



## Lamas

Issue 4

August 2024

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

### Guild News

The Lamas Day guild day was held on the 5<sup>th</sup> of August in the Guild Hall in Durham.

#### First Calls

Gareth Vincent Allison (Drapers) to be admitted via Patrimony

#### Second Calls

Robert Harold James Caulkin, (Joiners Company), to be admitted via Patrimony.

William Abby Clark, (Curriers Company), to be admitted via Patrimony.

Geoffrey Keith Newton, (Masons Company), to be admitted via Servitude.

#### Third Calls

Charlotte Victoria Middleton, (Joiners Company), to be admitted via Patrimony

Patrick Stephen Conway OBE (Cordwainers Company) to be admitted via Gentleman Freemen

The management committee for the Freemen is set below.

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

#### Wardens:

|                 |                      |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| Bryan Proud     | Barbers Company.     |
| Mac Williams    | Butchers Company.    |
| Theresa Ford    | Cordwainers Company. |
| Iain Wilmshurst | Curriers Company.    |
| Dave Howard     | Drapers Company.     |
| Ann Thurlow     | Joiners Company.     |
| Neil Graham     | Masons Company.      |
| Garry Dunnill   | Plumbers Company.    |

#### Deputy Wardens:

|                 |                      |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| Alan Metcalf    | Barbers Company      |
| Vincent Syson   | Butchers Company.    |
| Gary Bankhead   | Cordwainers Company. |
| Vacant          | Curriers Company     |
| Trevor Carter   | Drapers Company      |
| David Neale     | Joiners Company      |
| Alan Richardson | Masons Company       |
| Arthur Lockyear | Plumbers Company     |

#### Diary Dates

**Wardens and Deputies 12<sup>th</sup> September**

**Annual Dinner 26<sup>th</sup> October 2024**

**Martinmas Guild Day 4<sup>th</sup> November 2024**



## Apprentice Group Report

Following on from Durham City Freeman's prestigious second Apprentice Award Celebration, it is now time to start planning for next year's event!

Over the last two years the Freeman have been able to present twenty-two apprentices with awards for excellence in their chosen trade, recognising the talent, skill and commitment they have shown as part of their training and on the job work experience.

Moving forward, it is hoped that the Freeman's apprentice awards programme can be expanded to encourage smaller businesses, colleges and other organisations to nominate their apprentices for an award, helping to highlight and reward excellence, whilst building closer links between the Freeman and local commerce.

If you think that Durham City Freeman's apprentice award programme is something that you would like to be part of, and are interested in being part of a small working group to help organise next year's awards, or if you would just like to know more, please get in touch by emailing [deputychair@durhamcityfreemen.org](mailto:deputychair@durhamcityfreemen.org)



## Chair Report

First of all, I need to correct a couple of items from our last Guild Day in May. Eric Bulmer resigned as Membership Secretary, and I need to give thanks for all his hard work and service over the years. I would also like to wish him a speedy recovery after one or two recent health problems.

I would like to apologise for not formally welcoming, Mary Dufton to the last guild day.

I would like to welcome Mayor Liz Brown, to her first guild day. I hope your term of office has started without any problems and you enjoy the year ahead. It was a privilege to be invited to your Mayor Making Ceremony at the Town Hall to witness how such things are performed.

At this stage I would like to welcome our two new Freeman, Charlotte Victoria Middleton admitted by Patrimony into the Joiners Guild and Patrick Stephen Conway OBE admitted as a Gentleman Freeman into the Cordwainers Guild, hope both will attend future Guild Days, Members Meeting along with other functions throughout the year. Mac Williams sent me a little bit of information about Patrick, he became one of our Trustees in 2011 to replace my late Father-in-Law Col Raymond Hirst MBE TD, it's a small world Patrick.

After developing our website John Booth has stepped down from his post as Web Manager and I would like to thank John for all his work, with the website.

Following on from our Guild Day in May our Charitable Trust have made donations to :-

Go The Distance, to help teenagers find work through education sport and confidence.

Coxhoe Village Hall, to help with work on the main doors.

Amber Bee Community Interest Company that will be helping 14 local primary schools with support to children going into secondary education.

Further information about these are on the Web site.

We have recently started producing a newsletter that we emailed to our members, this has been well received and we have had some very complimentary letters and comments saying how good it is to be kept informed of all the current news. We hope this will help us engage, with all our members young and not so young.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> June we were invited to the lighting of the beacon by the parish council to commemorate the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 'D Day Landings'

We held our 2<sup>nd</sup> Apprentice Awards presentation on the 28<sup>th</sup> June in the Town Hall.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> July I had a meeting with Gillian Kirkbride DCC Heritage Venue & Collection Manager for Culture Sports and Tourism and Alice Thurman Chair of the Trustees. Gillian is going to check and update the inventory of all the silver and pictures within the Guild Hall and provide ideas on cleaning, storage and security systems.

I had a meeting with our friends from Berwick Freeman on the 6<sup>th</sup> of July, they were having a trip to Durham, over a coffee with their chairman Michael Herriot we chatted about both organisations and the way forward. Berwick Freeman are hosting the FEW AGM this year on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> of September.

We the Wardens and Deputies have had a meeting with Eric Bulmer and Alan Ribchester of the charitable trust on the 30<sup>th</sup> May to help the current wardens and deputies understand the workings of the charitable trust, this I hope will help us going forward.

Our new web manager is John Paul Proud, and I thank him for taking up this role. We have Gary Bankhead, John Paul Proud and Chris Williams looking at our Social Media Plan, again to help us communicate with younger members and I would like to thank them for this. The Membership Secretary role is being carried out by myself.

It is with regret that in the last few weeks we have had a Deputy Wardens resign. Gary Bankhead who I hoped would reconsider as he has a lot to offer. Gary has agreed to continue with his involvement with the Social Media Plan.

We now have a vacant position for two Deputy Wardens, Elections for these posts will be carried out in the coming months.

Our annual dinner is to be held on the 26<sup>th</sup> of October 2024 in Durham Masonic Hall, tickets are now available.



## 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. If you are interested, then please get in touch via the secretary.



### Freemen Tales

## Understanding the Masons' Contribution to Our Cultural Heritage

### Background

I joined the Masons Company of the Freemen of Durham as a grandson of my grandfather, Ralph Elliott. I have great respect for him. He was a well-respected bricklayer, mason, freemason and DLI soldier in the First World War. He was a quiet man of great depth. His dress code put me to shame. The DLI taught a man how to polish shoes!



Ralph Elliott

The family business of Dixon Elliott was located in Gilesgate, known on local documents at the time as Gillygate. I still pass the street that they built to house their workforce, Edward Street in Gilesgate. Jimmy Burdon (wagon Driver) lived his life there until he passed. I was born in my grandfather's house at 2 Glue Garth, or 52 Sunderland Road in modern parlance, 100m from the birthplace of my mother in Edward Street and right next door to what was the family business. Edward Street was named after my great grandfather Edward Dixon Elliott, who created Dixon Elliott building

contractors. Sadly, I have not kept the indenture documents. However, I have kept the records of house sales for less than £200 per house to the nearest three farthings.

My life has been saturated with construction and trades. I became a small builder before entering education and becoming a senior scientist specialising in the use of concrete. I cast my first concrete beam with my father at the age of 10-years-old. The beam went into the 'party house' at Belmont which featured in the famous Get Carter film. We lived there for a few years before we moved on. The Masons Company is therefore an obvious home for me.

### A Brief History of the Masons

To understand the role of the mason, let us take a look back in time to see what was required to be a competent mason. The oldest form of masonry was mud and straw bricks, as referred to in the Exodus of

the Bible, which were laid in a mud mortar. Cob construction still exists in the UK today and was derived from a technology used 5,400 years ago. The mason was, in effect, a material scientist, choosing the correct type of mud and straw to manufacture a durable product. He also needed an understanding of structural design to ensure slenderness ratios were not exceeded.

The mason had to get it right because the building code of Hammurabi (the sixth Amorite king of the Old Babylonian Empire) dictated that if the builder constructed a structure that was unsafe and caused a death, the mason would forfeit his life as a penalty for lack of due diligence!

Between 4,000 and 5,000 years ago the Egyptians laid stone blocks in gypsum mortar to construct the pyramids. They knew that gypsum would work well in the dry climate. Not so, for more northerly masons. They had to create a lime mortar that would withstand the damper, colder climate.

The Romans made huge strides in structural design and material science using pozzolanic mortars, that exist to this day. Vitruvius, a 1<sup>st</sup> century Roman architect and engineer, documented the techniques devised at that time. The Pantheon is a structural wonder and by adding volcanic ash from Vesuvius, the masons made strong and durable mortar.

We treasure the work of the masons worldwide as they have left their mark, literally with a mason's mark on each stone they made and laid, leaving a rich heritage within all developed societies. Durham Cathedral is a perfect example of the mason's knowledge, comprising of geometric, structural, and material science, all derived from the arts and mysteries of the mason.

Today, the historical tangible value of a country is assessed by the total value of its buildings and infrastructure. None of which would exist without the skill of the modern-day mason. Thankfully, however, the modern mason does not need the structural design or material knowledge of their forebears. The Durham Freeman's guild of masons is a beacon to the past in our present times.

Dr Alan Richardson – Freeman, masons company.



[We need your help](#)

I am obliged to keep our membership records up-to-date and to keep every Freeman informed as to what is happening within the Durham City Freeman.

In this regard I am trying to locate and re-establish contact with the following members. If anyone has any information about the lost members, can they contact the secretary by e-mail [secretary@durhamcityfreemen.org](mailto:secretary@durhamcityfreemen.org) or by phone 07919 996551. Thank you.

| Surname Name | Christian Names     | Last Known address  | Company     | Date Joined |
|--------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Brown        | Mark Andrew Charles | Not Known           | Joiners     | 07/11/2005  |
| Brown        | Tony Michael        | Stockton on Tees    | Joiners     | 05/08/2002  |
| Cunliffe     | Lisa                | Durham              | Plumbers    | 03/11/2014  |
| Davidson     | Peter Richard       | Carrville           | Cordwainers | 05/11/2007  |
| Davidson     | Peter               | Ushaw Moor          | Cordwainers | 08/02/1993  |
| Dunn         | Dennis              | Burnhope            | Barbers     | 08/01/2004  |
| Heron        | Mark Annesley       | Ross on Wye         | Cordwainers | 08/11/2004  |
| Lumley       | David Martin        | Langley Moor        | Cordwainers | 13/05/1996  |
| Mawson       | Nigel               | Esh Winning         | Masons      | 12/11/2018  |
| Vest         | Joanne              | Framwellgate Moor   | Drapers     | 12/08/2013  |
| Watson       | Judith Gwen         | Newcastle upon Tyne | Drapers     | 12/08/2013  |



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.