

Across the Plain

Online edition

The magazine of Wiltshire Freemasons



Winter 2022



RW BRO JOHN REID

INSTALLED AS THE 15TH
PROVINCIAL GRAND MASTER
FOR WILTSHIRE

THURSDAY 6TH OCTOBER
2022

The Provincial Grand Master.....



Following the annual meeting of Provincial Grand Lodge, I have had many members of the Wiltshire Masonic family congratulate me on being Installed as the 15th Provincial Grand Master. It is therefore only right that I use my very first piece in Across the Plain as Provincial Grand Master to thank every one of you for the incredible kindness you have shown to me in welcoming me to this very special role. I am very conscious of the fact that I follow in the steps of very worthy and distinguished Brethren and I am equally proud to be numbered among the Rulers in the Craft.

The highlights of the day were far too many to list, and if truth be told, I am still running through the day in my mind trying to recollect everything that was said and done. What I can say is that it was a day which will live in my memory forever. I am very grateful to RW Bro David Medlock, who was himself only Installed into the office of Assistant Grand Master on 14th September, for conducting my Installation. David and I were able to compare notes to decide which of us was the most nervous.

I am also immensely grateful to the Grand Director of Ceremonies Charles Hopkinson-Wolley, and members of the Grand Lodge team; and the Provincial team led so ably by the new Provincial Director of Ceremonies Barry Jordan-Davis, for the incredible work they undertook at relatively short notice. The entire day worked as smoothly as the intricate workings of a Swiss watch – a huge well done to everyone.

I'm sure that you will agree that one of the highlights of the day was the Deputy Grand Secretary Graham Redman's reading and superb delivery of my Patent.

I was delighted to re-appoint VW Bro Simon Leighfield as Deputy Provincial Grand Master. I know Simon will be an excellent right-hand man and I am grateful to him for his wholehearted and unswerving support to me and the Province.

I also re-appointed Phil Still to the office of Assistant Provincial Grand Master. Having experienced Phil's style of working as the Provincial Grand Secretary it comes as no surprise to discover he brings that same approach to his current role.

It was also a pleasure to appoint the team of active officers. For some the experience will be different from anything they could imagine, so let me assure you that the Provincial Director of Ceremonies and his team will be on hand to guide you every step of the way. The duties are not onerous and I am sure every member of the active team will honour the commitment they made to support the Province, not just at Lodge Installation meetings but also the Provincial Church Service, the Wiltshire 2028 Festival launch and other important Provincial events. I firmly believe that is only then, that you will fully appreciate and enjoy the honour you have received today, as well as extending your Masonic friendships, which I am confident will last long into the future.

Which leads me very conveniently to the subject of the launch of the Festival.

In 2023, Simon will be announcing and promoting the Wiltshire 2028 Festival in support of the Masonic Charitable Foundation. The festival team has been hard at work preparing for the launch event which will be a dinner dance at the Double Tree Hilton Hotel Lydiard Fields, Great Western Way, Swindon SN5 8UZ, on Saturday 18th February 2023. The launch of the Wiltshire 2028 Festival at the Hilton Hotel is an important event in the Provincial calendar and it will be supported by the entire Provincial team including the Provincial Royal Arch Chapter. I am determined that as we embark on the journey to raise funds for the Masonic Charitable Foundation no one should be in any doubt that every Freemason in the Province, irrespective of their affiliation to another Masonic Order, is an important part of the five-year project.

The Provincial Grand Master.....

With this in mind, I am looking forward to meeting with my counterparts in Orders beyond the Craft and confirming the importance of working together for the good of Freemasonry in general, Wiltshire Freemasonry in particular, and in support of the Wiltshire 2028 Festival.

Some of our members will be asking themselves, "What will the new Provincial Grand Master do next?" It's a reasonable question but as the Provincial Communication Officer recently suggested, speculating what might or might not happen is a real effort, probably unproductive and absolutely tiring. Brethren, he is right; guessing possible answers to a question without having enough information to make a considered decision is a pointless exercise.

In the world of politics, a new Prime Minister is expected to produce some eye catching initiatives in their first one hundred days in office. Such a course of action is more to do with giving the appearance of being active as opposed to being effective. It's not my style at all. However, I have given a flavour of the future in my 'The Provincial Grand Master Answers...' column on page 14.

I will be leading a great team and each member of the team will be charged with tasks designed to take the Province into the next decade. They will be asked to challenge the status quo, to be innovators and educators; to bring Lodges together so that everyone works with that love and harmony which should characterise Freemasons. As a Wiltshire Freemason, you will also have a part to play, and it's not just a walk on part, it's a real role as a key part of a team.

Our members are the essential building blocks of a Freemasons Lodge and it is in the confines of a Lodge that a member develops and grows; where he becomes a just and upright Freemason, perfect in its parts and honourable to the builder. The Lodge is the home of the team; it's a place where Freemasons assemble to work and to instruct and improve themselves in the mysteries of the antient science. It is for this reason the original Charges of a Freemason were unequivocal in stating that every Brother ought to belong to a Lodge and be subject to its by-laws and the general regulations of the Craft.

I wonder how many members of the Province were aware that there have been three previous holders of the joint office of Provincial Grand Master and Grand Superintendent. I am delighted to be numbered among their number and I am sure you would be surprised if I wrote to you without mentioning the Royal Arch.

The unique relationship which exists between the Craft and the Royal Arch is clearly set out on page one of the Book of Constitutions under the heading Preliminary Declaration and it's worth repeating today. By the solemn Act of Union between the two Grand Lodges of Free-Masons of England in December 1813, it was 'declared and pronounced that pure Antient Masonry consists of three degrees and no more, viz., those of the Entered Apprentice, the Fellow Craft, and the Master Masons, including the Supreme order of the Holy Royal Arch'.

Its inclusion in such an important document persuades me that our ancient Brethren recognised and acknowledged the huge significance of the Royal Arch to pure Antient Masonry. Perhaps the most compelling reason to consider joining the Royal Arch is that it is recognised as the completion of a Freemason's journey in pure Antient Masonry.

In December the United Grand Lodge will be launching their strategy for the next seven years based on our strong foundation of Integrity, Respect, Friendship and Charity. The strategy requires the Craft and the Royal Arch to work in harmony at Provincial and District levels. To ensure the strategy is fully implemented we all need to embrace it, which means an active participation and commitment from the Rulers to the Entered Apprentice Craft Freemason and the Royal Arch Companion.

The Provincial Grand Master.....

My wish for the future remains exactly as I have set out in previous articles. It is to see a substantial increase in the number of Wiltshire Craft Freemasons joining the Royal Arch. However, let me stress that the journey is one which must be entered upon 'voluntarily' - in my view there is no room for a press gang approach to membership of the Royal Arch, or indeed any other Masonic Order beyond the Craft.

Some may ask, what is the new PrGM's view of those Orders 'beyond the Craft'.. Let me answer that by restating a point made by a former Pro Grand Master. The Orders beyond the Craft are precisely that - not side Orders and not other Degrees, the courtesy extended to them must recognise their part in the whole Masonic family and I will be supportive of the other Masonic Orders within the province and foster a close working relationship with them all.

Brethren, you will be aware that the United Grand Lodge of England launched their second National Digital Marketing Campaign in September. The purpose of this initiative is to attract suitable candidates to join our fraternity. The Provincial Membership Team, under the guidance of Colin Cheshire, will continue to undertake the necessary due diligence to make sure that any prospective candidate is suitable to pass on to the most appropriate Lodge, with a request for them to process the applicant through to Initiation. I trust you will do your very best to make the journey as easy and as enjoyable as you can, and that you will not delay in processing their application. Brethren, if we wish our fraternity to grow and your Lodge to thrive, all Lodges need to be receptive to these Candidates, just as you would if the Candidate had been proposed and seconded by a long-standing, well-known member of your own Lodge.

I was a delighted to see and speak to a number of Wiltshire Freemasons who were acting as stewards at Provincial Grand Lodge. As they were fairly new to Freemasonry, they were not qualified to attend either my Installation or the Annual Meeting and yet they still volunteered their services. They told me they just wanted to experience the thrill of being a part of the event and to enjoy the day. What is there not to admire in Brethren that display such an attitude?

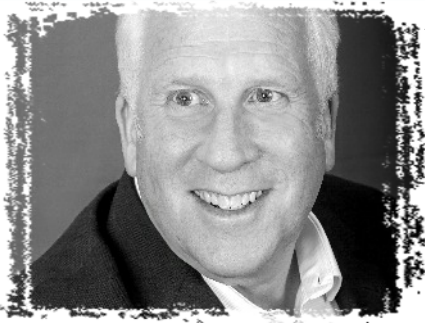
Brethren, before concluding my very first contribution in Across the Plain as your new Provincial Grand Master, I want to return for a moment to the Wiltshire 2028 Festival. At the end of our last Festival in 2017 many of you will recall the Province raised in excess of £840k. I believe it is important that you should know that since the end of that Festival, the Masonic Charitable Foundation has made donations and given grants to numerous charities and individuals within our Province totalling an incredible £1.27 Million - an amount considerably in excess of the total raised in 2017.

In the coming weeks the Festival team, led by the Deputy Provincial Grand Master Simon Leighfield, will be issuing further information on how you can play your part and contribute towards the Festival. I'm sure that you will pledge your support to the Province through the 5 years of Festival. I am convinced that through the combined generosity of our membership and the greater Masonic family of Wiltshire we can and will surpass the amount we raised six years ago.

Having mentioned David Medlock, it is only right that I also offer the Province's congratulations to the newly Invested Pro Grand Master Jonathan Spence. I am looking forward to inviting him to Wiltshire in order that he can see for himself how a small Province with a big heart can achieve so much.

Finally, I want you to know that I am very approachable and, together with my team, will do whatever needs to be done to promote Freemasonry in our wonderful Province of Wiltshire.

It may seem slightly premature but as we enter October the shops will start to fill their shelves with Christmas goodies and you will intensify your own preparations to celebrate Christmas. I take this opportunity to wish you and your family all the very best for Christmas and the year ahead.



As we all are faced with a global cost of living crisis, the method by which we manage our finances, including the way we pay for things we use or consume, is changing. Recent research suggests that more people are spreading their payments for items such as energy bills, insurance, council tax, car servicing and leisure club subscriptions.

While monthly payment options were generally restricted to mortgage or hire purchase agreements this is no longer the case. Many of our members will be well acquainted with the practice and benefits of regular payment transactions made either by a monthly standing order or variable direct debit.

Charities, including the Masonic Charitable Foundation (MCF) have been at the forefront of promoting regular giving as a means to make the process easier and donating more affordable. One of the reasons why regular giving is so important is its capacity to help the charity manage its work by providing a guaranteed income stream rather than an irregular contribution profile. It is for this reason that regular giving plans are often referred to as 'Smooth Giving'.

In the non-Festival period the Province places no demands and set no expectations on Lodges to make regular contributions to Masonic charities. I guess the only exception is Teddies for Loving Care, which benefits from the proceeds of one Lodge raffle every year. During the fallow non-Festival period many Lodges select their own local charities to support and Charity Stewards have little, if any, pressure to drive up donations. When we enter a Festival the dynamic changes.

Lodges are asked to achieve a financial target, nominally based on subscribing member numbers. Charity Stewards are tasked with being promoters of the Festival and to be inventive in income generating initiatives. Little wonder some of them become almost invisible to the wider membership as some resistance to their work in fundraising is demonstrated. The reality is that Festivals create mixed feelings among the membership at large. I believe that 'Smooth Giving' is a positive way forward to encourage individual members and our Lodges to meet and even exceed their target.

I also recognise that there is the practical issue of financial austerity and the previously mentioned cost of living crisis, this coupled with reduced membership numbers places an increasing expectation on a reduced number of potential donors each of whom faces financial challenges of their own. Smooth Giving is a way to combat the feeling of not making a proper contribution or of not doing enough.

The benefits of a smooth giving initiative will even out the flow of funds into the Province and help to eliminate the lumpy nature of fund raising. It will also formalise what some progressive Lodges already do, which is to set money aside for the next festival. I am delighted that a few Lodges have already accumulated a significant sum of money which they have set aside to give to the Wiltshire 2028 Festival. It will also enable individual Lodges to exercise total control of their own fund raising, decide when funds are released and to support local charities of their choice.

I also believe that an ongoing commitment to the Lodge and Provincial Relief Chests will create a savings culture which will place both Relief Chests in a positive position for when the next festival is announced.

Finally, while Smooth Giving is a great way to donate, it is not the only way and some members may wish to donate to the Festival by making ad hoc payments, sometimes for different amounts. Such donations should be accepted and processed through the Lodge Treasurer and placed into the Lodge or Provincial Relief Chest. At regular intervals funds should be transferred to the MCF Relief Chest where your donation will attract government assistance converting your £1 into £1.25.



Education is defined as the process of gaining knowledge, skill, and development from study, whereas training is defined as the process of learning the skills one needs to do a particular job or activity.

Both education and training are different sides of learning. The main difference between education and training is theory and practice. Education is involved with theory whereas training is involved with practical skills. In education, you learn theory; in training you learn how to apply those theories to practical situations.

As part of the provincial commitment to training, the Learning & Development Team is organising a series of workshops aimed at helping new Freemasons to understand how a Lodge Room is formed, what happens in a meeting, and the part played by the new member. For the Freemason who has started to make his way through the offices of the Lodge there is a Deacons workshop, designed to make sense of what the Deacon does and how best to do it. Finally, having made the decision to make the serious transition from backbencher to Master of the Lodge, the team has developed Preparing for the Chair, a practical approach to raise the Warden's awareness of what is expected of a new Master.

If you are interested in attending a course that is designed to help you make a daily advancement in Masonic knowledge, please speak to your Lodge Mentor or Lodge Visiting Officer.

NEW DATES FOR TRAINING....

Finding Your Feet

Devizes - Saturday 26 November

Note change of venue.

Deacons Workshop

Salisbury - Saturday 29 October

Swindon - Saturday 17 December

Preparing for the Chair

Swindon - Saturday 5 November

10.00am until 12 noon

<https://forms.gle/aeLsgEyCkEwC1vyt9>





When I was first approached to become the Provincial Charity Steward of Wiltshire, I was more than a little apprehensive, not least because in my discussions with the PrGM he made it crystal clear that the Wiltshire 2028 Festival would make the role busy, visible and challenging. Having worked in the charity sector for a number of years, I have always been aware of the generous nature which formed a huge part of the human psyche; in fact, I can honestly say that I have been genuinely moved by just how generously disposed people can be.

In 2019 I was invited to become a trustee of the Masonic Charitable Foundation (MCF), which as you know is the organisation formed in 2016 by the unification of the four principal Masonic charities with which we are all acquainted. The Board of Trustees works together with the MCF's executive staff to ensure that the charity is effectively achieving its aims, using resources to maximum effect and upholding the core values that underpin our work.

In my role as a trustee, I have a deep insight into the work undertaken by the MCF and I am very impressed with that they do, and this can be summarised as follows.

1. The MCF support Freemasons and their families when life takes an unexpected turn for the worse. It offer a wide range of grants and support services for financial, health, family and care-related needs.
2. The MCF helps tackle some of society's most important issues through grants to charities – both local and national – and partnerships with leading organisations in the sector.
3. Through the Relief Chest Scheme,
4. the MCF helps groups such as Lodges, Chapters or Provinces to give more to the charities they support.
4. All of the MCF's donations come from the generous donations of Freemasons, their families and friends. The MCF team work hard to ensure that they spend your donations as effectively as possible and are committed to transparency.
5. To raise money for the MCF, Provinces in England and Wales organise fundraising appeals known as festivals. A festival appeal usually lasts for five years and are a vital source of funding and generate the majority of donations made to the MCF. It goes without saying that the MCF is extremely grateful for the hard work and generosity of Freemasons who support their festival appeals.

I am hoping that each of the 44 Charity Stewards of our Wiltshire Lodges will join with me and the team in making the Wiltshire 2028 Festival a huge success.

Deputy Provincial Grand Master Simon Leighfield has put together a great team to promote the Wiltshire 2028 Festival. I know that times are tough and finances are stretched, but I'm also convinced that Wiltshire Freemasons across the board will respond to the challenge and do their very best to make the



**Charity it's in a
freemason's
DNA**



A new dawn, a new age....



What an amazing few weeks we have experienced. The death of Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II has had a profound effect not just on the United Kingdom but also the world. Many have spoken of Her life of service to our country and the Commonwealth, others have enthralled us with stories of their meeting The Queen and being put at their ease with her unerring ability to recognise the unspoken fear of saying or doing something which they thought might incur her displeasure. For many years, until her death, The Queen was the Patron of English Freemasonry, a position she held without fanfare, and dare I say without many Freemasons knowing of her close involvement with our fraternity. Her death and loss to her family and to the wider nation will be profoundly felt by us all and it is only right and proper that we should remember her and say, God bless Her Majesty.

The vacuum created by the death of The Queen was filled in a seamless manner, as it has throughout our nation's history by the accession of the hereditary successor in the person of King Charles III. Such is the nature of our unwritten constitution that there can never be a moment when there is no Monarch to reign over us, and even if for some it might seem a little strange, that is the way Her Majesty would recognise as being 'the right way'. Indeed, it is said that in Her own life she climbed up a tree as a Princess and climbed down a Queen, so instant is the filling of any void.

We also witnessed the election of a new political leader when Liz Truss MP became the leader of the Conservative Party and by default the country's new Prime Minister. While there was much theatre in the competition to become the new leader, once the result of the ballot became known there was a minimal delay in the transition process by which the office of Prime Minister was transferred from Mr Johnson to Ms Truss.

As you read this column it will not have escaped your attention that Wiltshire Freemasonry has also Installed a new Provincial Grand Master. As Philip Bullock retired from office at midnight on the 5th October the Provincial Grand Master (Designate) John Reid was preparing to be Installed as a special meeting of Provincial Grand Lodge on the morning of the 6th October. I have known John for 18 years and have been privileged to have served the Royal Arch under his Superintendence. Today, I am honoured to be the Deputy Grand Superintendent, something which may have the capacity to confuse John in the future as he now has a Simon (Leighfield) as his Deputy Provincial Grand Master in the Craft and me in the Royal Arch.

I am sure many of you will know that there has been a changing of the guard at Freemasons' Hall in London. After serving the Craft and the Royal Arch as Pro Grand Master and Pro First Grand Principal respectively, for over thirteen years, Peter Lowndes has stepped down and been succeeded by Jonathan Spence. The editor has contributed a short piece on the new Pro Grand Master in this edition of Across the Plain.

For me, what characterises these four events is how they emphasise the importance of continuity in a well-structured organisation, whether that be the monarchy, the government or Freemasonry.

The executive of the Royal Arch is very conscious of the need to plan for the future, indeed succession planning is one of the core elements of The Members' Pathway and for very good reasons. One of which is that we do not know what lies around the corner; a death, a coup or a retirement.

Our Chapters often rely on a few good men to run the administration and the ceremonial aspects of our meetings. When one or more are suddenly 'unavailable' there is a controlled moment of crisis as the Director of Ceremonies, as it is invariably his problem, takes the necessary actions to bring matters to a speedy resolution.

One of the most pleasurable aspects of my role as the Deputy Grand Superintendent is attending Chapter Installations and Exaltations.

On occasions I have the privilege of presiding at the meetings and it is a real delight to be able to congratulate a Companion who has journeyed through the offices of the Chapter to become MEZ. Equally, I am thrilled to be able to welcome a newly exalted Companion who has taken that natural next step to enrich his Craft experience.

It is also an opportunity to meet many old friends, reminisce on times past, and share our thoughts on how we can all contribute to enhance the future of the Royal Arch in Wiltshire.

A new leader 'at the top' of any organisation invariably will seek to initiate change, as change is the law of life; nothing remains the same forever and at some point in time, everything changes. Jonathan Spence, the newly Invested Pro First Grand Principal has already told us of the UGLE's seven-year plan for Freemasonry, and doubtless John Reid will be advising Wiltshire Craft and Royal Arch members of his plans for the Province. What I am confident of is that every one of our Companions will offer John and Jonathan their full support for whatever changes are proposed. I'm sure they will be made for the very best of reasons and for the betterment of Freemasonry in the Province.

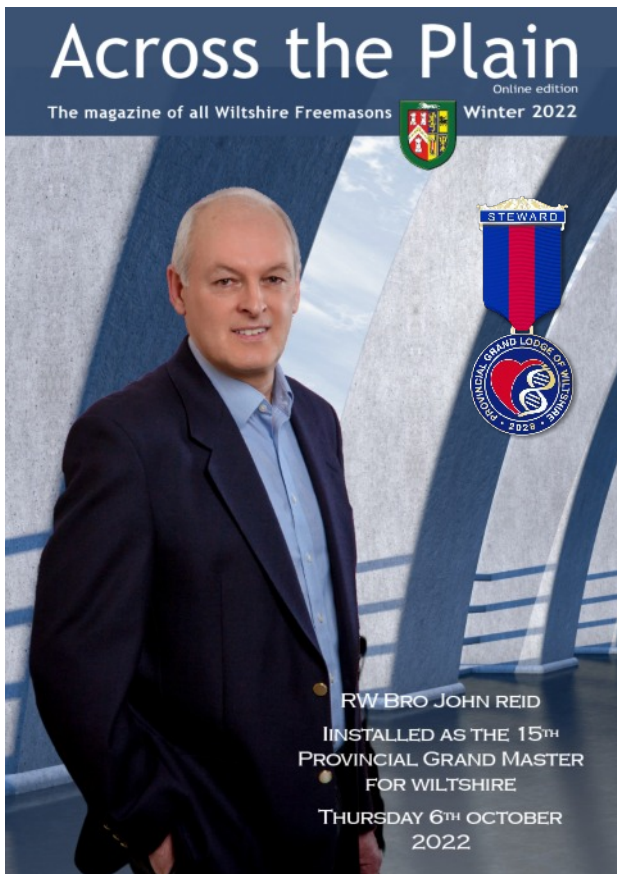
E Comp Roger Pounder was unable to attend the Annual Convocation of the Royal Arch when he was due to be invested as Provincial Third Principal by the Grand Superintendent John Reid.

The Grand Superintendent agreed to defer the investiture until Roger was able to be present at an emergency meeting of Gooch Chapter No.1295 when he was formally Invested.



We really like the incredible detail you get from a black and white image. These were taken at the recent Installation meeting of Lansdowne Chapter No.626 which meets at Chippenham.





In this edition of Across the Plain we welcome our new Provincial Grand Master John Reid who was installed at Trowbridge on Thursday 6th October 2022 by the newly Installed Assistant Grand Master David Medlock.

Important information.

While every care is taken in the compilation of Across The Plain, errors or omissions are not the responsibility of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Wiltshire or the editor.

Opinions and views expressed are not necessarily those of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Wiltshire or the editor.

Products or businesses advertised in Across The Plain do not carry any endorsement or recommendation by the Provincial Grand Lodge of Wiltshire or the editor.

All submissions for inclusion in Across The Plain are subject to editorial approval and the editor reserves the right to review, amend or reject all and any copy.

Any images supplied whether used or not become the property of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Wiltshire. All rights reserved

Advertisement requests are welcome.

Editor: Des Morgan.  editor@pglwilts.org.uk

Reviewers: Steve Lee, Colin Cheshire, Alan Colman, Andrew Hargreaves.

Images: Adrian Wooster, Gary Dolphin,

Royal Arch Communication Officer: Mark Fuller.

Twitter: [@wiltspgl](https://twitter.com/wiltspgl)

 pcowiltshire@gmail.com

In what incredible times we live. In the space of four weeks we have a new King, a new Prime Minister, a new Provincial Grand Master and a new Pro Grand Master (see page 21). I'll leave it to you to decide which is the more important appointment, as I neither wish to be consigned to the Tower, nor summoned to Freemasons' Hall for a chat 'without tea and biscuits'.

Whether a Republican or Royalist, I am sure that as Freemasons we would all offer King Charles III our loyal best wishes. We wish Liz Truss all the very best at the head of government, and I'm sure you will join me in wishing John Reid every best wish as he takes the helm of Wiltshire Freemasonry and Jonathan Spence as he moves from being Deputy Grand Master and takes over the 'hot seat' at Freemasons' Hall as Pro Grand Master. Finally, I am confident that everyone will send their hearty congratulations to David Medlock who was 'plucked' from his chair as PrGM for Somerset and placed in the chair to the left of the new Pro Grand Master on his promotion to the office of Assistant Grand Master.

In his first article as PrGM John reminds us that he is in fact the fourth person to hold the office of Provincial Grand Master and Grand Superintendent at the same time; the last holder of both offices was Major General TCP Calley 1927-1932. While this historical note might be of interest to some, I'm guessing that for the majority of the 2,200 Freemasons in Wiltshire the hot topic of the day is more likely to be along the lines of 'what's the new boss going to do, what's he going to change, and when will it happen?'

That there will be change is a given - after all that is the nature of things when a new man is appointed. So let's look at what he has said so far. The top ten changes can be found in this edition of Across the Plain.

The first change that will be evident to everyone is the fact that Provincial Grand Lodge rules will apply at Installation meetings and the Provincial Director of Ceremonies will assume a greater role. For Companions of the Royal Arch there will be some recognisable similarities to their existing procedure.

Your Lodge Director of Ceremonies will have been made aware of the changes and having had sight of them, I must say that I believe they will enhance the Installation ceremony. If they do nothing else, I for one will be glad to see the end of the words 'be upstanding'.

Note from the editor: Articles appearing in the Monthly Newsletter or Across the Plain have a number of purposes, including to inform, to educate, to entertain and to challenge. Not every piece written will meet with universal approbation, but neither are they intended to offend. The editor is delighted to receive your views on any article appearing in the Newsletter or Magazine. editor@pglwilts.org.uk

Fred and Charlie discuss....

Fred and Charlie had booked a couple of tickets for a recent Southern Braves game. Fred, a devoted cricket follower, was as yet undecided about these new-fangled variations on the Glorious Game that, in the view of all right-thinking men, was surely best savoured when played over a full four days at a county ground and watched alongside two men and a dog to keep each other company. Charlie had long concluded that Fred's glorious game had all the nerve tingling excitement of, how may one phrase this, watching paint dry on an especially damp day. On the other hand Charlie saw the new 'Hundred' as a short sharp testosterone-tested super bash. 'Bazball' writ large as it were.

As the interval music, a pop group somewhat alien to Fred's ears, came centre stage, Fred and Charlie slipped silently into the nearest bar. Safely protected from that Tannoy-testing onslaught of sound they sipped 'their medicinal'. Charlie decided to take the opportunity of sussing out what Fred really thought about a proposed unification of the Provincial Grand Master and Provincial Grand Superintendent appointments in a nearby Province.

Fred eyed Charlie cautiously. *'If it's good enough for the Grand Master in London it should be good enough for his subordinates, shouldn't it? What does the Preliminary Declaration say about it all anyway? Can you remember?'*

Charlie furrowed his brow, squinted his eyes and, while appearing to have swallowed something rather unpleasant, was nevertheless able to mutter: *'Pretty well – you've asked me enough times. It's set out on page one of the Book of Constitutions. "By the solemn Act of Union between the two Grand Lodges of Free-Masons of England in December 1813, it was 'declared and pronounced that pure Antient Masonry consists of three degrees and no more, viz., those of the Entered Apprentice, the Fellow Craft, and the Master Masons, including the Supreme order of the Holy Royal Arch". How's that?'*

Fred glanced across. *'Seems pretty convincing to me, Charlie. Isn't that a compelling reason for all Craft Masons to join the Royal Arch under just the one top man?'*

Charlie wasn't at all convinced. *'Well. We've always had the two posts in our own Province and it seems to work very smoothly. The two top men know everyone in their charge really well and they have the time and opportunity to patrol their patch and monitor standards. If we combined the two, the one top man would have a far larger realm to govern. We'd see him far less often and he wouldn't have the opportunity to meet us and see who's worthy of promotion and who isn't. In his passion Charlie's metaphors began to wobble a little: Why re-invent the wheel if it's not broken?'*

Fred then discovered he had taught Craft history to his Lol rather well. Charlie was able to add, a little smugly: *'Anyway If the Moderns and the Ancients had wanted the Royal Arch to be embodied in the Craft in 1813 they'd have made it a fourth degree or nailed it onto the Third. They deliberately left it hanging in the breeze and optional. If after three years of discussion they still decided the Royal Arch was to be a separate degree or order then there are convincing grounds for having the two separate schools of thought represented by two separate men, surely?'*

Fred smiled. Charlie had indeed remembered that talk at the Lol well – but perhaps not well enough. *'Yes, true, but remember Charlie, Freemasonry has always reflected changes in the society from which it draws its members... but alas my glass is empty.'*

The pair wandered up for a refill. Re-settled, Fred continued:

The relationship between the Craft and the Royal Arch has never been constant. It has changed with the changing needs of the day. In the early eighteenth century so that the Moderns' version of Speculative

are two heads better than one?

Freemasonry could be used overseas free from any one religion, Desagulier removed all Christian references from the operatives' ceremonies. However in 1738 to form a stepping stone from this new Craft ritual towards a purely Christian Order of Knights Templar, the Chevalier Ramsay created the Holy Royal Arch as a Christian influenced degree with its three archetypes on the throne and twelve archetypes in attendance. In the 1750's to restore the operatives' spiritual dimension into their own ceremonies, the Antients seized on this new Royal Arch ceremony and coupled it to their Third. So, Charlie, when the needs of society change then Freemasonry changes too.

Charlie muttered: *And just how does that help us?*

Fred raised his eyebrow, his finger, and his voice: *Well, a lot actually. Freemasonry's still a quality product but our numbers are really falling. We have to respond and we need to make changes. The English population is vastly different today from earlier times. Shouldn't we take a fresh look to see if 'pure Antient Masonry' might be best organised and promoted in our own Province, say, under one leadership or two?*

Isn't that for Grand Lodge to say, Fred?

In part, Charlie, but while lodges and chapters are all governed by the Constitutions, Grand Lodge can't impose its will on human relationships. All Provinces are slightly different but their PrGM and MEGS know the character of their own members well and surely they are best placed to tackle the tricky areas now emerging?

What do you mean, Fred?

I'd suggest three problems, Charlie. Firstly, throughout the 18th, 19th and much of the 20th century Britain was a Christian country, well familiar with the Old and New Testaments from church attendance. We're now in the year 2022. Three quarters of all young people today have little understanding of a spiritual dimension and have never read the Bible. At best they're Agnostic with no firm views. How can we expect them to be attracted by or to understand our Masonic Allegories today which rely on the historical significance of Solomon or Hiram Abiff or Zerubbabel?

Secondly, Grand Lodge wants us to recruit big-time to maintain our levels or, better still, raise them. If we're to expand we can only do so by recruiting from that vast part of our nation which is agnostic. Indeed, even one former senior officer of Grand Lodge has spoken out publicly in their favour.

Thirdly, we live in a mobile society so whether we're recruiting locally or online we generally have no in-depth knowledge of our candidates. On entry they're suddenly faced by prayer, a religious obligation and learning by heart an Old Testament Allegory to which it may not be easy for an agnostic to relate.

Taking the three points together, Charlie, after attending their first few meetings it may be difficult to retain them all. Even more challenging, I personally fear the membership of our lodges may in time become a rather loose mixture of those content merely to learn the words of the ritual by rote and other, perhaps more fully engaged Masons trying hard to follow our principles and precepts. A 'lodge' might then simply become a charitable club of 'fellow members' rather like Rotary and no longer be a lodge of close 'brothers'. Is that what we really want?

Charlie nodded. He knew the problem. *Perhaps, Fred, we just need to re-think how we can explain our rituals better so that a new generation can understand where we're coming from.*

Fred paused: *We could Charlie - but hopefully there might also be a third rather important group to help us. These are the increasing number of candidates who enter as uncomfortable agnostics but, having seen the moral foundations underlying Freemasonry, gradually become its very enthusiastic supporters. This is where*

the Craft and the Holy Royal Arch could begin to unite into a pure Antient Masonry if our leadership thought it helpful in their Province.

Intrigued, Charlie interjected a soft: *How so?*

Well the Third Degree and the Royal Arch share so much in common. They both invite a Mason to contemplate the role of the spirit in his own life. Both recognise a dimension beyond one's self that is nameless and unknowable and unprovable – call it the supreme state of existence or the Supreme Being or the Great Architect – the words all mean much the same. Both rituals recognise the importance of 'light' (a self-realisation or inspiration through quiet contemplation or prayer) as revealed in the Third Degree Charge and also following a Companion's emergence from the Crypt.

If a deeper interest in Freemasonry is aroused in our aspiring agnostic by the 'Third Degree' then he can be encouraged to develop it further by linking his research into the Royal Arch. It's a seamless exercise after all as the Antients insisted.

Charlie pondered on the practicalities: *Yes, I see, but how can one encourage an agnostic to take that next step?*

Fred's reply was prompt: *By demonstrating that the Royal Arch is not a separate entity (as with some other Orders) but a seamless part of pure Antient Masonry.*

Charlie's impatience broke through: *Yes, yes, but how?*

Fred tapped the table at each following point : *Here are some suggestions, Charlie. Most are already practised in our own Province but all are within any PrGM's gift. One, include the name and contact details of the Royal Arch representative on the first page of the Summons. Two, ask the Lodge's Royal Arch 'rep' to give his report on Royal Arch events alongside the Charity Steward and Almoner. Three, discuss the place of the Royal Arch within the Craft family at the next Lol. Four, in the Provincial Yearbook show which members are in both. Five, make sure that the Provincial periodicals give good coverage to both groups of Freemasons. Last, but by no means least, demonstrate publicly that the MEGS and PrGM are joined at the hip.*

Charlie smiled: *You make it seem so very convincing, Fred.*

Fred leant back and threw out his palms: *Yes, Charlie, two well run systems under two devoted leaders may have been an ideal in the past but I now feel - after many happy years of enjoying the leadership of first class men as PrGM and as MEGS - that for the Craft and the Royal Arch to survive today there are persuasive arguments for them to unite together conceptually into one pure Antient Masonry, indeed just as Grand Lodge first intended. Each would keep their own proud traditions of ritual, badge and rank. If we want that achieved with the minimum of confusion there is really only one answer. Fred then paused.*

Which is?, said Charlie, leaning forward in anticipation.

Fred raised his glass: *That it may be better for just the one wise head to offer an inspiring Masonic leadership to them both...*

Note from the Editor: Fred and Charlie's conversation will undoubtedly strike a chord with many of our members. Just by way of comment with regard to Fred's suggestions, the Province does encourage Lodge secretaries to include the name and a contact point for the Royal Arch representative. The Province is very happy for the Royal Arch representative to provide the Lodge secretary with information on Royal Arch events. The PrGM does not advocate either taking wine or toasting the Royal Arch at the supper table. The Learning & Development Team has a scheme which is approved by the PrGM to introduce Craft Freemasons to the Royal Arch. The Provincial year-book does show Lodge members who are also Companions in the Royal Arch.

Supporting Teddies for Loving Care....

The Provincial Grand Master John Reid is a great supporter of Teddies for Loving Care and one of his first actions on being Installed at Trowbridge on 6th October, was to pay tribute to the work of the team that supports Teddies for Loving Care (Wiltshire).

Led by Provincial Almoner Gary Dolphin, the Teddies for Loving Care team liaises with the county's two main hospitals in Swindon and in Salisbury to provide teddies for children attending the accident and emergency department. In addition, the team have recently been asked to support the newly opened Urgent Treatment Centre in Swindon and the Wiltshire Air Ambulance.

A hospital visit can be a frightening experience for a young child, especially in an emergency situation. Giving a child a Teddies for Loving Care bear is a way of providing much-needed comfort to children in A&E departments, helping to reduce the shock and distress of their experience.

The bears are used to calm children down, reward them for being brave or to demonstrate procedures. Often the bears distract children so nurses and doctors can get their jobs done quickly and efficiently. Doctors and nurses recognise a Teddies for Loving Care bear to be an invaluable tool for medical professionals.

Thanks to John King (Tisbury Lodge No.8718) and Ian Priest (Methuen Lodge No.8692), the storage and despatch of Teddies to the two centres is carried out with the minimum of fuss and bother - a phone call from the hospital is all that it takes for John and Ian to snap into action and make sure that no location is ever without a supply of cuddly teddies.

The work of the team to supply teddies is totally dependent on Freemasons making regular donations to Teddies for Loving Care (Wiltshire). Your Lodge can play its part in supporting Teddies for Loving Care (Wiltshire) by holding **one raffle** every year and donating the proceeds to this amazing initiative.



The core aim of Teddies for Loving Care is to provide cuddly teddy bears to distressed children admitted to the Accident & Emergency department at either of Wiltshire's two general hospitals located in Salisbury and Swindon.

Most of the money raised for 'Teddies for Loving Care' comes from within the Freemason community through Lodge donations and fundraising activities.

The TLC Wiltshire scheme operates under the umbrella of the Provincial Grand Lodge with all donations ring-fenced to support the purchase and distribution of TLC Bears.

SUPPORT YOUR T L C APPEAL

TLC Wiltshire now has its own unique Relief Chest which makes giving so much easier and allows you to Gift Aid your donations

Have your say!

Have you a question to ask, or is there something you want to know about Freemasonry. Maybe you just want to express a view or make a comment, whatever it is why not write to the Provincial Grand Master?

ATPLetters@pglwilts.org.uk

All letters and emails are subject to editorial control. Regrettably due to space not all letters can be published

Is this for you?

Would you like to play a part in promoting Freemasonry in the Province, can you write media copy? The Communications Team would be pleased to hear from you. pc0@pglwilts.org.uk

Wiltshire 2028 Festival



The Provincial Grand Master
Invites you to join him at the

Double Tree, Hilton Hotel,
Lydiard Fields, Great Western
Way, Swindon SN5 8UZ

Saturday 18 February 2023

To launch the
Wiltshire 2028 Festival

CLICK TO BOOK

Online booking strongly recommended

editor@pglwilts.org.uk

Q. First, Congratulations on being Installed as the Provincial Grand Master for Wiltshire. I guess I'm not alone in wondering whether or not you intend to change things in the Province and, if you are, what will the changes be and how will they affect members of the Craft.



A. Thank you for your kind wishes and for this very interesting and thought-provoking question. I really do appreciate the fact that members have a keen interest in what happens in the Province and feel able to ask such a bold question. I can assure you that I welcome the opportunity of using Across the Plain and In touch>On line to answer any question asked of me.

Having said that, In the last edition of Across the Plain the editor wrote that "Speculating what might or might not happen is a real effort, probably unproductive, and absolutely tiring". Like my predecessor I do agree with him and would urge Brethren to avoid trying to second guess what will happen.

However, with a change of Provincial Grand Master, it is inevitable that there will be a change in management and organisational style; after all Philip and myself are different people, so too might be our thoughts on how to manage this wonderful Province. Just as a private Lodge has the right to manage its own affairs, the same applies to the Provincial Grand Lodge, always provided that what we do and how we do it is consistent with the general laws and regulations of the Craft (Rule 155 BoC).

Over the past six weeks I have been talking with members of the Provincial team and I am confident that the changes I have already proposed will be supported and implemented with their total commitment. So let me tell you of a few of the changes that will come into effect as from 7th October.

The first is the establishment of my executive team which will be Simon Leighfield, Phil Still, Rob Evans, Colin Cheshire, Des Morgan, and Simon Ellingham. The team will be supported by John Deane as secretary. The team has my 100% support, and I am sure you will give all of them your full support.

The members of Calley Lodge No.7525 will be the first to see a slightly different incoming and outgoing procession at their Installation meeting on Friday 7th October. This will be the standard format for Installation meetings in the future.

There will be other small changes in protocol affecting the work in the Lodge Room and Dining Room, and the newly appointed Provincial Director of Ceremonies Barry Jordan-Davis will be advising Lodge officers of my expectations and of the integral part they will play in implementing the changes.

I am sure every Brother will be fully supportive of my ambition that both our ritual and ceremonial is conducted to the highest of standards. There will be teething problems, but I am convinced that with a liberal dose of goodwill and a positive attitude to change, these will be quickly eliminated and Wiltshire will be recognised as an exemplar to others.

Are you supporting your local Hospice?



Since 1980, **Prospect Hospice** has provided the only dedicated end-of-life care service for people living in Swindon, Marlborough and north east Wiltshire. The Prospect team bring care, comfort and confidence, around the clock, every day of the year.

Prospect provide excellent, personalised and compassionate care for everyone in the community who is affected by a life-limiting illness. Working in close partnership with other organisations – and specifically with local health and social care professionals – Prospect staff ensure that anyone can access the best possible care whenever and wherever they need it.

Prospect Hospice provides a broad range of services to thousands of patients, carers and family members every year. A dedicated team of nurses, doctors and therapists support patients at the hospice in Wroughton, in their own homes and care homes. Carers and family members can also access a range of free support services.

Through outreach work – talking to businesses, schools, GP surgeries and community groups – the charity raises awareness about life-limiting illness and end-of-life care, and encourage conversations about death and dying. The aim is to break down any barriers that might stop people from accessing Prospect services.

Prospect Hospice is a charity, funded primarily by the local community. Each year it costs several million pounds to provide the care that patients and their families depend on. Less than a third of funding comes from statutory organisations like the NHS – the rest is raised from organisations such as the Freemasons.



For over 40 years **Dorothy House** has been an active part of the local community. Their teams recognise that every life is special. Their mission is to make sure that anyone in their community who is facing a life-limiting illness can live well, and die well.

They do this by understanding who their patients are and what is most important to them. Together, they create individual care journeys which start at diagnosis and continue with bereavement support for family members, carers and children.

Without the backing of the community, they would not be able to care for as many people as they do and be there for local families who need them most. Your support means the world to Dorothy House. That's because any donation or gift, large or small, means that people living with a life-limiting illness get the care and support they and their families need to make the most of the time they have together.



Every year, **Salisbury Hospice** provides specialist palliative care to 1,000 local people with life-limiting conditions. Through the generosity and support of local people, Salisbury Hospice can continue to offer nursing and medical care, emotional and practical support, welfare advice, occupational therapy and physiotherapy, complementary therapies and creative activities.

These services are provided free to patients and their families – either at the hospice, in the community or in their own homes. They don't just help people in the last few weeks of their lives – they often provide care for up to a year or longer.

It costs £2.4 million to run the hospice annually – and less than 45% is funded by the NHS. As a charity, Salisbury Hospice aims to raise £1.5 million each year towards these costs to ensure vital services continue. Without the generous support of the Freemasons of Salisbury and Wiltshire the hospice would not be able to achieve this.

Seventy years a member of the Craft....

Chaloner Lodge No.2644, which meets in the lovely Wiltshire town of Melksham recently met to Raise Bro Nathan Lewis. A superb ceremony was conducted by the Master, Jason Pratt.

In attendance was W Bro Ian Burns who was Initiated in 1951 and has been a member of the Craft for over 70 years.

You might imagine this would make him fairly unique, as there surely cannot be too many Freemasons alive today who have sung 'God Save The King' and raised a glass to 'The King and The Craft' to two different Kings.



Quite coincidentally the Provincial Grand Master was asked by the St Margaret Hope Lodge No.1184 (SC), to honour another Scottish Masonic veteran who had completed 70 years service in the Craft.



Scottish Freemason, ninety-five year old Geoff Richards, a joining member of Broade Forde Lodge No.8547, was the recipient of a 70 year service certificate presented by retiring PrGM Philip Bullock on behalf of St Margaret Hope Lodge No.1184 (SC).

While Initiated into a Lodge registered under the Scottish Constitution, Geoff joined Trincomalee Lodge No.6923 (EC) while posted to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka).

Brethren from Broade Forde joined the PrGM and Geoff's family for the event.

Wiltshire has quite a list of distinguished Brethren who have completed in excess of fifty years as members of the Craft, with fourteen having served the Craft for sixty years, and four who have completed seventy years. Every one of these Brethren has a treasure trove of stories to tell, Masonic experiences to share and sage advice to impart.

Wiltshire welcomed the newly Installed Assistant Grand Master RW David Medlock when he Obligated, Invested and Installed, RW Bro John Reid as the fifteenth Provincial Grand Master for Wiltshire in a wonderful ceremony at The Civic, Trowbridge, on the 6th October 2022.



Supporters Page A big thank you to all our supporters and advertisers

Derek Gibbens MBA, FCII, DipPFS,
Independent Financial Adviser

Personal office: 19 Crow Lane, Wilton,
Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP2 0HB

Tel: 01722 744556

web: www.afhwm.co.uk/derek-gibbens



SteeleDavis

For all your building and
maintenance requirements.

Devizes 01380 728738

E: enquiries@steeledavis.co.uk
www.steeledavis.co.uk

BE IN THE PICTURE

Adrian Wooster

Professional Photographer

07922 245262



we recover data from
anything that stores data

We recover data from computers, hard
drives, USB devices, cameras, iphones,
ipads, tape drives etc.

No data no charge

Contact Adrian Road on

01249 715425

www.ajrdata.com

[Free Quotes](#)



4 ELEMENTS
CLOTHING

[4 elements clothing.co.uk](http://4elements clothing.co.uk)

15% Discount Code: WiltshireMason

Arktis

Deerhunter

Hoggs of Fife
1844

MUSTO

SPERRY
CORP

Treksta





Complete Pest Control
for commercial and residential clients.

Rats, Mice, Flies, Wasps, Moles, Rabbits, Pigeons, Fleas etc.

Peter Hatt BPCA/RSPH Certified
Tel/Fax 01380 730154
Mobile: 07725 656734
E: apestsolutions@btinternet.com
www.apestsolutions.com

G **U**



Professional Friendly Barbering for all ages.
Concessions for OAPs and children.

1 Wood Street, Royal Wootton Bassett,
Swindon SN4 7BB
Tel: 01793 850950
www.barbershopswindon.com



YOUR LOCAL AND INDEPENDENT RECRUITMENT CONSULTANCY

NEED HELP RECRUITING? LOOKING FOR YOUR PERFECT ROLE? WE CAN HELP.

We tailor our service to fit your requirements.
We regularly place applicants into temporary, permanent and contract job positions.
CMD pride ourselves in creating successful, long-term relationships with both our business clients and our candidates.

CMD Recruitment specialise in the recruitment in the following sectors:

- ✓ Industrial & Driving
- ✓ Engineering & Technical
- ✓ Administration & Customer Services
- ✓ Accountancy & Finance
- ✓ Sales & Marketing
- ✓ PA & Secretarial
- ✓ IT & Design
- ✓ HR & Training

For a more in depth understanding of the services that we provide, please contact your local office, visit our website www.cmdrecruitment.com or email enquiries@cmdrecruitment.com



13 Market Place Devizes Wiltshire SN10 1HT
t 01380 738300

Unit 5 Fourbrooks Business Park Calne Wiltshire SN11 9PP
t 01249 813843

4 Lancaster House Lancaster Park Bowerhill Melksham SN12 6TT
t 01225 805080



REEDS HEARING CARE

- Do you find you are tired at the end of the day?**
- Are you having problems remembering what has been said to you?**
- Do you think young people 'babble' and do not speak clearly?**

THESE ARE ALL SIGNS YOU MAY HAVE A SLIGHT IMPAIRMENT IN YOUR HEARING

Consult a local independent professional

Dr. David J Reed BA MSc MBA AuD RHAD

- EAR WAX REMOVAL
- HEARING ASSESSMENTS
- UPTO DATE HEARING AIDS
- PERSONAL ATTENTION
- LIFELONG AFTERCARE
- HEARING PROTECTION



REEDS HEARING CARE

Tel: 01793 692 815

Amnigilda | 4 Raglan Close | Lawn | Swindon | SN13 1JR

Hearing Aids will only be as good as the Audiologist who programmes them

The Installation of a new PrGM



John Reid was Installed as the fifteenth Provincial Grand Master for Wiltshire at Trowbridge on Thursday 6th October. The ceremony was conducted by the newly Installed Assistant Grand Master and Wiltshire Freemason David Medlock.

A Grand Lodge team, led by Grand Director of Ceremonies Charles Hopkinson-Woolley assisted by Thomas Hawley and Edward Goodchild, ensured the standard of ceremonial was performed to the highest Masonic standards.

One of the highlights of the day was the splendid reading of the Provincial Grand Master's Patent by Deputy Grand Secretary Graham Redman.

John is married to Carole, both originally from the west country - Devon and Cornwall respectively (which must make for an interesting discussion when deciding whether it's jam or cream first on scones). They moved to Wiltshire in 1983.

John was Initiated into the Border Lodge No 3129 in November 1988 and became Master of the Lodge in April 1998. He is also a member of Wiltshire Masters' Lodge No 6731, where he was Installed as Master in September 2014.

He was appointed a Provincial Grand Steward in October 2000 and the following year promoted to Past Provincial Senior Grand Deacon and in 2007 to Past Provincial Senior Grand Warden.

In April 2022 the MW Grand Master HRH the Duke of Kent honoured John with the Grand rank of Grand Sword Bearer an active rank which he is very proud to hold.

John was exalted into the Royal Arch as a member of Thynne Chapter No 1478 in February 1991. In 2013 he was appointed Deputy Grand Superintendent.

In 2008 he was appointed a Past Grand Standard Bearer in the Supreme Grand Chapter of England and promoted to Past Grand Sword Bearer in 2013. John was appointed Grand Superintendent by the First Grand Principal HRH The Duke of Kent in 2014.

It's a YES from the new Pro Grand Master....

A Pro Grand Master is appointed to be the public face of Freemasonry when the Grand Master is a Prince of the Royal Blood. For over fifty years His Royal Highness The Duke of Kent, who is a cousin of the late Queen Elizabeth, has been the Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge of England.

For many of our newer members, Peter Lowndes will be the name they remember from pleasant evenings spent at the supper table and that moment when what is generally referred to as the third toast of the evening is proposed. The toast itself is a bit of tongue twister as it involves numerous Masonic titles and the names of the three rulers of the Craft. Frequently the toast is proposed 'to Grand Lodge', when in fact its proper title is 'to Grand Officers'.

At the Quarterly Communication held on 14th September a unique occurrence took place as all three rulers were appointed and Installed at the same meeting. Lodge of Rectitude No.335 member David Medlock was Invested as the Assistant Grand Master, while Sir David Wootton and Jonathan Spence were invested as Deputy Grand Master, and Pro Grand Master respectively.

A banker by profession, Jonathan is the Bursar of Queens' College, Cambridge, a role which puts his banking skills to the test as he is responsible for the college's investment portfolio.

Away from work and Freemasonry, Jonathan is a rugby union referee, a pastime which allows him to operate in a low-key, unobtrusive manner, staying out of the way and letting the game flow. It's a style he may find a little difficult to emulate in his new role if he intends to lead by example.

Jonathan chaired the strategy group that has created the seven-year roadmap, which focuses on the importance of membership and increasing the number of men who become Freemasons.

The role and place of the Royal Arch in Freemasonry is very important to Jonathan. He acknowledges that it is vital that the UGLE gets better at explaining why the Royal Arch enriches the Craft experience of members. It sounds as if we are in for an exciting few years.



Jonathan Spence
Pro Grand Master

Around the Province....



My word is my bond - or is it?

In his sermon at the funeral of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, the Archbishop of Canterbury reflected on the declaration, made by the then Princess Elizabeth on the occasion of the 21st birthday broadcast, that her whole life would be dedicated to serving the Nation and Commonwealth. Archbishop Welby reminded the nation that rarely has such a promise been so well kept.

His words certainly got me thinking about promises, oaths, vows and obligations, and the value we attach to them. We all make promises at various times in our life. Some are very important, such as when we said "I do" when taking our marriage vows; some less so, such as when we casually say to a friend "see you later" or, "I'll call you" knowing full well that what we are saying is simply speech for speech's sake.

Without wishing to get 'political' - a recent survey suggested that the word of a politician is considered less trustworthy than that of a double-glazing salesman (with apologies to double-glazing salesmen), but I guess you get the gist of the point being made.

As Freemasons we are often called upon to take and make obligations, and such are the nature of the obligations, and so important is the content, we are asked to signify our understanding by 'sealing it with our lips on the Volume of The Sacred Law'.

Every Master of a Lodge is required to give his unqualified assent to fifteen Ancient Charges and Regulations. The full list can be found in the first few pages of the Book of Constitutions. Having affirmed his acceptance of the Ancient Charges and Regulations he is left with one more task, he is asked: "Do you submit to and promise to support these Charges and regulations as Masters have done in all ages?" It is only when he answers in the affirmative, in other words he says yes, that the ceremony of Installation proceeds.

It really is a big moment for the incoming Master and for the Lodge, even though of the fifteen Charges, only five are actual promises, six if you count the final words. The other ten only call for the Master's agreement and co-operation. Still, five promises is a big deal, or is it? Let's look at the promises we all agree to support.

No.3 is no problem, I doubt anyone is going to get involved in a plot against the Government.

No.8 another no brainer, of course we will respect genuine and true Brethren.

No.10 should be simple enough, after all who doesn't respect, admire and defer to the Grand Master or his Officers, and who would be foolish enough to ignore an edict from the Grand Lodge?

No.12 now here is where a promise made may cause a little problem for many Masters. Having just promised a regular attendance on the Quarterly Communications meeting of Grand Lodge how many Masters ever make the journey to Freemasons' Hall? It's just worth remembering that the promise was made voluntarily and the obligation entered into with a further promise to "conscientiously discharge my duties as a ruler in the Craft and Master of this lodge".

No.15 this one gets passed onto the Junior Warden, but remember it's still the Master's job to make sure he does his job properly. So, when a Brother visits the Lodge is he properly vouched for and if not is he 'proved'?

The question we probably need to ask is whether we really think a 'great and solemn obligation' is in any way binding on us for as long as we shall live; and do we subscribe to the view that if a promise is important enough to make, it's important enough to keep. Whatever your answer it's certainly food for thought and a topic for discussion.

The Installation in pictures....



through the lens of Adrian Wooster....



The Director of Ceremonies corner....

One of the great privileges attached to the office of Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies is being able to talk with my Lodge colleagues and discuss ways in which our profoundly beautiful ceremonies can be enhanced.

During my time as one of the two deputies to John Smith, I was often asked for my view on a point of detail as to how something should be done, or could be done a little better, or a little smarter. It won't surprise you to know that the main stumbling block to changing anything was to be found in that often used phrase "We don't do it that way" or "The Founders wanted it done like that" and sometimes, "The committee won't like it if we change". All perfectly reasonable in their way, but do such sentiments really dictate and control how we do things in the 21st century?

As a Director of Ceremonies I truly value the 'traditional ways'. Equally, I recognise that many so-called traditions were once considered innovations. Their timelessness cannot be measured as existing 'from time immemorial' neither can they be classified as immutable.

I never cease to be amazed at the fact that a simple action such as saluting (especially in the First Degree) in the proper prescribed manner can produce such an assortment of waves, grabs, flicks and other strange movements. After all, a reading of the eighteen words in the ritual appear to be very clear, with absolutely no mention whatsoever of a wave, grab or flick, and yet.....

I do understand and appreciate that some Lodges have customs and traditions which are unique to the way they operate and it is the undoubted right of any Lodge to regulate their own proceedings, provided they are consistent with the general laws and regulations of the Craft. However, it is always best to ascertain from the Province as to whether any supposed tradition is an Alteration or Innovation in the Body of Masonry. Something which is not allowed.

Part of my role, and that of my team, is to assist Lodge DCs as they seek to make sure the ceremonial of the meeting, which includes the actions printed in red in the Ritual Book, is conducted to the highest possible standard; it is not normally the Lodge DCs task to concern himself with the words of the ritual used or to act as a prompt.

It is also a part of my duties to see that Brethren observe certain rules and protocols as required by the UGLE and the Province.

Which brings me nicely to my first topic - the wearing of breast jewels. The Provincial Grand Master has noticed that there have been instances where Brethren have worn their breast jewels in the incorrect sequence.

In this Province the correct order is as follows:

1. Royal Arch jewel (one of three)
2. UGLE Tercentenary jewel.
3. Provincial Festival jewel.
4. Past Master's jewel.
5. Lodge Centenary jewel.

Lodge jewels which include a Past Master's breast jewel (item 4) may **only be worn** in the Lodge to which they apply and were issued.

(The wearing of any jewel is subject to qualification)



What changes?

It will come as no surprise to learn that the new Provincial Grand Master would like Lodges to introduce some changes to the ceremonial elements of Lodge meetings, particularly the Installation meeting.

1. The Provincial Grand Master wishes that he and the Provincial team process into the Lodge **before** the reading of the minutes, but **after** the Lodge has been opened. (There can be no procession into the Lodge before it is properly opened)
2. There will be a new form of processing into and out of the Lodge at Installation Meetings. For Companions of the Royal Arch there will be some recognisable similarities to their existing procedure.*
 - a) The Lodge Director of Ceremonies will be invited to join the procession and lead the left hand column along the North side of the Lodge Room.
 - b) The incoming officers will process along the North and South sides of the Lodge Room.
 - c) The Provincial Sword Bearer and the Standard Bearer will assume positions on the centre line of the Lodge Room. The Sword Bearer facing the East, The Standard Bearer in front of the SW in the West.
 - d) The Provincial Stewards (subject to their number) will lead the Provincial team in the outgoing procession, in front of the Provincial Standard Bearer.
3. The salutation offered to a Provincial Ruler, Grand Officers and to Provincial Officers will now be conducted by the Provincial Director of Ceremonies or one his Deputies, or Assistants.
4. The PrGM has made it known that he wishes salutations to be reduced to the minimum and that the practice of naming every Active Provincial Officer present is not only consuming, it is also unnecessary. The new protocol is to name the most senior of the Provincial Officers which at an Installation Meeting would be the Provincial Senior, and Junior Warden.
5. It is the Provincial Grand Master's wish that greetings, if given at the conclusion of a meeting, are given by a **single visitor** on behalf of all the visitors present. The greeting should be precise and not stray into the area of congratulations, that being the responsibility of the Brother responding to the visitors toast. A suitable form of words would be: **"Worshipful Master, I bring you warm and fraternal greetings on behalf of your visitors and wish you well in your year of office"**.
6. The Provincial Grand Master wishes Lodges to seat the Provincial Wardens to his immediate right at the dining table. In the event that his Deputy, or Assistant is in attendance they will be seated to the right of the Wardens. As space permits, Grand Officers, in seniority, will follow.
7. Other Active Provincial Officers may be seated across the dining room with their Lodge counterparts.
8. The Provincial Grand Master has observed a recent trend in the dining room where the Lodge Director of Ceremonies sounds the Master's gavel. This is improper and should not occur. A gavel is an emblem of power and is given only to the Master and his Wardens. The correct procedure is for the Lodge Director of Ceremonies to stand behind the Master and ask the Master to gavel.
9. The Provincial Grand Master wishes that the standard way in which a wand of office is held is the pencil grip. This method is the preferred grip in the Grand Lodge and in Provincial Grand Lodge and should be adopted by every Lodge across the Province.
10. The use of the word 'upstanding' often causes much amusement, and rightly so. However it is the wish of the Provincial Grand Master that Lodges simply ask the Brethren to 'stand', as in **"The Brethren will stand to receive"** or **"Brethren please stand"**.



Hermes is the name given to the project which will transform the way in which Lodge Secretaries and Chapter Scribe perform much of their work. It's about moving away from endless form-filling and providing a web based system enabling administrators to process data in real time. In short it's about improving efficiency and making the administration of Lodges and Chapters a whole lot easier.

A UGLE sponsored Craft and Royal Arch Steering Group has been working towards the release of Hermes. The project has been in design and development for almost three years, and the feedback from those Secretaries and Scribes E who have so far used the system has been very positive. The package is well designed, easy to use and will significantly reduce paperwork, making the life of the Secretary or Scribe E very much easier.

Due to an excellent response from secretaries and scribes who have been trialling the system a number of enhancements to the system are already underway, these might have the effect of delaying the roll out programme but rest assured Lodge secretaries and Chapter Scribes will be kept full informed.

Craft Secretaries and Royal Arch Scribes E will receive training on the new system, delivered by carefully selected volunteers from across the Province, who will ensure that the transition from Adelpi to Hermes is achieved as smoothly as possible and that support is just a phone call away, should it be needed. Training sessions will be delivered throughout October and there will be plenty of opportunity to practice the new skills before we go live. The thought of playing in a 'sandbox' sounds as exciting as it is intriguing.

However, as Provincial Registrar John Badger points out in this edition of Across the Plain, the need for Lodge administrators to make sure every Brother's details are correctly entered onto the system is a key component to the success of Hermes. It's also important to stress that any changes in the working officers of the Lodge or their contact details are notified to him and updated on the new system. This same message equally applies to the Lodge secretary; please make sure you notify the Provincial Secretary of any change in your email address, phone number and of course your home address.

Provincial Grand Master John Reid said "Hermes presents us with the opportunity to help Lodge and Chapter administrators eliminate unnecessary paperwork and processes by taking advantage of the latest technology has to offer Freemasonry and our membership. I am sure all of us are looking forward to the real benefits it will bring in streamlining the way in which we assemble and manage essential data.



Signing the Armed forces Covenant....

Freemasonry has a long and proud connection with the armed forces. The Province of Wiltshire replicates that connection with many members being either serving or former sailors, soldiers and airmen. We also offer the opportunity for men with a military background to join our military Lodge, The Lodge of Brothers in Arms No.9540. This partnership therefore represents an important step in further supporting both active and retired military personnel. Important Armed Forces personnel such as Colonel Sir Thomas Fowke, Major General Thomas CP Calley have occupied important offices in the Craft and in more modern times, Air Marshal Sir Ron Stuart-Paul, Brigadier Peter Sharpe, Group Captain Michael Lee, and Lt. Col. Colin Cheshire are recognised as prominent Wiltshire Freemasons.

Our Wiltshire military personnel join UGLE's Grand Master, His Royal Highness, The Duke of Kent, who has a longstanding relationship with the military, in particular the army.

The Armed Forces Covenant is a commitment to support those who have served, and their families. The support of organisations such as the Freemasons and the making of a public pledge of support to the Armed Forces community that they are valued by society is vital. This year we celebrate the Armed Forces Covenant's 10th anniversary.

Philip Bullock was joined by Simon Leighfield and Colonel Gary McDade for a signing ceremony in the Garrison Officers' Mess at Tidworth. The occasion also allowed Philip to brief Col. McDade on the history of Wiltshire Freemasonry and the connections we have with the Armed Forces.

Philip Bullock who retired as Provincial Grand Master on 5th October said: "It is my great pleasure to sign the Armed Forces Covenant on behalf of Wiltshire Freemasons. We are proud of our long-standing relationship with the Armed Forces and we will continue to promote their welfare, support, and respect amongst all our members."

Colonel Gary McDade who signed the covenant on behalf of said: "Wiltshire Freemasons have a solid connection to the Armed Forces, and I'd like to thank the Province for supporting the Armed Forces community."

The UK government's Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) recognises Wiltshire Freemasonry as delivering tangible support for the Armed Forces community since signing the Armed Forces Covenant.



WILTSHIRE 2028 FESTIVAL

MAKING A DIFFERENCE



John Reid PrGM
invites you to join him
at the

Double Tree Hilton Hotel

Lydiard Fields,

Great Western Way,

Swindon SN5 8UZ

SATURDAY 18 FEBRUARY 2023

Ticket £60 per person

four course dinner | music | dancing til midnight

Dinner 6.45pm for 7.30pm

CLICK HERE TO BOOK YOUR PLACE

Special Room Rates Available

WILTSHIRE FREEMASONS SUPPORTING



Masonic
Charitable Foundation



Discover More About The Festival

CONGRATULATIONS



THE PROVINCIAL TEAM

2022 - 2023