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The newsletter for all Wiltshire Freemasons

NOVEMBER 2026

Are we really strict followers of ritual?



For many Freemasons (it should be all…) there are four books that act as guides to everything they do. The first and unquestionably the most important is the Volume of The Sacred Law, the sacred writings are to govern our faith and to govern our actions by the divine precepts it contains. Secondly, we are enjoined to an acceptance of the Constitutions of Freemasonry, thirdly, we agree to a strict observance of the By Laws of the Lodge and are reminded that when we become members of a Lodge we declare our submission to them (Rule 138 BoC). Finally, we undertake the work within the Lodge according to the book we all know as "The Ritual" which for Wiltshire Freemasons is Emulation Ritual or a hybrid version of the same. It never ceases to amaze me that it is the ritual book that causes more arguments, as opposed to sensible discussion, among Brethren and it probably comes as no surprise to hear that the Province is more likely to be asked to adjudicate on matters concerning ritual than on an interpretation of a BoC rule, or a Lodge By Law. As you will be aware I have made it abundantly clear that we must always work within the rules as set out in the Book of Constitution, of that there must be no doubt whatsoever and it naturally follows that your Lodge By Laws must be adhered to at all times.

The ritual book is, to coin a phrase, a different kettle of fish. The Committee of The Emulation Lodge of Improvement has made it quite clear that the manner of demonstration which they carry out is the only rendering of ritual and procedure that can be said to be "Emulation Working". It is recognised that Lodges may of course govern their own proceedings as they wish (Rule 155 BoC), but in doing so they not be working Emulation Ritual. I am frequently asked whether that matters, to which the answer is in the form of another question - "Does what you do diminish the experience of the candidate (if it's a ceremony) or the members?" If the answer is "no it doesn't" then I suggest it doesn't. However, I commend the Emulation Ritual to you and trust it will continue to form the basis of 'what we do' in our Lodges.

Let me give you an example. I recently attended an Installation ceremony where the new Master was being Installed for the third time (not consecutively) and asked if the ceremony could be truncated. The Province offered some advice and he was Installed in a ceremony that didn't include some of the traditional elements, the Master was very happy and the members didn't feel 'short changed' - it wasn't a proclamation, just an Installation 'lite' and not only was it different it really was an enjoyable event.

Last month I wrote it is that time of the year when our thoughts turn to honouring the dead of two world wars and many other conflicts. The connection between Freemasonry and the military is long-standing, and Freemasonry particularly in Wiltshire has always counted many serving personnel and veterans among its members. I encourage the attendance of Members at Remembrance Sunday events, however, it is important that Brethren observe the rules and etiquette regarding the wearing of Masonic regalia on such occasions. While the Province applauds the sentiment that the wearing of Masonic regalia might result in some interest from other participants and the general public, our presence at such events must not detract in any way from the solemnity of what is a civic occasion. If you are attending a Remembrance event please do send a photo to the Communication Team at comms@wiltshirefreemasons.org.uk

Finally, if you haven't done so please do book in for Carols At Christmas on Sunday 20th December 3.00pm at Marlborough College Chapel. We will once again be joined by the Lord Lieutenant, and the High Sheriff of Wiltshire. It really is quite a magical event and I can guarantee three things, the music will be inspiring, the company fun, and the mince pies superb.

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Wyvern Lodge No.8620 pulls out the stops…

The members of Wyvern Lodge No.8620 marked a significant milestone on Saturday 17 October 2026, holding its **300th meeting** at the Masonic Hall in Warminster. The well-attended meeting was honoured by the presence of Right Worshipful Brother John Reid, Provincial Grand Master for Wiltshire.

At the heart of the meeting was a Second Degree ceremony for Brother Andrew Noad. Worshipful Master Barry Pirie gave Brother Steve Noad the opportunity to conduct the ceremony for his brother Andrew.

Another memorable family moment came when Brother John Noad, the Lodge's Inner Guard, delivered the Working Tools for his brother Andrew.

An exceptional way to celebrate this historic occasion and the bonds of family and fellowship within the Lodge.



Who gets the Gavel?…

Offering the Gavel might seem a simple task but there is an etiquette to be observed. The Provincial Grand Master, The Deputy Provincial Grand Master, and the Assistant Provincial Grand Master (referred to as Rulers in the Craft must always be offered the gavel and the Chair when attending a Lodge in person within their Province, unless prior agreement has been made otherwise, whether he is officially processing in or simply present at a meeting. If the visit is being made a in a 'private capacity' It is always best to ask the Ruler whether they wish to be offered the Gavel.

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The Centenary Hall Stone Appeal…

Almost one hundred years ago, our predecessors made a bold decision to invest in the future of Freemasonry by re-building Freemasons' Hall. The financing of the work required an appeal to the generosity of the membership at a time of national austerity

In 1919 the Masonic Million Memorial Fund was set up to rebuild Freemasons' Hall and the present building, the third Masonic Hall on the site, was constructed between 1927 and 1933 as a memorial to the 3,000 members who died on active service in the First World War known as the Great War, and was for many years known as the Masonic Peace Memorial.

Like any buildings, especially those with such strong historical ties, Freemasons' Hall requires continual investment. As expectations change alongside new regulations Freemasons' Hall must be maintained and where appropriate modernised and improved to make sure they remain welcoming, accessible and sustainable for future generations.

For this reason and to recognise our responsibility for the future of Freemasonry Wiltshire is supporting the UGLE wide initiative Centenary Hall Stone Appeal. The funds raised will help support Masonic buildings throughout England and Wales and Wiltshire Masonic centres will be able to apply for grants from the Centenary Building Fund (CBF) and the Community and Heritage Building Fund (CHBF).

The CBF is a ring-fenced fund within UGLE which will support projects that contribute to the day-to-day operation and long-term viability of halls, including upgrades that make a building usable and sustainable in modern times. The CHBF is a charitable fund intended to support works with specific community or heritage attributes, such as the preservation of historically or architecturally significant elements and projects that deliver significant public benefit.

Wiltshire has been set a fundraising target of £1.6 million over the next ten years. While at first glance that might appear quite daunting, when shared across the total membership and considered against the ten year timeline it becomes an achievable challenge.

As part of the Centenary Hall Stone Appeal, there will be an opportunity for individual Brethren to achieve recognition by way of breast jewels based on those worn as part of the Masonic Million Appeal.

Awards will be known as **Centenary Building Jewels**.



Silver jewel
Light blue ribbon
£600 over a ten-year period



Silver gilt jewel
Dark blue ribbon
£1,200 over a ten-year period



Silver gilt jewel
Dark blue ribbon
£3,000 over a ten-year period

As part of the Appeal, a Lodge will be able to become a Centenary Hall Stone Lodge , with an associated Centenary Hall Stone Jewel to be worn by the Worshipful Master, as part of his Craft regalia.

A Chapter will be able to become a Centenary Hall Stone Chapter, with an associated Centenary Hall Stone Jewel to be worn the First Principal, as part of his Royal Arch regalia.

To ensure compliance with charity law, Lodges or Chapters cannot make donations from Relief Chests or other charitable accounts to support the Appeal. Only members of Lodges and Chapters under the United Grand Lodge of England and Supreme Grand Chapter may donate to the Appeal.

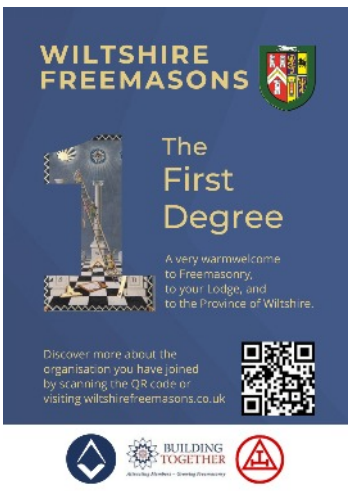
What are Progress Cards?

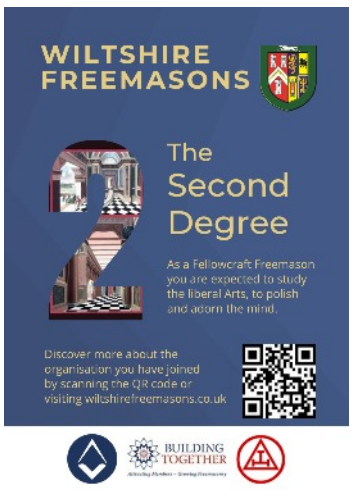
The United Grand Lodge of England and the Province of Wiltshire has introduced a new initiative to make the three Degree ceremonies more meaningful to the candidate by offering him a short welcome message as he completes each element of his journey, from initiation through to exaltation. The cards are intended to increase awareness of the journey the candidate is undertaking with the text on the reverse of the cards providing helpful context to the candidate in order that he might understand his journey of discovery as a Freemason.

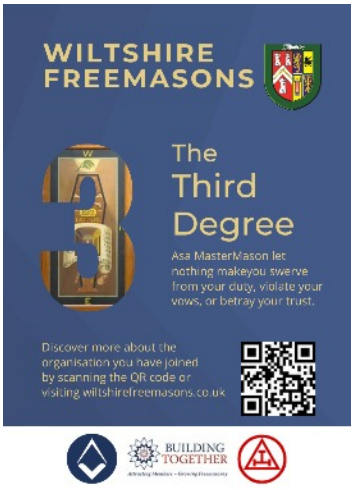
It is intended that the Progress Card relevant to the appropriate degree is presented to the candidate on the conclusion of the ceremony and before they take their rightful place in the Lodge. The design of the cards include the use of imagery from the three Tracing Boards which we trust will create interest and provide a point of discussion thereby encouraging the candidate to explore the meaning of the ceremony they have just undertaken.

To make the event a special moment for the candidate we would like a senior member of the Lodge (it could be the Lodge Mentor) to read the words on the back of the Progress Card before presenting the card to the candidate.

A set of three cards (5 of each) was collected by a representative of each Lodge at the recent PGL meeting(they were in a gold envelope) and we have been advised that members who have received a card were very appreciative.









Never miss a word…

Have you had trouble following your Lodge or Chapter meeting? Help yourself and help the 2028 Festival by booking a hearing consultation with Reeds who will provide you with expert advice and guidance, while you contribute their normal fee (£85.00) to the 2028 Festival. Reeds Hearing Care cover everything to do with hearing, tinnitus, wax removal and can provide help, support and advice for all issues. Reeds is a professional, independent, family caring business based in Swindon. e.mail: reeds@reedsear.co.uk or text 07585525993.

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Membership Attraction…

The Provincial Membership Team in conjunction with the Communication Team is always keen to support Lodge initiatives. In order to make sure that any advertisement complies with UGLE and Provincial guidelines Lodge Membership Officers, and Lodge Secretaries are asked to submit any proposals to the team before placing material on social media or commissioning printing.











Have you booked your place?

Provincial Grand Master John Reid invites you to join him for **Carols at Christmas** one of the most eagerly anticipated events of the Wiltshire Masonic calendar.

Carols at Christmas returns to Marlborough College Chapel on **Sunday 20th December at 3.00pm** (but you are advised to be seated by 2.30pm) and it promises to be just as good as previous years with star soloists and those famous mince pies with mulled wine. Carols at Christmas will be led by Rev Dr John Railton, and Rev Sandy Railton. Provincial Organist Gary Cook will provide the music on the magnificent four-manual, 62-stop Beckerath organ for the well loved and popular carols, punctuated with the story of the nativity to provide the perfect background to meet with friends and enjoy and experience the true spirit of Christmas. Over 650 attendees voices will provide the choir - that's YOU.

Carols at Christmas is not only for Freemasons, but also for family and friends, and for children under 16 there will be a special gift from Santa himself.

There are a few places left and we will be pleased to welcome you to Marlborough for Wiltshire Freemason's Carols at Christmas. https://tinyurl.com/carols-at-christmas2026





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Wiltshire 2028 Festival news…

The members of Gooch Lodge No.1295 presented a cheque for £1,000 to the Deputy Provincial Grand Master Simon Leighfield who was delighted to accept it from Master of the Lodge Jose Solera. Also present was newly appointed Assistant Provincial Grand Master Mark Whitmarsh who was not only wearing the chain of his office but also the apron badge (introduced into the Province by Steve Lee).



Vastern Lodge No.8977 welcome Sam Cooper…



Members of Vastern Lodge No.8977 welcomed Sam Cooper as their newest Initiate and their first in 2026.

Following their successful move from Lydiard Millicent to Calne the Lodge has undergone a period of consolidation during which senior members of the Lodge have emphasised the need to produce high quality ritual and more importantly to give new and established members an understanding of why the Lodge does what it does.

With new members joining the Lodge and a real desire to be more than just a 'me too' Lodge the future for Vastern Lodge No.8977 is truly rosy.

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Wiltshire Freemason's daughter celebrates debut season in motorcycle racing…



What a year it has been for 15-year-old Annabelle McCarthy the daughter of Wiltshire Freemason Kevin McCarthy a member of New Temple Lodge No.8435 meeting at Swindon. Annabelle has enjoyed a remarkable rookie season competing on her Kawasaki Ninja 400 with the British Motorcycle Racing Club in the ACU Team Green Junior Championship. Taking on some of the UK's biggest, most iconic and challenging circuits for the very first time, she has delivered a series of impressive performances and established herself as a young rider to watch.

At just 15 years old, her achievements have been exceptional. Learning a new motorcycle, adapting to unfamiliar circuits and competing against experienced riders requires courage, discipline, resilience and a willingness to keep learning — qualities Annabelle has demonstrated throughout the season.

For her family, watching her progress from a young rider with a passion for motorcycles to a competitive championship racer has been a source of immense pride. Her father's connection to Freemasonry in Wiltshire adds another dimension to the story, highlighting how the interests, ambitions and achievements of Freemasons' families extend well beyond the Lodge room and into their local communities.

Annabelle's journey is a wonderful example of a young person pursuing her ambitions with determination, supported by those around her. While the racing circuit may be a world away from the Lodge, the values of commitment, perseverance and encouragement are just as relevant. Her achievements demonstrate that age and gender need not be barriers to success, and her progress may encourage other young people, particularly girls, to have the confidence to follow their own sporting ambitions. Of course, success in motorcycle racing is never achieved alone. Behind every race weekend are countless hours of preparation, travel, hard work and support from family, the team, sponsors and supporters. Annabelle is grateful to everyone who has helped make her first season such a memorable one.



With the 2026 season now complete, attention is already turning to 2027. Armed with valuable experience, a growing list of achievements and the confidence gained from a successful debut campaign, Annabelle will be looking to build on her results and challenge for further podium finishes.

Her story is also a reminder that the achievements of Freemasons' families are worth celebrating: whether in sport, education, the arts or the wider community, their dedication and determination can inspire others and bring pride to those who support them. Congratulations to Annabelle on a superb 2026 season. We look forward to following her progress and seeing what the 2027 season brings.

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Highworth Lodge No.9009…

The members of Highworth Lodge No 9009 are proud of their six Initiates (two were not available for the photograph) and are delighted that two of the cohort will be Passed to the Second Degree in the November meeting. Nurturing new members and not rushing them through the three stages of a Freemason's journey is something the Lodge recognises as being very important, it is something that our new members appreciate and we trust will allow them time to enjoy their first experiences of being a Freemason.





Service uniforms and medals, and Masonic regalia are not to be worn together…

The connection between Freemasonry and the military is long-standing, and Freemasonry has always counted many serving personnel and veterans among its members. The United Grand Lodge of England, and the Province of Wiltshire has signed the Armed Forces Covenant and strongly encourages the acknowledgement and recognition of those who have served in His Majesty's Armed Forces.

This guidance on the wearing of service medals and uniforms on Masonic occasions, and on the wearing of Masonic regalia when representing Freemasonry in public, particularly at remembrance events) is to ensure that both are done respectfully and appropriately and that the relationship between Freemasonry and the military is not misrepresented.

CORE PRINCIPLES

1. Five principles underpin this guidance:

   1.1. the Aims and Relationships of the Craft (set out in the Book of Constitutions) apply at all times, whether in a public or private setting

   1.2. military uniform and Masonic regalia are not worn or borne together (other than as expressly described in paragraphs 7 and/or 9 below)

   1.3. service medals and uniforms are worn only by those entitled to do so

   1.4. service medals and uniforms are worn strictly in accordance with the dress regulations and conventions applicable to the service status of the wearer

   1.5. service medals are not worn with any Masonic regalia

WEARING OF MASONIC REGALIA IN PUBLIC, INCLUDING AT REMEMBRANCE EVENTS

2. The wearing of Royal British Legion poppies is to be encouraged. Care should, however, be taken when wearing regalia as to the positioning of the poppy, which is customarily worn through the buttonhole of the left lapel. Consideration should also be given to the number and type of any additional pin badges worn; it would be preferable to limit these to a single item, if any at all.

3. When attending a public event in a Masonic capacity, regalia may only be worn with a dispensation granted under Rule 178.

4. Masonic Jewels, including the Hall Stone Jewel, and/or collarettes should not be worn with medals or decorations issued by the Crown. Local customs vary as to whether full regalia (including aprons) is worn. It is unlikely to be appropriate for Masonic breast jewels or collarettes (including the Hall Stone Jewel) to be worn on such occasions to avoid confusion with the civilian or military orders, decorations and medals worn by others attending.

10. The guidance at paragraph 3 above is in respect of a public *Masonic* event. In the case of a non-Masonic public event at which one is attending in a Masonic capacity, military headdress (including berets) and/or unit ties ought not to be worn; if the member attends as a Masonic representative, he should restrict what he wears so that he only represents that institution.

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Wiltshire Freemasons

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