



# In touch > On line

## The newsletter for Wiltshire Freemasons



We're Looking forward to Christmas

December 2020

It's Christmas time - but maybe not as we know it....

Wiltshire Freemasonry



I guess everyone has a favourite Christmas song or carol and I'm sure you will recognise the phrase 'It's Christmas time' as the first line of the Band Aid single Do they know it's Christmas. As I started to write this piece for the December edition of **In touch>On line** I found myself thinking of the opening verse to the song which was sung by Paul Young, and had such an impact when it was released in 1984. ***It's Christmas time, there's no need to be afraid. At Christmas time, we let in light and we banish shade.*** It seemed to me that after the doom and gloom of the past eleven months it is only right and proper that we should allow ourselves a moment to reflect on the true message of the Christian gospel as we now look forward to in the celebration of Christmas and the birth of Christ, who gave light and hope to a suffering world.

Christ's teachings give us specific guidance on how we should interact with our fellow human beings, with tolerance, justice, and truth being pre-eminent. Freemasonry isn't a religion, but as Freemasons the principles of Integrity, Friendship, Respect, and Charity as set out in the Volume of the Sacred Law are ones we cherish. We are charged to practise out of the Lodge those duties that have been taught in the Lodge and I am delighted to acknowledge much evidence of these principles being practised by our members throughout the Province; particularly the amazing acts of kindness by individual Brethren who have been instinctively motivated to help those in need during this time.

Christmas this year will almost certainly be very different to anything the post war generation has ever experienced, and I'm not referring to the shortage or choice of food. I know there will mixed feelings about the government's latest relaxation of the rules regarding social gatherings, but with newly released figures showing a reduction in Covid-19 infection rates and hospital admissions it comes as no surprise. The new special rules allowing even greater mobility between 23<sup>rd</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> December will allow families to join each other and enjoy a near traditional Christmas.

Few would argue with me when I say that the coronavirus has had a significant effect on all our lives; this invisible but insidious enemy has negatively impacted on many of the things we hold dear and has severely affected our ability to enjoy what we regard as our normal way of life.

The image of Stonehenge is proudly featured on the Provincial Banner, symbolically depicting the sun rising in the East. Stonehenge is a World Heritage site providing an insight on how thousands of years ago pagan England celebrated both the summer and winter Solstice. The winter Solstice which falls on the 21<sup>st</sup> December, marks the end of the dark days of winter and the prospect of brighter days to come.

Recently, we received the wonderful news that not one but three vaccines will be available in the new year. The vaccines will offer real hope to the World that sometime next year we may be able to emerge from the darkness this pandemic has inflicted on society, and to make a significant advance in returning to our normal way of life. For Freemasons this news is the pre-cursor to what we trust will be a return to Masonic activity, in anticipation of which we can start to plan for the future. I think we will all be glad to leave the old year well behind us as we enter a new phase of hope and positivity. Your Provincial executive is confident that Wiltshire Freemasons will emerge from the dark tunnel of 2020, stronger and more determined to treasure what Freemasonry has to offer.



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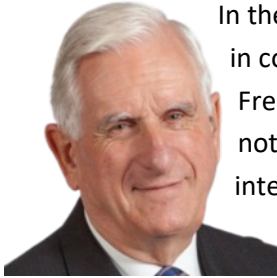
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### Keeping in touch....



In the November edition **In touch > On line** I wrote about our ambitious plans to keep in contact with men who had expressed an interest in becoming a Wiltshire Freemason but had either not yet completed a Form P (the application form), had not yet been interviewed, or who had completed both the Form P and been interviewed, but due to Covid-19 had not been Initiated. Amazingly this totalled over 90 men and we were really keen to assure them that their interest in Freemasonry was matched by ours in them. Working closely with the

Divisional Officers, and the lodge Secretaries we were able to contact every single person and invite them and their partners to a ZOOM meeting where they were invited to **Ask Me Anything**

### Just Ask One....

Have you seen our JUST ASK advertisement on Facebook? It has been viewed by over 1,500 people and resulted in some positive enquiries. We are encouraging good men who may have an interest in becoming a Freemason to Join one of our 44 Lodges. But we need **YOU** to play your part in being ready to tell a friend you are proud to be a Freemason. After all if you want to know what a Freemason is, and what Freemasons do, what better way to find out than to **JUST ASK ONE**.



### Charter Mark awarded to Province....



Provincial Grand Lodge of Wiltshire

Did you know that all Provincial websites have to be approved by UGLE? The good news is that Wiltshire's website has been awarded the prestigious UGLE Charter Mark which is formal recognition that the site meets the exacting standards required by Dean Simmons and the digital team.

Many of you will have noticed that the URL for the site is https:// and the additional **S** is very important as it signifies a level of additional security to protect you and the site. The Charter Mark can be seen at the footer of the front page of the Provincial website.

### The Peter Winton Trophy....

It hardly seems any time at all since we announced the inaugural winner of The Peter Winton Trophy and yet it really is time to ask you to think about what you can do to be a nominee for this prestigious title. In 2012 Steve Bridge introduced a splendid initiative 300 hours for 300 years, and while designed around the Tercentenary of the formation of the first Grand Lodge, Steve was equally sure it could be considered as a commitment to undertake 300 hours of good works for another 300 years, and that's a great idea. Now's the time to start planning what your Lodge will be doing to promote Freemasonry in Wiltshire, and who knows, YOUR Lodge could be the next name on The Peter Winton Trophy.



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## Christmas lunch - compliments of the Lodge....

Provincial Almoner Gary Dolphin is delighted to announce his support for a special Christmas initiative by Bros Paul Sharp and Mark Newman who have joined forces with a local company to provide a Christmas lunch for every Swindon Lodge member (or couple) who will be 'alone on Christmas Day'.

Working with the county's well known 'ready meal' provider **Wiltshire Farm Foods**, the team will ensure that a pre-prepared Christmas Dinner is delivered on Christmas Day morning in plenty of time for you to pop it in the oven ready for lunchtime. Brethren will be able to choose either a Turkey dinner, Beef with red wine or a hearty vegetarian option, plus one of three desserts. As it's Christmas there will also be delicious mince pies, and maybe even an apple and an orange!

WILTSHIRE

EST. FARM 1991

FOODS

No one should be alone at Christmas, but sadly the Covid-19 crisis means that for some there really is no alternative. Your Lodge wants to make a difference to your Christmas Day by making sure that even if you are alone, you can enjoy a traditional Christmas lunch and raise a glass of good cheer to friends and fraternity, and to a better New Year.

Lodge Almoners will be contacting eligible Brethren during the next few weeks to ask whether you would like a Christmas lunch - compliments of the Lodge.

*If you are 'Alone at Christmas' please let your Lodge Almoner know - you may get a welcome phone call on Christmas morning just to say 'HAPPY CHRISTMAS'. It's little things that make a difference.*



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Christmas will take place....

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Well it definitely will at Corsham Lodge No.6616 which meets at the Masonic Hall, Pickwick.

John Deane and Tom Snell have not quite 'decked the hall with boughs of holly' but it's beginning to look a lot like Christmas. All they need is for a little touch of snow and Santa Claus to make the scene complete.

The PrGM has suggested that Christmas this year will be different from previous years, but we trust that everyone will put up their decorations, dress the Christmas tree with twinkling lights, and take the opportunity to make this Christmas a time to let in light, and banish shade.

Christmas 2020 will be remembered for many different things, not least that it is a time to be jolly - and jolly careful.

## Local Lodges support Swindon Domestic Abuse Support Service....

For the **thirteenth** year running local Freemasons are supporting the Swindon Domestic Abuse Support Service (SDASS) Christmas Appeal. However, due to Covid-19 this year's appeal will be very different. In previous years, members and their families came along to the Swindon Masonic Centre in early December to generously donate various items to bring a little seasonal joy to victims of domestic violence and abuse, and their children.

Unfortunately, due to Covid-19 restrictions the Lodges cannot use the facilities at the Swindon Masonic Centre for this purpose. Nevertheless, they are still going to support SDASS with their endeavours to provide as good a Christmas as possible for an estimated **22** women and **40** children who will be residing at the refuge this Christmas, and up to **80** women and their children in the community

This year has been a difficult one for everyone due to the Covid-19 Pandemic and incidents of domestic abuse have increased considerably, particularly so during the first lockdown.

The appeal this year is for cash (monetary) donations to Swindon Women's Aid. A donation for any amount will be extremely welcome either by cheque posted to Swindon Women's Aid or by an online transaction to Swindon Women's Aid bank account. Payment details are as follows;

**Payment online:**

**Name of Bank:** Unity Trust Bank  
**Sort Code:** 60-83-01  
**Account name:** Swindon Women's Aid  
**Account number:** 20392442  
**Reference:** SF  
(denotes a Freemason's donation)

**Payment by cheque and post:**

**Cheque to:** Swindon Women's Aid  
**Postal Address:** PO Box 3816  
Swindon  
SN5 1BQ  
**Reference on reverse of cheque:** SF  
(denotes a Freemason's donation)



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### Congratulations to Ian Clark....

The Provincial Grand Master has offered his congratulations to Bro Ian Clark of Gooch Lodge No.1295 who has been appointed an Assistant Metropolitan Grand Master. Ian is currently a Metropolitan Grand Inspector, and In his new role Ian will be responsible for over 200 London Lodges.

### Speaking of Gooch Lodge....

The Master, and Brethren of Vastern Lodge No.8977 welcome you to their regular discussion group on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> December at 7.30pm for a very special ZOOM meeting when their very special guest will be VW Bro Maurice Leighfield PGSwdB, PDPrGM. This promises to be a highlight of the the year for the Lodge which has been holding their discussion group, interspersed with social events, every Tuesday since the first lockdown.

### Mentoring Matters....

It really does, and probably more so today than ever before. There can be no argument that the way some men are introduced to Freemasonry today is different from how it was in a day gone by. However, that it is not to say the new way is wrong or less likely to result in a candidate remaining in Freemasonry for 65 years. While it may be easy to criticise the man who joins our fraternity 'from off the internet' there is no evidence whatsoever to support the myth that he is less interested or committed to Freemasonry; on the contrary there is ample proof that they are keen participants in Lodge activities. David Little and his team of Divisional Mentors will be working with Lodge Mentors to introduce new ways of connecting with young Freemasons, offering help to support Brethren who are unsure of what they want to do in and for the Lodge, and to assist in retrieving those Brethren who are not attending the Lodge. As has been made clear before, this work is not intended to supplant the role of the Lodge, rather it is to enhance the overall experience that every member has the right to enjoy, including the over arching role of the Province in all Masonic matters.

### Are you under 45 and interested in....

Joining The Sarsen Club? The club which was formed in 2015 recently held its Annual General Meeting and elected a new committee under the chairmanship of Mitch Bryan (Royal Sussex Lodge of Emulation No.355) and a new secretary in Alex Corbett (Harry C Preater Lodge No.8204).

The Provincial Grand Master has accepted an invitation to become the Patron of the club; and Simon Leighfield APrGM is the new President. After accepting the office Simon spoke with the editor of **In touch > On line** and said *"It is often said that young men are the future of Freemasonry, and the Provincial Executive recognises how important it is to attract and retain younger men. The Sarsen Club is a great forum for new and young Freemasons to meet, especially in a social environment."*

If you are under 45 years of age, and would like to know more about The Sarsen Club why not contact Alex Corbett email: [secretary@sarsenclub.co.uk](mailto:secretary@sarsenclub.co.uk) Alex would love to hear from you.

### Breaking News....

With over 100 candidates wanting to be made a Wiltshire Freemason, if your Lodge is planning to hold a meeting outside of their normal dates the Provincial Grand Master has announced that there will be **NO CHARGE** for a dispensation to conduct an Initiation or Passing ceremony at any time while the Covid-19 restrictions are in place. Contact Provincial Secretary Phil Still for further information.

Wiltshire Freemasonry