



# Durham City Freemen Charitable Trust



## Review

*Jan 2023 - Dec 2024*



**Trustees of the Charitable Trust**

Eric Bulmer (Chair)  
Alan Ribchester MBE (Trustee)  
Theresa Ford (Treasurer)  
Kenneth Howe (Trustee)  
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John Booth (Secretary)  
Geoff Kitson (Trustee)

This booklet was compiled by John Booth - Secretary to the Charitable Trust

Copy by George Oliver - Freemen Press Officer

Images by Geoff Kitson - Freemen Photographer

In addition to the grants being awarded over the past two years the Charitable Trust continues to award the following embedded grants:

**2023**

Remembrance Parade  
Mayor's Charity Appeal

**2024**

Remembrance Parade  
Mayor's Charity Appeal

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### Foreword

This booklet is designed to provide information for Freemen and the Community of Durham about the objectives and activities of the charitable giving arm of the Durham City Freemen.

The Guilds of Durham City historically provided benevolence to members who fell on hard times and the funds were largely dependent upon subscriptions and donations from guild members.

During the 19th and early 20th century when the numbers of Freemen declined and some guilds became extinct, this act of benevolence, was more difficult to achieve and it gradually disappeared.

The Charitable Trust was established in January 2015, initially to reinstate and formalise elements of Freemen's traditional values, including training and education, by providing support for the wider community of the City of Durham, particularly those more vulnerable in our society and thereby reconnecting with our heritage and historical values.

The Charitable Trust receives funding from the Freemen membership, but operates independently and autonomously as a registered charity.

The Chairman of the Charitable Trust provides quarterly reports to the Trustees and Wardens meetings, the reports together with all relevant news items are also posted on the Charitable Trusts recently developed website here:

<https://www.durhamcityfreemencharitabletrust.org/>

A comprehensive review of the Charitable Trust's work is published annually and sent to all members.

There are two main objectives to the work of the Charitable Trust, which embrace the traditional values of the Freemen:

Training and Education  
Supporting Charities, Community Groups and Worthy Causes.

#### 1. Training and Education

The Guilds to which the Freemen are members, are based on crafts and trades which were established in the City over 500 years ago. A function of the original Charter was to set and maintain standards. This was achieved through the training of craft apprentices and is highlighted in the Freemen's calendar by the Trust's support for the Apprenticeship Awards to promote craft training and continues to be a cornerstone of the traditions of the Freemen.

### 2. Supporting Charities, Community Groups and Worthy Causes

A feature of the Freemen history has been its benevolence, initially to its members and more latterly to charities and groups within the city.

The Trustees continue to uphold the heritage of the Freemen by maintaining this important role, particularly vital in these difficult times for some of the most vulnerable in our local community.

Application forms received by the Charitable Trust are discussed by the trustees at their quarterly meetings to determine the merits of the application and whether meets its criteria for support.

Once an application has been approved, contact is made with the recipient charity or community group and arrangements made to visit their centre, to enable the Trustees to have a greater understanding of the work that they undertake and meet participants who will benefit from the Freemen's support.

This personal contact with recipient charities provides the Trustees with an insight into the valuable work undertaken by charities and community groups within the City.

### Moving Forward

A developing objective of the Charitable Trust, is to forge a closer bond with the Freemen membership and engage them in the delivery, ethos and sustainability of the Trust.

We intend to achieve this in two ways:

1. By encouraging all Freemen to contact the Trust with suggestions of charities or worthy causes that they feel would benefit from the Trust's support. Members are invited to provide contact details to the Chairman or Secretary in order to send out application forms for funding awards.
2. By creating an opportunity for interested members to undertake a more active role and meeting recipients of donations, by attending presentations and photo-calls.

We intend to organise this by compiling a list of interested members on which to draw when arranging presentations/photo-calls. This initiative will provide the membership with a greater understanding of the work of the Trust, that functions on behalf of the Freemen.

Any member considering being part of such a list should contact:

Eric Bulmer (Chair) Tel: 0789 4064057 Email: eckabulmer@btinternet.com  
John Booth (Secretary) Tel: 07514 081689 Email: boothjohn555@gmail.com

## Charitable Trust

12/03/2023

### Down's Syndrome North East

A pioneering five-year project, launched to raise a wider public acceptance and understanding of the region's Down's syndrome community, draws to a close today (Sunday, March 12) with a celebrity book launch.

Crime writer Ann Cleeves, whose novels inspired ITV's "Vera" and the BBC's "Shetland" series, will be special guest speaker at a giant tea party in the Delta Marriot Hotel, MetroCentre, hosted by Down's Syndrome North East (DSNE) – a registered charity run entirely by volunteers.



Two thousand copies of the book, entitled "Look at Me" have been produced with money gifted by a number of organisations and individuals, among them Durham City's Freemen. More than 1000 primary, first, middle and special schools across Northumberland, Durham, Tyneside, Wearside and Teesside will be among the first to be given the book. Additionally it will be included in special baby boxes in maternity units across the region to help parents of infants born with the condition.

The ground-breaking project initially got under way in 2017 with an appeal to the DSNE's 450 members for volunteers to pose not only for portrait photographs, but share in their own words, with the help of family, carers or friends, their dreams, emotions and aspirations for the future.

## Durham City Freemen

The images of 37 of the volunteers who stepped forward – their ages ranging from a few weeks to their late 30s - featured on thousands of posters and photographs which became the centre piece of a travelling exhibition staged in colleges, town halls and other venues across the region during the intervening years. It has since been seen by many thousands of people and the feed-back, reported by the organisers, has been "fantastic."



Last summer the original "cast" of 37 had their photographs retaken and their before-and-after images are showcased in the 60-page hard-back publication which underlines just how they have grown and flourished over the intervening years.

"The aim of our exhibition and book project is to help people understand and accept just how unique each person born with Down's syndrome is. They share the same hopes, emotions and a range of differences as the rest of the population. While some might have hugely complex needs, others are quite able, attending mainstream schools, living in their own homes, having relationships and jobs.

Just like any other member of the public they want to be treated with respect and consideration. Sadly this is not always the case and while there is evidence of improvement among some in the wider community we frequently hear of upsetting incidents which underline this lack of acceptance and opportunities," said Mrs Ros Collinson, "a DSNE committee member and trustee.

27/03/2023

**Freemen's Beacon**

A stunning steel beacon, sited on high ground above Durham City to commemorate the reign of her late Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, will be formally handed over and test fired in situ for the first time (Monday, March 27) – just weeks ahead of the King's Coronation.

The towering structure, nineteen feet tall and weighing half a tonne was commissioned and funded by Durham City's Freemen's Charitable Trust. It has been designed and created by Brian Russell, one of the country's top artistic blacksmiths at his 200-year-old Teesdale forge.

The Freemen's gift is the centrepiece of a wider county council supported project of improved footpaths and public access to the immediate area around the site of the beacon on Jubilee Hill, adjacent to the DLI Museum.



The ceremony, attended by the city's mayor, vice chair of the council and dozens of invited guests, was led by the Lord Lieutenant, Mrs Sue Snowdon, who performed the firing ceremony.

John Booth, Chairman of the Wardens said "We hope our gift will be seen as a fitting and lasting tribute to Her Majesty, a legacy of the Freemen and the outstanding skill of a local man. We hope too, it will be accepted as a reflection of the quality and value of so many thousands of the craftsmen whose lives and work played such a key role in the shaping of the city's history and development across more than 600 years."

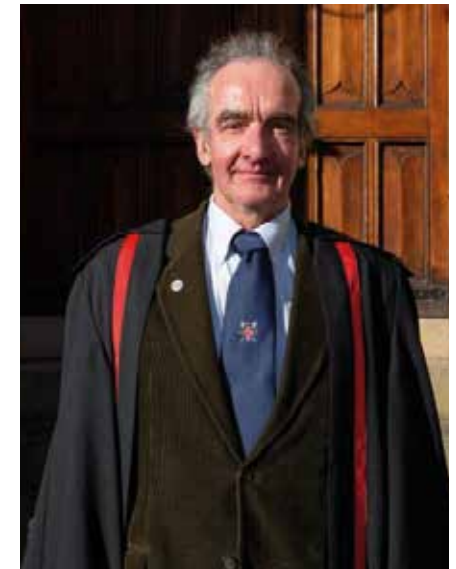
Councillor Joan Nicholson, vice chair of the council, said: "I am delighted to attend the hand-over ceremony of the beacon to mark the Freemen's gift and commemorate Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. It is fitting the beacon was designed and created by a local blacksmith, showcasing the craftsmanship and talent we have across the county and the rich heritage of County Durham.

"We were pleased to support the installation of the beacon which I am sure will be enjoyed by many in the years to come."



Future decisions on firing up the beacon to mark national events falls to the City of Durham Parish Council. The parish council already plans to light up the sky after the King's Coronation on May 6th and are actively considering a repeat for the 80th anniversary of the D-Day Landings in June next year.

Durham City-born Mr Russell, now 70 and recently sworn-in as a Freeman of the city, was awarded a fine arts degree by Sunderland College of Art before moving into his forge in Little Newsham near Staindrop in 1974. Twenty years later the excellence of his work earned him a silver medal from London's Worshipful Company of Blacksmiths and he is currently the only working blacksmith in the country to hold their gold medal. He has demonstrated his skills across Europe, the United States and Canada.



## Charitable Trust

01/04/2023

### Durham Guild of Spinners, Weavers and Dyers

A group of Durham enthusiasts, whose mission launched more than forty years ago to promote and preserve centuries-old spinning, weaving and dyeing skills, has been handed a financial boost by the city's Freemen.

Often working with hand-held spindles to duplicate methods pioneered by long-lost civilisations, the group has succeeded in creating a high quality range of artefacts - including ornate tapestries, rugs, jackets, waistcoats, scarves, handbags, matching purses and table mats – which have won national recognition.



Mrs Ann Evans, who still lives in Durham is one of the original band of five friends who founded the Durham Guild of Spinners, Weavers and Dyers and is proud to salute the continued success of the current three-dozen strong team.

“From those early beginnings we have produced some quite fantastic things and displayed our wares country-wide, including an exhibition of work in the Cathedral’s Galilee Chapel which included woven braids. At the annual exhibition of the National Association of Guilds of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers in Leigh last summer the work of four of our members was on display,” said 88-year-old Ann.

## Durham City Freemen

It all started with a weekend tapestry weaving course at the DLI Museum in 1979 and then moved on to weekly WEA evening classes in the city. From there they continued to cultivate their interest by hiring a teacher to lead their weekly meetings and for a time, were supported by a professional tapestry weaver from Wales and enjoyed visits by other experts.



The chairman of the guild Mrs Diana Barclay, said: “The Guild objectives are the promotion of public interest and education in the crafts of hand spinning and weaving and related textile crafts, alongside the development of techniques and equipment for the furtherance of our textile crafts. We are grateful to the city Freemen for their generous £300 grant which will help realise our objectives”



## Charitable Trust

12/04/2023

### If U Care Share Foundation

#### Our History

Our journey began in 2005. Daniel O'Hare was 19 years of age when, without any warning, he took his own life. He had no previous history of mental health problems nor had he shown any outward signs of his intentions.

Daniel was a normal young man, who was extremely popular and well known in his local community. He had a large amount of friends and a family that loved him dearly. He enjoyed football, spending time with friends and socialising. Daniel also had a job managing a family online retail business. To this day his family remain devastated by their loss and are still no nearer to understanding Daniel's choice.

In 2011, we became a registered charity with three main aims: Prevention, Intervention & Support of those bereaved by suicide.

"Our aim is to prevent anyone feeling the pain we felt as a family when we lost Daniel. We truly believe that talking can save lives". Shirley Smith, Daniel's Mother and co-founder.



John Booth Chairman of the Wardens with Rebecca Rowan - If U Care Share

## Durham City Freeman

#### About

We are here to save lives, support communities and prevent suicide.

We provide a range of services fundamental to our three main aims of Prevention, Intervention and Supporting those bereaved by suicide.

Our team reaches some of the most vulnerable people in our society to support them at a time of need.

We also believe that educating future generations is key to changing cultures. This is why we also offer workshops to Primary, Secondary and educational establishments to equip our young people. We also offer training and workshops based around themes of mental health and suicide prevention to professionals.

We are a team that has been brought together through shared values, passion and experiences. Together we work to bring hope to the communities we serve.



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Charitable Trust

29/04/2023

**ManHealth**

Expansion of a specialist organisation providing free male to male peer to peer support for North East men struggling with mental health-related issues, has been handed a £500 boost by Durham City's Freemen.

ManHealth will use the gift to set up a new group in the Gilesgate Family Hub in the city's Laurel Avenue and will be launching a further four groups in mid-May in family hubs in Newton Aycliffe, Peterlee, Chester-le-Street and Stanley.

Paul Bannister, who founded ManHealth over seven years ago, said: "Those leading the organisation have themselves 'walked the walk' of mental ill health and can offer unconditional help tempered by our own experiences".



"We cannot fix people's problems and cannot know what is right for every individual. But we can help in the self-healing process. The model we use encourages each individual to move forward, set new goals and develop relationships that give their lives meaning".

"With an ethos of sharing and education, our groups provide peer-to-peer empathy, an experienced ear and most importantly, friends who have walked the walk of mental ill health."

Durham City Freemen

Each group – linked to others stretching into Tyne and Wear and Northumberland - is led by a trained facilitator, supporting between ten and twenty "mates" at any one time.



In addition to their financial gift the Freemen have also arranged with the Durham Markets Company to make available a market stall in the city centre to publicise the launch of the new County Durham groups and raise awareness of the existing network.

Helping out on the stall with the distribution of information leaflets will be Alan Metcalf, deputy warden of the Feemen's Barbers' Company. Alan, who is in his 60s, has devoted his spare time over the last few years to supporting ManHealth's work and acts as a facilitator.

## Charitable Trust

08/05/2023

### Tursdale and Hett Women's Institute

A team of seamstresses whose combined skills have provided physical "comfort" to 1000 women recovering from breast cancer surgery, has been handed a timely boost by the city's Freemen.

Since 2014 the craftswomen, an 18-strong sub-group of the Tursdale and Hett Women's Institute, "worked below the radar" to manufacture soft fleece kidney-shaped cushions, known as "Breast Buddies."



The cushions, which give recovering mastectomy patients support, particularly when sitting, sleeping and driving, are distributed free at local Macmillan Information centres at hospitals in Durham City, Darlington, Bishop Auckland and Shotley Bridge or by breast care nurses.

In the early days the Women's Institute, sewing team's basic material needs were met by local firms happy to help. But the supply line was hit by the Covid pandemic, with many benefactors going out of business.

More lately the group has been able to gather fabric, thread and other essential material from a variety of sources – but they needed a cash boost to buy essential material, including the commercially produced stuffing to go inside the cushions. When the Freemen's charitable trust learned of their plight they stepped forward with a gift of £300.

## Durham City Freemen

Women's Institute president Sheila Swainston, first saw the Breast Buddies at the Darlington Macmillan Information Centre where they were made by one of the volunteers and the Darlington Quilters.



"I knew my friends in our local WI would relish the opportunity to get involved in the project. The feedback we have received has been tremendous, with some very moving stories." said Mrs Swainston.



"We would particularly like to thank Alan Ribchester for his support in securing the Freemen's donation and the Hett Village Hall Association for allowing us to use the premises free of charge. At our last session more than 100 cushions were completed, bringing the total to over 1000. It was a great day with lots of sewing, stitching, stuffing, gossip and cake!" she added.

## Charitable Trust

12/07/2023

### Cheesy Waffles Project

A charity, committed to bringing joy into the lives of children, teenagers and young adults with learning difficulties, has extra reason to be happy.

The Cheesy Waffles Project, based in Belmont Community Centre, has been handed a £1,000 gift by the Freeman towards costs of their latest adventure – a programme of visits offering their 100 members a special insight into the history of their home county.

Starting during this summer, and stretching into next spring, the project's staff and volunteers will lead trips to no fewer than ten of the region's leading tourist attractions.



As well as Durham Cathedral, Beamish Museum, Locomotion at Shildon and Killhope Lead Mining Museum, the members - whose ages range from seven to 30 - will also drop in at Spennymoor's Mining Museum, Durham University's Oriental Museum, Bowes Museum and Durham's Town Hall and Heritage Centre and Museum.

They will also venture outside the county's boundaries to take in Hartlepool's Heugh Battery Museum and the North East Land, Sea and Air Museum on the outskirts of Sunderland.

## Durham City Freeman

The club embraces eleven different sections which meet regularly on weekdays and selected Saturdays, providing tailor-made activities for differing age groups.

Project manager Erika Denholm said: "These trips serve to raise the self-esteem, self-independency and confidence these young people need to get involved in community work, charity fundraising, supporting local community projects and making gifts. And, most importantly, they have fun while doing it."

"We would not be able to offer these opportunities without the generosity of the Freeman and other organisations. Every person, no matter their disability or background, deserves the same opportunity in life to promote learning, visit new places and learn new skills."



The lion's share of the £1,650 needed to fund the trips will be spent meeting the fuel and driver costs of a 17-seater mini bus.

The club was founded in 2004 and one of the high points in its recent history was a royal visit, in the spring of 2021, by the then Duke and Duchess of Cambridge.

11/10/2023

## Durham Pointers

The immediate future of award winning tourism volunteers, who for more than a decade have played a key role in signposting Durham's tourist attractions to hundreds of thousands of visitors, has been given a key financial boost by the city's Freemen.

Durham Pointers, recognised by their distinctive pink tabards, have been gifted £750 by the Freemen's Charitable Trust, a gesture which will meet nearly half of next year's running costs.

Founded in 2012, the Pointers have cultivated strong ties and a lasting friendship with the Freemen who have, over the years, donated several thousand pounds to their cause.

The value of the work of the 65 volunteer Pointers - who provide their service every day in all weathers between Easter and early October - can be measured by the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service and gold awards from regional tourism bosses.



During last year and this year the team has provided assistance to nearly 100,000 people.

Running costs for next year's tourist meet-and-greet work will cover a range of needs, including public liability insurance, maintenance of their Market Place trike, replacement equipment and website upkeep.

Pointers' spokesman Paul Turgoose said: "Durham City Freemen have been hugely supportive over several years, providing much needed funding to buy individual tabards for all our volunteers and enabling us to design and print a variety of leaflets to assist visitors to the city, including a children's quiz leaflet. Their latest contribution will assist enormously in meeting normal day-to-day running costs, often the most difficult to raise funds for."

11/10/2023

## LionMouth Rural Centre

A ground breaking charity's ambitions to transform a plot of overgrown woodland into a haven of peace and tranquillity has won the backing of Durham City's Freemen with a £1,000 grant.

The LionMouth Rural Centre, will begin preparatory work within weeks on the £10,000 project adjacent to their Broadgate Farm complex near Esh Winning and hope to start in the woodland before the spring.

The centre supports two dozen local people, aged between 14 and 64 who have social or learning difficulties or are suffering or recovering from mental health problems.



Supported by two full-time and three part-time employees, as well as 16 volunteers, clients are offered day care support and training sessions in woodwork, horticulture, art, pottery cookery and conservation. The combined skills of those at the centre will play a key role in the creating the "calming reflective garden" which will be also be open to members of the public.

The proposed site's existing specimen shrubs, apple trees and a rare azalea already within the wooded area will be preserved and a path will be lined by scented plants and shrubs leading to an open glade. It will incorporate two lots of seating, one a curved wooden topped bench and a second which will have views of the nearby river.

Between the benches will be a stone mosaic conveying positive messages created by clients attending art sessions. They will also paint stones to represent animals and insects to be hidden in the garden for users to find.

Additionally bird and bat boxes, as well as feeding stations for the wide variety of birds, will be made in woodworking sessions and put up in trees and shrubs in the glade.

"We will not be destroying any important habitat or important flora and are confident we can undertake all the clearance and building work ourselves as part of the sessions at the centre. The clients will gain new skills and take pride and ownership in what is created," said Brigid Press, the centre manager.

Trust chairman Eric Bulmer said: "The Freemen's Charitable Trust have supported the work of the centre over a number of years with donations of several thousand pounds, together with our own craft trade expertise. We would encourage our members to visit the centre and see for themselves the valuable work being undertaken and experience this wonderful location."

## Charitable Trust

12/02/2024

### Solan Connor Fawcett Cancer Trust

The Freeman's £2,000 gift will be used to streamline bespoke services delivered to hundreds of patients and bereaved families from the Spennymoor headquarters of the Solan, Connor, Fawcett Cancer Trust, established over eight years ago.

Founder, Mark Solan, who launched the venture after the cancer claimed the lives of both his mother and grandmother said the organization was having to re-think its approach.



“Advances in treatment means terminally ill patients are surviving longer – sometimes for up to ten years. It’s great news but it means more people need our help and support for much longer. Alongside the cost of living crisis, our own costs are rising and with the NHS on its knees, we are having to rethink what we do and how we do it – as any other business would,” said Mark.

“But we could not do what we do without the incredible generosity of people like the Freeman,” he added.

In 2017, the year the fledgling service gained charitable status, Mark received a regional prize in the Pride of Britain Awards, followed two years later by recognition from the then Prime Minister Theresa May who marked his community work with a “Point of Light Certificate.”

## Durham City Freeman

In addition to responding to calls for help from cancer patients and their families, the charity – supported by a 36-strong team of volunteers – also responds to referrals from Macmillan Cancer Support, St Cuthbert’s Hospice and the NHS.

One of the changes planned at the substantial headquarters is the switch of the wellness centre to an unused former ground floor shop to provide more services – which include counselling, complimentary therapy, hair and beauty and a wig bank – giving easier access for a growing number of patients with mobility issues.



At the end of January the charity was supporting 253 adults and children with an active cancer diagnosis; 100 adults and children in remission but still needing practical and emotional help; 63 people who had lost loved ones; and 113 who had been discharged and in remission. During the same period a total of 147 people who had received help were reported to have died.

The charity offers help with fuel costs, groceries and transport to hospital appointments, while tradesmen, cleaners and gardeners are on hand to offer household services. Those with mobility problems have access to wheelchairs, mobility scooters and chairlifts. Donations are vital and extra funds are raised through coffee mornings and social events.

12/03/2024

## Durham Fringe Festival

A £500 gift from the city's Freemen will in particular help the Durham Fringe Festival reach a wider audience for this year's five-day event by targeting specific wards within the city facing socio-economic challenges - including limited home internet access - with additional printed promotional material.



Festival director, Stephen Cronin, said: "Statistically the north east has the smallest arts and culture sector in Britain and the festival seeks to provide a platform for artists, performers and creatives to develop and test work, supporting career progression. Over the past three years we have seen an appetite and demand from audiences for a fringe festival in Durham City".

It is proving to be a powerful tool in bringing people into the city at a time when it needs a boost the most – when the students go home for the summer.

We're really grateful to the Freemen's Charitable Trust for supporting us to further grow and diversify our audience at this stage of the festival's development.

The event, which features shows from genres across the performing arts, including dance, music, theatre, magic, stand-up, cabaret and children's shows, was launched in 2021 by local residents, intent on helping recovery from the economic and social effects of the pandemic. This year the team is encouraging more submissions of dance and movement-based performances.



The festival has been supported by a team of over 80 volunteers, whose ages range from 11 to over 80. The call for volunteers for this year's festival will be launched shortly and organisers invite people wanting to join and help to check their website for details.

This year's shows will be presented over eight performance spaces across seven venues. New venues include Durham Distillery and Dunelm House, adding to the core cohort of the Sir Thomas Allen Assembly Rooms, Cafedral, Durham City Theatre and Fabios. Audiences can also enjoy performances with the iconic backdrop of Durham Cathedral, in the festival marquee on Palace Green.

18/03/2024

## St Cuthbert's Church Baby Memorial

A striking granite and limestone memorial, designed to offer a focal point of remembrance for parents of dozens of babies who died before, during or immediately after birth in a Durham Hospital, has been installed.

The memorial was dedicated at a service on Sunday 21st July 2024 at St Cuthbert's Church, North Road, Durham DH1 4NH. The dedication will form part of the regular Sunday service beginning at 11am.



The ambitious £100,000 project – incorporating the unique memorial, flanked by limestone benches and accessed via a network of upgraded access footpaths and handrails - was mooted by two churchwardens from the city parish of St Cuthbert with St Aidan to provide “solace and support to any family who lost a child.”

A working group was established in the summer of 2021 and fundraising has so far raised £50,000.

Durham City Freeman's Charitable Trust was one of the latest organisations to pledge support - with a £1,000 gift to help towards the costs of foundations on which the memorial stands.

Historically, in the 1950s, 60s and into the 70s, stillborn babies and those who died very soon after birth, at what was then the nearby Dryburn Hospital, were buried in unmarked plots in the churchyard.

Over many years an annual service has been conducted by the University Hospital of North Durham's chaplaincy in St Cuthbert's church. More recently “a small but growing number” of relatives have been contacting the church to ask where individual graves are sited.

A church spokesperson said: “The whole issue of baby loss is very current and topical and there is clearly a need for a place of focus for relatives of the babies to visit, reflect and remember. We believe the memorial will impact positively on those seeking solace for the loss of a child for generations to come.”

The ornate screen, nearly a metre high and some one and a half metres long, will be sited on the south side of St Cuthbert's. The design, dominated by snowdrops and doves, is the creation of Lara Sparey, a Greater London-based artist and designer who has run her own workshop and studio for 25 years.

“As a bereaved parent myself, the memorial will remain one of the most poignant commissions I have undertaken. Thank you too, to the Freeman, for your contribution to this very special piece,” said Lara.

Significant funding to underpin the project was pledged by both the county and city parish councils. Fees to cover the cost of engaging a consultant heritage architect were met by a grant county's Area Action Partnership.

Further donations have come from the Diocese of Durham, the Benefact Trust, the Sir James Knott Trust, the Rank Foundation, the Barbour Foundation, Bellway Homes. and Direct Giving. Parishioners have also contributed to the fund.

Eric Bulmer, chairman of the Freeman's Charitable Trust said: “It is a privilege to provide a donation to a memorial which will provide comfort and support to families whose lives have been impacted by the loss of a baby.”



## Charitable Trust

10/06/2024

### Go The Distance

Troubled youngsters, stepping out on an award winning and unorthodox “pathway” to a brighter future, have been given a £1,000 “purse” to help them on their journey.

Operating outside a traditional school environment, Go The Distance (GTD), a community interest company based on the Belmont Business Park, uses a carefully structured “four pillar” mix of education, sport, confidence and knowledge to provide teenagers with the skills needed to find work.



The discipline cultivated by boxing plays a key role in the delivery of the training and to that end the Freeman’s gift will be used to buy essential equipment, including new gloves and helmets, to pursue the sport.

The company’s managing director, Paul Lysaght, explained: “The youngsters we work with are both boys and girls, aged between eight and 17, who for a variety of reasons, are not embraced by the traditional school system”.

## Durham City Freeman

“They may be held back by autism, ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder), anger management issues, violence at home, suicidal thoughts, self-harm and other mental health issues. We believe our system offers what they need to find employment and make something of their lives.”

Launched five years ago, the centre relies on a 50-50 split between public funding and charitable support from both local, regional and national organisations, to cover the cost of six specialist staff, along with leasing and running costs of their premises.

There are currently 45 young people on the company’s roll who share the 15 places available each day. The daily routine starts at 9.00am and first embraces English and Maths. Boxing too is a daily feature, as well as a range of other individually tailored supportive options. The centre’s two eight-seater mini buses give attendees the opportunity to reach a range of off-site activities, among them swimming.

## Charitable Trust

28/06/2024

### Apprentice Of The Year Awards

The project, launched 12 months ago by Durham City's Freemen, and supported by New College, Durham, this year considered 25 new hopefuls in eight trade categories, all supported by employers across the county.

From a short list of nine category winners the judging panel voted Liam Thynne the "Overall Apprentice of the Year." Each winner received a certificate, an engraved crystal trophy and a £50 Amazon voucher from Durham's Vice Lord Lieutenant, Mr. Michael Poole, at an awards ceremony in Durham Town Hall on June 28th.



Nineteen-year-old Liam from Ryhope, studied at New College while working for Focus Joinery, based in Houghton-le-Spring. His ability, innovative thinking and positive impact have, according to Neil Graham, deputy chairman of the Freemen and Warden of the Mason's Company, made him an outstanding candidate.

### AWARD WINNERS

**Carpentry and Joinery:** **Robin Erskine** (38) Newcastle

**Electrical Installation:** **Harvey Nichol** (19) Peterlee

**Hairdressing:** **Romilly Green** (16) Consett

**Information Technician:** **Neil Willis** (23) Stanley

## Durham City Freemen



*Robin Erskine -Carpentry and Joinery*



*Romille Green- Hairdressing*



*Abi Howlett - Painting and Decorating*



*Joseph Moore - Bricklaying*



*Neil Willis - Information Technician*

### AWARD WINNERS

**Painting and Decorating:** **Abi Howlett** (19) Chester-le- Street

**Plumbing and Gas:** **Lewis Minto** (24) Witton Gilbert

**Stonemasonry:** **Graham Penfold** (49) Esh Winning

**Bricklaying:** **Joseph Moore** (19) Ushaw Moor

## Charitable Trust

23/07/2024

### Coxhoe Community Hall

Officials of a community hub, who faced being shut out of their own premises by the pending failure of hydraulic entrance doors, have been handed the key to the crisis by Durham City Freemen's Charitable Trust.

Coxhoe Village Hall, built in two stages in the 1930s and celebrating its 90th anniversary last year, is home for a wide range of local organisations and available to people in surrounding villages.



Since Covid the premises, which supports more than 20 clubs and groups, as well as providing a venue for special family and community events, has undergone a £150,000 major overhaul. It includes a lift to make the entire premises disabled accessible; the replacement of main electric distribution boards; a face-lift of downstairs toilets and provision of new facilities on the first floor; repairs to the sprung dance floor, the upgrade of downstairs and upstairs fire doors and new windows.

But after the 21st century upgrade, officials faced an unexpected £4,000-plus additional bill when major malfunctions in automatic hydraulic doors at the front-entrance reached crisis point.

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Stuart Dunn, who chairs the team managing the centre, said "The hydraulics, installed over a decade ago, were failing to the point of being beyond repair and posing a danger to people going in and out of the building."

He explained: "When the right-hand door opened, its partner on the left was taking longer to open and close. It made access for wheelchair users and parents with buggies particularly difficult. The risk of colliding with the doors and the threat of injury was frequent. Even trying to lock the doors open was no longer an option."



Rita Brown, who also happens to be a Lady Freeman, suggested to Stuart that the Freemen's Charitable Trust might be able to help. The hall's subsequent appeal was considered and the Trust pledged £2,000 – almost half the cost of replacement hydraulics.

## Charitable Trust

25/07/2024

### Amber Bee CIC

More than 800 primary school children within Durham City are set to benefit from a national internet safety scheme aimed at making their switch from primary to secondary education less emotionally stressful.

Backed by a £1,000 gift from the city's Freemen, Amber Bee CIC, a national community interest company will, from this September, begin delivering to 14 local primary schools specialist support to youngsters ahead of their switch to city's secondary schools in the autumn of 2025 and 2026.



The company based in Chester, has reached out to over two million youngsters across Britain in the last decade, providing support across a range of issues.

Three years ago, it launched its "Barney and Echo, Mindfulness Project," working with The Police Community Clubs of Great Britain and others to help parents and teachers prepare youngsters for the personal, social and mental health challenges they may face when stepping up to secondary school.

Amber Bee's project manager, Ian Jackson, explained: "Many of the primary children we deal with are already internet-savvy when they leave to go to

## Durham City Freemen

secondary school. By offering a flexible way to deal with possible emotional changes, like bullying or grooming, they will be better equipped to make good choices."

The project, with a core message that mental health is just as important as physical health, is delivered over several months by volunteer teaching professionals, teaching staff and the support of parents. The estimated cost of delivery in Durham is about £5,000, nearly all spent on a work book for each child, including packs for both school staff and parents. Additional activities are incorporated into lesson planning and are supported by posters and includes a drama production.

"The strength of our work, spread over several months, is simple - it relies on professional volunteers for delivery and enjoys the support of school staff and parents. No costs for wages make it so attractive and we are grateful to outside organisations, like the Freemen, to help meet the costs of the material." he added.



The fourteen primaries involved are:- Laurel Avenue; St Joseph's RC; Durham Gilesgate; St Oswald's CofE; St Margaret's; Belmont CofE; Blue Coat CofE; Neville's Cross; St Thomas More; St Godric's RC; Finchale; Framwellgate Moor; Shincliffe CofE; and Belmont Cheveley Park.

27/09//2024

## SWaN Project

A small band of guardians, offering anyone in distress a safe night-time refuge within a central Durham church, have been handed a timely boost by the city's Freemen.

Their £1,000 gift will support the vital work of the five-strong team operating a funding-dependent Safe Hub within St Nicholas's Church in the Market Place – providing "pastoral care" to those caught up in disorder, as well as hot drinks, snacks, water, blankets and where needed, flip flops.



Since February, 2022, more than 4000 alcohol, drug and domestic abuse related incidents, as well those with suspected mental health issues, have been reported between 9:00pm and 3:00am on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. Many have been serious and on occasions, life-threatening.

The Hub is key element of a partnership led by Durham County Council, Durham Constabulary, the Parish Council, city centre businesses, the Temperance Trust and the county's Police and Crime Commissioner.

The return of university students at the start of the new academic year has once more raise demand for the services of the Hub. – crewed by three safer streets officers employed by the County Council and supported by two volunteers. Originally launched to aid women in distress it's now dedicated to offering a helping hand to any vulnerable person.

"Our original aim was to end violence and sexual harassment towards women but we now provide help to anyone who needs it." said Alan Patrickson, the County Council's corporate director for neighbourhoods and climate change and chair of the Durham City Safety Group.



"We are constantly looking for funding to keep the Hub open in a vital part of the city centre, ensuring it remains a great, but safe place for everyone. We are grateful to the Freemen for their much-needed boost." said Alan.

John Booth, a member of the Freemen's Charitable Trust said: "The trust is delighted to help an excellent city initiative which, with the support of volunteers, offers protection to vulnerable people caught up in night-time disorder within the community."

## Charitable Trust

16/10/2024

### Brandon Boxing Club

Young boxing gold medalists from Durham have earned themselves a special award from the city's Freemen – a £1,000 gift to help equip an extension to their purpose-built gym.



Formed over a decade ago, the Brandon Boxing Club has enjoyed regular success in regional, national and international competitions. But last season they excelled on a trip to Canada, winning no fewer than eleven gold medals and setting a new international record by becoming the first British team to clinch the country's Brampton Boxing Cup.

With more than 150 members, a third of them girls and ages ranging from five to 70, their gym is housed within the village cricket club's multi-sports complex. It caters for all members of the community, including the disabled and those with mental health problems.

Pivotal to the success of its boys' and girls' teams are their twelve coaches, all volunteers. The Freemen's latest gift is the third in four years. Previous gifts have helped cover the cost of boxing gloves, punch bags and coaching pads.

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The latest contribution will be used within the new extension to improve strength and conditioning and includes a rowing machine, treadmill, a turbo-bike and kettle bells and weights.



The club's competition secretary is Alex Oliver, a civil servant awarded the British Empire Medal in 2017 for his services to sport.

"Raising funds is a never-ending process for all volunteer-led organisations like ours. Our membership continues to grow and our involvement in competitions means the need to replace worn-out kit is relentless. Support from organisations like the Freemen, are vital to our survival and success." said Alex.

Charitable Trust

17/10/2024

Durham Quilters

A centuries-old craft, which first emerged in England during the Middle Ages and went on to be nurtured for over two hundred years in the homes of Durham’s coal and lead mining families, is poised to receive a double boost from the city’s Freemen.



A 20-strong women’s voluntary self-help group, whose ages range from 40-plus to 80-plus, meet weekly in Brandon Community Hall to pool their creative skills in the production of traditional quilts and patchwork - their showpiece work produced to national championship standards and earning acclaim.

An initial appeal for help to the Freemen’s Charitable Trust has earned them a firm guarantee of £500 to enhance their skills through a workshop led by a local textile artist, exploring new techniques, as well as buying specialist design, measuring and cutting tools.



Durham City Freemen

At the same time the Charitable Trust have indicated willingness to consider a supplementary request to help the group buy a sewing machine with an extra large sewing space.



Group member, Mrs Pat Sharples, explained: “Many in the group are active members of the Quilters’ Guild of the British Isles, some of us serving on the regional committee. Traditional Durham Quilting has its roots in the area’s mining communities and is internationally recognised.



## Charitable Trust

17/10/2024

### County Durham Stroke Club

Stroke victims from across Durham will enjoy “an enhanced quality of life” thanks to the continuing support of the city’s Freemen.



The 30 members of the County Durham Stroke Club have met twice monthly at Framwellgate Moor’s Bede Lodge Social Club since 2011 and in the last five years have enjoyed the financial backing of the Freemen’s Charitable Trust on three previous occasions.

The latest gift of £500 again covers the expenses of a team of four volunteer drivers for a year, guaranteeing members help in getting to community events, recreational trips and social gatherings they might otherwise miss.

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Club treasurer Paul Ryan said: “Many stroke survivors face significant challenges, not least limitations on mobility. Without transport their ability to take part in social activities and maintain a fulfilling life-style is seriously inhibited.



“The club provides companionship, a sense of belonging, a reduction in isolation and improvement in mental and emotional well-being. Together these can combine to cultivate physical and cognitive recovery.”

He added: “Without the help of the Freemen we would achieve much less in directly addressing the needs of members, particularly those stranded alone at home without the support of relatives and friends.”

Eric Bulmer, chairman of the Freemen’s Charitable Trust said: “I am pleased that we are once again able to support the club’s volunteer drivers who ensure stroke victims can maintain a social connection within the community.”



## Charitable Trust

17/10/2024

### Waddington Street Centre

An independently-run mental health charity, stretched by “a huge increase” in demand for its services, has been thrown a financial life-line by Durham City Freeman.

When the Waddington Street Centre celebrated its 40th anniversary three years ago it provided a front-line safe haven every week for 120 members, all struggling with the crippling stress of modern living, including the tensions of Covid.

Today staff at the centre, in the north of the city, report 200 people now seek support, placing their board under mounting pressure to “take serious action” to cut costs and explore new ways of generating income.



Measures already taken include tapping into reserves, a move which will impact service delivery.

At the core of the centre’s work is a 20-strong team of volunteers, all striving to relieve members home life worries, illness or community conflict through the implementation of a wide range of informal educational activities.

## Durham City Freeman

During the enforced closures of the Covid epidemic the centre was given a major face-lift, supported in part by the Freeman. The current rise in member numbers reflects the widespread national rise in demand for mental health support.

The freemen’s charitable trust has now responded with a £2,000 gift, already earmarked to help fund a support worker’s role.



Centre manager Ali Lee said: “We are once again in the debt of the freemen whose donation will support an additional member of staff. Quality is at the heart of what we do and having enough with the relevant skills is absolutely key to making this happen. Access to our services increases members’ independence and resilience, equipping them with the tools for self-care and development to move on.”

Charitable Trust member Alan Ribchester, said: “We are again delighted to help the centre, especially, like so many charities, they are facing the need to take action to cut costs.

“Their difficulties will, of course, have been increased by the recent increase in the employers’ National Insurance rate imposed in the budget. The centre offers a very significant level of help to its members and it is gratifying to be able to assist them once more.”

17/10/2024

## Remembrance Festival and Parade

Remembrance Sunday in Durham will be marked again by a double tribute to "The Fallen" – both supported together for the first time by the Durham City Freemen Charitable Trust.



The traditional Sunday morning parade through the city, which follows a service in the Cathedral, is one of the biggest in the region. It will include regular soldiers and reservists, supported by three bands and 18 fire brigade standard bearers from across Scotland, England and Wales, as well as representatives of other emergency services.

Mr. Arthur Lockyear, Deputy Warden of the Freemen's Plumbers' Company, spent more than 30 years supporting and developing the Sunderland's Parade and was awarded an MBE in 2010. For the last decade, he has committed himself to expanding the Durham City march.

To help meet costs, the parade treasurer, Dave Cuthbertson, was presented with a £1,000 gift from the Freemen's Charitable Trust while, at the same time, a matching donation for the Festival of Remembrance was handed to Lieutenant Colonel Barney Barnbrook, the Catterick-based Regional Director of the fund's North East and Yorkshire Branch.

Service personnel on parade this year included members of the 4th Battalion the Royal Regiment of Scotland, the Light Dragoons, the Royal Army Medical Corps, the Royal Military Police, the 8th Battalion, The Rifles and the 608 Royal Auxiliary Air Force (Durham's Own).

The Festival of Remembrance focused on the 80th anniversary of D-Day and Arnhem featuring an emotional mix of music and the spoken word. Among those taking part are the Band of the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, Tyne Electrical Engineers Association of Pipes and Drums, the Military WAGS Choir from Catterick and northern soprano Charlotte Potter.



Colonel Barnbrook said "While it was both a great responsibility to organize the Festival of Remembrance each year its was also a great privilege."

"As a region and as a country we have a duty to remember those who gave their all in the defence of our nation. Events in Durham over the Remembrance Weekend offer local communities an appropriate and fitting way to commemorate such great sacrifice. We are extremely grateful to the the Charitable Trust and our other local sponsors for their support in making the festival possible." he added.

## Charitable Trust

01/11/2024

### Waddington Street Foodbank

Three foodbanks, which have provided emergency grocery parcels to hundreds of crisis-hit families in the Durham area over the past year, have been gifted £1,000 by the Charitable Trust of the city's Freemen.

The three hubs, operating premises in Waddington Street, Old Elvet and Gilesgate are part of a network of 27 distribution points across Durham, managed by the Durham Christian Partnership from a central warehouse on Chester-le-Street's Drum Industrial Estate.

Thirty unpaid volunteers in Durham offer five-day collection-point availability with

Waddington Street's United Reform Church open Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays; Elvet Methodist Church covering Tuesdays; and Gilesgate's Edge Court Baptist Church on Saturdays.

In the year ending October 854 individual families in the city area each received a three-day supply of food, as well as a pack of household toiletries and cleaning products. The result is 1,408 adults and 406 children benefitted.

"We could not provide this service without our volunteers and the financial support of the public and organizations like the Durham City Freemen, who first helped us two years ago with a matching contribution," said Peter MacLellan, the partnership's chief executive officer.

Across their 28 outlets the partnership, set up in 1999, can call on the help of 300 unpaid volunteers and 34 part-time staff, which includes specialist debt advisers.

"Recent changes to National Insurance contributions, announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer will, we estimate, add an entirely unwelcome £20,000 to our annual running costs. Changes have consequences, often not recognized," he added.

Alan Ribchester, one of the Freemen's six charitable trustees, said: "We are supporting the Durham foodbanks when they are working to meet increasing demand for their services and, at the same time, face rising overheads which are the direct result of recent changes in Government policy. We sincerely hope they will succeed."



## Durham City Freemen

04/11/2024

### Mayor's Charity Appeal

The Mayor was presented with a Cheque by the Chairman of the Charitable Trust at the Martinmas Guild Day on 4th November.

The two charities supported by Durham' Mayor, County Councillor Liz Brown, during her year of office will share a £1,000 gift from the Freemen.

The two recipients, Feeding Families and the animal rescue service Stray Aid, both operate within the county's boundaries.

Thousands of families across the region facing "food poverty" have benefitted from deliveries from the charity's distribution centre in Blaydon. Two thousand food boxes are sent out every month and during the last year more than 160,000 meals have reached families on the breadline.

From its County Durham base Stray Aid dedicates support and protection to abandoned dogs and homeless cats.

On her appointment the city-born mayor said she was honoured and excited to be given the opportunity to represent the communities and organisations which "make this wonderful; city what it is."

She said: "My chosen charities are really important to me. At a time of higher living costs helping struggling families facing poverty is vital, as too is sheltering abandoned animals."

Coun. Mrs Brown, the representative for Neville's Cross for seven years, is married with four children. She has followed a varied career, embracing garden design, cleaning houses and working for the BBC.



