



2021



A Very Happy New Year



In touch > On line

The newsletter for Wiltshire Freemasons



"Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, today is a gift, which is why we call it the present."

January 2021

Wiltshire Freemasonry

Is this our new beginning?



This time last year I wrote that "January is the month of new beginnings, the time of year most of us stop and take stock of our lives, look back on the past twelve months, re-evaluate our priorities and set ourselves new goals." I went on to say "I'm equally sure you will appreciate that sometimes the best laid plans of mice and men often go awry; a saying adapted from a line in "To a Mouse," by the Scottish poet Robert Burns. Little did I know that a virus, unknown to us at the time of writing would change 2020 into an annus horribilis, not only for

Freemasons but for people throughout the world. Covid-19 entered the lexicon of the medical fraternity and 'lockdown' became the word of the year, joining coronavirus, social distancing, self-isolate and furlough in the top ten words of the English language. Christmas, normally a time when families and friends gather together to have a good time was distinctly muted, and traditional New Year celebrations have also been placed 'on hold'. Normal life, defined as being what we had before Covid, appears to be a little way off, as does the prospect of an immediate return to large Masonic meetings. The situation has been made a little more difficult by the Government's latest decision to revisit the Tier structure, and the news that Swindon has been moved to Tier 3 while the rest of Wiltshire remains in Tier 2. Who knows whether we will all be placed in Tier 4?

And yet I am persuaded that what defines us most as men and as Freemasons is how we respond in times such as these. I remind myself of the words written by Jobie Hughes - *"When you have lost hope, you have lost everything. And when you think all is lost, when all is dire and bleak, there is always hope."* Hope consists of a desire for an outcome and a belief in that outcome's possibility and is often said to be synonymous with optimism. For Freemasons the news that scientists have produced a vaccine for Covid-19 has raised the expectation that we will soon be able to meet in our beautiful Masonic Lodge Rooms and to once again engage in the performing of our ceremonies.

I am confident that Wiltshire Freemasons will emerge from the dark months of 2020 and experience a true renaissance, a rebirth that will lead to a new and vibrant period of revival and of renewed interest in what Freemasonry is, and what it offers to the man seeking to improve himself.

I am grateful to those Lodges which have advised the Provincial Secretary of their intention to work throughout the summer (Covid-19 rules permitting) and to initiate candidates who have been patiently waiting to be admitted to the Craft. I know that Colin Cheshire has maintained contact with many of the men who have registered an interest in becoming Freemasons, and I am looking forward to meeting them in the very near future. I am also encouraged by the news that even during 'lockdown' expressions of interest continue to be received by the Provincial membership team.

There is no doubt that many of our members will have experienced a profound sense of loneliness, having been prevented from spending Christmas with either friends or their loved ones. If you are anxious and struggling to come to terms with the vagaries of lockdown, please do not hesitate to seek professional help from the counselling service supported and funded by the Masonic Charitable Foundation. Details of the helpline number are given on page three of this copy of **In touch > On line**.

As we leave the old and begin a New Year, I wish each and every one of you all the very best for 2021. I know it will be a challenging year, but I also believe it will be a most rewarding year for the Province of which I am proud to be Provincial Grand Master.



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Provincial YouTube channel....

Have you visited the Province's newest media format, our very own  YouTube Channel?

A Freemason and a Stone Mason....

On Monday 14th December the team released a video featuring Neil Gray who is a Wiltshire Freemason and a Master Stonemason. To watch this short promotional video and to see how the Province is promoting the Craft in Wiltshire click onto this link <https://youtu.be/YhNNvebzzyU>

Subscribe to and like us....

Help the Province by subscribing to, and liking our YouTube channel. It's easy to do, just click the subscribe button and click on the bell.



Want to be in a video?

The Communication Team is keen to hear what you think would make a good video to promote Freemasonry in Wiltshire. If you have an idea or would like to be in a video send an email to pcowiltshire@gmail.com. Just tell us what you think would make good viewing and what you could do to help us make a better product.

Did you see....

The Provincial Communication Team published a series of Christmas Greeting twitter and Facebook posts featuring officers of Provincial Grand Lodge. We hope you liked them and thank you to those Lodges and Brethren who re-tweeted, liked and followed them. Here are two of the images used.



Have you signed up to Solomon?



Since its successful launch, some 18 months ago, the world of Freemasonry has moved on considerably and so has Solomon. From its original base of pure written material, it has expanded and now provides new ways of learning with new modules which include sound recordings, interactive and audiovisual content - with more content planned for future release.

Solomon is managed by Bro Richard Wright and complements the work undertaken by the Provincial Learning & Development Team led by Bro Steve Lee. If you haven't signed up to access Solomon through the UGLE website - why not make it a New Year resolution to register to receive regular updates to this fantastic programme.



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Provincial Almoner says mental ill health is not imaginary....

Wiltshire Freemasonry



I am very aware that we have just experienced a very different Christmas to the ones we are used to enjoying. For the younger members of society, often referred to as the post war generation, the notion that Christmas could ever be spent alone is a contradiction to everything they believe about the festive season, whereas for some of our more senior members the memory, distant though it might be, of a Christmas spent separated from loved ones is very real.

However being alone is not necessarily the same as being lonely, and it is the reality of loneliness together with its consequences that we must recognise if we are to have any chance of addressing the needs of those most affected. The impact of 'lockdown' or should that be multiple 'lockdowns' should not be underestimated as clinicians examine the part that lockdowns are playing in the mental health of the nation. Evidence suggests that they are having a detrimental effect, not only on those with pre-existing mental health issues, but also those with no previous history of mental ill health.

Humans are naturally social, Freemasons especially so. In recognising this fact it must surely be accepted that physical distancing, imposed isolation or self shielding are intrinsically alien to our normal way of life. And yet for the past twelve months this strange way of living our lives has become the 'new normal'. It looks likely to continue for a few more months as we are told the holy grail of a vaccine will be subject to a national programme of immense logistical complexity. It will probably be the end of 2021 before enough of the population is protected from Covid-19, and we are permitted to return to a more normal way of life.

The awareness of the new phenomena of 'Long Covid' (not a medical definition, but rather a word created on Twitter) will undoubtedly feature on the 'list of things to study' for a future generation of psychiatrists and psychologists anxious to acquire greater knowledge and understanding of the lasting impact of lockdown restrictions on mental health.

One of the wonderful things about Freemasonry is the way in which we do not rush to make negative judgements on a Brother's mental ill health, but rather we take a more nuanced view in which we consider the many ways in which we as individuals can help, and equally importantly how we can signpost a Brother to the excellent counselling service provided through the Masonic Charitable Foundation's partnership with an independent team of professional counsellors and therapists who are registered and accredited by the UK Council for Psychotherapy.

The counselling service offers mental health support to Freemasons and their family members who are experiencing low mood, symptoms of depression, anxiety, stress or other conditions affecting their mental wellbeing. While a financial assessment is not required to access the standard counselling service, a full financial assessment is required to access other specialist mental health support. However, please do not put off asking for help from a fear that you may be ineligible, a phone call will almost certainly be able to provide an answer to your enquiry.

If you have experienced Covid-19 or know someone who has, and you would like to access counselling either for yourself or a friend, the enquiries team is available to provide 'confidential' mental health support. You can contact the team who will provide all the details you require to access the service. Tel: **0800 035 60 90** or email: help@mcf.org.uk Why not do it today?



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Congratulations to Paul Sharp....

While most, if not all of us were at home, Paul was making a final trip to a Brother who was going to be on his own for Christmas. A few festive goodies plus a nice bottle of wine to toast the day made Christmas Day a very special day and proved once again that **charity it's in a freemason's DNA**.

Lodge Newsletters....

Great to receive newsletters from Sarum Lodge No.5137, Moonraker Lodge No.8747, and White Horse Lodge No.2227. If you publish a newsletter please do send a copy to pcowiltshire@gmail.com

Are you under 45 and interested?

The Sarsen Club is planning a number of social events for 2021 - **ARE YOU INTERESTED** - If you are under 45 years of age, and would like to know more about The Sarsen Club contact the club's secretary Bro Alex Corbett email: secretary@sarsenclub.co.uk

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. What will your Lodge be doing in 2021 to promote Freemasonry in Wiltshire? Whatever it is please let us know.

A huge Thank You from the Provincial Grand Master....

To all those Lodges who have committed to do 'whatever it takes' to welcome candidates into Freemasonry during the summer months of 2021 (subject to Covid-19 restrictions having been lifted). With over 100 candidates wanting to be made Wiltshire Freemasons, 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.

Colin Cheshire asks....

Have you got a potential member waiting to be interviewed, do you speak to them on ZOOM - a safe and convenient way to get to know them, and to let them get to know you?

Lodge Treasurers make a plea....

It's that time of the year when Lodge treasurers ask you to pay your annual subscription. For many Lodges the costs they incur are fixed and not variable - fees to Grand Lodge, and Province, plus Masonic Hall costs have to be paid regardless of Covid-19 and nationally imposed lockdowns. For most Wiltshire Lodges the fees payable for 2021 have not been increased (UGLE and Province fees have been frozen) and some Lodges have actually been able to reduce the fees charged to members.

Not forgetting your Secretary....

In the wonderful world of high technology it may surprise you to know that human intervention is key, and no more so than in the collection of up to date and accurate data. If you have changed your home address, got a new mobile phone number or updated your email address, please let your secretary know in order that he can update your records and start the New Year right.



Proud to be a Wiltshire Freemason

Derek Robins
Almoner
Lodge of Friendship and Unity
No.1271

