

President's Letter.



Having completed sixteen years in the FEW secretarial seat, including two as Deputy President, it now comes as a great change to be addressing you as the eleventh FEW President since its formation in 1966. I am both humbled and honoured that you have shown such confidence in me being able to lead our Association of Freemen of England and Wales. I know that it will be a hard act to follow in the footsteps of my worthy predecessors, but I will endeavour to competently fulfil all my duties, whatsoever they may be.

The AGM weekend in Berwick-upon-Tweed was a superb occasion, and it was a real pleasure to be in the company of the many delegates from different Member Gilds. The programme and hospitality arranged by our Berwick hosts, under the Chairmanship of Capt. Jim Evans was second to none, and both my wife Janet and myself, will retain very happy memories of the weekend. One thing stood out for me about the event, this was the wonderful fellowship shown between the delegates, something that although not one of its constitutional objectives, is still a major factor in what FEW is all about, bringing Gilds much closer together.

I have an excellent team of Executive Officers to work with this year, and as usual, we shall be closely addressing many varied matters, amongst which will be the establishment of some form of promotional and educational FEW exhibit visiting different Gild towns, and looking at ways of increasing membership numbers in Gilds. The Wardens will of course be continuing with their close liaison work with the Gilds in their areas, feeding back their experiences and findings, but unfortunately we are still short of Wardens for the North West and the East, although currently the East is being looked after by Nick Johnson, together with his own area London and the South East, plus as of now, his new role as FEW Hon Secretary. I am assured that the Wardens' roles are not onerous, but are most certainly convivial and interesting. So come on members, how about volunteering?

In concluding this, my first President's Letter, I wish everyone success in the work of your Gilds, and closely link this with that of FEW.

Ronald Leek. President.

Notes taken at the Open Forum.

2015 AGM

- 1) Howard Crapper asked whether Magna Carta could possibly be considered as the origin of the Freedom in the UK. He noted that King John had been forced to give power to the people, thereby becoming the start of local government. Capt. Jim Evans replied that it was William the Conqueror who had given the first charter to London, thus recognising the Mayor and the essence of Freedom. Alan Fallows felt that the viewpoint actually taken on this, was that the power was devolved to the Barons, and therefore it was probably not the forerunner of Freeman Charters.

- 2) Capt. Stephen Healy asked about any progress in Gilds successfully establishing new apprenticeships as a means to increasing their membership numbers. Alan Fallows replied that only Leicester had requested information, and he had therefore started giving his own views on the issue, which had later led to FEW being involved with making suggestions. Capt. Jim Evans stated that he had tried to set up a sponsored schools' competition scheme in Berwick, similar to that successfully working in Scotland via the Court of Deans, where the outcome of the students' submissions did lead to setting up apprenticeships. Unfortunately, he has not yet persuaded Berwick schools to take up this idea. He felt that all Gilds might nationally participate in such a scheme. Alan Fallows said that sufficient prize money needs providing in order to generate apprenticeship interest. Jim noted that small businesses such as those in Berwick were not normally taking on apprentices. He felt however, that individual Gilds could make their own rules to provide apprenticeships. John Heslop stated that Durham following negotiations, had sponsored an apprentice joiner to work in the Cathedral, and who subsequently has qualified for the Freedom. John said that they were also encouraging a stonemason. Howard Crapper stated that Oxford sponsors an apprentice award scheme via a local college, and that this leads to receiving the Freedom. Alan Fallows concluded the debate by encouraging all Gilds to consider positive ways in which apprenticeships can be established, leading to the Freedom.

- 3) Colin Hardcastle warned the meeting that a spurious organisation calling itself "Freemen in the Land" is touting around the Gilds, proposing membership. He stated that any approach should be totally ignored. An article was suggested on the matter, for publication in the Journal.

- 4) Alan Fallows reported that the FEW contract on Land Registration with the "12CB" law firm, had now been concluded. He noted that Shrewsbury, Oxford, and York were the Gilds principally affected by the findings.

Minutes of the 49th AGM of the Association of Freemen of England and Wales held on Saturday 12th September 2015 in the Guild Hall, Berwick-upon-Tweed

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

List of Attendees: Bill Allen – London, Geoff Anderson – Alnwick, Michael Ayres – Leicester, David Bacon – Colchester, Tracey Bacon – Colchester, John Barden – London, Alex Christison – Berwick, Charlotte Christison – Berwick, Nick Christison – Berwick, Christopher Cox – Oxford, Howard Crapper – Oxford, Isobelle Dewar – Berwick, Capt. Jim Evans – Berwick, John Fairnell – Berwick, David Fairnell – Berwick, Alan Fallows – Shrewsbury, Valerie Fallows – Shrewsbury, Robin Folland – Pembroke, Roy Folland – Pembroke, Eileen Forth – York and London, Hazel Hague – York, Mervyn Hall – Alnwick, Colin Hardcastle – York and London, Capt. Stephen Healy – Newcastle upon Tyne, Richard Helstrip – York, Michael W. Herriott – Berwick, W. Nigel G. Herriott – Berwick, John Heslop – Durham City, Nigel Hill – Shrewsbury, Nick R.S. Johnson – Hale, John Keggins – Northampton, Graeme Knox – Alnwick, Ron Leek – Alcester and London, Carl Mattison – Alnwick, Clive Mattison – Alnwick, James Mattison – Alnwick, Tommy Mattison – Alnwick, J. McElwee – Durham City, Alan Mole – Alnwick, H.B. Pate – Chester, Robert Shepherd – Alnwick, Billy Straughan – Alnwick, Larry Turnbull – Newcastle upon Tyne, Gordon Vardell – London, Lynda Weatherley – Berwick

Together with the Mayor of Berwick-upon-Tweed, Cllr Hazel Bettison, the President, Gordon Vardell, Deputy President, Ron Leek, and Immediate Past President, Alan Fallows, processed into the Guild Hall preceded by the FEW Mace.

The Mayor in welcoming everyone to Berwick-upon-Tweed in this its 900th Celebration Year, described the various events which were taking place. Thanking the Mayor for her welcome, the President called the meeting to order, and declared the AGM in session.

Apologies for non-attendance were recorded from Stephen White, Vice President and Hon Treasurer; Tom Gibson, Hon Editor; Alan Shelley, Officer Without Portfolio; Derek Austin, Warden for the South Midlands; John Edwards, Warden for the North Midlands; Martin Hanks, Warden for the South West; Past President Alan Robson; John Tolley; Leslie Morgan; Ray Stone; Charles Davies; James Shepherd; and Denis Nixon.

Following a proposal from Capt. Stephen Healy, seconded by James Mattison, the Minutes of the 48th AGM held on 20th September 2014 in the Yarnfield Conference Centre, Staffordshire, were approved as a correct record of the proceedings, and were signed by the President.

Gordon Vardell presented his President's Report. A copy is appended to these minutes.

In his absence, Vice President Stephen White's Report was read out by the Hon Secretary, Ron Leek. Copy appended.

The Hon Secretary reported that due to some confusion amongst members over

which parts of the country two of the Warden Areas actually covered, it had become necessary to interchange those area names. The old North East area now becomes the North, and the old North area now becomes the North East.

In Vice President Stephen White's absence, the President asked Past President Colin Hardcastle, Warden for the North, to introduce each of the Wardens to give their reports:-

North East: Capt. Stephen Healy. Copy appended.

Wales: Roy Folland. Copy appended.

West: Howard Crapper. Copy appended.

South East and London, and also covering the vacant East position: Nick Johnson. Copy appended.

North: Colin Hardcastle. Copy appended.

North Midlands: In the absence of John Edwards Report was read out by the Hon Secretary. Copy appended.

South Midlands: In the absence of Derek Austin's Report was also read out by the Hon Secretary. Copy appended.

In the absence of Hon Treasurer Stephen White, the FEW accounts were presented by Alan Fallows. Copy appended.

As he would relinquish his Immediate Past President position at this AGM, Alan Fallows gave his Immediate Past President's Report. Copy appended.

Eileen Forth presented her Hon Membership Secretary's Report. Copy appended.

Alan Fallows then presented his Hon Archivist's Report. Copy appended.

In the absence of Tom Gibson his Hon Editor's Report was read out by the Hon Secretary. Copy appended.

In the absence of, Alan Shelley, his Officer Without Portfolio Report was also presented by the Hon Secretary. Copy appended.

The new President, Ronald Leek, was then installed in office by the outgoing, and now Immediate Past President, Gordon Vardell. After pronouncing the Oath of Office, the new President was robed by Gordon, and presented with the President's Medallion of Office. He then made a short address, thanking everyone for the confidence now placed in him. Expressing pleasure that he would be working with an excellent Executive Officer team, he added that after 16 years in the secretarial seat, it was good to know that someone extremely competent was now taking over the reins as Hon Secretary. He mentioned that FEW had made contact with the Court of Deans of the Guildry of Scotland, with the view of establishing a formal link between the two very similar functioning organisations, and that Capt. Jim Evans, Chairman of the Guild of Freemen of Berwick-upon-Tweed, being the Immediate Past Lord President of the Court of Deans, was representing it at the FEW AGM.

Gordon then received his Immediate Past President's Medallion and robe from Alan Fallows, following which, he presented Alan with his Past President's Medallion,

and Alan's wife Valerie with her Past President's Lady's silver pendant.

The new President then read out the names of the 2015-2016 Executive Officers. These are:- Deputy President – Capt. Jim Evans; Vice President – Stephen White; Hon Secretary – Nick Johnson; Hon Treasurer – Stephen White; Hon Membership Secretary – Eileen Forth; Hon Editor – Tom Gibson; Hon Archivist – Alan Fallows; Officer Without Portfolio – Alan Shelley.

The 2015-2016 Wardens were confirmed as:- North East – Capt. Stephen Healy; North West – Position Vacant; North – Colin Hardcastle; North Midlands – John Edwards; South Midlands – Derek Austin; East – Position Vacant, but Nick Johnson will temporarily cover this area; South East and London – Nick Johnson; West – Howard Crapper; Wales – Roy Folland; South West – Martin Hanks.

Any Other Business:-

a) The President commented on a proposed idea that FEW may consider putting together what would be considered to be a mobile roadshow, with the express purpose of travelling in England and Wales, to towns and cities, in order to exhibit documents, regalia and items, that would further educate the general public regarding the history and continuing purpose of Freemen in those countries, and explaining the Freedom. The President added that whilst FEW had very few items that it could place into such an exhibition, it would be hoped that numerous Member Guilds might be willing to loan items or give copies that would illustrate particular histories. The Executive Committee will be spending some time considering how to take this idea forward, and will report to the membership in due course.

b) The President addressed a comment to Guilds who may be considering offering themselves as Hosts to future AGM weekends, and he spoke of the necessity of notifying the Hon. Editor in advance of their calculations regarding the date and anticipated costs. This information will need to be communicated to the Hon. Editor before the April of the year in question, in order for the information to be included in the first Journal (1 of 3) in that year.

c) Howard Crapper informed the meeting that he currently has two Warden's robes.

d) Eileen Forth asked if it was yet known where the 2017 AGM was to be held. The President said that the Vice-President was investigating the possibility that Grimsby would be prepared to be Host Guild for that year.

e) The Immediate Past President asked for a vote of thanks to be recorded for the work of Hazel Hague in attending at the AGM regalia stand, and also for her excellent design of the congratulatory card that was sent to Her Majesty the Queen by FEW, on the occasion this week of her becoming the longest-reigning monarch in British history. The IPP further asked for a vote of thanks to be recorded for the work of Janet Leek in designing and creating the IPP Lady's silver pendant that was earlier presented to Mrs Valerie Fallows

There being no other business, the President declared the meeting closed, and accompanied by the Mayor, and the Immediate Past President, processed from the chamber.

Presidents Report.

I am going to repeat myself with some of this report but it is my last as your President and I think some of the points do require to be mentioned again. I thank you for giving me the honour of being your President. Eileen and I have worked hard and thoroughly enjoyed it. We hope to work just as hard as your Immediate Past President.

We have been very busy since the March Court Meeting in Northampton. We have had several engagements but I will not mention them all, albeit they are all just as important.

I believe a first for the Freemen of England and Wales was an invite to Berwick on Tweed. (Not so you say) quite right but this was different. We were invited to the AGM and Banquet weekend of The Court of Deans of Guildry of Scotland held at Berwick upon Tweed. This was a weekend to be remembered, it started with lunch at a restaurant followed later by the AGM. In the evening the Banquet, and again what we enjoy is being able to take part, we find that most important in any gathering, the making of new friends and meeting the old ones, keeping the friendships alive

Sunday the 24th of May saw the church procession with the Freemen in their robes and all the other participants from around Berwick taking part in the 900th Anniversary Celebrations. The Pipe bands were leading different sections, the list of participants is too numerous to mention in this report but it was a sight not too be missed.

I wish to sincerely thank Capt Jim Evans for this invite and I hope this will be the start of many to come for the Freemen of England and Wales. From this we have so far been invited to Aberdeen in February 2016 by the Aberdeen Guild and I have accepted.

We have enrolled the Freemen of Stamford as Associate members of the FEW Association until such time as the paperwork is sorted out to make them full members. This was put it to this forward for the approval at the Executive meeting in Great Grimsby June 2015. (Nick Johnson is working with them on this)

One social event we went on with the York Freemen was a visit to Wentworth Woodhouse. This is owned by the Past Master of the London Guild Clifford Newbald, he is well known to some of us, the interesting part of this visit was that we were joined by another ancient group, not Freemen! This was at the Masters request, all went really well which goes to show that we can mix in with other Associations and get them interested in who we are and what we do.

The 2015/16 Master of York Mrs Hazel Hague has asked me to mention the WITCH HAZEL NIGHT to be held on the 30th of October in York, she would like all that are coming to put their names forward so that the numbers can be noted for the caterer. There will be music, food, games, face painters and you can, if you wish come in fancy costume. It is a fun family occasion and all are invited, Freemen, non Freemen, women and children all will be made welcome. Hazel is with us this weekend so she can tell you everything that you want to know.

Eileen and I would like to sincerely thank all the Guilds/Gilds that have invited us to their functions, we enjoy meeting you all. We sincerely hope that we can continue to support your functions. We are working hard to keep in contact with as many people as we can.

I have been asked by some Guilds. "What can be done about the loss of members and the reluctance of new members joining" My answer was "We all need to pull together

and work as team we are as one, we are a collective, we are all Freeman, we are not individual groups going their own way and we are not individual persons with their own agenda. There is a lot of truth in the saying "United we stand divided we fall"

To this end I said that I would write a paper. I have entitled this Recruitment and Retention" Hopefully for the benefit of all Guilds. A couple of Guild Masters have seen this already and hopefully at the end we can have a document that we can all refer to. We need to get involved and let everyone know who we are. I have said it before and I will say it again "We cannot sit on our laurels and expect everything to work out, we need to work at it for the future generations otherwise the Freedom as we know it will die" It's up to you!

Report of the Vice President.

This has not been a very good year for me, I have been dogged with health issues since Christmas and my absence from the AGM is due to scheduled hospital treatment; I was also forced to miss the Court Meeting in Northampton so I have missed the two major opportunities to engage face-to-face with our Wardens. I do, however, enjoy the occasional phone call, or email, or even personal call by Colin, my local Warden who enjoys part of his summer at his flat in Cleethorpes-byGrimsby.

I am grateful for the work undertaken by the Wardens over the last year and the reports that they either bring or have submitted to this meeting. We are still without a Warden for the North West and Nick Johnson is covering The East, in addition to. London & South East, following Norman Offield's resignation last October. Some review of Areas may be necessary if vacant posts cannot be filled.

My computer, at least, has behaved itself this year so I have been able to spend some time updating The Website. Other than one Journal, whose file size is too large to upload, this section is now up to date and further additions have been made to. The Viewpoints from The Officer Without Portfolio page. Contact was made with Richard Bishop, Past President, who very kindly submitted a "profile" for Presidents on Parade along with a print of The Court of Hugh Lupus, Earl of Chester in which the gowns worn provided the inspiration for the Association Robe. Finally, on the occasion of its' 800th anniversary, a page dedicated to the Magna Carta and its' significance to the Freeman has been added. The only thing really missing now is a regular update of 'diary dates' and 'events' which I would be grateful to receive.

Having said that, our Facebook page receives regular posts particularly from Tom Gibson, (also the prime mover behind the Freemens Railway Society page), and Nick Johnson. The number of "likes" now stands at 155, up from 75 last year which means that fresh FEW news is notified immediately to those members which removes the onus of having to check the website on a regular basis although any addition to the website is also notified through Facebook. One has to be a Facebook user in order to do this but for anyone with internet access it is a very straight forward process. Tom has been very busy in posting up. Guild news which is either of a very urgent nature or simply won't fit into the next Journal owing to space limitations, whilst Nick regularly posts photographs and video clips from Guild events that he has attended. Facebook provides a very good forum for members to leave questions or comments and I would encourage you all to have a look at it.

Wardens Reports.

WardenFor the North East.

Alnwick:

The new traditional description of the recent activities of the Freemen of the Borough of Alnwick applies yet again: "very quiet, heads down, business as usual".

The Chamberlains and Councillors were elected for the ensuing year on St. Mark's Eve (April 24th) with the Council consisting of four committees: the 'Moor Committee', the 'Schools Committee', the 'Finance Committee' and the 'Lands Committee', between which the general day-to-day business of the Freemen is enacted.

On July 12th, the Freeman carried out the annual 'Moor Inspection', examining the land and its boundaries. They also inspected the recent refurbishment work carried out on the Guild's public house 'The Shepherds Rest' (not that this is an advertisement, but real ales are stocked and a full menu is available).

The Freemen's Council are submitting plans to build two properties in the Town for the use of Freemen and Freemen's Widows of the Borough it is hoped that if possible more small developments will follow.

Yet again, although they have a distinct logistical advantage on this occasion, Alnwick are to be commended on their turn-out, although they really must address the persistent rumours now circulating that none of them are actually married.

Berwick-upon-Tweed:

Clearly, the Freemen of Berwick upon Tweed have been primarily focused on arrangements for the AGM and their involvement with Berwick 900.

Of particular note however is the sterling achievement of the Chairman of the Freemen of Berwick-upon-Tweed, Capt. Jim Evans, who this year celebrates 40 years in that position. He has though announced his intention to retire in November and will be succeeded by his equally capable Vice Chairman, Michael Herriot.

Durham:

The Chairman of the Freemen Wardens of the City of Durham, Mr. John Heslop, advises that the relationship with Durham County Council continues to be 'interesting', although that is not an adjective that many of us would probably choose in his situation. He does note that at a day-to-day level, negotiations are quite amicable, but it seems that once it goes to strategic level, there are endless challenges. One positive is a proposal from the Freemen to introduce an audio guide for the Town Hall and direct dealings with the staff there are progressing well. Talks are also in progress for the creation of a heritage-based 'Durham Trail'.

Many of you will know and have had the pleasure of meeting Roger Norris, one of Durham's 'Gentlemen Freemen'. Roger retired as Chairman of the Trustees after the May Day Guild. The title 'Gentlemen Freemen' can be described as an honorary appointment, but is wholly conferred by the Freemen themselves, unlike the 'Honorary Freemen' status awarded by Mayors and Councils. Of note too, is the fact that Durham now have two 'Lady Freemen', in this context being the equivalent of the 'Gentlemen Freemen', rather than the hereditary right afforded to female siblings.

The Durham Freemen established a Charitable Trust in April which John describes as being aimed at making them more 'tax efficient'. (Maybe we should get him to present a paper on this next year?) The Trust currently supports a number of projects in the City,

including the restoration of a sprung ballroom floor in the Shakespeare Hall, a venue historically used for Miner's Welfare and more recently for highly popular Tea Dances. Of interest, the Freeman's support is by way of installing a stair-lift. Rock on Tommy!

Newcastle upon Tyne:

There continues to be no ongoing formal dialogue with the Stewards Committee of the Freeman of Newcastle upon Tyne and the Association.

I will however pass on the best wishes to this meeting of Newcastle upon Tyne Freeman and Past President of the Association, Alan Robson_ Alan had hoped to attend but, as some of you may know, his lady Gwen has been very poorly this past year and Alan felt even Berwick was beyond them on this occasion.

Warden for Wales,

The Gild of Freeman of Pembroke:

The Gild received an invitation to attend the Service of Remembrance and the unveiling of a plaque on the 25th April 2015 at Freshwater West in honour of the 79 Sea Men who gave their lives aboard LCG 15 and 16 and HMS "Rosemary"

On Friday 8th May 2015 the Master represented the Gild at the Pembroke Dock Town Council Civic Dinner to mark the election of Councillor Peter Kraus as Mayor of Pembroke Dock.

On Saturday 9th May the Master also represented the Gild at the Mayor Making Ceremony at Pembroke Town Hall of Councillor Pauline Waters & Mr. Sean Waters Mayor and Consort Elect of Pembroke which was followed by the Mayoral Luncheon. The Civic Parade and Divine Service took place the following day.

The Gild's AGM takes place on October 22nd at the Pembroke Town Hall. The Annual Service will be held at 11.00am on Sunday 15th November at St. Mary's Church, Pembroke which will be followed by the Annual Luncheon at the Cleddau Bridge Hotel.

The Gild of Freeman of Llantrisant:

The Annual Court Leet which was held in May where applications for the enrolment unto the Freeman's Roll were considered 34 new Freeman were accepted. The Annual Dinner and Dance was a huge success with 240 Freeman and guests attending.

Another highlight of the year was that Llantrisant Town twinned with Crecy, Northern France. The Freeman of Llantrisant associate themselves very closely with the victory at the battle of Crecy of 1346 as longbowmen from the town played a role in the event. Following more than six years of tireless work and planning by Llantrisant Town Trust they have secured the final element of the massive funding package required to start the exciting project which will benefit the whole town. Llantrisant Town Trust will now be able to pursue innovative plans to restore the hall to its former glory and transform it into an educational facility that will act as both a community hub and welcoming visitors centre. The Clerk to the Town Trust is Mr. Derrick Pounder and the Public Relations Officer is Mr. Dean Powell.

Wardens Report for the West.

I must congratulate the Chartered Freeman of Gloucester on their splendid web site . It really sets the standard and I encourage you all to view it. It was very good to meet the new President of the Gloucester Freeman , Lee Hensley ,when he and a good group of Gloucester Freeman visited Oxford Freeman last month . A civic reception with the Lord

Mayor was followed by a tour of the Oxford Town Hall including the Court Room . It is still a mystery to me why so many Freeman wanted to stand at the Bar in the Dock . Probably best left unanswered .

From there we walked to Christ Church College where we had special entry permission. We made directly to the Cathedral . The only British Cathedral within a University College . After a super lunch we were given a brilliant tour of Jesus College by fellow Oxford Freeman ,Chris Cox, who is here today .

Our visit concluded with a walk down the historic Broad St and a drink at Detective Morse's favourite and quite hidden ,Turf Tavern .

I am pleased to report that Gloucester are preparing for a sell out Annual Dinner on the 7th November . My wife and I are hoping to attend .

In Malmesbury , the County Council and Town Council have joined forces to implement a dredging scheme . Neither could wait any longer for the Environment Agency and this work will ensure that the awful flooding is not repeated in the many Freeman Houses which occurred in recent years .

It is with regret that I report the recent death of Ray Wight ,the leading light in the Freemaners of the Forest of Dean . Ray opened the Clearwell Caves and this remains a great tourist attraction . Ray Wight attended FEW AGM meetings in pursuit of their ancient rights. I am pleased that his son Jonathon is continuing with the work of the Freemaners .

In Oxford , the recent display of the Charter from King Henry 3rd to the Freeman Burgesses and translation cause much interest . The Charter gave power to the people and the beginning of local government . The link between the Magna Carta and the Charters given out to Medieval Towns is only just being realised and more research is needed . Please contact me or the FEW website if you have information .

The Oxford Museum has been loaned items relating to the Freeman and we are grateful for the cooperation by all concerned . I remember our excellent former Warden for the North West , Leslie Morgan touring the museum several years ago and writing in the visitors book that there was no reference to the Freeman . That observation has now been rectified .

Oxford Freeman will hold their Annual Dinner on Friday 4th December and applications are now open.

Warden for South-East England & London, Also The East (Vacant position): Southwark, London.

The annual Charter Day and Quit Rents Ceremony took 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, and as Senior Master, she received the Quit Rents on behalf of the Crown from the Guildable Manor (on behalf of the City). For this purpose she instituted the Court of Exchequer to which the Southwark Jurors were summoned. This is one of only four City ceremonies which she participates in; the others being the Trial of the Pyx, the presentation of the Sheriffs, and the presentation of the Lord Mayor of London.

One of the Guildable Manor practices, which has been remarked upon by visiting Freeman, is the reading by new Freeman of passages from "Some Rules from the Conduct of Life" (the little red book) at the luncheon. Apparently, visitors are much taken with it

and have indicated that some are keen to adopt it within their own guilds and companies.

Rochester Oyster & Floating Fishery:

On Saturday 20th June 2015, the Mayor of Medway Councillor Barry Kemp assumed his other role as Admiral of the River Medway and presided over the Medway Admiralty Court at Rochester Guildhall, in order to hear a number of presentiments from Freeman Chamberlain Shane Hales of the Rochester Oyster & Floating Fishery. This court regulates the fishery and oyster beds of the River Medway between Sheerness and Hawkwood Stone, near Burham in Kent, and takes its jurisdiction from a charter of Henry VI in 1446.

Following the annual Admiralty Court, vessels of the Rochester Oyster & Floating Fishery, together with those of the Rochester Cruising Club and those from Allington Marina, joined in the Admiral's Cruise up the River Medway "beating the bounds" to Hawkwood Stone near Burham.

On Sunday 21st June 2015, these same vessels continued the Admiral's Cruise down to the mouth of the River Medway, passing the war grave of HMS Bulwark. The MT Touchstone, carrying a squad of Sea Cadets and a Piper playing the Mingulay Boat Song, gave a salute and paid tribute by the laying of a wreath at the site where British sailors lost their lives in November 1914 when HMS Bulwark blew up and sank with the loss of 736 lives.

On return to Rochester, the Cruise vessels moored up and all involved observed the Sunset Ceremony outside the Cruising Club, conducted by the Commodore of the Club in the presence of the Mayor of Medway, and the Freeman Jurors of the Fishery.

Video clips of the proceedings of the Admiralty Court and the two days "beating the bounds" may be viewed on the FEW Facebook page.

Acting Warden's Report for East England & Anglia

Lincoln Freeman's Guild:

On Saturday 11th April, the Lincoln Freeman's Guild held their investiture Ceremony for new Freeman in Lincoln Guildhall followed by their Annual General Meeting. The retiring Chief Executive of Lincoln City Council, Andrew Taylor, was invested as an Honorary Freeman at the ceremony for, amongst other things, his instrumental work in ensuring that women were also granted the Freedom. In addition, four women were invested as Freeman at the ceremony. A short video clip of Andrew Taylor taking the Freeman's Oath is on the FEW Facebook page.

The Committee of the City of Lincoln Freeman's Guild have recently enacted a dress code to which all Freeman are expected to adhere. For male Freeman, it is Guild gowns, Guild tie, white shirt, dark suit, and dark shoes. For female Freeman, it is Guild gowns, Guild scarf, dark dress or dark skirt or dark trousers, white blouse, and dark shoes. It should be noted that the decision to enact this dress code by the Committee was unanimous, and may be viewed as an example of good practice.

Freemen of Stamford:

The Freeman of Stamford have applied for membership of FEW, and at the moment have been granted only Associate Guild Membership because they are not yet able to produce the prerequisite historical governing document or constitution that would entitle them to full Guild Membership. I have recently sent an email to the Charity Commission on their behalf requesting a copy for them of the Commission's copy of the original governing document that was supplied to the Commission when the Freeman of Stamford's charity - called The Freeman's Lands - was first registered in 1966.

Following their reply, a fourteen-page copy document of selected pages from the Stamford Inclosure Act 1871 together with a Declaration from the Inclosure Commissioners dated September 1875, was forwarded to me as an email attachment. I have already forwarded this to Stamford, and subject to further discussions, I will ask them to draw up and unanimously enact a Constitution (draft proforma supplied by me). Stamford will then forward all these-documents to the FEW Executive Committee for further consideration.

It is a prerequisite condition of Guild membership that all Guild applications must be supported by a copy of that Guild's Constitution, so therefore when Stamford have fulfilled this particular requirement, their current Associate membership will be upgraded to full Guild membership.

The Freemen number only six males, and I have advised their Chairman, Neil Scholes, that they should consider admitting female Freemen in order to avert extinction, and I have advised him to effect unanimous action with his fellow Freemen and then write to the Clerk of Stamford Town Council, Mrs Patricia Stuart-Mogg, informing her of an intention in accordance with the Local Democracy, Economic Development & Construction Act 2009, to invest daughters of Freemen, as prescribed by Part 1 Chapter 5 Section 27 of the said Act. Developments are awaited.

Sudbury Freemen's Society:

On Friday 1st May 2015, the Sudbury Freemen's Society held their 'Turning On Day', where the pastures or Common Lands on both sides of the River Stour in Sudbury are formally certified by the Mayor as fit to be grazed by livestock, and so every five years the Sudbury Common Lands Charity continue the tradition called the "Turning On" ceremony.

These pasture lands were given to the Burgesses of the town around 1260, when the local Lord of the Manor (Richard de Clare, Earl of Gloucester and Hertford), fixed his seal to a Charter conferring the rights of the Burgesses of the town over the land which included Kingsmere and Portmanscroft and which is now called Freemen's Great Common and Little Common. The Common Lands are now regulated in part by guidelines from DEFRA and the EU as to when and how many cattle can graze the meadows.

Video footage of Sudbury's Turning On Day' can be viewed on our Facebook page.

The Annual General Meeting of the Sudbury Freemen's Society was held on Saturday 7th July 2015 in Sudbury Town Hall, following the annual payments of the Common Money to the Freemen and Freemen's Widows of Sudbury. Both these events are also included as items on the FEW Facebook page.

Resident Freemen Of Colchester:

On Wednesday 26th August 2015, the annual "Ceremony of the Giving" was held in the Mayor's Parlour at Colchester Town Hall, in the presence of the Mayor of Colchester, (Councillor Mrs Theresa Higgins), Freeman PeterNason, (Senior Conservator of the Resident Freemen), Freeman Eileen Sandra French (Conservator), and the council's Income Officer, Roy Anderson, and Finance Specialist, Laura Watson.

Today a new Freeman swears on oath to maintain and promote the interests of the borough and receives annually from the Conservator of Common Lands a token sum of money - about £5 - as a share of the revenue from what common land remains within the borough, providing that he or she lives within the old borough boundaries.

The informal "Ceremony of the Giving" maybe viewed on the FEW Facebook page.

Warden for the North:

Having failed to bring on board the company of Trinity House in Hull, I have spent many hours with another object in mind!

As many of you will know, in 2017 the city of Hull is to be UK city of culture and one of their plans is a season' entitled "freedom" running from July to September and is being organised by a group calling itself 'the team'.

In April I arranged a meeting over the airwaves of radio Humberside with the chief executive of the team and followed this up with e-mails seeking permission to join in the 2017 events by way of a display of our memorabilia [subject to AGM approval]. I was told that we did not need 'permission' but, if we had the resources to create a project, we would be encouraged to do so.

I also suggested that as Hull has since 1299 had the provision of admitting hereditary freemen, the city council should be encouraged to re-activate the freedom in 2017.

Following further e-mails to Hull cc, I was asked to suggest a procedure for Hull to adopt as no-body could remember what to do. I have done so. The council is to put the idea of re-activating the freedom to the civic committee and i may be invited to attend to offer any further information we hold.

I have managed to acquire a copy of the list of freemen of Hull with voting rights for the 1835 borough elections — this will go into our archives in due course. I also have access to Harry Wards' book with his thoughts on the Hull freedom.

I hope the AGM will allow me to continue my discussions with Hull cc and the team, all of which are made under the guise of F E W with me as 'local' warden, and approve a display subject to finding a suitable venue with all the appropriate safeguards.

Warden for the North Midlands:

There are not many occasions when I report that I feel that I have done something useful as a Warden, but this is one of them. On numerous reports I have stated that there is activity in Bridgnorth, Shrewsbury and Stafford, but nothing heard from Derby. Hence, I was delighted to get a phone call from a lady who, having been sworn in as a Freeman of Derby, realised that apart from swearing in ceremonies, precious little else was happening. A number of freemen of the city are now trying to get things moving so I was happy to be able to give some advice on reawakening their guild. As she put it; they are "alive, but not yet kicking", however I have every hope that that guild will once again become active. It was useful to be able to point them to the various web sites of FEW and guilds with active programmes. Perhaps when I have met them, I will be able to give an even more positive report on the Derby Freemen, (including lady freemen).

I have not had much direct contact recently with Bridgnorth, but they submit reports to the journal showing that they are active and continuing a good civic and social programme. A nice picture of their recent induction ceremony made the back of the last journal.

Similarly with Shrewsbury; they are well organised and also have a good social scene. Unfortunately, I have not been able to attend events there recently, but it is nice to be asked. Even the gentleman who wants me to prosecute them has gone quiet!

Newcastle-under-Lyme continues to rely on a few, (I hesitate to use the term),"old faithfuls", who administer the assets of the Trustees and make payments. Indeed, it is really only at the annual pay-out that one becomes aware how many beneficiaries there are. It would be good if some of those would decide to take a more active interest in the Freemen and wake up that section of my realm. Maybe next March I can do something to

assist with that, as it is the only occasion that I get a chance to talk to Newcastle freemen in general.

Stafford continues to increase both in activities and numbers, with 15 new burgesses being sworn in last July. The Mayor's Office has even set the date for next year's ceremony! We have definitely benefitted from the rule changes of 2011, attracting more ladies and younger applicants. Indeed, last week Anne Kinnersley became our first "Burgess Bride" in some 900 years! On the Guild front, Stafford has a regular social programme, including lunches, canal boat trips, skittles evenings, etc. We intend to invite local guilds to participate in these events and to our dinner in January 2016 to try to engender some regional pride in FEW. We attend most civic functions in our robes and we are, at last, managing to convey who we are to the general public of the town. At our forthcoming AGM, there is a proposal to drop the 'Freeman' title in favour of 'Burgess' because we are sworn in as "a burgess of this borough" and have become better known as Stafford Burgesses. It also avoids gender specific nomenclature and any confusion with freemasons.

We do still have our "Burgess plots" in the form of some 150 allotments, to which all burgesses retain a legal right. Indeed, we now have a significant number exercising that right, whereas a few years ago it was just a handful. There has been a great deal of activity concerning the Freeman's Allotments Trust, as Severn-Trent is increasing the size of a pumping station on our land as well as putting a 400m long stretch of a high pressure sewage pipeline across the allotments. Balancing the need to ensure that trustees act in the best interest of the Freeman against the considerable powers of the utilities has been far from simple. Alan Shelley's articles and the papers of Charles Sparrow have been valuable sources of reference in establishing our rights in the face of bureaucracy. Eventually, we hope to have enough money to improve the site services, regrettably it is not going to pay for us to get back the Stafford Guildhall that we should never have lost, though we live in hope.

We have just about finished tidying up the communications and accounts from the FEW AGM of 2014. Thanks to local support from Church, Borough Council, etc., we finished just a couple of hundred pounds up in a £14,000 project, and £100 of that will now go towards preserving the Staffordshire Hoard.

Sorry I will not be joining you at Berwick due to family commitments. Sadly, Stafford will not be represented for the first time in the last 10 years. For many members, seeing figures like "Banquet £60 each", was an instant switch off, which the executive needs to consider.

Warden for the South Midlands:

Coventry Freeman's Guild has seen 84 new Freeman admitted by the Lord Mayor & Guild President since the last FEW AGM. All new Freeman receive a specimen copy of 'The Guildsman' magazine, and a Guild application form. The usual Guild calendar of events has been augmented by local visits to places of interest, and also visits further afield.

Leicester Gild of Freeman has had a historic year: with robed Gild Court members invited to join the civic procession for the reburial of King Richard III in Leicester cathedral: and also the first Lady Gild Master Lynn Roffee now in her second year of office. Next year the Gild will celebrate 40 years since formation.

Northampton Guild of Freeman has also had a historic year, with the FEW Spring Court

meeting held for the first time in Northampton, in the fine Victorian gothic Town Hall. The second Guild Charity weekend event was again based at Moulton College, and had a good attendance from other Guilds.

Alcester Court Leet's usual calendar of events has been augmented with several novel events to help receipts for the High Bailiff's Charity Fund, which typically distributes thousands of pounds to local worthy causes.

Henley-in-Arden Court Leet saw the sad demise of the first Lady Bailiff, Dawn Leech, with Past Bailiff John Rutherford back in Office as High Bailiff for another term. 'Court Leet Day' in June was blest with good weather for the annual robed Assizes of local produce such as butter, fish, ale and flesh, and 'beating of the bounds'.

Warwick Court Leet have revived their annual 'Assizes Day', where robed Officers assess local food purveyors to ensure products are 'fit and proper for consumption by the good townsfolk of Warwick'. The Court Leet also took over the Warwick beer festival this year at the Race Course – and ran out of beer! The long served Steward, Town Crier, and Sergeant at Mace all retire this year, so the 461st Annual Court programmed for the 29th October will be of special interest.

Treasurer's Report.

Charity Commission Reference Number 293536

Freemen Of England And Wales 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 — 2014/2015 (TRUSTEES)

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

BANKERS - 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 1 LW

Principal Office - The Association does not have a Registered Office. All enquiries should be addressed to the Honorary Secretary:

Mr R E Leek.
Richmond House
3 Beech Close
Oversley Green
Alcester.
Warwickshire
B49 6PP

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.

TRUSTEES' REPORT

The Trustees present their report and the accounts for the year ended 31st March 2015.

OBJECTS OF THE ASSOCIATION

The 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

The year has been eventful with more ladies being admitted to the Freedom with some taking on the responsibilities within their own Guilds. Our membership remains fairly stable and we are striving to try out new ideas to get interest generated in the Guilds and FEW. As requested by some Guilds the President has written a paper on recruitment with ideas on how to get the interest going, some ideas are very simple and the cost is nil whilst others are very cost effective. The paper is available to everyone to help and expand it to make it a working viable document for all Guilds.

One member has written in and referred to FEW and the Guilds as OLD BOYS CLUBS! If a member from one of our oldest Guilds thinks this, what is everyone else thinking? We have had a Guild join our Association as an Associate Member. Unfortunately we have also had one resign because their new Clerk could not see the point of FEW! The

Wardens, along with the Archivist and Officer Without Portfolio are monitoring things very carefully.

The President and his Consort tried to attend as many events as possible during the last year but, unfortunately, things do clash and some do have to be missed with sincere apologies being given. Perhaps if all the Guilds published their list of events a year in advance, as the London Guilds do, a lot of clashes could be avoided, the Wardens and the Editor could help with the organising of this.

In his last year as President, Gordon attended the AGM and Annual Banquet of The Court of Deans of Guilds of Scotland being invited by their outgoing Lord President, Capt. Jim Evans, and from this has been invited to Aberdeen on 27th February 2016 to attend The Receiving of the Coat of Arms on Vellum from the Lord Lyon King of Arms and the Provost of Aberdeen; also in attendance will be Lord Charles Bruce, (a descendant of King Robert the Bruce), the Queens Chaplain in Scotland and the Lord President of The Court of Deans. This is the anniversary of the presentation of the Royal Charter to the Burgesses of Aberdeen by King Alexander in 1214. Our Secretary has been asked to write to the Scottish Guilds to suggest that formal contact between FEW and The Court of Deans would be desirable.

We are still waiting for all Guilds to reply on the apprenticeship scheme guidance paper that was published by the President at the 2013 AGM. There seems to be no movement on this at all as yet.

With the website small changes are still being made to improve the system for members and the public alike. Some of the published email addresses have been hacked into but not so much recently. The Vice President is continually monitoring the site to improve and expand where possible.

The Officers of the Association continue to attend whatever events they can, local or otherwise, to give support or advice wherever they can.

The President would urge all Guilds to invite one another to anything and everything to create good inter-Guild relationships; it is found that Guildsmen will visit other Guilds and talk of their experience which will generate the interest with others — remember that no Guild is an island wrapped in its' own little world. We are The Freemen of England and Wales encompassing all with friendship and Curteisy.

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 11th September 2015 and signed on their behalf by:

Gordon A. Varndell
FEW President

Stephen P. White
FEW Honorary Treasurer

Capt James Evans
Chairman of Trustees



Freemen of England & Wales

An Association of Freemen and Guilds in England and Wales

Patron: The Right Honourable, the Earl Bathurst

INCOME

April to March

EXPENDITURE

2013/14		2014/15	2013/14		2014/15
£		£	£		£
Note 1	SUBSCRIPTIONS		Note 6	ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES	
3,315.00	Individual	3,255.00	69.64	Postage	573.64
1,350.00	Guilds	1,395.00	-	Telephone	-
4,665.00		4,650.00	-	Insurance (provision only made)	-
	Annual Subscriptions are taken at £10.00 for each individual and the set level for Guilds. Any donation above this amount is, in the absence of any other instructions split equally between the Legal and Regalia Funds		67.29	Archives	-
			74.76	Stationery	86.04
			240.00	Printing/photocopying	102.49
			35.00	Website	240.00
			486.69	Other	35.00
					1,037.17
Note 2	DONATIONS TO:-		Note 7	PURCHASES	
149.20	General Fund	204.00	300.00	Robes	-
650.50	Legal Fund	6,154.50	-	Ties	-
160.50	Regalia Fund	144.50	-	Members Medallions	-
960.20		6,503.00	259.00	Robe Badges	-
			-	Blazer badges	-
Note 3	SALES		-	Lapel badges	-
195.00	Robes	-	-	Wall Plaques	-
124.20	Ties	82.80	-	Pens	-
-	Members Medallions	100.50	-	Cufflinks	-
328.50	Robe badges	87.60	-	Membership Wallets	-
-	Blazer badges	15.80	-		-
23.30	Lapel badges	8.40	-		-
-	Wall plaques	-	-		-
5.50	Stickers	1.10	-		-
-	Headsquares	6.60	2,150.00		-
13.00	Books	-	1,230.13		-
-	Christmas Cards	-	3,380.13		-
24.50	Pens	3.50		JOURNAL (4/3 editions in period)	
10.00	Cuff Links	54.00		Production	1,550.00
-	Membership Wallets	-		Postage/distribution	954.45
-	"The Guilds" - M E Pickering	-			2,504.45
-	Aspects of the Freedom	-			
2.80	Membership Certificates	2.80		Note 9	
726.80		363.10		ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS	
				2012 ~ York	-
Note 4	INTEREST RECEIVED			2013 ~ Oxford	-
210.78	COIF Deposit A/c	207.86		2014 ~ Stafford	472.05
1.12	NatWest Reserve A/c	1.12			472.05
0.28	Gift Aid Tax Refund	0.26			
212.18		209.24		Note 10	
				LEGAL & REGALIA EXPENSES	
Note 5	INCOME TAX RECOVERED			Freemen's Rights	5,040.00
515.01	Re: Gift Aid Declarations 2013/2014	-		Past-President Medallions	-
0.00	Re: Gift Aid Declarations 2014/2015	525.50			5,040.00
515.01		525.50		Note 11	
				COURT & OFFICERS' MEETINGS	
7,079.19	TOTAL RECEIPTS	12,250.84		75.00	Court Meeting Room Hire
				515.30	Catering - Nett
				194.80	Officers' Meeting Expenses
				-	President's Expenses
				785.10	
					279.93
				6,497.94	TOTAL EXPENDITURE
					9,333.60
				581.25	SURPLUS FOR YEAR
					2,917.24
				1,702.00	Less transfer to Designated Funds
					2,194.00
				- 1,120.75	AVAILABLE SURPLUS
					723.24

MOVEMENT OF DESIGNATED FUNDS - 2013/14 to 2014/15

	2013/14	2014/15
Legal Fund		
Balance brought forward, 1st April	2,376.69	3,047.19
Donations received	650.50	6,154.50
Tax recovered	20.00	18.75
Addnl Tax recovered	-	-
LESS: Costs Incurred	-	- 5,040.00
Balance at 31st March	<u>3,047.19</u>	<u>4,180.44</u>
Regalia Fund		
Balance brought forward, 1st April	330.85	503.35
Donations received	160.50	144.50
Tax recovered	17.00	13.25
Addnl Tax recovered	-	-
LESS: Purchases made	- 5.00	-
Balance at 31st March	<u>503.35</u>	<u>661.10</u>
Regalia Self-Insurance Fund		
Balance brought forward, 1st April	4,103.00	4,962.00
Amount Provided	859.00	903.00
Balance at 31st March	<u>4,962.00</u>	<u>5,865.00</u>
TOTAL DESIGNATED FUNDS	<u>8,512.54</u>	<u>10,706.54</u>

FREEMEN OF ENGLAND AND WALES

STATEMENT OF ASSETS & LIABILITIES AS AT THE FINANCIAL YEAR END

	31.3.2014	31.3.2015
Monetary Assets		
GENERAL PURPOSE FUND		
National Westminster Bank - Current A/C	825.09	1,055.96
National Westminster Bank - Reserve A/C	61.04	62.16
COIF Charity Deposit Fund	45,000.00	39,000.00
	<u>45,886.13</u>	<u>39,118.12</u>
DESIGNATED FUNDS		
National Westminster Bank - Current A/C	812.54	3,006.54
National Westminster Bank - Reserve A/C	2,700.00	2,700.00
COIF Charity Deposit Fund	5,000.00	5,000.00
	<u>8,512.54</u>	<u>10,706.54</u>
DEBTORS / CREDITORS		
Amounts owed to FEW at 31st March	899.20	2,050.70
LESS: Amounts owed by FEW at 31st March	-337.00	-997.25
TOTAL	<u>54,960.87</u>	<u>51,878.11</u>
Other Assets		
Stocks of resale items (cost, not realisable value)	2,042.65	1,840.08
Officers' regalia (insured value)	17,174.00	18,050.00
Other Assets	1,143.00	1,191.00
TOTAL	<u>20,359.65</u>	<u>21,081.08</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>75,320.52</u>	<u>72,959.19</u>

Liabilities

Short Term

At 31st March 2015, the only short term commitments were in connection with usual ongoing transactions such as unpresented cheques and purchase of Regalia.

Long Term

At 31st March 2015, the Officers of the Association have not made any long term commitments.

Immediate Past Presidents Report

This position does not normally warrant the inclusion of a report but on this, the occasion of my handover of the IPP gown to our outgoing President it is my sad reflection that the last official engagement I undertook as IPP was to attend and provide a eulogy at the funeral of our Past President Bill Healey.

Bill was a personal friend of many years standing but notwithstanding my personal bias I feel justified in saying that as President of FEW he provided the Association with strong leadership at a time when that was sorely needed. He injected a measure of commercial knowledge necessary to bring a more secure financial footing and provide the basis upon which FEW has built its charitable stability.

Bill, along with his wife Rita, made great efforts throughout his Presidency to make and maintain contact with as many Guilds as possible and was responsible for the creation, and inclusion within FEW, of several struggling and aspiring Guilds. His knowledge and experience will be sorely missed.

Honorary Membership Secretary Report.

Guilds

We have 38 Guilds on the books with currently five Guilds in Arrears, one Guild namely Llantrisant has resigned from the Association. Stamford I am happy to say have joined our association as an Associate member until they get their paperwork sorted out. Nick Johnson is working with them on this.

Individual Membership

The current membership stands at 353.

Since September 2014

2 New full individual Members

3 New Associate Members

6 Members notified as deceased

3 Notified Change of address (one of these is not Known)

3 Members have been deleted under rule 9 of the Constitution

2 Members have resigned

Current payments

Late payments, again I have to say reminders are being sent out constantly. Some of the members pay by Standing order and the some of these have ceased payment with no reason given. All have been reminded and as yet there has been no response from them. Arrears Stands at the moment at 31 with the breakdown as of September 2015;-

April 2013, April 2014, April 2015 (3 years)	7 members
April 2014, April 2015 (2 years)	6 members
April 2015 (1 year)	11 members
Sept 2014, Sept 2015 (2 years)	4 members
Sept 2014 (1 year)	3 members

Archivists Report

As Archivist my duties since our last meeting have been restricted to providing advice concerning the eligibility of certain towns freemen or Gilds to claim membership of FEW which I see as a positive situation.

I have also been requested directly by two borough councils to provide advice regarding both the admission of lady freemen and how to deal with developments upon and adjacent to freemens lands. This shows that we are recognized as a body able to provide expertise and representation of the interests of our freemen members. I just hope that our members have the same faith in us.

I previously mentioned the sad loss of Past President Bill Healey. I will shortly be meeting with Rita Healey and will be assisted by Ray Mason of Newcastle under Lyme in collecting Bills papers concerning FEW. I am hopeful that these papers may provide more information concerning the development and operation of FEW during Bills Presidency and may assist in a compilation of the history of FEW as we approach our 50th anniversary. It has long been in progress to provide this history but a comprehensive lack of documentation has made any but a collection of assertions based largely around hearsay to be virtually impossible. Perhaps we may make more progress this term.

Hon. Editors Report.

Issue 181 should have been received by members by the time the executive meet during June, it was a full edition and contained all articles I had received. There was a problem with the format of the Booking form for the AGM which meant, with the presidents approval, it was included as an insert rather than on the pages of the Journal itself. Please note that the next edition will be the AGM edition so is normally full with the reports from that, please note the closing date for receipt of the items for it is The 18th September (The Friday after the AGM).

I have contacted Sarah Weatherburn re supplying photographs for the front and back covers.

A member Guild has contacted me regarding the details in the Annual Gazette, they tell me that a number of the published email addresses seem to be inaccurate and sent emails are bouncing back as undeliverable, Please could I ask that published contact details are checked and if necessary amendments notified to me, also by the Journals closing date to be published in the next Gazette.

Officer Without Portfolio's Report.

Unfortunately I am unable to be with you on this prestigious occasion. Please accept my apologies for absence at the meetings and I trust you will all have a very happy, enjoyable and informative weekend. My report is as following:

Fortunately the past year since our AGM at Stafford has been relatively relaxed with no further threats from government legislation. During that period I have added papers to the FEW Website — Viewpoint No 36 entitled "Freemen's Lands" and No 37 "The Dilemma" concerning commons registration by freemen, under the 1965 Act. Additionally I placed an Aide Memoir in the Summer Journal (181) and input an opening piece on the Magna Carta for discussion on the Website.

Our 'Freedom' is unique. In the admirable drive to gain increased membership for FEW we must not lose sight of its importance. Freedom is a privilege resulting from custom. The national drive for democratic equality (regardless of gender) can potentially erode the exclusivity of our customary traditions. We must observe the need for suitable and justifiable candidates for admission as a high percentage of applicants take no further interest beyond their initial admission ceremony. Nothing appears to capture or further their momentum.

The value of 'Freedom' and its future will rely upon a better understanding and the image it portrays in society. By additional civic support where possible and by increasing the publicity of admissions, particularly where they can be applied through apprenticeship, then public perception can be greatly enhanced by a more apparent involvement. Charitable actions should be well broadcast by publicising. I feel sure that our future will rely more and more upon greater involvement with the public.

I am well aware that there are several dynamic gild societies who are closely involved with their local communities and they prove that greater public popularity is key to our position in the 21st century.

Message From The Guild of Freemen of Berwick-upon-Tweed.

FEW AGM

The Guild of Freemen of Berwick-upon-Tweed was very pleased to host the Freemen of England and Wales for the 2015 AGM. We have been requested to convey their thanks from the many organizations in Berwick which were involved and particularly the Mayor, Hazel Bettison, who said it was one of the highlights of her year of office.

It was a great pleasure and honour for Berwick to host the AGM and we thoroughly enjoyed the experience. We are grateful to those attending and it was good to see our Guild Hall crowded for the banquet.

Next year will mark 50 years since that first Meeting in October 1966 in York where the Freemen of England was initiated. We look forward to once again meeting many old friends during that weekend.

Jim Evans
Chairman
The Guild of Freemen of Berwick-upon-Tweed.

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Website: <http://www.freemen-few.org.uk>

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/FreemenOfEnglandWales>

Opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the Hon. Editor, F.E.W. Court or Executive.

Cover Picture: The traditional Group Photograph taken after the AGM in the Town Hall at Berwick upon Tweed. Courtesy The Freemen of Berwick upon Tweed.

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.

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York.

YO31 0SZ

Tel. No. 01904 423153

Email: thomasg624@aol.com

The editor can accept text for publication either electronically (email or on disk) or bold print hard copy to Scan. All submissions preferred in the **Times New Roman font, size 10**. I can also cope with images (I can convert to Black and white if necessary) either as hard copy to scan, electronically by email or on CDR/DVDR as **JPG** files please. If you require return of hard copies or disks an SAE is appreciated, please indicate if this is desired.

Please note the closing date for the editor to receive items for the next issue (No. 183) is the 22/1/16.

If you would like to receive future editions of this journal by email (as a PDF) rather than through the post, please contact the editor with your details.

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