

# Across the Plain

The magazine of Wiltshire Freemasons



Summer 2023  
Online edition

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- Provincial Grand Lodge Summons
- Christmas Carol Service
- Royal Arch Convocation



# The Provincial Grand Master.....



In my first contribution to the pages of Across the Plain I reflected on the day when I was Installed as Provincial Grand Master for this wonderful Province of Wiltshire. I wrote how The highlights of the day were far too many to list, but I was quite clear that it was a day which will live in my memory forever.

Having spent a few hours watching the Coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla I am pretty sure the highlights of his great day will live in The King's memory forever. What an amazing day it was. An event steeped in centuries of history and tradition that included new and interesting modern elements that were integrated seamlessly into the fabric of the service. The result was a Coronation fit for a King and perfectly in keeping with a society

that sees itself as citizens and not subjects. As Prince of Wales, Charles was ever aware of the motto 'Ich Dein' which translates to "I Serve". The newly crowned King reiterated his commitment to a life of service when he said "I come not to be served but to serve". As I sit here reflecting on the Coronation, I'm convinced that serving others should be the hallmark of a Freemason.

I do not claim to understand every aspect of social media but I have certainly enjoyed the posts on the Provincial Twitter, and Facebook site. Thank you to the many contributors, especially the Brethren that manage social media for their Lodge. There can be no doubting the incredible benefits of social media in communicating events and issue to a target audience. It is for this reason that I have asked the Provincial Communication Officer to undertake a fact finding study into the use of Twitter, facebook and WhatsApp in the Province. I know that he has asked Paul Robinson to assist him in collating the information and working with Lodges to determine what is needed to enhance our social media presence. I trust you will provide the team with the information they ask for and work with them as they undertake this important exercise.

Doubtless you will have seen and read the numerous articles in the Provincial newsletter **In touch>On line** confirming and reinforcing the link between the Craft and the Royal Arch. As the head of pure Antient Freemasonry in Wiltshire 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 once more repeat an important principle with regard to membership of the Royal Arch. It is this. When you were made a Freemason you were asked "Do... you freely and voluntarily offer yourself a candidate for the mysteries and privileges of Freemasonry?" The Freemason's journey into the Royal Arch must also be entered upon 'voluntarily' - there is no room for a press gang approach to membership of the Royal Arch, or indeed any other Masonic Order beyond the Craft.

In December the United Grand Lodge launched their strategy for the next seven years based on the four principles 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. I am sure you will have seen the excellent Royal Arch graphics that have appeared in the monthly newsletter, the website and the Province's social media channels promoting the undisputed fact that the Craft and Royal Arch is One Organisation on One Journey. Whatever Order you may be associated with I hope that you will acknowledge and be proud to be recognised first and foremost as a Wiltshire Freemason.

# The Provincial Grand Master.....

In mentioning Orders 'beyond the Craft'. I would restate a point made previously, that the Orders beyond the Craft are precisely that - not side Orders and not other Degrees. The courtesy extended to them recognises 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.

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.

I was particularly pleased to launch the Wiltshire 2028 Festival on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> February at a splendid dinner dance held in Swindon's Hilton Hotel. The Province welcomed the Deputy President of the Masonic Charitable Foundation Sir Paul Williams and his wife. We were also delighted to welcome Les Hutchinson the CEO of the MCF. Judging from the comments made on the evening and subsequently, I can confidently report that the evening was enjoyed by everyone who attended and generated a great deal of interest in what John and Des have in store for 2024. If you missed the launch, I hope you will book your place at the next event as soon as it is advertised.

The festival itself has got off to a great start. Thank you to those Lodges that have made a significant contribution to their 'goal'. I really am so pleased to see the funds flowing into our Provincial Wiltshire 2028 Festival Relief Chest No.E2028. For those Lodges still to be persuaded to move funds from their own Lodge Relief Chest let me say that an interest rate of six per cent payable on money in E2028 should be sufficient incentive for your Lodge Treasurer to release the money.

One festival event I will certainly be supporting is the cycle ride being organised by Alan Colman and Richard Legge both members of The Royal Sussex Lodge of Emulation No.355. Over the next five years Alan and Richard will be inviting cyclists of all standards to join them as they visit every Masonic meeting venue in the Province. The first cycle ride will be on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2023 and starting at 9.00am from The Planks, Swindon, will travel to Highworth, Malmesbury, Calne and Marlborough.

If you aren't able to take part in the cycle ride you can join me in assisting Alan and Richard by providing back up support, sponsoring a rider or just waving off your friends as they set out on what will be a very enjoyable event. The boys assure me that the ride will be very sedate and not at all like the Tour de France. So, give the bike a service, pump up the tyres, don the lycra, don't forget your helmet, and join Alan and Richard for the ride of a lifetime. And remember It's all for a good cause.

Donate or Sponsor online by clicking on this link: <https://donate.givetap.co.uk/f/masonic-charitable-foundation/wiltshire-2028-festival/entered-apprentice-cycling-event-2023>

To enter the event there is an online application form: <https://forms.gle/ZkfBEaDWBP6HHJqf8>

At a slightly different scale I was very impressed to read that Master of Lodge of Concord No.632 Mike Boddy took part in the fan dance race on the 8th July. Interestingly it's nothing to do with 'fans' and it's more than a 'race'. It's what the SAS and the SBS do as part of their qualification process.

Mike was in the Brecon Beacons and climbed the summit of Pen y Fan the highest peak in South Wales)as a competitor in a 24km race carrying 35lbs of kit whilst trying to complete it in selection time. I'm delighted to advise that Mike completed the course and raised funds for the Wiltshire 2028 Festival and the Masonic Charitable Foundation. His job is done , thank you Mike, but if you want to support Mike's incredible effort you can donate by clicking the link. [tinyurl.com/ax3ehb6x](https://tinyurl.com/ax3ehb6x)



It hardly seems that we are entering the second half of 2023, can it really be six months since we were looking forward to the event that launched the Wiltshire 2028 Festival?

And yet here we are, still experiencing the effects of the global cost of living crisis, wondering just how long the conflict in Ukraine will continue and how it will affect our lives and those of our friends and family in the future. These are the big issues that we encounter and consider on a daily basis and yet we still find time in our lives to think about other people and support them by contributing to schemes such as the Wiltshire 2028 Festival.

I recall a recent conversation in which the question was asked, "Does Freemasonry make men charitable?" After a lot of discussion and debate the consensus reached was that it didn't. For me the clincher for reaching this conclusion was when it was pointed out that in the address to the Initiate, commonly referred to as the Charity Charge, the Initiate is told that charity is denominated the distinguishing characteristic of a Freemason's heart – and that no doubt it has often been felt and practiced by you. In effect what this tells me is that we welcome men who are intrinsically charitable as members of our Antient and Honourable Institution. Perhaps, it might be better to suggest that Freemasonry encourages men to be more charitable.

As the Chairman of the Wiltshire 2028 Festival, I receive regular updates on the festival's progress, the events being planned, jewels being purchased and distributed and of course the aggregated sum of donations made and promised. I am pleased to report that Lodges and individual members have confirmed the truth of the words of the Charity Charge and have supported the Wiltshire 2028 Festival with pledges that, when realised, will result in the Province achieving almost a third of its overall goal. To which I can only say – well done.

I also want to mention the support of Lodges for Teddies for Loving Care (Wiltshire). The team overseeing TLC perform their work with little if any fanfare, and I am not going to change that today. Providing a young person with a TLC bear when they have been admitted to the Accident and Emergency Department of Salisbury General Hospital, or Swindon's Great Western Hospital can have a significant effect on the well-being of the individual and make the job of the clinical staff much easier. I continue to be impressed with the stories related by parents, grand-parents and even the recipients of a TLC bear. Every Lodge should be proud of the contribution they make to the life of a child that receives a TLC bear. Thank you for continuing to fund the Teddies for Loving Care (Wiltshire) initiative from the proceeds of a Lodge raffle, a donation from your Relief Chest and the many individual gifts made every year.

Finally, while Lodges are asked to achieve a financial goal, nominally based on subscribing member numbers, it is your Lodge Charity Steward who is tasked with promoting the Wiltshire 2028 Festival and to be inventive in income generating initiatives. Asking Brethren to open their wallets and make 'another' contribution is sometimes described as a 'thankless task' and often the Charity Steward becomes invisible to the membership as they make the case for a donation. Brethren, the Charity Steward has a big job to do. Please work with them and remember that all they will ever ask of you is that you give as your circumstances in life fairly allow.

I look forward to meeting with you at Provincial Grand Lodge on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> October at Trowbridge and I trust you will join John Reid, Phil Still, and myself at the Christmas Carol Service being held in the Chapel of Marlborough College on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> December. It really does promise to be a wonderful event.

## Making a daily advancement....

Steve Lee PrGLDO



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 organises workshops to help new Freemasons understand how a Lodge Room is formed, what happens in a meeting, the role of the officers of the Lodge and most importantly 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.

## Good ceremonial....

Barry Jordan-Davis PrGDC



One of the most important offices in the Lodge is that of the Director of Ceremonies so it might come as a surprise to discover that there is no obligation to appoint either a Director of Ceremonies or an assistant. However, the overwhelming majority of Masters do so. To understand why this is the case it is necessary to explain that the Director of Ceremonies is not a regular Officer, in fact he is what Rule 104 in the Book of Constitutions terms an 'additional officer'.

The Director of Ceremonies is responsible to the Master to see that the ceremonial aspects of the meeting proceed smoothly, and that ceremonial within the Lodge is carried out in a dignified manner and to the highest possible standard. He should be knowledgeable about the ritual practiced in the Lodge, tactful in his dealing with the Brethren and above all he should set the tone of the Lodge by personal example. The role of the Director of Ceremonies in supporting the Brethren of the Lodge in both the Lodge Room and the Dining Room cannot be overstated.

The independence of a Lodge allows it to have its own traditions, which they are perfectly able to demonstrate, provided they are consistent with the general laws and regulations of the Craft (Rule 155 BoC). However, when either the PrGM, the DPrGM or APrGM are present in an official capacity, and the Provincial Grand DC or one of his Deputies or Assistants is officiating there is a requirement that Provincial protocols will be adhered to - both ceremonial in the Lodge Room and in the Dining Room. In short, Grand Lodge rules apply. I am sure that this is and will be appreciated and understood, and that your cooperation is assured.



# One Organisation - One Journey....

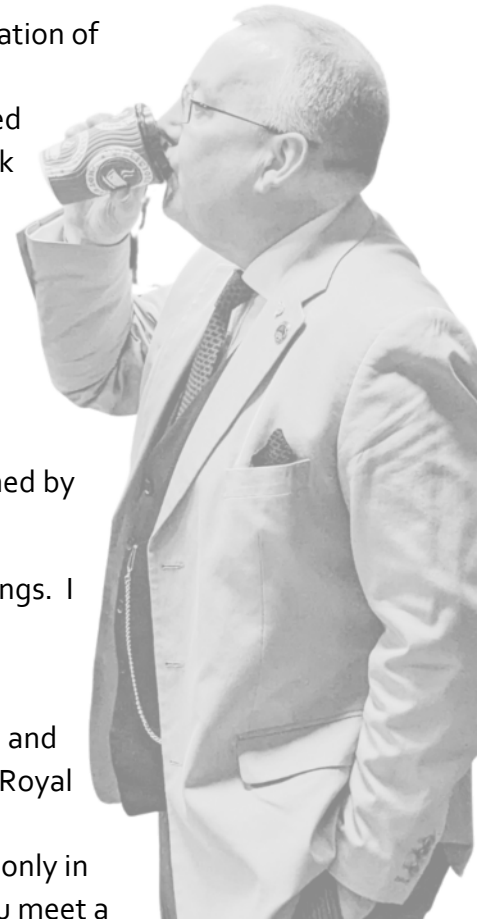
I was really pleased to see so many Companions at the recent Annual Convocation of Provincial Grand Chapter held in Melksham. The weather was kind to us, the company superb, and words fail me to adequately compliment the food served by Andrew and Frances Evans. On behalf of the Grand Superintendent I thank each and every one of you for making the day a great success and I look forward to working with the Provincial team (pic at bottom of page)

This year's Convocation showcased a few operational changes in the day's events. A number of Companions have reported on how much they liked the change to the appointment of the Officers continuing in office for a further year. Asking each Companion to stand when being named also allowed for a significant reduction in the meeting time; something that I know was welcomed by many of the Companions present.

It is little changes such as this that could make a big impact on Chapter meetings. I do hope that Chapter Directors of Ceremonies will give due consideration to making changes of this nature.

The Provincial Grand Master has reiterated the importance that Grand Lodge and Supreme Grand Chapter place on the relationship between the Craft and the Royal Arch. I endorse the view as promoted from Freemasons' Hall and would encourage every Companion to act as an ambassador for the Royal Arch, not only in your own Lodge but in the wider sense of wherever you are and whenever you meet a Brother who might enquire of you the place of the Royal Arch in Wiltshire Freemasonry.

The Communication Team is actively working with the Royal Arch element of the Provincial Learning and Development Team on updating the presentation to non-members. I know they are looking at introducing some eye catching graphics promoting the message that we are One Organisation on One Journey. We are Wiltshire Freemasons.



Welcome to the 2023 Provincial Team



Grand Superintendent John Reid was present to welcome newly appointed UGLE Director of Communications and Membership Shaun Butler to Swindon. Shaun was the guest speaker at the Wiltshire Chapter of First Principals No. 6731 when he gave an insightful presentation entitled "Communicating Freemasonry in the 21st Century"

Has your Chapter been in the **SPOTLIGHT**? If you're a **twitter** follower you couldn't have failed to see the new way we are promoting every Chapter in the Province. The format is the same, it's just the information that differs. Watch out for your Chapter to come under the **SPOTLIGHT** who knows it might just encourage a Brother to **JUST ASK** about joining.



Exalte Josh Whitfield was joined by newly Installed Jamie Osborn at a well supported Border Chapter No. 3129 meeting at the Masonic Hall, Ludgershall





Newly Exalted Companion Paul Davies was all smiles as he was welcomed into St Edmund Chapter No. 4714 by a clearly delighted Grand Superintendent John Reid. A very special Wiltshire evening captured so perfectly in this black and white photograph



Congratulations were certainly in order when E Comp David Plotkin was Installed as MEZ at Highworth Chapter No. 9009 meeting at the Masonic Centre, Swindon. Grand Superintendent John Reid was joined by the Second, and Third Principal for what was described as a wonderful evening.



What an amazing start to the Wiltshire 2028 Festival. I am in awe of the response made by Lodges and individual Brethren to the appeal launched by Provincial Grand Master John Reid in February. The generosity of people never ceases to surprise me as it is something I have witnessed first hand in my role as a director and trustee of a number of charitable organisations. However, I can honestly say that I have been genuinely moved by the positivity displayed by so many of our members..

In my role as a trustee of the Masonic Charitable Foundation (MCF), I have a privileged insight into the work they undertake, and I am very impressed with that they do.

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. Thank you to the Lodges that have invited members of the team to make a short presentation to the Brethren. For those who might feel a presentation would take up too much time, let me assure you that we have dispensed with Power Point slides, so no set up time, just a 6 minute briefing followed by a short Q&A session. Please invite us to your Lodge and let us keep you informed about what we are doing, what you can do and to generally answer any questions you might have.



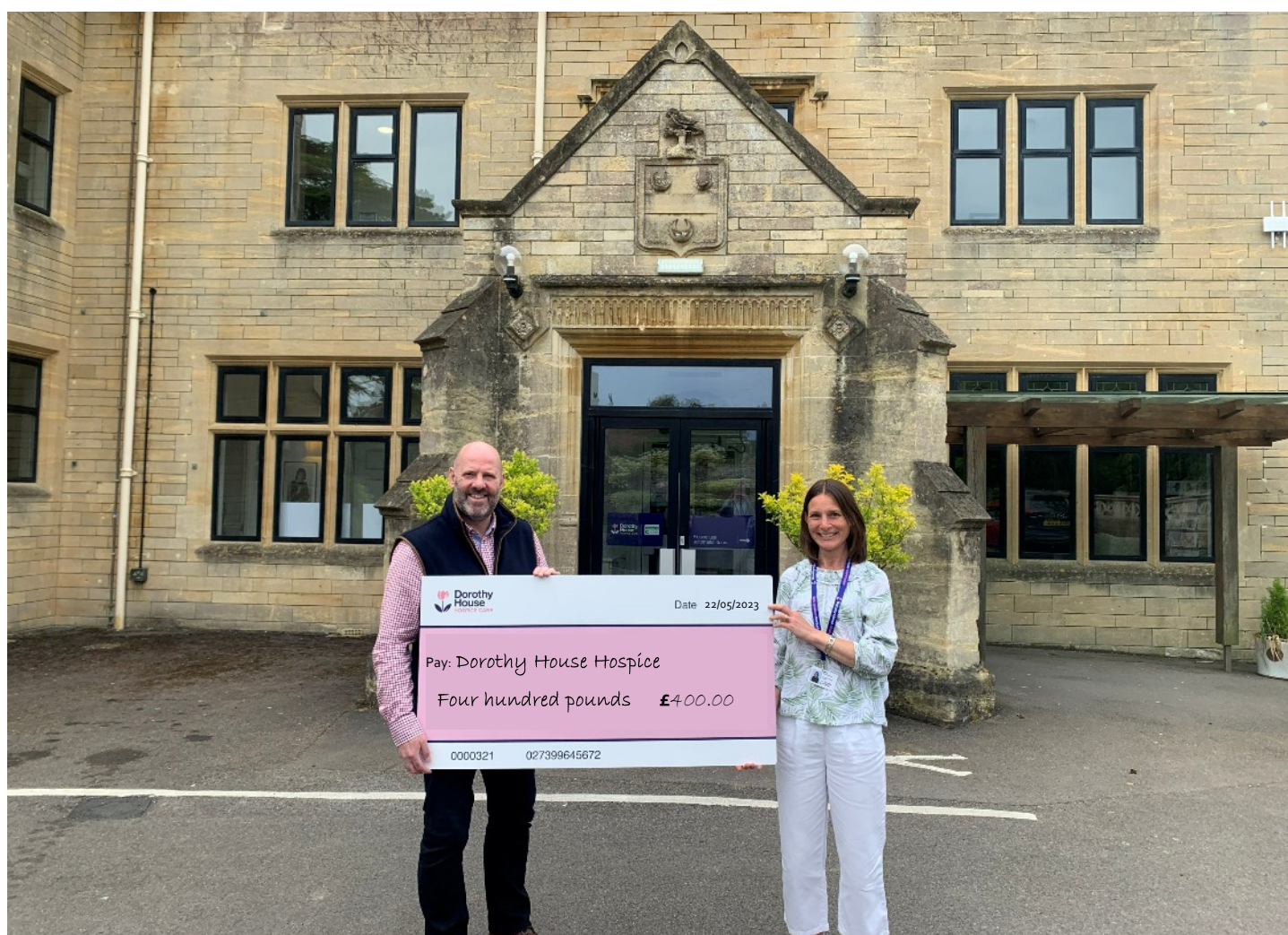
**Masonic**  
**Charitable Foundation**



Lodge of Innocence and Morality No.9587 was consecrated on 31<sup>st</sup> May 1995 and meets in the lovely village hall at East Knoyle. While comparatively 'new' the members have managed to give it the feel of a long established Lodge.

Originally intending to attract members from the west of Teffont - Fovant and Mere, the Lodge had its first application turned down. However, a change of Provincial Grand Master saw newly appointed Byron Carron approve the application and conduct the Consecration at a grand ceremony in The Laverton Hall, Westbury followed by a banquet at the Assembly Rooms, Warminster.

The Lodge is renowned for its hospitality and its Lodge Room. Members set up the Lodge Room with a great deal of care and attention and the transformation is on a par with anything that 'Harry Potter' could achieve; so much so that it is almost impossible to recognise the characteristics of the village hall. To enjoy the full Lodge of Innocence and Morality experience it really is necessary to sit it in the famed fireplace - the home of the Provincial Stewards at the Installation meeting.



At their recent Installation meeting the Lodge held a raffle that raised £400 for the Dorothy House Hospice. Newly Installed Master Bro Ian Hooper was delighted to present a cheque to the fundraising team at the hospice. 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. Without the backing of the Wiltshire Freemasons they would not be able to care for as many people as they do and be there for local families who need them most.



In this edition of *Across the Plain* we celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla

## 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.

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One of the privileges of being the editor of *Across the Plain* and the monthly newsletter *In touch>On line* is that it allows me the opportunity and privilege of using my column to comment on Masonic issues that might be considered a little contentious.

I have always been a great supporter of the right of the individual to challenge, criticise and even to contradict the views and opinions expressed by others; even those espoused by the so called experts amongst us. After all, an opinion is simply a view or judgement formed about something, not necessarily based on objective fact, evidence, argument or knowledge.

Alongside the right to hold an opinion sits one of the most treasured rights of a free society – the right to free speech.

While every Freemason has the untrammelled right to hold his own opinion with regard to public affairs, the Grand Lodge has made clear its position that it will not comment or express an opinion on any question of state policy. It has also acknowledged that Freemasonry has survived the constantly changing doctrines of the outside world by rigidly adhering to this policy.

However, free speech and the right to express an opinion has never been an absolute right; words that seek to agitate, stir up hatred or harm have often been regulated by law. In Masonic terms it is for this very reason we are reminded to avoid discussing politics or religion in Lodge.

As Freemasons we are reminded that "no institution can boast a more solid foundation than that on which Freemasonry rests – the practice of every moral and social virtue". To understand what this means we have only to consider the duty we owe to our 'neighbour' "by acting with him on the square, by rendering him every kind office...and by doing to him as in similar cases you would wish he would do to you".

The effect of the charge is to point out that as Freemasons we have an obligation to be kind to our Brethren in Freemasonry. Believe me when I say I know that there are times when that can be a difficult ask – but it's what elevates us above the rest of the world.

Finally if you are tempted to say something that may have a tendency to hurt someone else think on a saying with which we are all familiar – "If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all."

**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](mailto:editor@pglwilts.org.uk)

## Fred and Charlie discuss....

Fred met Charlie at the Masons Alms, both heavily laden with weekly shopping and both seeking, they felt strongly, a well deserved medicinal half... or perhaps two. Part of the way through their second, Charlie noted Wilf, secretary of a rival lodge, sitting in a far corner quietly completing his Saturday treat – his paper's crossword. With furrowed brow he appeared to be anxiously searching the pub ceiling for inspiration and clearly not wishing to be disturbed.

*'He's been in that Secretary's chair for donkey's years', reflected Charlie. 'How long can one stay in office for Pete's sake?'*

Fred eyed Wilf and returned his gaze to Charlie. *'Twelve months'.*

*'Nonsense!' exploded Charlie. 'He's been their Secretary ever since I've been a Mason. He must have taken over before the Ark.'*

*'He was rather stuck with the job – old Wilf was one of the first round here to get a PC and no one now wants to take over. Anyway, if you're right his PC was probably used to download the Ark's blueprint.'*

*'PDF', said Charlie slyly.*

*'No, PDO. The water around the Ark was rising fast. The answer's still twelve months'.*

*'How so?'*

*'Do you only use your 'Constitutions' as a doorstep, Charlie?'*

*'I was only asking, Fred'*

*'And I was only explaining - so listen and learn.'*

*'Most recreational societies need an engine room to run their affairs and plan ahead. It's known as 'the committee'. They tend to hold an annual general meeting and elect a chairman, secretary, treasurer, events organiser and so on. This committee produces a programme, costs it and charges the members a membership fee to match. Many members then seem happy just to turn up each month, sit back and rely on their committee to entertain them with an enjoyable and successful evening.'*

*'Sounds just like Freemasonry to me, Fred.'*

*'Not so, Charlie, quite the opposite. In those recreational societies members freely delegate to their elected committee the power to act on their behalf. On the other hand in the old operative lodges the working masons had equal rights. They valued their individual freedom very highly, not least the ability to move easily to a better paid job, and they wished to retain it. A mason was proud of his skills and spoke his mind. The Master knew him and he knew the Master. They didn't need a committee.'*

*'That's not true today, surely?', queried Charlie.*

*'The evolution of today's Masonic committees became guided by social history, Charlie. After the Grand Lodges united around 1813 Freemasonry became steadily more inter-woven with Victorian civic society. They supported schools, orphanages, technical institutes and the general welfare around them. Masonic leaders were often required to attend school speech days, presentations, civic banquets and all the many formal gatherings of Victorian society. Freemasonry was by no means just one evening a month.'*

Fred paused and thought for a moment.

# The Lodge committee?

*'I believe I still have a West Country newspaper cutting – about 1880 - with a front page article reporting the laying of a foundation stone in Swindon. It was a remarkably well attended event. There was even a special train to bring 500 Freemasons from Bristol for the occasion. The ceremony was followed by a Masonic procession through the town and concluded with a vast civic dinner at which the Lord Lieutenant made a speech. That takes a lot of organising, Charlie, and a lot of Masonic thinking time before that!'*

*'Planning this level of activity however presented a big problem. Some Lodges became formidably large. (As recently as 1976, when I was Initiated, the City of Salisbury – really just a small market town – boasted six Lodges totalling 617 members.) As all Masons have equal rights in Lodge matters, running a planning committee with over 100 differing voices was, is and always will be, totally impracticable. To focus Masonic effort, time and funds to best advantage, Grand Lodge allowed the Master to gather around him a small group of like-minded members as his Committee. They all helped the Master run the Lodge and support him throughout what could be a very demanding social year!'*

Charlie pursed his lips. *'Doesn't sound very democratic, Fred.'*

*'It's all spelt out very clearly in Rule 104 (e), Charlie: "The appointment of **all** officers...except the Treasurer...is in the **sole** power and discretion of the Master." To pre-empt officers trying to cling on to office from one year to the next the rule also states that: "No Brother has any right to claim advancement" – i.e. no one can demand of the Master-Elect to remain in office, to be given a particular post or be awarded promotion. In capital letters, Charlie, while many whispered voices will try to guide him, the Master in Office has sole authority for appointing all officers during his year, the Treasurer always excepted.'*

*'It also follows, Charlie, that during the Installation when the out-going Master retires, at the very instant that his right arm passes the gavel of authority across his left towards the incoming Master, all officers of his year are out of office - the Chaplain, Secretary, Director of Ceremonies etc. down to the Deacons and Inner Guard, the whole shebang. All posts then remain vacant until the new Master has appointed his own choice of office holders.'*

Fred nonchalantly waved his hand: *'It follows no officer can remain in post for more than twelve months, just as I told you. For the sake of continuity however it does make good sense for successive Master Elects to invite some officers, say, the Secretary and Almoner to continue in Office for perhaps three, occasionally five, years. Any longer does tend to become a bed-blocker for aspiring talent.'*

Charlie looked perplexed. *'In our Lodge, Fred, we have a so called 'ladder' and we all progress up it year by year apparently regardless of the Master.'*

Fred nodded. *'Many Lodges observe that custom, Charlie. By filling all offices an incoming Master gains a very sound insight into the ritual. However if the Master feels the circumstances in the Lodge require it then his right to make changes to the ladder remains absolute.'*

Fred paused. *'Some Lodges base appointment of officers on geography, some on a points-system to reflect attendance or individual effort. (I belong to Lodges of all three types.) Whichever it is, incoming Masters should try to work within their local system – their charity and social programme may become just a little thin if they don't.'*

Fred felt he perhaps ought to point out the downside to a Master's Committee. *'In the event that a Master and his close companions might have been tempted to invest Lodge funds in some dubious enterprise, Grand Lodge introduced three financial checks and balances to safeguard the interests of other Lodge members!'*



### 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. [pc@pglwilts.org.uk](mailto:pc@pglwilts.org.uk)

### Wiltshire 2028 Festival



The Provincial Grand Master  
Invites you to make a personal  
donation to the  
Wiltshire 2028 Festival



[editor@pglwilts.org.uk](mailto:editor@pglwilts.org.uk)



**Q.** What sign should be used at the Closing of a lodge?

**A.** The ritual book states – “All touch left breast lightly with right hand with each word.” Incidentally, the three words are not preceded by the word ‘of’ - there is no ‘of’. The fact that the words spoken are Fidelity, Fidelity, Fidelity does not mean we use the Sign of Fidelity.

**Q.** I recently heard a debate about the position of the VSL and the Square and Compasses on the Master’s pedestal. Is there a recognised position for the VSL?

**A.** I have heard this subject being debated on a number of occasions, often by well intentioned Brethren who are adamant they are principled practitioners of the Emulation Ritual. The answer to your question can be found in the ritual book under the heading ‘Opening’ and the final section. “VSL is placed so that WM can read it: points of the Compasses are directed to WM and hidden by the arms of the Square, angle towards the WM.” Any Lodge doing anything different to this ‘doing their own thing’ – I’m not sure why, perhaps it’s an error that has become custom and practice.

I have heard different reasons for why some Lodges choose to have the VSL put in a position where the candidate can read it, but none persuade me that the guidance in the Emulation Ritual should be overridden or ignored.

**Q.** Should I wear two or more collars of office at meetings of my Lodge?

**A.** An easy rule of thumb is to think of the collar as denoting the office, and the badge (apron) your Masonic rank. There are some senior brethren who believe that an office holder should wear all his collars. However, this can be an encumbrance, look awkward and certainly cause clanking of jewels when moving about a lodge room. For this reason I am very happy for holders of multiple Lodge offices to wear a single collar, that being the most senior of the offices held. What I do not wish to see and would strongly suggest is unacceptable is the practice of inverting one collar over another ostensibly to avoid the jewels banging against each other.

If a Grand or Provincial officer, I advocate the wearing of the Lodge light blue collar only, the exception being at the Lodge Installation meeting when your dark blue collar will be exposed when relinquishing a Lodge office.

Incidentally, you may have noticed Grand Officers who are also Active Provincial Officers wearing only the collar of their office when on Provincial duty. This simple act on their part demonstrates the importance they attach to the office they hold, while at the same time their apron denotes their Grand Rank – Rule 267 BoC refers.



# 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 was to pay tribute to the work of the team that promotes and 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.**

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

# Provincial Grand Lodge of Wiltshire

of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of England



RW Bro John C Reid  
Provincial Grand Master

VW Bro Simon R Leighfield **PGSwdB**  
Deputy Provincial Grand Master

W Bro Philip J Still **PSGD**  
Assistant Provincial Grand Master

July 2023

Dear Sir and Brother,

By command of the Provincial Grand Master for Wiltshire the Annual Meeting of Provincial Grand Lodge will be held in the Lansdown Hall, The Civic, Trowbridge under the Banners of Lodge of Concord No 632, Lodge of Good Fellowship No 8388 and New Temple Lodge No 8435 on **Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> October 2023 at 2.30 pm.**

All Present and Past Provincial Grand Officers, Masters, Past Masters and Wardens of the Province are summoned to attend. Master Masons are invited to be present.

Yours sincerely and fraternally

Robert J Evans

**Provincial Grand Secretary**

1 The Grove

Warminster

BA12 8QL

Telephone 01985 214 874

Brethren are to wear dark Lounge Suits or Morning Dress with full dress Regalia (no gauntlets) and are requested to be in their seats in the Lansdown Hall by **2.15 pm**. It is the wish of the Provincial Grand Master that members wear the Provincial Tie.

Lunch (12.45 pm for 1 pm) will be available in the **Usher Suite** for Brethren and their Masonic Guests, subject to seats being available. **Lunch is £32 per head** which includes wine. Bookings may be made using the following online link [click to register](#) and payments may be made to Sort Code 23-05-80, Account Number 43153161 (please use your Lodge number and name as a reference, eg 1234Bloggs). Alternatively, bookings with remittance (giving name, initials, rank, Lodge number and any dietary requirements) can be sent to J H Deane Esq, 10 West Park Road, Corsham, SN13 9LN. Cheques to be made payable to '**Provincial Grand Lodge of Wiltshire**'. Bookings must be made as soon as possible but no later than **Friday 1<sup>st</sup> September 2022**.

The **Provincial Committee** will meet at **The Masonic Hall, Trowbridge**, at **7 pm** on **Friday 8<sup>th</sup> September 2023** to receive the accounts of the Provincial Grand Treasurer, to consider the disposal of funds and to transact any other Masonic business.

## Business of Provincial Grand Lodge

1. Welcome and Opening Ode
2. To open Provincial Grand Lodge
3. The RW Provincial Grand Master will be saluted according to ancient form
4. The RW Provincial Grand Master will greet our guests
5. The attendance of Provincial Officers and Lodges will be acknowledged
6. In Memoriam
7. The Minutes of the Meeting of Provincial Grand Lodge held at Trowbridge on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> October 2022 will be submitted for approval
8. To receive the Provincial Grand Treasurer's accounts
9. To elect a Provincial Grand Treasurer for the ensuing year; W Bro Christopher J Robbins is nominated
10. To elect two Brethren to serve as Account Examiners for the ensuing year; W Bro Keith R S Surry and W Bro Derek K Gibbens are nominated
11. To receive the report of the Provincial Grand Registrar
12. To receive the report of the Provincial Committee held on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2023
13. To elect five Brethren to serve as Trustees of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Wiltshire Benevolent Fund; W Bro Clive Emerson, W Bro Simon Ellingham, W Bro Roger Karn, W Bro David Reed and W Bro Nigel Poole are nominated
14. To elect two Brethren to act as Account Examiners for the Wiltshire Masonic Charity Foundation for the ensuing year; W Bro David Wallace and W Bro Colin W Ayton are nominated
15. To elect two Brethren to serve as Wiltshire representative members of the Masonic Charitable Foundation for the ensuing year; W Bro Gary Dolphin and W Bro Christopher J Robbins are nominated
16. Wiltshire Association reports
17. The RW Provincial Grand Master will re-appoint as Deputy Provincial Grand Master, VW Bro Simon R Leighfield **PGSwdB**.
18. The RW Provincial Grand Master will re-appoint as Assistant Provincial Grand Master, W Bro Philip J Still **PSGD**.
19. The RW Provincial Grand Master will appoint and invest the Provincial Grand Officers for the ensuing year
20. The Provincial Grand Officers will be saluted
21. The RW Provincial Grand Master will address the Brethren
22. To attend to any other Masonic Business
23. To close Provincial Grand Lodge
24. Closing Ode

## NATIONAL ANTHEM

Alms will be collected in aid of the Wiltshire 2028 Festival.

Alms may also be donated before the meeting at the Charity desk or on leaving Provincial Grand Lodge

## The Provincial Grand Lodge of Wiltshire

Provincial Grand Master – RW Bro John C Reid

Deputy Provincial Grand Master – VW Bro Simon R Leighfield **PGSwdB**

Assistant Provincial Grand Master – W Bro Philip J Still **PSGD**

Provincial Senior Grand Warden	W Bro Ian W Lever	8435
Provincial Junior Grand Warden	W Bro Alan Colman	355
Provincial Grand Chaplain	RW Bro Rev Dr John R H Railton <b>PJGW</b>	1533
Provincial Grand Treasurer	W Bro Christopher J Robbins <b>PAGDC</b>	1478
Provincial Grand Registrar	W Bro John O Badger <b>PAGDC</b>	626
Provincial Grand Secretary	W Bro Robert J Evans	1478
Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies	W Bro Barry Jordan-Davis PPrJGW	5955
Provincial Grand Sword Bearer	W Bro Colin W Ayton	1478
Provincial Grand Superintendent of Works	W Bro A L (Sandy) Steele-Davis PPrJGW	8435
Provincial Deputy Grand Director of Ceremonies	W Bro Richard D Wright PPrSGW	2227
Provincial Deputy Grand Director of Ceremonies	W Bro Mark A Whitmarsh	1295
Provincial Grand Almoner	W Bro Gary Dolphin <b>PAGDC</b>	1295
Provincial Grand Charity Steward	W Bro Clive L Emerson	9064
Provincial Grand Membership Officer	W Bro Colin CC Cheshire, <i>OBE</i> <b>PJGD</b>	632
Provincial Grand Communications Officer	W Bro Des Morgan <b>PAGDC</b>	335
Provincial Grand Learning and Development Officer	W Bro Stephen Lee PPrSGW	8204
Provincial Grand Mentor	W Bro David Little <b>PAGStB</b>	9064
Provincial Senior Grand Deacon	W Bro David G Barter	6114
Provincial Senior Grand Deacon	W Bro Anthony H German	8747
Provincial Senior Grand Deacon	W Bro Gordon H N Hardie	663
Provincial Junior Grand Deacon	W Bro Andrew G Hargreaves	8977
Provincial Junior Grand Deacon	W Bro Anthony J Lucas	8432
Provincial Junior Grand Deacon	W Bro Stephen A Turner	8620
Provincial Assistant Grand Secretary	W Bro John H Deane PPrJGW	6616
Provincial Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies	W Bro Darren Astley	7525
Provincial Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies	W Bro John T Davies	8747
Provincial Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies	W Bro Mark J Duckett	1271
Provincial Grand Organist	W Bro Gary E Cook	632
Provincial Grand Standard Bearer	W Bro Stephen D Fenemore	586
Provincial Grand Standard Bearer	W Bro Peter G Tuite	632
Provincial Grand Pursuivant	Bro Paul A Sharp	1295
Provincial Grand Steward	W Bro Leslie R Welling	9773
Provincial Grand Steward	W Bro Mark Newman	1295
Provincial Grand Steward	W Bro Andrew M Potter	1271
Provincial Grand Steward	W Bro Michael L J Boddy	632
Provincial Grand Tyler	W Bro Stephen J Smith	3129

### Appointments:

Past Provincial Junior Grand Deacon	W Bro Stephen J Nuttall	632
Past Provincial Junior Grand Deacon	W Bro Martin J Scratchley	3129
Past Provincial Junior Grand Deacon	W Bro Robert G Wheeler	4037
Past Provincial Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies	W Bro Bruce D C Broughton-Johnson	1295
Past Provincial Grand Standard Bearer	W Bro Sven W Feaver	8692
Past Provincial Grand Standard Bearer	W Bro Peter Spencer	6616
Past Provincial Grand Standard Bearer	W Bro James Torrie	2644
Past Provincial Grand Standard Bearer	W Bro Nicholas G Preston	9035
Past Provincial Grand Pursuivant	W Bro Graham M Penney	9064

### Appointments under Rule 69:

Past Provincial Junior Grand Warden	W Bro Malcolm E Case	9587
Past Provincial Junior Grand Warden	W Bro Colin J Nunn	9540
Past Provincial Grand Registrar	W Bro John H Mitchell	6114
Past Provincial Senior Grand Deacon	W Bro Andrew S Hunter	8388

### Promotions:

Past Provincial Senior Grand Warden	W Bro Christopher T Callow	9773
Past Provincial Senior Grand Warden	W Bro Kenneth T Lever	8435
Past Provincial Junior Grand Warden	W Bro Roger Karn	632
Past Provincial Junior Grand Warden	W Bro Michael J Smith	6114
Past Provincial Junior Grand Warden	W Bro Peter L Taviner	8432
Past Provincial Grand Registrar	W Bro Frederick P P Beavers	8435
Past Provincial Grand Registrar	Bro Alan E Cole	1271
Past Provincial Grand Registrar	W Bro Luke K Facey	4451
Past Provincial Grand Registrar	W Bro Neville J Hart-Ives	626
Past Provincial Grand Registrar	W Bro Peter G Hibdige	5955
Past Provincial Grand Registrar	W Bro Hugh W Irwin	4687
Past Provincial Grand Registrar	W Bro Michael D O'Neill	1271
Past Provincial Grand Sword Bearer	W Bro Andrew N Entwistle	8692
Past Provincial Grand Sword Bearer	W Bro Ronald J Miles	9548
Past Provincial Grand Sword Bearer	W Bro Roger F Pounder	4687
Past Provincial Grand Superintendent of Works	W Bro John A Calvert	4714
Past Provincial Grand Superintendent of Works	W Bro Jeremy H Daniels	9064
Past Provincial Grand Superintendent of Works	W Bro Michael L Doell	8788
Past Provincial Grand Superintendent of Works	W Bro Haydn J Jones	2644
Past Provincial Grand Superintendent of Works	W Bro Martin J Plastow	8718
Past Provincial Grand Superintendent of Works	W Bro Philip A Watkins	8388
Past provincial Senior Grand Deacon	W Bro Keith F M Loader	6114
Past Provincial Junior Grand Deacon	W Bro Victor W Harris	1533
Past Provincial Junior Grand Deacon	W Bro Christopher D Harvey	2888
Past Provincial Grand Pursuivant	W Bro David W Wallace	9540



The poster features a blue background with a yellow vertical stripe on the right. At the top left is the Wiltshire Freemasons crest. The text is centered and reads: 'WILTSHIRE FREEMASONS' in white, 'PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE' in large white letters, 'THE CIVIC | TROWBRIDGE' in white, 'THURSDAY 5TH OCTOBER' in white, and 'BOOK NOW: [CLICK HERE](#)' in white. At the bottom, the website 'www.wiltshirefreemasons.co.uk' is displayed. The background shows several blue chairs, with one yellow chair in the center of the yellow stripe.

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

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# The Grand Superintendent....

On Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2023 the Grand Superintendent John Reid welcomed Companions from across the Province and guests from throughout the South West to the Annual Convocation at Melksham. This is an abridged version of the address he gave to the Companions.

Companions, I welcome you this morning and thank you for giving up your precious time to support our Annual Convocation. This truly shows the continued support and friendship we have for one another and the enjoyment shared through the Companionship of the Royal Arch.

Today, I offer my congratulations to all those who have been appointed or promoted in Provincial Grand Chapter. I also take this opportunity to congratulate the Deputy Grand Superintendent EComp Simon Ellingham on his recent promotion in Grand Rank to Past Grand Sword Bearer. These are richly and well deserved honours, which come with the expectation that you will continue to encourage and guide our newer members, to take an active role in support of your Chapters, and to promote the Royal Arch within your Craft Lodges.

The active Provincial Officers have an added responsibility to support the Provincial Executive when and where they can. This Province has for many years been exceptionally well represented at Chapter Installations, inter Provincial visits and many other special occasions throughout the year. I can assure you that your attendance will be appreciated and extremely well received by the Executive and Chapters.

Companions, I am sure you are all aware of **The Strategy For Freemasonry 2022 And Beyond**. It's a strategy reinforcing the connection between The Craft and The Royal Arch. Not surprisingly the strategy is based on Freemasonry's strong foundations of Integrity, Friendship, Respect, and Charity.

For an initiative to be successful it is essential that it is embraced and supported. If we are to have a happy, thriving membership, we must be willing to innovate and accept change. Freemasonry as a whole is moving on. We must acknowledge that, if we wish to progress, we must also accept that there are different ways of doing things. We must make sure that we engage with both our existing and new members and I do not just mean our regular attendees. Let's make sure we remember and regularly communicate with those members we have not seen for sometime.

Membership is important, so it is no surprise that the Pro 1st Grand Principal has introduced The Membership Challenge. The success of this initiative will be based on a Province's actual gains, against its actual losses. You will have seen the Provincial Grand Registrar's report which shows Wiltshire has once again made a very small net gain in 2022. Our membership has continued to increase and more importantly I am delighted that Chapters are reporting increased numbers of candidates waiting to be Exalted. As positive as this sounds, our Membership Challenge will only be successful if we can stem our actual losses, hence engagement with all our members is so vitally important.

You will all have read or heard that Supreme Grand Chapter is developing 'Archway' – the equivalent to The Members Pathway in the Craft. Archway will be launched later in the year, and before you all start groaning, I promise you all, it is going to be user friendly, web based, providing a framework and toolkit to aid Chapters in moving forwards. Key guidance will be given under four headings - Shape, Grow, Involve and Enjoy, believe me Companions it is intuitive.

Companions, I hope many of you have opportunity to have seen the **Royal Arch Discover More** booklet. Unsurprisingly it is aimed at those Brethren who for various reasons have not yet joined this wonderful Order. The booklet can be viewed and downloaded from on the Supreme Grand Chapter website. I am advised that the booklet will shortly be available in printed form for distribution to Brethren through our Masonic Centres. These are positive initiatives from the Centre, and they will strengthen our Chapters.



# The Annual Convocation....

Today, I want you all to embrace an important message. As Companions of the Royal Arch and as Brethren in the Craft we are One Organisation on One Journey from Initiation to Exaltation. We are Wiltshire Freemasons.

Companions, I am delighted to report that our Chapters are in good heart, our membership is growing, and we now have more members sharing and taking part in our beautiful ceremonies. It is clear to me that the more we as individuals take part, the more we gain a sense of belonging. We should be part of the team, fulfilling an important role, and most importantly we should be enjoying what we are doing. However, we do have one or two Chapters that really do need our support. I'm sure you know who they are. Today, I am asking you, please, when you can, pay them a visit and show your support. It really will be hugely appreciated.

The Province has recently re-launched The Travelling Quaich to bring back the levels of enjoyment through visiting which we achieved pre-Covid. Companions please continue to enjoy and share this initiative. When it is your turn to transfer it, please take as many members as possible from your Chapter to enjoy the occasion and Companionship it offers. By the way and just to add a little excitement into the mix, I just want to say that fifteen Companions of Gooch Chapter N°1295 delivered The Quaich into the safe keeping of the Chapter of Concord N°632. So Companions there is no pressure.

The Provincial Team, when invited, has undertaken Exaltation ceremonies on behalf of a Chapter. In November of this year we will once again have the privilege of Exalting a new member into the Lansdowne Chapter of Unity No.626 in Chippenham. This will enable the Provincial team to demonstrate how the ceremony can be shared between as many Companions as possible. It is hoped that all our Chapters will be in attendance to witness the occasion.

Whether it's giving or receiving a present everyone loves Christmas. This year the Province will be doing something quite different to celebrate the Christmas season. Instead of the usual Provincial Church Service in October we will be holding a joint Craft and Royal Arch Christmas Carol Service on the 17th December at 3.00 p.m. The venue will be the stunning Chapel in the grounds of Marlborough College. This is an opportunity not to be missed, and I very much look forward to your support for this special occasion. I am particularly pleased that the Carol Service will be pitched to appeal to family, friends and especially children. I hope to see a goodly number of Companions attending what I am sure will be a this memorable occasion. I know that our new Communication Officer Dave Clatworthy will be providing more details on these events.

By popular demand, the Province will once again be holding the very well received "Children at Christmas Luncheon". If you haven't attended one, you have missed a rare treat. Make a note in your diary and join the Royal Arch team at Chippenham on the 26th November.

Companions, the Royal Arch in Wiltshire recognises that most charitable giving is through your Craft Lodges and in support of the Wiltshire 2028 Festival. However, you still give generously to local charities through your Chapters. Thank you to the Chapters that have made donations to the Children at Christmas fund, as well as to the Wiltshire 2028 Festival.

Before I conclude it would be remiss of me not to mention those Provincial Officers who are today stepping down from Office. I cannot mention them all but it is important for me to say that I have valued your support and company over the past year, and in some cases years. You know who you are, you are not forgotten and I look forward to catching up with you when I visit your Chapters.

# Should Freemasonry embrace the constantly

A national newspaper recently published an article under the headline "Can William keep the Royal Family relevant?" For many the question might seem preposterous despite numerous surveys suggesting that the number of people, particularly among the under fifties who want a monarchy is at a record low. So perhaps the question is perfectly valid.

In 2015 the then newly elected Synod of the Church of England met to discuss the decline in membership in doing so they sought the answer to this question "How can the Church make itself relevant again?" Despite its efforts to become 'relevant, recent membership numbers suggest only 14% of the population claim any form of attachment to the established Church.

Freemasonry hasn't been immune to a dose of self-examination as evidenced by the UGLE commissioning a report titled '*The Future of Freemasonry*' – published in March 2012. As you can guess one of the prime questions being asked was "Is Freemasonry still relevant...?"

At the time of publishing the report, the then Grand Secretary opined that Freemasonry was indeed relevant – he also offered the view that "Freemasonry in the twenty-first century has become an amalgamation of the old and the new, of tradition and innovation, and therefore fits comfortably into the modern world." A bold claim supported by a membership claimed to be 250,000. Ten years later it's 150,000 – a serious setback when you consider the claim that Freemasons are the second largest charitable giver after the National Lottery contributing an average of £30 million annually to good causes. It seems that Freemasons can't even buy a member, and if being relevant is measured by membership numbers it's obvious Freemasonry is not quite irrelevant but it's not necessarily as relevant as we thought.

In its introduction the Social Issues Research Centre (SIRC) quotes the Grand Secretary on 'his vision' of the direction Freemasonry should now be moving in order to demonstrate its true role and relevance in contemporary society. This vision is not new in its character, indeed similar visions have been articulated over many years as many have sought to make Freemasonry relevant. Unfortunately, while the Grand Secretary laid claim to Freemasonry being "arguably more relevant today than it has ever been..." the bold claim simply doesn't 'hold water.

The changes proposed in the report and enacted by Freemasonry were largely managerial, geared towards efficiency and performance, arresting decline, and increasing membership. The so-called business model, fronted by a chief executive, appeared to be underpinned by a single objective – the numerical growth of the institution. Little wonder that the programmes put in place were developed to address an ageing membership and a lack of new arrivals. Who can forget the media headline Out with the old boys network... in with the millennials and vegans; or the rousing call to arms issued by the Pro Grand Master himself - "We are a members' organisation..." And while that is undoubtedly true it's surely only fair to ask – is that all we are?

The problems of poor attendance and falling membership has exercised Freemasonry for over fifty years (some would say even more). Many of the initiatives being talked about today were in vogue in the 60s, 70s and 80s. The advocates of change are enthusiastic but often fail to appreciate the essence of Freemasonry. They are usually impatient of ceremonial and tradition and have a great desire to streamline (by which they mean reduce) the ritual practiced in the Lodge.

In 2023 the UGLE celebrated the tercentenary of the publication of the first Book of Constitutions. Perhaps it might have been better if it had undertaken a root and branch examination of the content and brought parts of it up-to-date. After all, even the Church of England recognised that obsolete medieval laws and the requirement to read marriage banns had little relevance in the modern-day church, so changed them.

# changing doctrines of the outside world?

Even as Institutions such as Freemasonry, the Church, and the Monarchy have engaged in what many would describe as serious navel gazing to determine whether they are doing enough to make themselves relevant; what they never appear to do is question whether what they do will ever be enough to persuade a disinterested, disillusioned or disapproving audience of their relevance.

There are those who contend that Freemasonry is outdated, and believe its survival depends on it becoming 'relevant' to the modern era, but is being relevant really key to having a future? Moreover, if 'being relevant' is interpreted as meaning to be acceptable, or to be an organisation people respect and relate to, other questions must be asked and answered. How does an organisation such as Freemasonry make itself acceptable, respectable and relevant in a way that attracts men to join? and does being relevant really mean Freemasonry must adopt the latest social doctrines, and trends and promote minority issues in order to be seen as being on message?

Those same voices perpetuate the notion that because something is old it has passed its usefulness, and while it is a fact that Freemasonry is largely static and impervious to passing fads and fashion, its perceived weakness has indeed proved to be its strength and has allowed it to remain alive and strong. It has resisted attempts to embrace what the Book of Constitutions refers to as "the constantly changing doctrines of the outside world" on the basis that taking such a position would sow the seeds of discord; something The Grand Lodge recognised in 1938 and again in 1949.

It now appears that in its overwhelming desire to 'be relevant' – and seeing being relevant as key to having a future, the fraternity has seemingly moved from a position to which it claimed a 'rigid adherence' and is now prepared to not just respect the constantly changing doctrines of the outside world but to actively promote and support them. In doing so they can claim to be embracing Diversity, Inclusivity and Equity while at the same time sowing the seeds of discord their predecessors were so anxious to avoid.

Others appear to believe the route to acceptability is to present Freemasonry as a leading charity; after all, annual donations of £30 million to charities and worthy causes should surely lead the organisation to be considered respectable. Sadly, despite the charitable support Freemasons make locally, nationally and even internationally, convincing its critics that the fraternity is a force for good is still very much a work in progress.

For many members the twin obsessions of numbers and charitable giving are not conducive with their reasons for becoming Freemasons. Again let me refer to the words of the former Grand Secretary who in 2012 said "You will find that talking to members, the easiest thing [for them to] talk about is charity. Yet they didn't join to give to charity..." So why do men join the Craft? The 2012 Future of Freemasonry report answered the question. "The principal reason for becoming a Freemason was the widened friendship network and a strong sense of social bonding which, they believed the Lodge would provide." Unsurprisingly to me and many others, the ritual aspects that distinguish Freemasonry from Lions International and Rotary was also cited as enhancing the social experience.

However it's not just an external audience to which Freemasonry must appeal. Equally, and some might consider it to be more important, is to ask whether Provincial Freemasons feel any relevance to the hierarchy of Freemasonry as recognised by the term Grand Lodge.

For my part, I have no doubt that the peculiar or special nature of Freemasonry is a more than attractive proposition to the man with an enquiring mind who is prompted to become a Freemason by a favourable opinion preconceived of the Institution, a general desire of knowledge, and a sincere wish to make himself more extensively serviceable to society. Becoming a Freemason is something that men aspire to, and Freemasonry is an organisation that they want to be part of and one in which those who join are willing to participate.

# Congratulations Les Welling.

The spotlight was certainly on Les Welling when it was announced that HM The King had appointed him a Medallist of the Most Excellent Order of The British Empire for services to his local community in Devizes. This is the first Birthday Honours List of King Charles iii and Les joined a prestigious list of celebrities, sportsmen and women, military and uniformed personnel, academics, medics and a host of ordinary people that have given extraordinary service to society.

The Provincial Grand Master John Reid said "I was pleased to hear that Les had been honoured by The King with this award. It recognises the work Les does in Devizes, and also for charities such as Pancreatic Cancer UK, The Loganberry Trust, military charities and many other organisations".

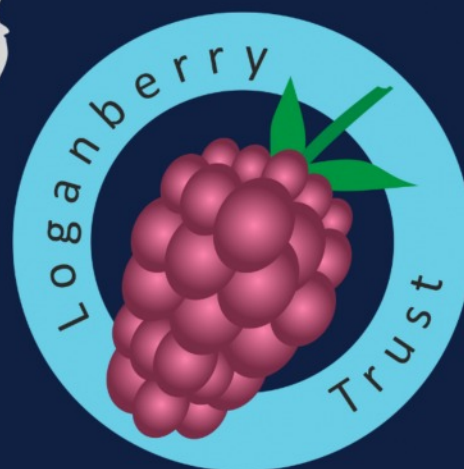


Les Welling

**PROSTATE CANCER**



**AWARENESS**



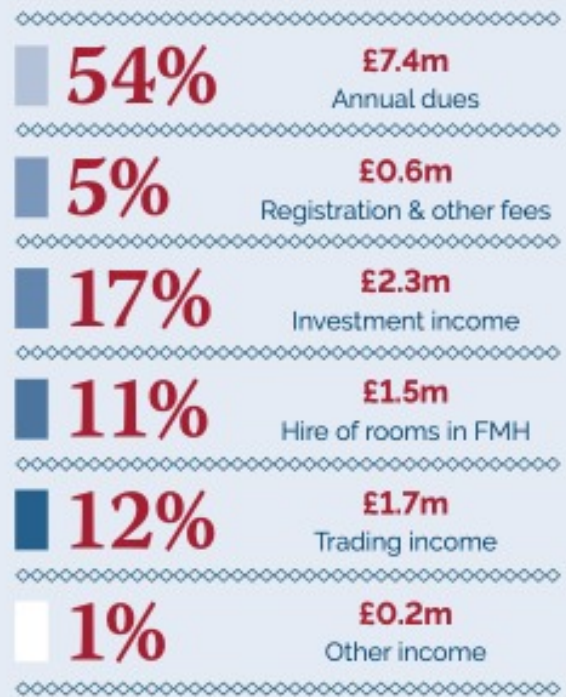
[www.loganberrytrust.co.uknco](http://www.loganberrytrust.co.uknco)

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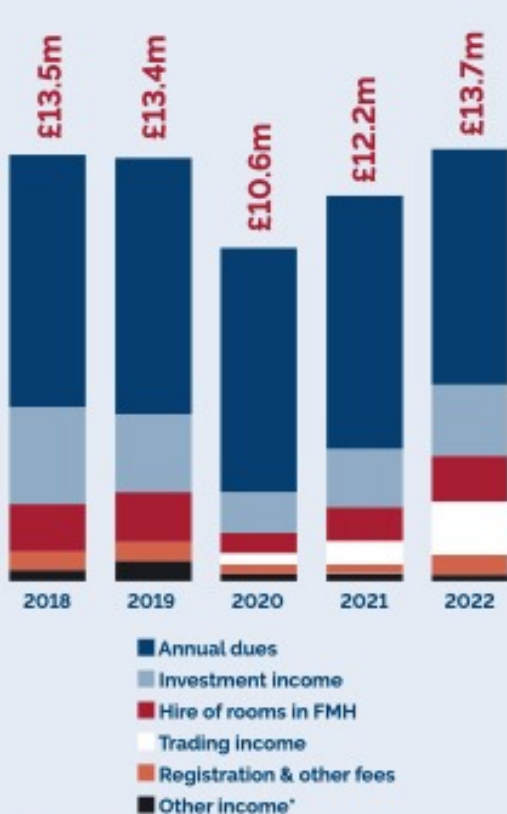


# ACCOUNTS FOR THE CALENDAR YEAR 2022

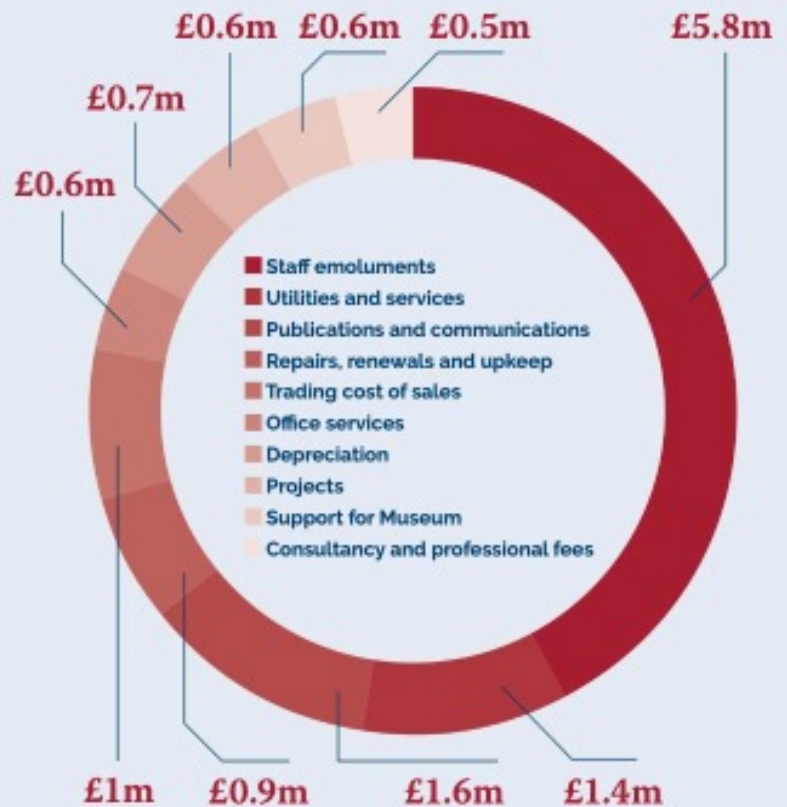
## TOTAL INCOME



## INCOME: FIVE-YEAR HISTORY



## OPERATING COSTS



\* Excluding Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme grant income

Wiltshire Freemasons



**Have You  
Booked?**

# Carols at Christmas

Marlborough College Chapel

Sunday 17th December 3.00pm

**CLICK HERE TO BOOK YOUR PLACE**

wiltshirefreemasons.co.uk