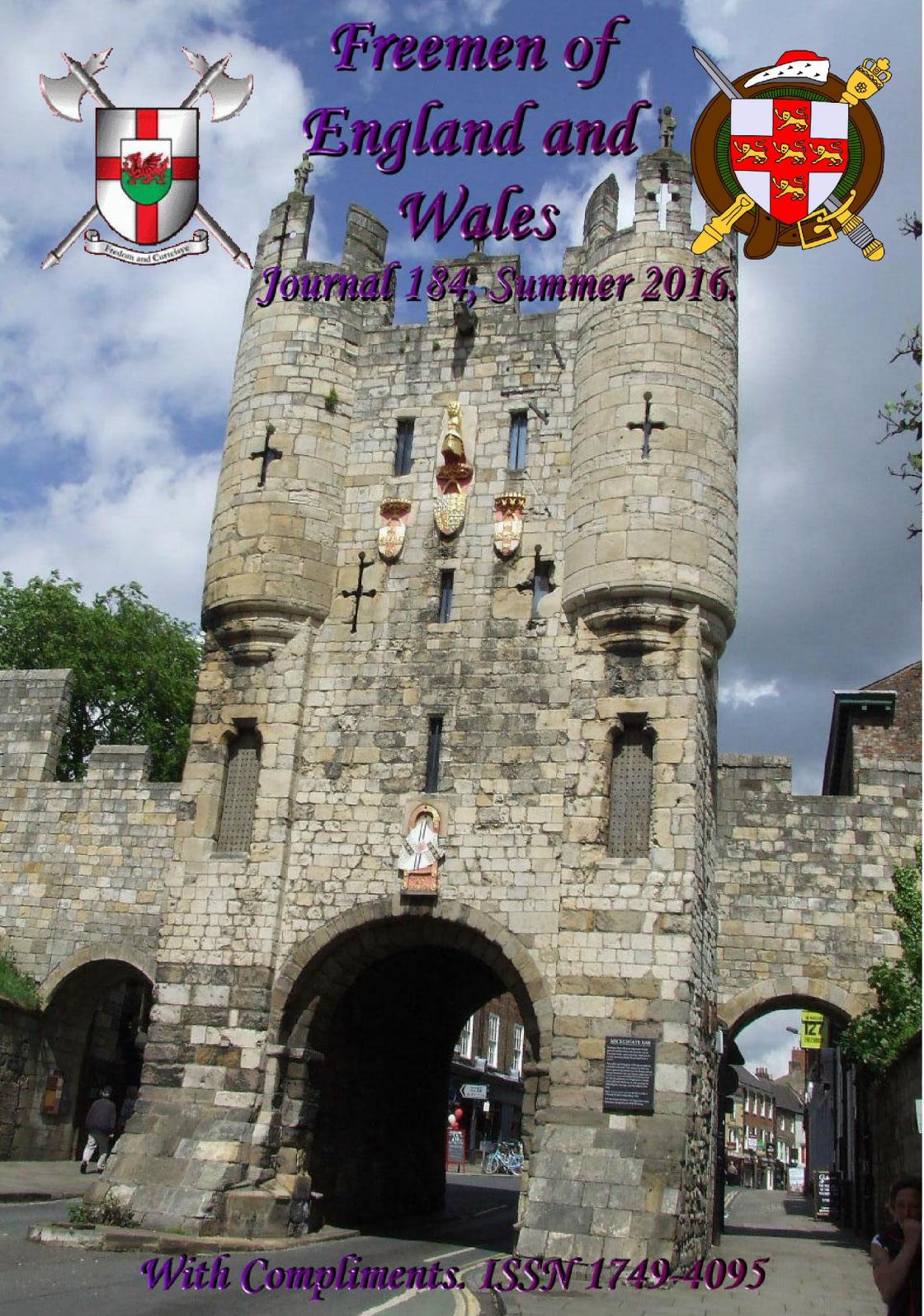


Freemen of England and Wales

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President's Letter.



Many thanks to those of you who attended the March Court Meeting in the Bailiffs' Hall of Alcester Town Hall, Warwickshire. It was a pleasure to meet up with you once again. However, numbers of attendees were still on the low side, although better than for last year's gathering. It is important that as many Member Gilds as possible, are represented at FEW Courts, as these are the occasions when FEW's policies are determined, before being taken forward for implementation by the Executive. These Courts also constitute the forum where comprehensive reports from Executive Officers and Wardens are presented, together with providing the opportunity for many aspects of Freemen's affairs to be collectively debated, and problems resolved.

The next time when we shall all meet together again will be in September at our AGM in York, and this year, being the 50th Anniversary of the formation of our Association of Freemen, promises to be something very special. Details and a booking form are included in this Journal.

I am pleased to report that together with my wife Janet, I have had the pleasure of recently attending the following Member Gilds' functions:- the Quit Rents Ceremony and Luncheon of the Guildable Manor of Southwark; the Spring Court and Dinner of the Warwick Court Leet; the Annual Banquet of The Guild of Freemen of the City of York; and the Annual Banquet and Freemen's Sunday of The City of Coventry Freemen's Guild. We thank them each for their great hospitality, conviviality, and the excellence of each occasion.

It further gives me pleasure to tell you that the fellowship link with our sister organisation in Scotland, The Court Of Deans Of Guild Of Scotland, has now been firmly consolidated. Janet and I were very pleased to attend on 29th April in Glasgow, the AGM and Banquet of The Court Of Deans as guests of its outgoing Lord President, John MacLeod.

Although having now dropped for practical reasons, the not so new idea of some kind of FEW Exhibition being established in order to better educate the public in what FEW and the Freedom are all about, the Executive is continuing to examine different ways in which this constitutional requirement can best be pursued. Any suggestions from members will be appreciated.

In conclusion, you may have noticed that our Deputy Presidents rarely have anything to formally report at our gatherings. This is because only infrequently are they ever called upon to deputise for the President, and therefore the excuse of "not having many crumbs to pick up, which have fallen from the President's table" is essentially correct. I must therefore apologise to my Deputy President, Capt. Jim Evans, with the assurance that there are most certainly good times to come!

Ronald E. Leek. President.

Minutes of the Court Meeting

held on Saturday 12th March 2016 in Alcester War Memorial Town Hall, Alcester.

1) List of attendees. Derek Austin – Coventry, Kay Blake – Alcester, Vaughan Blake – Alcester, Howard Crapper — Oxford, Shirley Crapper – Oxford, John Edwards – Stafford, Capt. Jim Evans – Berwick, Pat Evans – Berwick, Tim Forman – Alcester, Gill Forman – Alcester, Eileen Forth — York, Colin Hardcastle — York, Capt. Stephen Healy — Newcastle upon Tyne, Mike Honnoraty - Warwick and Southwark, Janet Honnoraty - Warwick and. Southwark, Norman Kench – Henley-in-Arden, Pat Kench – Henley-in-Arden, Phillip Kinnersley – Stafford, Nick RS. Johnson — Hale, Ron Leek — Alcester and Southwark, Janet Leek – London, Steven Morson – Coventry, Anthony Piddock – Stafford, Alan Shelley – Sudbury, Ray Spurway – Stafford, John P. Tolley – Altrincham, Gordon Varndell — London, Marc Venables- Alcester, Ian Whitehead – Alcester

a) The meeting was called to order, and the President welcomed everyone present.

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; Roy Folland, Warden for Wales; Martin Hanks, Warden for the South West; Hazel Hague (York); Howard Pate (Chester); Stella Machin (Stafford); Mick Ayres (Leicester); Michael Wheeler (Sudbury).

3) The minutes of the Court Meeting held on Saturday 14th March 2015 at Northampton Guildhall were approved as a correct record, and were signed by the President.

4) Matters Arising – None.

5) Ron Leek presented his President's Report. A copy is appended.

6) The Deputy President Capt. Jim Evans had no Report to present.

7) In the absence of the Vice President, Stephen White, who was unable to be present due to a serious injury in the family, no Report was available.

8) Wardens' Reports were presented as follows:-

Howard Crapper, Warden for the West. Copy appended.

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

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

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

Colin Hardcastle, Warden for the North East. No copy appended.

Capt. Stephen Healy, Warden for the North. Copy appended.

Martin Hanks, Warden for the South West. Copy appended.

Roy Folland, Warden for Wales. Copy appended.

9) In Stephen White's absence, the Hon Treasurers Report was distributed, comprising of the statement of Income and Expenditure, the statement of Movement of Designated Funds, and the statement of Assets and Liabilities for the Financial Year. Steve Healy said that the Treasurer would be speaking with the bank regarding a question about the payment dates of Standing Orders.

10) Eileen Forth presented her Membership Secretary's Report. A copy is appended.

11) In the absence of the Hon. Editor, Tom Gibson, his Report was read out by the Secretary. A copy is appended

12) In the absence of the Hon. Archivist Alan Fallows, no Report was available.

13) Alan Shelley presented his Officer without Portfolio's Report. A copy is appended

14) Any Other Business.

- a) FEW Exhibition. Colin Hardcastle said that whilst the idea of a Freeman's Exhibition at the AGM was sound in principle, there were practical problems. Borrowing valued artefacts from Member Guilds and transport and insurance being a major obstacle. The Secretary suggested to Colin that photographs of artefacts from Member Guilds might be a simpler solution for him to take forward.
- b) The President's Fund. The President, Ron Leek explained the idea of such a fund to the Court, and asked for the views of members present. Following some discussion, it was decided to refer the matter to the next Executive for further research, and framing into a firm proposal.
- c) Janet Honnoraty (Warwick) informed the Court that the previous April 25th, she had attended with others the Lichfield Assize of Ales. John Edwards volunteered to establish contact with Lichfield and the Secretary undertook to obtain a contact name and phone number for him.
- d) John Tolley,(Altrincham) advised the Court that Altrincham Court Leet would be holding a Service of Rededication of the Guild at St Margarets Church in Bowden on July 9th at 3pm. This would be followed by a dinner in the evening.
- e) Derek Austin asked whether an appropriate decision had been made by the Executive Committee regarding the letters that have been sent to some Member Guilds by the Llantrisant Guild Clerk. The President said that it had been decided to advise our Member Guilds that they should respond by post advising the Llantrisant Guild Clerk to contact the FEW Archivist for any professional advice regarding the Freedom and ancillary matters.
- f) The Secretary advised the Court that our Patron, the Earl Bathurst, had accepted the President's invitation to be our Principle Guest at the 50th Anniversary Banquet in September at York.
- g) Regarding a question about the forthcoming 90th birthday celebrations for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth 11 on April 21st, the President informed the Court that he would be sending an appropriate card to Buckingham Palace from himself, the Officers and the Wardens, on behalf of FEW, expressing our loyal and heartfelt good wishes to her.

15) Future Court and AGM venues.

Pembroke have offered to host the 2017 AGM, and Stafford may be willing to host the 2017 Court Meeting. Exact dates will be advised in due course.

16) Closure of Court. There being no further business, the President closed the meeting at 4pm.

President's Report to Court

This FEW Court today, is being held in the 17th century Town Hall of Alcester, the home of Member Guild, The Alcester Court Leet, an organisation of which I am proud to be a member. Over the years I have held various offices here, the most significant among which, are as High Bailiff in 1969-70, and later, as Constable for the 21 years from 1983 to 2004.

The next occasion following today, when we will all meet together again, is in September, when we will be celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Association. Formed in 1966, and originally entitled "Freemen of England", it was enlarged in 1992 to include Freemen in Wales, thereby becoming "Freemen of England and Wales". As this special anniversary will undoubtedly be a most prestigious occasion for FEW, the AGM this year is returning to York, the venue for that first significant AGM of 50 years ago, and a very special weekend is being arranged for us by the York Gild. I encourage as many of you as possible to join with us there in our celebrations. Details and a booking form will

be included in the forthcoming Journal, so don't miss out, and ensure that you reply before any possible deadline.

I understand that an article by Capt. Jim Evans, our Deputy President, giving a potted history of the reasons behind the Association's formation, its early days and successes, and its more recent happenings, will also be published in the next Journal. This will certainly be most informative, and well worth reading.

As President, I have been invited to attend later this month, the very historic annual ceremony of the "Quit Rents", enacted by Member Guild, the "Guildable Manor" in Southwark, London. This is the formal ceremonial when the Manor's ancient dues are paid to the Queen's Remembrancer on behalf of the Sovereign. This ancient custom set me thinking, that there must be other unusual customs and ceremonies still carried out by Member Guilds in their communities. Such colourful customs and ceremonies are a vital part of our heritage, and their enactment must not be allowed to lapse. After all, they are just one way of helping towards providing a better public understanding of what Freemen and their Guilds are all about. I would be very interested to hear about any of these, as I am sure would other members.

Finally, I must mention that the Association's Asset Register is in the process of being updated, and Hon Treasurer, Stephen White, would be pleased to hear of any currently unlisted items of FEW regalia or accoutrements which may still be in the possession of members.

Report of the Vice President.

I regret not being able to be with you today, and especially after I had hoped to put all of the problems that I had last year behind me. My son, whom some of you will know, has Asperger's Syndrome and he suffered a heavy fall from his horse whilst at his regular "Riding for the Disabled" session a couple of days ago resulting in a break at the top of his femur. He was due to have surgery on Friday so as you can imagine my wife and I have had to cancel all of our other commitments to support him through this difficult time.

I am grateful for the work undertaken by the Wardens over the last year, despite my absence, and the reports that they either bring or have submitted to this meeting. We are on the verge of appointing a Warden for the North West, (subject to receipt of the necessary paperwork), and Nick Johnson is covering The East, although I have persuaded Norman Offield to continue in a support role to Nick in consideration of his (Nick's) additional duties as Honorary Secretary.

Some further work has been done 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 recently been made to The Viewpoints from The Officer Without Portfolio page. A photograph has been very kindly provided by our Patron and this has replaced the temporary one which had been obtained from the internet. The 'diary dates' page has been hidden from view for the time being as it is being updated. I would be grateful to receive details of any functions, or events, either directly from Guilds or via the Wardens, that you wish to be included along with the relevant contact details.

Our Facebook page, which receives regular posts particularly from Tom Gibson, (also the prime mover behind the Freemens Railway Society page), and Nick Johnson, is also now picking up an increasing number of items from our member Guilds and so provides a steady stream of fresh information. The number of "likes" now stands at 197, up from 155 last September, and any addition to the website is also notified through Facebook. One has to be a Facebook user in order to view it but for anyone with internet access it is a very straight forward process to register a Facebook Account. 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.

Warden for the West:

It has been another busy period for Freemen in the West. I am very grateful to the Chartered Freemen of the City of Gloucester for not only advertising the Oxford Annual Dinner but also providing a download of the application form on their website. Such co-operation is real progress and very much appreciated. It was a pleasure for me to welcome Freemen of Gloucester to the Freemen of Oxford Annual Dinner. It was our honour to welcome our President of FEW along with his charming wife Janet. Several other Guilds were represented and it was tremendous to see them all .

I recently spoke to the Warden and Freemen of Malmesbury and they said they were all doing fine and nothing particular to report at this time.

Exciting news from the Burgess Guild of Chippenham. Not known for regular meetings but have now elected a new Leader in Marc Allu. He lives in a Burgage House , as do the ten other Burgesses in the town. They live under a Charter granted by Queen Mary in 1554, and is appertaining to occupiers or owners of these houses only. The properties can change hands, and the owners need not take up their rights, and therefore the Freemen vary from year to year."

I have an appointment to meet Marc in Chippenham next week and we will talk about Freemen issues and the FEW.

This week in Oxford ,has seen one Admission Ceremony of a new Lady Freeman. Preceding the ceremony was a short renaming event on the Town Hall staircase where the popular Panel Meeting Room was unveiled as the new Freeman's Room . The Leader of the City Council made a speech referring to our Charter from King Henry which gave Freemen the right to free trade in the City and exemption from taxes and tallages in the surrounding area.

The Freemen of Oxford Apprentice Awards this month saw the aspiring young people apply and we had seven finalists from varying trades and skills . The Apprentice of the Year was one Stephanie Rockett, from Business Administration , whose employers say they never thought of her as an Apprentice as she was so good from the start The event drew press coverage and was attended by both the Deputy Lord Mayor and the Chairman of the Oxford County Council. It was an uplifting event and Freemen were seen to be doing something useful and charitable. The social media in Oxford really took off as the Awards were made.

Next week, I am meeting with Lord Krebs ,who is representing the University in the quest to reduce the criticism of the eight new hideous student blocks which overlook our Oxford Port Meadow.

Pleas that the top floors of each block are removed have been rebuffed but the University hope that tree planting and changing the exterior colour will placate the neighbours.

I have urged Oxford University Students, through our Freemen Journal , who protest about a historic statue of Pioneer, Cecil Rhodes, that they should turn their attention to the future and get these ghastly student flats changed for the good of all Oxford.

Our Freemen grazing rights are suffering from a change in the administration of the Rural Payments. It was once a simple system which has now been changed . This has resulted in the delay or cancellation of the payment and to the detriment of the graziers. I have just received excellent advice from our Officer without Portfolio and will put this to our Oxford Graziers.

I have been advised that our Patron has links with the Northleach Court Leet. Meeting just once a year, they did not merit a mention in Harry Wards Book on Freemen in England but I will keep a watching brief on them along with similar organisations in Cricklade and Hungerford.

Warden for North Midlands:

There are things going on in my area on which I could report, but there are few occasions when I feel that I am doing worthwhile things as a warden. I happen to believe that the creation of FEW was a good thing in order to provide expertise, support and advice where needed. However, if my

area is typical, most guilds seem to be getting on with their own affairs perfectly well without me. Occasionally, I think I may be doing something useful. Giving some encouragement to the people who are trying to breathe new life into the Derby Guild is a case in point. At Stafford annual dinner we try to invite local guild representatives to attend. On this occasion Mr and Mrs Da Silva, who are working to revive the Derby guild were able to attend and had the chance to talk to people who have built Stafford up from nothing over the past 20 years. Sadly, they seem to have members who are less enthusiastic about the guild doing anything other than paying out £15 a year.

Indeed, Newcastle-under-Lyme has a similar situation with a few devoted servants and a large number who's only concern is their annual pay-day. There are clearly some advantages in not having money to distribute. Stafford does have a significant income, but it all goes into maintaining and improving allotments that are their primary asset, so nobody joins for the money.

Bridgnorth and Shrewsbury both have active programmes and seem to be thriving, as can be seen from reports in the journal. Bridgnorth and Stafford have benefited from expanding the entry criteria to include ladies, as has Derby, but the latter did not take advantage of increasing the entry via apprenticeships, which is the primary method used by other guilds nationally.

A call from the officer without portfolio drawing my attention to the Guild of Smiths at Lichfield looks like it may bear fruit. Lichfield has a long history of Guild activity and a superb guildhall, but there has never been any real relationship with FEW. By pure coincidence this year Stafford Burgesses put in a couple of trees in the Christmas tree festival at St Mary's Church, one from the Guild and one from the Allotments Trustees. At the opening ceremony we were wearing our robes, complete with local and FEW Badges, and a member of the Rotary Club, noted our existence. He said he happened to be associated with the Lichfield Smith's Guild and gave me a card with contact details. I have still to follow up that lead, but I have some hope that we may be able to eventually bring them on board.

At the last Stafford AGM, it was formally agreed to use the term 'Burgesses' rather than 'Freemen'. That has been slowly changing since the arrival of a significant number of ladies in our midst and we have long wished to separate ourselves from Freemasons in the mind of the public.

Unfortunately, a company called Burgesses that supplied agricultural machinery was well known in the town and some people now think we have something to do with them. You can't win!

Lengthy negotiations with Severn Trent, who are building a pumping station and pipeline on the freemen's allotment land look like coming to a reasonable conclusion. The money will be useful in improving the site. It has not been easy, due mainly to the local agents not understanding that dealing with an ancient Trust is very different to dealing with a private owner.

We are feeling a little self-satisfied having had an article published in the national allotments magazine refuting the claim of another site to be the oldest in England at 300 years, because we reckon that our plots have an 800 year history!

Stafford Burgesses, as members of the Staffordshire Heritage Group, are embroiled in a battle with the County Council over the design of a flag for the historic county. We believe that the Stafford Knot is the primary emblem of the county and that the flag should cover the Potteries and the Black Country that were part of Staffordshire for centuries, not just the administrative area which arrived in 1974. Lots of controversy, but plenty of good publicity for Stafford Burgesses. Watch this space.

Warden for the South East and Acting Warden for East:

Rochester Oyster & Floating Fishery;

The official business of the Fishery occurs but once a year, usually in July due to the changing tide table, and it is through the Admiralty Court which is held in Rochester Guildhall. I have attended and videoed the last three courts and attended the subsequent beating of the bounds by boat and cruiser up and down river to mark the extent of their jurisdiction on the River Medway.

The Fishery has been working alongside a number of partners for a number of years in a successful effort to clean up the water of the River Medway. It follows that cleaner water results in more fish and more Crustacea, more river plant life and plankton, and bigger catches for the fishermen.

One of those partners is IFCA - the Association of Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities. Their aim is to assist and promote the regional IFCAs to ensure that all partners and authorities develop a leading and effective role in fisheries and conservation management. Following an original idea from ROFF, and then a direct request from ROFF for the enactment of a local bye law, the north shore of the River Medway in between Upnor, and Elphinstone Point (on the Isle of Grain) - some fifteen square miles of water - are about to be declared by statute as a No Take area. This means that no one can fish or dredge in the area ever, not even ROFF, who have excluded themselves from this massive intertidal salt marsh conservation area. The aim of the Fishery is to set a high example in the field of conservation; one that they hope many other fisheries and authorities will follow throughout the UK. The next Admiralty Court will take place on Saturday 9th July at midday in the Rochester Guildhall, and amongst the various guests will be a small contingent of freemen from the Guildable Manor of Southwark, who are also a Member Guild of FEW.

The City Of Lincoln Freemen's Guild

On Saturday 10th October 2015, six new Freemen were invested in a ceremony in the Guildhall in Saltergate, by the Mayor of Lincoln, Councillor Andrew Kerry in the presence of the City Sheriff and his Lady, Mr Graham Kent and Mrs Gill Kent, as well as myself as guest speaker. The introduction was conducted by the President of the Gild, Mr Tony Gadd in the presence of the Master of the Gild, Mr Roy Froggatt, and the new Freemen are Charles Gadd, Eleanor Gadd, Karen Huddleston, Linda Hunter, Ellen Lamming, and James Mapleston. In addition, four new Associate Members were invested – Charlotte Powell, Doreen Webb, Paul Benton and Roy Houlden. There are videos and photographs of some of the Ceremony on the FEW Facebook page. On Saturday 16th April 2016, the Lincoln Freemen's Gild will hold their next investiture Ceremony for new Freemen in Lincoln Guildhall followed by their Annual General Meeting. Tony Gadd has indicated that he will standing down from his clerical duties shortly, and handing over to his successor, Helen Dolby.

Freemen Of Stamford

Following discussions with myself, the small number of Stamford freemen are content for the present to remain an Associate FEW Member Guild. Part of the reason that they feel unable to enact their new constitution is because there are not enough of them to run such an organisation at the present time. In addition, most of the Freemen belong to one family, and the day-to-day distractions such as earning incomes, raising babies and young children, and paying bills, tend to come before other considerations.

I have spoken with Mrs Joy Scholes, who is the contact- not a trustee - of the charity known as 'The Freemens' Lands'. Joy is all but Treasurer in name, and maintains the financial records of the small income and expenditure on the upkeep and conservation of the lands. Joy's father-in-law Norman is in his mid nineties, and the family have natural concerns for his health. Joy is also a grandmother, and has granddaughters who are not yet anywhere near old enough to accept the Freedom. The family business is run by joy's son Neil, who is also Chairman of the Stamford Freemen. Being self-employed does not leave much time outside work to develop a Guild when there are so many family priorities.

I have agreed that their status quo should remain as it is until the time arrives when the Freemen of Stamford want to and need to expand their numbers.

Resident Freemen Of Colchester henceforth to be known by their new name of The Borough Of Colchester Freeburgesses Society

The annual Freeburgesses Admissions Ceremony was held on Tuesday 6th October 2015 at 6pm in the Mayor's Parlour of Colchester Town Hall. Fifteen candidates (eight women and seven men) were present, together with their Witnesses (a family member who is also a Freeburgess). Following the welcoming address from the Mayor, Cllr Mrs Theresa Higgins, the Council's Solicitor, Mr Andrew Weavers invited the Candidates to either affirm or swear the Allegiance, and I was invited to address

the assembled Freeburgesses on the subject of their new responsibilities. There is a video and photographs of parts of the Ceremony on the FEW Facebook page. Efforts are currently being made to adopt a new Constitution for the Society.

Warden South Midlands:

Alcester Court Leet dates back to 1272, and Wall Boards around the room list the many Bailiffs, including our President, who have served the Town in that time.

Last year the Court Leet distributed over £10,000 for local causes, which reflects the many events and the support of the Townspeople. For the annual Court Leet Church service at St Nicholas next door, the High Street is closed to traffic for the parade, led by the Alcester Silver Band, and including other Court Leets, civic dignitaries, Scouts & Guides, and other local associations.

Henley-in-Arden Court Leet was revived in its current form in 1917, by the then Lord of the Manor William Fieldhouse. He also restored the medieval Guildhall originally built for the Guild of St John, before closure under the Abolition of the Chantries Act in 1547. The colourful shields on the back of your current FEW Journal reflect the various Lords of the Manor since 1086, and the shields were recently refurbished under the guidance of High Bailiff Norman Kench. 'Henley Court Leet Day' on 4th June sees the traditional Assizes of bread weighing, fish and flesh tasting, etc., all performed by robed officers with due pomp and ceremony — well worth a visit if you are in the area.

Warwick Court Leet has changed a lot over the last ten years, with the second ever Lady Bailiff Janet Honnoraty overseeing a robed Court, with social activities now supplementing the legal duties of 'Presentments for the Good of the Town' A Town Crier competition is scheduled for 21st May, and an 'Assizes Day' on 13th August. Both events will be a colourful and vocal pageant for the county town.

Turning now to the Guilds in the South Midlands Area:

Coventry Freeman's Guild finds that a high proportion of candidates attending the Lord Mayor's Admission Courts are over 50 years of age, but this is just the age group most likely to attend our regular Guild events. The Apprentice of the Year competition has been going for 11 years in its current format, having evolved into small and medium, and large firm categories, and also a discretionary prize for endeavour. The latter prize this year went to an apprentice registered blind, but having devised effective strategies to mitigate his handicap. The prime event in the Guild's calendar is the annual banquet on Saturday 7th May, where our new Master and his Wardens are installed with pomp and ceremony in St Mary's medieval Guildhall There is also a Friday night supper and a robed procession to church on the Sunday. We invite other Freeman and partners to attend, contact George Wilkinson on 024-7646-3203 or myself for further details.

Leicester Freeman's Guild this year celebrates its 40th anniversary since reformation in 1976. Some long served Past Masters are stepping down from current roles this year, including 'Gildhall News' editor Brian Mudford after 12 years, and also Warden Mick Ayres after 40 years. Mick is still your contact on 0116-2242353 for details on the Guild's banquet weekend events, which start with a Welcome Supper at the Freemens' Holt on Friday 31st June, a banquet at Devonshire Place on Saturday 41 June, and finally a robed procession to Leicester Cathedral on Sunday 5th June for a 10.30 am service.

Northampton Freeman's Guild invites all Freeman to their 31st Charity Weekend events over Friday 8th and Saturday 9th April 2016. A welcoming supper will be held on the Friday at Moulton College, which is also the venue for discounted accommodation. Saturday includes a visit to the Stoke Bruerne Canal Museum, with a short trip up the canal to the Blisworth Tunnel. The evening dinner will also be at Moulton College. Contact Terry Sibley on 01604-784704 for booking details.

Warden for the North:

Alnwick:

The Chamberlain's Common Council and Freemen of the Borough of Alnwick's next scheduled event is their AGM in a couple of months' time. At the moment they have no new admissions listed. The Freemen are registering a piece of land that was somehow missed off the map when they registered their properties a few years ago. It is a small cobbled area that was used for the corn weighs in times gone by.

On a lighter note, Alnwick held its annual 'Shrove Tuesday' football match in the pastures of Alnwick Castle when the Parish of St. Paul played the Parish of St. Michael. The earliest recorded Shrovetide match in Alnwick was in the streets in 1762, moving to the pastures in the 1820's. The Freemen of Alnwick were represented by the Town Waits and Cryer, although I am unaware of which side they were on or of this year's result. My thanks go to James Mattison for helping with this update.

Berwick-upon Tweed:

The business of the Freemen of the Borough of Berwick-upon-Tweed is reported as 'routine housekeeping' at this time and is the usual mixture of financial matters, governance and social events.

Due to disastrous planning and last minute re-scheduling by the FEW executive committee, both ex-Chairman of the Freemen of Berwick-upon-Tweed and Custodian Trustee Capt Jim Evans and I were both forced to miss the Freemen's ever popular "Pie & Pea Supper" last night which, on this occasion, was supplemented by the showing of a film of 'old Berwick' by the Town Archivist. Sunday 1st May will see the Freemen participating as usual in the historic Riding of the Bounds of the Borough.

This will be followed by on 19th June by their Summer Trip which this time takes the form of a Boat Trip down the River Tyne and back, followed by a visit to the Newcastle upon Tyne Trinity House.

Captain Jim Evans continues to contribute to the ongoing work of two important Groups; one is the Berwick Archives and Museum Action Group, a key aim of which is to find a new and permanent home for the Borough's Archives, including many of the Guild's records; the other is a Families Project, led by the Borough Archivist, which seeks to build a website to assist members of Berwick families, including Freemen, to trace their ancestors back to the First World War and before. My thanks go to Michael Herriott for helping with this update.

Durham:

The Freemen of the City of Durham have a new and interim Chairman of the Wardens, that being Mr. Eric Bulmer, Warden of the Plumbers' Company, succeeding Mr. John Heslop. Eric considers his approach to current issues and challenges as 'a period of change'. The Freemen are moving to a more corporate structure, where the Wardens' roles are redefined and responsibilities for the management of the organisation are shared.

Targets have been established for 2016 and include:

- 1) Redefining roles and responsibilities of the Wardens of Companies and the Chairman of the Wardens;
 - 2) Introducing tenure of appointment for the position of Warden and Chairman of the Wardens;
 - 3) Setting out formal rules of procedure for the organisation;
 - 4) Providing a framework that will encourage the general membership to become more involved within the organisation, the initial strategies being directed at new or recently admitted members.
- Longer-term strategies will be put in place in an attempt to lower the average age of Wardens to ensure continuity for the future and also ensure a smooth transition at the end of the Warden's tenure.

To achieve these objectives it intended to establish a Development Group that will become the 'engine room for change' and will provide an opportunity for the general membership to become

involved. My thanks go to Eric Bulmer for helping with this update.

Newcastle upon Tyne: Nothing to report.

Morpeth:

You may recall that I have been investigating the possibility of encouraging the town of Morpeth, in Northumberland, in re-establishing the Freelage. Morpeth were indeed represented in the discussions that preceded the formation of the Association of the Freemen of England.

Upon examination of correspondence between various parties between 1991 and 2002, including exchanges between the then Castle Morpeth Borough Council and the then Warden of the North for the Association, Mr T Haslam, plus some historical accounts as held by the Honorary Archivist, I can see no nominal route by which the Town Council of Morpeth today can readily re-activate the system of Guilds and Freedom. This is primarily due to the surrendering of rights that accompanied the integration of Morpeth (and others) into the reformed Northumberland County Council in 1974. I believe there would still be provision for local bye-laws that might accommodate such matters, but it would wholly depend on an acceptance and commitment by the Town Council, something that would require some delicate negotiation and heavy persuasion. There would after all be a cost and they would need to be re-assured of the role of Freemen into the future.

Warden for the South West:

Please accept my sincere apologies for, once more, having little or nothing to report.

I had intended to attend Court and to report on progress on the freemen of the City of Exeter (the only city in Devon & Cornwall, I believe, that has Hereditary Freemen).

When I last checked the relevant page of the Exeter City Council website, it reported the existence of seven Freemen of the City of Exeter.

These seven were granted the freedom at ceremonies over a thirty year period from 1984 to 2014.

There are a number of rights traditionally associated with freemen such as the right to drive sheep through the city or carry a sword in public. While sheep have occasionally been driven through Exeter, the "privileges" are now effectively symbolic and one wonders if carrying a sword through the city might lay the carrier open to a charge of carrying an offensive weapon!

Freedom by succession is still granted today to any person who can prove descent from a deceased freeman. Proof of descent is required by the production of the usual certificates of death of father, marriage and birth.

As far as I am aware there is no Freemen's organization in Exeter, my task for this year will be to get one going.

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 Saturday 3rd October 2015 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 8th 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 October 22nd 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 2016 were agreed and will take place on the 17th March 21st July and the AGM on the 20th October. The Annual Service and Luncheon the 20th November.

The hosting of the AGM of the FEW in 2017 was discussed and it was proposed, seconded and accepted by all present that the Gild of Freemen of Pembroke would host the FEW AGM on the 15th-16th 17th of September 2017. The Cleddau Bridge Hotel has been booked for those dates. On Sunday November the 8th representatives of the Gild took part in the Service of Remembrance at the Pembroke Town Cenotaph, The Master laid the wreath on their behalf.

The Annual Service was held on Sunday 15th November 11.00am at the Ancient Parish Church of Saint Mary The Blessed Virgin Pembroke. The service was taken by Canon Roger Jones, Chaplain to the Gild, the guest preacher was the Revd. Nigel Griffin. Following the service the Annual Luncheon was held at the Cleddau Bridge Hotel.

The Honoured Guests attending were the Chairman of Pembrokeshire County Council Cllr. Wynne Evans and his Consort, Mrs. Gwyneth Johns, The Mayor of Pembroke Cllr. Mrs. Pauline Waters and her Consort, Mr. Sean Waters, The Mayor and Mayoress of Pembroke Dock Cllr Peter Kraus and Mrs. Doris Kraus, the Master of the Haverfordwest Gild of Freemen Mr. Charles Davies and his Lady Mrs. Marion Davies, the Guest Preacher Revd. Nigel Griffin and a representative of the Pembroke Street Pastors who was presented with a cheque for £250.00 by the Master on behalf of the Gild of Freemen of Pembroke.

The Gild of Freemen of Llantrisant

Following the letter received from the Clerk to the Town Trust of Llantrisant to our Membership Secretary of their decision to resign their membership from the FEW. I made contact on a personal basis with the Trust Clerk stating the importance of their membership and the help that other Gilds/Guilds receive who are not as fortunate as they to have the backing of the Town Council on legal matters and such like and to prove a point I mentioned if it had not been for the intervention of the FEW some years ago, Pembroke would not now have a Gild of Freemen. I am sorry to say following my contact with the Llantrisant Town Trust I received a reply stating their letter of resignation still stands.

Haverfordwest Gild of Freemen

Two distinguished local leaders were sworn in as Burgesses of Haverfordwest Gild of Freemen on Friday.

Lieutenant Colonel Mark Stoter, C.O. of The 14th Royal Signals at Cawdor Barracks, Brawdy, and Secretary of State for Wales, The Right Hon. Stephen Crabb MP, should have been installed last summer, but their very busy work schedules made it impossible to fix a mutually convenient date. Gild Master Charles Davies, who conducted the ceremony at Picton Town House, outlined the distinguished careers of the two men, both of whom described their admission as an honour and privilege.

Lieut. Col. Stater, who was commissioned into the Royal Corps of Signals in 1999, has served in the Gulf and Afghanistan, the MoD Joint Task Force HQ, Counter Terrorism and Gurkha Signal squadrons, spoke of the warmth of welcome he and his family had received in "the stunning county of Pembrokeshire."

He said: "We have lived in lots of places around Britain and all over the world, but we have never known such warmth as we have in Pembrokeshire. It means a tremendous amount to a military man to know he has such support in his home area."

Mr Crabb, who was born in Haverfordwest and educated at Tasker Milward School, Bristol University and London Business School, was elected to Parliament for Preseli Pembrokeshire in 2005, became a Front Bencher in 2009, was Under-Secretary of State from 2012-14 and became Secretary of State for Wales in 2014. Married with two small children, he has supported many charities, played rugby for the County Youth squad and has run the London Marathon three times. He spoke of his delight to be living and working in his native town and county and giving his children the opportunity of enjoying the same benefits he enjoyed as a boy in Haverfordwest. • Burgesses, or Honorary Freemen, are appointed as a mark of appreciation of valuable service to the town in different ways. The ceremony was held in the presence of Wardens of the Gild Court, and a

civic welcome was extended by the town Sheriff, Councillor Chris Thomas on behalf of the Mayor, Cir Sue Murray, who provided hospitality in the Mayor's Parlour.

Membership Secretary's Report.

Guilds: We have 38 Guilds on the books with currently two Guilds in Arrears, -

Altrincham One payment September 2015

Lincoln One payment September 2015

Individual Membership: The current membership stands at 360. Slightly up on the last report.

Since September 2015:

8 New full individual Members

1 Notified Change of address

3 Members have resigned due to ill health 1 Reinstated

Current Payments: Late payments, some are coming in. Reminders are being sent out but responses are very slow because of the late statements of last year.

Arrears: An accurate figure for this at the moment stands at 55 members in arrears.

The breakdown of these are;-

April 2015 to April 2016 16 members

September 2015 to September 2016 21 members

April 2014 + April 2015 6 members

Sept 2014 + Sept 2015 2 members

April 2013 + April 2014 + April 2015 5 members

Sept 2013 + Sept 2014 + Sept 2015 5 members

Of all these 13 were paying by standing order, but for whatever reason they have not been paid out.

Hon. Editor's Report.

The Editor reminded those present of the closing date for items for this edition of the Journal. In addition to his report he enclosed the following report on preparations for the AGM in York. Preparations for the AGM weekend in York are, as expected, well underway by the York committee which is mostly made up of the same team that organised the successful 2012 event, Hazel Hague, Maureen Eland, Steve Hornby and Tom Gibson, also Sylvia Errington is a useful addition to the team and she will be Master of York at the time of the event.

As in 2012 the most cost effective way of hosting this event in York is to have a central base and for delegates to choose their own accommodation from the 100s of options in the city, from camping right up to Five star hotels and everything in between. For clarity, we again investigated venues with accommodation included, the costs quoted were far in excess of the price we could reasonably charge for the weekend (by hundreds of pounds per head).

The events will all be based once again in the Merchant Adventurers Hall from Friday through to Sunday. All food provided shall be catered by Bradshaws who have an excellent reputation in the City and are reasonably priced. The weekend shall of course have a Yorkshire theme and the Banquet shall be preceded with Canapés.

The Rt Hon. The Lord Mayor shall be in attendance with us on Saturday. Sunday coincides with the Battle of Britain Service in York Minster and the men and women of RAF Linton on Ouse shall be exercising their Freedom to March through the City that day as well as ourselves.

On Saturday afternoon we are arranging for the President to ceremonially plant some Daffodil bulbs in the embankment of the City Wall, opposite the Royal York Hotel, venue (we are told) of the Inaugural meeting of the Association 50 years ago when it was the Station Hotel. There will be a total of 250 bulbs planted in FEW's name in this area, although Ron will not be expected to plant them all. Booking forms shall be sent out with the next Journal (This one in fact. Editors note) in plenty of time for delegates to place their booking and to book accommodation. We are also happy

to supply Visit York's Brochure to any who request it and with acknowledgement of bookings, however for any who wish to book accommodation earlier than that, their website is:
www.visitvork.org/

Officer Without Portfolio.

Fellow freemen, brothers and sisters, this is a very brief report:

My monitoring role of freemen's property rights has been relatively quiet. Parliament has been preoccupied with the EU Referendum and government actions are consequently limited. Of course a departure from the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) could possibly affect freemen's grazing pastures. However, we must await any such outcome.

In the meantime, for those who check the FEW website, I have posted three more papers of some general interest to freemen.

My rather lengthy report to the Court held at Northampton contained several comments regarding the image and the purpose of our Association. It pointed to the need of Freemen's Gilds and Associates to maintain the common pursuance of protection under the umbrella of FEW.

It is by the solidarity of our fraternity and common endeavour that FEW can protect the future of our unique traditions.

News From the Guilds.

Alcester Court Leet:

With the FEW President Ron Leek being active in the Alcester Court Leet for many years, the High Bailiff Tim Forman kindly agreed to provide the Town Hall as the venue for the FEW Spring Court Meeting on 12th March. Following the High Bailiff's welcome, the FEW Executive and Wardens meetings were held in the historic Bailiff's room in the morning. Following refreshments, the afternoon Court Meeting had representatives ranging from Berwick in the north, to London in the south.

March 26th saw the Easter Coffee Morning, with stalls and a raffle in the Town Hall, followed in the afternoon by the Heart of England Town Criers competition in Malt Mill Gardens – a fine pageant of colourful robes and bells organised by the Court Leet Town Crier.

May 7th saw the Annual Assizes in the High Street, where checks by robed officers of the Court included: 'taste the fish & flesh'; 'weigh the bread'; and 'search and seal the leather' – to assess the suitability for consumption by the residents of the Town. Following due pomp and ceremony, successful vendors were then awarded a sprig of evergreen and a certificate to hang in the shop. See website www.alcestercourtleet.co.uk for details of forthcoming events.

Henley-in-Arden Court Leet:

The medieval Guildhall opened for Sunday summer visitors on 10th April, and the season closes on 18th September. Anyone visiting in the Henley area is welcome to explore this 600 year old Guildhall and garden.

On 21st April the annual Court Leet Dinner was held in the Guildhall with invited guests from other local Leets and FEW. As the Guildhall has no kitchen, the meal was cooked outside under canvas in a field kitchen. I can report it was most excellent. The talk afterwards was given by what was a 20 year old WW2 unarmed Mosquito bomber pilot, who advised that whilst they could outrun any of the current German fighters over Berlin, the new ME262 jet fighter completely turned the tables as it was 100 mph faster.

On 23rd and 24th April, the 400th Shakespeare celebration parade and church service saw Henley Bailiffs in full robes and regalia in Stratford-on-Avon.

On 12th May the Guildhall saw the start of the annual Ale Tasting circuit, with the Civic Service in St Johns church on the 15th May.

If this edition reaches you in time, then 4th June is the day to visit to visit the Guildhall for Court

Leet Day, with traditional assizes of bread weighing, fish and flesh tasting etc., complemented by an Artisans Market in the refurbished Guildhall gardens.

Northampton

The third Annual Charity weekend events were held on the 8th and 9th April, based at Moulton College, where special overnight accommodation rates had been arranged. Friday night saw a fish & chip supper and quiz to engage our guests. Saturday started with a visit to the Stoke Bruerne Canal museum, with an explanatory talk, followed by a trip by barge up to the Blisworth tunnel, the third longest in Britain. Saturday night had the 10th Annual Charity Dinner, where Northampton Freemen were joined by Freemen from Chester, Coventry, Lincoln, London, Oxford, and York Guilds. A substantial three course meal was then followed by Guild Chairman Phil Ager thanking his Officers and Trustees for their continued help and support. The after dinner talk was given by Georgina Jeyes on the history of 'Jeyes Fluid', including a testimonial from one lady who attributed her long life to a daily spoonful of the Fluid! A raffle was held to support Marie Curie the charity of the principal guest, Her Worship the Mayor of Northampton.

Chester

Our President, Canon Dennis Kelly, who represents Chester so very well, with his wife Valerie, will be standing down after two years in office. This has been Dennis's second term as President, and all Chester freemen are grateful for his outstanding service.

As he relinquishes this office, Dennis has kindly undertaken to edit the journal of the Chester Freemen, The Deva Pentice.

Following our AGM on 4th. June, Dennis was succeeded as President by David Starbuck Edwards, who is a well-known Chester businessman and resident.

Brian Evans, our very able Chairman, stood down from office at this year's AGM. The Chester freemen are very grateful to Brian for his unstinting efforts in modernising the administrative system of the Freemen and Guilds, and reforming our finances. Brian was a central figure in the Guilds removing from the Guildhall, as it had become an expensive liability.

It may be that we are able to use the Guildhall again in the near future, as a new, dynamic tenant takes charge some time later this year.

One of the most significant dates in the Freemen and Guilds calendar is the Pentice Court, which this year was held on Friday 29th. April. Six new freemen were admitted by patrimony, at a ceremony held in the city's splendid Council Chamber, by the Lord Mayor, Councillor Hugo Deynem. Also present were the High Sheriff of Cheshire, and the City Sheriff. Two of the new freemen had travelled from their home in Belgium to attend.

Freemen attended the Lord Mayor making on 12th. May, carrying staves in their ancient role as escorts to the Lord Mayor. Freemen were also present at the Civic Service in the Cathedral on Sunday 15th. May, acting as sidesmen in the Cathedral, and as part of the Civic Procession. At the Midsummer Watch Parade on Saturday and Sunday 18th. And 19th. June, the President will accompany the Lord Mayor as he is pulled in a chariot at the head of a very colourful procession, which wends its way through the ancient streets.

Our Banquet this year is on 8th October in Chester Town Hall. Tickets
chesterfreemenandguilds@gmail.com

Leicester

2016, the 40th anniversary of the Gild's reformation, was started with a talk on 16th January by Archivist John Tolton on the history of Leicester Freemen. In recognition of their individual 40 years service to the Gild, John Tolton and Mick Ayres received engraved plaques. Also Bob Gregory received a framed certificate as Honorary Gild Member for services rendered.

Long Alley skittles at the Wheatsheaf Inn on 19th February saw teams of Leicester and Coventry Freemen in competition, before enjoying a traditional hot supper. Return round will be on 12th August at Barnacle Village Hall.

A Magic Lantern Show on 12th March saw an 1895 Lantern operated by John Finney of the Magic Lantern Society enthral the audience at the Freemen's Holt, before enjoying a supper. At the Board of Deputies AGM in March, retiring Chairman Brian Mudford handed over the reins to Lynn Roffee. The Board manages the charitable assets of the Freemen's Holt, including bungalow refurbishment and letting, and grounds maintenance. Common Hall on 13th April in the Council Chamber saw Gild Master Lynn Roffee re-elected, and again taking on the Clerk's duties due to lack of volunteers. Mick Ayres retired from the Court after his 40 years service, and Jeff Lewitt was elected as Deputy Master, and Maurice Hill as Chamberlain. After 12 years editing the 'Gildhall News', Brian Mudford was superseded by Valerie Moore.



John Tolton, the Lord Mayor and Mick Ayres at the 40th anniversary of the Gild's reformation.

Preparations are in hand for the Gild's 7th annual banquet at Devonshire place on 4th June, and we hope to welcome Freemen from other Guilds. 5th June will see a robed procession to St Martin's Cathedral for 10.30am service.

Warwick

24th March was the occasion for the Spring Court Leet meeting in the Courthouse. Guests included robed Bailiffs from Alcester, Henley, and Bromsgrove Courts Leet, and the FEW President Ron Leek and his Area Warden Derek Austin. With Steward and Town Clerk Jayne Topham in post, the Lord of the Leet, Her Worship the Mayor, opened proceedings at 7pm. The Bailiff Janet Honnoraty, and her officers, reported on current concerns, and Presentments were agreed on: Linen Street car park availability; rats in the Shire Hall bins; and rubbish in the Tournament Fields area roads. Planning for the Town Beer Festival scheduled for 15th & 16th July at Warwick Racecourse is in hand, and sponsors are being sought. It was proposed and agreed that a 50% attendance at meetings rule should be adopted for continued Jury membership. The meeting was followed by a hot supper and raffle.

On 8th May Warwick had their 'Old Bears' version of the Bromsgrove Leet 'Old Boars Rideout', with classic cars visiting local Courts Leet in Henley, Bromsgrove and Alcester. The Warwick Mayor trumped the field by being chauffeured in a 1934 Roll-Royce saloon, which was quite

appropriate with her 'Lord of the Leet' title. Having once been the Lord Mayor of Liverpool's official car, it was large enough to also include both Warwick Bailiffs and consorts! Besides the Beer Festival, you may want to note 13th August as Court Leet Assizes Day, where robed Officers perform their traditional duties.

Bridgnorth ,

On Thursday 12th May The Gild of Bridgnorth Freemen attended Mayor Making in the Town Hall . On this occasion Mrs Jenny Rogers became our First Lady Freemen Mace Bearer. Jenny is the daughter of the late Mr Harry Foxall past Master and knight of the Gild.



Seen in the photo Jenny is accompanied by Bridgnorth Freemen Mr Eddie Brown.

Coventry

On 30th October a new 'Master's Games Night' event was held at Stoke Bowling Club, who had organised eight different types of games for over 50 Bowlers and Freemen. A fish & chip supper and raffle concluded an enjoyable evening, that may well be repeated in the future.

On 3rd November a Guild party visited Coventry University. This city centre site started as the Lanchester College of Advanced Technology, and in the 1970's progressed to the Lanchester Polytechnic, before evolving into the highly rated modern university of today. After viewing the new students 'Hub' facility, a tour of the Graham Sutherland building showcased the Arts side, with activities ranging from fashion to clay modelling. The former art deco styled Gaumont cinema, now renamed the Ellen Terry building was the next venue, with extensive media studios for the broadcasters and directors of tomorrow. Final venue was the old Gulson Road Hospital site, now reborn as the Engineering & Computing facility. Besides computers, a Harrier Jump Jet and Formula Student race cars interested the engineers in our party – plus the wind tunnel built by the Mercedes AMG F1 Organisation. Our thanks to Junior Warden Brian Jackson for another worthwhile visit, and University guides Kristina and Katia.

On 24th November the last Guild tour of the year was a preview of a new building housing the reserve collection of cars at the Gaydon Heritage Motor Centre. This collection includes many prototypes not previously on display, and also the Jaguar heritage vehicles, formerly housed at the Browns Lane factory before closure. The Gaydon site closed on 30th November for redevelopment, and will reopen on 13th February as the British Motor museum – to showcase the world's largest collection of historic British cars. Our thanks again to Brian Jackson for his 2015 series of visits, a welcome addition to the Guild calendar.

The Guild year concluded with the 11th December St Mary's Hall Christmas Dinner, so popular this year that a double figure waiting list was necessary. The usual festive menu was enjoyed by Guildsmen and friends, followed by entertainment by the Silver Lining Ladies Barbershop choir with a repertoire including the evocative 'Coventry Carol'.

First event in 2016 was the Apprentice of the Year dinner in the Guild Hall, with a capacity audience seeing the two winners in the small & medium firms category, and the large firms category receiving £1000 each. An Enterprise Award was agreed this year to a candidate registered blind, but having devised effective strategies to mitigate his handicap.

Ladies Night held on 16th February saw a presentation on the medieval stained glass removed from the 'Old Cathedral' in anticipation of bomb damage during WWII. After the Coventry Blitz, the stained glass was somewhat redundant due to the Cathedrals destruction, so has lain in store ever since.

On 24th February our Junior Warden organised a visit around the Priory undercroft, uncovered during a 'Time Team' excavation, sadly now being shut due to Council cutbacks.

On 8th March a Guild Party visited a 15th century restored Weavers Cottage in Spon End. It is unusual to find workers homes from this period, and the period planted garden shows how vital home grown remedies were for common ailments, besides staple food supplies.

On 13th March, the annual Past Masters Dinner allowed recent Masters to enjoy the company our more senior Past Masters at a carvery meal. Three days later a sizeable Guild Court contingent attended the funeral of Les Yates aged 95, the last of our 1946 founding Council.

On 22nd March the annual Special Appeals dinner saw cheques totalling £3000 distributed to eleven local charities from Guild funds raised during the year.

On 5th April the first of this years' Lord Mayor's Admission Courts for new Freeman was held in the Council House to admit nine new Freeman and women

On 13th April a Special Guild Admission Court was held in the Council House with our President the Lord Mayor presiding, for HRH the Duke of Gloucester to take the Guild Oath and become a Companion of the Guild. The military uniform and Court Dress of the Lord Lieutenant and High Sheriff complemented the Guild robes in use. This was the first of the Guild's 70 anniversary events.

On 20th April the Guild AGM confirmed the selection of Officers and Wardens for the forthcoming year, and were duly installed at the Guild's annual banquet in the Guild Hall on 7th May. 'Freemen's Sunday' the following day saw a robed procession from the Council House to the Guild church of Holy Trinity, where our Chaplain the Rev David Mayhew was installed for the last time, before his retirement as Vicar in July.

As the FEW President Ron Leek hails from the South Midlands Area, I invited him and his lady Janet to the weekend events, to help celebrate the Guild's 70th anniversary.

Oxford.

St Georges Day Service and Lunch - April 2016

This year the Freeman of the City of Oxford were invited to Parade from the Town Hall with the Lord Mayor to the Church of St Michael at the North Gate . We were so pleased to wake to a dry morning . A bit of cloud but also a glint of sunshine . The Mace Bearer led the way across Carfax and down Corn Market . It was also pleasing to see the flag of St George flying from the roof tops. The traffic stopped and shoppers stood back to allow our colourful procession to pass . Most of our Freeman were wearing gowns and it was good to see. Please note , we have enough gowns for most occasions - just let us know you are coming .

The City Rector walked with us and promptly greeted us again at the Church Door . The Church Wardens led us to our pews and quite soon the processional hymn began with the Choir entering the aisle behind the gleaming silver cross .

Our Chairman read the first lesson from Isaiah and the Lord Mayor read the second lesson from the book of John . I know I say it every year but the choir and organist are really worth listening to as they excell in their offering . The choirmaster is from Somerville and the choir are largely from various colleges but I tell you they must practise continually to get this level of perfection .

The Sermon this year came from the Revd. Andrew Wright who is also the Secretary General of the Mission to Seafarers. A maritime themed Sermon was highlighted by the desire to equip our young people with the gifts of knowing their roots and providing the confidence for young people to go out and learn from travel experience. Roots and Wings I think he said .

Our Hymn of the Freeman of England and Wales was sung with great gusto . The closing line is "Our Strength is in our Unity" .

This week has seen the ninetieth birthday of our Queen Elizabeth and the closing National Anthem was a real treat.

The Lord Mayor and our Chairman followed the choir to the South Door for the Vestry Prayer. From there ,they processed to the Parish Room where we were all entertained to coffee and biscuits . Our thanks to The Very Reverend Bob Wilkes and all the members of St Michaels for the generous and splendid Service and hospitality .

Our Entertainment Secretary , Bryan Keen had arranged another excellent St George's Day Lunch at The Mitre . Downstairs in the main dining room we were seated around a huge long table by the window .

The attentive waiting staff made us most welcome and the first course arrived . Everyone remarked how our Waiter looked like George Clooney ! Our Chairman rose to read a letter from Buckingham Palace,which thanked the Freeman for their good wishes on the occasion of Her Majesty's Birthday. A toast was raised in her honour . This was followed by another toast to St George , our Patron Saint of England . We were reminded that it was right here in Oxford in 1222 that the 23rd April be St Georges Day and that St George would replace King Edward the Confessor as Patron Saint . I thank everyone for coming along and make sure you are there next year . Grateful thanks to all those involved in the days organisation and special thanks for the wonderful crimson red rose presented to me.

The relaxed lunch rolled on and concluded sometime later . We all contributed to a staff tip and I was delighted to personally thank Patrick , the Restaurant Manager for the memorable lunch . The Freeman of the City of Oxford fully support this project to erect a memorial to the seventeen airmen on Oxford Port Meadow. They died in terrible accidents and have gone unrecorded since their untimely deaths in training on one of the country's earliest military airfields which first saw operations on Freeman land before the beginning of WW1. Very grateful to any help from our Journal readers. The Treasurer is fellow Freeman Bryan Keen and former Lord Mayor of Oxford. Sheriff Inspection of Oxford Port Meadow - Friday 24th June Come on down all Freeman who live near Oxford! The annual Inspection of the Meadow begins at 6pm sharp at the Wolvercote River Car Park . This amazing walk is lauded year after year . What a sight the ancient grazing meadow gives the visitor with the backdrop of the dreaming spires . If you are willing ,you may join us later for a game of Aunt Sally with free beer. Freeman team versus the Sheriff's team. Further details on 01793 791171

Origins of our Association. **By Jim Evans. Deputy President.**

As early as 1928 Guilds from Berwick, Newcastle and Durham met to discuss the possibility of an association of Freeman Guilds. It was recognized at that time that this could take some time as it was not certain which towns and cities had active guilds. Berwick voted £10 10s to help organize meetings. Various meetings were held before the Second World War.

In 1948 the City of Newcastle attempted to take over the Freeman's rights to the Town Moor. Newcastle Freeman sought and received the support of the Berwick and Durham Guilds and the proposal was dropped.

This sparked a renewed interest in an Association of Freeman. In June, 1951, there was a celebration Service for the Festival of Britain held by the Merchant Adventurers Guild in Newcastle.

Discussions following this service agreed to attempt to form an Association. Meetings followed in Richmond and South Shields, between Lorne Robson, the Chairman of the Stewards Committee of

Newcastle and Thomas Evans, the Chairman of Berwick Guild. Contact was made with Coventry and Alnwick.

York freemen constituted themselves into a Guild and also joined. This brought Harry Ward into contact with the other Guilds and he was to provide the driving force in the organization of the new Association.

By this time reorganization of local government was being mooted with a number of towns with Guilds threatened with losing their status. In its original form this Act would have eliminated the rights and privileges of Freemen.

In October, 1966, the first AGM of the new Association, the Freemen of England, was constituted in York. This was to have been chaired by the Chairman of Berwick Guild, Thomas Evans.

Unfortunately he died in September, 1966, and the meeting was chaired by the newly elected Chairman of Berwick Guild, Arthur Cairns. It was agreed that the new Association would have a Court meeting in March and AGM in September. The Court meeting would be one representative from each guild and would be the Executive Committee of the Association. Harry Ward was elected President and Mr. Marr from Alnwick, Chairman. The first task was to deal with the Act reorganizing local government. In the original form this would have abolished freemen and guilds. FEW employed Parliamentary Agents and a Queen's Council to monitor the bill through Parliament and protect the interests of Freemen. Several clauses were altered to achieve this and an additional clause added stating that property and other rights pertaining to freemen would be preserved irrespective of any other article in the Act.

The second AGM was held in Newcastle on 5th. October, 1968. A draft constitution had been drawn up by Mr. R. Walker of Newcastle ten years previously. This was amended and circulated with a view for approval at the AGM. The draft could have allowed individual freemen to outvote Guilds and allowed interested non freemen to vote. These two items were amended. It was agreed that the name of the Association would be 'The Freemen of England'. After the Freemen from Wales joined in 1990, the name was changed to the Freemen of England and Wales.

In 1986 the City of York proposed a bill through Parliament to take over the York Strays. The York Pasture Masters had little money to oppose this bill, but FEW provided financial support and advice. The Berwick Guild contributed £1000 each to York Pasture Masters and the FEW fighting fund. The bill was lost at a cost of £100,000 to York Council, who also had to restart their local government Bill from the beginning without reference to the York Strays.

Thus within it's first twenty years the Association had faced up to and succeeded in protecting freemen's rights on two major occasions and justified the reasons for it's formation. This furtherance of Freemen's rights remains a major purpose of FEW.

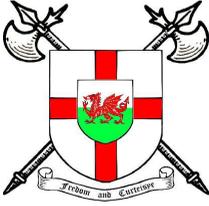
An important aim of FEW is to research information regarding the freedom in various cities and towns in England and Wales and enable this information to be made available to a wide variety of organizations and individuals. All Freemen Guilds are different and FEW enabled an awareness of the traditions and purpose of other Guilds. Our first President, Harry Ward, recognized this and produced his book, 'the Freemen of England'. The difficulty of this will be recognized as 20 years have been spent in trying to update this information. Your archivists have collected and shared many important documents which have been passed to FEW from individual Guilds.

Several Guilds have made use of the services of FEW in confrontation with local Authorities, notably Berwick in the 1970s.

The value of FEW to all Guilds was obvious in the next reorganization of Local Government in 2009. FEW engaged Parliamentary Agents to alter several clauses in the original White Paper to ensure the rights and privileges of Freemen were maintained, protected and enhanced

Every Guild is unique and at times it is difficult to reconcile the requirements of individual Guilds.

There have been problems but on the whole the Executive of FEW has been successful in maintaining the objectives of the Association formed 50 years ago. It should be stressed that FEW is only as effective as the Guilds make it by working together through the Court and AGM. For it to be effective in the future individual freemen must come forward to play an effective part in the Association and where necessary take up office in the Executive.



*Freemen of
England & Wales.*



An Association of Freemen and Guilds in England and Wales.
Registered Charity No: 293536

AGM 2016
at
York

Hosted by the Gild of Freemen of the City of York.
Friday 16th – Sunday 18th September 2016
at the historic Merchant Adventurers Hall.

Booking form for functions Only.

Please note Accommodation is not included in prices or bookings, delegates should make their own accommodation arrangements for this weekend. A brochure including details of accommodation in the City will be sent with confirmation of your booking.

The Gild of Freemen of the City of York look forward to welcoming you to the:

**50th Annual General Meeting of the Association of
the Freemen of England and Wales
17th September 2016
at 11am
in the Merchant Adventurers Hall,
Fossgate, York. YO1 9XD**
www.theyorkcompany.co.uk

Programme of Events.

(all events meet at Merchant Adventurers Hall).

Friday: Bar available all evening.

- 16:30 Registration opens.
- 17:00 Executive Meeting, Governors Parlour.
- 19:30 Supper
- 21:00 Presentation on Viking life in the City.
- 23:00 Bar closes.

Saturday:

- 9:00 Saturday arrivals registration.
- 9:30 Open Forum
- 10:30 Tea/coffee Break
- 10:50 Official Robed Photograph.
- 11:00 50th AGM of the Association. (Partners are free to explore York).
- 12:30 Lunch
- 14:00 (Time TBC) Bulb planting on Bar walls after which all are free to explore York. Members of the York Gild will be available to guide you to wherever you wish to visit. Freemens Railway Society will visit the National Railway Museum.
- 19:00 Canapés.
- 19:45 Banquet. (In the presence of our patron the Rt. Hon. The Earl Bathurst).
- 23:00 Bar closes.

Sunday:

- 9:30 Gather at Merchant Adventurers to Robe for Procession, Partners to go straight to All Saints Church.
- 10:00 Process behind The York Guard to Church
- 11:30 Process back with the York Guard to Merchant Adventurers via Fossgate.
- 12:00 Buffet Lunch
- 13:00 Farewell speeches and Baton Ceremony.

Booking Form.

(A Photocopy of this form is acceptable)

Prices are for functions only, accommodation and breakfast not included. Details of accommodation options in the City will be sent with event booking confirmation, alternatively see <http://www.visitcityofyork.org/>

or contact Visit York by telephone Monday to Saturday 9am to 5pm on 01904 550099.

Option Details	Price per Person	Number Attending	Total Payment Enclosed.
Friday to Sunday including meals (except breakfast) etc	£135.00		
Saturday and Sunday only including meals (except breakfast) etc	£120.00		
Saturday only, including meals (except breakfast) etc	£100.00		
Saturday only, including lunch etc, but excluding the banquet and breakfast.	£30.00		
Saturday, banquet only.	£60.00		

I am a Freeman (or associate) of _____

Full Name and Name of Partner/ Guest(s). _____

Full address and contact number: _____

I enclose my payment of £ _____ : _____ p in full payment.
(Cheques made payable to “*The Guild of Freemen of the City of York*”).
Please note any special dietary requirements: _____

Please send completed form with full payment to:

FEW York 2016. Mrs. M. Eland. 6 Marlborough Close, York YO30 5WA.
All bookings to be received no later than the 12th August 2016 please.

Hon. Secretary's Notices.

We have received one nomination for each executive post (except that of President and IPP who are not due for election this year), therefore no election will be required and the serving nominees will be returned to office unopposed.

Directory.

President: Ronald Leek. Richmond House, Beech Close, Oversley Green, Alcester, Warwickshire B49 6PP 01789 762574

Deputy President: James Evans. Makore, Northburn View. Eyemouth. TD14 5BG 018907 50701
captjamesevans@gmail.com

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

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

Hon. Secretary: Nick Johnson. 37 Stanhope Gardens Ilford Essex IG1 3LQ 0208 554 5326
fidibelle@aol.com

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

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

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Wardens.

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

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

Warden for the The North West: Denise Laver. 07711450221. Email: deniselaver@talk21.com

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: Nick Johnson (Pro Tem) (See Hon. Secretary details above)

Warden for London and the South East: Nick Johnson. (See Hon Secretary above)

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

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

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Front Cover: The Royal Entrance to York, Micklegate Bar, where the Monarch must ask permission of the Lord Mayor and Sheriff to enter the City. Photograph by Tom Gibson.

Back Cover:

Top: The Northampton Guild and guests take a trip by barge up to the Blisworth tunnel during their Charity Dinner weekend. Photograph Courtesy Terry Sibley.

Bottom: Henley in Arden Court Leet dinner guests, by kind permission of Henley News on line.

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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. 185) and for any amendments to the Annual Gazette and Directory is the 23/9/16.

If you wish 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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