



In touch > On line

The newsletter for Wiltshire Freemasons



"March brings breezes loud and shrill, stirs the dancing daffodil."

MARCH 2022
Wiltshire Freemasons

Spring forward....



An old English proverb reminds us that "March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb" - which reminds me when March starts it's still officially winter. When the month ends, it's officially spring.

From my study window I can see sheep in the field, lambs gambolling seemingly without a care in the world, birds at the numerous feeding stations while others are gathering nesting material and preparing for new arrivals; while a squirrel rummages for hidden nuts - a veritable treasure trove carefully stored away during warmer days and now providing a late winter feast. Daffodils are poking their green leaves skyward and the trees are showing signs of budding. Nature provides us with many important lessons, not least that change is the law of life, a subject that I have spoken about on numerous occasions. The pace of change in our lives has reached a point where it seems that every day there is a new discovery, a new idea, a new way of doing things. In Freemasonry, change has always appeared to be at the pace of the ocean tanker, slow and deliberate. In this century that pace has changed and we must adapt or be left behind.

Can there ever be a truer saying than "One man's unwanted, 'business as usual' is another's prized sacred tradition." Which I suggest is one of the reasons why even when it is as plain as a pikestaff that change is required, there is always a move to resist even the smallest of changes. I often hear Brethren claiming almost 'divine authority' for the things they insist 'must be done' in their Lodge. If it's not the Lodge By-Laws it's the fact that they work in Emulation ritual. Which they claim justifies their position. Sadly, neither supports their reluctance to change, and in many cases it transpires they are being very selective in their interpretation of the content of both books.

Often, protecting and promoting some prized traditions is nothing more than a vainglorious attempt to impose the will of a minority on the Lodge. We really do need to protect the purity of our ritual; after all ritual as performed in our ceremonies is what separates pure and Antient Masonry from many other worthy and charitable organisations. Long may that be the case. By the way, I would never advocate poor or even average ceremony as being acceptable in our Lodges. The aim must always be to attain excellence, no matter how difficult that may be. Never be content with mediocrity. Make excellence a priority."

I am delighted to announce that Bro Ian Lever and Bro Alan Colman have accepted the office of Provincial Senior, and Junior Warden respectively. I am absolutely sure that Ian and Alan will continue the fine tradition of being exemplary Wardens, and I am looking forward to Investing them at Provincial Grand Lodge in October 2022.

We are very fortunate to have a number of Brethren who are skilled practitioners in training the mind. This edition of **In touch>On line** has an article from Bro Chris Wall - Clarendon Lodge No.5908. Chris writes about methods of learning and offers practical advice on how we can utilise different techniques to help us to deliver our ritual in Lodge. I for one will be reading every word. I trust you will too.



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Welcome new faces....



I am sure everyone knows that we have a backlog of over one hundred men waiting to be welcomed into Wiltshire Freemasonry. The greater proportion of enquiries are generated through the Internet, either by the UGLE national digital membership campaign or our very own website. Sadly, there is a reluctance on the part of a few Lodges to treat Internet candidates with the same care and attention as enquiries generated from their own membership. Such an attitude is not only unmasonic, it is also counter-productive. Claims such as 'Internet candidates are not serious about Freemasonry' or that they are 'more likely to drop out of the Lodge' are often nothing more than the unfounded opinions of a few, formed by prejudice and unsupported by facts.

Recently I heard that a Lodge didn't want any more new members as they had too many, and their Entered Apprentices would have to wait ten years or more to become Master. To which my answer was - "and so what?" In my discussions with new Masons, I have never heard a single one suggest that attaining the Chair was a motivating force to their membership of a Lodge.

We are a member organisation: that's a fact that we cannot deny and as such we need to welcome new faces into Freemasonry. That is not to suggest we lower our admission standards, just as we should not reduce the standards in our Lodges. Rather it is to recognise that if the Lodge is satisfied that a man is a good candidate and a fit and proper person to be made a Mason, then the cry should be "Admit him" After all there is little to fear, and a lot to gain.

Learning & Development....



For the new Freemasons there can surely be no greater unsettling experience than finding themselves in an unfamiliar environment where they don't know the design and layout of the Lodge Room, the placement of symbols, or the format of ceremonies and meetings.

I remember when I made my second visit to my Lodge and it was quite an intimidating experience. I was very fortunate that I received good advice as to where and with who I should sit, and what part, if any, I would play in the Lodge proceedings. Thankfully I was not asked to say or do anything. Instead I just sat, watched and listened to what was happening. My experience makes me very glad that we have a great Provincial Learning & Development Team, and a superb Mentoring Team who are keen to help new members understand the life of a Lodge.

Steve Lee and his team have produced three programmes designed to provide support at the critical phases of a Freemason's experience. For the new Freemason, **Finding Your Feet** will take you through the 'basics' - what you need to know, and what you should do when in the Lodge Room. The session is scheduled for Saturday 19th March in Swindon, and I look forward to joining you at The Planks for what I am sure will be an interesting presentation.



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Learning & Development Courses....

Please make a note of the following courses, and if you are able to attend, complete the online registration form for the course you wish to attend..

Finding Your Feet - Swindon – Saturday 19 March at 10.00am

(Intended audience – Entered Apprentices /Fellowcraft Freemasons)

On-line registration form - <https://bit.ly/3B5Y4xb>

Designed to help the new member enjoy his Freemasonry by providing information on Masonic etiquette, Lodge protocols, the officers of the Lodge, Masonic regalia, and the place of Provincial and Grand Lodge in the Order.

The session features short presentations followed by a visit to the Lodge room for an interactive question and answer session in which the aim is to eliminate any confusion in the minds of new members. Nothing is 'off limits'.

Deacons' Workshop - Swindon – Saturday 26 March at 10.00am

(Intended audience – Master Masons/Steward/IG/Deacons)

On-line registration form - <https://bit.ly/3LhvOi>

Taking office for the first time and moving forward in the Lodge progression can, at first glance, be a daunting prospect. A Brother will be leaving the relative anonymity of a seat in Lodge watching proceedings, and become an active participant as an officer of the Lodge.

The Deacons' Workshop is designed to help the Brother taking on his first active role or moving forward in the progression. There is a particular emphasis on the role of the Deacon and they will receive short presentations and examples of good practice within the Lodge room, accompanied by the opportunity to ask questions and practice elements of the Deacon role. In addition, there will be an introduction to tips and technique in learning ritual.

Preparing for the Chair – Salisbury – Saturday 2 April at 10.00am

(Intended audience – Deacons/Wardens/Master Elect)

On-line registration form - <https://bit.ly/3414WiR>

This course is designed to prepare a Brother for the office of Master. It offers practical advice and examples of best practice. It offers general guidance on how to prepare for the Chair of the Lodge, with particular emphasis on what is required of the Brother before taking office and what to expect during the Installation and Festive Board.

The course also introduces the Brother to the duties and responsibilities of the Principal Officers both inside and outside of the Lodge. In addition, it provides guidance, suggestions and examples on how to approach the learning of ritual. etiquette, Lodge protocols, the officers of the Lodge, Masonic regalia, and the place of Provincial and Grand Lodge in the Order.



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How do we learn? Chris Wall - Clarendon Lodge No.5908

Following my initiation, I became instantly humbled that my newly made brothers had toiled for many hours in learning and recalling a great deal of ritual to make my initiation the spectacle it was. This year, I will become the Junior Warden, and in my Lodge tradition dictates that I deliver the Charge to the Initiate a piece of ritual consisting of almost 800 words.

This led me to think about the method in which I learn and how I exercise my memory in order to perform at my very best.

I read many books, talked to Past Masters and read extensively regarding the art of memory. I concluded that the ubiquitous magic bullet does not exist. Success is down to a lot of hard work, and the application of some clever techniques. At this point I want to make clear that for some people the word technique allows them free rein to explore some fantastic psycho theories. I'm not going there, that's for others to develop, as I'm sure they will.

We all learn differently. The requirement to 'remember' is not quite as necessary as it once was, after all your smart phone is your memory, isn't it? This modern age can certainly be considered as a negative towards the art of developing memory. Learning and discovering using a smart phone, the Internet, and Google are so very different to what Past Masters in my Lodge did in 'their day' when I am told they would take their blue book with them when out walking the dog late in the evening.

Five things I have found useful and which may help in your own quest in improving your ritual.

- 1) **Repetition** The first step is an arduous one. You need to begin absorbing the words. This can be multi-modality (reading, writing or listening, LOI etc) You need to get the required information into your brain. This is known as encoding. This is the process of forming new memory. It has to be meaningful, multi-sensory and have connections to what we have already learnt. In essence, it is not enough to read and repeat the book on your own and expect to chance it at Lodge - the brain needs more.
- 2) **Recall** This is the next important part; it performs the donkey work and delivers. New neuronal pathways are made and solidified by spontaneous recall. Without it, it is like expecting a pattern in the sand to remain the next day. You need to be able to recall the lines under spontaneity. This can be done with practice with another Freemason, at LOI and even using pigpen cipher. We know that certain words in the book of emulation have a cipher for good reason - extend it. The recall required to remember words from ciphers and rehearsal strengthens neuronal pathways within our brain differently to just reading ritual.
- 3) **Rest** The second important element is rest. To truly retain and forge longer term memories you need to be undistracted and free of other thoughts after learning ritual. The old adage of learning prior to bed never rings so true. The brain is always looking for ways it can trim and prune unnecessary memory. By reducing thoughts, thinking and ideas after both repetition and recall enables things to forge in a more lasting fashion.



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- 4) **Finding a method that works for you** There are many ways or methods you may wish to use. You may learn in a different method - some have an eidetic strength (seeing the words) others may be audiophiles and some may need to experience the actual environment they will deliver such as LOI. There are lots of books out there that talk about different styles such as the method of loci which is incredibly popular but hard for long prose. It describes a deep method of visualisation, imagery and experience to aid memory which may appeal to some.
- 5) **Understanding what you're saying** At my last meeting an entered apprentice asked at the bar what the word 'approbations' meant. To be fair it was a struggle for all of us. However, what it highlighted was that people learn things best when they know what they are learning and this is key in the Craft.

As a final message it is worth investing time in working out your own memory style before you begin traversing through the offices. But also to make use of those older Past Masters, they are interesting and helpful men.

Editors' note: Bro Chris Wall is a Registered Mental Nurse with a special interest in associated health matters. In 2019 Chris was Initiated into Clarendon Lodge No.5908 where he is currently the Lodge Almoner.

So what is Rule 144 BOC?

Some rules are quite easy to overlook (some might say, they all are!) But Rule 144 is quite interesting in the way it affects the life of the lodge Secretary. It starts with a statement of fact.

Every Lodge shall keep a Minute Book - and then proceeds to list three conditions relating to the content and treatment of the minutes etc.

1. The names of all persons initiated, passed, or raised in the Lodge, or becoming members thereof *shall be entered*. All Lodge secretaries know that alongside the names they must also include age, address, title and profession or occupation of the Brother.
2. The names of all members, and all visiting Brethren with the name and number of their Lodge together with their Masonic rank must also be entered in the Minute Book.
3. Finally, the Minute Book must contain the minutes of all proceedings of the Lodge.

Two points to bear in mind from this rule are that a list (appendix) which could be a photocopy of the attendance book and fixed in the Minute Book is sufficient to satisfy the second rule. In the same way, the third element of the rule requiring the secretary to read the minutes in open Lodge can be avoided as long as an exact copy of the minutes has been sent to each member with the summons to the meeting and submitted for confirmation as a true record of fact.

For many the Book of Constitutions is a dry and dusty tome, while for others it is an interesting, even exciting read. To understand what we do and why we do what we do is only possible with an understanding of this book. It's why every Master is told "There is scarcely a case of difficulty can occur in the Lodge in which that book will not set you right."