



A month has just flown by...



John Reid

In December I asked “Where has the past year gone?” and before listing my top five resolutions for the coming year in the January edition of **In Touch>On Line** I asked “What will 2026 bring?” I am very grateful to those of you who took the time to tell me how much you agreed with the five resolutions and for sharing with me your hopes and aspirations for your family, your future career, and your Lodge or Chapter. Some of the hopes were indeed very inspirational and I wish you all the very best as you set out to achieve them.

I am pleased to commend the article penned by Bro Howard Jones a 33 year Masonic veteran and member of Gooch Lodge No.1295, and a highly respected Royal Arch Companion. Howard reflects on advice given to him with regard to the new Initiate by the late and sorely missed Maurice Leighfield; advice that he has followed and which in this month’s edition of **InTouch>OnLine** shares with us all. I believe the manner in which we treat our new members not only demonstrates our understanding of what Freemasonry is all about, it also serves to show how much we want to grow our Lodges and Freemasonry overall. We all recognise the importance of offering support to our new members and yet for some the new member is seen as the new steward of the Lodge well before he has had chance to settle into the Lodge, discover who we are, what we do, and equally importantly why we do what we do. Is it any wonder we lose new members so soon after they join our fraternity?

Talking of new Members, Colin Cheshire informs me that our Lodges have a healthy programme of Initiates for the first half of 2026 and I am looking forward to meeting many of the new members as I visit Lodges during the coming months. In the meantime, I’m sure our readers will join me in congratulating the new Members pictured on the following pages and every newly made Freemason joining a Wiltshire Lodge during the past month.

WELCOME

Jack McGeoch | Simon Offley | Tim Buckeridge
Scott Novall-Andersen | Francis Cavill | Jamie Hunt

A new initiative from Grand Lodge and Supreme Grand Chapter came into effect on 1st January and enables Craft Freemasons as at the 31st December 2025 who have not joined a Royal Arch Chapter to do so without having to pay a registration fee. This is part of the *Strategy for Freemasonry, 2022 and Beyond* and the Building Together programme currently being promoted within the Province. Wearing both my hats, the first as the Provincial Grand Master for Wiltshire, I would encourage every Member to think seriously and positively about joining a Royal Arch Chapter, it doesn’t have to be one with the same number as your Lodge what’s important is that you join a Chapter that suits you. My second hat is that of the Grand Superintendent of the Royal Arch, in and over the Province of Wiltshire and in this capacity I would invite you to come and join us and discover more about the part a Chapter can and indeed will play in your journey through Freemasonry. If there is one thing I never tire of it is saying to every new Exaltee - Welcome Companion.

Finally, if you haven’t yet signed up to **Portal** - please do. In terms of information gathering and sharing it really is the future for Freemasonry and while Wiltshire is doing well in the number of ‘signed up members’ it can do better. Vince Wheeler is our Provincial **Portal** guru and an email or phone call is all it takes to get connected. Oh, and just by the way, Carols at Christmas is back for 2026 on Sunday 20th December.



Welcoming a new Brother into the Lodge... Howard Jones PPrJGW, SLGR

If there is one thing that creates a frisson of excitement in the Lodge it must surely be when a new member is welcomed for the first time whether that be as a joining member or an Initiate. Of course, for the Initiate the event is even more special as it is his first introduction to the mysteries and privileges of Antient Freemasonry and for a single night he really is the focus of attention. Having been a Freemason for over three decades it has been my privilege to witness numerous occasions when an Initiate has been welcomed into Freemasonry and what has never failed to move me has been the sincerity of the Brother, often the sponsor/proposer when he is invited to propose the toast to the Initiate.

What an honour it is to be invited to perform that special duty and yet very little is ever said or written explaining the etiquette of this important and dare I suggest, a more important responsibility than the toast to the visitors.

In the early days of my becoming a Freemason, pre Google, it was common practice for junior members of the Lodge to seek the counsel of those with vastly more experience and so it was that I sought the advice of one of our senior members asking him what should I say if I was ever asked to propose this important toast. The senior member was the late VW Bro Maurice Leighfield, a man whose pronouncements on any masonic matter were worthy of the very best of attention. The advice he gave me and which guides me today consisted of four essential elements.

That they were simple, straightforward, and laden with common-sense didn't minimise their importance, quite the reverse in fact and epitomised just how Maurice practiced his Freemasonry.

- 1) Congratulate the new made Brother on being admitted a member of Freemasonry in general and the Lodge in particular. After all, you really do want him to feel welcome - don't you?
- 2) Make reference to the "Charge after Initiation". Refer to the fact that in due time the Initiate will receive a copy of the ritual and recommend that when he receives his copy he should study the "Charge after Initiation" as it eloquently summarises what is required of a Freemason.
- 3) Remind the new made Brother of his positive response to the "Charity Charge". Introduce him to the Lodge Charity Steward and explain how he will be making contact to explain how charities should be supported. Stress that although Masonic Charity Funds are raised from Freemasons alone, Masonic Charities support non-Masonic charities as well as Masonic ones.
- 4) Explain to the Initiate that on this his big night he is seated at the supper table in a place of honour to the right of the Worshipful Master and that at the conclusion of the toast he will receive Masonic Fire. Remind him that the honour of receiving Masonic Fire will not be repeated until he becomes the Worshipful Master of the Lodge.

Sound advice from an inspirational and experienced Freemason.

Editor's note: Howard Jones has been a Freemason for 33 years and is a member of three Craft Lodges including Gooch Lodge No.1295 meeting at Swindon. Howard holds Provincial Grand Rank in Wiltshire and Senior London Grand Rank in the Metropolitan Grand Lodge. He is also a Royal Arch Metropolitan Assistant Grand Inspector. His experience makes him well qualified to offer a considered view on the subject of protocol affecting the newly appointed Freemason.



Unintended consequences....

The Law of Unintended Consequences states that actions, often have unforeseen, and unexpected results, which can be positive, negative, or even disastrous, rather than just the intended outcome. A good example of this was brought home to me recently when an invoice landed on my desk demanding payment for an image I had used in a news article. While the image had been 'doctored' to create a funny tag line, the underlying image was subject to copyright protection and an agency working on behalf of the media giant Alamy was taking no prisoners and making no concessions, just demanding a fee.

You might reasonably think this just applies to websites and publications such as [In Touch>On Line](#) - it doesn't. Creating a fun image using an existing background photograph can land you with an unwelcome bill.

It wasn't for nothing that we were taught to be cautious, and being cautious with regard to using images could save you pounds.

Fiat Lux Lodge No.9773....

For Brethren wishing to meet during the daylight hours the Members of Fiat Lux Lodge No.9773 offer the very warmest of Wiltshire welcomes. They also welcome new Initiates and Bro Timothy Buckeridge became their newest Member at their regular January Meeting. To discover more about the Lodge contact Paul Robinson on L9773@wiltshirefreemasons.org.uk





Gooch Lodge No.1295...

The Master, Wardens and Members of Gooch Lodge No.1295 welcomed their 'Christmas Initiate' Bro Christopher Duke when he joined the Lodge in December 2025. It is a long tradition of the Lodge to have a Christmas Initiate and Christopher joins a long list of distinguished Brethren as part of a very special 'club'.



Chaloner Lodge No.2644...

Bro Dab Stuchbury is the newest Initiate for Chaloner Lodge No.2644 and was welcomed into the Lodge and Freemasonry by the Master, his Wardens and the members of the Lodge on the occasion of their Christmas 2025 meeting.





The City Lodge No.5955...

The Master, Wardens and Brethren of the City Lodge No.5955 meeting at Crane Street, Salisbury welcomed Bro Aaron Parris as their 322 member. Sadly, the Lodge doesn't have 322 members but that doesn't change the wonderful achievement. The good news is that the Lodge has two joining members and an Initiate scheduled in their programme for the first part of 2026.



PROVINCE OF WILTSHIRE




THE CRAFT & ROYAL ARCH

ONLINE

MASONIC REFERENCE BOOK

2026
(AL6026)



BUILDING TOGETHER

Attracting Members – Growing Freemasonry

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New OnLine reference book...

This month has seen the 'soft' launch of the online 2026 Masonic Reference Book for Wiltshire Craft and Royal Arch Freemasons. The book consists of 212 pages and includes details of every Lodge and Chapter in the Province. As the book is published online it is anticipated that updates will occur more frequently and the content be more accurate.

The editorial team will review Adelpi on a regular basis and subject to Lodge and Chapter administrators processing their Post Meeting Report (PMR) on time pages will be amended to reflect reported changes.

A separate online booklet for the Mark Master Mason, and the Royal Ark Mariner degree has been agreed and this will be published during February.

Orders beyond the Craft will be contacted during February to discuss the publication of their units.



In Touch > On Line

The newsletter for all Wiltshire Freemasons

FEBRUARY 2026



The Royal Arch...

Now available - A guide to help new Exaltees to explore fresh perspectives and confidently engage with fellow Companions in completing your journey in pure antient Masonry.

The Royal Arch
Welcome Companion

A narrative for the
21st Century Freemason

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John Reid

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FINDING YOUR FEET

Masonic Hall | Yerbury Street | Trowbridge | BA14 8DP

SATURDAY 28th FEBRUARY 2026 - 10.00am until 12.00pm

BOOK ONLINE: <https://tinyurl.com/FyF-Feb-26>

ALL COURSES ARE SUBJECT TO SUFFICIENT NUMBERS SIGNING UP TO A MODULE



PREPARING FOR THE CHAIR

Swindon Masonic Centre | The Planks | Swindon | SN3 1QP

SATURDAY 21st MARCH 2026 - 10.00am until 12.00pm

BOOK ONLINE: <https://tinyurl.com/Chair-March-26>

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PREPARING FOR THE CHAIR

Masonic Hall | Yerbury Street | Trowbridge | BA14 8DP

SATURDAY 25th APRIL 2026 - 10.00am until 12.00pm

BOOK ONLINE: <https://tinyurl.com/FyF-Feb-26>

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BUILDING TOGETHER

Attracting Members – Growing Freemasonry



FEBRUARY 2026

WHO SEES THE BALLOT?

The first thing to say is that the Book of Constitutions is silent on this and offers no advice. What the Book of Constitutions tells us is when a vote is by ballot and when it is a show of hands, and if the two ball system is used, how many black balls are required to prevent the proposal from being 'in favour'.

The Emulation Ritual offers the clearest advice, which is that it is the Worshipful Master who examines the ballot box and he alone who announces the result. There is no requirement, need, or logic for any other Brother to view the result let alone to declare it. Further clarification is offered by the Deputy Grand Secretary who suggests the same approach is taken.

DID YOU
?
KNOW



In Touch > On Line

The newsletter for all Wiltshire Freemasons

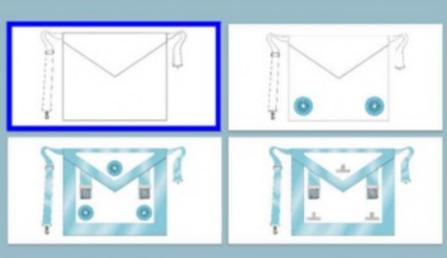
FEBRUARY 2026




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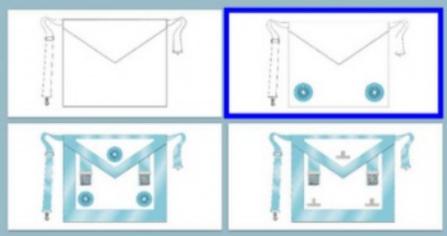
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2026



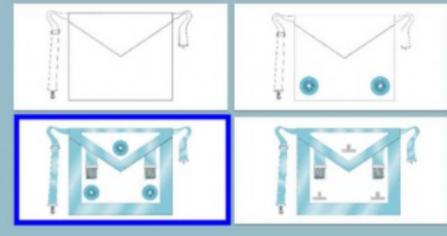
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MASTER MASON

2026



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FEBRUARY 2026

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