



Problems, problems and more problems...



If there is one thing that has amazed me in my first year as Provincial Grand Master of this wonderful Province it is without doubt the number and type of problems and issues that have come across my desk. Many of them have been easily resolved and I'm glad to say that in the main they are what I would call 'small problems'. The issues are slightly different, in that they really can and invariably do take on a life of their own. I am constantly surprised that in a society of men where honour and virtue are prized above the external advantages of rank and fortune, honour and virtue often lose out. Brethren, I will not shy away from addressing serious issues, but I do ask that any Brother having a private disagreement or quarrel with another Brother should address

the issue in accord with the principle explained when being invested with the distinguishing badge of a Freemason. "If the matter be of such a nature as not to be so easily adjusted, it were better that one or both of you retire than that the harmony of the Lodge should be disturbed by your presence". If a Brother's behaviour disturbs the harmony of the Lodge the Book of Constitutions provides for a remedy, and I will support a Lodge that correctly invokes the appropriate rule.

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 Provincial 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. For many a return to the practice of these original principles as opposed to pursuing the ever changing and fashionable doctrines of the outside world may just be what Freemasonry needs. It's certainly something that studies have shown is desired by new members.

On Saturday 24th February I had the privilege of visiting Longleat Lodge No.1478 meeting in Warminster when the Lodge celebrated 150 years since its founding and paraded a newly refurbished banner. We often take for granted the amount of work that goes into making such an event a success. I was pleased to be able to express my appreciation, and that of the Province for the professionalism on display.

Last month I wrote of my pleasure in hearing from readers of the help they have received from the educational element included in each edition of In Touch>On Line. I recommend the piece in this edition on the important question of what is often referred to as 'progression'. I have asked the editor to introduce subjects to promote and provoke discussion and debate. Please do hit the keyboard and email your comments and questions to the editor comms@wiltshirefreemasons.org.uk

Finally, many congratulations to Stonehenge Lodge No.6114 on being the first Lodge in the Province to reach their Wiltshire 2028 Festival goal. I would also like to thank every Lodge that has made a contribution to the festival and look forward to receiving even more good news from the Provincial Charity Steward Clive Emerson.



We all need to be able to talk, says Les Welling....



Les Welling a member of Fiat Lux Lodge No.9773 meeting at Devizes wrote to the Province about a Dorset initiative on Mental Health First Aiders. While this Province does not feel the need to adopt the scheme, It is an interesting one and we wish it every success.



Research shows that the UK ranks very highly among our European neighbours as being most adept at talking about mental health matters, and for closing the gap between mental and physical health. Organisations such as the excellent charity MIND acknowledge that working towards parity has resulted in people realising, they don't need to suffer in silence, and that they can seek help. It really is an admirable and worthy aspiration to normalise discussing mental health.

Freemasons in Wiltshire have been exemplary in supporting organisations that offer emotional and therapeutic support to people across a wide demographic. This support has been augmented by funding from the Masonic Charitable Foundation (MCF). The Province also has a track record of supporting campaigns on Mental Well Being with Mental Health Awareness Week; Mental Health Day and with donations for Mental Health Charities made by the MCF.

A part of the role of the Lodge Almoner is to 'lend a listening ear' and to ascertain the immediate needs of a Brother experiencing any form of distress. The Lodge Almoner is not a Mental Health First Aider, but he is generally a principal point of contact. Our Almoners are encouraged to guide Brethren to a suitable and appropriate expert, and not attempt to deal with the problem themselves. This maxim applies irrespective of the problem or issue and in the case of a Wiltshire Freemason the MCF is the connection or link to the expert advice, and it is to the MCF that we now refer.

The Masonic Charitable Foundation has commissioned an external expert resource to help, assist and support members of the Wiltshire Masonic family with a dedicated team of trained counsellors. This service provides access to a free, confidential counselling service for Freemasons and their families and is run by an independent team of professional counsellors and therapists who are registered and accredited by the UK Council for Psychotherapy. <https://mcf.org.uk/get-support/freemasons-and-families/mental-health-and-wellbeing/> <https://mcf.org.uk/media/better-lives/our-counselling-service/>

The Province believes the MCF provided services offer a truly professional, confidential, and above all safe route for members to discuss their mental health. The development of another layer between the Lodge, the member and the MCF's designated professional is not something the Province feels is necessary at this time, however, we will keep this subject under review.

It is precisely because the MCF undertakes such important work that the Provincial Grand Master launched the Wiltshire 2028 Festival in 2023. The cost of providing professional counselling services can only be met through the generosity of Freemasons, their family and friends. We know that the Lodge of which you are a member represent a vital link between the MCF, external counselling support, and the person requiring urgent assistance. Thank you for encouraging members of your Lodges to give generously to the Wiltshire 2028 Festival, and a special thank you to every one of our members who has signed up to a Regular Payment Plan and is wearing the Wiltshire 2028 Festival jewel



Supporting your local hospital or hospice.

Bro Geoff Johnson wanted to make a real difference during his year as Master of Lodge of Brothers In Arms No.9540 - Wiltshire's military Lodge. His most recent achievement was to present £492 to Salisbury District Hospital's STARS APPEAL and in particular the Stoma Care team.



Geoff Johnson made a real difference

Dorothy House Hospice receives donation.

Dorothy House Hospice Care in Winsley received a £1,130 donation from Melksham Freemasons who held a charity race night in October of last year.

Caring for our community, when it matters most.

www.dorothyhouse.org.uk





What a night and didn't we enjoy ourselves....

One of the great things about the [Wiltshire 2028 Festival](#) is the way in which it brings people together and this was never more evident than at the Bowood dinner/dance held on Saturday 10th February. 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, but 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, the aggregate effect of small and medium sized donations very quickly add up to make a real difference. I was delighted to be invited to attend Calley Lodge No.7525 and receive a cheque for £1,500 for the Wiltshire 2028 Festival. The Lodge has a big goal to achieve and this cheque will go a long way in ensuring the goal is reached.

I do want to encourage every member 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 in January that in order to reach £600 per member over five years only requires a donation of £120 per year; or £10 per month; £2.50 per week; or 35 pence per day.



Deputy Provincial Grand Master Simon Leighfield says 'thank you' to Liam East



Solomon - your first step in making a daily advancement

Solomon has undergone an extensive redesign over the past few months. We are delighted to inform you of the following updates:

1. SolomonGPT has been launched. Based on the technology of ChatGPT this allows you to ask questions based on Solomon material relevant to that module. While it is early days yet, this offers another way of interacting with Solomon.
2. Mentor's Corner has now been updated with "Snippets", shorter versions of Nuggets and "Within hail", material for use with Entered Apprentices and Fellowcraft if they are requested to leave the Temple temporarily.
3. The "Welcome" modules are proving very popular with candidates. These are Welcome Apprentice, Welcome Fellowcraft, Welcome Master Mason and Welcome Companion. These modules are gamified to make the learning more fun and provides an explanation of our ceremonies to new members.
4. Lodge Matters also has some interactive content that covers how the Lodge functions and the role of the Officers.
5. The Second Degree, The Third Degree and Masonic History all have new and updated material.
6. The user interface has been redesigned. Every module has a video that explains its purpose. Also, each section has a short video that summarises the content. Each file now has a standardised summary without having to open the PDF. This is extremely useful when using the Search facility. The Tags function has also been revised and is now available in all modules.

Here is your link: <https://solomon.ugle.org.uk/login/index.php>

You can use snippets and nuggets from Solomon in your Lodge

Did You Know?

There are two bodies entitled to receive a Lodge Summons. The first is the Lodge members, and the second is what is referred to as the relevant Masonic Authority by which we generally mean Provincial officers particularly the Provincial Executive, and the Secretariat.

The Lodge Summons is generally sent by email or in a very few cases by WhatsApp. Both formats are acceptable with caveats. It is important to bear in mind that a Lodge summons, particularly if including an agenda can contain information of a personal and confidential nature. In such event the agenda should not be shared with anyone outside of the Lodge membership or relevant Masonic Authority.

The test as to whether a person should receive a Lodge summons (*particularly the Agenda*) containing personal information is simple enough - is it **absolutely necessary** for the recipient to see the information? In almost every case there is no good reason for a non-member to receive such details.



Supporting Storehouse Foodbank (Trowbridge).

Wiltshire Freemasons are well known for subscribing to the maxim ‘charity it’s in a freemason’s DNA’ and we are delighted to acknowledge Lodge donations to local charities and other worthy causes.

To assist Lodges to maximise the promotional value of every donation, the Communication Team and Bro Ian Lever have designed and printed a ‘blank’ cheque unique to every Lodge and Chapter in the Province.

The beneficiary and amount of the donation will be inserted before the photograph is used on social media or the Provincial newsletter In Touch > On Line. Newspaper editors have advised the Comms Team that they are unlikely to include a photograph showing a cheque being presented.

Lodge of Concord No.632 meeting at Trowbridge donated £500 to the local Storehouse Foodbank a local project that aims to support families, couples, and individuals in short-term need of food and toiletries. Based in Trowbridge, this service began in 2006 in response to a growing need within the community.



Rich Knight

Representative of Storehouse

Aaron Varnals



Learning and Development

"A Lodge is a place where free-masons assemble to work and to instruct and improve themselves in the mysteries of the ancient science." Antient Charges No .3. And where better to start than from the beginning.

WILTSHIRE FREEMASONS
Learning and Development

Lodge MEMBERSHIP Officer seminar

Saturday 23 March @ 10.00am

Masonic Hall | Yerbury Street | Trowbridge

tinyurl.com/MemberOfficer CONTACT | STEVE LEE
07825 713048
EDUCATION@WILTSHIREFREEMASONS.ORG.UK

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

Finding your FEET the start of a journey

Saturday 16th March @ 10.00am

Masonic Centre | The Planks | Swindon

Book Online | <https://tinyurl.com/44nra2kf>

Banner Dedication.

Images from a wonderful day at the Longleat Lodge No.1478 Banner Dedication.





A Blast From The Past.

It is always interesting to discover hidden gems from history and Devizes archivist John Merrett (Wiltshire Lodge of Fidelity No.663) unearthed one from records dating back to 1903 and concerns the publishing of “unauthorised reports, or of matters which it is improper to publish”.

Such was the concern of the Grand Lodge that it asked the Board of General Purposes to carefully consider the matter, with many experienced Brethren pointing out that many of the reports complained of are furnished to the press by the Masters, Secretaries, or Tylers of private Lodges, in violation of the duties and obligations of those officers. The Grand Secretary was directed to communicate a letter to the Worshipful Master of every Lodge under the jurisdiction of the United Grand Lodge of England, that the hands may be strengthened of those Rulers in the Craft who have kept aloof from and discountenanced such improprieties, and that those Brethren who have either knowingly or unwittingly been parties to such publication may be warned as to their liabilities on any repetition of the offence. *Strong words!*

The Board would first of all remind the Brethren of their Obligations, which need not here be further referred to, as they ought to be written on the hearts of those who took them. But the specific prohibition contained in Rule 205 of the Book of Constitutions (*removed in 1980*) appears to be so frequently overlooked, that it may be necessary to repeat it here. The first part of that Rule reads as follows:-

No Brother shall print, or publish, or cause to be printed or published, the proceedings of any Lodge, or any part thereof, without the consent of the Grand Master, or Provincial or District Grand Master, or print or publish, or cause to be printed or published, anything which by the laws and regulations of Masonry is Improper to be published. **Editor’s note:** The full article is available from John Merrett.

And what for today?



There has certainly been a revival in interest in Freemasonry on the part of written and broadcast media. The UGLE has issued guidance to Provinces, and this has been cascaded to Lodges. While having no desire to prevent Lodges from articulating their own views or promoting Freemasonry in a beneficial light, the UGLE believes that whether at local or national level all news stories that involve Freemasonry in its many forms must be reviewed by the Provincial Communications Officer and no story, however interesting should be forwarded to a news media outlet without first being approved for release.

All this means is that should a Lodge wish to place an article in their local media they are requested to seek guidance on its suitability which includes wording, images and the use of Masonic titles. The proper person with whom to liaise is the Provincial Communication Officer comms@wiltshirefreemasons.org.uk

Occasionally, members are approached by media organisations to comment on news articles, specific stories, and to offer an ‘opinion piece’. The rule in such an event is to ask for the journalists name, politely decline to comment and immediately inform the Provincial Communication Officer of the approach.



Congratulations Stonehenge Lodge No.6114.

Provincial Charity Steward Clive Emerson was delighted to be invited to attend the regular meeting of Stonehenge Lodge No.6114 when he was able to congratulate the Master, Andrew Botha and the members of the Lodge on becoming the first Lodge to meet their Wiltshire 2028 Festival goal.

Having contributed one hundred per cent of their goal in year one of the Wiltshire 2028 Festival the Lodge can now look forward to 'interest' on their donation adding a significant amount to the total.

Well done Stonehenge and many congratulations.



Clive Emerson congratulates Andrew Botha

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING TLC

THROUGHOUT THE YEAR CHILDREN WILL BE ADMITTED TO SWINDON'S GREAT WESTERN HOSPITAL OR TO SALISBURY GENERAL HOSPITAL. **TEDDIES FOR LOVING CARE (Wiltshire)** PROVIDES A SOFT TOY FOR EVERY CHILD ADMITTED TO THE ACCIDENT AND EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT. TO ENABLE WILTSHIRE FREEMASONS TO CONTINUE DONATING TLC BEARS WE NEED YOUR HELP TODAY.



Progression ...what is it and is it right for today?

For many Freemasons the term progression reflects the steady movement of the officers of the Lodge leading to the moment when they are Installed into the Master's chair, the highest honour the Lodge has within its power to bestow.

Strangely the word progression is not mentioned in the Book of Constitutions, the little blue book titled Information for the Guidance of Members of the Craft, or the Emulation Ritual. In fact, the nearest we get to the word is in the address given at the South East corner when the candidate is reminded that Masonry is a progressive science. This would suggest that the term 'progression' which describes the process of developing or moving gradually towards a more advanced state, to be a relatively new term in the lexicon of Freemasonry.

The appointment and subsequent investing of Lodge officers is without doubt a minefield for the unsuspecting new Master. The guidance given in Rule 104 (e) BoC., could not be any clearer, no Brother has any right to claim advancement. *The appointment of all Officers, except the Master, the Treasurer, and (if elected) the Tyler, is in the sole discretion and power of the Master.* There you have it, as clear as crystal, and yet how often has it been said that a committee of the great and good decide, or even as I heard recently, the Director of Ceremonies decides who will be the floor officers.

Equally, the same rule, but in this case (a) - defines the Officers of the Lodge and advises the Master those he **must** appoint, those he **shall** appoint, and those he **may** appoint. A quick read of the rule may evoke a splutter of outrage from some, while others will wonder why we get over-excited about 'filling the offices.'

For many Freemasons the Book of Constitutions is simply something they are given at their Initiation and which they then put either in their case, in a drawer or on a bookshelf. It is estimated that over 85% of Freemasons have never ever opened and read a page of the Book of Constitutions. I am therefore not expecting many members to even know that sandwiched between the rules governing private (or particular) Lodges and the Appendix showing the jewels, chains, collars, and aprons there is a section titled Antient Charges. It is quite an interesting read.

I particularly like Charge No. IV wonderfully referred to as *Of Masters, Wardens, Fellows, and Apprentices.*

It is in this charge that we are told that *All preferment among Masons is grounded upon real worth and personal merit only.* Furthermore, we are reminded that *No master or warden is chosen by seniority.* In fact, the choices we make in Freemasonry should be no different from those we make in real life – choose the right person for the job, and be sure he can do the work required of him.

Did You Know?

1. When an Officer of the Lodge is absent and another Brother (normally a Past Master) is asked to take that office for the evening he should wear the collar and jewel of that Office as well as the collar and jewel of his rank. The only time this would not be correct is if the incumbent is in the Lodge and they are unable to participate.
2. A clearance certificate should only be given to the Brother requesting such certificate (Rule 175 BoC) and should not be issued to anyone else unless asked to do so by the Brother to whom it refers. Remember, we are taught to be cautious for good reason.



Calling all Royal Arch Companions.

Have you booked your place at the Annual Convocation of Provincial Grand Chapter?

If not there is still time to register for the showcase event of the Royal Arch year and you will be made most welcome by the Grand Superintendent and his Officers.



PROVINCIAL GRAND CHAPTER OF WILTSHIRE

Annual Convocation of the Provincial Grand Chapter of Wiltshire

SATURDAY 11th MAY 2024

The Melksham Assembly Hall, Market Square, Melksham, Wiltshire SN12 6ES

The end of an era for Swindon Branch of Widows Association.

After over two decades the Swindon branch of the Wiltshire Masonic Widows Association held its final Annual Meeting at The Planks, Swindon. Gary Dolphin, Provincial Almoner paid tribute to co-ordinator David Lewis for his years of service to the Swindon Branch and said: "Dave and the ladies have worked hard over the past few years to generate interest in the branch. However, Covid played a huge part in changing the way in which many of the members interacted and as a result the numbers attending meetings fell below the levels that made the branch sustainable. The ladies will still meet in a less formal environment and the Swindon Lodges will continue to support their endeavours.

Did you know?

In this Province it is only the PrGM, his Deputy, and the APrGM who are entitled to ask for an Initiate, candidate, or other Freemason to accompany them as they leave the Lodge in procession. It is not in the gift of a Master to invite a Brother to accompany him as he leaves the Lodge.



Ride Out for a purpose.

Join the Wiltshire Masonic Bikers as they set out from the Masonic Hall, Morris Lane, Devizes for the **GREAT PROVINCIAL RIDEOUT 2024**. The ride is in support of the Wiltshire 2028 Festival and you can donate to the festival by scanning the QR code, clicking on the poster or click this link.

<http://tinyurl.com/stonecutter-2024>



STONECUTTERS

PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE OF WILTSHIRE
2028

GREAT PROVINCIAL RIDEOUT 2024

**21ST
APRIL 2024**

Meeting at 0800hrs.
Stands Up at 0830hrs.

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MEETING POINT
The Masonic Hall,
Morris Lane
Devizes
SN10 1NX

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IN SUPPORT OF THE WILTSHIRE 2028 FESTIVAL APPEAL

www.stonecutterswsmba.org