



**Freemen of England and Wales.
Journal 201.
Summer 2022.
With Compliments.**

Letter from the President.



Due to my continued poor health I have done very little as President since the last Journal and letter to you. I am slowly recovering, although have been warned a further operation may be necessary. My thanks to the officers of FEW for their help while this is ongoing and to those of you who have sent messages of support.

I was particularly sad not to be able to attend the court meeting, but thank those who did attend particularly the Leicester Guild for hosting it for us. It appears to have been a lively meeting with some quite forceful in the views expressed. It should be remembered that even though strongly held views may differ with others, it is important not to demonize those who simply hold a different, just as strongly held point of view. We all hold the same aim and FEW is simply a voice for our members.

One advantage of being restricted in what I can do has been catching up with some of the Admin of FEW. As well as producing the Journal, I have managed to arrange the venue for next years court meeting. The first time in several years we shall have had this set so far in advance, see the Secretary's notices for information. It is also heartening to see another Guild volunteering to host us in the future.

It is also heartening to hear how Guilds are recovering from our enforced lock down. If I am still editor after the AGM it will be a delight to record news from Guilds in a future edition (Probably issue 203 in the new year will be the first opportunity, the next edition carrying reports from the AGM). Despite having both website and Facebook presences, the Journal remains our main way of communicating with you all, and I know that some of you look forward to receiving it. However, as we move forward, effective methods of communication within FEW will be key. Any suggestions are most welcome.

My best wishes to you all.
Tom

Obituary.

Nicholas Rutherford Sowerby Johnson 14th November 1949 — 17th February 2022

By Alan Shelley.

Ever amiable and popular with all, Nick was a proficient Hon. Secretary of FEW and an excellent Area Warden covering both the East and Southeast of England. He had been bravely battling with severe illness for some time, throughout which, he maintained an interest in FEW and retained his typical good humour.



Nick, a retired police officer and freeman of Hale was accomplished in many ways. He was multi-talented, interested in the Arts, in music he could play the piano by ear and had been an actor in his youth. He took part in a BBC radio play called “Blackspot on the Mersey” produced by Alan Ayckbourn when he played the part of James Edward Scully.

Where Nick lived as a child, he had a good view of the Mersey. He discovered that people in the past had been able to ford the river at Runcorn. With some research into the tides, sandbanks, and mudflats he was convinced it would be worth trying himself. This he followed with several successful crossings.

Having joined the Liverpool police as a young cadet he was initially based at various stations, including Lark Lane and Speke. During his police career, Nick moved to London and for a while was stationed at Hackney. He was required to move around London with their policy of ‘tenure’, in order that they couldn’t become too familiar with their area. He ended up at Greenwich, south of the river, where he remained until he retired.

Following his retirement, Nick and his wife Sue were able to enjoy more travelling and sightseeing, firstly in Europe and later by cruising around the world. Nick was a keen gardener and a cook, so much of his interest was to grow vegetables for the table. In his recreational skills Nick was a competent chess player and a keen astronomer. He was also a member of the Liverpool Police Life Saving Display team. An unusual interest of Nick was his knowledge of mycelium or fungi, he could randomly pick flavoursome edible mushrooms to take home for a meal.

Nick has certainly left an indelible mark and his memory will long remain with many of us. Our sincere condolences are sent to his charming wife Susan. Nick was interred at Allerton Cemetery on Wednesday 9th March 2022.

Minutes of the Court Meeting held on Saturday 19th March 2022. **At The Freemans Holt, Old Church Street, Aylestone, Leicester**

1) Attendees. Derek Austin (Warden for the South Midlands), Howard Crapper (Oxford), James Dowler (Newcastle under Lyme), John Edwards (Stafford), Alan Fallows (Deputy President / Archivist), Stephen Healy (Newcastle upon Tyne), Lee Hensley (Hon. Secretary), Alan Shelley (Vice President), Trevor Ward (Northampton).

A point of order was put forward by Derek Austin, that the Leicester master should be able to vote in the absence of the Leicester Guild Rep. Alan Fallows replied that if we had been notified in advance, yes he could have voted. We ask all our Guilds to make sure that if they are certifying a vote it is done on letter headed paper. Derek Austin replied that that seemed a bit pedantic, Alan Fallows replied we either do it one way or not at all.

a) The Deputy President welcomed everyone present and explained that he would be chairing the meeting on behalf of the President due to Tom Gibson's ill health.

A moment of silence was held for Nick Johnson — Former Hon. Secretary and Warden of FEW and Leslie Morgan a former Warden of FEW, and Alex Stephenson who had recently passed away, and to remember any others that have passed.

The Deputy President introduced James Dowler to those present, as it was the first Court meeting James has attended since becoming the Guild representative for Newcastle upon Lyme.

2) **Apologies for absence** were received from John Booth (Durham), Stewart Bristow (Lincoln), Andrew Croose (Gloucester), Tom Gibson (President / Hon. Editor), Sue Haigh (Chester), Shane Hales (Rochester), Tony Head (Bridgnorth), Michael Herriot (Berwick), Ron Leek (Alcester & Southwark), Stella Machin (Stafford), Jimmy Mattison (Alnwick), Ralph Mills (Hale), Maxine Taylor (Beverley), Anthony Piddock (Stafford), John Tolley (Altrincham), Lionel Weaver (Montgomery), Stephen White (Treasurer & IPP) Johnathon Wright (Freeminers), Charlotte Yeates (Membership Secretary).

3) The minutes of the Court Meeting held on Saturday 26th June 2021 via Zoom, were approved as a correct record, and were signed by the Deputy President.
Proposed by Alan Shelley, Seconded by Alan Fallows.

4) **Matters arising not on the agenda.**

The only item not on the agenda, was approval from the Court to purchase from FEW funds, a chain for the Presidents Lady's Medallion. As no costings were available at the time, the matter was left in abeyance as it was not a pressing matter.

Derek Austin asked for a clarification, in the minutes that were just approved, it contains the Hon. Membership Secretary's report, in the report the following question had been raised ***if a Guild or Court Leet are not up to date with their subscriptions, whether they had voting rights or not.*** Derek continued, as it is a fundamental principle that if your subscription is not paid up to date, surely your votes are suspended. The report back then mentioned 5 Guilds in arrears and now the latest report mentions six Guilds in arrears and in the AGM report from June of last year it was recorded that we had 38 Guilds and Court Leets as members with 5 in arrears. So taking this new figure of six, the total number of eligible Guilds and Court Leets able to vote should be 32, so for voting purposes later two thirds of 32 is 21. The Deputy President corrected Derek Austin that the latest figure of Guilds in arrears is four, and informed him that the Guilds in arrears would not be named in an open meeting. The Guilds have been contacted and two of the Guilds are in dispute over the arrears as they believe they have paid, and the other two Guilds have not paid and are unlikely to. Unfortunately, we did not receive the report in time before today's meeting to make further contact to see about them being barred from voting. What FEW had done

over the past two years, due to COVID, where so many guilds had not been meeting, we had not chased any guilds for arrears. If they could not meet, then they possibly could not pay their subscriptions. Now that things are starting to get back to normal, and we are in the situation where Guilds are meeting, we will be reinstating the normal rule that anybody in arrears for more than twelve months will be having their membership withdrawn.

Stephen Healy asked the Deputy President, you say you do not disclose which Guilds it is that are in arrears, if we are doing a vote where we are listing the vote by Guild, it must come out.

James Dowler raised a point of order, the Clerk for Newcastle-under-Lyme was not aware they were in arrears, so he (James Dowler) made it a point to get the Clerk to sign a cheque and send it for the membership, as it was remiss of wherever the miscommunication was, James Dowler made sure it was ratified.

Derek Austin asked what the agreed eligible number of Guilds and Court leets that are eligible to vote at today's meeting, is it 34? The Deputy President replied that if we ignored those that are in dispute and took off the Guild that had confirmed they are Associate status because their constitution is not being applied, the number would in fact be 33 Guilds and Court Leets eligible to vote. Derek Austin suggested the Guilds should be known so that the Wardens can go to those Guilds and encourage them to pay their arrears. The Deputy President replied that we could take that viewpoint, but what is the point of the Membership Secretary if they are not chasing subs?

John Edwards asked what had happened with the working group, as far as he was aware it was in operation and that the people were listed, is that still the case? The Deputy President responded that as the following AGM (Sept 2021) it was discovered that the appointment of the working group had been unconstitutionally operated by then President Stephen White. It was then removed from operation, and it was agreed by the Executive that we would have to allow it to be formally proposed at the next Court Meeting, and that the Executive would support that. Alan Fallows had honoured that by formalising a proposal, for the working panel authorisation, which you have all had a letter sent out by email dated the 18th February. Derek Austin asked for clarification on a proposal must go to the Court first, and then to the AGM, this was confirmed by the Deputy President.

Derek continued that the appointment of the working group was listed on the minutes of the last Court Meeting as an agreed working party, so the AGM merely confirmed that, so the working party surely was setup constitutionally? Alan Shelley informed the Court, that there was possibly some confusion that the Court should understand, and that was with the first proposal to be voted on, and that Alan Fallows had informed him that if the proposal should fall there would be no working Party in future. Derek Austin thought that was nonsense as it was proposed and agreed at the last Court Meeting and in the AGM minutes it is written that *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 at the AGM to volunteer to go on the working party if required, so the AGM did in fact confirmed that the working party is constitutional and agreed.

The Deputy President responded, in the minutes of the Court meeting held on June 26th 2021, it says prior to the meeting all Guild representatives had been informed via email of

the Executive decision to propose the formation of a working party to look at the constitution, policies, and procedures. This appointment is now finalised with the core working party confirmed as Stephen Healy, Ian Phillips and Alan Shelley, with others being added. The Deputy President continued, that this was only an announcement, it was not put to the membership to vote on at that meeting, which was unconstitutional. The President or the Executive were not in a position to just make that decision. The Deputy President reiterated that the working party should have been put to the Court for a vote by all the Court members, because it has to be a Court that votes on it and the Court did not. Derek Austin said, I think in the constitution it says the Court can propose a working party, it does not say they have to vote on it. The Deputy President read the following passage out of the constitution, *The Court shall have the power to appoint a panel* and informed those present that the Court did not have the opportunity to appoint the panel at the last Court because they did not have the chance to vote on it.

Stephen Healy reminded the Deputy President that the Executive had a meeting over Zoom with the Wardens to discuss the way forward, and at that meeting, the formation of the working party was decided. this was done under covid conditions as a way of moving things forward. Derek Austin stated that the constitution says the Court has the power to form a panel, it does not say they have to vote on it. The Deputy President replied if you are going to take that line, this Court could propose anything, and then you are saying the rest of the Guilds who are not here would have to accept it, that's not going to happen. Every time there is a proposal for a vote its going to all the Court members. The Deputy President continued that there had been no proposal put forward to the membership, it was just announced by the then President, and then reinforced with either a letter or email from Stephen Healy, stating that the working party had been formally instituted. Which it had not been because it had not been voted upon. Stephen Healy stated that a vote was not needed if the Court has the power to appoint. The Deputy President replied, so you want me to hold a Court meeting where I have half a dozen people and if 4 of those half dozen agree to something, then the other 32 Guilds that are not there, just have to suck it and see. Stephen Healy replied, that if it is a duly constituted Court meeting, which meets the criteria, you have the power to do it. Which could happen today. The Deputy President replied, we instituted the voting in the constitution last time, to make sure we gave due notice of everything that was going to be voted on, was on the agenda, with prior notification so that all Guilds had the opportunity to vote on it. And if you raise something today, what opportunity have other Guilds got to vote on it, as its not on the agenda is it. You are just bringing it to the meeting without it being on the agenda. Stephen Healy responded with, in some cases yes, because the Court has the power constitutionally, and it does not say everything at the Court meeting is subject to a vote. The Deputy President replied, just because it says it may, does not mean to say that it will or can or must. Stephen Healy replied, exactly, that is what is decided by the Court.

Stephen Healy asked why FEW was not represented at the funeral of Nick Johnson, a former Secretary, Warden, and stalwart of this association. The Deputy President responded that he was not notified of any dates, I had heard second hand that he had passed away but had no notification of any funeral arrangements. Alan Shelley took responsibility for not informing a broad enough circle among the Wardens and Executive of the funeral arrangements due to the shock of losing his friend. It was confirmed that

Denise Laver and Howard Crapper (FEW Area Wardens) had gone to the funeral of Leslie Morgan. Stephen Healy had attended the funeral of Nick Johnson, not in any official capacity, but as his friend.

5) Proposal for Working Party Authorisation

Stephen Healy asked for confirmation of when the proposal was actually received by the Secretary, the Deputy President confirmed he sent it to the Secretary on the 19th of February.

There was some discussion on whether this had arrived outside of any specified deadline, however as this proposal is not to change the constitution it does not have to meet the 31-day deadline set out in the constitution. The Deputy President then reminded the Court, that he had setup a contact point with all of the Guild Representatives and tried to ascertain when each Guild has their schedule of meetings during the year to try and make sure they are contacted, prior to that previous meeting, so they have the opportunity to vote. The Secretary had twenty-six votes returned, seventeen Guilds voted against, five Guilds voted for and four abstentions.

The Deputy President confirmed to the Court that the proposal failed to go through. The Deputy President informed the Court that he put that proposal forward for the setting up of the panel. This is what everybody has voted on, therefore that panel is not agreed by the voting Guilds.

Derek Austin stated that the working panel should therefore revert back to the previous discussions, at the previous Court, and the original party should go ahead. The Deputy President replied that the only thing we can do is go forward to the next meeting, you see the constitution says a working panel may be instituted by the Court and that it shall consist of two or more Court members. Court members are Executive officers and Guild representatives, and I can assure you that the Executive will not agree to any proposal that gives a biased or unfair split on that working party. Derek Austin put to the Deputy President that as his proposal failed, he did not have the veto on having a unanimous response from the panel to the Court. The Deputy President replied that the proposal details a reasonable constitution of the working party inline with the constitution. Derek Austin put to the Deputy President that the proposal also said that no proposal from the working party will go back to the Court unless there is unanimous members agreement, which effectively meant you have got a veto as to what the results of the working party discussions were. The Deputy President replied that the Executive always had that facility, nothing is going to go to a Court unless it has been agreed by the Trustees, the Trustees are the Executive per say. If somebody tries to put something through to the Court which is against the interests of the association, its not going to get through the Executive. Derek Austin stated that it does not have to go through the Executive, anybody can propose a motion at Court. The Deputy President insisted that it had to go to the Executive to go on the agenda, so it has to have previous notification. Stephen Healy put to the Deputy President that the working party can put forward their findings to the Secretary and say please enter these on the agenda for the Court meeting. The Deputy President responded, providing the working party has been agreed.

The same argument of the Court shall have the power to appoint a panel was brought up

by Derek Austin, and that this was done at the Court and agreed at the AGM. The Deputy President again stated that the Court did not appoint the working party in March because it was previous to the Court that that panel was instituted by the then President, without being put to the Court. It didn't go to the Court, and it was not authorised by the Court. The Secretary reminded the Court that an email had been sent to the Guild Representatives asking for a reply, if they were against the formation of the working party. It was done in this way because a meeting was not possible due to the Covid 19 pandemic. And only one Guild replied with an objection. The Deputy President asked Stephen Healy for the original composition of the working group, Stephen replied that the members were Alan Shelley, Ian Phillips, and himself.

The Deputy President replied, so you wanted two Wardens and an Executive, who is the senior Warden. This led to a response from Stephen Healy that it was the Deputy President's conclusion, that it would be a biased and would lead to something. John Edwards responded that they were chosen for their expertise. Derek Austin responded that the Executive were invited to put some people forward. The Deputy President responded that he remembered the meeting well when Jim suggested that I (Alan Fallows) should be on it, and he was shouted down. Stephen Healy reminded the Deputy President that he was invited to take part in the first meetings of the working party, which he declined at the last minute, and Stephen White attended and had substantial and positive input into it. The Deputy President replied that he declined because he could not see himself attending a meeting that he was proposing to the Executive had been instituted unconstitutionally. Derek Austin returned to the point that the constitution does not state you need a vote on the powers to appoint a panel, and stated, this is another reason you need a working party to clarify all these items.

The Deputy President asked, how can you assume a Court meeting which has only half a dozen members has the power to appoint something which will dictate to the thirty-six, as it is just not reasonable. Derek Austin replied that the membership was asked about the working party and only one Guild had reservations about it. The Deputy President replied the letter was worded with a double negative, Guilds were given the opportunity to respond if they did not want something, instead of if they did, which is contrary to all normal business practice.

Stephen Healy asked the Deputy President, surely the working party was a positive thing, everybody agreed that it needed looking at, and that was an attempt to move forward, Stephen continued that he found it ironic that the Deputy President had gone into writing stating that the constitution as it was, was sacrosanct and not one single word needed to be changed, that you then came up with a whole raft of proposed changes for it, either it needs changing or it don't, and that was one of the things the working party was going to look at.

The Deputy President informed the Court that in 2010 a complete review of the constitution took place, which every Guild was given the opportunity, over a two-year period, to consult on and approve, and every Guild approved it. Now, all of a sudden, there is something wrong with that, and there are dozens of things that need changing, why?

John Edwards responded that the constitution is now out of date due to a lot of legal requirements such as safeguarding, financial arrangements and discrimination that have all come in since that review.

The Deputy President asked those present at the Court to let him know what is wrong with the constitution, as nobody has informed him of anything. Stephen Healy responded that the initial work of the working party had found nineteen documents missing in terms of standard policies. The Deputy President asked if they were needed for the operation of FEW, as the constitution is specifically written for FEW and its members. He then asked why this had not been passed on to him. Stephen Healy replied because the Deputy President had stamped on the working party, the work never progressed.

The Deputy President replied to the Court, that if something needs changing and they give a good enough reason, it will be changed, but, he has to be convinced that its reasonable, because that original constitution was specifically written, and you Stephen, supported it and congratulated me on it, and it protected the Guilds.

Stephen Healy asked why the working party has to report directly to you, why can it not be allowed to do its work, it pledged as you recall to report regularly to the Executive, it filed two reports on its business and was then shutdown.

James Dowler asked for clarification of the nineteen points that were previously made if it was on the constitution. He was informed by Stephen Healy that it was nineteen documents in terms of policies and procedures that we do not have, such as discrimination, anti-slavery, and equality.

The Deputy President replied that we have already answered the anti-slavery question, however, Stephen Healy reminded the Deputy President that we have a statement, not a policy.

Derek Austin asked The Deputy President, you said why does the constitution need to be changed? So why in that case did you put this proposal forward to radically change the constitution, especially as it contains an illegal statement, namely that if it ceases to be a charity the assets of the association will be equally divided up amongst the members. The Deputy President replied that if the association was no longer a charity it was not illegal. The Deputy President then invited Derek Austin to make a proposal to amend the constitutional proposal that failed earlier in the meeting, (to remove the above statement), Derek declined to make a proposal, but would make a proposal if the original proposal was brought back before the Court for any decision.

The Deputy President brought the meeting back to the original point, which was the proposal for the working party authorisation, and suggested that the members did not want it in the format proposed. Derek Austin replied that the members did not want the format that had been proposed, because the working party had already been agreed at the last Court and AGM.

The Deputy President again invited Derek to make a proposal for the constitution of a working panel that could be taken to the next meeting. Various members replied that there was already a working party constituted at the last Court and AGM, and there was no

point bothering with a new proposal because it would only be stamped on by the Executive. John Edwards confirmed he had only offered to join the working party because Ian Phillips had resigned. Derek Austin said all that was required was two members of the Executive to join the existing two Guild members of the working party. Alan Fallows agreed that he would prefer to have two Guild Reps and two members from the Executive on the working panel. Derek Austin asked Alan Fallows to join the working panel alongside Alan Shelley as the two Executive members. Alan Fallows replied he was not confident that the panel would be impartial with the current members of the working panel. Alan Shelley asked Alan Fallows to explain what he meant by impartial. Stephen Healy asked about confidence and impartiality, he put to Alan Fallows that as far as the working panel had seen, since all of this started, you have stamped on every bit of it, so where is the impartiality in that. Alan Fallows replied that he had not stamped on anything all he had done was enforce the constitution. Stephen Healy replied that Alan Fallows had applied certain interpretations of the constitution, and Alan Fallows reasoning for that in writing, was nobody else understands the constitution because I wrote it. Alan Fallows replied, I accept that was partially true, but apart from the fact that I do understand it because I did write it, and I know why it was written and you know why it was written, you should know as well as I do every nuance of that constitution and why things were written into it.

Stephen Healy replied, can I show you a part that is absolutely ridiculous, I beat James Evans in a vote for Officer without Portfolio last year by about 1000 votes, you then ruled that any proposal had to have a 2/3rds majority to succeed, and that because neither James nor I received 2/3rds majority nobody could be appointed. Now the constitution in respect of that, and I quote 'for a vote to be carried For or Against a clear 2/3rds majority of votes cast must be achieved' now in an election you don't have any votes against they are cast for one or more candidates, Stephen Healy then asked Alan Fallows, what would happen if there is a vote for the President, Secretary, Treasurer where there are multiple candidates and nobody gets a 2/3rds majority, are you going to say the association doesn't have a Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer. Alan Fallows replied that was what he was waiting to see with this year's nominations. Stephen Healy put to Alan Fallows that he was dodging the question and asked, what happens by your interpretation and your application of that voting, if we had an election for the President of two candidates and neither get the 2/3rds majority, does the association then not have a President? Alan Fallows replied, no, what we need to do is to select the candidates beforehand to make sure. Stephen Healy repeated his question to Alan Fallows, who finally replied, its possible.

James Dowler did not understand why the 2/3rds rule was used for nomination votes as it defeats the object.

Derek Austin raised the point that due to only one nomination being received for some positions on the Executive those nominated got the job, yet one of the roles contested the Officer without Portfolio, there was a fundamental problem. I have here the nomination sheet for James Evans that was supplied to all Guilds, and it was not signed by the proposer, it was signed by a seconder and not by a proposer so it was an ineligible nomination and on that basis Stephen Healy should have been elected Officer without Portfolio. Alan Fallows replied he could not comment on that as he was not privy to it.

The Secretary confirmed to the Court that he had received the nomination form without a signature and contacted the proposer who said send it anyway.

Derek Austin believed that Stephen Healy should be the Officer without Portfolio if we are following the principle of the constitution.

Alan Fallows replied, that if you want to follow the principle of the constitution, Stephen Healy cannot be the Officer without Portfolio because he did not poll 2/3rds of the vote. This led to outbursts from the Court that it did not matter as one of the candidates was not eligible. Alan Fallows further replied, we have the same problem again haven't we, you all very happily agreed to the constitution when it was written 10 years ago, nothing has changed, but now all of a sudden, it is a problem because we haven't got enough people who want to come forward as Officers. Alan Shelley replied that he did not think when it was written that the 2/3rds rule would be applied to a vote for a person.

Stephen Healy put to Alan Fallows that he (Alan Fallows) had alluded to this earlier on when mentioning the nuances hidden in the constitution, and what has happened here is that you have applied that to an election. Stephen Healy went on further that if you look at Roberts rules and you look at the English parliamentary equivalent it says that 2/3rds should not be applied to elections, and that is one of the items that would have come up for clarification to remove any ambiguity.

Stephen Healy then reminded Alan Fallows that he had still not answered his original question. All that Alan Fallows had replied was possibly we might not have a President. Stephen again asked, how can the association go forward without a President? Alan Fallows replied with, we must make sure the right people are put forward for the job in the first place, by making sure they have Guild experience.

This led on to a small discussion on how to move forward with the position of Officer without Portfolio, after much debate on the constitution and the nomination process, Derek Austin proposed that a note be added to the minutes that it was brought to the Courts attention that the election for Officer without Portfolio was an invalid election, there is only one valid candidate and that is Stephen Healy. This was Seconded by John Edwards and agreed by the Court members present.

Alan Fallows said that the proposal could not be accepted today, because there were less than 10 people present. So a letter would be sent to the Guilds, asking them to vote on the Proposal made today, to take immediate effect for Stephen Healy to be instituted as Officer without Portfolio interim from now to the AGM on the basis of an incorrect voting form. Stephen Healy was not satisfied that his question regarding the 2/3rds rule had been addressed, even though he had given examples of how that interpretation of the rule would fail spectacularly, such as if at the next election we have multiple candidates, and nobody achieves the 2/3rds majority the position fails. Alan Fallows replied that he was fully expecting that to happen this year and that he was expecting people to liaise and somebody to withdraw to allow somebody a clear run, on the basis of better qualifications for the position.

Alan Shelley felt the most serious outcome of this was the amount of time the panel has lost due to being stopped, with coming forward with proposals that we sorely needed.

Alan Fallows replied that in the 2 years of saying that changes were required no proposals had been brought forward to the Executive. Stephen Healy replied that the proposals had not been put forward because the working party was still working on them when it was told to cease.

6) Proposal of change to the Constitution from The Guild of Freeman of Shrewsbury.

Before voting on the proposal, James Dowler asked for clarification on the status of Newcastle upon Lyme, whether this change would affect their voting rights and change how they are governed. The Deputy President confirmed that this proposal would not affect their Governing document or how they admit freemen into their Guild.

The Secretary had twenty-six votes returned, sixteen Guilds voted against, four Guilds voted for and six abstentions.

The Deputy President confirmed to the Court that the proposal did not achieve the 2/3rds requirement so Failed to go through.

7) President's Report was noted. (Copy Appended)

8) Deputy President's Report was noted. (Copy Appended)

9) Vice President's Report was noted. (Copy Appended)

10) Immediate Past President Report – No report

11) Hon Treasurer's Report – No report

12) Membership Secretary Report (Copy Appended)

Jon Edwards asked if there was a timeline for when the Membership Secretary would get access to the FEW bank account, as in her report it is noted that it was agreed 6 months ago for access to be granted. The Deputy President explained that getting secondary access to the bank account is not a simple request, it is being worked on, it was discussed earlier in a meeting of the Executive to ensure copies of bank statements are sent on the first of the month to the Membership Secretary.

13) Hon. Secretary Report (Copy Appended)

John Edwards noted that there were currently no written guidelines or procedures for this role at present, and thought it was unfair for somebody to be thrust into the role of Secretary with no guidance or procedures. It was pointed out to John, by Alan Fallows, that his was currently being worked on as the Hon Secretary had contacted the Archivist and Editor for guidance. The Hon Secretary explained to the Court that as he had made mistakes with voting in the past, he wanted procedures in place so that when it comes for somebody else to take over, they do not make the same mistakes.

14) Hon. Editor's Report was noted. (Copy Appended)

15) Hon. Archivist's Report (Copy Appended)

Jon Edwards noted that in the Archivist report it is stated that the Archivist proposed Jim Evans for election for Officer without Portfolio, yet we have heard today that it was in fact Stephen White who proposed Jim Evans. The archivist apologized for the mistake he had made, however he was the one who had spoken to Jim initially about the position. Alan Fallows admitted the reason he wanted Jim Evans in the role was because he is the person with the most expertise towards digitizing FEW records, which is what FEW are aiming to do. Stephen Healy was led to believe, from his contacts in Berwick, as Area Warden, that Jim Evans is only the point of contact and that the real expertise lie with the proper archivist that Berwick has been using. It was asked if the archivist from Berwick could

draft an article for the journal explaining what has been done with all the Berwick records, as this would be beneficial to all Guilds.

James Dowler informed the Court that the Newcastle-under-Lyme Guild would be 850 years old next year, and that there would be a medieval reenactment at the Brampton, and all would be invited to take part in the celebrations.

16) Officer without Portfolio Report - No report - Position Vacant

17) Wardens Reports (Copy's Appended)

John Edwards did not understand why there had been a break in the whole process as every Court he had attended in the past 15 years the Wardens had given their reports. Alan Fallows explained that for several years we have been making it perfectly clear that the Wardens reports take up far too much time, and that they had to be curtailed.

Unfortunately, that has been a long slow process to try and get them down to a reasonable length which they still haven't been doing. The one thing Alan Fallows would like to remark on, is that except for very few exceptions, most of the reports contain information about what the Guilds are doing in their areas, that should be sent to the Editor as news from the Guilds, that is not a Warden's report. A Warden's report should be informing the Court what you have done in line with your Warden's duties in the handbook.

Stephen Healy said most of the Guilds in his area, look to their Warden to report on their behalf. Derek Austin confirmed that was the same with the Guilds in his area. Alan Fallows stated that he was more than capable and willing to contact the Guilds for that information, so that FEW can promote them in the Journal. He would like the Wardens to be getting out into the towns that did have Freedom and could still have Freedom and jolly up those that are doing it and are not in contact with FEW and doing the job.

Stephen Healy felt the Guilds prefer talking to the Wardens to find out information rather than reading it in the Journal, and that the Guilds look at the Wardens as a conduit.

Alan Fallows was very disconcerted to see that Durham were having trouble with the sands, as he had worked with them in the past on this. Stephen Healy gave a brief report to the Court on the background to this.

Derek Austin brought to the attention of Alan Fallows in regard to the comment he had made that Guild news should not be reported by the Wardens, that in the handbook the job description point number 10 states *present a report of their activities and the various activities in their area to the AGM and Court meeting*, which is what they are doing.

18) Appointment of Independent Examiners.

In the absence of the Treasurer, Alan Fallows proposed the firm Forrester Boyd to conduct the independent examinations of the FEW accounts. Stephen Healy asked that a statement be added by Forrester Boyd "that there maybe a perceived conflict of interest because of our proximity to the Treasurer with which we work, therefore, our mitigating measures are as follows....."

19) Any Other Business.

James Dowler was unsure when Newcastle-under-Lyme last hosted a Court or AGM for FEW and has shown an interest in hosting a future Court or AGM.

Howard Crapper asked if it was possible to send a donation to Ukraine within the remit of charitable funds, Alan Fallows will refer the request to the Treasurer to see if it is at all

possible.

Stephen Healy asked for clarification on what was now going to happen in terms of the working party, Alan Fallows explained that he was happy for the Executive and Guild reps to independently select candidates to go onto the working party, if agreement can be found there is no reason it can't be put to the AGM, and we can agree today to do that.

This led to a discussion on whether new terms of reference were needed first and how many people were required, Stephen Healy explained how the working party had been working before it was stopped.

Alan Shelley was quite annoyed that for the 2nd time in the meeting Alan Fallows had referred to him as the senior Warden. He explained to the Court that he had the impression that Alan Fallows thinks the Wardens walk all over him (Alan Shelley) and that he had nothing to say and that he did not stop the Wardens saying things, he then invited the Wardens to reply if that was true. Stephen Healy replied, out of everybody in this association bar none, the guy I listen to more than anybody for guidance is Alan Shelley. This was supported by the other Wardens, who are also Guild representatives, present. Stephen Healy asked that the following statement be recorded in the minutes: - The Wardens have expressed absolute faith in the guidance administered by the Vice President. After much discussion, it was agreed that the Guild rep candidates for the working panel would be John Edwards and Stephen Healy, and the Executive candidates would be Alan Shelley and either Stephen White or Alan Fallows, dependent on whether Stephen White was willing to participate. Once this was known Alan Fallows would contact the other members of the panel so terms of reference could be discussed prior to the AGM.

John Edwards read out a letter from the Stafford Guild.

The Hon. Secretary read out a letter received from Angela Priestley-Gibbins.

20) Future Court and AGM venues.

The 2022 Annual General Meeting will be held in Grimsby, Date yet to be announced.

The 2023 Annual General Meeting will be held in Lincoln.

Newcastle under Lyme have expressed an interest in hosting either a Court meeting or an AGM in the near future.

21) Closure of Court.

Having run out of time, the Deputy President closed the meeting.

P.S An enquiry from Capt. Stephen Healy as to why FEW was not represented at the recent funeral of Nick Johnson, ex Secretary, Warden and Member of the Association. Deputy President Alan Fallows replied that he was not that he was not notified of any dates. Alan Shelley initially took responsibility, indicating that he may not have advised the President. This addendum corrects that position, confirming that the President had been made aware of the death of Mr Johnson in writing and that the President had confirmed receipt of the applicable report. While no details of the funeral were available at the time of writing, the matter was not followed up.

Executive Reports.

Presidents report.

Since the AGM in September I have had very little to do as President, apart from writing letters, including those for the Journal, dealing with emails and asking our archivist to ensure our records of the events of the last couple of years are compiled and catalogued for ease of access. This was necessary following a report to us that a complaint had been submitted to the charity commission about the association, although as we did not know the nature of the complaint we needed to be ready to provide any information that may be needed when asked. So far none has been requested, and we have recently been told that the Commission have informed whoever the complainant was that they do not intend to investigate further. In fact apart from hearsay, we have no evidence that a complaint was actually made, but this incident does show the value of ensuring our Archives are as complete as possible for future reference.

I have also created and sent a card to Her Majesty The Queen on behalf of FEW on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of her accession to the throne. Since then my duties have been curtailed following a major operation, which, at the time of writing, has left me housebound during my recovery, which is predicted to take several more weeks. Not the start to my time as President I expected, but we must deal with what life deals us as cheerfully as possible.

My thanks to all of you who have sent me messages and to the members of the executive for their support in this period, especially to Alan Fallows, our Deputy President, for chairing the meetings I am unable to attend as a result, I look forward keenly to being able to return to my duties once recovered.

Deputy Presidents Report.

Due to some serious health issues being suffered by our President I have deputized in conducting the recent Executive Meeting and will continue to cover as and when required. I have continued to develop the regular contact between Executive and Guild Representatives which I instigated after the last AGM. This is now able to give a rapid response to any queries raised by the Guild Members and conversely has enabled the Executive to gain a better understanding of Guilds operations and procedures.

Vice President's Report.

Fraternal Greetings to All. In the light of friendship and courtesy, I trust we can all look forward to a more harmonious year ahead.

May I begin by reporting with great sadness, the passing of our good friend and colleague, Nick Johnson, Warden, and former Hon Secretary of FEW. Nick had been bravely battling with severe illness for some time, although this never prevented his interest in the activities of our Association.

My report is relatively brief as the Covid pandemic has continued to limit much of my actions. The activities of the Area Wardens have likewise been obstructed though we have held several Zoom meetings that provided lively discussions. There unfortunately remains an air of some discontent over certain matters within FEW and its administration. I am conscious that we should make some effort to regain our normal harmony.

In the meantime, I have been directly involved assisting a lady with her application for admission to the Freedom of Ipswich and most importantly with the potential resurrection

of the Ipswich Guild. I have been approached by two guilds who are actively designing apprenticeship schemes to enhance their admissions.

It is of some considerable relief that we are now able to return to something like 'activities as normal' and Covid free operations. The position of Warden for the North remains vacant, and I would particularly like to see that position taken up by a freeman of York. So far there have been no takers.

I have been invited to attend the Civic service at Gloucester Cathedral 6th March 2022. The Dean of Gloucester is to receive the Honorary Freedom of the City and I shall be pleased to attend along with my wife Kathy.

The recent suggestions to shrink FEW, cause me concern in respect of the 'values of our Association'. Removing all costs may appeal to some, particularly as they have not recently been receiving value for money. However, it should be understood that this cheapens the organisation's resources and could lessen the value of membership.

The size and versatility of FEW give it a more powerful voice and protection against any adversary. A low funded Association could result in a negative future. Going forward, FEW requires even greater strength of presence rather than a diminished one.

Membership Secretary Report.

This report is accurate from the end of February, if there have been changes since then they are not included in this report.

Guild/Gild Membership

Guilds that were unable to hold meetings because of Covid have managed to meet and as a result payment and returns of number of members have been made by most Guilds. There are four guilds who have not paid in 2021, one guild 2018, one court leet form 2017.

It was asked in previous report Should Rule 9 be evoked, for guilds/gilds who are behind by more than 2 years? If guilds/gilds have not this year, are they entitled to vote. All guilds/gilds have been written to requesting payment, details, and membership numbers. Four guilds/gilds have not reported their numbers on the annual membership form which is the annual declaration of numbers for the guild/gild signed by the appointed member of the guild.

Individual membership

- There have been three reported deaths
- Two resignations
- We also welcomed one new member.

Covid has produced people with time on their hands and there has been an increase in people wishing to join FEW who are not entitled to do so under the constitution. This has resulted new individual members being asked for proof of validity. The new Individual Membership Application Form which was agreed in principle at the last executive will stop some of these spurious requests.

Useful numbers: in total there are 270 individual members of which 13 are associate members.

New standing orders have been sent to the thirteen members whose standing order forms

in 2020 which for reasons unknown have not been actuated.

The access to the online bank statements has still not occurred this was requested and agreed six months ago. Is there a timeline for when access will be available? This will be more efficient for not only the Hon Treasurer but for The Hon Membership Secretary as well.

Editors Report.

Since the AGM two editions have been produced and distributed. Number 199 was the 40th I have edited and contained reports from the AGM and included an appeal to all Guilds to send in some news for the next edition. The appeal was repeated to Guild reps in one of the letters sent to them by the Deputy President, and there was news from 17 of the Guilds included. The cover was a composition of all member Guild Badges we had on record or sent to me after I contacted the Guild representatives of those we did not have. It is a shame not all Guilds sent news, and I hope it is not an indication that those who didn't are experiencing too many problems following the lock downs. I must thank those who did send articles and/or pictures and particularly thank Derek Austin, Warden for the South Midlands, for providing news from so many Guilds to me. I must also record my thanks to my Daughter, Christine, who is a Freeman of York, for her help in finishing the compilation and distribution of issue 200, following my operation.

Archivists Report

As you will have seen from Journal 200 I have recently provided a report regarding Guilds inadvertently making "honorary members of their Guilds" and listing them as full freemen members within FEW. Members are reminded to take care with this practice as it can be easy to convey an impression that these valuable members of your Guild are actually being awarded the Freedom of your town or city.

I have also given a preliminary opinion regarding the effects of changes to family law and the status of legitimacy regarding the Freedom. This was instigated by a question from a member guild so is likely to re-occur.

As a result of problems last year I was instructed by the President to produce reports on all officers actions over the previous two years. This was to provide clarification in the event of a response being required to a report of discontent made to the Charity Commission. It would appear that the complaint has been dismissed but as a result I have been able to provide full reports of all actions of officers and elections from 2019 and prior, so if any questions are raised this year they can be summarily dealt with.

I had previously proposed Jim Evans from Berwick upon Tweed for election as Officer without Portfolio at the 2021 AGM. This was because of Jims extensive expertise with the digitization of archives and the invaluable help he would have provided towards digitizing our own FEW records, Unfortunately Jim was not elected, however to his credit Jim had begun preparation, in the hope of election, of a brief history of the Freedom and FEW which he continued with regardless. I have been privileged to work with Jim since then in editing his work for inclusion in our journal and website and am now able to report that it is ready for future publication when the editor has space available.

For Jim to have continued with this project after we had both suffered the disappointment of the AGM election shows his dedication to FEW and we should commend him.

Hon. Secretary's Report

Since our last meeting I have mainly been: -

- Producing and sending minutes from the last AGM and Executive meetings and ensuring they arrive with both the Editor and President promptly.
- Sending Executive members prompt reminders on report due dates.
- Gathering and sending reports for review prior to publication.
- Resending documents to Executive members that have requested items.
- Sending merchandise to members when order forms have arrived.
- Liaising with the Membership Secretary and her assistant regarding Membership and the stock items required for new members.
- In contact with the President to discuss Agenda's and supporting any requests he may have.
- Liaising with the Membership Secretary to arrange Zoom Meetings.
- Forwarding Emails to other Executive officers with the necessary experience to deal with queries as they arrive.

In addition to the above, I also contacted the Hon. Archivist for guidance on what items the Hon. Secretary is required to send to the Archives. The Hon. Editor was also contacted to give guidance on what material is needed for the Journal and when.

The sole purpose of this task was to ensure in the coming years, anyone stepping into the role of Hon. Secretary has some guidance, as currently there is no written guidance or procedures for this role or many tasks in FEW.

Wardens Reports

Warden For The North East

Alnwick: Ongoing repairs to damage across various properties resulting from the successive gales have occupied the Freeman of Alnwick over the winter.

Berwick Upon Tweed: Berwick's news highlight was of course the Freeman's opportunity to form a colourful backdrop to Michael Portillo in a recent episode of his 'Great Coastal Railway Journeys' series.

More routine business saw nine new Freeman admitted at the end of last September, of whom seven were Ladies, bringing to some 150 the number of Ladies whom have taken up the Freedom since the change in the related legislation. This represents a continuing healthy and welcome shift in the overall demographic of the membership.

The annual Christmas dance was once again able to be held in early December which was enjoyed by some 80 people.

Everyone is looking forward to a resumption of the annual Riding of the Bounds which, this year, will see many Freeman once again witnessing over one hundred horses riding out on Saturday 30th April.

Plans are underway to run a suitable family event to help mark Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee in June.

The Guild continues to actively support the ongoing work of the Borough Archives, many of which constitute Freeman records, and has recently agreed to sponsor the employment of an Assistant Archivist for a period of three years as he/she is mentored by the longstanding Archivist in advance of her retirement in 2025.

In addition to recent increases made in financial support to resident Freeman, as well as

further funding for local Schools and selected charities, the Guild is also investigating other potential conduits for such support in the foreseeable future. One may well transpire to be funding a complete refurbishment of the Town's War Memorial. The Guild will also shortly be contributing to the cost of replacing many of the Town's Christmas lights destroyed during the recent storms.

Durham: January 2022 saw the sad passing of two of the City of Durham's Freemen: Roger Norris, Gentleman Freeman and Chair of the Freemen Trustees for 20 years between 1995 and 2015, died on 2nd of the month, while David Todd followed on 29th. Since my last report, the issue of the de-registration of the Sands as Public Land has reached its outcome, with the Planning Inspector ruling on Durham County Council's application to have the former coach park at the Sands de-registered as common land. Patrick Conway, Chair of the Durham City Freemen Trustees, stated that, given the overwhelming public opposition to this application, the Freemen are saddened that the protection against further development, afforded by common land status is now about to be removed. He expressed the Freemen's concern that the decision might be used in the future, as a precedent for encroachment on the remaining green space. The Freemen recently held their first Guild Day for two years in Durham Town Hall. The Candlemas ceremony witnessed eight new Freemen admitted to the ranks, in the presence of the Mayor. Work is well under way in planning the Butchers' Company 500 Year Celebrations to take place on the 14th May, the celebrations will include performances from Morris Dancers, Street Entertainers and medieval performers including butchery demonstrations and exhibits from the Guild of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers and Garry Bankhead of Discovery Channels 'River Hunters' fame displaying his River Wear finds. The Freemen's Apprentice of the Year project will see young craftsmen being recognised for their excellent craft skills in a ceremony to be held later in the year. The Charitable Trust are currently working with the City of Durham Parish Council and partner organisations in planning events to also celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

Newcastle Upon Tyne: As Warden for the North East, I recently met with the new Chairman of the Stewards' Committee of the Freemen of Newcastle upon Tyne, in what was an amicable and wide-ranging exchange of views and information.

Warden Report for the North West.

Life in the North West is starting to embrace the "new" normal. As the Warden for the North West I have actively kept in touch with Altrincham, Chester & Hale plus a few individual members.

Last October it was encouraging to attend the Chester Banquet weekend & meet up with Freemen from London, York, Coventry & Altrincham. The warmth of friendship was welcoming.

Throughout these past two years we have all become a great support network, wishing each other well plus grieving for those Freemen lost during this time.

President, Lord Mayor and Provost have all had difficulties in their roles as much has been curtailed but the resilience of the Freemen shone through.

In Chester it was pleasing to hear that last November, the Annual Student Awards were presented by the Guilds to students at Cheshire College South and West was a face to face

event.

In Hale, The Lord Mayor and his Council are working towards rearranging the Annual Court which was postponed in January 2022 because of Covid with a proposed revised date in April. It is to be a smaller event primarily for the Freemen of Hale & Freemen elect. In Chester they are hoping that a Pentice court will take place in April to admit new Freemen.

Members from the Guild of the Freemen of Altrincham have recently met face to face to organise returning to duties. Provost Tony Collier has done a sterling job during the pandemic as well as promoting prostate cancer awareness through his many means of fundraising & media interviews.

A Spring Assize is to be held early May to receive new Freemen & install a new court.

On 10th April there is to be an event entitled "Stop the Clocks" whereby we invite fellow Freemen to join together to celebrate those lives lost during the past two years.

Chester have informed me that their Banquet weekend will be 30/9/2022 to 2/10/2022.

On 23rd March the hands of friendship will reach out on the National day of Reflection - by the sharing of tiles of friendship to start a wall of reflection with fellow Guilds & Courts. Freedom, Faith & Friendship

On a personal note I would like to thank all Freemen from around the country for reaching out to me on the sudden death of my husband Alderman Alan Laver.

Warden for the South Midlands.

As the activities of South Midlands Guilds & Courts Leet were well reported in the excellent FEW Journal 200, to avoid duplication I shall just highlight latest news.

Coventry Freemen's Guild.

At Leicester Gilds invitation, a Coventry contingent joined them in a return 'Skittles & Supper' match on 18th February at Thurlaston. On 29th March a Ladies Night at Coombe Abbey is planned – as we still have no visibility of promoting our events at St Mary's Guildhall due to the overrunning refurbishments. Looking ahead, the Guild AGM is due on the 20th April in the Council Chamber and Banquet on 7th May.

Gild of Leicester Freemen.

Plans for the biannual Leicester Freemen's Garden Party at the Holt on 12th June are now in hand. As the usual Gild's banquet date clashes with the Queens Platinum Jubilee Celebrations, this year it is planned for Saturday 18th June at the new venue of the Leicestershire County Cricket Club. A possible quiz and supper may be arranged for the preceding Friday night at the Holt. Sunday will see the Gild's annual church service at the new venue of St Andrew's church, very near to the Holt.

Northampton Guild of Freemen.

The procession for the Mayor's Civic Service last month included Freemen Trustees carrying the Great Mace, the Civic Sword, and the Borough Staff. It is hoped to hold a Freemans 'get together' on Saturday 9th April at the Conservative Club.

Alcester Court Leet & Court Baron.

After the pandemic stopped play in 2021, this year's 1st March Pancake races down the closed High Street attracted big audiences in the dry weather. Contestants ranged from tots to pub relay teams, and included Court Leet Officers in full regalia – and even a race for

vicars!

Henley-in-Arden Court Leet & Court Baron

The annual Court Leet Dinner will be held in the Guildhall on Thursday 14th April – with High Bailiff Laurence Marshall in the chair. As the Guildhall doesn't have a kitchen, the 'Field kitchen' of Sue Dalby usually supplies excellent fare, to be followed by notable guest speaker Lord Digby Jones.

Warwick Court Leet

The Beer & Cider Festival at the Lord Leycester Hospital on 18th & 19th February was a sell out event, and thanks to sponsors, raised funds for renovation of this medieval venue built as Warwick's Guildhall - a rare survivor of the Great Fire of Warwick in 1694. Another Beer, Cider & Music Festival is planned for July 15th & 16th in Pageant Gardens – to raise funds for local charities.

Warden for the East

Stewart Bristow (President and FEW Representative) very kindly provided an update to the FEW Journal 200 and has forwarded the following words to me (in my capacity as a member of the Committee of the City of Lincoln Freemen's Gild) to be distributed to Lincoln Gild members along with a copy of the Journal 200. I have removed a call out for Committee Members and a request for ideas for celebrating the Queen's Platinum Jubilee! I hope that I will be able to report at the next FEW AGM what The City of Lincoln Freemen's Gild did for the Jubilee and our on-going events on the assumption that we continue to be allowed out.

From Stewart –

“Freemen and Friends,

It is almost March but I hope it is not too late to wish you a Happy New Year, we all hope for continuing improvement in life under the pan endemic and with that in mind I have the health of our members in mind. We have been a little dormant over the last couple of years BUT the majority of our active members are of the vulnerable group of the population we must be sure we can keep all feeling safe and comfortable when we get meeting together again. So I hope we will be able to have a physical AGM this year.

The Gild have been invited to support the Guildhall over the week-end 26/27 March during the Heritage Weekend talking to the visitors about the Freemen of Lincoln.

FEW (Freemen of England and Wales):

The Gild belongs to FEW and many of us are individual members in our own Right. Its aim is to assist and promote the Freedom. Do you have any views on its role and any possible changes you would like to see?

The Freemen were pleased to be invited to the Freedom parade of the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Anglicans on 4th February 2022.”

Lincoln Gild has effectively been dormant over the last two years. Like the FEW Executive Officers, a number of our Committee have found themselves within the vulnerable group and, as a Gild, we have had to suspend many of our activities over the last 2 years to protect our members. As we emerge from the grip of Covid 19 it will be all hands on deck.

Having been appointed Warden for the East in September 2019 I've not had a lot of

opportunity to fulfil this role. As the pandemic restrictions ease I hope that, finally, I will be able to support the other Gilds/Guilds within my area.

I am pleased to report that Alan Shelley has been contacted by a couple of Ipswich Freemen regarding the re-instatement of Investitures for family members. Unfortunately, the Ipswich Guild is struggling for support at the moment and the Rights to claim the Freedom do not have the full support of the current Mayor's Office. The Deputy President, as Archivist, has been included in the correspondence trail and I am counting on the support and knowledge of both the Vice President and Archivist to liaise with Ipswich Council and put forward the benefits of belonging to The Freemen of England and Wales as either Individual members (as outlined in the Constitution – Section 4, Area Wardens, point 5) or through encouraging the revival of the Guild (point 3), something which I would need the support of the Executive to achieve.

The City of Lincoln Freemen's Gild wish to pass on their condolences to the families of Leslie Morgan and Nick Johnson. Nick and Sue came to a number of Lincoln's AGMs. Nick in his capacity of acting Warden for the East. He was an excellent promoter of FEW. He will be missed by the Freemen of Lincoln for his wise words and fabulous photographs.

Warden for the South West

The gilds are being elusive, and like trying to catch haggis never about.

They are still all outstanding their AGM, so unable to move forward in deciding what to do, this is for Wareham, which is a court leet. Given the current situation I've not pushed for a response from them.

Warden for the North Midlands

I am pleased to report that for most of my guilds, things are starting to return to normal after almost two years of restrictions.

Stafford managed to hold their Christmas lunch and the trustees have returned to face-to-face meetings, albeit in the Allotments Community Building, rather than in the Borough Council offices that are still restricted. However, yesterday they gave permission for the Annual Burgesses Meeting, which had been postponed from January, to be held there. This meeting chaired by the Mayor of Stafford and held under the legislation of the 1983 Staffordshire Act, is when the burgesses get the chance to review the work of the trustees and make new appointments.

Derby have been using the time during the restrictions to follow up important documents relating to the city. They have contributed towards the translation of an ancient Market Charter and they followed their AGM with an interesting talk about the outcome. They are also continuing with their innovative collaboration with the London School of Dentistry, who are using an MRI scanner to try to read a historic Freemen's Roll that suffered water damage and could not be unrolled. It is hoped that these state-of-the-art techniques may result in identifying some early information about the Freemen of Derby.

The Freemen of Bridgnorth are also returning to some state of normality after similar cancellations to the rest of us. I was delighted to be invited to their AGM at The Down Inn Bridgnorth, which is followed by a carvery. Regrettably, I shall not be in the area, so I cannot attend, which I hope will not upset the cordial relations with this guild. Bridgnorth, like Stafford, Tamworth, Warwick and others, was established and fortified in the 9th

century by the indomitable Æthelflæd, Lady of the Mercians, against the Danelaw.

I have had no reports from Shrewsbury or Newcastle-under-Lyme.

Regrettably, things have not gone well everywhere, as The Stafford Freeman's Allotments Trust has again been the victim of serious crime. This time they took down a fence to gain access, ripped the doors off two buildings and opened shipping containers with angle grinders, doing £4,000 of damage and stealing some £6,000 of equipment. Despite the miscreants being identified thanks to local social media, the police do not seem to be able to act. Fortunately, the insurance company has been very helpful, but one wonders if it is really worth the effort of dealing with such things as a volunteer.

Notices from the Secretary

The nominations received for Executive Officers, by the Hon. Secretary, before the closing date of May 12th as published in Journal 200 - Spring 2022, are as follows: -

Deputy President - Alan Shelley

Vice President - Alan Shelley

Secretary – Lee Hensley.

Membership Secretary - Charlotte Yeates

Archivist – John Edwards

Officer without Portfolio – Capt. Stephen Healy

A further call for nominations is now being made for the positions of Treasurer and Editor only, and the closing date for these nominations will be 6th August 2022. This will allow time for Guilds to be informed if there are multiple nominations and for ballot papers (if required) to be sent out.

All nomination forms must be accompanied by the following: -

- 1) A statement from the candidate, in not more than 150 words, detailing experience within the Freedom validating the candidate's suitability to fulfil the nominated office.
- 2) A short prospectus from the candidate, in not more than 50 words, detailing his or her aims in furthering the constitutional objectives of F.E.W.
- 3) A short statement by the principal proposer, in not more than 100 words, supporting the suitability of the candidate to serve F.E.W. in the nominated office.

Nomination Forms are available in Journal 200 or via email from the Hon. Secretary. The 2022 Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday 17th September via Zoom.

If you would like to attend, please email the Hon. Secretary who will send the invite and relevant papers to you.

The 2023 Court meeting will take place on the 18th March at Bedern hall, York. More details will be available in the Winter Journal

Directory.

President: Mr. T. Gibson. 79 Tang Hall Lane. York. YO31 0SZ 01904 423153
thomasg624@aol.com

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

Vice President: Alan Shelley. Wycken End, 16 Bournside Road, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire,
GL51 3AH Tel 01242 515739 alan.shelley@ymail.com

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

Hon. Secretary: Lee Hensley 86, Painswick Road, Gloucester, GL4 6PT 07780 680810,
leehensley@btinternet.com

Hon. Treasurer: Stephen. P. White (See IPP above).

Membership Secretary: Charlotte Yeates. 6 Cicester Terrace Moreton in Marsh Gloucestershire
GL56 0HD 01608 650291 cpdc2000@yahoo.co.uk

Hon. Archivist: Alan Fallows.(See Deputy President above)

Officer Without Portfolio: Vacant

Wardens

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

Warden for the North: Vacant

Warden for the The North West: Denise Laver. 07966 449497 altrinchamcourtleet@gmail.com

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

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

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

Warden for Wales: Vacant

Warden for the East: Angela Priestley-Gibbins 192 Grantham Road Lincoln LN5 9RZ
01522 853212 angiepf@hotmail.co.uk

Warden for London and the South East: Vacant

Warden for the South West: Nic Christison wondergeezer@yahoo.co.uk

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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

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