

*Freemen of England
and Wales.*



Journal 185. Autumn 2016
Annual record and Gazette.
With Compliments.
ISSN 1465-8755

President's Letter.



Following the splendid AGM weekend celebrating the 50th Anniversary of our Association of Freeman of England and Wales which has just come to an end, I must on behalf of all FEW members, thank the Gild of Freeman of the City of York for the excellence of their arrangements in making the whole occasion such a great success. The ambience of the venue, the medieval Merchant Adventurers Hall, greatly added to the pleasure of the weekend, as did the wonderful sunshine for the Sunday procession.

The full programme commenced with an informal supper on the Friday evening, followed by a most interesting and entertaining talk on Viking York, given by Tom Gibson, Past Master of York Gild and FEW Hon Editor. Saturday commenced with the customary Open Forum which raised some interesting points for consideration by the Executive. This was followed by the AGM itself, at which we were honoured by the presence of the Lord Mayor of York, who stayed for the whole proceedings. Saturday afternoon was a special highlight for me, as accompanied by the Master of the York Gild, Mrs Sylvia Errington, I had the pleasure of planting daffodil bulbs on the embanked York Walls opposite the Royal York Hotel, the venue of the first AGM 50 years ago. My special guest at the Banquet on Saturday evening was Dr Stanley Callaghan, Lord President of the Court of Deans of the Guilds of Scotland, FEW's sister organisation in Scotland. The Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress were also present on the top table, alongside myself and my wife Janet, together with the Master, her husband Eddie, and Alan Robson, Past President of FEW, who in proposing the toast to FEW referred to some of the significant events in its 50 year history. Sunday morning saw everyone resplendent in their guild robes and regalia, led by the colourfully costumed York Guard, processing to the York Guild Church of All Saints Pavement, for Morning Service. Returning afterwards to the Merchant Adventurers Hall, the weekend was concluded with the ceremony of the FEW Host Guild Baton being handed over by the Master of the York Gild, to Roy Folland, Master of the Pembroke Guild, which will be hosting the 2017 FEW AGM.

We now look forward in anticipation that the next 50 years will be as successful and fulfilling for FEW as the first.

Ronald E. Leek.
President.

Minutes of the 50th AGM.

of the Association of Freeman of England and Wales held on Saturday 17th September 2016 in the Merchant Adventurers Hall, York.

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

Attendees: Peter Ainsworth – Chester, Geoff Anderson – Alnwick, Dave Appleby – Alnwick, Derek Austin – Coventry, Michael Ayres – Leicester, John Barden – London, Eric Bulmer – Durham, Alex Christison – Berwick Upon Tweed, Nic Christison – Berwick upon Tweed, Christopher Cox – Oxford, Louise Cox – Oxford, Howard Crapper – Oxford, Shirley Crapper – Oxford, John Edwards – Stafford, Norah Edwards – Chester, Maureen Eland – York, Robert Elliott – Durham, Marion Elliott – Durham, Edward Errington – London, Sylvia Errington – York, Jim Evans – Berwick upon Tweed, Alan Fallows – Shrewsbury, Robin Folland – Pembroke, Roy Folland – Pembroke, Eileen Forth – York, Donna Gibson – York, Tom Gibson – York, Hazel Hague – York, Melvyn Hall – Alnwick, Colin Hardcastle – York, Michael Haslam – London, Michael Herriott – Berwick, Stephen Healy – Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Richard Helstrip – York, Fiona Hogg – Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Nick Johnson – Hale, John Keggins – Northampton, Denise Laver – Altrincham, Ron Leek – Alcester, Carl Mattison – Alnwick, Jimmy Mattison – Alnwick, Tommy Mattison – Alnwick, Doris McElwee – Durham, Joe McElwee – Durham, Brian Mudford – Leicester, Denis Nixon – Alnwick, Howard Pate – Chester, Valerie Pettifer – York, Alan Robson – Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Eileen Reynolds – Coventry, Alan Shelley – Sudbury, James Shepherd – Alnwick, Robert Shepherd – Alnwick, Terry Sibley – Northampton, David Starbuck-Edwards – Chester, Alec Stephenson – York, Beryl Stephenson – York, Roger Sutton – Henley-in-Arden, Gordon Varndell – London, Kathleen Vasey – Durham, Brian Weatherburn – Berwick, Matthew White – Grimsby, Stephen White – Grimsby.

Together with the Lord Mayor of York Cllr Dave Taylor, the President, Ron Leek, processed into the Great Hall preceded by the FEW Mace.

The President, before calling the meeting to order, presented a FEW wall plaque to the Lord Mayor and also to the Master of the York Guild, Sylvia Errington. He then declared the AGM in session.

Apologies for non-attendance were recorded from Martin Hanks, Warden for the South West; John Tolley (Altrincham), Leslie Morgan (London), Paul Morgan (London), Past President Richard Bishop (Altrincham), Anne Bishop (Altrincham), Lee Hensley (Gloucester), Marc Allum (Chippenham), Ray Stone (Oxford), Ant Piddock (Stafford), Ray Spurway (Stafford), Charles Davies (Haverfordwest), Laurence Turnbull (Newcastle-upon-Tyne), Mark Rae (Altrincham), Alan Laver (Altrincham), Stella Machin (Stafford).

Following a proposal from Steve Healy, and seconded by Howard Crapper, the Minutes of the 49th AGM held on September 2015 in the Guildhall, Berwick-upon-Tweed, were approved as a correct record of the proceedings, and were signed by the President. There were no matters arising.

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

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

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

The Vice-President announced that he would now install two new Wardens - Denise Laver (Altrincham) as Warden for the North West, and Val Pettifer (York) for the East of England & Anglia. Both Wardens were enrobed and presented with their Warden's Medallions and Handbooks. Their appointments were greeted with an extended round of applause from all the delegates present.

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

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

North: Colin Hardcastle. A copy is appended to these minutes.

North West: Denise Laver. Denise introduced herself and gave a brief autobiography.

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

South Midlands: Derek Austin. A copy is appended to these minutes.

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

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

East & Anglia: Valerie Pettifer. Val introduced herself and gave a brief autobiography.

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

South West: Martin Hanks. A copy is appended to these minutes.

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

Eileen Forth's Membership Secretary's Report was presented by Gordon Vardell as she had a sore throat and had almost lost her voice. A copy is appended to these minutes.

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

Tom Gibson presented his Hon Editor's Report. A copy is appended to these minutes.

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

The President then informed the Meeting that only one nomination has been received for each of the Executive positions, and that therefore an election would be unnecessary. He then asked the Secretary to read out the nominations for the year 2016 - 2017. They 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 2016 - 2017 Wardens were confirmed as:- North East – Capt. Stephen Healy; North West – Denise Laver; North – Colin Hardcastle; North Midlands – John Edwards; South Midlands – Derek Austin; East & Anglia – Val Pettifer; South East – Nick Johnson; West – Howard Crapper; Wales – Roy Folland; South West – Martin Hanks.

Any Other Business:-

- a) The Secretary read out a letter of thanks from Balmoral Castle that had been received by the President on behalf of the Officers and Wardens of the Association. The letter, from Lady-in-Waiting Susan Hussey, expressed gratitude from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth for the FEW birthday card sent to her by our President with loyal wishes on the occasion of her ninetieth birthday.
- b) The President confirmed that John Barden had been appointed as a Custodian Trustee, and also confirmed that the Vice-President would serve as Chairman of the Custodian Trustees.

There being no other business, the President declared the meeting closed, and accompanied by the Lord Mayor, processed from the chamber preceded by the FEW Mace.

President's Report.

This AGM celebrates the 50th Anniversary of the formation of our Association of Freeman of England and Wales, and I am very proud to hold the office of President at this auspicious time. It is significant that we are being hosted this year by the Guild of Freeman of the City of York, as it was here that the very first AGM was held 50 years ago, when Harry Ward was elected as its first President. During these 50 years the Association's Executive Officers have been extremely vigilant in ensuring that the interests of its Member Guilds have not been adversely affected by any enacted legislation. We are indebted to all of them. The current Executive continues to maintain a close watch on proposed changes both locally and nationally, which might in any way affect the customs and usages of guilds, and if further cases should arise, will promptly take all necessary actions.

I must thank my team of Executive Officers for their help, expertise and competency in the day to day running of the Association, and also I particularly thank the Wardens, who maintain direct contact with the Member Guilds in their areas, thereby playing an invaluable role in the exchange of necessary information, as well as enjoying the many fellowships forthcoming.

Two projects discussed at Court Meetings, which might possibly have been undertaken by FEW, have been considered in depth by the Executive during the past year, but unfortunately the considerable difficulties, implications, and practicalities, necessary

to both establish and then successfully administer each of them, has meant that the decision has had to be taken that neither was realistically viable, and should therefore be shelved. The first of these was the idea of creating some kind of moveable exhibition showcasing both FEW and its Member Guilds, which would tour around the country in order to better inform the general public as to what we and the Freedom are all about. The second project was the possibility of establishing some kind of fund to raise monies, which could be used to help any Guild experiencing financial difficulties due to natural disasters.

On a brighter note, I have much pleasure at this AGM in personally presenting the Association with a special addition to its formal regalia. This is a hallmarked gilded silver President's Lady's Jewel, which can be worn either on a collarette, or as a pendant on a chain for evening wear. My reasoning for commissioning this presentation, is that the current President's Consort's regalia takes the form of a military style medal on a short ribbon, very suitable if the Consort is a man, but wholly inappropriate when the Consort is a lady.

In conclusion, also with regard to regalia, a new gilded silver chain has now been purchased for the President to wear with his Medallion of Office.

Immediate Past President's Report.

This is a short report which is unusual for me. All is going well with Immediate Past Presidents role at the moment. I am free to attend a lot of functions throughout the land with different Guilds and societies to promote the Association as much as I can. The thing that is worrying me at the moment though are all the bill boards and signs going up around the country stating that, "Your real name should not be given". "It is illegal to give your real name and that if you are a Freeman of England a lot of our laws do not apply" Also a lot of other rubbish

It turns out that a woman in Canada is financing all this at a cost of hundreds of thousands of pounds with three main people in England and Scotland running it, one has been in Court on a number of occasions trying to prove his rights as a Freeman of England. I do not know how this can be done but we as Freemen should be looking to address this problem and disassociate with it.

I wish to thank on behalf of the Freemen of England and Wales for the invitations Eileen and I have had from not only our own Guilds/Gilds but all the different organisations in order to promote The Freemen of England and Wales

Deputy President's Report.

The Deputy President has a rather vague roll, deputising for the President. This year I have not been called upon to cover this duty. However there are a few items to report. I accompanied your President to the AGM in April of the Court of Deans of Scotland, our sister organisation, where he was well received. We hope this link will continue in the future.

On behalf of the President and FEW I attended the funeral of Gwen Robson, the wife of our former President along with the warden for the North East, Stephen Healey, and my own wife, Pat. Gwen was well known to many of us. I am pleased to see Alan here at the AGM.

I wrote an article on the origins of FEW which has been handed out with your papers when you arrived. It is important we realise where we come from as we go into the second 50 years.

I shall be attending the Durham dinner on 15th. October.

In November I retired as Chairman of the Berwick Guild after holding the post for 40 years. I am now Vice Chair so that I can deputise for the new Chairman, Michael Herriott when his work commitments prevent his attendance.

At the end of last month I was one of a group who welcomed the next Bishop of Berwick. This bishopric was created for the Abbot of Lindisfarne when the monastery was closed by Henry VIII. After he died in 1572 the post was held in abeyance until this year, when after 444 years the second Bishop of Berwick will be consecrated here in York Cathedral.

Report of the Vice President.

Following my son's accident in March, (and, indeed, my own visits to the surgeons knife), which prevented me from attending the Court Meeting, life is beginning to get back to normal. However, he still has his bedroom downstairs in what is usually my office so it does make my working arrangements rather difficult at times.

I am pleased to report that I have appointed Denise Laver, Provost of Altrincham, as the Warden for the North West. Whilst this will be something new for her she knows Leslie Morgan so I have suggested that she have a chat with him to determine the lie of the land. And in the East, I have been able to appoint Val Pettifer, a Freeman of York living in Royston, Herts. My thanks, and those of the Association, goes to Norman Offield for covering this area latterly and the assistance given by Nick most recently.

I am grateful for the work done, and contributions made, by ALL wardens over the last year.

The appointments were confirmed at this point on a unanimous show of hands and Denise and Val were presented with their robes and insignia. A medallion was also presented to Capt Stephen Healy, Warden for the North East, (since he had never had one since his appointment).

The Vice President commented that this was the first time in a good while that all areas had a Warden and then continued with his report...

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 with the most recent (184) cover picture added and the content for the one prior to that (183). At Alan Robson's request, following Gwen's recent demise, his profile on President's on Parade has been up-dated and a photograph of Gwen added. The 'diary dates' page remains hidden from

view due to insufficient material being forwarded for inclusion. I have recently set up Tom as an administrator for the website, just in case anything happens to me; we don't want a repeat of what happened last time!

Our Facebook page, which receives regular posts 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 224, up from 197 last March, and any addition to the website is also notified through Facebook. Tom keeps busy posting up York Guild news or other items which 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. A few of our members also post on the Railway page.

Whilst I have been very pre-occupied with my own local Freeman, and other working commitments, I have now been able to produce an up-to-date first draft of The Association Directory which first saw the light of day 20 years ago. This formed the core document of The Handbook which provides everything you ever needed to know about FEW, but were too afraid to ask. Copies have been circulated around the Officers and Wardens for comment and discussion before putting on general release.

Wardens Reports.

Warden For The North East:

Alnwick:

The Chamberlain's Common Council and Freeman of the Borough of Alnwick continue quietly in their stewardship of the Moor and participation in activities within the town. The Freeman held their AGM on St. Marks Eve (24th April) when the various Trade Guilds met and the four Chamberlains plus the Councillors were elected for the year ahead. The Freeman's Council employ a land Agent for the any legal matters, although all decisions are made by the Freeman's Council, all members of which are Freeman of the Borough.

One property owned by the Freeman is Pottergate Tower, one of the ancient gates of the town. The original tower came into possession of the Freeman in 1630 and it was re-built in 1778. Some sixty feet in height, it is constructed in pseudo-Gothic style. After standing empty for many years, it has recently undergone major structural repairs and has been sympathetically restored to create a unique, award-winning holiday property in the heart of Alnwick.

In August, the Freeman were involved in the planning and services for Alnwick's yearly International Music Festival, with the Town Hall being used for refreshments and Craft Stalls. They are also supporting an idea to floodlight the Town Hall clock tower, along with the Castle and other buildings in the town, for the benefit of various children's cancer charities.

I must also draw the meeting's attention to the immense sacrifice being made by those dedicated Alnwick Freeman who have chosen to attend this FEW weekend, rather than stay at home for the 3-day Alnwick Beer Festival, in which, naturally, they had a great interest.

This year, there were no new Freemen admitted into the Borough, a matter simply of age and availability, rather than of policy.

My thanks go to James Mattison for assisting with this update.

Berwick-upon-Tweed:

The Guild of Freemen of Berwick-upon-Tweed continues to seek to identify a suitable site for a second housing development, in order to build upon the success of the existing Freemans Court. The management of this original complex changes shortly, following the incumbent company giving notice of terminating all of its existing business south of the border. Ideally, further land immediately adjacent to Freemans Court would be acquired from the NHS, in parallel with the planned redevelopment of Berwick Infirmary but, thus far, despite repeated approaches, no progress has been made. It is still however hoped that this aspiration will eventually become a reality and active enquiries continue.

Capt. Jim Evans has continued to lead the Guild's involvement in two significant projects within the Town. The first is the relocation of the Borough's Archives, a significant proportion of which represent the history of the Freemen, to a new purpose-built facility as part of an extensive and comprehensive redevelopment of Berwick's historic Barracks. This initiative is progressing favourably and currently seeking funding and development approvals. The second is the compilation of an online database of all those from Berwick families, including many Freemen, who have given their lives for their country over the years. This project is now all but complete with a room currently being set aside in the Town Hall, equipped with the necessary technology, to enable visitors to seek details of their ancestors and family friends.

A sizeable contingent from the Guild participated in the 407th Annual Riding of the Bounds held on 1st May, when some seventy horses and riders completed the customary check of the Town's boundaries. In June, the summer outing saw a bus full of Freemen and their families enjoy a splendid day out on the River Tyne when a boat trip took them from the City Centre down to Tynemouth and back again, followed by an evening meal together on the way back to Berwick.

The Guild is looking forward to its autumn outing next month, this time to Edinburgh to see a theatre production of "Billy Elliot", followed not long thereafter by its long established and popular annual Christmas Dance held in the Town hall at the beginning of December – now a firm and most enjoyable fixture in this Warden's diary.

My thanks go to Michael Herriott for assisting with this update.

Durham:

My last report, to the Court in Alcester in March, relayed plans by the Freemen of the City of Durham, under the guidance of their new Chairman of the Wardens, to develop a more corporate structure, with the Wardens' functions and responsibilities clearly identified. The framework which underpins this structure is now in place and both roles and tenures of appointment for the Wardens of each of the eight Companies are defined in a formal 'Guide for the Wardens'. Since the publication of the 'Guide', two new Wardens have been elected, one each for the Joiners and Butchers companies. These appointments mean that 25% of the Wardens are now ladies, closely reflecting the gender balance within the membership as a whole.

The Freeman's website has recently been redesigned. Although commercially maintained, it is managed by a Freeman of the Plumber's Company. The excellent images used on the website have been provided by the official photographer for the Durham City Freeman, who is also a member of the Barber's Company. Close cooperation between all those involved has resulted in a first class communication tool, both for the Durham Freeman as an organisation and a wider source of information for all those with an interest in the Freedom. I recommend you to visit www.durhamcityfreemen.org to see what can be achieved with the right focus and commitment.

The Freeman's Annual Dinner will be held on Saturday, October 15, 2016 in the Town Hall where this year, the guest speaker will be Gary Bankhead, who discovered and retrieved over 4000 artefacts from the bed of the River Wear, spanning a period of over 500 years of history. These objects, some of which would have been made by craftsmen within the City, will provide a unique opportunity to research the history of our Guilds and perhaps form the basis of a project for the Freeman in the future.

My thanks go to Eric Bulmer for assisting with this update.

Newcastle upon Tyne:

Nothing to report.

Warden For The North:

Great Grimsby

At a recent meeting of the Enrolled Freeman, our own Steven White was re-elected as chairman of that august body. We wish him well in that appointment!

The Freeman have taken two important steps: they have reduced the age for application into the Freedom from 21 yrs. to 18 yrs; and a decision to re-introduce admission by apprenticeship albeit that the procedural details have yet to be finalised.

On 4th July, a short film was shown at the Parkway cinema in Cleethorpes depicting the raising and training of the 10th Battalion of the Lincolnshire Regiment, which became known as the Grimsby Chums, in 1914/15. The film was commissioned by the management of the Tivoli cinema in Grimsby and is believed to have been shown for the first time on 1~ July 1916 — a fateful day in WW1 - when the Regiment is said to have 'gone over the top'. The film was lost for many years until rediscovered in the archives of a former projectionist at the 'Tivoli and sent to the Imperial War Museum for restoration. At the showing on 4th July, a collection was taken to fund efforts to locate or replace the Colours of the Chums which had been disposed of by an Incumbent of the Church where they had been 'laid up' after WW1.

Beverley

For the first time, I have some positive news from this City; their clerk has changed her address to 5 Lavender Walk, HU17 8WE. I have written to her to 'remind' her of this year's AGM being in her backyard, but I had no response.

York Strays Council

A vacancy exists for a Warden for Walmgate Stray — currently overseen by Mr Tom Gibson. If you are eligible and willing to serve, please let the Strays Council secretary have your details at Geoff.barracrough@btintemet.com. The other Strays are in the safe hands of their respective Wardens.

City Of York

The disastrous floods of Christmas 2015 did not by-pass our City. The river Foss, which flows very close to where we now are, was in flood for the first time in nearly 30 years. Many homes and businesses were decimated and are still in some cases unoccupied — the Jorvik centre alone will remain closed until 2017. A flood relief fund was set up by the City Council and the York Gild donated £1000 to it. Indeed, the very building we are meeting in today was heavily flooded but the canoes and lifejackets will fortunately not be needed. Thanks must go to the volunteers and organisations that came to York's aid, not least the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, the Wharfedale Fell rescue service, the Army, the Police and Fire Service.

The annual general meeting of the York Gild was held on 24th June in Bedern Hall. Right Honourable Lord Mayor, Dave Taylor, was invited to become President during his year of Office. He graciously accepted but despite feeling unwell said he was proud to be installed. The new master is Mrs Sylvia Ethnngton with her husband Edward as her consort. Her nominated charity is St Leonards Hospice.

A number of Gild officers retired at this meeting. Former archivist Richard Helstrip had earlier relinquished this post; he is replaced by Mrs Andrea Smith. The Gild membership secretary also retired. He is replaced by Mr David Brough. Mr David Flower the Gild auditor also retired on health grounds. He is replaced by Mr Paul Giles. The outgoing Master made presentations to the retirees to acknowledge their lengthy service but one for the former auditor was to be presented at a later date.

Those of you who attended the York banquet of 2015 will remember a letter received from a founder member of the York Gild, Mr Frederick Bewley, who was too ill to attend in person. He was born in 1925 in Sunderland, took his Freedom and joined the York Gild in 1952. Sadly Fred died recently and I was invited to attend his funeral at St Marys Church Wath in North Yorkshire. His coffin was draped in the Union Flag to recognise his service in the Merchant Navy. After the service he was laid to rest in the Church graveyard which abutted his former garden in Wath. Fred had told me that in August 2016, two of his American grandchildren were to be admitted in to the Freedom. At the family's request, I attend that Ceremony but only one of the grandchildren - Lauren — was able to travel from the USA.

Whilst Fred was resident in the care home in Whitley Bay, our Warden for the North East, Stephen Healey, visited him on a number of occasions. The family wish me to thank Stephen for the visits he made and I do so -thank you Stephen.

Warden For The North Midlands:

In each of these reports I begin with asking myself what this report is about. Do you want to know what I have been doing, what my guilds have been doing, or what the effect of FEW has been in my area? If the first; the answer is "not very much", as the guilds seem perfectly capable of getting on with things without me. I do monitor any reports they supply to the journal, I do make the odd telephone call to see how things are going, attend events if invited and where possible encourage joint activities. However, the main thing is that I am there if they want me.

As for what the guilds have been doing; Bridgnorth seems to be going from strength to strength and pictures of their new members have appeared in the journal. They continue to participate in civic occasions and much like the others, have regular social events.

Newcastle-under-Lyme, on the other hand, rely on a faithful few to maintain their existence and, despite having significant numbers, have little more than the annual payout when they come alive. Sadly, their relationship with the local borough council seems rather distant, which is a pity, bearing in mind the position of freemen in the history of their borough.

Shrewsbury have their regular events, but judging by reports in local papers, are not as high profile in the town as I might expect. Sadly, looking them up on a search engine, leads you to a 2010 article when they began to swear in ladies. An excellent article, but the comments following the report were a torrent of ill-informed abuse from people who had no idea of the historical context. In this time of Google and Facebook, perhaps we should be more active in using media to create a more positive image. (These comments are certainly not restricted to Shrewsbury.)

Stafford, on the other hand, are starting to gain recognition locally and, to their own amazement, often receive applause when marching on civic parades. Since making their presence felt, with conspicuous robes, establishing good relations with the Borough Council and getting pictures and articles in the local press, there is a better understanding of their historical foundations. Luckily they have been supported by a professional photographer who supplies pictures to the local papers and burgesses often figure in reports. Stafford's lengthy negotiations with Severn Trent Water, who have installed a pumping station and pipeline across the Freemen's Allotments, are coming to a close. After much consternation over the legalities and practicalities, the Trustees are now in a better financial state, so most of the land can be returned to its horticultural heritage and the site developed.

There is good news from Derby, which for some years has been rather inactive. A few freemen have begun to revive the guild and although it is a slow process there have been a number of innovations. They had a speaker at their AGM which promoted interest and they are setting up a web site, which is positive. Also the City Council are now well disposed to the freemen and have made facilities available. Sadly, the usual scenario applies that it is often left to the few to do the work and some are only in it for the dividend, albeit a trivial amount. However, it is good to see that this historic group of freemen are active once again.

As for my last question on the local relevance of FEW; that is more difficult to assess. Most guilds believe that it is beneficial to have such a national organisation with wardens like me for communication and support, but they are all proudly autonomous and don't give me a lot to do. Stafford guild's decision to host two AGM weekends, certainly raised the profile in the area, but I think it will be quite a while before they do it again.

Warden For The South Midlands:

Coventry Freemen's Guild is celebrating its 70th anniversary year. A Court decision was taken to focus on those members we rarely see, so next weekend there is a big Guild member only event in St Mary's Guildhall, organised by our Master Steven Morson. To also mark the 70th anniversary, we were pleased to welcome HRH the Duke of Gloucester as a Companion to the Guild at a special Admissions Court in April. Afterwards he had time to talk to Court members, and I was able to advise him that Coventry Guild was part of the national FEW Association.

The usual calendar of events, such as the Apprentice of the Year competition, are well reported in the Journal, and in the last two years augmented by an active programme of local visits.

We have found it helpful to allow Guild members to sit in at our monthly Court meetings, and most Court members start in this way.

Next event is the Master's Games Night on 28th October at Stoke Bowling Club.

Leicester Guild of Freemen celebrates its 40th anniversary year since reformation, and some long served members of that duration have now retired from the Guild Court, such as FEW rep Mick Ayres. Replacement Court members are needed. Despite the large influx of lady Freemen after the 2009 Local Democracy Bill, only two have taken office, Lynn Roffee in her second year as both Master and Clerk, and Val Moore as the new editor of the quarterly 'Gildhall News' journal. I hope that the banquet weekend, now in its seventh year, and supported by five other Guilds, will continue in the future.

Next event is the autumn Freemen's Admission Court in the Town Hall.

Northampton Guild of Freemen celebrates its tenth year of the Charity Dinner, now part of a larger weekend series of events, attracting seven other Guilds in support of the Mayor's Charities. A recent Mayor's Parlour ceremony saw four youngish Freemen take up their inheritance, and will hopefully join the Guild.

Alcester Court Leet & Court Baron. Recognising Ron Leek's long service to this Court, it was very welcome that this year the High Bailiff Tim Forman and his officers were able to host the FEW Spring Court meeting in the Town Hall.

The usual calendar of events are reported in the Journal, and generate substantial funds for local charities. Next event is the annual meeting in the Town Hall on 6th October.

Henley-in-Arden Court Leet & Court Baron. The usual calendar of events under High Bailiff Norman Kench are reported in the Journal. Next event is the annual meeting in Henley Guildhall on 9th November.

Warwick Court Leet have achieved good publicity this year, with the robed 'Assizes of Food and Drink Day' generating a half page spread in the local newspaper. The second year of operating the Warwick beer festival again ran out of beer! Myton Hospice was one of the charities benefiting from funds raised. Next event is the annual meeting in the Courthouse on 27th October.

Warden For The West:

I was pleased to speak with the High Bailiff of Northleach Court Leet . Albert Collins is the Town Funeral Director and I thank him for his warm welcome . He tells me that the Court meet once a year at a special dinner which is attended by most Buraige holders in the town and attendance is limited by the size of the room . The Buraige homes are essentially those on the main street through the town . I have since been in correspondence with the Court Leet Archivist . It is with Northleach Court that our Patron, the Rt. Hon. Earl Bathurst, is an enthusiastic member and we wish him a speedy recovery from his recent illness. Northleach grew as a result of the Wool Trade in the 15th century and one of the wealthiest merchants of that time ploughed huge sums of money into the Parish

Church of St Peter and St Paul . So much that it is regarded as the Cathedral of the Cotswolds .

The Freemen of Chippenham have risen like the Phoenix in the last year since my last visit . A small group of Buraage householders who have come together and now look organised and forward thinking . Much credit goes to their Treasurer for holding things together during a long period of drift before this resurgence. The leader of Chippenham Freemen , Marc Allum ,says he is compiling a list of all the Buraage houses in the town and looks forward to a successful Autumn Meeting .

Malmesbury Freemen meet officially four times each year for the purposes of election and admittance ceremony. Great efforts continue to improve and renovate their large Buraage housing stock in the town . Malmesbury claims to be the oldest Borough in England.

The Free Iron Miners of the Forest of Dean are guided by Jonathan Wright . Clearwell Caves are the main focus of their operations . The numbers of Iron Miners are less then ten . Please visit the Caves in this lovely part of the country.

It was my pleasure to attend the recent Coventry Freemen Master's Summer Garden Party and enjoy the company of many friends on a pleasant afternoon .I was interested to learn that Freemen of Coventry have invited the Chartered Freemen of Gloucester to visit their great city and I wish them a memorable day .

My wife and I will be attending the Annual Dinner in Gloucester next month at the new quayside venue . Lee Hensley , their President , reports that they are admitting 13 new Freemen on the 23rd of this month . Gloucester Freemen used their freedom last month to drive sheep through the main street of the City and a great picture appeared in the local press .

Oxford Freemen will be helping the Sheriff with next weeks Annual Cattle Roundup . It is reassuring that the current Sheriff of the City is very interested and supportive of the many issues which surround the historic Meadow . It is with regret to report that a grazing horse suffered fatal blood loss after a stepping or rolling on broken glass. New signs will urge visitors to take all their litter home and be vigilant. There are 40-60 horses and over 250 cattle on the Meadow.

Freemen of Oxford are committed in supporting a memorial project for 17 airmen killed in training on their Port Meadow Airfield during 1916 -18 . The dramatic uptake in military aircraft during the first world war saw young airman engaged in dangerous flights in largely experimental conditions. The Freemen of Oxford were paid £10 per annum for permission to use the meadow at the time . I am on the fund raising committee and have forms with me today.

Warden For Wales:

The Gild of Freemen of Pembroke.

The Gild attended an impressive Remembrance Service of a maritime disaster at Fresh Water West which was held on Saturday 23rd April 2016 with the Royal Navy's HMS Bulwark Albion-class assault ships anchored off the beach, a salvo was fired off two minutes before the start of the service and the landing craft arriving at the beach. The Gild

was represented by members and the Master who laid a wreath on their behalf. On Saturday the 7th of May, the Master represented the Gild at the Mayor Making Ceremony which was held in the Chamber of Pembroke Town Council and was followed by the Mayoral luncheon. The Civic Parade and Divine Service was held on the 8th May at St. Mary's Church, Pembroke.

A Freeman's Court was held on the 21st July in the Chamber of Pembroke Town Council at which Cllr. Pauline Waters, Mayor of Pembroke was enrolled as a Burgess of the Gild of Freeman of Pembroke, in recognition of the service she has given to the town and community of Pembroke over the years.

During the proceedings a letter which had been received from the Queens Chief Clerk Christopher Sandamas was read out thanking the Gild on behalf of Her Majesty for the letter sent on the occasion of Her Majesty's 90th birthday.

A proposal made and accepted by all present that we contribute £250.00 to the town's Henry V11 statue fund. The Master presented the cheque to the Mayor Cllr. Pauline Waters and in thanking the Gild she explained the 8ft high bronze statue designed by sculptor Harriet Addyman will cost around £40,000.00 and informing us that the fund was well on its way to achieving its aim of having the statue of Henry V11 placed in his home town

The AGM takes place on the 20th October. The Annual Service and Luncheon will be held on Sunday 20th November. The service will take place at St. Mary's Church, Pembroke at 11.00am and will be followed by the luncheon at the Cleddau Bridge Hotel. All arrangements are now in place to host the 51st FEW AGM to take place on the 15th-16th & 17th of September 2017. To be held at the Cleddau Bridge Hotel; all 40 rooms have been booked for that period and a deposit paid.

The Gild of Freeman of Haverfordwest

Plans are at an advanced stage for the annual weekend of the Gild of Freeman of Haverfordwest, and Gild members are looking forward to this important social and formal event.

The proceedings open with the AGM on Saturday October 1st at County Hall when Lieu Col Mark Stoter, CO of the 14th Signals Regiment based at Cawdor Barracks, Brawdy, will give a talk. The meeting will be followed by the second payout to Hereditary Freeman. Among important items on the Agenda are report by the chairman of Trustees on the year's business regarding the Gild's estate, and the impending sale of Haroldston House ruins, birth place of Haverfordwest's greatest benefactor, Sir John Perrot, which the Gild acquired thanks to the former Master Colonel John Higgon of Scolton some thirty years ago. Upkeep of the ancient Tudor mansion and its extensive grounds has become a burden to the Gild over the years since plans to establish a public amenity park there became too costly. For many years it provided a modest income from grazing of sheep and horses. The annual banquet takes place at Wolfscastle Country Hotel on Saturday evening when it is hoped the newly-appointed Lord Lieutenant, Miss Sara Edwards will be present. Sunday will feature the Annual Founder's service in St. Martin's Church followed by a final reception in the church hall.

Warden's For London And The South-East:

The Rochester Oyster and Floating Fishery.

On Saturday 9th July 2016, the Admiralty Court of the Mayor and Citizens of the River Medway, having been convened by Statute under the auspices of the Mayor, Cllr Stuart Tranter, commenced its business with Registrar Neil Davies requiring Freeman Chamberlain Shane Hales to take the Oath and be sworn in, followed by the sixteen members of the Jury who were then sworn in and were required to sign the Register of Jurymen.

The business of the Court included a number of presentiments from the Chamberlain, including reinforcing the No Take Zone which is an earmarked conservation area near the mouth of the Medway; agreeing that the ROFF Oyster ground would be opening from October to March; and agreement from the Admiralty Court on a ban on all trawling in Saltpan Reach in order to preserve Dover Sole stock for one year. This is because these fish have certain behaviours that make them especially vulnerable to fishing pressure, such as migratory bottlenecks, site fidelity, and spawning aggregations, so they need a bit of peace and quiet occasionally.

The retiring Principal Water Bailiff Mr Robin Burfoot, gave a very well-received speech in good humour, before being presented with a token of appreciation by the Chamberlain after many years of loyal service to the Admiral of the River, the Court, and the Freeman. The fishing boats and dredgers of ROFF, accompanied by a large number of inland cruisers from Rochester Cruising Club and Allington Marina, then beat the bounds from Rochester up river to Hawkwood Stone, before returning to Rochester Cruising Club for refreshments.

The events of this day were photographed and are on the FEW Facebook Page for public viewing.

Acting Warden's Report For The East

Colchester Freeburgesses.

In August 2015, at the Annual Installation of new Freeburgesses, I addressed the meeting in the presence of the Mayor of Colchester, and I hopefully encouraged the Freeburgesses, led by their Conservators, to become organised and take responsibility for themselves in the form of an independent society, and become a social and charitable body within the town.

In May this year, the five Conservators decided to send out a questionnaire to all Freeburgesses asking if they were interested in forming a society and paying a £10 annual subscription. The result of this initiative is still awaited by FEW and by Colchester Borough Council.

Sudbury Freeman's Society

The Annual Meeting of Sudbury Freeman's Society and the Payment of Common Money was held at 7pm on Tuesday 5th July 2016 in Sudbury Town Hall.

Under a Charity Commission Scheme of 1987, the lands are managed by a body of trustees consisting of the trustees of the Sudbury Municipal Charities and four elected freemen. By a contract between the trustees and the Freeman's Society, acting on behalf of the freemen, their grazing rights are sold annually, and half the proceeds paid to the trustees as the fee due, while the Society distributes the other half to the freemen and widows (who receive half the amount payable to the freemen).

Four of the meadows were registered in 1974 and 1975 under the Commons Registration Act.

The Scheme of 1987 was introduced at the time of the sale, with the concurrence of the freemen, of one meadow, Harp Close Meadow, as the site for a new hospital. Under the Scheme, all profits made by the trustees (including environmental grants) go to charity, a quarter of them going to the Sudbury Freemen's Trust, established in 1986 to commemorate the 900th anniversary of the mention in the Domesday Book. The Trust makes grants to local bodies for capital projects, with a special interest in fire precautions, in memory of the custom in ancient times of requiring new freemen to provide fire buckets for the Moot Hall.

There are some photographs of the Annual Meeting on the FEW Facebook Page.

City of Lincoln Freemen's Guild

The Investiture Ceremony of the new Freemen and Lady Freemen of the City of Lincoln Freemen's Guild, at 11am on Saturday 16th April at Lincoln Guildhall. Two new Freemen and three Lady Freemen were invested. During the following Annual General Meeting, the President, Tony Gadd announced that Helen Dolby would be taking over as Clerk of the Guild from himself, who would be retiring after forty seven years. Vic Harrison was elected as Treasurer as Betty Proctor was retiring, and following some discussion, the role of Secretary was divided in two. Carol Rogers was elected as Membership Secretary, and Angela Priestly-Gibbons was elected as Minute Secretary.

Some photographs showing the new Freemen and the Lady Freemen together with the Officers of the Guild, are to be found on the FEW Facebook Page.

Warden For The South West:

At long last I have done something in the SW !!

However, it does not look as if there is much interest in contact being made by the Exeter Freemen. There are only seven hereditary freemen in Exeter at the present time. I have written to all of them, suggesting some sort of association, group meetings etc, but only one has replied and he lives in Norfolk ! I have spoken with another who now lives in Guernsey. The Exeter Freeman in Norfolk would be interested, I think, in joining FEW. Under the present "rules", it looks unlikely that there will ever be more than 7 freemen in Exeter as the freedom only passes on to the relevant offspring on the death of the current freeman.

Treasurer's Report.

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 – 2015/2016 (TRUSTEES)

President	- Mr R E Leek
Deputy President	- Capt J Evans
Vice President	- Mr S P White
Immediate Past President	- Mr G A Varndell

Honorary Archivist	- Mr A G Fallows
Honorary Journal Editor	- Mr T Gibson
Honorary Membership Secretary	- Mrs E Forth
Honorary Secretary	- Mr N R S Johnson
Honorary Treasurer	- Mr S P White
Officer without Portfolio	- Mr A Shelley
Custodian Trustees	- 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 1LW

PRINCIPAL OFFICE

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

Mr N R S Johnson
 37 Stanhope Gardens
 Ilford
 Essex
 IG1 3LQ

TRUSTEES' REPORT

The Trustees present their report and the accounts for the year ended 31st March 2016.

TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ACCOUNTS

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

OBJECTS OF THE ASSOCIATION

The primary objects of the Freemen of England and Wales Association are to advance public education in the Freedom and to promote research into the history and legal customs of ancient towns of England and Wales and the legal institution of the Freedom, to publish the useful results of such research and, in furtherance of this object, to provide advice and information concerning the legal institution of the Freedom within each of

those several places in England and Wales, being former boroughs or other places where that institution is to be found.

ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS DURING THE YEAR

2016 heralds the 50th Anniversary of the formation of our Association of Freemen of England and Wales. Formed in York in 1966, following a series of meetings going way back to 1928, the Association was initially created as The Freemen of England, with Harry Ward becoming its first President. Constituted in 1968, it was extended in 1992 to formally include the Freemen of Wales. Throughout its 50 years, it has successfully striven to maintain one of the major objectives for its formation, that of ensuring the wellbeing of each of its Member Guilds, by actively lobbying both Parliament and Local Authorities, whenever legislation was proposed or tabled, which could in any way adversely affect the customary customs, practices, and properties of these Guilds, and assuredly will continue to do so into the future. It has further acted as a successful conduit for the exchange of news and information between Guilds, often leading to the establishment of firm and longstanding fellowships.

Over the years, two series of invaluable treatises have been produced for the Association. The first of these entitled "Aspects of the Freedom" was presented by the then Honorary Counsellor to the Association, the late Charles Sparrow QC. This was followed by the currently expanding second series by Alan Shelley, Officer Without Portfolio, under the general heading "Viewpoints of the Officer Without Portfolio". Both of these series are published on the Association's website, and form an essential source of information and advice for all Freemen and Guilds.

In 1975, Harry Ward produced his book "Freemen in England" which, besides covering many aspects of Freemen and the Freedom, also included a comprehensive summary of each of 58 towns and cities still admitting Freemen. Much of the valuable information published in the book is now sadly way out of date, and despite several attempts to get the information updated, the unfortunate lack of response from several Member Guilds, has led to the current shelving of the project.

On a day to day basis, 2015/16 can be recorded as being a very steady year for the Association.

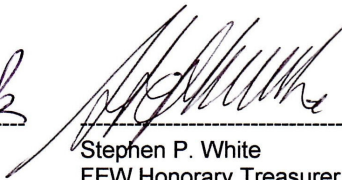
FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES AND AFFAIRS

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

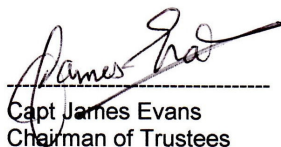
Approved by the Trustees on the 16th September 2016 and signed on their behalf by:-



Ronald E. Leek
FEW President



Stephen P. White
FEW Honorary Treasurer



Capt James Evans
Chairman of Trustees

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

1. Subscriptions

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

2. Donations to Funds

Any payment received over £10 is applied to the Legal, Regalia or General Fund as directed. The total income is broadly in line with 2014/15 if the transfer of £6,000 to the Legal Fund from Reserves in 2014/15 is ignored.

3. Sales

Income from sales items has varied, but is better than 2014/15, as indicated by the detailed figures.

4. Interest Received

Interest on our COIF Account has remained at 0.450% which is low, reflecting the Bank of England base rate, but may be regarded as a secure investment. The balance has reduced following the £6,000 transfer to the Legal Fund.

5. Income Tax Recovered

Gift Aid is claimed on all payments received under the Scheme, including the basic subscription and on bank interest which is currently taxed at source.

6. Administrative Expenses

This includes postage, stationery, printing and on-going website hosting costs. A little less than on 2014/15, the largest difference being on postage costs.

7. Purchases

The only purchase of stock items for sale during the year were robe badges.

8. Journal

Three Journals were produced, the same as in the previous year, (total 64 pages in 2015/16, 64 pages in 2014/15). Printing costs per copy have slightly reduced, as has the postage giving an overall reduction in expenditure.

9. Annual General Meetings

Costs include those directly incurred by FEW and those reimbursed to Hosts. Those shown for previous AGM's are the final costs, costs for 2016 not yet known.

10. Legal & Regalia Expenses

There were no Legal expenses in the year; the £430 Regalia expenses were in respect of the President's Consort Medallion.

11. Court & Officers Meetings

Most of these costs relate to the Court Meeting held at Alcester in March 2016.

MOVEMENT OF DESIGNATED FUNDS - 2014/15 to 2015/16

	2014/15	2015/16
Legal Fund		
Balance brought forward, 1st April	3,047.19	4,180.44
Donations received	6,154.50	174.80
Tax recovered	18.75	29.00
Addnl Tax recovered	-	-
LESS: Costs Incurred	-5,040.00	-
Balance at 31st March	<u>4,180.44</u>	<u>4,384.24</u>
Regalia Fund		
Balance brought forward, 1st April	503.35	661.10
Donations received	144.50	158.20
Tax recovered	13.25	22.75
Addnl Tax recovered	-	-
LESS: Purchases made	-	-430.34
Balance at 31st March	<u>661.10</u>	<u>411.71</u>
Regalia Self-Insurance Fund		
Balance brought forward, 1st April	4,962.00	5,865.00
Amount Provided	903.00	1,021.00
Balance at 31st March	<u>5,865.00</u>	<u>6,886.00</u>
TOTAL DESIGNATED FUNDS	<u>10,706.54</u>	<u>11,681.95</u>

STATEMENT OF ASSETS & LIABILITIES AS AT THE FINANCIAL YEAR END

	31.3.2015	31.3.2016
Monetary Assets		
GENERAL PURPOSE FUND		
National Westminster Bank - Current A/C	1,055.96	371.60
National Westminster Bank - Reserve A/C	62.16	864.66
COIF Charity Deposit Fund	39,000.00	39,000.00
	<u>40,118.12</u>	<u>40,236.26</u>
DESIGNATED FUNDS		
National Westminster Bank - Current A/C	3,006.54	281.95
National Westminster Bank - Reserve A/C	2,700.00	6,400.00
COIF Charity Deposit Fund	5,000.00	5,000.00
	<u>10,706.54</u>	<u>11,681.95</u>
DEBTORS / CREDITORS		
Amounts owed to FEW at 31st March	2,050.70	2,303.91
LESS: Amounts owed by FEW at 31st March	-997.25	-448.05
TOTAL	<u>51,878.11</u>	<u>53,774.07</u>
Other Assets		
Stocks of resale items (cost, not realisable value)	1,840.08	1,735.07
Officers' regalia (insured/replacement value)	18,050.00	20,421.00
Other Assets	1,191.00	195.00
TOTAL	<u>21,081.08</u>	<u>22,351.07</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>72,959.19</u>	<u>76,125.14</u>
Liabilities		
Short Term		
At 31st March 2016, 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 2016, the Officers of the Association have not made any long term commitments.		

Membership Secretary.

Guilds

We have 38 Guilds on the books with currently two Guilds in Ar~ears,

Individual Membership

The current membership stands at 351. A drop of 9 on the last report. Since March 2016.

7 Members Deceased

7 New full individual Members

2 New Associate members

8 Members have resigned due to ill health

5 Members deleted under rule 9 of the Constitution

Current Payments

Late payments, some are coming in. Reminders are being sent out but responses are very slow.

Arrears

An accurate figure for this at the moment stands at 37 members in arrears. The breakdown of these are;-

April 2016 to April 2017	12 members
April 2015 + April 2016	8 members (2 years)
September 2015 to September 2016	2 members
Sept 2014 + Sept 2015	2 members (2years)
April 2014 + April 2015 + 2016	3 members to be deleted (3 years)
April 2013+2014+ 2015 + 2016	5 members to be deleted (4 years)
Sept 2013 + Sept 2014 + Sept 2015	5 members to be deleted (3 years)

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

Archivists Report.

Calls upon the archives have been few this term but I have been contacted again by local council officers on questions regarding both court leet status (from Warwick) and admissions criteria.

The latest request from Bridgnorth was for advise reference eligibility of adopted children and it is worth noting that providing the provisions of the 1926 and subsequent adoption acts are met that this will now apply to both sons and daughters. Dependant upon local Gild Custom this may have to be instituted over several generations thus further removing genetic links and adding even more layers of name changes which need an accurate number system on admissions to ensure future applications being validated correctly.

Editors' Report.

The last year has seen the expected three issues sent to members, We now send electronic versions to all officers and wardens as well as those Guild representatives for who we have an email address, unfortunately very few members (3) have taken up the opportunity to receive the journal by this method.

As has been the case since I took over as editor, the first edition in the new year seems to be the slimmest, only once reaching the 24 page plus cover limit in that time. This issue offers the best opportunity for Guilds to have any news published. This issue also includes notice for nominations for executive officers.

The last edition included Booking information for the AGM weekend, saving the association money and the organisers the hassle of organising a separate mailing. The next edition will carry reports on our AGM weekend as well as the Directory and Gazette, please ensure any changes to Guild contact or other details are sent promptly so they will be accurate in this annual publication.

Officer Without Portfolio.

Mr President, Ladies and gentlemen, freemen brothers and sisters, it gives me great pleasure to be with you on this commemorative and auspicious occasion. At the same time, it is very sad and disappointing that our esteemed patron Lord Bathurst has been unable to be with us. You may by now, be aware that he is unwell and will join me in wishing him a speedy recovery.

As we celebrate fifty years since the formation of our Association I am able to reflect on nearly forty years of membership. During that period there have been many developments.

My report today comes in the form of a message and something of a 'call to arms' metaphorically speaking. My concern is regarding the loss of important founding member guilds. For convenience I will confine my comments to one specific guild.

I speak particularly of the Guild of Chartered Freemen of Ipswich. Some of you, and I hope there are still many amongst us, may remember Bill and Marie McCurrach. Bill was our stalwart warden for the East. Marie was the powerhouse of the partnership; she had pressed her female right to the freedom of Ipswich and committed herself to gaining the freedom of many others so entitled. Clearly, as their dedicated secretary and archivist, it was Marie that influenced the reformation of their dynamic guild.

At any function of our Association we could anticipate the presence of Marie with Bill and a number of the Ipswich freemen. They were prominent among those early members of the Association's reformed guilds to become robed when in attendance. A presence of the Ipswich Freemen is very sorely missed today.

Sadly Marie was taken from us some years ago, by cancer leaving Bill rudderless. The Ipswich Guild struggled on for a while without proper leadership and finally appears to have disintegrated.

My 'call to arms' is in the need to positively preserve our guilds and their historical lineage. Here at York we can see a Guild and various companies demonstrating that very positive preservation. However, in the case of Ipswich, I would appeal to any freeman associated in any way with that town, to assist in the restoration of its Guild. I am of course willing to assist in any reasonable way, as I am sure our acting Warden would do likewise.

It is difficult to believe or to accept that all of their resident freemen have lost interest and or simply disappeared. Perhaps notices could be posted locally to gather a meeting for discussions.

I am sorry if I have laboured this specific development but on our fiftieth anniversary it seems relevant if we are to avoid the Ipswich situation from becoming, in any way, indicative of the future.

Clearly, our Honorary Secretary has been working very hard to promote our Association, particularly into new fields and I applaud his dedication and good work. However, wider attention may be necessary in order to prevent such events as has occurred at Ipswich.

The Executive Officers will always be receptive, as will the Wardens, to any similar problems with a struggling guild.

Although we must, of course, operate a strict policy for gathering annual subscriptions, it can by that time be too late for recovery when a member guild is struck off for the non-payment of fees. We may need to look further into this course of action.

Our unique Freedom is always vulnerable and for the past fifty years it has given the Association an important role in safeguarding and assisting the guilds against adversity. It is the strength in numbers of our guild membership that will maintain the preservation of our Association and its foremost purpose.

Together, our Association of Freemen can provide the support for each other over any hardships, be they threats from local authority, government legislation or any other matter contesting our now well-established fabric.

Thank you, and I wish you an especially joyful weekend to celebrate fifty years of fraternal Association.

Journal Information and Acknowledgements.

© The Freemen of England and Wales Journal, Annual Record, Gazette and Guilds Directory (ISSN1749-4095) incorporating the Newsletter (ISSN1465-8755) in continuous series, is distributed three times a year in October, February, June and is published by the Freemen of England and Wales (regd Charity 293536) and hereby asserts its copyright. FEWJ 185.

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

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

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

Cover Picture: The procession from Church heads into Fossgate led by the York Guard during the 50th Anniversary Weekend. Photograph by Kevin Ward, a Freeman of York

Back Cover:

Top; The assembled delegates at Merchant Adventurers Hall. Photograph by Tony Neal.

Bottom; The President plants some Daffodil Bulbs in the rampart of the Bar Walls opposite the Royal York Hotel. Photograph by Donna Gibson, a Freeman of York.

Hon. Editor: Tom Gibson, Freeman of York. All correspondence, enquiries as to advertising and circulation (including requests for additional copies) should be addressed to:

Mr. T. Gibson. Hon. Editor F.E.W Journal. 79 Tang Hall Lane. York. YO31 0SZ

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. 186) is the 20/1/17.

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.

Registered address of the Freemen of England and Wales Association: F.E.W. 37 Stanhope Gardens. Ilford. Essex. IG1 3LQ

Printed by: Focus 4 Print. 1James Street, York. YO10 3WW Tel:01904 673030

Email: office@focus4print.co.uk

