



### It's cold outside...



As many of our members will know I live close to Salisbury Plain and enjoy nothing more than exercising the dogs on this wonderful part of the county, and our Province. This past few days has reminded me of just how cold it can be in January and indeed throughout the winter months. While I don't want to sound like the 'nanny state' I do trust you will take all proper measures to make sure you keep warm as the various storms forecast to hit the area do their worst; and can I just ask that if you know of someone living on their own, please do knock on their door and make sure they are alright too.

The year has got off to a wonderful start with a number of Lodges welcoming new members, and Chapters exalting new Companions. This year is certainly going to be interesting as we seek to balance the need to bring in new members with the absolute desire to make sure the new member is a good fit to the Lodge and to Freemasonry. I am aware that some members are of the view that all that interests the Province and UGLE is numbers, that is categorically not the case at all. I am absolutely focused on quality over quantity, and to that end I can assure you that the Membership Team is working to the same maxim. It is important that we all realise that Freemasonry is not simply a social club where membership consists solely of attending meetings, enjoying the festive board and going home until the next meeting. The essence of our fraternity is that it is also an educational forum where we have the opportunity to study, moralise and develop our minds.

On Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> February at 12 noon I will have the privilege of visiting Longleat Lodge No.1478 meeting in Warminster when the Lodge celebrates 150 years since its founding and parades a new refurbished banner. To understand just what this means why not plan to attend? If you have not experienced a Banner Dedication ceremony before, I promise you will be greatly impressed. To book a place simply email the Lodge secretary on [L1478@wiltshirefreemasons.org.uk](mailto:L1478@wiltshirefreemasons.org.uk) By the way, a huge thank you to the Lodge Secretaries and Chapter Scribes that have signed up to use the [@wiltshirefreemasons.org.uk](mailto:@wiltshirefreemasons.org.uk) email address. The Provincial executive is using the system and I can report a 100% satisfaction rating.

Another superb event will be the second of the dinner dances in support of the Wiltshire 2028 Festival being held at the outstanding Bowood Golf Course and Spa. I know the venue and event received high ratings when the Province last visited, I'm assured that those attending this year will not be disappointed.

I am always pleased when something we do in the Province generates positive comments, and I'm delighted that many of the readers of In touch>On line have told me how much they appreciate the educational element included in each edition. I recommend the piece in this edition on the qualification and role of the Master of the Lodge, and also the excellent piece on the issue of balloting for candidates. Sometimes, we do well to reflect on matters that at first seem mundane and ordinary - the articles in our newsletter are meant to provoke discussion, challenge the status quo, and persuade readers to ask questions. So, please hit the keyboard and email your question to the editor.

Finally, I offer my congratulations to the Master and Brethren of Sarum Lodge No.5137 who recently welcomed into Freemasonry Bro Richard Lamb. I know that Richard will not mind me disclosing the fact that he is sight impaired, and that the Lodge made appropriate alterations to the traditional initiation ceremony thereby enabling him to enjoy the experience of being made a Freemason.



### Can You My Worthy Brother....

To be elected Master of a Lodge is the highest honour the Lodge has in its power to bestow on any of its members. The office is considered by many to be the pinnacle of a Freemason's journey in the Craft, and it justly demands certain assurances from its holder.

In The Charges of a Freemason (found in the Book of Constitutions sandwiched between the rules for the Craft and the General Regulations of Royal Arch Masons) clause four, or IV as it is shown, deals with Masters, Wardens, Fellows, and Apprentices. To every Mason it states, "all preferment among masons is grounded upon real worth and personal merit only." Of Master and Wardens, it states equally clearly that **"no master or warden is chosen by seniority, but for his merit."**

The Book of Constitutions provides that to be considered a candidate for the Master's chair a brother must have served in the office of a Master or Warden for a full Masonic year in a Lodge under the English Constitution. The definition of a full Masonic year is from one Installation to the next, in other words the Warden's qualifying year starts at the point they are formally invested and Installed. Therefore, if a Warden is not invested and installed on the same day as the Master, they will not have served a full year and as such will not be eligible to be nominated for the chair. In the unlikely event that a Brother miss being invested and installed on the relevant evening in both years of being a Warden the consequence is quite clear, he cannot become Master. However, as in all things Masonic justice and benevolence walk hand in hand, and under Rule 109 BoC a Brother who has not completed a full year in office may apply for a dispensation to set aside the rule, however, the reasons given for the application must be 'watertight'.

The qualifications of a Master are made known to the Master Elect by his predecessor and the obligations of a Master are read to him by the Lodge Secretary. There are fifteen charges, to which the incoming Master must give each of them his 'unqualified assent'. It is also the case that he must be "able and willing to undertake the management of the work *of the Lodge.*" (my italics). Having given this assurance the Master Elect is then required to make a solemn and binding obligation to conscientiously discharge the duties of the office. Herein occurs a difference of immense significance between the office of Master and any of the other officers appointed and invested. The inclusion of a solemn and binding obligation.

Is this as important as I suggest it to be? I believe it is, as it imposes a responsibility on the Master in a way that nothing but an obligation can. After all what sort of Freemason would make a promise that he could not keep?

The duties of a Master are many but chief amongst them is a requirement to 'rule and direct his Lodge,' another is to 'employ and instruct the Brethren in Freemasonry,' a task only possible if he "able and willing to undertake the management of the work." These duties can be neatly summed up by a reference to Rule 114 BoC: "The Master is responsible for the due observance of the laws by the Lodge over which he presides". The Master also promises to conform to The Ancient Charges and No. 5 read to him at his Installation is easily forgotten: 'that he will submit to the awards and resolutions of your Brethren in general Lodge convened...' The clearest indication that the Master is the servant of the Lodge.

This all may seem quite daunting - and it is - but the weight of the office is an indicator of its importance and every Master who recognises the fact that they have a role to play, and a job to do, will fully enjoy their year, as many Masters have done before.



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**so you want to be a DEACON**  
join the learning and development team

**Saturday 10th February @ 10.00am**

Freemasons' Hall | Crane Street | Salisbury

CONTACT | STEVE LEE  
07825 713048  
EDUCATION@WILTSHIREFREEMASONS.ORG.UK

Preparing for the Master's Chair.... Click here <https://tinyurl.com/3xfb4umn>



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**Preparing for the MASTER'S CHAIR**

**Saturday 24th February @ 10.00am**

Masonic Hall | Yerbury Street | Trowbridge

CONTACT | STEVE LEE  
07825 713048  
EDUCATION@WILTSHIREFREEMASONS.ORG.UK



### Thank you for the money....



I'm not quite sure I should be telling anyone this, but just recently I was listening to ABBA on the car radio (I'm not in sync with Spotify just yet) and found myself humming along to one of the groups 1977 hits Thank You For The Music. In my head I converted the last word of the line to MONEY as it just seemed to reflect how grateful I am to the many Lodges, and Freemasons that have helped make year one of our [Wiltshire 2028 Festival](#) such a great success. Every meeting I attend I remind everyone that as Wiltshire Freemasons we acknowledge and support the Masonic Charitable Foundation; we might not agree with every cause they support but we do have a moral obligation to support their work.

By the end of the [Wiltshire 2028 Festival](#) we hope the level of our support will be one million pounds. Circumstances may result in that figure being a little lower than we would anticipate, and who knows, it may be more. The Festival Team together with the Provincial Charity Steward and your Lodge Charity Steward will continue to encourage your active participation.

Supporting the [Wiltshire 2028 Festival](#) isn't always about giving large sums, smaller amounts very quickly add up and the Brethren of White Horse Lodge No.2227 proved that when they handed over a cheque for £120 the proceeds from the sale of Lodge key-rings. Special thanks to Bro Andy Tomaszewicz (TZ to his friends).

By far the easiest way to help is for every subscribing member of the Lodge to set up a **Regular Payment Plan (RPP)**. If you haven't done so already, please do think about doing so as soon as possible. I know you will remember the Provincial Grand Master writing last month that in order to reach £600 per member over five years is £120 per year; or £10 per month; £2.50 per week; or 35 pence per day.

**Teddies For Loving Care (Wiltshire)** also received much needed funds during January. Your donations really do make a huge difference to a child's life. In 2023 we donated 6,408 bears - Thanks to you.



Thanks to the White Horse Lodge Team



### Doubling up - it's the way to go....



Congratulations to the Master, Wardens and Brethren of The Border Lodge No.3129 who meet at Ludgershall.

The Lodge has enjoyed unparalleled success in attracting and Initiating seventeen men into Freemasonry since 2020. Many of the Initiates are serving in the military as a result their attendance at meetings of the Lodge will always be subject to the exigencies of the service they represent (generally the Army).

While for some Lodges the inability to rely on a regular attendance might be an issue, for the Brethren of The Border Lodge No.3129 such an occurrence offers the Director of Ceremonies, and the Secretary the opportunity to demonstrate just how adaptable to change the members are. Well done The Border Lodge.

### Levelling up - it's not new....

And eight Masters in Office prove the point. It was a fitting climax to a great evening when seven of his fellow Masters in Office joined the incoming Master of Royal Sussex Lodge of Emulation No.355 meeting at The Planks, Swindon. A sea of light blue - suggesting all is well for the future of Wiltshire Freemasonry





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## Discover More....

The prime qualification for admission into the Royal Arch is to be a Master Mason of at least four weeks standing in a Lodge under the United Grand Lodge of England. To be Exalted into a Chapter and to become a Companion is an important step in your Masonic journey. To discover more just ask your Royal Arch representative for the new Royal Arch booklet.



## Stay Safe Online....

Ignore the email to help a brother with laryngitis - it's almost certainly a **SCAM**.

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 ONLINE  
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### Annual Subscriptions are now OVER due....

Last month we wrote a piece on Annual Subscriptions and a number of Lodge Treasurers asked that we repeat the plea to remind members that Lodge annual subscriptions were due to be paid on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024. A Brother not having paid the appropriate annual subscription is now OVERDUE.

This might come as a surprise to many Brethren, but in the very few cases where the subscription year is not the 1<sup>st</sup> January, it really is the case that as we enter February a Brother who has not paid his annual subscription is overdue. Almost all Lodge and Chapter by-laws state that a subscription is payable **IN FULL : IN ADVANCE**, by a single specified date. What does this mean in practice? In a case where a Lodge or Chapter does not insist on observing this requirement it is in violation of its own by-laws and is therefore behaving irregularly and the Brother or Companion is by default IN ARREARS.

A Lodge or Chapter is always carrying a retrospective debt. Treasurers being fully aware that the most significant outgoings (dues to Grand Lodge/Chapter and to Province) are collected in advance and paid retrospectively, meaning that funds have to be available at the appropriate time of the current year to pay last year's bills.

Grand Lodge has made it clear in their model by-laws that they would not approve new or amended by-laws which omitted the requirement to pay subscriptions in **full: in advance**. One acceptable alternative is to pay a subscription by instalments during the previous year, so that it is paid in full by the due date.



A beaming Bro Gerry Lynch proudly displays his Wiltshire 2028 Festival Jewel presented to him by Provincial Charity Steward Clive Emerson



### Every right has its responsibilities....

And this fact is never more clearly demonstrated than when a Brother is afforded the right to ballot for an Initiate, or a joining member.

In his superb book *Masonic Etiquette Today*, the Deputy Grand Secretary Graham Redman reminds his readers that a Lodge is essentially a group of Freemasons who meet together to enjoy Freemasonry and each other's company. It can therefore be said to exist primarily for the benefit of its existing members, who have an interest in preserving harmony within the Lodge, and only secondarily for the benefit of those who seek to become members. It is for this reason that the Book of Constitutions provides for the ability of a small number of people to prevent the introduction of a person into the Lodge by the recognised practice of 'blackballing' the applicant. It is a privilege that should be exercised most carefully having regard to the many potential unintended consequences.

The blackballing of any candidate is a serious matter that is likely to reflect on not only the candidate, but also the Brother(s) placing a blackball in the ballot box; it will also have an effect on the proposer, seconder, and supporters of the candidate - in other words, the whole Lodge will be affected. It is for this reason that almost all Lodge By Laws carry a notice that reads:

*"Should there be any objection to the introduction of a Candidate for Initiation, or a Brother for joining, it is recommended that such objection be mentioned privately to the Master or Secretary who may communicate with the proposer and give him the opportunity of withdrawing the Candidate."*

Such is the gravity of any such action, the above words form part of the model By Laws which all Lodges will be encouraged to adopt.

Doubtless the earnest reader will note that advising the Master, or Secretary is only a 'recommendation' and is not an absolute requirement. What is to be deprecated and considered immensely bad form, and an action unworthy of a Freemason is for the Secretary to be sent anonymous notes and letters indicating that the 'unknown' writer will place a blackball in the ballot box.

It is accepted that every Brother has the right to vote, and the right implies the right to blackball. However, the right must be exercised in good faith, if not the abuse of the right might itself constitute a Masonic offence. Good faith is simply the exercise of an action being done sincerely and honestly, with the best interest of Freemasonry in general and the Lodge in particular being paramount.

It is improper to use the blackball process to gratify some personal resentment, or as means to punish or take revenge for some real or supposed grievance especially on behalf of another person. Even more importantly if the blackball is placed to injure some other Brother, or to hinder the progress and prosperity of the Lodge such an abuse would be a breach of trust, and the Brothers(s) would be committing a Masonic offence.

Finally, every Freemason is reminded of the excellences of character that distinguish members of the fraternity, Secrecy, Fidelity, and Obedience. The latter requires "a ready acquiescence in all votes and resolutions duly passed by a majority of the Brethren." This requirement brooks no debate and cannot simply be applied to mean an acceptance of only the decisions that an individual likes and to which he agrees. As difficult as it may be the very future of Freemasonry rests on a strict observance of our laws and regulations.





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