



*Freemen of
England and Wales.*



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With Compliments.*

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<http://www.freemen-few.org.uk>

President's Message.

Dear members,

We have just completed a successful Court meeting the minutes for which are in this journal. Our thanks to Grimsby for hosting the meeting.

This journal includes a centrefold for the AGM in Pembroke. This is for easy removal and completion to send your bookings as early as possible. It will be repeated in the June journal too.

Two items I wish to advise of:-

Firstly, we wish to supplement the services of our Hon. Counsellor by establishing a panel of Solicitors within the Gild structure. I will write separately on this matter, but I would like all Gild Members to consider whether they could nominate a solicitor from within their ranks, or whom they defer to on freemen's matters to be willing to join such a panel to consider any future problems we may encounter.

Secondly, we are embarking upon a constitutional review to ensure the future protection of FEW and its members. Full details of this will shortly be sent to all Gild representatives for consideration before the June Court meeting and will also be included in the website. This is a major review and I urge all members to make the effort to study it carefully.

Best wishes to you all.

Alan Fallows.

President.

Website News.

The FEW website is growing rapidly and contains much information worthy of your attention. Just being added now are papers explaining the history of freemen s lands, their property rights, trusts and charities, and commons / land registration act arguments. These are up-dated papers reflecting the problems to be faced NOW!

<http://www.freemen-few.org.uk>

News From The Guilds.

Shrewsbury.

Shrewsbury Gild confirm that their annual St. Georges Dinner and Service will be held on Saturday and Sunday 16th and 17th April. The dinner, £22.50 per ticket, will be at the Lord Hill Hotel with the Sunday Service at the Abbey Church followed by lunch, £13.50 per person, at Abbotsmead Hotel (hopefully processing between. NB no hills). Anyone wishing further details please let me know on alan.fallows@talktalk.net or tel: 01743 358495 and we will write individually.

Coventry.

On 25th January the **Apprentice of the Year** dinner was enjoyed by 122 members and guests in St Mary's Great hall. In this, the sixth year of the current competition, a record number of applicants from firms such as: Jaguar Land Rover; Unipart Eberspacher; Whitefriars Housing Group; and Coventry City Council was whittled down to five finalists who received £100 and a trophy from our President and Lord Mayor Brian Kelsey. The winner Rebecca Shaw from Jaguar Cars received a £1000 cheque from our Master – the first time a lady apprentice has carried off the top award. It is clear from the interview sessions that schools are not adequately briefing their pupils on alternatives to University – several of our finalists have progressed academically onto University courses funded by their firms – without the burden of tuition fees and with the security of a committed employer. An Endeavour Award of £100 was also presented this year to Ezekiel Belgrave, who had turned his life round from crime to inspiring his peers during his apprenticeship. Our thanks to Enterprise Warden John Wilkinson for his hard work in organising the competition and dinner – and an excellent half page report in the local daily paper.

On 22nd February the **Ladies Night Event** in the Guildhall Crypt started with a very good silver service dinner, and in her speech the Master's Lady Eileen Reynolds commended the fellowship of the Guild. The speaker David Howe then reminded us of the bill toppers at the former Coventry Theatre such as Ken Dodd – Harry Secombe – Peter Sellers – Frankie Howard etc. A romantic gesture for the Ladies this year was a wrapped red rose, besides the usual chocolates – courtesy of new Guild member Ronald Robinson. On 3rd and 4th March as Guild Master I was able to join PM Bob Crane on Coventry's affiliated ship **HMS Diamond pre-commissioning sea trials** off the south coast. Having worked on various naval gas turbines, weapons, and helicopters during my engineering career it was good to see some hardware in action! The Guild looks forward to an official ship visit when schedules allow.

On 13th March the annual **Past Master's Event** was held at the Coventry & North Warwickshire Cricket Club. Over 40 PM's and partners enjoyed an excellent meal and the fellowship of the Guild.
Derek. A. Austin

Warwick Court Leet – Jan/Feb/Mar 2011

A closed Court meeting was held on 27th January in the Jury Street Courthouse, and Juror Mrs Anne Henderson was elected as Interim Bailiff until the Autumn meeting. She replaces Bailiff Higgins who stood down for health reasons at the end of the year. The functions of the Court Leet were reviewed and agreed, with public meetings to be held in March and October.

The Spring meeting was held on 17th March with the Warwick Mayor Cllr Michael Kinson OBE, representing the Lords of the Leet, welcoming visiting Bailiffs from Alcester, Bromsgrove, and Henley-in-Arden Leets, together with the FEW Warden for the South Midlands.

Bailiff Henderson reported that the health of Past Bailiff Higgins was now a real concern, and that he had been admitted to hospital. New Juror Jonathan Wassall took the Leet Oath, and was then presented with his robe and badge by the Mayor. Officer reports from Constables, Ale Taster, Overseers of Buildings and Pavements were then presented. Court and public Presentments were then taken, and formally agreed for the Court Steward to investigate. The Town Crier Competition on 14th May, and Ale Tasting on 22nd June were then confirmed, and the role of Leet Herald is to be reviewed.

Following the closure of the Court, members and guests enjoyed a convivial meal.

Minutes of the Court Meeting held on Saturday 12th March 2011 in the Skills Centre at the Market, Great Grimsby.

1) List of Attendees:

Derek Austin — Coventry; Michael Ayres — Leicester; Richard Bellamy — Grimsby; Eric Critchlow — Leicester; Tony Chettle — Leicester; John Edwards — Stafford; Alan Fallows — Shrewsbury; Roy Folland – Pembroke; Hazel Hague — York; Stephen Healy — Newcastle upon Tyne; Ron Leek — Alcester & London ; James Manship — Leicester; Eileen Reynolds — Coventry; Gordon Vamdell — London; Bridget White — Grimsby; Stephen White — Grimsby; Chris Wilson — Grimsby

Following the Call to Order, the President opened the Court, and welcomed those present. Prayer was pronounced by the Hon. Secretary.

2) Apologies were received from Immediate Past President, Colin Hardcastle;

Hon. Membership Secretary, Eileen Forth; Officer Without Portfolio, Alan Shelley; Hon. Editor, Tom Gibson; Warden for the West, Howard Crapper; Warden for the North West, Leslie Morgan; Brian Simpson, Newcastle-under-Lyme; Ray Mason, Newcastle-under-Lyme; Howard Pate, Chester; and Anthony Piddock, Stafford.

- 3) The minutes of the previous Court Meeting held on 19th June 2010 in Chester, were approved and signed by the President, following the replacement of the word "by" with "amongst" in Item 17.
- 4) Matters Arising: Item 18b. It was noted that as Past President Alan Robson had indicated that he would not be undertaking the role of Chairman of the FEW Trustees, the Executive were actively pursuing the matter, with several names under consideration.
- 5) Alan Fallows presented his President's Report. A copy is appended. Further to this, Alan presented the Hon. Treasurer with a cheque for £200.00, being a donation from the Shrewsbury Guild, for some of the monies advanced by FEW towards the legal costs incurred in establishing certain Freeman's rights.
- 6) Gordon Vardell presented his Deputy President's Report; A copy is appended.
- 7) Stephen White in presenting his Vice President's Report, noted that the website was now operational, and he demonstrated this by showing it on a screen. Referring to the Wardens, he noted that meetings had been held, with a variety of items being discussed. He stated that the Wardens' Handbook was an invaluable tool in fulfilling the role of Warden, and that due to its size, a revised version was being produced, some parts of which will appear on the website.
- 8) Wardens' Reports were presented as follows:-
 - i) Warden for the North, Stephen Healy. Copy appended.
 - ii) Warden for the North East, Colin Hardcastle. In Colin's absence, it was noted that numerous new Lady Freeman had been admitted in Grimsby.
 - iii) Warden for the East, Norman Offield. In Norman's absence no report was available.
 - iv) Warden for Wales, Roy Folland. Copy appended.
 - v) Warden for the North West, Leslie Morgan. In Leslie's absence, his report was read out by Ron Leek; Hon. Secretary.
 - vi) Warden for the West, Howard Crapper. In Howard's absence, his report was read out by the Hon. Secretary.
 - vii) Warden for the North Midlands, John Edwards. Copy appended.
 - viii) Warden for the South Midlands, Derek Austin. Copy append.

It was noted that the idea of offering free initial membership to potential new Guild Members as an incentive to joining FEW, had so far not achieved any

success.

- 9) Stephen White presented his Hon. Treasurer's Report.
The question was raised regarding any increase in FEW subs for Individual Members, and the figures of £10.00 and £12.00 per annum were considered, together with the best method for receipt of these. No decision was arrived at, and the item will be included in the agenda for the next Court Meeting in June, with prior discussion having been undertaken by the Executive.
- 10) In Eileen Forth's absence, her Hon. Membership Secretary's Report was read out by the Deputy President. A copy is appended.
- 11) Alan Fallows' Hon. Archivist's Report was incorporated into his President's Report. See above.
- 12) In Tom Gibson's absence, his report was read out by the Hon. Secretary. Copy appended. It was agreed that future AGM Pro-forma Booking Forms should be included as the two centre pages of the Journal, thus enabling them to be easily detached for use, and also avoiding the necessity for them to be separate attachments with incurred additional costs. It was also suggested that it would be advantageous if this form appeared in both the next Journal and the following one, distributed in advance of the AGM. Roy Folland agreed to send this detail to Tom Gibson on a disc, noting that it must be received prior to the Journal printing deadline. Regarding the Hon. Editor's role, Stephen Healy pointed out that as Editor, Tom must be allowed to edit items as appropriate, and not necessarily be expected to print articles as received. The President responded by stating that as President, it was policy to collaborate with the Hon. Editor in determining the final form of each publication.
- 13) In Alan Shelley's absence, his Officer Without Portfolio's Report was read out by the Hon. Secretary. A copy is appended.
- 14) Having noted the concern expressed by the Newcastle-under-Lyme Burgesses, which as the President reported, was likely due to their misunderstanding of the actual relationship between The Company of Freemen of Trinity House of Newcastle upon Tyne and the Newcastle upon Tyne Stewards Committee (which does not support FEW), the meeting, following a proposal by the President, seconded by the Hon. Secretary, was pleased to ratify by a unanimous vote, the application for membership of FEW from The Company of Freemen of Trinity House, Newcastle upon Tyne.
- 15) Stephen White reviewed the former FEW procedure of presenting medallions to its Past Presidents in recognition of the service that they had rendered to FEW whilst in office, and he proposed its re-introduction. He noted that there is a reserve maintained in the Regalia Fund which could be used for such a purpose. Following discussion, which determined that eligibility for receipt of

a Past President medallion, should only apply to any Past President who has completed the whole presidential term of office (ie: including the period as Immediate Past President), the meeting gave its approval to the proposition, which had been formally seconded by Stephen Healy. Other than medallions for any eligible Past President now out of office, it was agreed that future medallions will be presented at the conclusion of each Immediate Past President's term in office. The Executive was charged with obtaining costings and progressing the matter.

16) Stephen White noted that amongst information to be included on the website, will be Warden's Reports, and such items applicable to the Freedom as those currently submitted by Alan Shelley, Officer Without Portfolio. He also noted that formal FEW e-mail addresses were being established for members of the Executive, and that these too, would be included. He agreed that consultation with the Hon. Editor was part of the input process. The meeting recorded its thanks to Stephen for all his work on getting the website up and running.

17) Any Other Business.

a. Michael Ayres noted that following information received regarding other guild's events, Leicester had reprogrammed its events for 2012 to avoid date clashes, and that their 2012 banquet will be on June 9th

b. Stephen White noted that our current financial year — July to June - was inconvenient. Following discussion, and a proposal from Stephen, seconded by John Edwards, it was agreed that subject to approval from the Charity Commissioners, the year should be altered. run from 1 April to 31 s` March.

c. The President noted that he had sent congratulations for the forthcoming Royal Wedding on behalf of FEW.

d. The President stated that for various reasons, including confusion over the poll voting system, he was proposing that the Constitution should be revised. He circulated copies of his proposals to those present, and will send copies direct to all other guilds, requesting comment, and stating that this will be included as an agenda item for discussion at the June Court, where a formal resolution for any changes agreed would be tabled for ratification at the next AGM.

18) Dates.

The next Court Meeting is provisionally scheduled for June 11• The venue still has to be determined, but Stafford may be able to act as host. Details will appear in the next Journal.

The AGM in Pembroke is from Friday 16th to Sunday 18" September.

President's Report

This report will incorporate the requests to the Archivist to speed up proceedings.

I have been pleased to attend dinners in Chester and Durham in my capacity as President, both of which were very well organised and most enjoyable. In view of the poor weather over the winter I must admit to relief that the season for functions is only now beginning again and I hope to meet as many members as possible over the coming months.

I have recently met with Roy Folland in Pembroke to finalise arrangements for this years AGM and am pleased to report that all is in hand for an excellent event. I will leave Roy to advise further.

The question of admission of ladies rolls on with queries having been received from Cardiff, Northampton, Bridgnorth and Montgomery; and Durham still progressing towards sanction from the Secretary of State which they wish to secure as a safeguard.

The question of land registration nears completion but we await two rulings in separate towns which may effect our outcome. These are referred to in our Officer Without Portfolio report.

Deputy President's Report.

Well once again there is not much I can say about the Deputy Presidents role. That means all is going well leaving me with nothing to do.

This leaves me free to attend a lot of functions throughout the land with different Guilds and societies to promote the Association as much as I can where ever I am.

As reported at our Executive meeting on 15 January 2011 The Company of Freemen of Trinity House Newcastle upon Tyne has put forward for membership of the Freemen of England and Wales. This needs to be ratified by the Court members at this meeting.

Gordon Varndell, Deputy President

Wardens Reports.

Warden for the North: Stephen Healy:

Durham

The Freemen of Durham, although extremely keen to add ladies claiming the hereditary right to their ranks, have an ongoing legal issue which is currently preventing them applying the provisions of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill. The criteria for admission in Durham are outlined in a pie-existing Act of Parliament and the Freemen have been advised that an Order in Council changing that original Act is necessary before they can proceed. Both the Freemen and the Local Authority have written to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to this end but at this time, the matter is still not resolved. In addition to exchanges with Executive Officers of FEW, the Durham Freemen are also in direct contact with their counterparts in Northampton, for whom a similar limitation reportedly exists.

On a positive note, a group of newer, younger Freemen in Durham (their words, not mine!) have recently been expressing a very lively interest in both the public profile and the activities of the City's Freemen, which has resulted in dates being set for a series of meetings, open to all Durham Freemen, at which information will be promulgated and from which ideas and proposals can be taken forward to the Warden's Meetings. This new interest and the establishment of a vehicle to harness it is viewed as very positive and promising for the future of the Freemen of Durham in general.

The Freemen are also in negotiations with the Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral with the aim of sponsoring an Apprentice Tradesman engaged in work within the Cathedral and leading, on successful completion of the indentured term, to him or her becoming a Freeman of the City.

Newcastle upon Tyne:

Through the combined good efforts of the staff of the Lord Mayo's office and the Stewards Committee of the Freemen of Newcastle upon Tyne, 283 Lady Freemen have to date been sworn in, some of which are daughters of ladies already admitted. This has required an extensive programme of special events and indeed this continues, with ceremonies on a frequent basis in the City's Guildhall. The current Lord Mayor of Newcastle upon Tyne, Councillor Brenda Hindmarsh, will have sworn in well over 250 of these ladies during her year of office, a record which I am guessing will stand nationwide for many a year to come. Following swiftly on the heels of the City, a number of individual Companies have started admitting the ladies in their own ceremonies.

Berwick-upon-Tweed:

Berwick upon Tweed have so far sworn in just over 50 ladies through the hereditary route and have three further Freedom Ceremonies planned during 2011. The

Berwick Freemen have their 'Riding the Bounds' at the beginning of May. They also continue their active programme of social events and it is pleasing to note that the relationship with the Court of Deans of Scotland appears to be developing.

Alnwick

The Freemen of Alnwick, as usual, report that they are 'quietly going about their own business'. They have their Annual Guild Meeting coming up shortly and their "Riding the Bounds" in July.

Warden for Wales: Roy Folland.

The Gild of Freemen of Pembroke

As Warden for Wales I was invited to and attended the AGM of the Haverfordwest Gild of Freemen weekend, at which I was invited to speak. This was held in the Chamber of The County Hall, Haverfordwest, present was the Chairman of County Council who gave a welcome speech and the Mayor of Haverfordwest. The venue for the Annual Banquet was the Wolfscastle Hotel, and the Benefactors Service was held at St. Martin's Church on the Sunday, this was followed by a wine reception at St. Martin's Church Hall.

On the 7th October the Master of the Gild joined the Mayors of Pembroke and that of other towns of the County in a procession from the Town Hall to open the St. Michaelmas Fair which is held in the main street of Pembroke.

The Annual General Meeting was held on the 21st October 2010 in the Chamber of the Pembroke Town Council. The proceedings opened with a welcome from the Master, the opening prayers were led by the Chaplain, this was followed by a few personal remarks by the Master. He particularly welcomed Miss Nancy Folland to her first meeting as a Freeman, and read out a letter of thanks received from Mrs Ann Cain of Scotland, for a memorable day on her admission to the Gild of Freemen of Pembroke. During the election of Officers the Master vacated the Chair which was taken by Mr Phil Lloyd for the duration of those proceedings. It was proposed, seconded, and unanimously approved that all Officers should be re-elected en bloc. The Master replied on behalf of the Officers, thanking those present for their continued support.

Treasurers Report. The Treasurer stated that at the end of our financial year The Gild's Funds to be in a healthy position.

On Friday 29th October we learned with great sadness of the passing of one of our most loyal members, Mr W H Pugh, (affectionate known as Bill); he was a retired Dyfed-Powys Police Inspector and former Mayor of Pembroke. A tribute was paid to him by the Mayor of Pembroke, Cllr Keith Nicholas, saying, "He was a very genuine man who devoted so much of his time and energy to helping so many people and through his different roles he did so much for the Pembroke Community". Bill leaves to mourn his devoted wife Elaine, daughter Karen, son-in-law Neil and two granddaughters. His service

to the Community of Pembroke was recognised by the Gild and in 1995 he was invited to become a Burgess of the Gild of Freemen of Pembroke.

The Gild was well represented at the Remembrance Service held at the Pembroke Cenotaph; the Master laid a wreath on behalf of the Gild.

On Sunday 21st November the Gild held their Annual Service at St Michael's Church, the service was led by our Chaplain Canon Roger Jones and the Sermon was taken by our guest Preacher, The Ven G J Davies. This was followed by an excellent luncheon at the Cleddau Bridge Hotel where the honoured guests included the Chairman of Pembrokeshire County Council, Cllr John George, and his Lady, Mrs Sarah George, the Mayor and Mayoress of Pembroke, Cllr Keith Nicholas and Mrs Karen Nicholas, the Mayor of Pembroke Dock, Cllr Mrs Maureen Colgan and the Master of the Haverfordwest Gild of Freemen, Mr Malcolm Green and his Lady, Mrs Janet Green.

Thanking those present for their support, the Master asked the Mayor of Pembroke to convey to his council our grateful thanks for their continued support of the Freemen of Pembroke without which we would have difficulty continuing as a Gild. The Court Meetings will take place at the Pembroke Town Hall on Thursday 17th March, Thursday 21st July and the AGM on Thursday 20th October.

The Freemen of England and Wales AGM Weekend will take place. On Friday 16th September, Saturday 17th September and on Sunday 18th September. All of which will take place at the Cleddau Bridge Hotel, Pembroke Dock, apart from the Visit to Pembroke Castle and the Civic Service on the Sunday which will take place at St. Mary's Church, Pembroke. Mr President, I would like to record my grateful thanks to John, (John Edwards), Deputy Master of Stafford for the information on the hosting of the FEW AGM at Stafford, and for the help and guidance I have received from him. I would also thank the President, who with his Lady, Val, visited Pembroke to check on the arrangements being made for the FEW AGM Weekend. I spent a most pleasant day with them and I would thank the President for his suggestions and guidance. *(Editors note: Booking form included with this issue has one error. Contrary to the table, option "A" does include Hotel (Bed & Breakfast) on the Saturday).*

The setting up of a Gild of Freemen of the City of Swansea

This is ongoing and Mr. David Rosser-Owen has been in touch recently to say that he has checked the Roll of Freemen and is now in a position to make contact with the named Freemen of the City of Swansea. I think that David has made an excellent job with the letters of introduction and the reasoning and importance of setting up a Gild of Freemen of the City of Swansea. He should be congratulated on the time spent and for his endeavours in setting up this Gild.

Llantrisant Town Trust

April sees the closing date of the acceptance of applications of those who wish to be considered to be enrolled as Freemen at the meeting of the Court Leet which will be held on Friday 13th May 2011. This will be followed by the Annual Court Leet Dinner.

Last year saw 47 Freemen from all parts of the world being enrolled. In 1966 the Accounts Book went missing, it was found inside a tea chest in a garage by one of the Freemen and returned, although the contents were still legible, the accounts book with the Roll of Freemen Book have now been rebound at a cost of £300.00 each book. The accounts were of great interest, which included the date that the book was purchased in 1873 at a cost of 18/6d.

Laugharne Corporation

In view of the fact that I had not received a reply to my original letter and speaking to their Mayor, concerning their membership of the FEW, he suggested that I write again, this I did. I received a letter from the Recorder, stating that my letter had been discussed at the meeting of the Grand Jury and the decision taken, was that they would not be renewing their Membership of the FEW.

Warden for the North West: Leslie Morgan.

Since our last meeting at Berwick-upon-Tweed I have attended the Michaelmas Assize of the Barony of Dunham Massey (Altrincham) on 25th September, the Hale Freemen's Business Meeting on 21st October, followed by the Hale Freemen's Lancashire Evening on 24th November.

On January 24th along with Paul, I attended the Annual Court of the Ancient and Honourable Corporation of Hale (1304) at which three new Freemen were admitted, one of whom I am glad to say has now joined our ranks.

I fear that lack of transportation precludes me from coming along to Great Grimsby, and I sincerely thank our worthy Secretary for presenting this report on my behalf, also it is highly unlikely that I will be able to get along for this year's Annual General Meeting, distance and travelling time being against us! However, we hope to be in York for the 2012 meeting at which I hope to be in a position to report on the 2012 Preston Guild which Paul and I will be attending on 2nd and 3rd of September 2012, although by then, being in my 84th year, I sincerely hope that "The Grim Reaper" will not have cut me down in the prime of life!!!

Warden for the West: Howard Crapper .

The Local Democracy Bill has brought the first Lady Freemen Admissions and celebrations to both the Chartered Freemen of the City of Gloucester and the Freemen of the Forest of Dean . This liberation has brought great joy to many families through the West .

I was warmly welcomed to the excellent Annual Dinner of the Freemen of Gloucester at the Mercers Hall in November. I was delighted to be accompanied by both my wife Shirley and fellow Freeman of Oxford, David Barson and his wife.

The Freemen of Oxford now have over forty Lady Freemen since the change of the local rules of admission nearly three years ago. Three of whom are now part of the

Freemen General Committee .

Oxford Freemen are also pleased to see the importance of Apprenticeships being highlighted nationally , as great store is placed in the Annual Oxford Freemen Apprentice Awards . The October event was very successful with six section winners and all covered by local television news.

The Freemen of Oxford enjoyed their sell out Annual Dinner at Balliol College in December. Both the Lord Mayor and the City Sheriff were in attendance and spoke after dinner.

Chiltern Railway plan to upgrade the line which runs adjacent to the Oxford Port Meadow . While Freemen are pleased to see an improvement in the railway service to London , there has been Freeman representation at the local inquiry in Oxford. The Freemen are determined that planned works and future running of the system do not interfere in any way with the delicate and fragile natural setting of the historic Port Meadow.

I would like to place on record the huge effort to gather tremendous technical and historic data and present this information at the Inquiry in the most professional manner. Our own Alison Cobb stood her ground with the Inspector as the Chiltern Railway QC used all his vast resources to slap down all our observations and objections. Some useful concessions have been wrought from this process but the Inspector is not due to issue his final report until April .

May I also use this report to thank our Executive member without portfolio , Alan Shelly , where his experience with this very situation is so valuable and appreciated .

Warden for the North Midlands:John Edwards.

One day something that I tackle will go smoothly and then I shall begin to worry. Happily, after a slow start,I have now established communication with four of the five member guilds in my area and several of the individual members, but still no response from Bridgnorth.

I sent out introductory letters and Christmas cards to all the people listed when I took office and I have also written to new members to introduce myself and offer any assistance I may be able to give. To date nobody has requested such help and a few actually replied to my request for e-mail addresses to avoid future costs, but the majority have not given any response. This is about par for the course, but it is a little disheartening.

On the plus side, Shrewsbury Gild has invited me to several events, but I have been only been able to attend the one detailed in my last report. They are clearly well organised, as one may expect with the current president as a member.

Stafford Guild is the one with which I am obviously best acquainted. It has two main functions, one to provide a social and communications forum for the Burgesses of the borough, and the other to monitor the appointment and function of the trustees of the

freemen's lands. The former function is run by a Guild Council of about 12 members and they have organised a variety of events and attended civic functions like the remembrance parade and mayor making celebrations. However, the turn out has not been great, probably due to poor communications. Since my appointment as Master in November, I have tried to address this matter. Now that we have a membership secretary, who is making progress correlating a host of out of date lists, we should be better placed to increase our numbers. We hope to move up from the 40 or so currently active members by tapping into the 200+ burgesses that we believe to exist.

The infamous Stafford hospital enquiry has taken over various committee rooms including that which we normally use, so we have found ourselves of no fixed abode'. As there has been a new building erected on the Freemen's allotments, it seemed the obvious place to meet. However, getting there in the pitch dark had its drawbacks and the fact that for two meetings the generator failed hate way through, made life interesting. We suddenly have suddenly become in tune with our freemen forbears in holding our meetings by candle light. Quite romantic really!

The Annual Meeting of Burgesses, chaired by the Mayor, duly took place and twelve good men and true were elected to oversee our assets for another year. We still have not been able to meet the borough council officials to discuss changes to our rules, but as there is no material gain involved, there seems to be little interest from potential new burgesses. We have appointed an honorary public relations expert to hopefully raise our profile locally.

I was delighted to be invited to the annual payout day by the Burgess Trustees of Newcastle- under-Lyme. This was to be a formal affair with the mayor in attendance etc. I noticed on the local TV news, the night before, that there had been a fire in the town, but thought little of it. When arrived at St Giles's church there was much consternation as the church, which backs on to the then smouldering remains of the 'Poundstretcher' store, had been cordoned off until early that morning. This fact let to a variety of speculations and misinformation that the event had been cancelled. In the event, the trustees, who had definitely not cancelled the payout, plus myself, (resplendent in our robes), oversaw the distribution of money to some hundred of so of the 250+ recipients of the benefit. All these folk were grateful that something as trivial as a store fire did not phase the Newcastle burgess trustees. This occasion gave me the chance to learn a lot more about this group of freemen, which was very pleasant and enlightening.

The Freemen of Derby have not yet invited me to an event, but they did draw my attention to an ongoing problem over FEW regalia and produce, which I trust will be resolved at this court or in the near future. I support their view that any measures to raise the profile of FEW should be encouraged, not presented with stringent rules.

At least there has now been some activity by the FEW Warden for the North Midlands, which has been sadly lacking in recent years. Whether it turns out to be beneficial remains to be seen!

Warden for the South Midlands: Derek Austin.

As the **Coventry** and **Leicester Gilds**, and the **Warwick Court Leet** events are currently reported in the Journal's columns, I shall just cover a few of their highlights first.

The **Coventry Freeman's Guild** banquet weekend will start on Friday 6th May with a welcoming 'get together' at the Days Hotel (formerly the Aston Court). Reservations and discounted accommodation details are available from PM Rod King on 024-7630-3065, or e-mail rodkingster@googlemail.com Saturday 7th May will see the formal banquet and change of Officers in St Mary's Guildhall, with 'Freemen's Sunday' on 8th May having a robed procession to the Guild Church of Holy Trinity to install the Guild Chaplain, with a sherry reception afterwards in the Council House. Banquet tickets are available from George Wilkinson on 024-7646-3203.

Leicester Freeman's Guild has seen over 110 ladies admitted to the Freedom since the change in the law, but I am advised that only four have taken up Gild membership so far. There may be scope here for a targeted marketing leaflet. In Coventry we give new Freeman free Guild membership for a year. Following their successful 2010 event, the Leicester Gild banquet weekend starts with a fish & chip supper on Friday 24th June at the Freeman's Holt, with the Saturday banquet at the Devonshire Place venue. The Sunday church service will be at Leicester Cathedral. Ticket and hotel details are available from Roger Allen on 01530-831151, or e-mail rogerallen8@ntlworld.com

Warwick Court Leet has their next open meeting now rescheduled to 17th March in the Jury Street Courthouse.

Northampton Freeman's Guild progress with the admittance of ladies to the Freedom made a promising start, with our President's guidance, with over 75% in favour on the Freeman's poll. However, the borough solicitor as of this week wants Secretary of State approval for any revision to the Northampton Act – and apparently regards the Freeman as a private club – so will not act. This is where the authoritative guidance of a FEW Counsel, like Charles Sparrow, would no doubt move progress.

Alcester Court Leet have their activities well reported on website www.alcestercourtleet.co.uk Their recent church procession behind High Bailiff Nick Dearling and the Alcester Silver Band, included cubs, scouts, beavers and guides etc – so the next generation is well aware of the vital role the Court Leet plays in the town's heritage.

Henley-in-Arden Court Leet under their new High Bailiff John Rutherford has a full set of gowned Officers and programme of events. Court Leet Day on 11th June will enact the Assizes of bread, fish, ale and flesh tasting – all in gowns with due ceremonial. The potential closure of the County Library in the Guildhall ground floor could give a significant drop in maintenance revenue for this medieval gem.

Honorary Membership Secretary's Report.

Guilds

Currently we have 40 Guilds on the books. Five Guilds are in arrears.

Individual Membership

The current membership stands at 405.

Since September 2010

We have had 7 individual new members
3 members that we know of have died
6 members have resigned

Current payments

Late payments, again I have to say reminders are being sent out constantly.
In saying this we have only 21 members in arrears.

The Breakdown

April 2009 to April 2010 and April 2010 to April 2011 (4 members in arrears)
Sept 2009 to Sept 2010 and Sept 2010 to Sept 2011 (1 member in arrears)
April 2010 to April 2011 (7 members in arrears)
Sept 2010 to Sept 2011 (9 members in arrears)

The Majority of these pay by standing order and that has been stopped. The assumption from this is either the member has passed away or resigned without informing us.

Eileen Forth.

New Members since February 2011.

Mr. R.C. Duff. Freeman of Alcester Court Leet.

Mr. J.T.A. McGorry. A Freeman of Hale.

Hon. Editors Report

Firstly my apologies for not being present at the court meeting.

The last issue of the journal has once again been well received from feedback, including comment on the change of font used, I have received. It was however about 10 day's later than it should have been. This was due to members of the executive asking me to delay in order that they could send me articles for it. This is becoming a real difficulty as I endeavour to accommodate the requests. Could I please reiterate that it is important that articles are received by me on the date published in each journal at the latest, this date is usually a few days after the meeting the journal follows. Copy and or images for the next issue, No. 166, should reach me no later than 20/3/11 please.

It appears that there will be a further rise to the cost of postage applied by Royal Mail from April this year. This will mean a rise in distribution costs of the Journal. If anyone is still receiving surplus copies of the journal could they please inform the Hon. Membership Secretary who furnishes me with the labels.

Tom Gibson.

Report to F.E.W. From the Officer Without Portfolio. **Freemen's Land and Property Rights**

I have recently given some attention to the following:

1) Durham - where the freemen have herbage rights over eight acres of land known as 'The Sands'. In order to gain greater protection, the freemen requested a profit à prendre be recorded under the Land Registration Act 2002. This has been rejected on the grounds that the grazing rights are capable (and are indeed) registered under the Commons Registration Act 1965.

2) Oxford - where the freemen have grazing rights over 300 acres of land primarily known as Port Meadow'. A recent proposal by Chiltern Railways, to develop their service track, was negotiated with the City Council (who are the registered proprietors of the land), ignoring the interests of the freemen. Every initiative is being applied to establish the title and the importance of the freemen's overriding interests in this land.

3) Shrewsbury - where the freemen (burgesses) have anciently held rights over land known as 'The Quarry'. The freemen, wishing to register their rights under LRA 2002, sought legal advice before proceeding. The lawyers have advised against any likelihood, sighting the problems resulting from the Huntingdon débâcle (see more later). My view here is that Shrewsbury Freemen should apply for registration under the Commons Act

2006.

4) Sudbury - where the freemen have grazing rights over some 115 acres of meadow land. To gain greater protection, under LRA 2002, my application to register profits à prendre were rejected 'being that the rights were "capable of registration under the Commons Registration Act 1965", as they are indeed.

It is dear that Freeman's rights over land recorded under the CRA 1965 are unable (themselves) to register with the Land Registry.

Registration of land with rights can achieve first registration under LRA 2002 (if not already registered under CRA 1965) by arrangement with the owner/proprietor. That may be a local authority or charitable trust

Unregistered land (waste of the manor) may be capable of registration under the Commons Act 2006.

The future of freemen's land and property rights has been greatly influenced by the Huntingdon Freeman's case Pegg v Lamb 1993.

It would appear that freemen's 'grazing rights' in gross (held personally) where head payments made by letting to graziers (in lieu of exercising rights) may be in jeopardy. DEFRA, in their dealings with commoners and common-lands have shown a disinterest in freemen's ancient rights. The Charities Commissioners have made it dear that benefits must be shared with society at large.

Arbitration will be limited as the Common Lands Commissioners are being disbanded due to cuts of the Con/Lib Coalition. Generally, new legislation seeks to remove grey areas and appears to discourage customary traditions - Freeman beware!

Alan Shelley for March 2011 Meeting.

Notices from the Hon Secretary.

Nominations for Executive Officers 2011-2012

In accordance with the 2008 AGM directive, nominations for Executive Officers for the year September 2011 to September 2012, are now requested. All offices, except that of the President, who holds office for two years, are open for nomination. A nomination form is included in this Journal. The closing date by which I must have received all nominations, again in accordance with the 2008 directive, is the 11th June, the date of the next Court Meeting, the last before the AGM. This is also detailed on the nomination form itself, which may be photocopied if preferred.

Nominations will be published in the July edition of the FEW Journal, together with the accompanying statements from new nominees standing for election — see the nomination form for details. Statements for those existing members of the Executive standing for re-election, will not be re-published, but will be referenced by the noting of the edition of the Journal previously containing them, thereby saving on space and costs. As determined by the 2008 AGM directive, the July publication of nominations, should allow sufficient time for full consideration by all member guilds prior to the AGM in September.

2011 AGM Voting Procedure for Election of Executive Officers

This will be by Ballot. Postal votes will be allowable.

Court Meeting June 2011

Notice is hereby given to all Guild Representatives, Wardens and the Executive, that the next FEW Court Meeting (kindly being hosted by the Stafford Guild) will be held at 2.00pm on Saturday 11 June 2011, Venue details to be confirmed and published on the F.E.W. Website when available. Gowned and/or badged attendance is preferred.

AGENDA:-

- 1) Attendees to sign register and be seated.
 - a) Call to order and President's Procession into meeting.
 - b) Opening of Court, and Welcome.
- 2) Apologies for absence.
- 3) Minutes of the Court Meeting held on Saturday 12th March 2011 in the Skills Centre, the Market, Great Grimsby. These minutes are published in this Journal (No 166).
 - a) Approval of Minutes.
- 4) Matters arising, not forming any other part of this agenda.
- 5) President's Report.
- 6) Deputy President's Report.
- 7) Vice President's Report.
- 8) Wardens' Reports.
- 9) Hon. Treasurer's Report.
- 10) Hon. Membership Secretary's Report.
- 11) Hon. Archivist's Report.
- 12) Hon. Editor's Report.
- 13) Officer Without Portfolio's Report.
- 14) Constitutional changes.
- 15) Subscriptions.
- 16) Website.
- 17) Any Other Business.
- 18) Dates and Venues.
- 19) Closure of Court, and President's Withdrawal Procession

Freemen of England and Wales

Election of Executive Officers to serve for the year 2011— 2012

NOMINATION FORM

Any nomination, properly proposed on this form, must be received by the Hon. Secretary on or before Saturday 19th June 2010, being the date of the Court Meeting immediately preceding the AGM. This must be accompanied by the following:-

- 1) A statement from the candidate in not more than 150 words, detailing experience within the Freedom validating the candidate's suitability to fulfil the nominated office.
- 2) A short prospectus from the candidate in not more than 50 words, detailing his or her aims in furthering the constitutional objectives of FEW.
- 3) A short statement by the principal proposer in not more than 100 words, supporting the suitability of the candidate to serve FEW in the nominated office.

We the undersigned propose

A Freeman of

For election to the position of
of the Association of Freemen of England and Wales for the period 2011 — 2012.

Proposer..... (sign)

Secunder..... (sign)

I....., declare that if elected, I am willing to serve as
of the Association of Freemen of England and Wales for the period 2010 — 2011

Signed.....

FEW Hon. Secretary, Ronald E. Leek, Richmond House, Beech Close,
Oversley Green, Alcester, Warwickshire, B49 6PP.

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Closing date for items for the next issue (No. 167) 20/6/11.

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