

Freemen of England and Wales.

Journal 199



Autumn 2021
Annual Report and Gazette
With Compliments

President's Letter.

Picture: The President, Tom Gibson, and his Lady, Donna Gibson.

In the Oath I took on being elected President, given at the somewhat unusual AGM held on zoom, I swore, amongst other things. “Any evil or hurt to this Association, or to the Members of the same that may come to my knowledge, the same to be done or intended, the same I will Hinder according to my power, or give them notice thereof.”



In the last few years, many in our nation seem to have become much more polarised and less tolerant of others points of view, on matters they deem important. There seems to be a lack of willingness to communicate constructively with those who see things differently. Often ignoring evidence that is inconvenient to acknowledge, or even trying to make it fit the view one holds. Sadly this attitude seems to have entered discussions within our own association, despite, or perhaps because of, the advantages of modern technology, enabling us to communicate and even hold meetings whilst sat in our own homes.

We all have strongly held views on matters, which can lead to intolerance of opposing or different views which can seem magnified through the screen intruding into our homes during Zoom meetings and the like. As we move forward it cannot be healthy for our Association, for such intolerance to come to the fore. We need to listen and learn from each other as we work together in FEW, using evidence to help reach conclusions rather than the reverse to guide us.

Captain James Evans has served the association for many years, but at the AGM was not re elected to the executive. I, for one will greatly miss him and his insights at our meetings and believe I will be joined by many in thanking him for his contribution over the years and hope we shall see him again soon. I hope he will not mind me quoting him, from his letter to the Trustees of our Association after the AGM. In the last Paragraph he said;

“FEW is not a social club. It is an organisation committed to preserving the Freedom. It is an absolute necessity that Guilds work together. There will, undoubtedly, be other threats to our privileges. With those privileges come responsibilities, not least in holding Guilds together because united we are stronger than individual Guilds.”

He is right. F.E.W. Is, and should be much more than simply a social club. We have a duty of responsibility to ensure we are ready for any threat to the Freedom, we cannot let intolerance of another's point of view within ourselves be that threat. While naturally we may have different views, between us all, mutual respect for those opinions, even when opposing our own, must be a cornerstone of keeping our association of Guilds and Freemen together and strong as we move deeper into the 21st century. We all, after all, share a desire to do the best we can for our Guilds and our Association, there is far more to unite us, than divide us.

Tom Gibson
President. From AGM 2021.

**Minutes of the 54th AGM of the Association of Freemen of England
and Wales**
held on Saturday 18th September 2021 Via Zoom.

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

Attendees: Derek Austin – Coventry, Howard Crapper – Oxford, John Edwards – Stafford, Dennis Evans – Pembroke, Capt. James Evans – Berwick, Alan Fallows – Shrewsbury, Tom Gibson – York, Donna Gibson – York, B. Harrison – York, Sue Haigh – Chester, Capt. Stephen Healy – Newcastle, Lee Hensley – Gloucester, Michael Herriot – Berwick, Denise Laver – Altrincham, Howard Pate – Chester, Angela Priestley Gibbins – Lincoln, Alan Shelley – Sudbury, Stephen White – Grimsby, Charlotte Yeates – Berwick

The President, before calling the meeting to order, welcomed everyone to the zoom meeting, the President then called the meeting to order and declared the AGM in session.

Apologies for non-attendance were recorded from Nick Johnson, (Warden for the South East;), Nic Christison, (Warden for the South West;), Alex Christison, (Berwick), Maxine Taylor (Beverley Pasture Masters), John Booth (Durham), Stewart Bristow (Lincoln), Trevor Ward (Northampton), Stella Machin (Stafford), Nick Hinchcliffe (Individual Member).

A minute silence was observed for all those members of the Association that had recently passed away.

Following a proposal by Denise Laver (Altrincham), which was seconded by Charlotte Yeates (Berwick), the Minutes of the 53rd AGM held on September 21st, 2019, in the Buckholt Suite, The Cheltenham Chase Hotel, Gloucester, were approved as a correct record of the proceedings and will be signed by the President when Covid restrictions allow.

There was only one matter arising from the minutes and that was just to record that the following two proposed changes to the Constitution, which were put to the Members at the last AGM were withdrawn after the meeting, because it was found to have been presented unconstitutionally at the meeting (there was no notice at the Previous Court Meeting of the changes). As a result they had not been adopted into the Constitution, all Guild representatives were informed via email.

The 1st Proposed change to the Constitution at Part 13b, with the addition of *or April* added to the statement below.

“Court meetings shall be held in March, and if desired June”

So, (if agreed) it would read in future

“Court meetings shall be held in March **or April**, and if desired June”

The 2nd Proposed change to the Constitution at Part 11, with the removal of *Executive* from the statement below.

The Court shall consist of the Executive officers and the representatives of each Full Member Guild.....

So, (if agreed) it would read in future; -

The court shall consist of Officers and the representatives of each Full Member Guild.....

There were no other matters arising.

Lee Hensley informed the meeting that currently we have no hosts for the forthcoming Court. Grimsby have offered to host the AGM for 2022, but after that there had been no firm commitments. Many Guilds had verbally mention hosting events, but none had confirmed for definite. Altrincham, Stafford and Lincoln have offered to host events going forward. Lee Hensley will contact these Guilds for firm dates.

Denise Laver asked if the Hon. Secretary could hold a meeting with Guild reps so that they understand what is required for each meeting. Lee Hensley agreed to do this.

The President, Stephen White wondered what sort of response would be garnered from that as the turnout for this AGM via Zoom was poor. However, he thanked those that had offered to host future meetings.

Stephen White’s President’s Report was tabled and noted. A copy is appended to these minutes.

Angela Priestley Gibbins commented that sadly for Stephen White, who being the 13th President of FEW, that it was ironic that he would have to deal with a major pandemic when trying to conduct meetings. Denise Laver congratulated Stephen White for managing to keep FEW functioning during the pandemic.

Tom Gibson’s Deputy President's Report was tabled and noted. A copy is appended to these minutes.

Alan Shelley’s Vice President's Report was tabled and noted. A copy is appended to these minutes.

Capt. James Evans immediate Past Presidents report did not arrive in time to be circulated. A copy is appended to these minutes.

Stephen White's Treasurers Report and the FEW Accounts were tabled and noted. A copy is appended to these minutes.

Charlotte Yeates Membership Secretary's Report was tabled and noted. A copy is appended to these minutes

Alan Fallows Hon. Archivist's Report was tabled and noted. A copy is appended to these minutes.

Tom Gibson's Editor's Report was tabled and noted. A copy is appended to these minutes.

There was no Officer Without Portfolio Report as the position is vacant.

Lee Hensley's Hon. Secretary's Report was tabled and noted. A copy is appended to these minutes.

Stephen White expressed his thanks for all the work the officers had carried out over the past two years, as they had helped him keep FEW functioning during the pandemic.

Stephenn White explained that due to the meeting being held via Zoom that there would be no robing of the new President. However, the new President will start his term. With that Lee Hensley confirmed the nomination for President was Tom Gibson, who had received 2 nominations.

The new President, Tom Gibson, was installed in office by the outgoing, and now Immediate Past President, Stephen White. After pronouncing the Oath of Office, the new President, Tom Gibson, then made a short address, thanking everyone for the confidence now placed in him.

The President then asked the Hon. Secretary to read out the Nominations for Executive Officer's that he had received. The Secretary informed the Meeting that only one nomination had been received for each of the following Executive positions, and as no nominations had been received from the floor, that therefore an election would be unnecessary for these. For the year 2021 - 2022, they are: - Deputy President – Alan Fallows; Vice President – Alan Shelley; Hon Treasurer – Stephen White; Hon Membership Secretary – Charlotte Yeates; Hon Editor – Tom Gibson; Hon Archivist – Alan Fallows; Honorary Secretary – Lee Hensley.

There had been two nominations received for the position of Officer without Portfolio, these were Capt. James Evans and Capt. Stephen Healy.

Due to holding the AGM this year by Zoom, the Hon. Secretary sent out ballot papers to all Guild representatives and to all Individual members that were not members of a member Guild.

Lee Hensley read out the result as follows: -

30 out of 31 Guilds responded with a total of 4960 votes cast
46 Individual members contacted; 11 individual votes received, of these there was one abstention.

Capt. Jim Evans received 1991 votes
Capt. Stephen Healy received 2979 votes.

Therefore, Capt. Stephen Healy was announced as the Officer without Portfolio on the FEW executive.

Tom Gibson thanked Capt. James Evans on behalf of the Association for his many years of service and welcomed Capt. Stephen Healy to the Executive.

The nominations for the Executive members of the association were agreed by all present.

Denise Laver expressed concern that it seemed to be the same names nominating people for positions on the Executive, she would like to see new members on the Executive. Tom Gibson explained that by the closing date in the journal of May 18th that there had only been three nominations submitted, so members of the Executive took steps to ensure that the association could continue working, this was despite advertising in the journal and Facebook page for volunteers and assistants.

Angela Priestley-Gibbins commented that it was nice to see that some members nominations had not come from the Executive, then asked how you become part of the group so you can work are your way up, gaining experience to join the Executive, are there assistant roles and how can you put yourself forward to become an assistant. Is this the forum to do it? Charlotte Yeates responded to Angela that she had raised this at the AGM in Pembroke (2017) and that is how she became an assistant, and then ended up on the Executive. Charlotte then confirmed that there were assistant roles and that is the way to learn the roles. Tom Gibson informed Angela to either contact the Hon. Secretary or the Executive member you would like to assist if she is interested.

Charlotte Yeates then picked back up on Denise Lavers and Angela Priestley-Gibbins observation on the persons nominating individuals to posts on the Executive, and that it would be best practice if the Executive did not propose and second each other. The President, Tom Gibson agreed, but informed Charlotte that due to the restrictions in place due to Covid it was not possible for people to meet each other to do that. And what was done was with the best intentions of keeping the association alive.

Denise Laver at this point offered to be Assistant to the FEW Archivist Alan Fallows. And Angela Priestley Gibbins offered to assist any member of the Executive who would like her help. Tom Gibson thanked them both.

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

The 2021 - 2022 Wardens were confirmed as: - North East – Capt. Stephen Healy; North West – Denise Laver; North – Position Vacant; North Midlands – John Edwards; South Midlands – Derek Austin; South East – Nick Johnson; West – Howard Crapper; Wales – Position Vacant; East – Angela Priestley-Gibbins; South West – Nic Christison.

The Vice President then introduced the Wardens and ask them to give their reports.

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

North West: Denise Laver. Verbal report, A copy not submitted.

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

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

South West; Nic Christison. Report was tabled and noted. A copy is appended to these minutes.

South East: Nick R.S. Johnson. Report was tabled and noted. A copy is appended to these minutes.

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

East: Angela Priestley Gibbins. A copy is appended to these minutes.

Any Other Business: -

Derek Austin asked if he could assist with the question previously raised regarding assistant’s officers, he then quoted from the Constitution; -

The duties of officers shall be allocated by the Court, which may authorise the appointment of additional officers if required, subject to requiring ratification at the next AGM.

Derek then proposed that this Court approve the setting up of assistant officers as required.

The Immediate Past President, Stephen White, informed the meeting that we already have the precedent of appointing assistant officers, so we don’t need to approve it again. We always accept nominations for assistant officers at the AGM.

Derek Austin asked if on that basis could we approve the appointment of Denise as Assistant Archivist now.

Stephen White agreed that it could, so the proposal for Denise Laver to be approved as assistant Archivist was put forward. It was proposed by Derek Austin, seconded by John Edwards, and it was agreed by all present.

A proposal from Denise Laver was put forward for Angela Priestley Gibbins to be approved as the assistant to the Hon. Secretary, Derek Austin seconded this, and it was agreed by all those present.

Denise Laver took the opportunity to thank those who attended the Zoom meeting in June regarding the Working Party, as it's a great way of moving forward.

John Edwards offered to volunteer for the Working Party if required.

Denise Laver suggested that FEW write to the New Culture Secretary informing her of the Organisation and how it helps protect the heritage of the Freeman and the freedom. In view of some very strange things that have been going on in the last 48 hours. As the Cultural Secretary, had just given permission for a listed building to be demolished.

There being no further business, the President declared the 54th Annual General Meeting closed.

President's Report

With this being my final report as President it is for me a time of some reflection; having said that the events of the last 2 years could not have featured in even the wildest imagination. There is not much that I can add to what has already been said previously but I do need to set something down as a record.

My election as President was confirmed at the 2019 AGM hosted by the Chartered Free-men, and Women, of Gloucester, a most memorable occasion for me and the last time that we all met together in person. I made mention of the fact that I was the 13th President, and expressed the hope that that was not an unlucky omen...

My first, and only, event that I attended physically as your President, was the Winter Function at Berwick Upon Tweed in early December 2019 by kind invitation of Capt. Jim Evans. Bridget, Matthew and I thoroughly enjoyed ourselves and it was good to meet up with Jim's family. I was, subsequently, invited to the York Banquet but that had to be cancelled.

Come the New Year and meetings had been arranged by Skype but owing to some technical difficulties were not altogether successful.

And then we had Brexit and, thrown in for good measure, we were introduced to Covid-19.

Nobody knew just how long Covid would last for but it is still with us although thankfully now there is an effective vaccination. Venues have been closed and people advised to self-isolate, we postponed meetings in the hope that they might be re-arranged at later dates but there was no Court or AGM held in 2020, particularly disappointing for me since the AGM was due to be held in Grimsby. And, as it has turned out, both our Court and AGM in 2021 are being held by Zoom with Executive Meetings a combination Skype and Zoom.

Comments have been received concerning our website and discussions held with our host to look at ways of improving its' appearance. Various suggestions have been made but requests to our membership for opinions have met with a nil response. We continue to add to our Facebook page, (which feeds through to the Website), and which is generally open to all to add to but again we receive few contributions. The number of "likes" on the Facebook page has increased to 387, (302 in January 2020).

In February 2021 I was pleased to receive an invitation from the Mayor of Northampton to attend (by Zoom) the Investiture of Lord Earl Spencer as an Hereditary Freeman of Northampton. The Earl gave a speech afterwards in which he expressed his delight that he was able to continue his family tradition in this way.

Over the last 2 years we have lost friends and for me personally these include Colin Hardcastle, one-time Warden for the North and President and Val Pettifer, one-time Warden for the East; there will be others, known to you, may their souls rest in peace.

I have been supported by the other Executive Officers during my term, Lee – as Hon Secretary – has had to keep his eye continually on the ball and the rest of us on our toes and Charlotte and Alex have carried out an outstanding job in overhauling the membership database.

I cannot ignore and will end my report by reference to the recent Court Meeting.

The proposal which went to the Court which sought to make certain changes to the Constitution was defeated by failing to collect the required number of votes and was in regard to individuals holding more than one post within the Executive. It has been a bit of an ongoing issue but we continue to be lacking in volunteers to fill vacancies in sufficient numbers with the requisite skills notwithstanding the recent addition of Lee, Charlotte and Alex.

It may be the case that "the bar has been set too high" but it is important that we get the right people into jobs and not be left with a mess to clear up as we were after the last Treasurer had to be removed from office. The Charity Commission offers guidance on the appointment of Trustees.

Neither should somebody be just allowed to cruise in as President, or Deputy, unless they have exceptional attributes, but who is to be the judge of that and how do you draw the line without having rules in a Constitution to fall back on, rules that the members have voted for?

They say that change is inevitable, and that in order to stand still you have to keep moving. Change is not always a bad thing and can be a driving force for good so long as sufficient thought goes into the reasons why a change is necessary and what will have to be actually done to bring such a change about.

The Freemen of England and Wales is an Association steeped in history and tradition, it

would be easy for our newer and younger members not to appreciate the actions and nuances which brought it into being and shaped its' development since 1966, one of those being granted Charitable status in 1986.

The Association was founded to protect the rights and existence of Bodies of Freemen whose members are admitted in compliance with the 1835 Act and subsequent Legislation; that is why full membership is granted to those Bodies, as defined in The Constitution.

Our Constitution has undergone a number of changes during our history, these are noted within the Annual Report. We have, on occasion, allowed changes to take place which have then been regretted requiring further changes to be made to restore things back to how they were, or how it had been intended.

Such changes have always been dealt with openly, receiving due approval from the membership and then from the Charity Commission to whom we are ultimately answerable.

Similarly, the Association operates under stated Aims and Objectives, to suggest any sort of change in them and you would need to justify the reasons to the Charity Commission.

Thank you.

Stephen P. White
President
2019 to 2021

Deputy President's Report.

I have had no specific duties as Deputy President since my last report, however I would like to express my thanks to those who sent me good wishes following my heart attack which occurred just two days before the Court meeting in June, your messages mean a great deal to both myself and Donna.

Report and Message from the Vice President

The limitations caused by the Coronavirus outbreak has affected us all. However, as I reported lately to our Court Meeting, in several respects communications have been improved via Zoom (webinars) and electronic means.

Freemen all, let us hope and pray that we are now nearing an end of the pandemic. This has been a difficult period and not unlike conditions experienced during and after wartime in the past. The breakup of society caused by World Wars I and II, set things back many years terminating guilds and civic activities. These recent disruptions may similarly be taking their toll and require a revaluation of Freedom today.

If it were not for the endeavours of Harry Ward and others campaigning hard and in many cases persuading guilds to re-establish themselves, even as late as the 1980s, we would be

without many of the associations we are familiar with today.

Preservation of 'Freemen's rights' should not be seen as an act of selfishness; it is of great importance to the 'heritage' of our nation. We must persevere with the objectives that retain the 'common grounds and facilities that have made England and Wales the envy of the world.

Our Association should not be seen as one of 'elitism' but of pride in the preservation of the better acts of service to our nation. We must recognise the importance of the image we may portray in today's society. This image should have relevance to our good intentions and to remove any suggestion of assumed self-superiority.

To these ends and in some respects to modernise processes of our FEW Association, the Area Wardens recommended the formation of a 'working group' to assess, re-evaluate and possibly advance the image of the Association. Today, it seems we may need to reignite the aspirations and consider the future of our movement.

For many years I have been arguing the need for clarity in the recognition of Borough Freemen. These views remain unaltered. Legislation under the 1835 Municipal Corporations Act and subsequent qualifying Acts determine the status of Borough Freedom. However, it should also be recognised that Freedom and Gilds/Guilds have their own determinates resulting from custom and tradition.

'Freemen' is a reasonable expression for those who have 'freedom' over certain unique customary rights and liberties. When Harry Ward (our founder) set out on his mission to gather information of Freemen's associations, he did not make distinct authority, with regard to selection, of one group over another. I considered this fact, when recently a member of our Executive referred to Harry's book as the 'bible' of information. If this be the case, it is clear that our Association should be a little more 'even' and less insular over its clinical observation of Freedom.

Let me make it absolutely clear, that all members of our organisation should be 'genuine' freemen, with observance to their personal rights and liberties. If Harry Ward's book can be regarded as the 'instruct' to our organisation, I feel it apt to close with this message at the end of his book.

"Here then is the future of freedom, plain for anybody to see. To meet their duty, the Freemen of England [& Wales] must do everything to nourish further fellowship which has already been so fruitful; the freedom must be guarded and strengthened wherever it exists; and overall, there must everywhere be a trustful partnership between the ancient institution of the freedom and its modern successors in local government" [in all its liberties] Charles Sparrow QC FSA.

Report of IPP.

There has been no requirement to carry out any duties as IPP in the past year. A house move in late August resulted in a loss of all communications, phone, email and Internet for two weeks, which proved highly inconvenient. However this did allow me to carry out some work within my own Guild. We are now underway in preparing a presentation to FEW of the cataloguing of the Berwick Archives to the new international system.

Jim Evans. IPP

Membership Report

Individual Membership

We have now issued membership cards to individual members. There are currently 306 paid up individual members, of which we have no GDPR forms for 44. Some have now been written to a second time warning them that if they do not return the form FEW will no longer legally be able to contact them.

There are still twelve members paying at the old membership rate of £8, all of whom have written to including a standing order form encouraging them to pay by this method asking them to pay at the correct rate of £10.

Since beginning of 2020:

- 7 deaths from individuals who gave their time and skills to their guild/gild and to FEW
- 11 resignations to report
- 7 new members have joined

Guild/Gild Membership

There are 38 guild/gilds of which 5 are in arrears since 2018.

We would like to thank the Wardens who have spoken to guilds/gilds in their areas regarding continuing membership of FEW.

Other points

There seems to have been a problem with activation some of the new standing orders that sent to the Hon Treasurer during the course of the year, this is still being investigated by the Hon Treasurer and we are awaiting his comments.

It has been agreed for a smooth running of the membership process that access to the online bank account has been sanctioned by the executive to check members payments. We are still currently waiting for the Hon Treasurer to action. This is to enable the Hon Membership Secretary to check any queries rather than emailing the Hon Treasurer and waiting for a response.

In 2020 and 2021 a lot of time and resource was given to gathering correct information from the members and guilds/gilds to ensure the smooth running of the organisation. Therefore people who had incorrect subscription rate, missing GDPR have been contacted and new standing orders set up.

Archivist's Report

Actions this year have again been severely curtailed by the pandemic and our own self-isolation precautions, although access to the archives has still been available as required. Meetings by zoom are far from suitable and I look forward to meeting face to face again where business can be completed more effectively.

The problems within FEW continue over a faction showing discontent with its operations and membership. I look forward to robustly investigating any such concerns and ensuring that the Association operates as it was intended from its formation in the 1960's.

Hon. Editor's Report.

In the last twelve months there have been three editions of the Journal, despite a lack of articles due to the lack of events during the pandemic we are (at the time of writing) still under. As mentioned in my previous report this worldwide difficulty has led to delays in publication. This has also meant a lack of pictures especially for the front and back covers, though some members have contacted me to say they continue to appreciate images from outside the areas necessarily covered by Freeman Bodies. Generally feedback for the journals produced has been positive.

I continue to use a printing firm local to myself to publish the Journal, which has up to recently been run by Jill and Gill, however I have learnt that Jill has recently retired from Focus4print, which is now wholly owned by Gill. I hope Jill enjoys her well-earned retirement, and wish Gill every success as she guides the recovery of the company from the difficulties of the last 18 months or so.

While it may be of interest to note that issue 199 will mark the 40th edition I have edited, in the new year we reach edition number 200 of the Journal. I should like to think we could have an item in it from each of the Freeman Bodies who are members of the association, to be published in that edition along with any other notices needed. Wardens and Guild Representatives, over to you to ensure an item from each is with me in time. The closing date for items for it will be published on the last page of edition 199 which is planned for publication during October.

Hon. Secretary's Report

My time has mainly been spent: -

- Compiling reports and Agendas
- Sending correspondence to Guild Representatives.
- Dealing with requests for merchandise.
- Liaising with the Hon. Membership Secretary with members enquiring about their membership.

Wardens Reports

North East: Capt. Stephen Healy.

Alnwick:

The Chamberlain's Common Council and Freemen of the Borough of Alnwick report usual business over the Summer months and have started to meet back in person.

Berwick-upon-Tweed:

Work on the archives, previously reported on, continues and public access in a dedicated space within the Town Barracks project is anticipated soon. The Freemen previously contributed to the feasibility and scoping study into the future of the Barracks and stand ready to continue to fund aspects of this project.

The Guild continues to maintain its complex of Freemen's accommodation and, due to the favourable position of their charity finances at present, have recently increased support to resident Freemen and various local causes. This includes grants to local schools and donations to a number of local community charities.

Durham:

August saw John Booth appointed as the new Chairman of the Wardens of the Durham City Freemen and congratulations are extended via this report. John started his working life with a firm of painters and decorators – a five-year apprenticeship which was subsequently to qualify him for entry into the freemen's ranks. He later started his own business, also employing apprentices, before moving to a post with the maintenance team for Durham School. A change of both location and direction found him at Newcastle College, from where he retired in 2000 as the college's Information and Learning Technology Manager.

In the spring of 2014 Mrs Connie Hotchkiss was just four months short of her 93rd birthday when she was welcomed into the ranks of the Durham City Freemen, A great-grandmother, she has recently celebrated another milestone in her life – her 100th birthday. A member of the Masons' Company, she can trace her Guild ancestry back several generations, as well as seeing younger members of the family entering the ranks of the Durham Freemen.

The Wardens and Deputy Wardens decided in July to cancel this year's Annual Dinner and the Martinmas Guild Day and Distribution in the interests of public safety.

First and second calls for new applicants are currently being served via the Zoom platform. Third calls (admissions) are being deferred until the ceremony can be held in the Guild Hall as soon as Covid restrictions permit.

Nothing has as yet been reported on the outcome of the public enquiry into the County Council's application to deregister part of the Sands Common Land, alongside the River Wear and over which the Freemen exercise Herbage Rights, to provide a car park for the new Civic Centre.

North West: Denise Laver. Verbal report, A copy not submitted.

North Midlands: John Edwards.

Like most parts of the country, this area has had very limited activity over the past year

with many of the usual social and civic functions either cancelled or changed to virtual methods. I have had no recent communication from Shrewsbury, Bridgnorth or Newcastle under Lyme. However, I know that Newcastle had to change their method of delivering the annual payment, which is usually held in the church. That is rather sad, because it is almost the only occasion when most of their freemen actually get to meet one another. An event to which I have been welcomed in the past.

Unfortunately, the Shrewsbury web site, about which I was so complimentary a while ago, seems to have stagnated with most of the information, including the details of contacts and officers, over two years old, so I do not have current information. Stafford's web site also has not been updated recently, due to a breakdown of equipment and a lack of people able to edit the html format. It is intended that a new web site will be created using more modern and more easily edited systems.

An interesting event last year relating to the Bridgnorth Freemen was the inclusion of a sculpture in the local Art Trail entitled the 'Freeman Flyer'. It depicts a locomotive and members of the Guild, showing the regard that their freemen are held in the town. Among the civic functions that have been postponed are swearing in ceremonies for most Guilds, so hopefully when things get back to normal we may have an influx of new blood. The Derby Guild is getting back to live meetings with their AGM being held this week. It is to be followed by an interesting talk by guest speaker Dr Simon Harris about the exceptional work undertaken on the translation of the ancient market charter 1378 for The Freemen of the City and the DCC. Though I would very much like to accept their kind invitation, I shall be away that day. Hopefully, a report will appear in the Journal in due course.

At Stafford things are also on the up, with a Christmas Lunch and the annual dinner arranged for December and January. Hopefully, people with their double jabs and masks will feel confident enough to participate.

Big news on the Freemen's Allotments; after only 800 years, electricity has arrived on site! This should help with lighting, power supplies for the Workshop and the Store and improved security for our tenants, who are still suffering from shed break-ins and thefts. However, recent attacks left the trimmers and rotavators untouched, but had biscuits, lemonade and sweets stolen. Probably kids with nothing better to do, but a distinct improvement on those a year or so back, who used hydraulic jacks to open shipping containers.

There was a very successful barbecue held on the site recently with food contributions from many of our numerous different nationalities. Everyone got on very well, which was a reward for the trustees who have the difficult job of managing the Freemen's inheritance.

In terms of Warden's duties there is not much to do. However, I am investigating a few places where it may be possible to reinstate some Freedom or Court Leet activity.

South Midlands: Derek Austin.

Coventry Freemen's Guild.

As Guildhall closure is predicted until 2022, the Presidents Dinner on 16th July was held instead at the Coombe Abbey Hotel venue, where the Lord Mayor Cllr John McNicholas was welcomed as Guild President for 2021/2. A further return to pre pandemic activities was the Skittles evening on 13th August in Barnacle Village Hall, where we were pleased

to welcome our fellow Leicester Gild Freemen, with supper afterwards.

The Guild AGM was socially distanced and limited in numbers on 1st September, and confirmed our new Master Matt Johnson and his Court of Officers. We still have a few seats left for our banquet next Saturday at Coombe Abbey: with the ceremonial installation of Officers; a ‘get-together’ meal the night before; and a Freeman’s Church service and robed procession on the Sunday. Looking ahead, we hope to have a Christmas Dinner on 10th December, and a better programme of events for 2022, pandemic permitting.

Gild of Leicester Freemen.

A party of Gildsmen visited Barnacle last month in a welcome return to a pre Covid19 type skittles evening with Coventry Guild.

Leicester’s Guildhall built in 1390 for the Corpus Christi Guild was open for visits during the recent Heritage Open Days events, claimed to be the oldest secular Leicester building still in use.

Northampton Guild of Freemen.

It is still to be clarified if the new Northampton Town Council will continue the previous Borough Council support for the hereditary Freeman Trustees, which included accommodation for meetings and administrative support.

Alcester Court Leet & Court Baron.

In July the annual duck race, using sponsored plastic ducks starting from Centenary Fields Bridge to the Oversley Bridge was held – to raise funds for the town’s Christmas lights. Also in July the Court was invited to provide a ceremonial presence at the Alcester Game Fair at Ragley Hall – the seat of the Lord of the Manor of Alcester since 1813. August saw a robed Court visit to fellow Court Leet Henley-in-Arden on the occasion of their ‘Court Leet Day’ – with ceremonial assessments of fish, flesh, and other commodities. It is hoped to hold the annual Court meeting next month in the War Memorial Town Hall.

Henley-in-Arden Court Leet & Court Baron

‘Court Leet Day’ was held last month in the Jubilee and Guildhall gardens, albeit with some Covid19 precautions. The ceremonial tasting of fish & flesh, butter etc, was duly enacted – with a green sprig and certificate given to adorn the vendor’s premises. As the Court Leet website appears to have been hijacked by a travel firm, please note the new address: https://www.heritagehenley.org.uk/the_court_leet.php and also the Guildhall: <http://henleygh.co.uk>

Warwick Court Leet

The Court Leet Assizes event was held on the 14th August at various locations in the town centre, supported by adjacent Courts Leet. The following day the sell out Classic Car Show took place in the Market Place and adjacent streets, as a welcome return to normal activities.

South West; Nic Christison.

Wareham will discuss FEW at their next free Covid meeting. They are aware of us due to a presentation 20 years ago. Still no contact from Exeter Freeman or Portland

South East: Nick R.S. Johnson.

Owing to Covid restrictions and other current considerations, there is no news whatsoever from Guilds in South East England.

West: Howard Crapper.

In Oxford we did manage to hold our Annual Inspection of the Port Meadow with the City Sheriff. A pleasant mid summer evening and a good number of Freeman in the fresh air looked at the river and the excellent grass. The wonderful variety of cattle all appeared to be doing well.

The Port Meadow has been under intense pressure from the sheer number of visitors under lockdown conditions. The Ranger and his team have been working late hours in order to collect up to 3 tonnes of disgraceful litter per day. Urgent signs have been posted on each entrance to the Meadow requesting that visitors take their litter home and local media joins in, advertising this, especially after three animals died after ingesting foreign matter. The Meadow has never been busier with many usual City entertainment outlets closed. The following Aunt Sally match against the Sheriffs team was once again won by the Freeman. We thank Chris Cox for organising the match and thank brewers Greene King for generously supplying the free beer.

In Gloucester, on Friday 3rd September, the Guild did take part in a small but worthwhile service of raising the flag for the Merchant Navy.

The following day on the 4th September, the Guild took part in the Gloucester Day Parade which celebrates the lifting of the Siege of Gloucester during the Civil War of 1643.

No Annual Dinner this year due to Covid, we wish the Gloucester Hon Secretary all the best following his recent health scare.

East: Angela Priestley Gibbins.

Report from the Warden for the East for the Court Meeting June 2021 updated September 2021

(Editors note: My apologies to Angela for inadvertently omitting her Report to the June court from Issue 198)

I don't have a great deal to report. Having made the decision not to contact the other Gilds/Guilds in my area until Covid restrictions eased I was never expecting the situation to last as it has. However, now that I am double-dosed and twice weekly testing for work I intend to make contact once we get past 21st June 2021 and hopefully the all clear so I shall be able to meet with other Gilds/Guilds in person.

Lincoln

Lincoln was very quiet until the New Year when the Master instigated Zoom Committee meetings and in April held their first virtual AGM. There were sufficient attendees to make the necessary quorum but it was agreed to leave all formal decision making until it is possible to meet in person. All Officers to remain in place until the next AGM or EGM. The next event is Boultham Park Fair and all being well the President, Stewart hopes to hold a birthday bash in August subject to health and Covid restrictions. Stewart continues

to make steady progress and has ventured out, out for his first beer. All being well there will be much more to report next time and not just about Lincoln. Whilst writing, the City of Lincoln Freemen's Guild would like to pass on their sincere condolences to David Pettifer and to Brian Jackson, Past Master of the Coventry Guild of Freemen. As you may remember Val Pettifer was previous Warden for the East.

Angela Priestley-Gibbins
June 2021

I am pleased to report that Boultham Park Fair went ahead and the Freemen were able to attend and hold their teddy tombola stall. Not one child (or parent) objected to using hand gel (Vic sourced a very smart automatic dispenser) and we even ran out of teddies. There have been no Committee meeting over the summer but these should be re-starting shortly.

Due to a very busy (family-related) summer I have only just made contact with other Guilds/Gilds in my area
The City of Lincoln Freeman's Guild would like to pass on their sincere condolences to Denise Laver and the Freemen of Altrincham on the loss of Alan.

Report from Sudbury Freemen's Society – Annual Report 2020-2021

I am pleased to have received a copy of the Sudbury 2020-2021 Annual Report from Andrew Grimwood.

The current Committee are in place until their next Quinquennial meeting in 2024. There has been one resignation from the Committee and Freemen or Widows are welcome to get involved.

The Committee has been meeting by Zoom to ensure that society matters are addressed. At the last AGM there were 2 new admissions to the Freemen of Sudbury but sadly also 2 reported deaths this year.

There have been no Civic events requiring Mace Bearers

Sudbury Freemen's Trust update – the Trustees remain in place until 2024. They were able to hold a zoom meeting to support the SFT projects with vulnerable groups and individuals.

Grants paid towards several payments for Contact Care Lines. The restoration of the Gainsborough family graves headstone in Sudbury cemetery was completed in December 2019. The SFS website and a contribution was made towards the March 2021 publication of a book about the history of the Dramatic Society and also provided the seed funding by way of a grant towards the publication and design costs of "A Pub Crawl Through Time" by Peter Thorogood.

Sudbury Common Lands Charity

The Freemen Nominative Trustees remain in place until 2024. Adrian Walters continues as Clerk and Mentor, Nick Shimwell has been confirmed as Ranger and Jack Cresswell has been appointed Assistant Ranger.

The current programme of works has been reprioritised to ensure the upkeep of the footpaths caused by increased footfall during the pandemic. Day to day practices of

managing the common lands have been restricted by the Covid-19 Government directives but the wildlife continues to do well.

I very much look forward to meeting with the Freemen of Sudbury when “allowed” and able.

This concludes the reports from the AGM 2021.

Secretaries Notice.

Dear Members,

We now have lapel badges, Book and windscreen stickers back in stock!

Has FEW got the Merchandise for you? I would be interested to see which new items; FEW could consider for you, the members. Whether it be umbrellas, notebooks or a scarf or broach.

Please send all ideas or comments on to the Hon. Secretary

News From Chester

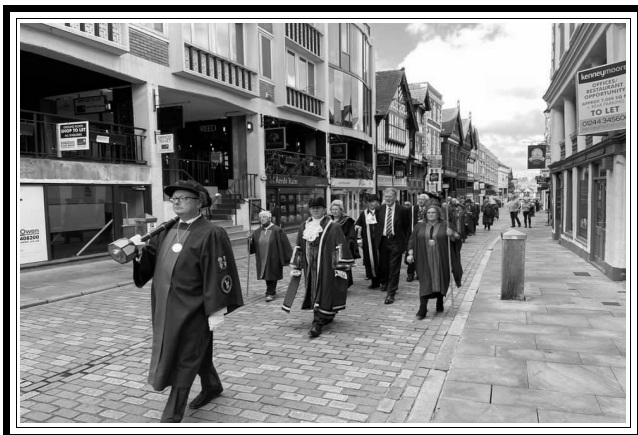
Chester Freemen & Guilds are slowly returning to normal activities. We were fortunate that our postponed Pentice Court was able to go ahead in September at the Town Hall. Numbers were limited but at a carefully socially distanced ceremony 18 new Freemen of the City of Chester were admitted. The evening was enjoyed by all with refreshments afterwards at the Guild Church – St Peters.

Our new website is now up and running – www.chesterfreemenandguilds@org.uk – so please take a look.

Several of our members attended Coventry Guild Banquet at Coombe Abbey. This was a wonderful venue for an evening of fellowship and fine dining.

We are now all looking forward to our own Banquet Weekend in early October.

(Chesters Banquet Weekend has now taken place, the picture to the right shows The members of the Guilds and Guests in procession to Church. Photograph from the Chester Guilds Facebook page, reproduced with permission.)



Notice from the Hon. Editor.

As you will have seen from my report to the AGM, the next edition will be number 200 and I would like to be able to include a news item from each one of the Member Guilds etc within it. I am happy to receive photographs in lieu of an actual item if that is easier and don't expect long articles, for example the one from Chester is about 120 words. The closing date for articles to reach me is 21st January 2022, Lets make this edition more than just a special number, but also a very special edition.

My thanks in anticipation.

Tom

F.E.W. Gazette & Guilds Directory.

2021 - 2022

A full listing of all members of the Executive, Area Wardens, The Court, the Guilds, and their representatives.

Registered Address: 86 Painswick Road Gloucester GL4 6PT

The Patron.

The Right Honourable, the Earl Bathurst Cirencester Park, Gloucestershire, GL7 2BU

Past Presidents.

1966 - 1981 Harry Ward MSc FRIC FCIS	York (deceased)
1981 - 1991 Col John Kenyon OBE MC	Shrewsbury (deceased)
1991 - 1996 William F Healey	Chester (deceased)
1996 - 1999 Richard Bishop BEd DASE	Altrincham
1999 - 2002 Alan Robson	Newcastle upon Tyne
2002 - 2005 Maurice Pickering	London (deceased)
2005 - 2008 Philip Bowman	York and London (deceased)
2008 - 2010 Colin Hardcastle	York and London (deceased)
2010 - 2013 Alan Fallows	Shrewsbury
2013 - 2015 Gordon Varndell	London
2015 - 2017 Ronald Leek	Alcester and London
2017 - 2019 Capt. James Evans	Berwick upon Tweed
2019- 2021 Stephen. P. White	Great Grimsby

The Executive.

President.	Tom Gibson.	Freeman of York
79 Tang Hall Lane, York YO31 OSZ	01904 423153(h) thomasg624@aol.com	
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3 Holborn Drive, London Road, Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY2 6SL	01743 358495 (h)	
07870534772 (m) alan.fallows@gmail.com		
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Stephenwhite.grimsby.nel@ntlworld.com

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Hon Treasurer. Stephen P. White. Freeman of Great Grimsby
 (See Immediate Past President's details above).

Membership Secretary. Charlotte Yeates Freeman of Berwick upon Tweed
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membership@freeman-few.org.uk

Hon Archivist Alan Fallows Freeman of Shrewsbury
 (See Deputy President's details above).

Hon Editor. Tom Gibson Freeman of York
 (see Presidents details above)

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The North Midlands John Edwards Freeman of Stafford
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The South Midlands Derek Austin Freeman of Coventry
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The West Howard Crapper Freeman of Oxford
 The Mount, Hinton Parva, Swindon, Wiltshire SN4 ODH 01793 791171 h.crapper@btinternet.com

Wales Position Vacant

The East Angela Priestley-Gibbins Freeman of Lincoln
angiepf@hotmail.co.uk

London & South East Position Vacant

The South West Nic Christison Freeman of Berwick upon Tweed
wondergeezer@yahoo.co.uk

Assistant Officers.

Assistant Membership Secretary. Alex Christison - Freeman of Berwick upon Tweed
Assistant Archivist. Denise Laver - Freeman of Altrincham
Assistant Secretary. Angela Priestley-Gibbins - Freeman of Lincoln

Supernumerary (non-Executive).

Hon. Counsellor. Communication via the President's address please.

F.E.W. Court Members (Guild Representatives).

The person so named is that Guild's notified holder, at time of press, of their vote at General and Court Meetings.

Guilds are listed in alphabetical order by town.

Correspondence to guilds sent to their Court Member should be forwarded to their relevant Officers.

Alcester Court Leet

www.alcestercourtleet.co.uk

Ronald Leek, Richmond House, Beech Close, Oversley Green, Alcester, Warwickshire
B49 6PP 01789 762574 ronleek724@btinternet.com

Chamberlain's Common Council & Freemen, Borough of Alnwick

Tom Mattison, Park View Cottage, Alnwick Moor, Alnwick, NE66 2AH 01665 603030.

jimmymattison@outlook.com

Altrincham Court Leet

John Tolley, 28 Hillside Road, Verwood, Dorset, BH31 7HE 01202 280121

altrinchamcourtleet@gmail.com

Freemen of the Borough of Berwick upon Tweed

www.freemenofberwick.org.uk

Michael W Herriott, 4 Hawkhead Crescent, Edinburgh, EH16 6LT.

Michael.herriott@gconnect.com

Beverley Pasture Masters

Maxine Taylor, 25 Curlew Close, Beverley, HU17 7QN 01482 888201

Beverleypasturemasters@gmail.com

Guild of Freemen of Bridgnorth

www.bridgnorth-lists.co.uk/Lists/Burgess

A.J. Head, The Yews, Turley Green, Alveley, Bridgnorth WV15 6LS 01746 780619

janehead619@aol.com or GildofBridgnorthFreemen@hotmail.com

Freemen and Guilds of the City of Chester

www.chesterfreemenandguilds@org.uk

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Burgesses Guild of Chippenham

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bob.rudd@icloud.com

The Freeburgesses of the Borough of Colchester

Peter Nason, 3, Van Dyck Road, Colchester, CO3 4QD 01206 570544 pnason@aol.com

City of Coventry Freemen's Guild

www.coventryfreemenguild.wordpress.com

Derek Austin

(See Warden for South Midlands details above).

The Free Iron Miners Guild of the Forest of Dean

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832535 jw@clearwellcaves.com

Freemen of the City of Derby

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512684 mrdzzydasilva@btinternet.com

The Freemen of Durhamwww.durhamcityfreemen.orgJohn Booth, 0191 3733381, boothjohn555@gmail.com**Chartered Freemen & Women of the City of Gloucester**www.gloucesterfreemenandwomen.co.uk

Andrew N Croose, 41 Granville Street Gloucester GL1 5HL 07989223230

andrew.croose@gmail.com**Enrolled Freemen of Grimsby**www.enrolledfreemenofgrimsby.org

Stephen White, (See IPP details above).

Freemen of Hale

Ralph Mills, 23 Arklow Drive, Hale Liverpool L24 5RN 0151 4252782

freemenofhale@hotmail.co.uk**Gild Freemen of Haverfordwest**

Paul Lucas, c/o R.K. Lucas and Son, The Tithe Exchange, 9 Victoria Place,

Haverfordwest, SA61 2JX paul@rklucas.co.uk.**Henley In Arden Court Leet and Court Baron**www.henley-in-arden.org/courtleetindex.htmlJohnathan Dovey, steward@dovey.co.uk**Gild of Freemen of the City of Leicester**www.leicesterfreemen.co.uk

Hazel Lake, The Malthouse, 6 The Maltings, Ashley, Leicestershire, LE16 8HW

hazel.lake-leicesterfreemen@outlook.com**The City of Lincoln Freemen's Gild**www.lincolnfreemen.co.ukStewart Bristow stewart.bristow@hotmail.co.uk**Warden and Freemen of Malmesbury**www.athelstanmuseum.org.uk/govenance_warden_freemen.html

Margaret Lamb, 1 Market Lane, Malmesbury, Wilts, SN16 9BQ 01666 829000

wardenandfreeman@btconnect.com**Town Freemen of Montgomery**

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lionelweaver@gmail.com**Trustees of the Newcastle under Lyme Burgesses Lands**

Ray Mason 35 Princess Street Talke Pits, Stoke-on-Trent, ST7 1QN

raymason2372@gmail.com**Scriveners Company of Newcastle upon Tyne**www.freemenofnewcastle.com/scriveners/index.html

Capt. Stephen Healy, (See Warden for the North East details above).

Freemen of Trinity House Newcastle upon Tyne www.trinityhousenewcastle.org.uk

Capt. Stephen Healy, (See Warden for the North East details above).

The Guild of Freemen of the Borough of Northampton

Trevor Ward, 2, Eady Close, Moulton, Northants, NN3 7TF 01604 643836

trevor@tmjward.co.uk**Freemen of the City of Oxford**www.sites.google.com/site/oxfordfreemen

Howard Crapper,

(See Warden for the West details above).

Gild of Freemen of PembrokeDennis Evans, dw.evans939@btinternet.com

Rochester Oyster and Floating Fisheries

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01634 363757 or 07791 572951 thehalesfamily@btintemet.com

The Gild of Freemen of Shrewsbury

<http://gildoffreemenschrew.wixsite.com/shrewsburyfreemen>

Alan Fallows (See Deputy President Above)

Guildable Manor of Southwark Court Leet

www.guildablemanor.org/

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B49 6PP 01789 762574 ronleek724@btintemet.com

Stafford Freemen's Guild

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John Edwards,

(See Warden for North Midlands details above).

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Warwick Court Leet

www.warwickeourtleet.co.uk

Jayne Topham. Clerk. Warwick Town Council. Court House, Jury Street. Warwick CV34
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Gild of Freemen of the City of York

www.freemenofyork.com

The Clerk. Tom Gibson

(See Presidents details above).

York Strays Council

Tom Gibson (Chairman)

(See Presidents details above).

**Changes of representatives or their contact details should be directed
to the Hon. Secretary for publication in the next edition.**

Presence on the Internet:

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

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

Freemen's Railway Society Page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/736130756449655/>

Note: The Freemens Railway society is an unofficial facebook group of F.E.W. Members and other Freemen who are Railway enthusiasts sharing photographs and news about their hobby in all scales and gauges. Any like-minded Freemen are welcome to join in.

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

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Please note the closing date for the editor to receive items for the next issue (No. 200) is the 21/1/22.

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