

The Manor of Rushton

Information for freeholders of the Manor and others

Are you currently the owner or occupier of residential or commercial property lying in the parochial chapelry of Rushton (which includes the townships of Rushton Spencer, Rushton James and Heaton, and the hamlet of Rushton Marsh), in the Leek division of the county of Staffordshire? If so your property may well stand on the site of one of the free tenements that once constituted the manor of Rushton and the activities of the manorial courts may be of interest to you as to others.

The manor was a unit of local government for over six hundred years, from the founding of the township until mid Victorian times. For the first few centuries the Overlordship of the manor was held by great nobles including the earls of Chester but it was the free tenants who regulated the civic life of the township, meeting together in the manor courts and taking turns as portreeve, ale-taster and jurors.

After a century and a half of reform and reorganisation most civic functions are now exercised by Town, District and County Councils with the manor of Rushton now having the benefit of a Parish Council and the free tenants have become freeholders. But the manor has never ceased to exist in law, and under the present holder of the over-lordship the Courts Leet and Baron have now been revived and it is intended to hold an ale-tasting ceremony annually.

It is hoped that perambulations of the manor will soon be revived with inspections of watercourses and stocks along with ceremonies of bread weighing etc. Freeholders of the Manor can now be admitted as such and all residents may take the oath of assurance and frankpledge.

It is intended that a programme of events will shortly be published. All courts and outdoor events will be open to the public and will be advertised locally in good time. Anyone thinking of applying to be a juror or registered as a freeholder of the manor is also welcome to attend an informal meeting. More information on the activities of the manor can be obtained from the Steward or Deputy Steward during normal office hours.

We particularly welcome the interest of manor residents and hope to see them at courts and ceremonies. We also hope such persons, whether they are interested in an elected post or not, will be eligible to apply for admission as freeholders of the manor. As well as maintaining ancient forms and traditions we can also act as a pressure group, and admitted freeholders are entitled to raise a matter of local concern for consideration and presentment by the Leet and Baron jury.

Officers and jurors need not be manor residents and persons living anywhere in the neighbourhood are welcome to apply for jury posts and are eligible for office. In the olden days court attendance and tenure of office was compulsory and officer posts circulated on an annual basis. A two-year tenure is now preferred, enabling officers to become more familiar with their duties, serve in a variety of posts, and progress to senior office within a reasonable time.