



City of Durham
Freemen
Newsletter 2015



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Foreword

Happy New Year. I hope that 2015 brings you joy. I hope also that 2015 is as successful a year for Durham City Freeman as 2014 has been.



(John Heslop)

In last year's Newsletter I referred to the need for the Freeman to have substance, relevance and purpose. I have been delighted with the response that we have had to that message. Our image has grown tremendously in the public awareness and this in turn has led to our numbers continuing to grow. As you will see from the membership information we now have 232 Freeman in membership, the largest number in recent history.

Civic involvement in the affairs of the City has increased greatly as we enhance our relationship with the Mayoralty, The Cathedral and the County Council. Of particular significance has been the strengthening of ancient bonds between the Freeman and the Mayoral Bodyguard.

Sadly two of our Wardens - David Atkinson (Barbers) and Vera Davidson (Drapers) stood down from office during the year and we thank them for their service. They have been succeeded by Alan Dufton and Stuart Magee respectively. Both new Wardens are introduced themselves in the pages that follow.

Our annual Dinner was yet again a very successful occasion, largely due to our Chairman of Trustees, Roger Norris who has organised the Dinner single-handedly for more than 10 years. Roger has indicated that he wishes to take a well earned rest from that task and I request support from Freeman for volunteers to form a team to prepare for the 2015 Dinner which is to be held on 3 October.

The Freeman continue to offer support in the community. Details follow. We hope that the establishment of a Charitable Trust will enhance our ability to offer community support. Wardens and Trustees are working on this currently and hope that the Trust can be established by the beginning of the new financial year in April.

Another welcome and long overdue development is the establishment of a purpose-built website which will give both Freeman and the public access to information and communication. It may be that we need to rethink our approach to communication in the light of this development.

In 2014 the Bishop of Durham, the Right Reverend Justin Welby, was elevated to lead the Anglican community as Archbishop of Canterbury. Justin is a fine man and we wish him well in his challenging role. He has been succeeded by the Right Reverend Paul Butler. The Freeman were represented at the enthronement and wish Bishop Paul well in his ministry.

2015 sees the retirement of the Very Reverend Michael Sadgrove. As Dean, Michael is the head of the Cathedral Foundation and Chair of the Chapter. Through the good offices of Joe McElwee (Warden of the Cordwainers' Company) the Freeman have worked closely with the Dean on a number of projects. We wish Michael a restful and happy well-earned retirement.

Our links with Durham County Council continue to grow stronger. This is important as DCC is our partner in the ownership and oversight of the Sands in the City centre. The Mayor of Durham also holds the office of Chairman of the County Council. We have been fortunate this year in having a most personable and supportive mayor. John Robinson and his wife, the Mayoress, Maxine Robinson have been good friends to the Freeman and shared a number of civic functions over his year of office.

We have also begun forging a link to DCC through Dr Stephen Howell who is Head of Culture and Sport for DCC and has recently taken responsibility for the Town Hall and all that is associated with it. Roger Norris and I met with Stephen and discussed his new brief and how we might work together for the mutual benefit of the Freeman and the County Council. We had a very interesting and helpful initial meeting and agreed to meet quarterly to advance this dialogue and sharing of ideas and information. We hope that this is of great benefit to both the Freeman and the County Council and look forward to continued sharing for our common good.

I hope that you find the information in this years Newsletter interesting and helpful. Please get in touch if there is anything that you would like to talk about.

John Heslop, Chairman of the Wardens,
Warden of the Company of Curriers
Tel: 0191 386 8264 | Mob: 07792 655 031
e-mail: hezza@talktalk.net

A message from the Worshipful Mayor of Durham City - Councillor John Robinson



(Picture courtesy of The Northern Echo)

Since becoming Mayor, both Maxine and I have met some wonderful people and excellent organisations. Indeed we have often been humbled by them. The Freemen are one of those. We have been warmed by your friendship and hospitality which we appreciate. Your generous donation to the Mayors Charity, lots and lots of friendship via your Annual Dinner and Guild meetings will always be remembered.

It would be remiss of us not to thank you for your wonderful support of the Mayoral Bodyguard through your donation which enabled them to not only refurbish their robes and uniform but provided the wonderful banner which they so proudly carry in Civic Parades. May we also thank all of you who attended both the Remembrance and Mayors Carol Services, again strengthening the bonds and friendship between us.

As we look forward to the last few months of our Mayoralty we hope to build upon our friendship and unity and hope we can work together for the benefit of the City and residents we all serve.

May you all have a prosperous, healthy and happy 2015.

John and Maxine

Diary Dates for 2015

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 inauguration take place on Guild Days.

- 2 February 2015 (Candlemas)
- 11 May 2015 (May Day)
- 10 August 2015 (Lammas)
- 2 November 2015 (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 commencing at 1.00 p.m. and Chaired by the Chairman of the Wardens, John Heslop

- 23 January 2015
- 1 May 2015
- 25 September 2015
- 4 December 2015

Meetings of Trustees and Wardens

(Commencing at 2.00 p.m.)

Trustees and Wardens meet four times a year. These meetings are also held in the Guild Hall and traditionally take place on a Friday commencing at 2.00 p.m. and Chaired by the Chairman of the Trustees, Roger Norris.

- 23 January 2015
- 1 May 2015
- 25 September 2015
- 4 December 2015

Member meetings

(Commencing at 6.00 p.m.)

Member meetings are for 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.

- 15 January 2015
- 23 April 2015
- 10 September 2015
- 26 November 2015

Annual Dinner

The Annual Dinner of the Freemen will be held in the Town Hall on 3 October 2015.

Wardens & Trustees

on the 1st January 2015

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)
Alan Dufton	
Barbers' Company	(07896 065 860)
John Stout	
Butchers' Company	(0191 386 6517)
Joe McElwee	
Cordwainers' Company	(0191 373 4394)
Stuart Magee	
Drapers' Company	(0191 383 0098)
Robert Brown	
Joiners' Company	(0191 377 2271)
Eric Bulmer	
Plumbers' Company	(0191 378 0554)
Bob Elliott	
Masons' Company	(0191 383 0934)

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. Oliver Esq.

M. Proud Esq.

A Ribchester Esq. MBE

Membership Secretary

Robert Elliott (0191 383 0934)

e-mail: robert.elliott934@btinternet.com

Communication Secretary *(Provisional title)*

Kathleen Vasey (0191 386 8000)

e-mail: kathleenvasey@aol.com

New Wardens

Two of our Wardens stood down from office during 2014.

David Atkinson - Warden of the Barbers' Company moved to Morpeth and recognised that it was not practicable for him to continue given the geographical constraints. We thank David for his contribution to the life and work of Durham City Freeman.

David has been succeeded by Alan Dufton who is introduced below.

Last year Vera Davidson - Warden of the Drapers' Company - advised that she needed to take some time away from her role in order to care for her husband Sidney who was unwell. Kathleen Vasey took on Vera's role in an interim capacity and served us well. Sadly Vera's own health has now deteriorated to the point where she felt it necessary to stand down from her role completely. This was particularly poignant as Vera was one of the first women Freeman to be accepted into membership in February 2102. She was also the first ever Woman Warden in our history. We wish Vera and Sidney well for the future.

Kathleen Vasey and Stuart Magee both expressed interest in succeeding Vera and an election was held amongst the 54 members of the Drapers' Company to determine who should take on the role. The results of the ballot were:

Stuart Magee - 10 votes received

Kathleen Vasey - 9 votes received

Stuart has now taken up the role of Warden of the Drapers' Company and is introduced below. I'm delighted that Kathleen has pledged to remain an active and committed Freeman.

Alan Dufton

Alan was born in Wolsingham before moving to Crook where he went to school. He served an apprenticeship as a barber in Durham City which gave him eligibility to the Freedom which



he attained when he was admitted into the Barbers' Company at the Candlemas Guild Day in February 1988. Alan became selfemployed in 1966 and opened "Alan's Barbers" in Gilesgate in 1966 where he established a respected and popular business over 49 years.

After a lifetime as a Barber it is fitting that Alan became Warden of the Barbers' Company at the Martinmas Guild Day in November 2014. It was a doubly happy event as Alan's daughters Kay and Hilary were also accepted into the freedom on that occasion. He hopes that the family tradition can be maintained for generations to come. In the meanwhile Alan is looking forward to working with colleagues to maintain the well-being and traditions of the Freeman in his new role.

Stuart Magee

Stuart Magee is 55 years of age and has lived in Durham all of his life. He was educated at St Margaret's Primary School and Whinney Hill Secondary



School. He became a Freeman when he was 21 in 1980 and was installed into the Drapers' Company with his twin brother. It is likely that is the first and only time that twins have become Freemen on the same occasion.

Stuart has been married to Diane for 28 years.

Before he retired Stuart worked as a Civil Servant in several Government Departments including 21 years at HM Land Registry.

Although sad that Vera has had to stand down as Warden, Stuart is delighted that he can take on that role. Both his father and his uncle held this position in the past. Stuart is proud to maintain the family's active involvement with the City of Durham Freeman.

Membership Information

On the first day of January 2015 there were 232 Freemen of the City of Durham of whom 109 were In-District and 123 were Ex-District members.

13 new members were sworn in during the year. Of these 9 were women who became eligible for membership in 2012.

The following applicants had their Third and Final Calls during 2014 and were made Freemen of the City of Durham.

May Day Guild Day - 12 May 2014

Connie Hotchkiss Company of Masons



(Picture courtesy of The Northern Echo)

Lammas Guild Day - 11 August 2014

Una Weightman	Company of Barbers
Stephanie Milbourne	Company of Drapers
Nicola Marsden	Company of Curriers
John Booth	Company of Plumbers
Jane Bulmer	Company of Plumbers
Sean Bulmer	Company of Plumbers



(Picture courtesy of The Northern Echo)

Martinmas Guild Day - 3 November 2014

Hilary Brolls	Company of Barbers
Kay Faulkner	Company of Barbers
Andrew Clarkson	Company of Joiners
Nigel Clarkson	Company of Joiners
Allison Brown	Company of Plumbers
Lisa Cunliffe	Company of Plumbers



(Picture courtesy of The Northern Echo)

Applications for membership received during 2014

At the Lammas Guild Day and Martinmas Guild Day, First and Second Calls were made without objection for:

Elizabeth Elliott Company of Masons

A Third and Final Call will be made at the Candlemas Guild Day on 2 February 2015. Subject to there being no objections raised she will then be granted the Freedom.

At the Martinmas Guild Day a First Call was made without objection for:

Barry Shotton Company of Cordwainers
Helen Gent Company of Plumbers

Second Calls will be made at the Candlemas Guild Day on 2 February 2015. Third and Final Calls will be made at the May Day Guild Day on 11 May 2015. 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.

Deceased Members

Sadly we have been notified of the following members who have died in 2014.

Thomas Chilton Cordwainers

Arthur Allison Drapers

Tom Vest Drapers

Our thoughts and prayers go to their families friends and loved ones.

Membership Criteria

Any man or woman who has attained the age of 18 years and has any of the qualifications set out below is eligible to be admitted to the Freedom of the City of Durham. The qualifications for eligibility for the Freedom of the city of Durham are:

- (a) **Guild Servitude;** 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, with an employer who is a Freeman of the City of Durham;
- (b) **Durham Servitude;** 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.
- (c) **Hereditary Freedom;** he or she is the son or daughter of a Freeman of the City of Durham;
- (d) **Customary Freedom;** men and women who have attained the age of 18 years who are not otherwise qualified in accordance with 2(a), (b) or (c) above may be admitted as Freemen in accordance with ancient local custom or practice subject to the approval of the Wardens.

All claims to Freedom of the City should be supported by sufficient documentary evidence of entitlement to be submitted for consideration by the Wardens of the Guilds meeting collectively.

Following due consideration, the decision of the Wardens in respect of any claim to Freedom of the City shall be final.

The Honorary Freedom conferred by the former Durham City Council or by Durham County Council is distinct and separate from the Freedom granted through the eligibility outlined above and the approval of the Wardens. The rights duties and powers of the Durham City Freemen shall continue in accordance with the provisions of the Durham City Council Act 1985 and associated customary practice.

Applicants for the Freedom should make initial contact with the Membership Secretary:



Mr R Elliott
147, Gilesgate
Durham
DH1 1QQ

Tel: 0191 383 0934

e-mail: robert.elliott934@btinternet.com

If you know of any Freemen who do not receive this Newsletter can you please let us know in order that we can keep our membership data-base up to date.

Calendar of involvements during 2014

22 February: Enthronement of the Very Reverend Paul Butler as Bishop of Durham held at Durham Cathedral.



20 March: Service to commemorate St Cuthbert's Day, held at Durham Cathedral

14 September: Dedication of DLI Memorial held in Durham Market Place and afterwards at the Cathedral. Freemen represented by Eric Bulmer (Warden of Plumbers' Company) and Kathleen Vasey (Interim Warden of Drapers' Company)

20 September: Freemen recognised for their support of Durham Cathedral through inclusion in the Liber Vitae (Book of Life) at Durham Cathedral.



3 November: Presentation and dedication of Banner presented by the Freemen to the Mayoral Bodyguard, held in the Town Hall.

11 November: Talk by Chairman of Wardens to Bede Rotary Club at their meeting in Kingslodge Hotel, Durham.



23 November: Commemoration of Founders and Benefactors held in Durham Cathedral. Freemen represented by Bob Elliott (Warden of Masons Company).

9 December: Civic Carol Service held at St Nicholas Church, Durham market Place.

22 December: Festival of Nine lessons and Carols held in Durham Cathedral.

A number of meetings have been held with Dr Stephen Howells, Director for Sport and Culture for Durham County Council at which the Freemen were represented by John Heslop (Chairman of the Wardens) and Roger Norris (Chairman of the Trustees)

Community Activity

2014 was another year which gave the Freemen of Durham an opportunity to offer financial support to local causes. In the context of our aim to have substance, relevance and purpose this is a key area for the Freemen and one to which a lot of thought is given as evidenced by the plan to establish a Charitable Trust as described below.

Mayoral Bodyguard

There has been a link between the Freemen and the Durham Mayoral Bodyguard for a number of centuries. As long ago as the 13th Century the Bodyguard gave protection to Wardens as they collected taxes and tithes around the City. When the first Mayor of the City was created in 1602, the Bodyguard became associated exclusively with that office. It is interesting to note that at that time only Freemen had any say in the election of the Mayor, a situation which continued until the Municipal Corporation Act of 1835. The Mayor of Durham City has the oldest Bodyguard outside the City of London.

Residents and visitors to the City never fail to be impressed by the pomp that the Bodyguard provide to civic events. We were therefore delighted to be able to offer support to the Bodyguard in refurbishing and enhancing their regalia. Principal in this was the procurement and presentation of a processional banner which will be carried whenever the Bodyguard are involved in ceremonial events throughout the City. The Banner was presented to the Worshipful Mayor and the Bodyguard at a ceremony on 2 November.

This was followed by a dedication by the Deputy Dean of Durham.



(Picture courtesy of The Northern Echo)

Peter Bennett - Apprentice Joiner

Our support for Peter Bennett's joinery apprenticeship at the Dean and Chapter is now entering its final year. We wish Peter well as he concludes his training and hope that he will exercise his eligibility to the Freedom by becoming a Freeman of the Joiners' Company in due course.



DLI Memorial

We provided funding to support the erection of a monument in tribute to the soldiers of the Durham Light Infantry which has been installed directly outside of the Guild Hall in the Market Place.

The Freemen were also represented in the service of dedication of the statue on 14 September.



(Picture courtesy of The Northern Echo)

Mayor's Charity Appeal

Each year we make a contribution to the Mayor's Charity Appeal.



(Picture courtesy of The Northern Echo)

A cheque was presented to the Mayor at the Annual Dinner. The beneficiary of this year's Appeal is Finchale Training College which is increasingly involved in the vocational rehabilitation of former service personnel. The Mayor was especially appreciative of our donation and invited us to a press publicity event where the work of the College was brought into focus through the retraining of former Commando David Evans who served in Kosovo, the Balkans, Afghanistan and Iraq before leaving the Army in February.

West Rainton Banner

Last year through the good offices of Eric Bulmer (Warden of the Plumbers' Company) we helped to fund a Community Banner for West



Rainton, a project that was led by Alison McDonough, Headteacher of the local primary school and a member of the Plumbers' Company. The school was the centre of the project which had the aim of processing the banner in the 2014 annual Miners' Gala. The Freemen were delighted to assist once more and contributed to the banner being accompanied by Esh and Bearpark Brass Band when it was proudly marched to the Cathedral and blessed as part of the Gala celebration.

Trustees Reports

Chairman of Trustees Report on Charitable Trust

Wardens and Trustees have been concerned for some time that our capacity to offer funding and support to projects in the community



(Roger Norris)

has been considerably restricted by our obligation to pay corporation tax at the end of each financial year. Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs requires that 21% tax is paid on any surplus income that remains when all outgoing expenditure has been spent. Over the years this has amounted to many thousands of pounds being paid in tax rather than to worthy causes.

You might recall that at one stage we took advice about applying for Durham City Freemen to become a registered charity. Legal advice that we received at the time suggested that this was not an option available to us.

More recently we have explored establishing a Charitable Trust. This is effectively a ringfenced fund into which financial resources - including surpluses - can be deposited. Because it would be registered with the Charity Commissioners as a Charity no tax liabilities would apply. This fund would then be drawn upon to provide support for community activities that the Freemen would wish to assist.

The establishment of a Charitable Trust is a complex and involved process. We are indebted to our Trustees Stewart Atkins and Alan Ribchester for their endeavours on our behalf and also to our Clerk and Receiver Philip Wills for providing legal oversight of the process.

A draft Trust Deed has been formulated which we believe will be acceptable to the Charity Commissioners and will pave the way to the establishment of a much more tax-efficient approach to our charitable giving.

There are issues still to resolve. We are conscious that the public identity of the Freemen is significantly defined by our involvement in the community. There is the potential for tension between this notion and the need for the Charitable Trust to be an independent body with activity managed by its Trustees to achieve its laid down objectives. We are working on this issue and are confident that the Trust will be an asset to the Freemen and to the Community in which we exist.

Guild Armorial

In June 2014 the 15 John Lambert late 18th Century water colours from the Guild Hall of speculative armorials for the Durham Guilds were repaired and conserved at Durham County Records Office by Archive Conservator, Jenny Barnard with whose expertise the Freemen are delighted. The restored armorials are back on show in the Guild Hall.

Clerk and Receiver's Report on the Sands

The Sands has been used only once for hire during 2014 when the annual Easter Fair came to town once more. We have been approached by other organisations to use the Sands but applications were later withdrawn.



(Philip Wills)

An interesting development has been the request by potential hirers to have alcohol available at their events. Our policy has always been that the Sands is an alcohol-free venue but in the light of changing times the Wardens and Trustees considered this issue and resolved to adopt the following policy.

Policy on sale/provision of alcohol for events held at the Sands

In recognition of their rights over The Sands, the Durham City Freemen will apply the following policy in relation to the sale and provision of alcohol for events on The Sands:

1. The sale and provision of alcohol may be allowed for events on The Sands in circumstances deemed appropriate by The Freemen. There is no absolute right of any hirer and the Freemen's decision is absolutely final. The Freemen have absolute discretion and if consent is given for the sale or provision of alcohol the conditions set out in Schedule 1 must be complied with.
2. In deciding whether to grant permission for the sale/provision of alcohol, the Freemen recognise their wider responsibilities to the community, particularly with regard to residents of dwellings adjacent to The Sands. The Freemen will always consider the effect any sale and provision of alcohol may have in relation to residents, the wider community and the reputation of the Freemen.
3. The Freemen also recognise that The Sands has a high level of public amenity value and is seen as an asset to the city of Durham and in order to maximise the potential, the sale or provision of alcohol may be advantageous at certain events.

- (a) The Sale /provision of alcohol must always be by way of contract authorised by the Freemen after approval by the Safety Advisory Group
- (b) The hirer must have a strict admissions policy by ticket only or other suitable means by which open access by individuals not associated with the event is prevented.
- (c) The hirer of The Sands is responsible for obtaining and providing a copy of the relevant licence for the sale provision of alcohol and must indemnify the Freemen against any such failure to comply with this requirement.
- (d) The hirer must take all reasonable steps to ensure that sale and consumption of alcohol is not visible from the roads surrounding The Sands.
- (e) No alcohol is allowed to be taken off site from The Sands and no alcohol can be brought onto the site externally outside the limits of the licence (for example cans of beer or bottles of wine)
- (f) No glass is allowed on The Sands only plastic or other synthetic receptacles may be used.
- (g) Adequate toilet facilities must be provided on site.
- (h) All reasonable efforts must be made by the hirer not to permit any drunkenness or rowdy behaviour within the licensed area of The Sands which may be deemed a nuisance.
- (i) The site must be cleared of all debris and litter after the event.

2014 was a year of consolidation from a financial perspective. With the uncertainty and expense of the car park revenues behind us, your Trustees and Wardens have been able to



(Stewart Atkin)

look ahead. The continued depression of interest rates led to the decision to invest further amounts for the long term; that is, 5 years plus. Provided adequate cash balances are maintained, other funds can be invested with a view to obtaining a better regular return with the opportunity for capital growth. This is designed to give a degree of safety by balancing fixed interest investments with certain equities. As a result, the income yield has been in excess of 4.5% with a small degree of capital appreciation.

The Freemen have continued to support the community having completed the sponsorship of a joinery apprentice as well as making donations to local charities and charitable concerns. To further this cause, the Trustees and Wardens agreed to create a charitable trust into which some of its annual income can be directed. In turn the trust would continue to make grants in Durham and the surrounding area. The charity status of this trust will also serve to reduce the amount of Corporation Tax the Freemen pay each year.

Plumber's Company Visit to Durham Cathedral

As Warden of the Plumbers' Company I hope to provide opportunities for members of the Plumber's Company to meet socially in a relaxing and interesting environments. To that end on 29th August 2014 I, Eric Bulmer, John Booth, Mel Wortley and Haydon Watson of the Plumbers' Company together with Joe McElwee (Cordwainers) and Geof Kitson (Barbers) were met by Stonemason Nigel Mawson who was to take us on a tour of the Cathedral which would include many parts that are not accessible to the general public. Nigel's 36 years experience as a mason at the Cathedral was evident throughout the tour which started in the Nave where he drew our attention to a number of interesting points about the massive columns;

- The simple construction of the decoratively carved columns with some having only 3 types of carved, shaped stones that were used continually in different positions to create a continuous pattern throughout the column.
- The circumference of the column's base is exactly the same as the height of the column.
- The width of the Nave from column to column is exactly the height of a column.

The main body of the Cathedral was used to house Scottish prisoners who did immense damage to some of its decorative features. They broke the head off the Neville Tomb and smashed almost every statue, particularly those that would have stood on pedestals

built into the Neville's Screen which is a carved limestone screen separating the Choir and Alter from St Cuthbert's Tomb. They also burnt all the wooden artefacts to keep warm. The Clock escaped their grasp and survived because it had a thistle carving prominently displayed on its front. Another feature of the highly decorated clock is that it is divided into 4 minute segments rather than the normal 5 minutes as apparently time was only recognised in quarter hour periods.

After a brief description about the Bishop's Throne which is reputedly the highest in Christendom, we proceeded to St Cuthbert's Tomb which is situated directly behind the Altar in what would have been the 'White Church', the first structure on the site. Beneath the floor and exposed by a trapdoor was a large void that contained the remains of the original columns of the 'White Church'. On the floor surrounding St Cuthbert's Tomb is the outline of the earlier exterior east wall of the Cathedral prior to its extension to incorporate the area of the Nine Altars and the Rose Window.

Just before leaving the main body of the Cathedral we spent a little time in the DLI Chapel where our attention was drawn to a rustic wooden cross which was made at the Somme in the aftermath of the battle and dedicated to the regiment. Situated adjacent to the Chapel was a column that Nigel believed to be an apprentice piece as the carved pattern that was started at the bottom of the column changed into another more simpler pattern after about a metre.

After leaving the main body of the Cathedral we entered the Chapter House. This is a beautiful large room used as a changing area for clergy and choristers. It is linked to the Bishop's Robing Room which in turn is connected to an area that houses the communion wine and eventually leads to the prison, comprising of a small cell with a primitive privy which I assume was for wayward monks.

The hard part of the tour began by climbing the Tower to reach the Bell Ringing Chamber.



(Group in the bell-ringing chamber)

The Chamber is very impressive with what looked like original access ladders to the Belfry and old wooden pulley wheels decorating the walls. A wooden circular centre piece on the floor allowed you to look through small peep holes directly to the 'Cross at the Nave' many hundreds of feet below. We ascended the ladder to the Belfry just in time to hear the bells strike 11:30, which was not as loud as you might have imagined for a peal that is heard throughout the City and beyond. We then stepped outside on to the Belfry walkway, which is a small channel about 18 inches wide with a parapet that runs all around the tower affording spectacular views of the City. We decided to tackle the last 94 steps to the top of the tower only to be greeted by a heavy shower of rain which resulted in us beating a hasty retreat back to the ground floor.

Finally we made our way to the small chapel below the Deanery which was quiet and serene and housed an audio installation of the 'Sounds of Lindisfarne', a fitting end to an interesting and enlightening visit to the Cathedral. Our thanks go to the Dean and Chapter Yard Manager Iain Wilmhurst (Curriers' Company) for arranging the visit and Nigel Mawson's expert guidance on the day.

Eric Bulmer (Warden: Plumber's Company)

Annual Dinner 2014



Our Annual Dinner was held on 4 October 2014 in the Town Hall and was another most enjoyable evening. The dinner has been organised single handedly for over 10 years by our Chairman of Trustees, Roger Norris, to whom we all owe a great debt of gratitude. This was the last Dinner that Roger will be organising. I hope that my appeal for support set out below results in the establishment of a team to organise the 2015 Dinner and beyond.

We are also grateful for the help and support of all of the Town Hall staff and our caterers T&I Bell.

Our special guest this year was His Honour Judge Peter Armstrong and his wife Joanna. Peter is a Circuit Judge presiding over courts in the Teesside area. His talk was witty and absorbing and well received by the eighty or so guests.



(Judge Peter Armstrong)

We were also joined by The Worshipful Mayor of Durham City, John Robinson and his wife, The Mayoress, Maxine Robinson.

Stephen Healy represented Freemen of England and Wales. Freemen from the City, the region and across the country were in attendance including Hazel Hague, Master elect to the Freemen of York and Alan Webb, Past Dean of the Guildry of Stirling.

Annual Dinner 2015



As I mentioned above the 2014 Annual Dinner is the last that will be organised by Roger Norris. Roger has been organising our Dinners for more than 10 years and deserves some respite from that responsibility.

I think readers will agree that the Annual Dinner is part of the culture of the Durham Freeman and an event well worth preserving. To that end I would like Freeman to get in touch with me as soon as possible if you feel that you can help with planning the 2015 Dinner (and beyond). I hope to establish a team of people each of whom will take on responsibility for elements of the preparation. Please give this serious thought and get in touch with John Heslop by the end of January to offer your support.



Looking to the future

Lady Freeman

For many years the Wardens have been pleased to honour men who have given service to the Freeman of Durham by inviting them to become Gentlemen Freeman. Current holders of that honour are:

RJB Morris	1986 Joiners
Former Clerk to Durham City Council	
AJ Greenwell	1992 Cordwainers
Prominent businessman and local government officer	
P Wills	1996 Barbers
Clerk and receiver to City of Durham Freeman	
RC Norris	1998 Cordwainers
Chairman of the Trustees of City of Durham Freeman	
AE Donkin	2001 Joiners
Prominent local Craftsman	
GG Firmin	2001 Cordwainers
Former Chairman of the Trustees of City of Durham Freeman	
Sir Paul Nicholson	2003 Masons
Former Lord Lieutenant for Durham County	
JM McMinn	2011 Curriers
Former Treasurer of City of Durham Freeman	

After many years of trying, in February 2012 we were able to overcome the legal obstacles that prevented women from becoming Freeman and admitted female Freeman for the first time. I am delighted that women make up in excess of 20% of our membership.

I think it is high time that we started to equalise opportunity for women by creating a category for Lady Freeman which is equivalent and equal to the Gentlemen Freeman listed above. This will become an agenda item for Wardens and Trustees during the coming year. I would welcome any views that members feel might be helpful to this debate and also any suggested names of women who are felt to be appropriate beneficiaries of the honour. Please get in touch.

Links with Durham County Council

I mentioned in last year's newsletter that the Freeman were seeking to extend their partnership with Durham County Council. I was pleased that at the beginning of the year Roger Norris (Chair of the Trustees) and I were invited to meet with Dr Stephen Howell who is Head of Culture and Sport for DCC and has recently taken responsibility for the Town Hall and all that is associated with it.

Roger and I met with Stephen and discussed his new brief and how we might work together for the mutual benefit of the Freeman and the County Council. We had a very interesting and helpful initial meeting and agreed to meet quarterly to advance this dialogue and sharing of ideas and information. We hope that this is of great benefit to both the Freeman and the County Council and look forward to continued sharing for our common good.

Web Site

I am really pleased to report that significant progress has been made in establishing a website for Durham City Freeman. Initially this has been pursued by Bob Elliott (Warden of the Masons' Company and Membership Secretary) and more particularly his gifted grandson Jack. More recently John Booth (Plumbers), who has considerable skill and experience in this field, has offered his services to work with Bob and Jack to establish a website that meets our needs in the 21st Century.

We are deeply grateful to Bob, Jack and John for their work and look forward to launching the website in the coming months.





