



May Day

Issue 14

May 2026

This newsletter is to keep members up to date with what is happening within the Durham City Freemen.

Guild News

The May Day Guild Day was held on the 11th May 2026 in the Guild Hall Durham

First Calls

None

Second Calls

None

Third Calls

Susannah Steenkamp (Barbers Company) was admitted via Patrimony



The management committee for the Freemen is set out below.

Chair; Garry Dunnill, Deputy Chair; Neil Graham, Secretary; Bryan Proud.

Wardens:

Bryan Proud	Barbers Company.
Vincent Syson	Butchers Company.
Alan Metcalf	Cordwainers Company.
Iain Wilmshurst	Curriers Company.
Dave Howard	Drapers Company.
Ann Thurlow	Joiners Company.
Neil Graham	Masons Company.
Garry Dunnill	Plumbers Company.

Deputy Wardens:

Robert Elliott	Barbers Company.
Vacant	Butchers Company.
John Elliott	Cordwainers Company.
Vacant	Curriers Company.
Vacant	Drapers Company.
David Neale	Joiners Company.
Alan Richardson	Masons Company.
Arthur Lockyear	Plumbers Company

Chair's Report

We are delighted to welcome new member Susannah Steenkamp to our May Guild Day. We also extend a warm welcome to our guest speaker, Fiona Tierney from Daisy Chain, who will be giving us a talk later in the proceedings.

We are pleased to confirm the appointment of John Elliot as Deputy Warden for the Cordwainers Company. John has already begun supporting us with several projects, and we are confident he will be a great asset to the team.

Our thanks also go to Arthur Lockyear, Deputy Warden of the Plumbers Guild, who has kindly taken on the role of Press Officer. We are sure Arthur will do a fabulous job in this important position.

Members should now have received their copy of the 2026 Yearbook. If yours has not arrived, additional copies are available on the chest at the back of the hall.

We are pleased to announce the new website is now live. Please take a moment to explore it when you have time. It brings our online presence up to date and will also help reduce running costs. Sincere thanks to everyone involved in making this happen.

The Apprentice Awards will take place on 5th June, and all winners have now been selected. A huge thank-you to Neil and everyone who has contributed to this year's event. We hope to see many of you there on the night.

As mentioned at our last Guild Day, the Brief History booklet has now been completed and printed. Copies are available on the chest for anyone who would like to take one.

We are also pleased to confirm that discussions regarding our Future Charitable Giving have now concluded. The new approach begins today, ensuring our charitable work continues in a sustainable and meaningful way for the future of the Freemen.

The silver cabinet at the rear of the hall has recently been renovated, and the silver has been professionally cleaned. It is looking splendid once again.

Finally, today marks the last Guild Day which Mayor Gary Hutchinson will be with us in his role as Mayor. We would like to express our sincere thanks for his support, his relaxed and approachable manner, and the ease with which he has chaired our meetings. We wish him well and hope he has enjoyed his term of office.



Results of the recent elections

Deputy Warden of the Cordwainers Company

John Elliott has been elected on 5th March 2026 to the vacant post of Deputy Warden of the Cordwainers Company.

Warden of the Joiners Company

Ann Thurlow has been re-elected on the 1st May to be the Warden of the Joiners Company. Ann has been a Warden for approximately 9 years.



Meet our New Freemen

Introducing Susanah Steenkamp Continuing a Proud Family Tradition



The Guild is pleased to share a profile of Susanah Steenkamp, whose interest in joining the Freemen represents the continuation of a distinguished family lineage deeply rooted in the civic history of Durham.

Susanah's grandfather, Baron Charles Ebby, was himself a Freeman and a proud son of Durham. A respected architect, his contribution to the city endures his name is inscribed on the foundation stone of Durham

Masonic Hall, a testament to his professional legacy and standing within the community. Susanah's father also continues this family tradition as a current Freeman, making her application a meaningful next step in a long-established heritage.

Susanah has been happily married for 26 years and is the mother of three grown children: Dylan (25), Tabitha (22), and Joshua (17). Family life is central to her, and she speaks with great pride about the close bond they share.

Although now settled in the beautiful city of Hereford, Susanah's life has taken her across continents. She and her family spent many years living in Botswana, an experience that broadened their outlook and deepened their appreciation for different cultures. Her own early years were equally varied: born in Solihull, raised in Surrey, educated in Kent, and later a university student in Scotland.

While not currently in formal employment, Susanah owns and manages a successful Airbnb, drawing on her natural warmth, hospitality, and organisational skills.

Outside her professional and family commitments, she enjoys travelling, reading, and spending time with family and friend, interests that reflect her open, sociable, and community-minded character.

Talk By Fiona Tierney Adults Autism Service Manager Daisy Chain Charity



We support and empower autistic and neurodivergent individuals through the provision of holistic person-centred services, whilst promoting training, wellbeing, inclusion and acceptance regionally and nationwide.

Daisy Chain began life in 2003 as the dream of its founder, Lesley Hanson, whose son Jacob was diagnosed as autistic at an early age. Lesley realised there was a lack of support available in the region for autistic people and dreamed of a place for autistic children and adults; a place where they could receive personalised support and feel safe to be their authentic selves.

She wrote notes on an evening about what this place would look like – it needed to be close to towns and cities but still feel ‘away from it all.’ It needed to be a place where people

felt no guilt about being themselves, somewhere that was inclusive and offered essential respite and experiences for autistic people and their families.

Soon after, Lesley and her husband Duane set off on a quest to make her dream become a reality. They started with street collections and building awareness, shining a light on the challenges that autistic people and families faced. They eventually met our Patron, Albert Dicken, who was a part of their church congregation. Albert funded the purchase of our farm site back in 2003, and went on to be our Chair of Trustees for a number of years.

After extensive fundraising, the doors to Daisy Chain opened one year after Lesley’s initial dream and has continued to grow ever since. Tragically, Lesley died in 2004, but her dream lives on.

Initially launched as a community initiative for autistic children and young people, the charity has evolved significantly, and now also provides support for adults. Daisy Chain Day centre is based on a 5.5-acre site offering state-of-the-art facilities and therapeutic animal therapy and also provides community outreach services across the North East region.

We have continually evolved in line with beneficiary need. Annually, we offer a variety of specialist provisions to over 8,000 families and neurodiverse individuals inclusive of social clubs, respite care, wellbeing, independent living skills, employability, and animal therapy.

Values: Passionate; Inclusive; Empowering; Ambitious; Open; Innovative.

Vision: “Our shared vision is for every person we support to live a life they enjoy and is meaningful to them at every stage

Mission: “To support and empower autistic and neurodivergent individuals through the provision of holistic person-centred services, whilst promoting training, wellbeing, inclusion and acceptance regionally and nationwide”.



Durham City Freemen – Charitable Giving



The Durham City Freemen are committed to supporting local good causes, including Freemen or the families of deceased Freemen who may be experiencing hardship, as well as registered charities whose work aligns with our Vision for the Future. Our charitable giving aims to make a meaningful difference within our community while honouring the long-standing traditions of the Freemen.

Who Can Apply

We welcome applications from:

- Local individuals or families connected to the Freemen who are facing difficult circumstances
- Registered charities working within the Durham area
- Community groups or initiatives that support education, wellbeing, heritage, or social improvement

All applications must demonstrate clear benefit to the community or to those in need.

How to Apply

Applications should be submitted online using our official application form via our website durhamcityfreemen.org

If an applicant does not have access to a computer, a Warden will be happy to assist with completing the form.

What Happens Next

Once an application is received:

1. A Warden will contact the applicant within one calendar month.
2. A visit will be arranged to understand the request and assess the need.
3. Wardens involved in the process will meet to review all applications and agree outcomes.
4. Applicants will be informed of the decision directly.

All discussions are held face to face to ensure privacy and to protect personal information.

Presentation of Donations

Successful charity applicants will be invited to the next Guild Day, where donations are formally presented.

Recipients are encouraged to give a short explanation of how the support will help them or their organisation.

Use of Funds

We aim to ensure that all donations are used for their intended purpose.

Where possible, we ask recipients to provide copy receipts or evidence of expenditure.

If the application relates to tools, clothing, equipment, or similar items, a Warden will work with the applicant to purchase the item directly rather than providing cash.

Our Commitment

This charitable-giving process reflects our dedication to:

- Supporting those in genuine need
- Strengthening our community
- Ensuring transparency and fairness
- Upholding the values and traditions of the Durham City Freemen

We are proud to continue this important work and to contribute positively to the future of our city.

Should you wish to suggest a charity that is close to your hearts and may need help then please let us know.

For further information on the scheme contact Alan Metcalf on: ametcalf57@gmail.com

Management Vacancies

The Wardens and Deputies are always on the lookout for capable Freeman to come and help with the management of the guild. The usual starting point is a deputy where you will get to understand how the guild is managed. The time commitment is about 4 meetings per year. The meetings are scheduled to last from 6.00 until 7.30 on a Thursday night usually in the Guild Hall.

We currently have three Deputy Warden vacancies: Butchers, Cordwainers, and Curriers. You do not have to belong to one of the companies to apply as they are open to all. Training will be given once you have been elected.

Come and help us move the Freeman into the future, we are hoping to enhance the Apprentice Award Scheme and to increase member involvement in the organisation. If you are interested, then please get in touch via the secretary.



Any comments on the format, content, and any future ideas you may have for content please get in touch via secretary@durhamcityfreemen.org

This newsletter has been sent to those members who have supplied their e-mail address; however, it is available to view on the website. If you no longer want to receive this newsletter then please contact the Secretary to have your address removed.

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Photographs courtesy of John Attle