



Special Edition

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In this issue we celebrate four new Freemen into the Durham City Freemen.

Robert Harold James Caulkin-Neale, (Joiners Company)



Photo: left to right Rita Brown, Ann Thurlow, Mayor Liz Brown, Robert Caulkin-Neale, David Neale and Chair Garry Dunnill

A Family, whose modern-day footprint on the freemen's seven centuries of history is near impossible to match, established a generational "quadruple" first at this year's November Guild Day.

Joiners' Company warden Ann Thurlow, accompanied by her 43-year-old son David, were among the first to congratulate her grandson, Robert Caulkin-Neale, when he completed the "treble" after being sworn in at the colourful Martinmas ceremony in the town hall. And great grandmother Rita, now in her mid-80s, was present to round off the Brown family's "four-in-a-row" achievement.

Ann's dad Jim Brown started the trend, completing the family's first living "treble" when, in 1957 at the age of 22, he followed in the footsteps of his father Charles and grandfather William, a master joiner, who was inducted in 1908. When Jim died suddenly, in 2008, his role as joiners' warden was filled by his son Robert, who by then had already scored another hat-trick with son Darren and dad Jim. Robert sadly passed away in 2018.

Changes in Equality Laws in 2010 ended the freemen's ancient men-only culture and two years later Ann became a freeman. Two years after that she was installed as the first woman warden.

Eight years ago, it was Rita's turn to make her mark when she was one of the first two candidates to become a Lady Freeman.

Currently nearly half of the membership of the 42-strong Joiners' Company is made up of Browns and other members of their extended family.

Ann, currently a part-time bus driver working for Durham High School, started her PSV driving career in 1988. Robert, who is 19, is training to be a chef and is in his third year at Darlington College.

"To have living relatives from four successive generations at the same swearing in ceremony is, we believe, a record in Durham. It made it a very special day for us, something we will long be proud of," said Ann.

"The freemen and their long-standing traditions were drummed into me from being a little girl and I was told of the powers they enjoyed long ago. I hope to see Robert's cousin Chloe, who is thirteen and her eleven-year-old brother Kieran joining us as soon as they are old enough," she added.

William Abby Clark, (Curriers Company)



A Close-knit family of showmen, whose Easter fun fair has been a popular feature on the city's Sands for many decades, have opened a new chapter in their links to the freemen with the admission of William Abie Clark into the Currier's Company.

Twenty-year-old William's great uncle, Luke Jobson, widely known as "Chicka," led the way. His paternal grandfather

Bill Clark, Luke's oldest nephew, maintained the link and was in turn followed by William's 52-year-old dad, also called William.

The family business, William H Clark and Son, is based in Hetton-le-Hole and provides fairground entertainment across the north east region. However, during the early part of each year they travel to south Wales and spend several weeks with extended family, relatives of his mum Emma, before making the long trip back to Durham in time for Easter.

William attended Hetton Lyons Primary and Shotton Hall Comprehensive schools before joining the business to which he has been dedicated since his early teens. He recently qualified as a Class 1 HGV driver. He has a sister, Emilia, who is sixteen.

Sybil Jean Charlton (Drapers Company)



FORMER school cook Sybil Charlton restored her family's broken links to the freemen when she was sworn-in at the same ceremony.

Seventy-five-year-old Mrs Charlton was just 30 when she started work in the kitchens of Langley Park's primary school where her eldest son, Lee, was a pupil.

She was later appointed head cook and went on to provide catering services in county council-run civic centres, police headquarters and other schools before ill health forced her to retire in the 1990s.

Her maternal grandfather, Joseph Vasey, was admitted into the Drapers' Company, a lead which was followed by her father Robert and his brothers Joe and John. Her uncle, Arthur Metcalfe, was Durham City Council's Sword Bearer for a number of years.

Son Lee, now 53, works for Jet2, while her youngest son John (51) is an electronics specialist living in Lancaster. She has three grandchildren and two great grandchildren and still lives in Langley Park with husband William.

Geoffrey Keith Newton, (Masons Company)

WEARSIDER Geoff Newton, born during the Second World War, still has vivid early memories of searchlights scouring the night sky for enemy planes over the city where his father was a fish and game merchant.

His sporting prowess at primary school led to a place at Worksop College where he was a member of the school's cricket, rugby and hockey teams. He went on to play rugby for Durham County's under 19s and into league cricket, rugby and hockey for Sunderland.

His ambition to become a chartered civil engineer started with a four-year sandwich degree course at Sunderland Technical College in 1962 - his time split equally between lectures and tutelage under the direction of Durham County Council Surveyor W.H.B Cotton.



He subsequently became an assistant resident engineer during the construction of the Durham Motorway and the A19 Sunderland Bypass. During his 40 years with the council, he helped prepare the Durham County Structure Plan after Local Government Reorganisation in 1974, worked on traffic management schemes, prepared evidence for public inquiries and was involved in highway and winter maintenance management.

When he retired, he joined Bullens Consulting Engineers at Neville's Cross, where for four years he prepared contracts for road schemes across the region and evidence into the cause of fatal accidents.

For the past 57 years he has lived at Belmont with wife Kathy, a trained physical education teacher who initially worked in Sunderland. She was later invited to teach blind and partially sighted children at Belmont Comprehensive - where, after completing a course at Birmingham University, she stayed for 23 years. The couple have two children, daughter Diane, son Christopher and four grandchildren.

Geoff, a former chairman of Dunelm Round Table and past president of Durham 41 Club is a chartered member of both the Institutions of Civil Engineers and Highways and Transportation.

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