



## Candlemas

Issue 8

February 2025

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

### Guild News

The Martinmas Guild Day was held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2025 in the Committee Room 1 County Hall.

**First Calls**

Daryl Metcalf (Cordwainers) to be admitted via Patrimony

**Second Calls**

None

**Third Calls**

None

#### Diary Dates

**Wardens & Deputies 6<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

**Wardens 24<sup>th</sup> April 2025**

**May Guild Day 14<sup>th</sup> April 2025**

The management committee for the Freemen is set below.

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

**Wardens:**

Bryan Proud  
Mac Williams  
Alan Metcalf  
Iain Wilmshurst  
Dave Howard  
Ann Thurlow  
Neil Graham  
Garry Dunnill

Barbers Company.  
Butchers Company.  
Cordwainers Company  
Curriers Company.  
Drapers Company.  
Joiners Company.  
Masons Company.  
Plumbers Company.

**Deputy Wardens:**

Vacant  
Vincent Syson  
Vacant  
Vacant  
Trevor Carter  
David Neale  
Alan Richardson  
Arthur Lockyear

Barbers Company  
Butchers Company.  
Cordwainers Company  
Curriers Company  
Drapers Company  
Joiners Company  
Masons Company  
Plumbers Company

## Chair Report

Firstly we need to recognise the death of the following Freeman since our last Guild Day:-

Sir Paul Douglas Nicholson lived in Brancepeth, joined the Masons Guild 4<sup>th</sup> August 2003 through Customary route.  
Alan Ribchester MBE lived in Durham, joined the Cordwainer Guild 4<sup>th</sup> Feb 2019 as a Gentleman Freeman.

It has been a quiet time since our last Guild Day on the 4<sup>th</sup> Nov. Our yearbook (Durham City Freemen) has now been sent out and everyone should have received a copy. We have been told by a few of our members that the envelope had been opened and if this applies to you, we would be grateful if you could let us know as we need to report this to the Post Office

The Charitable Trust have also sent out their yearbook and everyone by now should have received a copy, if for some reason you have not, please contact us and we will arrange to send one out.

The next Guild Day is to be brought forward from the 12<sup>th</sup> May to the 14<sup>th</sup> April at a venue still to be decided. (Once we know for definite, we will let you know via the website and email.) Let's hope the Lammas Guild Day on the 4<sup>th</sup> August will be back in our home the Town Hall.

We have cancelled the Apprentice Awards for this year as we feel the only true venue for this event is the Town Hall, which will not be available.

The annual dinner has been cancelled this year due to lack of interest. What is going on with the Freemen? that very few are interested in this. Why become a Freeman if you are not wanting to be involved in some way, by attending functions or Member meetings, you do not have to be a Warden or a Deputy Warden. But if the Membership do not give us some ideas of the type of events they would wish us to organise then events will cease to exist. This is where we need help from a cross section of the Membership covering all ages.

The Charitable Trust have donated to the following since our last Guild Day:-

Three foodbanks operating from Waddington Street, Old Elvet and Gilesgate Moor they are part of a network of 27 distribution points managed by Durham Christian Partnership.

An independently run Mental Health Charity run in Waddington Street Centre.

Broom House Farm have an apprentice being trained by one of our Freemen, Vincent Syson.

I hope these have covered all of the donations as I took these from the website, and I have given them their correct names.

We are checking several Freeman that are celebrating 60 years or more and will be contacting them over the next few months.

Now moving on we have: - **Bob Elliott Joined the Freeman on 8<sup>th</sup> February 1965 in the Mason Company.**

What an honour for me to be able to acknowledge his 60 years of service, what a major milestone. We have been fortunate that Bob has been a very active member over the years and carried out many roles within the Freemen, Membership Secretary, and Warden and he will have seen many changes over the years. It would be great for the Wardens of today to be able to access the knowledge of all our long-standing members, as I am sure today's problems will have been covered in the past.



## Town Hall Closure

With the closure of the Town Hall several of our meetings have had to be moved to a new location. The Candlemas Guild Day was moved to the Committee Room 1 in the County Council building. The Wardens and Deputies meetings have been moved to The Story building at Mount Oswald. The next May Guild Day is to be in The Story.

## BOB'S ANOTHER "DIAMOND" IN THE CROWN OF LONGEVITY



BOB Elliott has joined the freemen's celebrated "band of brothers" by reaching a 60-year membership milestone – adding to the already notable claims of two of his grandchildren.

At the February Guild Day Garry Dunnill, chairman of the wardens, marked the occasion by paying tribute to the Elliott family and, in particular, their special place in the 21<sup>st</sup> century history of the organization.

"It's a great honour to be celebrating this occasion with Bob. Bob has 60years of experience / knowledge of the workings of the Freeman and we should be making good use of this. As with lots of things in life most problems have cropped up before and the answers from the past can help today." said Garry.

Eighty-six-year-old Bob, whose family links to the guilds stretch back to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, took up a career that helped add his personal mark on the city.

After leaving the Johnston Grammar School he trained as an electrical engineer with the then North Eastern Electricity Board and led projects which replaced many of the city's high voltage mains and included reconstruction of sub stations. He followed his dad, Tommy, into the Masons' Company in 1964 and was appointed warden in 2012.

Bob went on to become NEEB's senior engineer in the North Tyne Region and in his five years before retirement was responsible for negotiating contracts for nuclear and renewable electricity on behalf of twelve regional power companies.

A decade ago granddaughter Beth was believed to be the youngest freemen in Britain when she was sworn-in at the age of 18 years and 211days – following in the footsteps of dad John.

Just three years later her younger brother Jack, then preparing to sit his A-levels, completed a unique double when he too became a member of the Masons' Guild. But he failed to better his sister's record, falling short by 16 days.

In the passing years Beth has since qualified as a doctor and is currently based in Leicestershire where she begins her GP training in the summer. Jack completed an Open University degree in business studies during Covid and has since joined Nissan as a logistics specialist.

Other members, all members of the Drapers' Company, who have already celebrated their 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary include:- Roger Lewis Allison (1963); John Frederick Vasey (1963); Roland Vest (1963) and Alan Hepburn (1964).

The freemen's oldest member, Mrs Connie Hotchkiss, was aged 92 and believed the country's oldest newcomer when she followed her father Frederick, brother Fred and nephew Michael into the Masons' Company in 2014.

Connie, who will celebrate her 103<sup>rd</sup> birthday in September of this year, is linked to the Elliott dynasty through her paternal grandfather Joseph Elliott (1841 to 1893), a master mason from Gilesgate. He in turn was younger brother of John Elliott (1837 to 1873) who was Bob's great grandfather.

Neil Graham Warden of the Masons' said "Bob has always been a passionate supporter of Durham City Freemen and a tireless advocate for preserving their history and heritage while ensuring they are well-prepared to meet any challenges the future may bring."



## Management Vacancies

The Wardens and Deputies are always on the lookout for capable Freemen 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: Barbers, Cordwainers and Curriers. You do not have to belong to one of the companies to apply as they open to all. Training will be given once you have been elected.

Come and help us move the Freemen 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](mailto: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.