



AUG 2024

In Touch > On Line

The newsletter for all Wiltshire Freemasons



Life is like a bowl of cherries....



That's what songwriter Lew Brown wrote back in 1931, whereas today we often hear the reformed version "life is not a bowl of cherries." In fact, both versions are equally correct and speak to the same truth. The expression is a metaphorical way of saying that life is not always easy or pleasant. It conveys the idea that life can be challenging, unpredictable, and full of difficulties. Just as a bowl of cherries may look appealing on the surface but can contain hidden pits or be spoiled, life may present obstacles or hardships despite outward appearances. The phrase suggests that life is not always as sweet or simple as one might hope, and it acknowledges the many complexities and struggles that people may encounter along the way.

Freemasons and their families are not immune in experiencing the ups and downs of life, and I am aware that for many of our members circumstances of unavoidable misfortune have made life challenging, and stressful. However, for the Freemason there is always hope as assistance of a material and pastoral nature is available from the Lodge and from the Masonic Charitable Foundation (MCF), subject to a means test. Such help may well be provided free gratis to the recipient but as we all know nothing in life is ever really free. For this reason, appeals such as the Wiltshire 2028 Festival are absolutely vital to enable the work of the MCF to continue and be carried out in our Province.

As we enter August my thoughts are already being directed to October and the annual meeting of Provincial Grand Lodge on Thursday 3rd October at Trowbridge. I must confess that it is disappointing and surprising to hear that some Brethren feel disinclined to attend on the basis that it requires them to take a day's leave from work, while others "don't see the point of it." To the first, all I can say is that the meeting starts at 2.30pm and means that for most Brethren the time off is probably only a half-day; while to those who can't see the point of the meeting, surely the fact that it is the annual meeting of **your** Provincial Grand Lodge is all the justification required? I am sure the Brethren who are due to receive a first appointment or a Provincial promotion will attest to its importance, and I look forward to welcoming them and every member who attends. It is without a doubt the highlight of our Masonic year, although after last year's Carol Service I'm not sure it might be relegated to number two in our events list. Please do let me know what you think.

Talking of Christmas, we have over 250 registered to attend the Carol Service and I know that many members have told me that they will be registering online. The organising team are planning for the number of children attending and also for the number of mince pies and mulled wine they have to provide. It's a great help to them if you are able to complete the online form. <https://tinyurl.com/CarolsinChapel>

I am always pleased to hear about Wiltshire Brethren visiting other Lodges, it's so important that we support each other in this way. When I was informed that three members had made the journey to Prague to attend an Installation meeting I was left thinking that a trip from Shrewton to Swindon or Chippenham isn't such a hike - is it? Please do take time to read the story on page 6 of the visit by Longleat Lodge No.1478 members.

Last month I mentioned how for some of our members the so called summer recess is anything but a break from Masonic activity. During July Steve Lee and the HERMES team held two walk-in sessions for secretaries wishing to know more about the system that will become the new way of doing things as from the 12th August; while Barry Jordan-Davis and his team held a Lodge Director of Ceremonies evening at Devizes. I am grateful for the amazing efforts of the Acting Provincial Officers who do so much for the Province.



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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 2024

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 Gooch Lodge No.1295, Corsham Lodge No.6616 and Lodge of Brothers in Arms Lodge No.9540 on **Thursday 3rd October 2024 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 (11.45 am for 12) will be available in the Usher Suite for Brethren and their Masonic Guests, subject to seats being available. Lunch is £35 per head which includes wine. Bookings may be made using the online link <https://tinyurl.com/PGLAGM> 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. Cheque to be made payable to 'Provincial Grand Lodge of Wiltshire'. Bookings must be made as soon as possible but no later than **Friday 6th September 2024.**

The **Provincial Committee** will meet at **The Masonic Hall, Trowbridge**, at **7 pm** on **Friday 6th September 2024** to receive the accounts of the Provincial Grand Treasurer, to consider the disposal of funds and to transact any other Masonic business.



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Lodge Elias de Derham No.586 and Camp Site Quest.

Salisbury Explorer Scouts for boys and girls aged between 14-18 years are determined to own their own Camp Site under the banner of Salisbury & South Wilts Scouts. To achieve this incredible ambition they needed to raise £150,000.

The Scouts set about raising money by selling books, collecting foreign money (holiday leftovers) plus adopting many other ingenious ideas.

Local Scout Leader Alex Bell approached his father, W Bro Andy Bell to ask if the Lodge could assist in any way, and after discussing the matter with Lodge Charity Steward Derek Brown, he was advised that WM Richard Thomas was looking for a Charity to support for his year in the Chair, and Camp Site Quest was the worthwhile project he nominated to the Brethren of the Lodge.

IPM Bro Richard Thomas presented a cheque for £1,200 to the Salisbury Explorer Scouts, receiving the cheque is Cheryl their newest recruit.

This donation to assist the group in their Campsite Quest of raising £150,000 to purchase their own campsite in the Salisbury area, they are just £2,700 short of their target.



Lodge Elias De Derham No.586 members attending the presentation
Bros Vince Kernick, Richard Thomas, Derek Brown, Andy Bell, and Tony Oke



#WiltshireRoyalArch

DISCOVER MORE

Open Day

Saturday 19th October 2024 | Chippenham Masonic Centre





Christmas is just five months away...

You are invited to join John and Carole Reid in the beautiful Marlborough College Chapel for Carols for Christmas. The date is Sunday 15th December and the service starts at 3.00pm. The Rev Dr John Railton and Rev Sandy Railton will be conducting the Carol Service and we are sure there will be some special guests. Register your interest in attending Christmas Carols in Marlborough <https://tinyurl.com/CarolsinChapel>



Cycle Ride 2024...

The 2024 Fellow Craft (FCs) route aims to start and finish in Chippenham and in order will visit the Masonic Halls in Corsham, Bradford on Avon, Trowbridge, Devizes, and Melksham.

The total Route length is around 49 miles and total ascent is just over 2000 feet. Overall ascent rate (42ft/mile) is just below that for 2023 therefore everyone who took part in 2023 should have no issue whatsoever in participating in this year's ride.

We start in Chippenham at 9.00am on Sunday 8th September. The Chippenham Masonic Centre and car park will be open and we will be able to use the facilities and car park at the start and end of the ride.

Please try to arrive at 8.30 am for a briefing on the route and the all important safety notices. We aim to end the ride back in Chippenham between 2.15 and 2.45pm.

Currently we have ten riders signed up to take part, but would welcome more.

Based on a 9.00am start we would expect to visit the other Lodge buildings at the following times:-

• Corsham 9.20 - 9.30am	• Bradford-on-Avon 10.00 - 10.30am	• Trowbridge 11.00 - 11.30am
• Devizes 12.00 - 12.45pm	• Melksham 1.15 - 1.35pm	• Chippenham 2.15 - 2.45pm

Did you know?

1. A member who proposes or seconds a candidate for Initiation of Joining membership shall be responsible to the Lodge for all fees payable under its by-laws in respect of such a candidate. Rule 171 BoC.
2. A Lodge cannot have a by-law limiting the number of Initiations it will conduct each year.
3. A Lodge cannot have a by-law limiting the number of members it wishes to have in the Lodge.



Teddies for Loving Care...

Provincial Grand Master John Reid recently appeared on the 'telly' - not as some suggested "I'm a celebrity, get me out of here" neither was it on "Strictly Come Dancing". John was invited to appear on That'sTV Wiltshire to tell Salisbury viewers about the work of one of the most important charities we support.

Teddies for Loving Care (Wiltshire) was identified by the TV station as a subject of interest, particularly as the charity provides a comforting soft toy to children admitted to the Accident and Emergency units of Salisbury General Hospital.

In the first six months of 2024 we have distributed 1,584 TLC teddies and are on target to donate over two thousand five hundred bears by the end of the year. We are always being asked to do more, and while we would absolutely love to meet every request made to us, the reality is that **Teddies for Loving Care (Wiltshire)** needs your help to continue its important work in helping a child to cope with trauma of being admitted to the Accident and Emergency Department of their local hospital.

Teddies for Loving Care (Wiltshire) is a unique charity as it is managed and funded solely by Wiltshire Freemasons - you, me, and our friends in every Craft Lodge and Royal Arch Chapter. I know you give generously to local charities and yet I'm asking you to treat **Teddies for Loving Care (Wiltshire)** as a very special case whenever you consider making a donation to a local cause.

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.



Did you know?

Rule 138 BoC requires that every Master must be given a copy of the Lodge by-laws on his Installation, and his acceptance of them is deemed to be a solemn pledge on his part that he will observe and strictly enforce them.

The same rule states that every Brother is supplied with a printed copy of the by-laws of the Lodge when he becomes a member, and his acceptance of them is a considered a declaration of his submission to them.

It really is important that every Brother reads the by-laws of the Lodge.



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Visit to Hiram Lodge No. 12 in Prague

On 8th June 2024, three intrepid Wiltshire Freemasons, W Bro Carver, Bros Stadward and Jones, from Longleat Lodge No. 1478 embarked on a memorable journey to Prague to attend the Installation Meeting at Hiram Lodge No. 12. This visit came about after Bro Stadward travelled through Europe by train last year and spent time in each city visited, finding lodges to visit in the future. Hiram Lodge No. 12 is an English speaking Lodge that uses the Emulation ritual.



*Dům u Kamenneho Zvonu
The House of the Stone Bell*

The team chose the date because it was going to be the day that Brother Roman Choc was to be Installed into the chair of King Solomon. The ceremony took place at the historic Dům u Kamenneho Zvonu (The House of the Stone Bell), located at Old Town Square. The Wiltshire Brethren were warmly welcomed and enjoyed the camaraderie of Freemasons from around the world. Attending the meeting were Freemasons from Czechia, Spain, Germany, Malta, Guyana, Italy and the UK.



The Hiram Lodge No.12 Banner

The ceremony was conducted with precision and reverence, reflecting the deep traditions and values of Freemasonry. The IPM, W Bro Richard Phillips was an Englishman and the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of the Czech Republic, MW Bro Libor Adamec was present. He is a Czech but is very closely involved with Freemasonry in the UK.

The day's events culminated in the annual Ladies Night Dinner held at Hotel Hoffmeister, Nad Bruskou 7, Prague 1. Here the Lodge really pushed the boat out and we had a great evening with the Masons and their charming wives and girlfriends. Great food and great beer!



The combination of an historic building, excellent ceremony, Masons conducting ritual in what for most was their second language or in some cases 3rd or 4th, and a delightful Ladies Night Dinner made this visit truly special. The hospitality extended by Hiram Lodge No. 12 left a lasting impression on the Wiltshire Freemasons, reinforcing the universal bonds of friendship that are the cornerstone of Pure Antient Masonry. Next year it looks like we will be visiting Malta GC with one of our new Brethren.

Editor's Note: Always remember, before travelling abroad make sure the Lodge you're visiting is in amity with the UGLE.



What is the rule regarding Honorary Membership and holding an Office?

The answer can be found in Rule 167 BoC that very clearly states: "Such Honorary Member, unless he ceases to be an Honorary Member by becoming a subscribing member of the Lodge **cannot hold any office in the Lodge**" other than that of Tyler - Rule 104. (b) BoC.

One of the most common, albeit erroneous justifications given for appointing Honorary Members is that the Lodge does not have enough Past Masters to fill the Lodge Offices. This begs two questions, does an office have to be filled by a Past Master, and, does it have to be filled at all? Rule 145. BoC answers the first question. ...a subscribing member cannot be disqualified from holding office, while Rule 104. (a) BoC answers the second pointing out that there are regular Officers that the Master must appoint, a second group of additional Officers that 'shall' be appointed, while a third group 'may' be appointed. This third group includes the Chaplain, Director of Ceremonies, Membership Officer, Mentor, Assistant Director of Ceremonies, Organist, Assistant Secretary, and Stewards, but no others.

Being competent to undertake an office in the Lodge is not determined solely by a Brother's progress through the offices of the Lodge. There are many Master Masons quite capable of being the Chaplain, Mentor, Membership Officer, and even the Director of Ceremonies, or Secretary.

In using the Honorary Membership route the Lodge might just make its situation worse, as it is possible the vacant offices could have been filled on a casual basis, even by a non-Past Master or a visiting Brother.

What is beyond doubt is that no vacancy other than that of Tyler can be filled by an Honorary Member.

Thinking of an ATTRACTION campaign?

Contact the Provincial Communication Team - we can help you prepare posters, social media images and offer advice on what you can and equally importantly what you can't do when promoting your Lodge or Masonic Hall. Avoid the pitfalls (many and various) and launch an ATTRACTION campaign

MEET THE DOWNTON FREEMASONS

About the Freemasons
 We are a members' organisation which has thrived for over 300 years.
 We have no political connections, we have members of all ages, races, religions, cultures and backgrounds.
 Freemasons have met in Downton for over 20 years and currently meet at the Downton Football Club.

Our Principles
 Integrity
 Respect
 Friendship
 Service

L9064@wiltshirefreemasons.org.uk
 wiltshirefreemasons.co.uk



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Have you attended a Prestonian Lecture?

The impact of the Grand Lodge of Ireland and of Irish freemasonry extended beyond, indeed, far beyond, the island of its birth. This is seen perhaps most clearly in the development of 'Antients' freemasonry, which was established by London's expatriate Irish community in the mid-eighteenth century.

More inclusive and mutually supportive, Antients freemasonry was not only shipped back to Ireland but transported across Britain's burgeoning Empire, particularly North America, where it was carried by migration, trade, and the regiments of the British Army. It was also absorbed formally into English freemasonry following the 1813 union of the original Grand Lodge of England (the 'Moderns') and the Antients Grand Lodge to create the United Grand Lodge of England.

The 2024 Prestonian Lecture recognises the role that Irish and Antients freemasonry has played in the transmission of Masonic and Enlightenment ideas across the globe, and in making English freemasonry as it is today. Put the date in your diary to meet the Prestonian Lecturer Dr Ric Berman when he visits Wiltshire as the guest of members of Methuen Lodge No.8692 on Tuesday 1st October at 6.15pm



METHUEN LODGE No. 8692

INVITE YOU TO THE

PRESTONIAN LECTURE 2024

The Second Grand Lodge : The Grand Lodge of Ireland, the London Irish & Antients Freemasonry

TUESDAY 1st OCTOBER

6.15PM



Dr Ric Berman FRHistS

Swindon Masonic Centre | The Planks | Swindon

Contact Ian Priest: L8692@wiltshirefreemasons.org.uk

Did You Know?

The Tyler is a regular Officer of the Lodge - Rule 104 BoC, which means a Lodge must have a Tyler. Therefore, if due to unforeseen circumstances the office falls vacant a new Tyler must be elected or appointed whichever is permitted under your by-laws. Only a Master Mason (a Past Master is a Master Mason) can hold the office - Rule 113 BoC, and he should be well informed in Masonic rules and customs. If the Tyler is elected he need not be a member of the Lodge, he can even be an Honorary Member; but if the Lodge resolves that a subscribing member is appointed without emolument, he is appointed by the Master. If the Tyler is a subscribing member it is important to remember that he has the right to join in any debate and vote of the Lodge.



HERMES the next phase...



It's only **3** weeks until we go live with Hermes and Lodge Secretaries, and Chapter Scribes are testing in the Training Environment. It's vital that everyone does so as soon as possible to ensure they are conversant and well-practiced before the Province goes live on Monday 12th August.

Brethren and Companions, Hermes is not optional, and it is not possible for a Lodge or Chapter to fulfil its administrative obligations without signing up to use the system.

If you have any concerns about 'being ready to go' please flag them with the Hermes Team.

CHANGING THE WAY WE DO THINGS

PROUD TO HOST PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE



Lodge of Brothers In Arms
No. 9540



Gooch Lodge
No. 1295



Corsham Lodge
No. 6616

Marlborough Masonic Hall...

The Masonic Hall will be closed until Friday 30th August while the painters and decorators are on-site in order to provide a freshly painted centre of the new Masonic season.

Did you know?

That while not mentioned in the Model By-Law prepared by UGLE, a Lodge may in its by-laws provide that members who are in default in the payment of their subscriptions for some specified period, not less than three months after their becoming due, shall be deprived while so in default of all or any of their rights of voting, proposing or seconding candidates, and being appointed or elected to office. Rule 145 BoC.

Note: Lodges are encouraged to review their By Laws and adopt the latest version of the UGLE Model By Laws under the guidance of the Provincial Communication Officer comms@wiltshirefreemasons.org.uk



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Grand Lodge appoint women to new body...



In an unprecedented and historic move to dispel misconceptions and address challenges, English Freemasonry has announced the creation of the Council for Freemasonry, covering female as well as male members in England and Wales.

This new Council aims to enhance further existing and longstanding collaboration and promote the fundamental principles of Freemasonry, including merit, tolerance, diversity, and inclusion, between the United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE), the Order of Women Freemasons (OWF), and the Honourable Fraternity of Ancient Freemasons (HFAF).

Even in 2024 Freemasonry continues to face various unfounded criticisms and inaccurate misconceptions, often stemming from deep-rooted prejudices, or preconceived falsehoods. Contrary to the erroneous claim that Freemasonry is exclusively male, women's Freemasonry has been an integral part of Freemasonry in the UK for over a century. While Freemasonry is practised in single-sex Lodges, this is no different from many other activities, including most sports as well as many other community groups.

The establishment of the Council for Freemasonry will formally establish an overarching forum for collaboration. In addition, the Council will bring together the community service ambitions of all three bodies, coordinate communication and engagement with other organisations, drive the membership growth ambitions, particularly for women Freemasons, and allocate resources and facilities for the general benefit of both male and female Freemasonry.

The Council will include the heads of each Grand Lodge, and each Grand Lodge will provide the President for a twelve-month period, chairing Council meetings in strict rotation. The President for the first two years will come from the OWF and HFAF, with UGLE covering the third year.

The formation of the Council for Freemasonry in England and Wales marks a pivotal step towards enhancing cooperation, addressing misconceptions, and promoting the values of Freemasonry. This historic initiative reaffirms Freemasonry's commitment to integrity, friendship, respect and service, while keeping community service and charitable giving at the absolute forefront of this historic organisation.



It's Bigger, It's Better, It's Back On...

Yes, Downton Lodge No. 9064 is hosting an evening offering you the opportunity to bid for some amazing items in their AUCTION OF PROMISES to be held on Saturday 12th October at Freemasons' Hall, Salisbury.

Register your interest in attending or bidding online: <https://tinyurl.com/downtonauction>

For more information contact the organisers David or Richard.



DOWNTON LODGE NO. 9064 AUCTION OF PROMISES Saturday 12th October 2024



Browsing from 7:00pm : First auction from 8:30pm

Tickets only £10
including nibbles and a drink on arrival



Freemasons' Hall | Crane Street | Salisbury
Register today at <https://tinyurl.com/downtonauction>

For more information on LOT details please email
David Little: dlittle9064@gmail.com | Richard Noon: noon.richard@googlemail.com

Did you know?

There were three Temples at Jerusalem.

The first Temple was built by King Solomon on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. Started in the fourth year of Solomon's reign the building of the Temple took seven years and upwards to complete. He was supported by Hiram King of Tyre and Hiram Abiff.

The second Temple was built by Zerubbabel, a name well known to Royal Arch Masons, and the returned Israelite exiles. Just as Solomon was supported by Hiram King of Tyre so Zerubbabel was assisted by Cyrus, King of Persia.

The third temple was built by Herod the Great, it took considerably longer to build than the first Temple but that didn't prevent its destruction by Roman Legionaries under Titus in 70AD.

The present structure commonly known as The Dome of The Rock still stands in Jerusalem and is said to cover The Rock upon which Abraham prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac. The Dome of The Rock replaced the Mosque of Omar, a mediaeval wooden building erected by Moslem invaders and later demolished.



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Stonecutters Widows Sons...

Twenty seven members of the Stonecutters Widows Sons Masonic Bikers Association (WSMBA) attended the National Rally at Newton Abbot Rugby Club during the third week of July. Although an annual event, this Rally marked the 20th Anniversary of the formation of the WSMBA in England and Wales.

The weekend provided the ideal opportunity for all the WSMBA Chapters, plus invited overseas members come together to celebrate the fantastic work we do. Together with several hundred other Brethren WSMBA members 'visited' the Widows Sons Lodge No. 10011 for their meeting, which was held by dispensation.

The Wiltshire WSMBA also celebrated the fifth anniversary of the Stonecutters Chartering and were proud to announce that during our first five years we have collected and donated £11,000 to charities and good causes.

Entertainment for the weekend was provided by a number of bands, a Morris Troupe danced and a good time was enjoyed by everyone. If you are interested in joining the Widows Sons, visit our website at <https://www.stonecutterswsmba.org>.



Recovering Satellites performing at Newton Abbot



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Mediocrity or Excellence?

One of the benefits of being the Provincial Communication Officer is that I get invitations to attend all sorts of events and asked to contribute to discussions that take place. I am always pleased with the way members of our Lodges are unafraid to challenge the status quo, and that's exactly as it should be as "a Lodge is a place where freemasons assemble to work and to instruct and improve themselves in the mysteries of the ancient science." Equally, when Freemasons meet it provides the perfect forum in which to gain a knowledge and understanding of the established usages and customs of the Craft.

It really is important to bear in mind that speculative Freemasonry is a society that has its roots in learning and education. Our forefathers were concerned with matters philosophical, practical and political (with a small p) and they met to debate and discuss weighty matters in the coffee houses and ale houses. In the second of the three questions posed by the Master to the man seeking admission to the mysteries and privileges of Freemasonry, a general desire of knowledge is a key element.

At the recent meeting of Lodge Directors of Ceremonies hosted by Barry Jordan-Davis and his team there was certainly no shortage of strong opinion covering a range of subjects. One in particular was the seeming constant issue of there never being enough able Brethren to occupy the offices of the Lodge, and as you might expect this led to a discussion on the vexed issue of officer performance, particularly in the matter of learning ritual, and concluded with a good discussion on Brethren moving through the offices of the Lodge and ultimately to the Master's Chair.

My view on the three subjects is well known, but let me repeat something I said at the meeting. The urge to fill every office is understandable but absolutely unnecessary, the Book of Constitutions doesn't demand it and neither does the Provincial Grand Master. Just read Rule 104 (a) and work out the offices that must (shall) be filled and those that the Master may choose to fill.

It is also the case that many offices in the Lodge do not have to be filled with Past Masters, indeed every office **can** be filled by a Master Mason. However, the office of Tyler **must** be filled by a Master Mason - Rule 113 BoC. The qualification for office is quite straightforward, the Brother appointed must be a subscribing member of the Lodge. **p.s.** The rule for the Tyler is different subject to whether he is elected or appointed.

Regarding learning ritual, I guess every generation has had its fair share of the supremely talented, the worthy competent, and then of course the less able. I'm also sure that this can be applied to any number of activities whether it's the aspiring sportsman, singer, musician, dancer, doctor, lawyer, or skilled tradesman; not everyone can be a superstar but those that reach the peak of their profession do so on the basis of hard work and lots of effort, most of it unseen.

We are all acquainted with the words that precede the advancement of a Brother to a higher degree, "It is necessary that he give proof of proficiency in the former." Yet, how often have we heard a Brother struggling with the answers to the questions, to the point that many members are looking at their feet in embarrassment? But we stay silent and in doing so we become a party to the promotion of mediocrity in our Lodges and the fraternity as a whole.

How and why have we reached the position in which we now find ourselves?



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First and foremost, the issue of poorly performed ritual and the inability of candidates to answer the questions I have referred to is not new. I often refer to a book first printed over fifty years ago in which several contributors bemoaned the fact that candidates were ill prepared and unable to answer the preliminary questions prior to the degree being conferred, or to the Wardens during the perambulations.

The response to the observations included asking, "Was the candidate properly prepared?" "Had he attended a rehearsal?" and "Was there another reason that made it impossible or difficult for the Brother to learn the words?"

In today's society certain terms such as Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, ADHD and even Downs Syndrome are often cited as reasons for a Brother not being able to learn ritual. SENSE the national charity helps thousands of people who are deafblind or who have complex disabilities to communicate. In their research they suggest that the four conditions are not in themselves learning disabilities, but they can often affect learning ability.

Just like today, the question was asked, what should we do in such a circumstance? The answer was twofold. First, some slight help is perfectly legitimate when it is clear the issue is one of nerves and the help given is minimal. Secondly, when it is clear that the candidate just does not know even this little part of the ritual a Master should be brave enough to suggest to him that he should either retire for a short while and compose himself or stand down until a future date. I'm guessing neither route features in a modern day Lodge's thinking and for good reason, as unless carried out in a discrete and generous spirit it is likely the Brother's Masonic career would likely be very short indeed. What is clear is that a Brother's competence to answer the questions posed, should be well known before the meeting.

Then there is the question about treasured elements of the ritual often referred to as 'party pieces'. On this point I can be much clearer. If a Brother wishes to exercise his talents in reciting a large body of ritual it is incumbent on that person to be competent in his delivery, and I don't just mean reciting the words. The piece should not be considered a vehicle for a Brother to display his ability to remember lots of words, that would be vain beyond belief, rather it is an opportunity to inculcate some of the important aspects of Freemasonry into the mind of the candidate. Remember a presentation in the Lodge is not for the enjoyment or benefit of its members, it is given as a means of instruction to the candidate.

In our ritual we are reminded that advancement is predicated on two key elements – merit and ability. This is further confirmed by reference in the Book of Constitutions to the Antient Charges where we are reminded that "All preferment among masons is grounded upon real worth and personal merit only." To be clear, the wording continues, "therefore no master or warden is chosen by seniority, but for his merit." How things have changed over time. So, let's look at what is expected of a Master.

While there is no extra work required of a Master than was required fifty or even one hundred years ago, it does appear that some Masters are less inclined to do anything beyond opening and closing the Lodge, and by this measurement it could well be argued that the standard of work from the Chair has changed over the years. One may ask how this squares with the words of the IPM in the opening of the Lodge, when asked why the Master is placed in the East he responds – "To employ and Instruct the Brethren in Freemasonry."

It is also the case that at his Installation the new Master is confronted with the qualifications which are essential in every candidate for the Master's Chair. Having been reminded of the qualifications he is challenged "Can you my Worthy Brother, undertake the Mastership of the Lodge on these qualifications?" to which the answer is invariably "I can."



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I do not propose to enter into an explanation of the section on the obligations of an Installed Master, other than to say all Masters promise to discharge their duties as a Ruler in the Craft and Master of the Lodge.

I believe we have to protect Freemasonry from being an organisation where mediocrity becomes the norm and where producing an average performance is considered acceptable. "That will do" is to accept that something other than excellence is acceptable in our Lodges. Of course, the riposte from the floor will be 'no one is perfect' a view with which I fully concur. However, surely the expectation should always be that we aim to achieve the very highest possible standard whenever possible. Imagine if you will a world where 'doing enough to get by' is standard throughout every profession.

Ah, but Freemasonry is a voluntary undertaking, we don't get paid to perform. That is also undeniable, but I am sure you can think of other organisations where no money changes hands and yet rigorous standards of excellence are not only required but are often demanded. High levels of effort will only get you so far, to be the very best of the best you have to apply what many would claim to be absurd levels of commitment.

In order to attain the ultimate goal of excellence it is necessary to focus on achieving the highest possible standards of performance. If we limit ourselves to doing only what seems possible or reasonable, we are accepting and endorsing a standard that is lower than is desirable, we are compromising and compromise is the fuel that feeds mediocrity.

Editor's Note: It is a privilege to be able to offer a personal opinion on the state of Freemasonry to-day. As it is a personal opinion, and not that of the Province it naturally follows that it is subject to challenge, criticism, and contradiction, three elements of mature debate that I have championed and encouraged.

You are not required to simply accept without reservation any of the points made in this article and your observations, comments and views are equally valid. If you wish to respond to the content please email comms@wiltshirefreemasons.org.uk

Lodge Director of Ceremonies meeting...

Barry Jordan-Davis welcomed Brethren from across the Province to Devizes for a short presentation on the role and responsibilities of the Lodge Director of Ceremonies. As you might expect from such senior members of the Craft the questions and comments were of the highest quality, and it was good to hear that everyone present was absolutely determined to make sure the standard of ceremony in their Lodge was to be performed to the highest level possible.

Did you know?

Rule 98 BoC. states that every Lodge must be distinguished by a name or title, as well as a number and there is a proper way in which to use and display both. Incidentally, if you ever want to change the name of your Lodge, you must first obtain the approval of the Grand Master.

When referring to your Lodge, the Lodge name and number must always be shown in the standardised design with the name being shown in full and the number must always be preceded with 'No.' (i.e. the lettering capital 'N', small 'o' and a full stop. {No.}

A good example would be, The Lodge of Brothers In Arms No. 9540 or Lodge Elias de Derham No.586



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The Tyler

In modern Speculative Freemasonry, the Tyler is a regular Officer of the Lodge - Rule 104 BoC, which means a Lodge must have a Tyler. Therefore, if due to unforeseen circumstances the office falls vacant a new Tyler must be elected or appointed whichever is permitted under your by-laws. Only a Master Mason (a Past Master is a Master Mason) can hold the office - Rule 113 BoC, and he should be well informed in Masonic rules and customs. If the Tyler is elected he need not be a member of the Lodge, he can even be an Honorary Member; but if the Lodge resolves that a subscribing member is appointed without emolument, he is appointed by the Master. If the Tyler is a subscribing member it is important to remember that he has the right to join in any debate and vote of the Lodge.

In ancient stonemason guilds, Tylers guarded the door against intruders (eavesdroppers) and cowans. They still serve a similar function today.

The word and term "cowan" is probably a sixteenth-century Scottish operative term of contempt, given to the ignorant or partially instructed labourer who hadn't completed the proper period of apprenticeship and who was competent in only one facet of masonry. He was also known as a "rough mason" or "dry-dyker", who built structures with un-hewn stones and without mortar or cement, the stones keeping in position only by their own weight. His exclusion from guild membership was a necessary means of trade protection from competition by unskilled labourers.

The "eavesdropper" is however a more suspicious character. "Eaves" describes the space between a building's wall and the line where the rainwater "drops" off the roof. Here the surreptitious listener could position himself, monitoring conversations in the Lodge from which he might learn some of its secrets or gather material to create slanderous tales.

Just in case you were wondering, which is the correct spelling, the use of "Tyler" and "Tiler" are interchangeable, with the former an older usage. The Masonic application of the word, subject to much uncertainty and speculation as to its symbolism, may derive from the interdependent working relationship of the operative masons and tilers.



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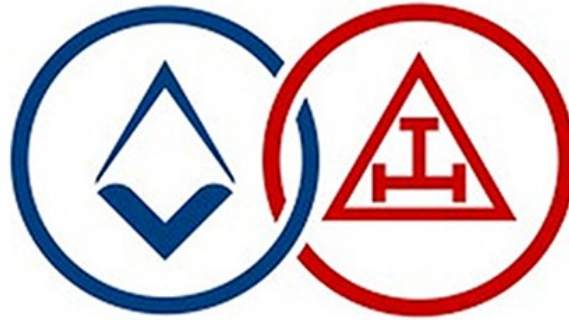
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More details to follow