



City of Durham Freemen

Newsletter 2011



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Chairman's Foreword

Happy New Year

2010 was a year that might be compared to a swan.

The organisation glided serenely through the year while beneath the surface there has been frantic activity to maintain and preserve our rights and to clarify our membership entitlement.



Throughout the year we have continued to wrestle with the issue of overhauling the membership of the organisation following the facilitation of change provided by the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act. Sadly the Act has created more heat than light. I address the current situation later in the newsletter.

In addition, because of changes in the legislation related to land registration we have been in lengthy dialogue with the Land Registry to protect our legal interest in the properties with which we have been traditionally associated.

We have continued to support and fund activities in the community and see this as one of our key functions. If any Freeman has any suggestions concerning ventures that we might become involved with please get in touch.

The Freeman mourned the deaths of Trustee John Cole and Warden of the Plumbers' Company, Ed Coldicott during 2010.

The centuries old traditional use of the Sands for Fairs and Circuses was maintained over the year. An even more ancient tradition was resurrected at the sands when the Mystery Plays took place in May.

Our links with the Freeman of England and Wales continue to grow in strength. The Warden for the North, Stephen Healey has attended one of our Guild Days and has been a regular guest at our Annual Dinner. On this occasion we were also pleased that the new president of FEW was able to join us.

We are looking at ways of improving the organisation of Guild Days in order to make the event more memorable for new Freeman and to accommodate greater numbers being "called" as and when our membership criteria are revised.

I have also been asked to explore more activities for Freeman beyond the Guild Days and Dinner which have become established as the fixed points of the year. I would welcome any and all suggestions and ideas that would make the organisation more inclusive and more vibrant for all Freeman and which would raise our profile in the 21st Century.

Please get in touch.

John Heslop - Chairman of the Wardens

Tel: 0191 3868264 Mob: 07792 655031 e: hezza@talktalk.net

Diary Dates for 2011

Guild Days during 2011 will be held in the Guild Hall on the dates below. The meetings begin at 11.00 a.m. and are presided over by the Worshipful Mayor of the City of Durham. All Freemen, their families and the general public are most welcome.

Candlemas	7 February 2011
May Day	9 May 2011
Lammas	1 August 2011
Martinmas	7 November 2011

Meetings of Trustees and Wardens are also held in the Guild Hall commencing at 2.00 p.m and Chaired by the Chairman of the Trustees, Roger Norris.

28 January 2011
6 May 2011
30 September 2011
2 December 2011

The Annual Dinner of the Freemen will be held in the Town Hall on 15 October 2011.



Wardens and Trustees on the 1st January 2011

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.

Trustees

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

Chairman:	R. C. Norris, Esq.	(0191 384 2949)
Clerk and Receiver:	P. Wills, Esq.	(01388 603 073)
Treasurer	S. Atkin, Esq.	(0191 523 8918)
	G. Oliver, Esq.	(0191 386 7471)
	P. Conway, Esq.	(0191 386 8216)
	Dr. W. E. Chapman	(0191 3722 885)
	N. T. Hart, Esq.	(0191 384 0840)
	M. Proud, Esq.	(0191 386 7615)
	P Bramwell, Esq.	(0191 386 8066)

We salute the services of Colonel Ray Hirst MBE DL who has relinquished his position as a Trustee after many years of very helpful service and of Alan Atkinson who has had to stand down because of work commitments.

We have been fortunate in securing the services of George Oliver and Patrick Conway as new Trustees to the Freemen.

Wardens

Chairman:	John Heslop	Curriers' Company (0191 3868264)
	David Atkinson	Barbers' Company
	John Stout	Butchers' Company (0191 3866517)
	Joe McElwee	Cordwainers' Company (0191 3734394)
	James McGee	Drapers' Company (0191 3045203)
	Robert Brown	Joiners' Company (0191 3772271)
	John Atkinson	Masons' Company (0191 3844946)
	Harry Robson	Plumbers' Company (0191 3866017)

Harry Robson has become the new Warden of the Plumbers' Company following the death of Ed Coldicott. David Atkinson has taken the helm as Warden of the Barbers' Company following the resignation of his cousin Alan Atkinson.

New Freeman - Guild Days 2010

Eleven new Freeman were sworn into the Freedom during 2010. All are most welcome.

Candlemas Guild Day – 1 February 2010

Guy Forster	Company of Butchers
Stephen Forster	Company of Butchers

May Day Guild Day – 10 May 2010

Kevin Lee Coxon	Company of Barbers
Kris Heslop	Company of Curriers
Richard Luther	Company of Curriers

Martinmas Guild Day – 8 November 2010

Adam Heron	Company of Plumbers
Benjamin Calvert Lee	Company of Drapers
Christopher P Clarkson	Company of Joiners
Jonathon Lee	Company of Drapers
Peter JH Tindale	Company of Masons
Steven Clarkson	Company of Joiners

In addition a First call was made at the Martinmas Guild Day for Kieran Atkinson.

Trustees and Wardens have agreed that Mr Mike McMinn should be made a Gentleman Freeman of the City. Mike was a Trustee of the Freeman for a number of years and served us with distinction as Treasurer. He will be installed at the Candlemas Guild Day on 7 February 2011.

Finance

Currently my hardest task is to ensure the Freeman's funds earn the best rate of interest possible. Unfortunately, the rates paid to businesses (yes we are treated as a business) are only a fraction of what personal savers can get; and no such thing as an ISA is available to us. So 3 times a year I am scouring the comparison websites looking for the best offerings and over the past year we have ended up earning less than 2% before tax!

The flip side though is the enormous satisfaction the Freeman can get by supporting local organisations such as St Cuthbert's Hospice. In addition, the prospect of helping young apprentices learn a trade really does take the Freeman back to their roots.

Annual Distribution

The traditional distribution from our funds to Freeman living within the boundary of Durham City was made in November at the Martinmas Guild Day. The level of payment was £40.00 per member.

As indicated in earlier newsletters our Trustees advise us that each recipient of the distribution should sign a declaration that they will be responsible for any tax liabilities associated with the payment in order that the Freeman are not deemed to be employers or liable for deduction of tax at source.

The 2011 distribution will take place at the Martinmas Guild Day on 7 November 2011.



Stewart Atkin
Honorary Treasurer

Freemen's interests in the Sands

The Trustees have been actively pursuing the registration of the Freeman's rights at the Land Registry. This needs to be achieved by 13th October 2013 so that the rights are binding on any transfer of the land.



Unfortunately, the issue is far from straightforward. In common with the experience of other Guilds we have found that the Land Registry seems reluctant to register grazing rights because these rights may also be registered as Commons. We have been in close communication with the Freeman of Sudbury over the past year because their situation is very similar.

This is a specialist and somewhat obscure area of the law and there are few experts on these ancient rights. The County Council has now registered the freehold interest to The Sands and is supporting our efforts to register the Freeman's rights and it is anticipated that there will be a meeting with the Land Registry staff before long. However, in the meantime the Trustees and Wardens have agreed that the services of a specialist consultant in Land Registration be approached to assist and discussions have already begun the next steps. We hope to have more substantive news to report in the next newsletter. In the meantime the Freeman are particularly grateful to the dedication and assistance of Mr Norman Hart, in his capacity as a Trustee who has been instrumental in steering a way through the complexity of Land Registration.

Philip Wills
Clerk and Receiver

Chairman of the Trustees

Town Hall History

David Butler has contributed a fascinating article to the February 2010 *Durham County Local History Society Journal* 75, pages 38-72 : “*The Chief Ornament of his native City*” : *William Henderson and building of Durham’s Town Hall, 1848-*



1851. David explains the planning of the new Town Hall by the original committee of Mark Story, John Forster and William Henderson, the relationship with the building of the New Markets, the appointment and briefing of the architect Philip Charles Hardwick and his provision of the numerous historical allusions in the decoration of all the new buildings.. Copies of the *Journal* can be obtained from Dr John Banham, Hon.Sec. DCLHS, 21 St Mary’s Grove, Tudhoe Village DL16 6LR @ £5 plus p+p.

Market Place Saga

The handsome equestrian statue of the 3rd Marquess of Londonderry, having been removed from the Market Place on Wednesday 28th October 2009, has now been returned with an unwonted black finish to a new location at the head of Silver Street. The 18th century statue of Neptune, emblematic of water supply, only recently restored to the Market Place in 1991, has gone, we hope to be brought back. The story of the current trials and travails of the Market Place is expertly told by the esteemed Secretary of the City of Durham Trust, Dr Douglas Pocock, in *The unmaking of Durham Market Place* published in September 2010 and obtainable from the Trust at its registered office at c/o BHP, Kepier House, Durham DH1 1TW @ £3.50 plus p+p. RCN

Roger Norris
Chairman of the Trustees

Membership

Members may remember that at the beginning of 2010 we conducted a Ballot of members to seek authority to change our membership criteria.

The resolution that members voted on sought to do 3 things

- to give women exactly the same rights as men to access the Freedom
- to remove the criterion that the husband of the daughter of a Freeman is able to claim access to the Freedom
- to recognise that apprenticeship and employment skill training has moved on and to allow greater access to the Freedom at the discretion of the Wardens.

The ballot overwhelmingly gave approval to the resolution but to date that is not the end of the story.

The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act has two key clauses (27 and 28) that impact upon Freeman's rights to determine their own membership criteria.

The first is very specific and requires that women should have exactly the same entitlement as men. The next clause however requires that if membership criteria are the subject of an Act of Parliament they can only be revised when the Secretary of State has made an Order in Council. Legal opinion from our Trustees and from the Local Authority advises us that because our membership is regulated by an Act of Parliament (Durham City Act 1985), any change in our membership criteria must be achieved through such an Order by the Secretary of State.

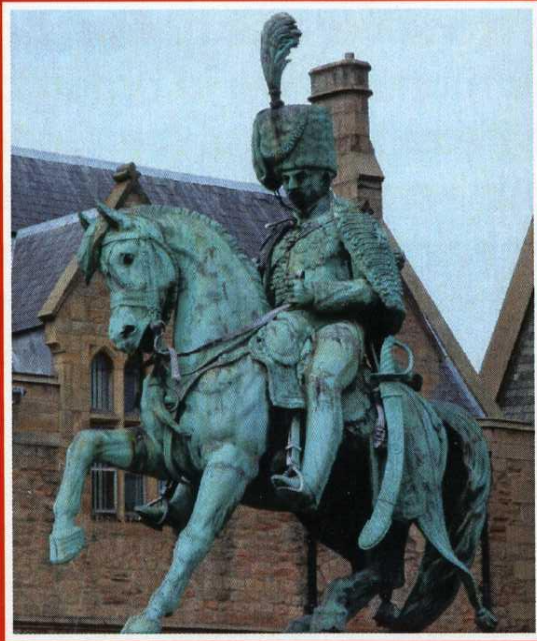
Philip Wills, our tireless Clerk and Receiver has been in contact with Government for some months now in order to have this resolved. Unfortunately the outcome of the General Election and the change of government has resulted in this being delayed. Philip's latest letter has now been acknowledged by the Department for Communities and Local Government and they promise to look at it "shortly".

Freemen should be assured that as soon as we have the authority to do so we will amend our membership criteria, the principal effect of which will be to extend the Freedom to women.

If any Freemen would like to propose a new member please contact me in order that we can set the process in train.

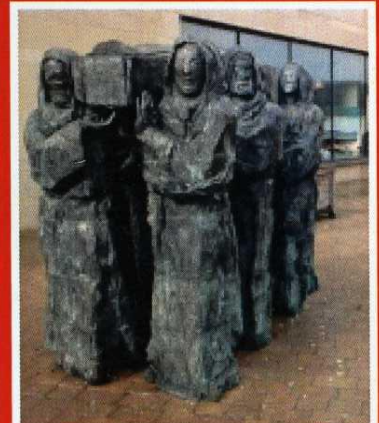
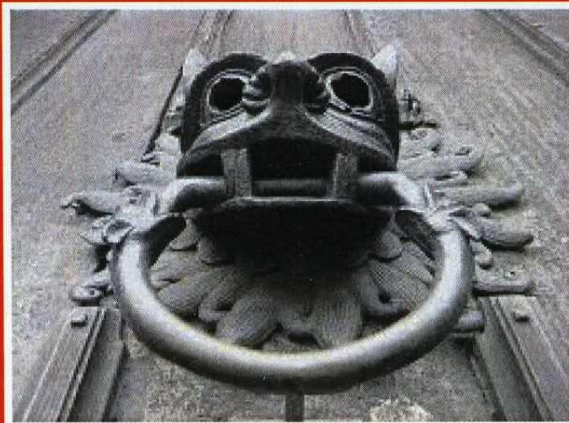
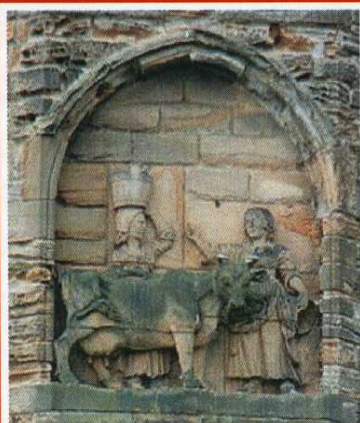
John Heslop
Chairman of the Wardens





Durham Mysteries 27-29 May 2010

The excellent Simon Stallworthy, Director of the Durham Gala Theatre, commissioned from ten writers a modern set of Mystery Plays for Durham (nothing like the Chester or York Mediaeval Mysteries surviving for us) eight of which were performed on The Sands. The individual plays provided the customary forceful and exciting Biblical moral and ethical themes, were strong on choreography, clear plot lines, colour, movement, music and enthralling enthusiasm of the participants, and involved the audience in a memorable time of learning and appreciation.



Annual Dinner 2010

Roger Norris, the Chairman of the Trustees, once again organised a superb annual Dinner for the Freemen.

We were privileged to have Professor Christopher Higgins and his wife as our principal guests. Professor Higgins is Vice Chancellor of the University of Durham.

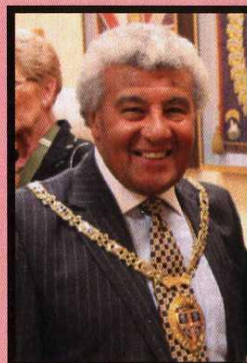


We were also pleased to welcome The Worshipful Mayor of Durham City, Mamie Simmons and her consort Neville Simmons. A particular pleasure was the attendance of the Chairman of Durham County Council, reflecting the reorganisation of Local Government and our increasingly strong links with the County Council. Councillor Mac Williams was accompanied by his consort Pauline Adams.

We had guests from around the region and beyond. A strong contingent from the Freemen of the City of York was in attendance. We also welcomed Alan Webb. Although Alan is originally from Stanley he now lives in Scotland and is Past Dean of the Guildry of Stirling and Past President of the Deans of Guild of Scotland.

We were also honoured to welcome Alan Fallows and his wife Valerie. Alan is a Freeman of Shrewsbury as well as being the current President of the Freemen of England and Wales. The FEW were also represented by the Stephen Healy and his wife Diane. Stephen is Warden for the North, a Freeman of Newcastle upon Tyne and an old friend of the Durham Freemen. Newcastle Freemen were also represented by Alan Bainbridge and his wife Jean.

Our thanks go once more to Roger Norris for a truly splendid evening.



Community Activity

Heart Scanner

At the beginning of the year we were delighted to sponsor the Heart of Durham Appeal organised by the British Heart Foundation to provide a new heart scanner for the University Hospital of Durham. An excerpt from the press release reads:

A Heart Scanner appeal has received its largest financial boost to date. John Heslop and Joe McElwee, from the Durham City.



Freemen join Fiona Tuner and special clinical physiologist Steven Hodgson in the cardiology department.

City of Durham Freemen have pledged to give the British Heart Foundation's Heart of Durham Appeal £5,000.

The appeal, which is backed by the Durham Times, aims to raise £47,923 to buy a 2D echocardiogram for University Hospital of North Durham.

John Heslop, chairman of the wardens of City of Durham Freemen, said:

"We felt this was a worthwhile project. The notion that it was the Heart of Durham was interesting as we would like to think our activities are also at the heart of Durham."

Fiona Turner, Heart of Durham Appeal manager, said:

"This is the biggest donation we've received so far – ten per cent of what we're trying to raise, so it's absolutely fantastic."

Sound System for Chapter House of Durham Cathedral

The Friends of Durham Cathedral have been seeking funding for a sound system to be installed in the Chapter House of the Cathedral. Our support will make this possible early in the new year. An extract from the press release reads:



The Freemen of Durham City have made a generous donation to the Friends of Durham Cathedral. The donation is specifically to enable the Friends to fund the installation of a sound system in the Cathedral's iconic Chapter House. The Chapter House plays an important part in the daily worship of the Cathedral as a vestry for services and as a place for worship during key moments in the Christian calendar such as the dawn vigil on Easter Day. It is also regularly used as a meeting room; a venue for chamber concerts and small scale theatrical productions; a green room for larger scale concerts and events in the Cathedral and as a celebratory space.

Bill Apedaile, Chairman of the Friends of Durham Cathedral says, "The Freemen of the City of Durham have a long history of supporting trade and workmanship as well as their objective to engender good fellowship in society and religion. The Friends are delighted to have received such a generous gift that allows this important space within the Cathedral to be enhanced. We hold our Annual General Meeting in the Chapter House each June, and perhaps in future my address will be heard at last by my whole audience. I thank the Freemen on behalf of the Friends of the Cathedral and all other users of the Chapter House.

John Heslop, Chairman of the Wardens of the City of Durham

Freemen says:

“Durham City Freemen seek to support and celebrate events and organisations which are the life-blood of our historic City. Without doubt the Cathedral is the very heart of the City and links between the Cathedral and the Freemen can be traced back through many centuries. We are delighted that we can take this opportunity to refresh those links in the modern world by financing the installation of a sound system for the Chapter House of the Cathedral. The Freemen hope that the investment enhances all of the events held in the Chapter House for many years to come.”

The Very Reverend Michael Sadgrove, Dean of Durham says, “The installation of the sound system will allow use of the Chapter House to evolve in new ways as well as improve existing use. I am delighted that the Freemen of the City were moved to support the Friends allowing them to fund the installation of the sound system.”

Mayor's Charity Appeal

As in past years we supported the Mayor's Appeal for her chosen charities which this year were Diabetes UK and St Cuthbert's Hospice. A cheque was presented to the Mayor at the Annual Dinner in October.

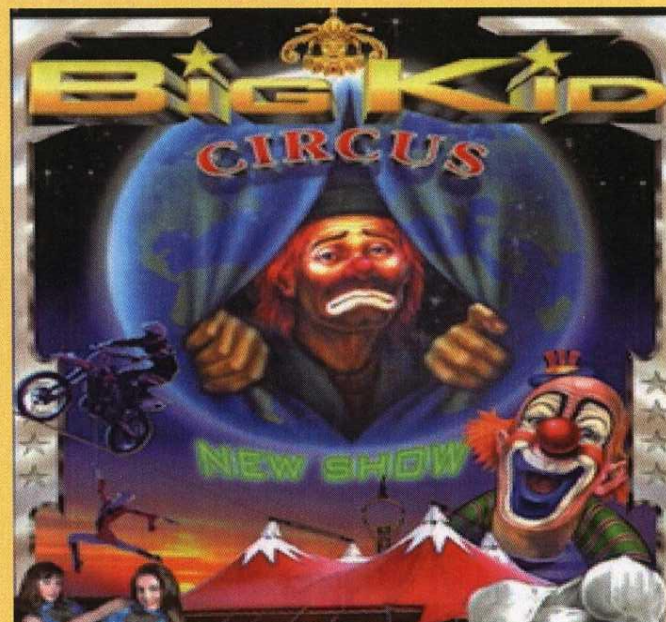


Durham Johnston School War Memorial 1921-2011

Durham City Freemen are becoming involved in the restoration and rededication of a memorial to past students of Durham Johnston School who died in the service of their country. The memorial was originally in the South Street premises of the school

Events at the Sands

The Freeman were once again able to host the Annual Easter Fair at the Sands and to welcome the Big Kid Circus. Visiting Fairs and Circuses have provided entertainment to the people of Durham for centuries and have been traditionally hosted by the Freeman at the Sands.



Freemen of England and Wales



Durham Freemen have continued to be associated with the Freemen of England and Wales and have benefited greatly from the link. Stephen Healey has been a friend of ours for some time. This friendship has become closer since Stephen became FEW' Warden for the North. We were delighted when he joined us once more for our Annual Dinner in October.

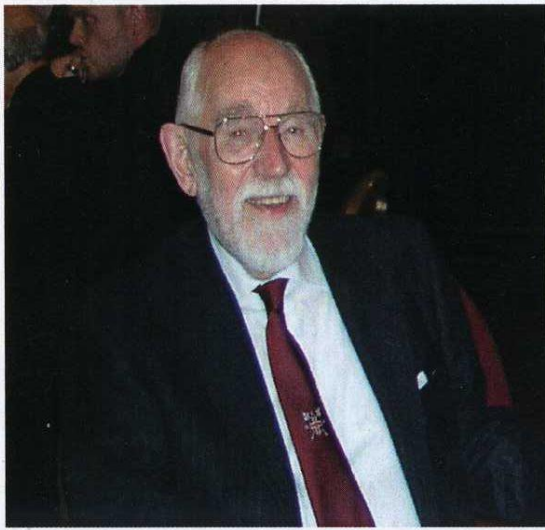
All of FEW were saddened to learn of the sudden death of Joe Petty. Joe was a Freeman of the city of Newcastle and had been Stephen's predecessor as FEW Warden for the North.

We were joined at Annual Dinner in October by the President of FEW, Alan Fallows. Alan has been Archivist for FEW for a number of years and has taken an active part in the revision of legislation related to Guild membership across the country. He has been of great service to us in our current efforts to revise our membership criteria and has worked most usefully with our Clerk and Receiver on issues to do with registration of land interest.

The AGM of the Freemen of England and Wales was held this year in Berwick on Tweed. Durham Freemen were represented by the Chairman of the Wardens John Heslop and by the Warden of the Cordwainers' Company, Joe Mc Elwee and his wife Doris.



Obituaries



John Alexander Cole, Engineer and Freeman of Shrewsbury, died on 4th February 2010 aged 82. He took on the duties of Treasurer as soon as he became a Trustee of the Freeman, continuing in the building up of the Freeman's resources and handing over to his successor, Mike McMinn, a healthy and watertight ship. When John

and Nesta came to Durham they found and loved Durham Cathedral where they served as Stewards, the invaluable front-of-house ambassadors, for many years. John was appointed a Gentleman Freeman of the Curriers' Company in 2002. Nesta and he supported the Freeman with vigour, enthusiasm and kindness. John's Funeral Service was on Thursday 11th February 2010 at Durham Cathedral.



Edwin Henry Coldicott, Warden of the Plumbers Company, died on 1st May 2010 aged 83. He had been apprenticed to Dennisons when the plumbing firm was in a series of houses in Crossgate, had moved to the Engineering Department of Dryburn Hospital where he stayed for over 40 years, was admitted a Freeman of the Plumbers' Company

on 17th November 1986 and succeeded Arthur Eales as Warden in 1989. We always valued his wisdom, genial presence and the loyalty Ruby and Eddie to the City and to the Freeman. Eddie's Funeral Service was at St Nicholas Church, Durham Market Place, on Thursday 13th May 2010.



