Durham City Freemen Newsletter

Martinmas

Issue 17 November 2026

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

Guild News

The Martinmas Guild Day was held on the 2nd November 2026 in the Guild Hall Durham.

First Calls

Alan Drane to be admitted by servitude to Cordwainers
Andrew Scott to be admitted by servitude to Joiners

Second Calls

None

Third Calls

John Tindale was admitted as a Gentleman Freemen to Butchers Company.

Diary Dates For 2027

Warden's Meeting 21st January

Warden's & Trustees Meeting 22nd January

Candlemas Guild Day 1st February

The management committee for the Freemen is set out below.

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

Wardens:		**Deputy Wardens:**	
Bryan Proud	Barbers Company.	Robert Elliott	Barbers Company.
Vincent Syson	Butchers Company.	Vacant	Butchers Company.
John Elliott	Cordwainers Company.	Vacant	Cordwainers Company.
Iain Wilmshurst	Curriers Company.	Vacant	Curriers Company.
Arthur Lockyear	Drapers Company.	Vacant	Drapers Company.
Ann Thurlow	Joiners Company.	David Neale	Joiners Company.
Neil Graham	Masons Company.	Alan Richardson	Masons Company.
Garry Dunnill	Plumbers Company.	Vacant	Plumbers Company

Chair's Report

The Durham City Freemen welcomed members, guests and dignitaries to a successful Martinmas Guild Day, chaired by the Chairman and attended by **The Right Worshipful Mayor of Durham, Councillor Amanda Hopgood, and Deputy Mayor Councillor Eric Mavin**.

A warm welcome was extended to new member **John Robert Tindale**, together with guest speakers **Marc Sermanni** of the Supportive Project and **David Hall** of the Deerness Valley Methodist Church Project.

Members also welcomed **Arthur Lockyear** as Warden of the Drapers Company and **John Elliott** as Warden of the Cordwainers Company. In addition, **Neil Graham** agreed to act as temporary Grassman until a permanent appointment is made. Congratulations were offered to **Bryan Proud** on his re-election as Warden of the Barbers Company and Secretary to the Wardens. His continuing contribution to the organisation was warmly acknowledged.

Members were encouraged to visit the Freemen's website to read recent articles highlighting the achievements of Freemen within the community. These include a remarkable sandstone carving of the historic Sanctuary Ring completed by Steve Mann who is a Freeman and Master Mason for Durham Cathedral, and recognition received by volunteers, including Freemen, involved in life-saving prostate cancer screening initiatives.

The Freemen were also pleased to support the Durham Dogs and Cats Home Fun Day held on The Sands in September. The event proved a great success, bringing together local families and dog lovers, and is expected to return next year.

Planning is already underway for the **2027 Apprentice Awards**, with **John Elliott** taking the lead this year. Thanks were expressed to **Neil Graham**, who has guided the awards programme over recent years.

A successful social evening was recently held at **The Copper Pot Restaurant** at New College Durham, attended by Freemen, Trustees, friends and the Deputy Mayor. The event highlighted the excellent work being undertaken by students training in hospitality and catering.

Members also received an update regarding proposals for the Trustees to move forward as an incorporated trust company. It was emphasised that the proposal relates only to governance and financial administration and would not affect the traditions, values or operation of the Durham City Freemen. Copies of the Special Announcement Newsletter were made available, with members reminded that the process remains under consideration.

The Chairman concluded by highlighting the Freemen's Community Support arrangements, encouraging anyone aware of a Freeman in need of assistance to contact a Warden, Deputy or Bryan Proud. A further appeal was made for volunteers interested in becoming Deputy Wardens, with fresh ideas and new participation always welcomed.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their continued support and contribution to the Durham City Freemen and looked forward to the opportunities and events ahead.

Results of the recent elections

Warden of the Barber's Company

Following the latest election Bryan Proud was re-elected to the post of Warden for another three years.

Warden of the Draper's Company

Following the latest election there was no interest for the post of Warden, but Arthur Lockyear asked to be transferred into the post. The Wardens have agreed to the transfer.

Warden of the Cordwainer's Company

Following the latest election John Elliott was appointed to the post of Warden for Cordwainer's company

Secretary

Bryan Proud has been re-elected to the post of Secretary.



Deputy Wardens Wanted

The Wardens and Deputies are always looking for enthusiastic and capable Freemen who are willing to play a role in the management and future development of the Guild.

The usual starting point is as a **Deputy Warden**, giving you the opportunity to learn how the Guild operates and contribute to its work. The commitment is modest, requiring attendance at approximately **four meetings each year**, normally held in the Guildhall on Thursday evenings from **6.00 pm to 7.30 pm**.

We currently have vacancies for Deputy Wardens representing the following Companies:

Butchers Cordwainers Drapers Curriers and Plumbers

You do **not** need to be a member of any of these Companies to apply, as the positions are open to all Freemen. Full guidance and support will be provided following election.

This is an exciting opportunity to help shape the future of the Durham City Freemen. We are seeking to strengthen our Apprentice Award Scheme, increase member engagement, and ensure that our historic organisation continues to thrive for generations to come.

If you would like to become more involved and make a meaningful contribution, please contact the Secretary for an informal discussion.

Help preserve our traditions, support our community, and play your part in shaping the future of the Durham City Freemen.

Introducing our New Freeman – John Robert Tindale



I was born and bred in Carrville, Durham, I have deep roots in our local community and a strong connection to the traditions and people of the area.

I am not married and do not have children, but my family and life have always been firmly centred around Durham. From an early age, I developed a strong work ethic, beginning my career at just 13 years old as a Saturday lad for Monty Tyson Butchers in Langley Moor.

My passion for butchery led me to Askham Bryan Agricultural College in York, where I formally trained as a butcher. I graduated with distinction and was subsequently selected as one of only seven students nationwide to attend the prestigious Cattleman's Academy. This unique programme travelled across the country, providing advanced training and insight into innovative developments within the livestock and meat industry.

Following my training, I went on to become the manager of Willis Pipers Butchers' Stall in Durham Market Hall. Today, I am proud to serve as Butchery Manager at Broom House Farm Shop, a business that has recently been recognised nationally, winning Best Butcher in the UK at the Countryside Alliance Awards.

Alongside my butchery career, I also operate my own family business. I am the fourth-generation dairyman of Tindale, continuing a proud family tradition through our milk round, delivering milk throughout Durham City and the surrounding areas for many years. Supporting local people and maintaining those valued community connections remains an important part of my life.

I have always been aware of the historic role of the Freemen of Durham, with several family members having been Freemen. I also have close connections with current Freemen through my family and working life, giving me a strong appreciation of the traditions and responsibilities associated with the Freemen's organisation.

Outside of work, I am a passionate supporter and volunteer at Durham City Rugby Football Club. I first played rugby there at the age of nine and have remained involved ever since. While work commitments leave less time to play these days, I continue to support the club whenever possible and remain a strong advocate for grassroots sport and community involvement.

Through my career, family history, and community engagement, I have always been committed to serving Durham and preserving the traditions and values that make our city unique.

Community Support

The Wardens have considered in accordance with our policy a number of requests for the small amount of money that was available to use. They have agreed to support the following;

Supportive Seeks Support for New Recovery Hub in Ferryhill



Supportive, a charity greatly supported by the Durham Freemen last year through a donation to its volunteer programme, is continuing to expand its work across County Durham and beyond.

As a not-for-profit organisation, Supportive provides services throughout County Durham, with some activities reaching people across the UK. The charity is always seeking new ways to strengthen local communities and has recently identified an important opportunity to expand support within the substance misuse sector.

Supportive is planning to establish a **SMART Recovery Hub in Ferryhill**, providing support for individuals affected by drug and alcohol addiction, as well as their families, friends and carers. The organisation recognises that many people living in County Durham's rural communities face difficulties accessing existing recovery services and aims to address this through an expanded patient transport service.

To support this initiative, Supportive has recently welcomed a new Director, an Assistant Psychologist and a Junior Doctor, all with extensive experience in rehabilitation services. Together they will help develop a range of new support programmes, including:

- Transport to and from inpatient rehabilitation services.
- Transport to and from community recovery and support groups.
- The development of the North East's only publicly commissioned residential rehabilitation service.
- A new community hub at Ferryhill offering SMART Recovery programmes.
- Outreach support and health checks for rough sleepers through the charity's vehicle services.

The charity is currently seeking grant funding to help bring this vision to life. Funding would enable the establishment of the SMART Recovery hub in Ferryhill and provide the training required to deliver these vital services.

Supportive has approached the Durham Freemen for assistance and hopes that, with continued support, it can further strengthen the help available to those affected by addiction and other vulnerabilities within our community.

SPA Tuesday: Tackling Loneliness and Building Community



SPA Tuesday is a thriving community group based at Deerness Valley Methodist Church (St Andrew's), Brandon, dedicated to reducing loneliness and social isolation.

The project began following discussions with local Parish Councilors' and wellbeing teams from both the local authority and the NHS. A pilot scheme highlighted a clear need for regular support and social opportunities for people who were isolated in their own homes, leading to the creation of SPA Tuesday.

Today, the group has 56 registered members, with around 40 attending each week. Members range in age from their teens to their nineties and come from a variety of backgrounds, faiths and cultures. There is no exclusion policy, ensuring everyone is welcome.

Many members face physical disabilities, mobility difficulties, anxiety, mental health challenges or other circumstances that can make social interaction difficult. The group helps overcome these barriers by providing transport and support where needed, enabling people to meet others, build friendships and regain confidence.

Meeting every Tuesday from 9.00am to 11.30am, SPA Tuesday offers a warm, safe and welcoming environment. Volunteers are DBS checked, safeguarding trained and available to provide support, companionship and a listening ear over tea, coffee and refreshments.

A varied programme of activities is planned almost a year in advance, focusing on both physical and mental wellbeing. These include:

- Seated exercise sessions twice a month led by a qualified instructor.
- New Age Curling, Boules and other group games that encourage participation and friendly competition.
- Creative workshops using materials such as leather, felt, wax and ceramics.
- Educational talks and presentations on subjects relevant to members' lives.

One of the group's proudest achievements is a large ceramic mosaic depicting Durham Cathedral and the area's mining heritage, designed and created entirely by members. Projects such as these encourage creativity, teamwork and a sense of achievement.

The group is also grateful to the Freemen for their generous grant funding, which will cover the cost of the fitness instructor for the next 12 months, helping to ensure these valuable sessions can continue.

Regular guest speakers include Community Police officers, County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service, local authority representatives and professional advisers covering topics such as scam awareness, home fire safety, recycling, wills and powers of attorney.

Through friendship, support and meaningful activity, SPA Tuesday continues to make a real difference to the wellbeing and quality of life of its members, helping people to stay active, connected and valued within their community.

The Durham Freemen are proud to highlight the valuable work being undertaken by local charities and wish them every success with this important project.

News items on the website

There are three new stories that are very interesting which has involved two of our Freemen. They are available on the website under News.

MANN MAKES HIS MARQUE

PARLIAMENT PRAISES NORTH EAST PUB-BASED CANCER CRUSCADE

PAWS FOR APPLAUSE! DURHAM DOG SHOW DRAWS CROWDS AND RAISES OVER £2,000 FOR ANIMAL RESCUE

Any comments on the format, content, and any future ideas you may have 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