

THE GILD OF FREEMEN OF THE CITY OF YORK

Once you are admitted as a

‘Freeman of the City of York’

You are eligible to join the Gild of Freemen.

Application forms are available from:

Or you can download an application form from the
Gild website at www.freemenofyork.com.

© The Gild of Freemen of the City of York

FREEDOM OF THE CITY OF YORK

Admittance as a Freeman of the City of York is by
patrimony (birthright)

Or by servitude (apprenticeship) bound to a Master
craftsman (manager) who is already a ‘Freeman of
the City of York’.

The Freedom of the City of York
is today granted and administered by the
City of York Council who once a year hold a
Freedom Court in the ancient Guildhall of the city.

If you feel you have a right through your family
history to become a Freeman of the City you should
first complete an application form, available from:

Electoral Services
City of York Council
West Offices
Station Rise
York YO1 6GA

Tel: 01904 551050

Alternatively the application form can be
downloaded from the Gild website.

THE GILD OF FREEMEN OF THE CITY OF YORK



President:
The Right Honourable
The Lord Mayor of York

www.freemenofyork.com

HISTORY OF FREEMEN

Free men have existed for a millennium or longer although not in the constitutional way we now regard freemen. Written records called ‘freemen’s rolls’ of freemen of York are recorded from the year 1272; these are held in the city archive department.

In York, in keeping with other towns and cities, a man had to be a freeman before he was allowed to trade and become a member of his trade guild of which there were as many as 80 in York.

The trade guilds controlled the admission of craftsmen and merchants in the city and also approved the standards and quality of merchandise of their members, with fines imposed on those who did not abide by the required standard. They also set out the terms of apprenticeship and tested those wishing to enter a trade.

Freemen of York prior to 1835 controlled the affairs of the City and implemented a municipal democracy under the rules of the King and collected his taxes. They maintained the city walls and defences and were the first to be called to arms to defend the city.

In taking the oath of freedom today one is sworn to be:

“true and trusty to our Sovereign Lady, Queen Elizabeth II, and to this City of York; and the same City shall save and maintain to our said Sovereign Lady The Queen and her Successors; and all the franchises and freedoms of the same City maintain and uphold with the best of my Power and Cunning, and with my body and goods, so often as it shall need my Help. So Help Me God”

THE GILD OF FREEMEN TODAY

The Gild of Freemen of the City of York was founded on 9th September 1953 on a unanimous vote of nearly two hundred freemen representing all four wards in the city.

It was formed for the benefit of all freemen who no longer had a craft guild and to maintain the heritage of the gift of freedom so dearly held down the ages.

- The Gild upholds the vows of Freedom
- Promotes the good reputation of the City
- Acts as guardian in protecting and developing the traditional rights of Freemen
- Preserves the custom of caring for the welfare of Gild Freemen
- Operates a benevolent fund
- Subscribes to charitable causes
- Provides a range of social activities

YORK MYSTERY PLAYS

Were originally produced by the religious and trade guilds of the city and are world-renowned. The Gild of Freemen are proud to participate with the other Guilds of the City in continuing to keep the cycle alive and presenting the plays in the traditional manner on wagons which are hauled to a number of locations within the city walls. The Mystery Plays run on a four-year cycle. For further information on future productions contact:

The Chairman, York Mystery Plays,
Bedern Hall, Bedern, York, YO1 7AL.

Tel: 01904 653698

Email: info@bedernhall.co.uk

BEDERN HALL



Originally this was the communal hall of the College of Vicars Choral of York Minster; it is one of the ancient buildings in York existing from medieval days. During the 1980s it was restored by the City of York Council and today is the home to three York guilds – The Gild of Freemen, the Guild of Building and the Company of Cordwainers. The Gild of Freemen uses the hall to conduct their monthly business, hold their annual general meeting and social functions, which include an annual Christmas lunch and Christmas dinner.

THE STRAYS OF YORK

Historically the ‘strays’ of York belonged to and were organised by Freemen who each had the right to graze one or two cows in pasture, on the stray in the ward where they resided. Pasture Masters administered each of the four strays and evidence of the position of ‘herdsman’ (person responsible for the safe up keeping of animals and the stray) can be seen on each of the strays (Micklegate, Bootham, Monk and Walmgate) in the shape of the ‘Herdsman’s’ cottages, which still exist.