



City of Durham Freemen

Newsletter 2013



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Foreword

Happy New Year. I hope that 2013 is a good year for you, your families and your friends.

Last year certainly lived up to the expectations I outlined on this page in the last newsletter. It has been a very busy year indeed and promises to continue as our membership grows and diversifies and as our links with partner organisations continue to develop.

In 2012 we welcomed our first women freemen into membership, thus changing forever a constitutional and legal situation that has lasted for centuries. We are in no doubt it was both timely and worthwhile. Our involvement with the community took a very important turn in May when arrangements were finalised for our sponsorship of an apprentice joiner with the Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral. This arrangement reflects our traditional roots in promoting trades and skills and reinforces our ancient link with Durham Cathedral. As part of that it was good to meet with the then new Bishop of Durham for the first time. Sadly it may also be the last as he moves on to become Archbishop of Canterbury in which post we wish him well.



Our support for other projects in the community is reported in the community support section of this newsletter.

Links with the Freeman of England and Wales continue to flourish and we appreciate the support that we have received particularly from its president, Alan Fallows, and from Steven Healy, Warden for the North. Joe McElwee (Warden of the Cordwainers' Company) and I represented the City of Durham Freeman at the national AGM held last year in York.

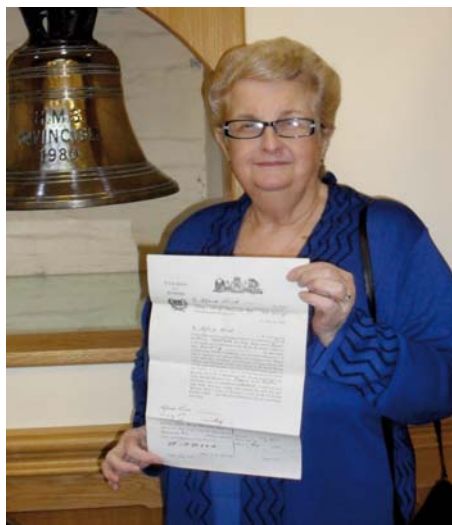
In September we were delighted to welcome the Fellmongers of Richmond to a reception in the guild hall and thank Vera Davidson (Warden of the Drapers' Company) for her work in making the visit so successful and enjoyable.

As chairman I was invited to attend a reception hosted by Trinity House, Newcastle upon Tyne and the annual dinner of the Freeman of Berwick on Tweed, both of which were very enjoyable occasions.

Our Trustees have had a very busy year working with our partner Durham County Council to clarify and cement our shared interest in the Sands area of the city. Many thanks are particularly due to Philip Wills our clerk and receiver who represented us with vigour and flair.

I am pleased to announce that we are making progress with a website for the freemen. A draft site has been set up at www.duramcityfreeman.com by David Atkinson (Warden of the Barbers' Company) to whom we are most grateful.

In January Jim Magee stood down as Warden of the Drapers' Company, a post he held with distinction for many years. A trawl of the members of the guild resulted in the appointment of Mrs Vera Davidson as his successor. Vera was one of the first women to become a freeman in February and is the first woman warden in our history. We wish her well in her role and congratulate her on her appointment.



Vera Davidson – Warden of the Drapers' Company

In December I was advised by Harry Robson that ill-health was forcing him to stand down as Warden of the Plumbers' Company. Harry is working to identify a successor from the guild and would welcome any expressions of interest.

Finally I would draw your attention to the article looking to the future of the freemen. In it I outline some ideas I have for moving forward and would welcome any and all contributions from all freemen, especially in relation to the positions that we are hoping to establish.

John Heslop, Chairman of the Wardens, Warden of the Curriers' Company.

Tel: 0191 386 8264 | Mob: 07792 655031

e: hezza@talktalk.net

We record with sadness:

Dr Wilfred Chapman died aged 96 years on 21 January 2012. Dr Chapman attended the Durham Johnston School and studied medicine at Newcastle-upon-Tyne. He joined the RAF in 1942, served in Australia and thence to Normandy and Germany, and was demobbed in 1946. He succeeded Dr Cuthbert Adamson as the head of the Claypath General Medical Practice in Durham City. He was the kindest of men and a delightful watercolourist. He became a Trustee of the Durham City Freemen in 1988 and enriched our meetings with wisdom, patience and sparkling good humour.

Harold Heron, admitted as a Freeman of the Plumbers Company 8th February 1954, died, aged 79 years, on 27th July 2012. Harold was a loyal attender at guild days. He lived in Mitchell Street in Durham City where he became the only non-student resident.

Diary Dates for 2013

Guild Days

(Commencing at 11.00 a.m.)

The meetings are always on a Monday and begin at 11.00 a.m. Guild days are presided over by the Worshipful Mayor of the City of Durham. All freemen, their families and the general public are most welcome. Calls for new members and subsequent inaugurations take place on Guild Days

- 4 February 2013 (Candlemas)
- 13 May 2013 (May Day)
- 12 August 2013 (Lammas)
- 4 November 2013 (Martinmas)

Meetings of Wardens

(Commencing at 1.00 p.m.)

Wardens meet together in advance of their meetings with trustees (see below) in order to discuss agenda items and other business. The meetings are held in the guild hall, start at 1.00 p.m. and are led by the chairman of the wardens, John Heslop

- 25 January 2013
- 3 May 2013
- 27 September 2013
- 6 December 2013

Meetings of Trustees and Wardens

(Commencing at 2.00 p.m.)

Trustees and wardens meet four times a year. These meetings are also in the guild hall and traditionally take place on a Friday at 2.00 p.m. under the leadership of the chairman of the trustees, Roger Norris.

- 25 January 2013
- 3 May 2013
- 27 September 2013
- 6 December 2013

Member meetings

(Commencing at 6.00 p.m.)

Member meetings are a relatively new innovation arranged in response to freemen who want to have greater awareness of the organisation and play a more active part in its affairs. The meetings are held in the guild hall on a Thursday beginning at 6.00 p.m.

- 17 January 2013
- 18 April 2013
- 12 September 2013
- 21 November 2013

Annual Dinner

The annual dinner of the freemen will be held in the town hall on 26 October 2013.

Wardens & Trustees

on the 1st January 2013

Wardens

If you have any comments, observations or suggestions relating to any aspect of the work and organisation of Durham City Freemen please make contact with the warden of your company who will ensure that the issue is addressed.

Chairman:

John Heslop
Curriers' Company (0191 386 8264)

David Atkinson
Barbers' Company (0191 375 0855)

John Stout
Butchers' Company (0191 386 6517)

Joe McElwee
Cordwainers' Company (0191 373 4394)

Vera Davidson
Drapers' Company (0191 386 4653)

Robert Brown
Joiners' Company (0191 377 2271)

John Atkinson
Masons' Company (0191 384 4946)

Harry Robson
Plumbers Company (0191 386 6017)



(John Atkinson, Warden of the Masons' Company)

Trustees

The activity and business of Durham City Freemen is overseen by the trustees.

Chairman:

R. C. Norris Esq.

Clerk and Receiver:

P. Wills Esq.

Treasurer:

S. Atkin Esq.

P. Bramwell Esq.

P. Conway Esq. OBE

N. T. Hart Esq.

G. R. Oliver Esq.

M. Proud Esq.

A Ribchester Esq MBE



(Roger Norris – Chair of Trustees)



(Philip Wills – Clerk and Receiver)



(Stewart Atkin - Treasurer)

Membership Information

Candlemas Guild Day - 6 February 2012

At the Candlemas Guild Day on 6 February 2012 the history of the Freemen of Durham City was changed forever when 19 new freemen were awarded the Freedom of the City. What was particularly significant was that 17 of the third call candidates were women and became the first ever female freemen to be admitted into what had been an all-male preserve for almost seven centuries.

The event was something that the wardens and trustees had been working towards for years but had been held back by legislation. Two years ago a ballot of the freemen overwhelmingly backed proposals to amend admissions criteria to give equal rights to women. The decision ran into a legal hitch in the summer of 2011, but the Government advised that equality legislation, introduced in 2010, effectively set aside earlier laws excluding women from the guilds and companies which are believed to date back to 1327.



The day attracted local and national attention in the press and the media and was attended by Roberta Blackman-Wood, our local MP and Alan Fallows, the President of the Freemen of England and Wales. The admission of women to the freemen was not only a very happy occasion but also a momentous milestone in our history and one which will undoubtedly change us for the better.

Criteria for membership of the City of Durham Freemen

Guild Servitude

Applicants must have completed service in an apprenticeship of at least three years duration with an employer who is a Freeman of the City of Durham in a recognised trade, or equivalent trained employment status deemed satisfactory to the Wardens of the Durham City Freemen.

Durham Servitude

Applicants must have completed service in an apprenticeship of at least three years duration in a recognised trade, or equivalent trained employment status deemed satisfactory to the Wardens of the Durham City Freemen, in one or more trades within the Durham City boundary whether or not such trade is the trade of an extant guild.

Hereditary Freedom

Applicants must be the son or daughter of a freeman of the city.

Customary Freedom

Men and women who have reached the age of 18, who are not otherwise qualified in accordance with the criteria above, may be admitted as freemen in accordance with past precedent established through custom and practice and approved by the wardens.

Honorary Freedom

Durham County Council can confer Honorary Freedom to individuals that it considers to be worthy. The Honorary Freedom is separate and distinct from the freedom overseen by Wardens and Trustees of the City of Durham Freemen.

Anyone wishing to become a freeman should contact the warden of the appropriate company or the chairman of the wardens. All applicants should be able to provide sufficient documentary evidence of entitlement for consideration by the wardens of the guilds meeting collectively. The decision of the wardens in respect of any claim to freedom of the city shall be final.

Because of the increased numbers of applicants and associated cost implications, the wardens and trustees have agreed with a suggestion from members that a small fee should be charged for processing applications. This has been set at £20.00 and will be payable on application by applicants who have not yet had a first call.

Annual Distribution

In-district freemen members (who live within the traditional administrative boundaries of the city) are eligible to receive an annual distribution from freemen income. In 2013 this will be paid out at the Martinmas Guild Day on 4 November 2013.

New Freemen admitted to the Freedom during 2012

On the first day of January 2013 there were 200 Freemen of the City of Durham more or less equally divided between those who are in-district and those who are ex-district members.

Thirty eight new members were sworn in during the year. Of these 30 are women who we were able to accept into the freedom for the first time during 2012.



The following applicants had their third and final calls during 2012 and were made Freemen of the City of Durham.

Candlemas Guild Day - 6 February 2012

Barbara Charney	Company of Curriers
Karen Crawford	Company of Curriers
Charlotte Crawford	Company of Curriers
Sandra Heslop	Company of Curriers
Kate Luther	Company of Curriers
Laura Provett	Company of Curriers
Mary Hayes	Company of Drapers
Adele Smith	Company of Drapers
Dorothy Snowball	Company of Drapers
Robert Clarkson	Company of Joiners
Christopher Fenwick	Company of Joiners
Lynne Swann	Company of Joiners
Ann Thurlow	Company of Joiners
Vera Davidson	Company of Masons
Ann Mallen	Company of Masons
Beverley Renwick	Company of Masons
Amy Wesencraft	Company of Masons
Alison McDonough	Company of Plumbers
Katherine Wortley	Company of Plumbers



May Day Guild Day - 14 May 2012

Alex Milbourne	Company of Drapers
Dean Brown	Company of Joiners
Theresa Ford	Company of Joiners
Irene Bryden	Company of Joiners
Pat Billsborrow	Company of Plumbers

Lammas Guild Day - 13 August 2012

Pamela Angus	Company of Drapers
Catriona Jackson	Company of Drapers
Barbara Samuel	Company of Drapers

Martinmas Guild Day - 7 November 2011

Joyce Handy	Company of Barbers
Judith Nightingale	Company of Barbers
Barry Joicey	Company of Cordwainers
Gillian Brookes	Company of Drapers
Barbara J Scott	Company of Drapers
Kathleen Vasey	Company of Drapers
Peter Gilroy	Company of Joiners
Claire Wigham	Company of Joiners
Darren J Browell	Company of Masons
Martin E Browell	Company of Masons
Patricia Allan	Company of Plumbers

Applications for Membership Received During 2012

At the May Day and Lammas Guild Days, first and second calls were made without objection for:

Susan Lyle Company of Drapers
(Third call deferred until Candlemas Guild Day 2013)

At the Martinmas (2011) and Candlemas Guild Days, first and second calls were made without objection for:

Rev Joan Donkin Company of Joiners
(Third calls were deferred until Candlemas Guild Day 2013)

At the Lammas and Martinmas Guild Days, first and second calls were made without objection for:

Heather Forster Company of Butchers
Jonathon P Forster Company of Butchers
June MacKay Company of Drapers
Eric Bulmer Company of Plumbers

Subject to there being no objections at the third call these applicants will be granted the freedom at the Candlemas Guild Day on 4 February 2013.

At the Martinmas Guild Day, first calls were made without objection for:

Joanne Vest Company of Drapers
Alexander L Fenwick Company of Joiners
Amanda J Fenwick Company of Joiners

Second calls for these applicants will be made at the Candlemas Guild Day on 4 Feb 2013. Third and final calls will be made at the May Day Guild Day on 13 May 2013. Subject to there being no objections raised they will then be granted the freedom.

First and second calls were made without objection during 2012 for:

Tony Raybole Company of Cordwainers

Because of other commitments this application is held in abeyance. Third and final call will be made in due course. Subject to there being no objections raised he will then be granted the freedom.

At the time of writing a further nine applications have been received and should move through to first call at the Candlemas Guild Day on 4 February 2013.



A day to remember for new Freemen and their families.

Meetings of Members

During the year we have fixed dates for guild days and for the annual dinner which are outlined in the newsletter. We also have a programme of meetings for freemen over the year. It is hoped that these meetings could lead to

- Greater opportunities for freemen to contribute to and learn about the business and affairs of the organisation
- A more inclusive ethos
- An enhanced public profile
- Activities with which freemen can become involved

Four meetings were arranged during the year each taking place on a Thursday evening at 6.00 p.m. in the guild hall. Members who attended felt that the meetings were useful and informative. They also gave members the opportunity to comment on outcomes from meetings of the wardens and trustees and to contribute to future agendas.

In order to facilitate this dialogue with wardens and trustees a further four meetings have been scheduled in 2013 (please see diary dates). Each meeting will be held shortly before a scheduled meeting of wardens and trustees in order that the views of freemen can be represented in that forum. It is hoped that as many members as possible will take advantage of the member meetings which are scheduled during early evening in order to maximize access to all members.

Visit by Fellmongers of Richmond

On 23 September 2012 we were visited by the Fellmongers of Richmond.

Like ourselves the Fellmongers of Richmond are an ancient Company of Freemen committed to the oversight of their specialist crafts and skills. Fellmongers are traditionally dealers in hides and skins, particularly sheepskins. Their influence extended beyond their trade however. As in many towns the Freemen had considerable civic interests and political influence.



*Master Fellmonger
Linda Drury*

The group led by Master Fellmonger, Linda Drury, shared a very pleasant afternoon with us discussing out respective traditions and having a guided tour of the town hall and the guild hall.

Our thanks go to Jen Straughan and her staff at the town hall for their cooperation and to Vera Davidson who organised the event on our behalf.

Annual Dinner

Our annual dinner was held on 13 October 2012 in the town hall and was another most enjoyable evening. The dinner is organised



every year by our Chairman of Trustees, Roger Norris, to whom we all owe a great debt of gratitude. We are

also thankful for the help and support of all of the town hall staff and our caterers T&I Bell.

Our special guest this year was The Very Reverend Michael Sadgrove and his wife Jenny.

Michael is Dean of Durham and is the principal dignitary, after the bishop, of the cathedral. On behalf of the cathedral chapter he directs the life and work that goes on there.

We were also joined by The Worshipful Mayor of Durham City, John Wilkinson and his wife, the Mayoress, Cynthia Wilkinson.

Stephen Healy and his wife Diane represented the Freemen of England and Wales and freemen from the city, the region and across the country were also in attendance.



Community Activity

One of the objectives of the freemen is to support local enterprise and good work.

During this year we have been delighted to continue support in the community.

Joe McElwee has a lead responsibility for our involvement with community projects. He reports: "In particular we are pleased that the major projects we have supported over the year take us back to the very roots of our existence when one of the primary concerns of the ancient trade companies was the promotion of skill and craft and the maintenance of high standards of workmanship throughout the city."

Funding by the freemen will be considered for projects which:

- 1 Promote trades, crafts and vocational initiatives
- 2 Promote Durham City
- 3 Are geographically within the traditional administrative boundaries of the city
- 4 Are related to issues of particular need

If members are aware of any organisation or project that it might be appropriate for us to support please get in touch with Joe McElwee, Stewart Atkin or John Heslop.

Durham Cathedral

After some months of negotiation, we were particularly pleased to sponsor an apprentice joiner employed by the Dean and Chapter at the cathedral.

Local teenager, Peter Bennett started his apprenticeship early in 2012 and is now working alongside the cathedral's two experienced joiners, Tony Swallow and Terry Orton. Tony served his apprenticeship at the cathedral and has worked there for the whole of his professional career.



Ian Wilmsburst (Currier) *Joe McElwee (Cordwainer)*
Peter Bennett (Apprentice)

As well as receiving guidance and mentoring from the cathedral's experienced joinery team, he is receiving formal training at New College, Durham. Peter is from West Rainton, and has always enjoyed working with wood. The post is also being supported by The County Durham Apprenticeship Programme funded by Durham County Council and the Coalfields Regeneration Trust (CRT).

The Right Reverend Justin Welby, Bishop of Durham, said: "Apprenticeships are a way of enabling employers to train and give hope to young people. In the current tough economic climate it is important to create such opportunities as young people strive to move from formal education at school into the world of work. There are too few opportunities available, and it can be equally difficult for potential employers to find the resources to create such posts. The freemen and the county council are, by their support of Durham Cathedral, an example of what is possible."

This project takes the freemen back to our trade and craft roots. We hope that when the apprentice has served his time as a joiner he will become a freeman by right of servitude and join the Company of Carpenters, Joiners, Wheelwrights, Sawyers and Coopers, which was established in 1661. Our thanks go to Joe McElwee (Warden of the Cordwainers' Company) for his perseverance in arranging this funding.

Restoration of St Giles

In 2012 the well-known parish church of St Giles, a Grade 1 listed building, celebrated the 900th anniversary of its consecration in June, 1112.

As part of the celebrations, an appeal was launched to refurbish and restore the statue of St Giles above the entrance to the church and the coats of arms alongside it. The statue of the saint, a 7th century hermit in southern France and the patron saint of healing, was erected in 1876.

At the end of the Second World War it was given a coating of plastic-type paint in a bid to help protect it from the elements. Despite this the years had taken their toll and work was necessary.

The freemen agreed to fund the professional restoration of the crumbling four-foot high statue which stands 14 feet above the main entrance of the church in Gilesgate. The work was carried out by Annie Holdsworth, from Wolsingham.



(Photograph courtesy of The Northern Echo)

Before the saint's overhaul the war-time paint was removed and the eroded parts of his mitre and facial features restored. A missing stone crozier was replaced with a wooden one and two colourful coats of arms alongside were also returned to their former glory.

It is good to report the patron saint of healing has made a full recovery after undergoing major surgery in an operation funded by the City of Durham Freemen.

St Margaret's Centre

We were attracted by an appeal by St Margaret's Centre for funding to continue structural improvements to the old school building in which it is based.

The centre houses an ecumenical project supporting people with mental health problems and includes a training workshop for people recovering from mental health illness. It was established 21 years ago and now offers training and work therapy in woodwork, craft, kitchen and cooking skills and garden experience (the centre has an allotment) as well as computing and office skills.

The centre currently has a team of six volunteers who have provided support and training to hundreds of attendees over the past two decades. It aims to develop a therapeutic work setting which will motivate people to regain confidence and self-esteem, enabling them to return to open employment or go on to further training. The ultimate success rate depends on the capability and progression rate of each individual.

The centre operates in the former St Margaret's Primary School and a lot of work has gone towards making the building better suited to its range of activities.

The centre will use funding from the freemen to underpin the third and final phase of a £100,000 programme of restoration and improvements to the premises in Margery Lane.



The freemen were pleased to welcome the centre's manager, Rob Chatwin and development manager Howard Nicholson to our Martinmas Guild Day in November to describe the fabulous work that they do and outline their aspirations for the future.

St Cuthbert's Hospice

During 2011 we sponsored Richard Langdon in his fund raising attempt to climb Mount Kilimanjaro. We are thrilled to report that not only did Richard succeed in climbing the mountain, he also raised £15,000 in sponsorship for St Cuthbert's Hospice on the outskirts of the city. A brief account of Richard's trip is published elsewhere in this newsletter.

Mayor's Charity Appeal



Each year at our annual dinner we have been able to present a cheque to the Worshipful Mayor of the City in support of the Mayor's Charity Appeal. At this year's dinner we were able to present the current incumbent, County Councillor John Wilkinson, with a cheque to support his nominated charities which are:

1 Heel and Toe

Heel and Toe offer therapeutic support to children with cerebral palsy, dyspraxia or any other motor disorder.

2 Blind Life in Durham

This project is managed by a committee of visually impaired volunteers to help and support the blind and partially sighted in the community.

Mount Kilimanjaro

RETIRED solicitor Richard Langdon met the challenge of climbing to the summit of Africa's Mount Kilimanjaro head-on - and came down with his temple swathed in a large bandage but thousands of pounds richer.

Fundraising for 66-year-old Richard's equatorial trek to the iconic peak was launched in 2011 and the City of Durham Freeman were among the first donors, stepping forward with a £5,000 cheque.

The 45-mile hike through rainforest and desert to the mountain's 19,000 foot summit was completed last October with his success putting more than £15,000 into the coffers of the city's St Cuthbert's Hospice where he is company secretary.

For Richard, a self-confessed novice, all the usual risks of high altitude applied, including the additional threat of diarrhoea, sickness, dizziness, hallucinations, hypothermia, and severe headaches. There were also high temperatures during the approach as well as snow, ice and sub-zero temperatures at the top. But despite the many challenges he would have escaped with only a sore big toe had he not fallen during the final day of the descent and cut the side of his head on rocks.

In a diary covering the eleven-day adventure, Richard's final push for the summit, which had started in darkness, describes the start of sunrise and sight of the curvature of the earth: "The altitude was becoming too much....There were frequent stops yet we were only walking at about a quarter of a mile an hour.... Simply speak to someone and you are out of breath.... At the top we wanted photographs but it was too cold to take gloves off.... I was so tired it required too much effort to take my rucksack off and get my camera out. ...I spotted someone with his gloves off and I got him to take a picture on my iPhone," he reported.

In addition to a detailed description of the six-day climb Richard's journal also offers an outline of time he and his team spent working to re-decorate an orphanage before setting off for the mountain.

The full diary is available on: www.stcuthbertshospice.com/fundraisingevents/MtKili.aspx



(Photograph courtesy of Northern Echo)

Looking to the Future



I became a warden (Curriers) with the freemen in 2004 and took over as Chairman of the Wardens in 2006. At that time membership was dwindling and there was a real danger that the organisation could

stagnate and perish. We seemed to have little purpose other than a ceremonial one and members were limited in what they could become involved with.

There could be no doubting our illustrious past but to survive we needed (and continue to need) a present and a future that has purpose, substance and relevance. Wardens and trustees have begun to address this, principally by increasing membership, raising our public profile and modernising our outlook. I am delighted our efforts have resulted in considerable growth as an organisation in recent years. I list some of the areas where we have made quite dramatic progress:

- Membership Numbers Doubled
- Women Members
- Member Meetings
- Increased Funding
- Charitable Giving
- Newsletter
- Press Coverage
- Enhanced Links with The Freemen of England and Wales
- Links with Other Guilds

I am sure the list is neither complete nor comprehensive, but does illustrate that as an organisation we are now much busier and more involved than we have been for some time.

Sadly growth and complexity bring challenges to organisations as well as vigour. In addition to the increased administrative load that flows from increased membership, we have experienced a significant rise in the number of technical, administrative and legal issues that we have to deal with. This has been further complicated by changes to legislation and local government structures.

I feel we have now arrived at a point where we need to pause and take stock of where we are and where we have come from. Evolution and growth are essential to the well-being of an organisation but so too is the need to be aware of what we are about in changed circumstances and to ensure we are in a position to manage the changes we have introduced. We need to take stock, consolidate the progress we have made and plan for the future.

To do that, we need to examine the way that we manage our affairs. Tradition, custom and practice no longer automatically provide the mechanisms we need if we are to have a future in the modern world with the purpose, substance and relevance referred to earlier.

Freemen who have joined us in recent months have been thrilled to be part of such an ancient organisation and to maintain links with family and trade. A number of our new members, however, have asked what there is to become involved with and how they can participate in the activities of the organisation.

I am bound to say close examination reveals that apart from our ceremonial function and management of our administrative affairs we have little of substance for members to access or to take part in. I have tried to make the organisation more inclusive and accessible where members can participate and contribute in a meaningful way. The establishment of “member meetings” was a sincere gesture to this notion, in the hope freemen would be able to meet, share ideas, information, and have greater opportunities to take an active part in the organisation they joined.

I think it is fair to say that those who have attended “member meetings” have found them both interesting and valuable. Certainly I have welcomed the input of members into issues that are of concern to wardens and trustees. It would be naïve however to claim these meetings have been well supported as numbers attending represent only a small proportion of our membership.

The visits to and from the Newcastle Freemen, the visit by the Worshipful Company of Lightmongers and the link with the Fellmongers of Richmond are also testament to our recent growth. I have also tried to ensure that every guild day has a point of interest such as a speaker or an event to enrich the occasion in addition to the ceremonial admission of members.

The funding and support of local community projects and events has been a central plank of our development over recent years and has raised both the profile and the relevance of the freemen immeasurably. More on this can be found elsewhere in the newsletter.

Supportive links with the press and media have also helped nurture the image of the freemen in the local and regional consciousness. Our thanks go to George Oliver (Trustee) for his significant role in this.

The annual dinner continues to be the most significant social event that we offer and our grateful thanks must be offered to Roger Norris who single-handedly plans, organises and delivers that occasion each year.

And that is the rub!

If we are to move forward and have a dynamic organisation we need a more corporate approach to our management and planning. Our trustees do a splendid job in managing the affairs of the freemen for which the wardens and I are deeply grateful. It is not their role, however, to manage or schedule our activities, our programme or our links with the community in which we are embedded. That is quite rightly the business of the freemen - us!

To this end I believe that through member meetings and other avenues, we need to explore and develop more corporate management arrangements, with wardens and freemen taking on greater responsibility for specific issues and activities. Wardens are officers of the organisation and need to be taking a lead in our affairs. Similarly, freemen who want to become active and involved should be encouraged to do so and be given the opportunity to contribute. A team approach is essential if ownership of the freemen is to be a reality for us all and we are to have a meaningful role in the 21st century.

I am happy to lead this process but in order to do so I must free up time and opportunity currently taken up by issues that could be done by others. In the first instance I would welcome any offers from freemen to take responsibility for

- 1 Membership Issues and
- 2 Information to Members

I would be happy to discuss what is involved with anyone who feels they may be able to help.

I would also welcome any and all suggestions that can be offered from freemen in response to the issues raised through this article, especially offers to contribute to and organise activities and to actively participate in our development. We need to have active involvement of freemen if we are to

- Make the Freemen of Durham City a more inclusive and accessible organisation
- Begin to address the issues associated with succession (what happens when we pop our clogs!)
- Help the process of taking stock and consolidating the progress we have made
- Free up some of my time and enable me to focus on issues for the future
- Increase the opportunity for wardens to engage with their guild members (an issue which has been a bone of contention at member meetings)
- Broaden our baseline for future development
- Create an organisation that has substance, purpose and relevance in today's world

Please get back to me on this.

Best wishes, John Heslop.

