

Gildhall Aews



THE QUARTERLY JOURNAL
OF THE
LEICESTER GILD OF FREEMEN

Number 105

February 2025

Some of the garden equipment for sale (see page 8 for details)



John Deere X165 ride-on mower



Husqvarna ride-on mower R18AWD

GILD OF FREEMEN OF THE CITY OF LEICESTER



Number 105

February 2025





THE QUARTERLY JOURNAL
OF THE
LEICESTER GILD OF FREEMEN

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Patron: Colonel Robert Martin OBE DL President: The Lord Mayor of Leicester

OFFICERS 2024-2025

Master: M. Ballard Deputy Master: L. A. Roffee Clerk: (VACANT) Chamberlain: (VACANT)

WARDENS

N. Cave, J. D. Lewitt, S. Freeman, K. Mardon (co-opted) & Jean Mardon

GILDHALL NEWS February 2025

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Editor's Comments

"There is no need to do any housework at all. After the first four years the dirt doesn't get any worse.."

- Quentin Crisp



Ah, it appears that spring is finally on its way (albeit still a little cold) and with it, apart from more light and warmth, comes that dirty word 'spring-cleaning'. Trouble is all those jobs I put off during last summer, intending to get on with them during the cold autumn and winter months, are still on the 'to do' list! Oh well, one day at a time...

As you might expect at this time of the year, the Board and the Gild had a flurry of seasonal activities in the run-up to Christmas, followed by a relatively quiet January.

Thank you to everyone for your contributions - it's always good to hear from you. If you'd like to share your memories or something about your family history, or perhaps you've got a pastime you'd like to share, we'd love to hear from you - so please put pen to paper, or fingers to keyboard. My contact details are on page 18.

Val Moore

Report by Master of the Gild, Malcolm Ballard



Dear Friends,

A Happy belated new year to you all, and I hope you all had an enjoyable Christmas.

The time goes so quickly. I trust you are all well and looking forward to another new year.

Twenty-twenty five seems to have brought largely mixed temperatures and weather conditions which hopefully will settle down during the forthcoming months.

On the 5th December we were invited to Kilworth Springs Golf Club for Christmas dinner. There was approximately thirty of us who attended. We all enjoyed good company and a decent meal with good service.

On the 16th December we held a Carol Service at St Andrews Church in Aylestone where we enjoyed a good selection of carols to sing that we all knew. It would be great to see more people attending in the spirit of Christmas.

Afterwards, everyone was invited to the community Centre where we were served warm mince pies and sausage rolls with mulled wine, and tea, coffee or cold drinks. It was good to see all enjoying the company of each other, a true Christmas time!

At this time of year we are all looking forward to spring, and for those who have an allotment or a garden or even a large pot I suspect you will be looking through the seed catalogues in readiness for maybe rearranging your plot in anticipation of planting new and exciting veg and flowers for yourselves, and to share with friends. I think we all need a great big dose of sunshine, here is hoping it arrives sooner rather than later.

In April there will be another swearing-in ceremony at the Town Hall.

At this point I would like to send my condolences to all who have lost someone close to them whether it be a relative or friend over the last few months, my heart goes out to you all.

Good Wishes to all Malcolm Ballard

Report by Chair of the Board, Lynn Roffee



I hope this edition of the Gildhall News finds you well and in good health. The days are now getting slightly longer, and although we have a way to go, the bulbs are starting to show indicating spring is on the way.

In December we sadly lost one of our Deputies, Barry Daniell, after a short illness. Barry had served on the Board for twelve years in various roles including Chair of the Board, and Chair of Finance. Barry made a huge contribution to the Charity and will be missed by the Board, Staff and Residents.

You will have hopefully received the letter last year regarding the change to allow residents to be in paid work (subject to certain guidelines). If you would like more information on this, please contact the office.

We had our usual events for Christmas here including a trip to Kilworth Springs Golf Club for lunch, a visit from the South Fields Concert Band for carols and showed The Muppet Christmas Carol in our Community Centre. In October, the Board had their Annual Dinner at the Taste Restaurant at Leicester College.

Sarah Allen, the new Freemen's Engagement Officer, joined the team at Freemen's Holt in January, I am sure you will all join me in wishing her the best. Sarah has a lot to get to grips with, so please bear with her in the meantime.

I received and accepted an invitation from the Lord Mayor of Leicester, Councillor B Dave, to attend the Annual Memorial Holocaust Day Commemoration Event – this year's theme was "For a Better Future".

I have received news that the Civic Office is planning a Making Free event at the Town Hall in April this year. If you have family members who have not yet taken their freedom, it might be a suitable time to give them a gentle push to contact the Civic Office. To ensure The Holt and the Charity continue for generations to come, we do need a steady flow of eligible people to come forward to take their freedom. These ceremonies are organised by the Civic Office, therefore we do not know when the next ceremony will be held.

Bungalow Vacancies

We have two standard bungalows available which are ready to be allocated. Please contact the office if you would like more information. You are more than welcome to view the bungalows and estate.

The current Monthly Maintenance Contributions are: Standard Bungalow - £174.68 Extended Bungalow - £244.51

Meeting Dates 2025

Board Meeting – Wednesday 12th March, 19:30

AGM - Tuesday 18th March, 19:30

Board Meeting - Wednesday 11th June, 19:30

Board Meeting – Wednesday 10th September, 19:30

Board Meeting – Wednesday 10th December, 19:30

All Freemen are very welcome and encouraged to attend these meetings. The meetings are held in the Community Centre at Freemen's Holt. Freemen can request copies of the minutes of these meetings – please contact the office if you would like a copy.

Charitable Payments

We currently have two people who receive a monthly Charitable Payment. If you would like to apply for a Charitable Payment or want more information, please contact the office.

Introduction from Sarah Allen, Freemen's Engagement Officer



Hello, as your new Engagement officer I would like to introduce myself to you all.

I'm Sarah Allen, 40-ish, married to Stuart with 2 beautiful daughters Yasmin and Madison and a little Cockapoo Bailey.

My previous role was a home help which was a very varied position, this was for a handful of clients whom I became very good friends with. I consider myself to be very friendly, caring, chatty but a great listener too.

In my spare time I like to go for long walks with my husband and little dog Bailey, shopping/lunch with my daughters and keeping fit (albeit for 2 months of the year after the goose has got fat!) I also love to watch thriller/crime series and read.

My duties as Engagement officer are to organise activities and events and help to reduce loneliness. Should you require a visit to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact me at the office.

Over the next few weeks, I will be organising activities and events for you to attend if you wish, details of which to follow.

I will also keep you informed of any vacant bungalows on a regular basis. I am looking forward to meeting everyone and getting to know you all!

Sarah Allen,

Freemen's Engagement Officer

Garden Equipment For Sale

We have a variety of Garden Equipment for sale. This equipment has been kept in our garages at Freemen's Holt, but it has not been used since 2020. Prior to this, the equipment was serviced every year. Please be aware that we are unsure of the working condition of all the equipment, and it will be 'Sold as Seen'. The equipment must be collected within a month of the bid being accepted.

If you would like to view or test the equipment, please contact our estate office to make an appointment. We have reserved Wednesday 5th, Tuesday 11th and Thursday 20th March between 09:00 and 17:00 for the appointments. You are welcome to test the equipment, but you are doing so at your own risk.

If you would like to submit a bid for an item, please contact our estate office to do so. Bids must be submitted by 31st March at the latest.



John Deere X165 ride-on mower



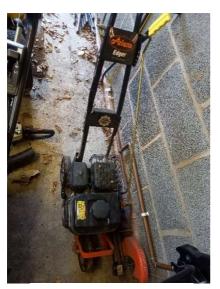
Stihl leaf blower backpack BR600



Honda petrol lawn mower Cobra GX



Honda petrol lawn mower HRH



Ariens Petrol Edger



Makita petrol scarifier EUV 400



Stihl hedge cutter HS82



Husqvarna ride-on mower R18AWD



Duuo Trailer



Electric scarifier



Stihl hedge cutter HS80



Stihl brush cutter HS80



Stihl leaf blower handheld BG85



Petrol shredder Honda GX270

Contact Details

Telephone - 0116 2834017

Email-office@leicester freemen.com

Address - 32 Freemen's Holt, Aylestone, Leicester, LE2 8NH

Website - www.leicesterfreemen.co.uk

Take care, Lynn Roffee Chair of the Board

Programme of Future Events

Board Meeting Wednesday 12th March, 7.30pm

Freemen's Funday — Sunday 29^{th} June 2025 at Freemen's Holt. (See separate flyer for further details.)

Contributions to Gildhall News

The recollections of Len Tolton - Final Part

The final part concludes with Len surviving to the end of the war to return to a peacetime England.

I went down the line with some wounded and was taken to a hospital near Ypres, rejoining what was left of our battalion a few days later. After leaving the home at Trouville I was sent to Calais where, after a few weeks, I was sent to a depot near Arras, eventually rejoining my battalion at Mory, just in time for the Germans last offensive.

We were in reserve on March 21st when it began, and were on top of a hill overlooking our gun positions, which were about three miles in front of us. It was terrible to see each gun position being wiped out by shellfire in turn, and even one of our ammunition lorries was hit, exploding like a firework display.

That night we advanced into our reserve trench, which proved to be a six-foot-wide trench and about one foot deep, which our great commanders had left unfinished. After digging ourselves in we awaited the dawn, when Jerry advance on each side of us, causing us to retire under rifle fire from each side of our position for about two miles.

We then dug ourselves in again, and that night we were attacked by Jerry blowing bugles, and after an hour of firing blind he retired, and at dawn we retired again to our original position in front of Mory, where we dug some slit trenches.

On our left were a battalion of Guards, and we could see that in front of them, on top of another ridge, Jerry had settled him. Of all the crazy things to do the Guards, in broad daylight, attacked Jerry, walking with their rifles at the trail, and as they ascended the ridge towards Jerry, we could see the Guards being picked off one by one, until none were left.

After four days in these slit trenches, we found ourselves surrounded, and when dawn broke on the fifth morning, we saw hundreds of Germans advancing towards us, and two of my pals with a Lewis gun prepared to have a go at them, but were promptly fired at. Fortunately, the bullet went through both their tin hats without hitting them.

As the Germans came nearer, we had to surrender, and as we were being marched, a pal and I caught hold of an elderly German, who was wounded, and helped him along.

After some weeks behind their lines mending roads, sleeping at night in an open field with no overcoats and freezing cold. We were given half a pint of imitation coffee, if we were lucky enough to find an empty can, at four o' clock

in the morning, and we then worked until four in the afternoon after which we were given a pound loaf of black bread between four, and a can of soup. To be sure of getting a fair share of the loaf, the man who cut the loaf had the last pick.

As you can imagine, some of us were driven to eating snails and slugs, and some went to the German's latrine for potato peelings, washing them in dirty water before cooking them. But I made do with cooking nettles. After about six weeks of this, during which time I noted that our side had not retreated any further and that the German transport consisted of horses and carts, and sometimes of cattle drawn carts, I heard a rumour that all miners were to be sent to Germany. I promptly altered the trade in my paybook to that of miner.

True enough, the miners were sent back, myself among them, and on arriving at a town in France were interviewed by some high-ups who spoke English, and were told that all R.A.M.C. men and stretcher bearers were exempt from mine work. We were sent to a camp at Dusseldorf, where our boots were taken from us and given wooden clogs.

Following a few weeks there, during which time I got a job peeling spuds, and knocking a few off at intervals, we were given a stack of old boots which had been burnt. I sorted out a pair and cut off the tops. We were sent to Munster 3 and on arrival were photographed, a copy of which I still have, and sent it to my parents, who were delighted as it was the first intimation that they had received that I was still alive. This camp was quite good and we were given food parcels, which were a God send.

After a few weeks there we were sent to a farm in Poland, near to Stettin, each with a large parcel of food.

This train journey I shall never forget, going first to Hamburg, then on to Berlin, and finally on to this farm. There we were given a barn to sleep in, and given some black bread and given a bucket full of spuds each day. I shall always remember the face of the woman when we gave her a packet of tea each day for us to drink instead of their coffee. We worked in the field every day kartoffel hocking (spuds). Each night we all had a special biscuit from our food parcels, which had to be drilled with a small hole and water inserted, and then swelled to a lovely white, and after cutting in two made two slices of bread. This amazed the locals.

What amazed me was that the farm was run by electricity supplied through wires from Berlin, and was also connected to Berlin by a light railway.

Winter came on and the spuds were camped in two feet of earth and sledges replaced wheels on the carts. After digging up all the spuds, a back breaking job which went as follows: Six of us and twelve girls from the village armed with a three-pronged hocker and a basket each started from one end of the field, went along the rows grasping each plant by the stem, hocking the spuds from the ground and throwing them into the basket, and when the basket was full carrying them to a cart.

After all these were gathered in, we had a variety of other jobs. One of these was feeding the cattle when they were in the stalls which, by the way, were milked three times a day. In front of each row of cattle was a wooden

trough and in the yard was a huge two handled pump, which two of us pulled up and down, and the water was carried by a pipe to each trough. After the cattle had drunk, we then filled each trough with a mixture of straw, hay, and mangles, which had been mixed in the chaff cutter run by electricity.

Another job we had to do was cleaning out the stalls once a week. Each day a layer of straw was added to the floor, and at the end of the week it was gathered up with the aid of a long handled three pronged hocker, rolled up like a mattress, and loaded onto a sledge drawn by a horse and hauled into the yard.

About the middle of November a number of soldiers arrived, each wearing a red armband, and the three Polish families, who lived in a nearby cottage, all left.

Two days later a French prisoner, who worked on a neighboring farm came over and told us in broken English that the war had been over for more than a week.

Two days after that we were taken by a light railway to a camp near to Stettin, where we were told to split up into groups of six, given a load of food parcels and told to pick a Russian for a servant. For these poor devils had nothing but the scant rations from the Germans, who also had nothing to give away. For the few days we were there we were besieged by Germans wanting to buy food and soap from us.

One day we were told that all the N.C.O.'s were going to the docks that night to go back to England, so another private and myself decided to slip among them, and landed aboard a ship which took us to Copenhagen. Here we were transferred to a liner, complete with a band, and had the most generous gorgeous food, and after sailing round the top of Norway landed at Hull. At the dock it was pitiful to see dozens of women with photos of their menfolk asking if we knew of them. From Hull we were directed to Catterick where we were sent before doctor for a medical. He asked us if we were alright and marked us OK, without an examination. We were then given a small amount of money and sent to Leicester where I boarded a tram, and on giving the conductor half a crown was told that the fare was only a halfpenny for soldiers. When I told him that this was the only coin that I had I was greeted with a mouthful.

On arriving home, I was greeted with great affection by my parents, and for the next month I had a great time before settling down to work.

Len didn't write any more about his recollections. I suppose life after the war was very mundane and his gratitude at surviving the war was offset by the memory of his lost colleagues. Unfortunately, I did not acquire these notes until many years after Len died, otherwise I may have quizzed him with the intention of answering the many questions this script has raised. Sadly, that is no longer possible, but I hope that you have gained a little of an insight into life from the beginning of the 20th century to the end of the Great War.

John Tolton

News from the Freemen of England and Wales Association (FEW)

FEW 2024 AGM

The rescheduled **FEW 2024 AGM** was held on the 'Zoom' on-line video platform on 19th October.

Unfortunately my Zoom feed froze shortly after starting, so like the Leicester Gild's individual members of FEW, I await the meeting minutes in the next FEW Journal 208. Pre meeting reports show that the Association, like all the local Freemen's Guilds, has an increasing age profile, and hence less Officers and resources available. In contrast, the local Courts Leet with their adoption of lady members, have reduced their previous decline in activities.

Roundup of other South Midlands FEW Area member's news.

Coventry Freemen's Guild saw 18 candidates admitted to the Freedom on 8th October in the Council Chamber at a Lord Mayor's Admission Court. Four days later the Guild's Annual Dinner had the installation of the Lord Mayor as Guild President during his term of Office, witnessed also by Freemen from London, York, Chester, and Northampton Guilds. The Guild year concluded at the Christmas Dinner, after which the annual charity raffle was drawn, and the Master's Charity of the Guild Church of Holy Trinity's Organ Fund had the Vicar regaling tales of organs built and lost since the first installation fitment in 1526.

Northampton Freemen's Guild's robed Officers continue to support civic events such as Remembrance Sunday. The West Northampton Unitary Council's plan to sell or lease off the modern wing of the Guildhall has raised concerns about the future of the civic heritage.

Henley-in-Arden Court Leet's Annual Court was held on 13th November, with the Lord of the Manor David Lodder and Steward Jonathan Dovey welcoming a good attendance by Jurors and visiting Court Leet Officers and Town residents. The Guildhall Charitable Trust appeal to finance a new roof on the 14th Century Guildhall has reached its target – virtually all raised by Town residents and businesses, with no help from the Lottery Fund.

Warwick Court Leet's 470th Annual Court was held on 17th October, with a welcome by His Worship the Mayor of Warwick in his dual role of Lord of the Leet. New Officers were appointed, and it was agreed to promote the very successful Charity Beer Festivals and Classic Car Show for 2025.

Derek Austín



A Double Century

How many people now adays live to the ripe old age of 100?

Records show that currently there are some 16,000 centenarians living in the UK today, with the ratio of 2 to 1 in favour of the females.

I cannot find any figures for centenarians from the same family but here's one.

My auntie Florence (who lived in bungalow No. 6) lived to be 100, and now my cousin Lois will be 100 on the 20^{th} of January 2025.

Lois is house bound and lives in sheltered accommodation in Ashby-de-la-Zouch with her immediate family living local to her.

Lois is an avid reader of the Gildhall News which she receives by post.

Both Lois and Florence lived at one time on the Freeman's Common, in the off licence on X Road and in a house on B Road.

When my wife June and I got married and lived on B Road they were our next-door neighbours.

Question! How many Freemen have had two Centenarians in their family?

Question! I will be 94 this year, shall I live to reach 100 and conform with the national ratio?

Maurice Hill Retired Welfare Chairman Board of Deputies

If you have any suggestions for what you would like to see in future editions of the Gildhall News, or a story you would like to contribute, please write to the Editor

VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

GILD VACANCIES

If you have a little time to spare, the Gild has the following vacancies, and would appreciate your support:

Chamberlain for the Leicester Gild of Freemen

We need a Gild Chamberlain to take over the Gild's bookkeeping, and to organize social activities and outings for Gild Members and their families, residents of Freemen's Holt and, indeed, the Freemen of Leicester in general.

Clerk for the Leicester Gild of Freemen

A Gild Clerk is needed to liaise with Gild Members, the Lord Mayor's office and other Special Guests, to arrange events and meetings, and to pass on relevant information.

We also need someone to deal with the Gild Product orders

Anyone interested should contact Malcolm Ballard on 07775 791 144 for an informal chat about what's involved

Have you changed your address?

In the event that is necessary to inform the Gild or the Board of any change in circumstances, the information should be sent to:

Leicester Freemen's Deputies 32 Freemen's Holt Old Church Street Aylestone Leicester LE2 8NH

Telephone: 0116 283 4017

E-mail: office@leicesterfreemen.com

Leicester Freemen website: www.leicesterfreemen.co.uk

Copy for the next issue should reach the Editor by Friday 11th April 2025

Write with your suggestions and contributions to:

Val Moore 24 Freemen's Holt Leicester LE2 8NH

Telephone: 0116 429 3947

E-mail: valmoore2@gmail.com

Leicester Freemen website: www.leicesterfreemen.co.uk
Gild e-mail address: leicester_gild@outlook.com
Facebook: search for "Leicester Gild"

Some of the garden equipment for sale (see page 8 for details)



Petrol shredder Honda GX270



Duuo Trailer



Christtmas lunch at Kilworth Springs Golf Club



The Gild of Freemen of the City of Leicester **GILD PRODUCTS ORDER FORM**

1.	Tie- navy	at £10.00 each	= £
	- green	at £10.00 each	= £
2.	Gild Scarf	at £15.00 each	= £
3.	Lapel Badge	at £2.50 each	= £
4.	Cufflinks	at £16.00 per pair	= £
5.	Gild Pens	at £3.00 each	= £
6.	Gown, made to meas	sure,	
	(includes delivery)	price on request	= £
7.	Register of the Front 1986–1996 £2.50	eemen of Leicester each	= £
8.	Register of the Fro 1931–1985 £3.50	eemen of Leicester each	= £
		£3.20 second class £3.95 first class	
		TOTAL	= £
		que for the above total, mad Gild of Leicester Freemen	
NA	ME		
ΑC	DRESS		
		POST CODE	
ΕN	1AIL ADDRESS		
TE	LEBUIONE		
	LEPHONE:		
Sig			

Malcolm Ballard, 5, Snowdrop Close, Narborough, Leics LE19 3YB

Tel: 0116 286 1507 or email: romalc@btinternet.com *Please note that any orders at and above £20 will need to be sent by recorded delivery at £7.25 (contact Malcolm for further details)

GILD OF FREEMEN OF THE CITY OF LEICESTER Application for Full Membership

Full Name(BLOCK LETTERS)
Address
Post Code
Tel No.: email address
I am a duly sworn Freeman of the City of Leicester and apply to be enrolled as a Member of the Gild of Freemen, for which I enclose the sum of £10.00 (Enrolment fee of £1.00 plus the first annual subscription of £9.00).
SignatureDate
Application for Associate Membership
Full Name(BLOCK LETTERS) Address
Post Code
Tel Noe-mail address
I certify that I am the (please delete where applicable) SPOUSE / WIDOW / WIDOWER / SON / DAUGHTER / GRANDCHILD, aged 18 years or over of
Mr / Mrs / Ms(Freeman of Leicester)
Or
I am a full member of the Guild of Freemen of(City or Town I apply to be enrolled as an Associate Member of the Gild, for which I enclose the sum of £7.00 (Enrolment Fee of £1.00 plus the first Annual Subscription of £6.00)
SignatureDateDate

Please make cheques payable to 'Gild of Leicester Freemen' and send with this application to:

Malcolm Ballard, 5 Snowdrop Close, Narborough, Leics LE19 3YB

RENEWAL OF GILD MEMBERSHIP

(Payment by Cheque) FOR THE YEAR 1st APRIL 2025 – 31st MARCH 2026

I would like to pay the annual subscription for my membership/associate membership of the Gild for the year commencing 1st April 2025

Membershipat £9.00 = £
Associate Membershipat £6.00 = £
My name is (BLOCK CAPITALS)
My address is (BLOCK CAPITALS)
Post codeTelephone
e-mail address
I enclose a cheque/postal order for £ made payable to "Gild of Leicester Freemen"
Please post to: Malcolm Ballard, 5, Snowdrop Close, Narborough, Leics LE19 3YB

Any queries, please phone Malcolm on 0116 286 1507

RENEWAL OF GILD MEMBERSHIP

(Payment by Standing Order)

(Kindly complete where marked by all dotted lines)

To: Malcolm Ballard, 5, Snowdrop Close, Narborough, Leics LE19 3YB

Date......20.....

l,
agree to pay my Annual Subscription to the Gild of Leicester Freemen on $1^{\rm St}$ April each year by means of the signed Standing Order that I have sent to my bank.
I understand that the annual subscriptions at present are £9.00 for a full member and £6.00 for an associate member, and that I can stop or amend this Standing Order simply by giving instructions to my bank.
Signature
Address
Post code
Tel. No
email

Please complete the Standing Order form below, and send it to your Bank Manager

STANDING ORDER – PLEASE SEND TO YOUR BANK MANAGER

To: The Manag	er	Ba	nk Plc
Address			
		Postcode	
Please pay to:-	Lloyds Bank Plc, Old Market Square Br Nottingham NG1 6FD	anch,	
	(Bank Sort Code 30-96	-18)	
For the accoun	t of the Gild of Leicest e	er Freemen (Account No	. 01409164)
the sum of £	,		
commencing 1	st April 20, and yea	arly thereafter until furtl	her notice.
		(my surname	e and initial/s)
Name of accou	nt to be debited		
Account No			
Signature		Date	20
Address			
Postcode			