ron Robinson.

On 19th February a good turnout of Guild Court members attended the funeral of Past Master Jim Satchwell at the Canley crematorium. Jim served as a Court member for about 40 years, and was Guild Master in 1988.

On 8th March the annual Past Master's lunch was held at the Coventry & North Warwicks Cricket Club, where an excellent carvery meal was enjoyed by our active Past Masters and their ladies or widows. Our thanks to PM Sudin Basu for organising the event.

On 12th March our President, Lord Mayor Hazel Noonan, admitted 33 former Jaguar Land Rover apprentices as Freeman in a St Mary's Great Hall ceremony, with robed Guild Court members in attendance.

On 24th March the Charity Awards dinner was held in St Mary's Great Hall, where 55 diners enjoyed a three course silver service meal, and ten local charities received awards totalling £3500 from funds raised during the year. Each charity gave a brief resume of their activities, and how they hoped to use the Awards.

On 15th April the Guild AGM was held in the Council Chamber, where retiring Clerk PM Jim Parry gave his last report after five years service in the role, and received a well deserved vote of thanks. Renter Warden David Hearn reported a satisfactory financial year, and the Guild was pleased to welcome previously co-opted members Brian Jackson and Mrs Carole Wilson to now serve as Junior Warden and Charity Warden respectively.

On 18th April the Coventry Guild was pleased to support our local Freeman at Northampton Guild for their annual Charity Dinner at Moulton College.

On 22nd April 25 new Freeman were admitted at a ceremony in the Council Chamber, chaired by the Guild President and Lord Mayor.

On 23rd April, St Georges Day, our current Junior Warden Clive Nelson organised a coach trip to London's Imperial War Museum. Some 40 Guildsmen and friends enjoyed a day out in the capital.

On 8th May the Guild's banquet weekend events started with a three course meal and quiz at the Days Hotel, where 49 Guildsmen and partners included visiting Freeman from York, Chester, and the FEW President and Membership Secretary. Saturday saw the formal banquet in St Mary's Great Hall, and ceremonial installation of Officers for the new Guild year. Sunday started with a robed procession to the Guild Church of Holy Trinity, where the vicar the Rev David Mayhew was re-installed as Guild Chaplain by our new Master Peter Wilford, before a buffet meal was enjoyed courtesy of our President the Lord Mayor.

Henley-in-Arden

At last November's AGM in the Guildhall, tributes were paid to the Low Bailiff Dawn Leech, whose unfortunate illness stopped her progression to becoming the first lady High Bailiff of Henley. The Court were pleased to welcome back John Rutherford for another term as High Bailiff, with Norman Kench taking the Low Bailiff role.

Activities in 2015 started in March, with an Intercourt Sports Evening in the Guildhall, with teams from Alcester, Bromsgrove and Warwick Leets.

On 28th March a memorial service for Dawn Leech in St John's church saw a good turnout of the local Court Leets in robes.

From April to 22nd September the 15th Century Guildhall on the High Street, built by the Guild of the Holy Trinity and St John, is open on Sunday afternoons for visiting – well worth a trip if in the area. The Court Leet Dinner on 23rd April saw a capacity audience enjoy a four course meal cooked outside under canvas as the Guildhall has no kitchen! Guests included the High Sheriff of Warwickshire, Bailiffs from local Leets, and the FEW Area Warden. The after dinner speech was given by the Chairman of the Tanworth Association for the Prosecution of Felons. In the 18th and early 19th century, before the creation of police forces, rural communities formed such mutual subscription associations to prosecute criminals.

Future Court Leet summer events include Ale Tasting and 'Court Leet Day' on 6th June – where traditional assizes of: bread weighing; fish & flesh tasting; and searching & sealing of leather are performed in robes with due pomp and ceremony.

Leicester:

Saturday 31st January, the Gild was invited to St Mary de Castro Church to attend Mass to commemorate the martyrdom of King Charles 1st. He was tried and convicted for high treason on this day in 1649 when he was executed.

Friday 20th February, a Long-alley skittles night held at the Coach and Horses public house Markfield. When forty Freemen, including friends from the Coventry Guild battled over two games before enjoying a pub supper of Faggots, Chips, Steak and Ale pie and Peas. After supper and other round of drinks we had the final game of the evening, with Coventry Freeman Charles Platt winning the trophy for the highest score of the evening.

Sunday 22nd March, the Gild was invited by the Leicester City Council to join the Lord Mayor and the City Mayor to welcome the coffin containing the mortal remains of King Richard 111 at the medieval Town boundary of Bow Bridge. There were cheers and clapping and salutations made to Richard and white roses being thrown, as the cortege entered the City. Ten robed Freemen joined the walking procession following the cortege from Bow Bridge to St Nicholas, the oldest church in Leicester. Silence fell across the crowd as the cortege was carried into the church for a short but moving service. As we left the church and stood in line along Holy Bones waiting for the coffin to be transferred to the horse drawn hearse, the crowd once again fell in silence.

Friday 27th March, twelve members of the Gild were invited to the Leicester Cathedral to the Reveal Service of King Richard 111 Tomb. After the service the congregation were invited to view the tomb. Like thousands of people I had queued to view the coffin and tomb. We returned again in the evening to the Cathedral gardens to see the fireworks and the 8000 candles lighting the gardens and Jubilee Square. It was the conclusion of a most historical event in Leicester's History.

Sunday 29th March, an open morning was held at Freeman's Holt when members of the Gild to come along for a chat and a cup or tea or coffee pay their membership and book for future events.

Saturday 11th April, a cheese and wine evening held at Freeman's Holt, when we had a very interesting talk by Felicity Austin on Edwardian Leicester. Felicity was able to show us a number of old photographs of the City in Edwardian days. She also had a number of ladies hats and clothes of the day which she wore and demonstrated

during her talk. The evening concluded with the singing of the old musical hall songs which would have been popular in our grandparent's day.

Wednesday 15th April, the Gild Common Hall held in the Council Chamber of the Leicester Town Hall in presence of the Lord Mayor of Leicester Councillor John Thomas. After the formal opening

of the meeting, The Master then presented, the Lord Mayor with a set of Gild cufflinks and a cheque for his charity. The next item on the agenda was the election of offices to the Gild Court. Lynn Roffee was elected Master to the Gild for a second term in office. Andrew Marriott elected Deputy Master, Brian Mudford Gildhall News Editor, After the election of offices the meeting continued with any other business before the meeting closed at 8 45 PM. We then retired to the Lord Mayor's tea room for a buffet supper and drinks.

Lincoln:

We seem to be very poor in informing FEW members about what we have been up to. The year started with an almost sell-out annual dinner at the end of January, with a talk by Mr Richard Pullen one of the foremost experts and author on the tank, especially Lincoln's role in its birth. April 11th saw the annual investiture of new Freemen followed by the AGM, the turnout was the best for many a year, we hope this will be repeated at other events. Mr Roy Folland was elected as Master for the next three years. We were pleased to have Mr Nick Johnston, our new warden present.

The next day saw the annual service, attended by the civic party.

We are a small Gild that has no income other than its members subscriptions and money raised at Gild events but we are committed to supporting local charities. Recently we have supported 3 local charities all with a similar aim, to erect monuments.

1. The Tank memorial, depicting a 2 dimensional First World War tank being built by the men and women of Fosters and Co, this was unveiled on the 10th May.
2. The Bomber Command memorial spire, the first phase will be opened on the south common in October at the same time as
3. The rebuilt Eleanor's cross, on the site of the first of 12 crosses built by Edward 1st to mark the resting places of the funeral procession of his Queen on its way to London. The last one being Charing Cross.

The Freemen look forward to the official opening of the revamped Castle, Magna Carta Vault and Victorian prison. 22 million pounds has been spent on this fantastic complex. We hope fellow Freemen will visit or revisit our changing city.

Warwick

At the 460th AGM held on 30/10/14 in the refurbished Court House, the Worshipful Mayor of Warwick Moira Ann Grainger took the Chair as Lord of the Leet, with formal opening by Derek Fletcher as Sergeant at Mace. Guests included the High Sheriff of Warwick and Bailiffs of other local Leets. A new position of Low Bailiff was duly sworn, with Mrs Janet Honnoraty as first incumbent. Also sworn were two new jurors, Mathew Halford and Peter Knell. After 28 years as Town Crier and Beadle Graham Sutherland will retire at the end of 2014. An Inner Court has now been set up to ease the work load on the Steward & Town Clerk. After the usual Officer Reports and Presentments, the Court was closed with due ceremony and supper taken.

At the Spring Court Leet meeting on 9/04/15 guests included Bailiffs from Alcester, Bromsgrove and Henley-in-Arden Court Leets, and the FEW Area Warden. After the minutes of the closed Court Leet meeting of 4/02/15 were approved, the usual Officer Reports and Presentments took place. It was reported that after long service, Sergeant at Mace Derek Fletcher would resign his post on 31/05/15. It is planned to have a 'Court Leet Day' on 15/08/15, when Assizes of Ale and Fish & Flesh tasting would be held in the traditional manner.

Stop Press

It is with sadness that we report that just as this edition was going to press, news reached us of the death of Past President Bill Healey. We send our condolences to Rita and his family. An obituary will appear in a future edition of the Journal.

Directory.

President: Gordon Varndell. 3 Bridge Road, Bishopthorpe. York. YO23 2RR 01904 701286
GV.44@hotmail.co.uk

Deputy President: Ronald Leek. (See registered office address above).

Vice President: Steve White. 11 Manor Avenue, Great Grimsby, North East Lincolnshire DN32 0QR
01472 329847 stevewhite.grimsby.nel@ntlworld.com

Immediate Past President: Alan Fallows. 3 Holborn Drive, London Road Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY2 6SL
01743 358495 alan.fallows@talktalk.net

Hon. Secretary: Ronald Leek. (See registered office address above).

Hon. Treasurer: Steve White. (See Vice President above).

Membership Secretary: Eileen Forth . 88 Whitethorn Close, Huntington, York YO3 9EU 01904 638361

Hon Archivist: Alan Fallows (See Immediate Past President above).

Officer Without Portfolio: Alan Shelly. Wycken End, 16 Bournside Road, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire,
GL51 3AH Tel 01242 515739 alan.shelley@ymail.com

Warden for the North: Stephen Healy. 43 Greenlee Drive, Dalesford Green, Little Benton,
Newcastle upon Tyne NE7 7GA 0191 2159356 stephen.healy@tesco.net

Warden for the North East: Colin Hardcastle. 19 Holt Dale Road, Leeds LS16 7RN 01132 670409 (h)
0784 720 4318 (m)

Warden for the The North West: TBC

Warden for the North Midlands: John Edwards. 5 Oak Close, Church Eaton, Stafford ST20 0AQ
01785 823067 john@staffordfreemen.org.uk

Warden for the South Midlands: Derek Austin 1 Yarrow Close, Rugby, Warwickshire CV23 0TU
01788 547145 4derekaustin@mypostoffice.co.uk

Warden for the West: Howard Crapper. The Mount, Hinton Parva, Swindon, Wiltshire SN4 0DH
01793 791171 howardcrapper@supanet.com

Warden for Wales: Roy Folland Winchcombe, St Thomas Green, Haverfordwest SA61 1QW
jarfolland@hotmail.com

Warden for the East: see Nick Johnson below.

Warden for London and the South East: Nick Johnson. 37 Stanhope Gardens Ilford Essex IG1 3LQ
0208 554 5326 fidibelle@aol.com

Warden for the South West: Martin Hanks. Fairview Cottage, Shop, Bude. EX23 9SG. 01288 331480
oxonserve@btinternet.com

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Front Cover: Berwick-Upon-Tweed castle from a train on the Royal Border Bridge. By Tom Gibson.

Back Cover: Top; The Tank memorial, Lincoln. Photograph Courtesy of the City of Lincoln Freeman's Guild
Bottom; Leicester Freemen waiting for the mortal remains of King Richard III. By Lynn Roffee.

Hon. Editor: Tom Gibson, Freeman of York. All correspondence, enquiries as to advertising and circulation (including requests for additional copies) should be addressed to: Mr. T. Gibson. Hon. Editor F.E.W Journal. 79 Tang Hall Lane. York. YO31 0SZ Email: thomasg624@aol.com Tel. No. 01904 423153

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Please note the closing date for the editor to receive items for the next issue (No. 182) is the 18/9/15.

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