

Across the Plain

The magazine of the Masonic Province of Wiltshire



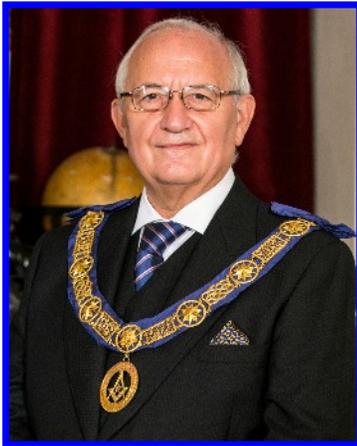
Summer 2018

CONTINUE
GIVING

Mark Neilson tests the water
And himself in Clipper Race.....



The Provincial Grand Master.....



As we pass the mid point of the year, I know it's difficult to believe we are halfway through 2018 when it seems only yesterday that we talked about new year resolutions and plans for the forthcoming year; but a full six months has come and gone and with it a number of major changes have taken place.

For Mark Neilson, son of Eddie, who was one of the great pugilists of our time, the past few months have been spent readjusting to a life on terra firma having spent a few weeks tackling high waves, rough seas and the demands of helping to sail a racing yacht in some of the toughest conditions known to man. The Master's Chair of Gooch Lodge No.1295 must seem very tame in comparison. Mark features on the front cover and is the subject of an article on page 10 in this edition of *Across the Plain*.

Phil Elliott, Simon Grove and Ian Priest have a keen interest in photography and over the years the Royal International Air Tattoo (RIAT) which in 2018 celebrates the Centenary of the formation of the Royal Air Force, has given them a great opportunity to provide the editor with some superb images for use in *Across the Plain*, the Provincial Website and our Twitter site. We are very fortunate to have a team of skilled photographers who are prepared to give freely of their time and talent to help make our Provincial magazine such a great success. Talking of photographers, let me also pay tribute to John Rose, Gary Dolphin, Phil Johnston, Adrian Wooster and Sue Bacon who are regular contributors of superb images, and I do hope you enjoy their photographic prowess as much as I do. Indeed, if you have a photograph which you feel can be used, why not send it to the editor?

I am also immensely grateful to the many people who work behind the scenes, particularly family members who seek no recognition or reward for the hours they put into supporting Freemasonry and who make sure 'things happen' in the Province. I know my friend the Most Excellent Grand Superintendent John Reid shares the view that we owe a great deal to 'our dedicated volunteers'.

Talking of volunteers, I am sure you noticed the mention on the Twitter site for the members of Vale of Avon Lodge No.8432 who support The Cheshire Home at Kington Langley; their latest undertaking was to clear a path leading to a lakeside area, to enable residents of the Home to sit by the soothing waters and 'watch the world go by'. My thanks to Ian and Maureen Dunbar and new member Tony Caillou for all their hard work. Sadly, we have recently been advised that due to the cost of maintaining The Great House the facility in Chippenham will be closed at the end of July. I do commend to other Lodges the type of work undertaken by Vale of Avon Lodge and others (see facing page) and trust they will seize the opportunity to 'give by doing' especially when 'giving money' is not necessarily what is wanted. In this edition of ***Across the Plain*** there is an interesting article on Charity which concludes with a familiar refrain '*Brethren I trust you will agree that Charity really isn't always about money and that charity should naturally spring from the heart and not from the wallet!*' I feel sure this will strike a chord in the hearts of many of our Brethren.

Speaking of charity allows me the opportunity to mention the sterling efforts of all Lodge Charity Stewards who conscientiously go about their work reminding the Brethren of the need to support local charities and good causes, persuading members to take out a 'covenant' to the Lodge Charity Chest and organising raffles, auctions and other ad hoc fund raising activities. In his latest contribution to the pages of ***Across the Plain*** Provincial Grand Charity Steward Ian Priest writes about the importance of choosing the right charity or cause to support, and outlines some of the thought processes he employs before committing your money. I know that Ian is assiduous in his research of all applications for assistance (he receives far more than we can possibly satisfy) and when a recommendation is made, Ian decides only after a great deal of thought and much serious consideration. Ian has also penned a short piece on 'legacy giving' - a tricky subject to raise, but very important nonetheless. As many of you will know Ian will step down as Provincial Grand Charity Steward in October, and I wish to thank him for his contribution to the Province during his four year term in office. Ian's successor will be W Bro Derek Gibbens a member of Lodge Elias de Derham No.586.

One particular aspect of giving I am very keen to support is that of providing something a charity 'needs' as opposed to just giving them a cheque. Sometimes it's easy to give a cheque but far more rewarding to source something or agree to support the purchase of something that is tangible. Last year Border Lodge No.3129 donated a sum to the local Scouts for the express purpose of buying a St George's flag; imagine if you would, the immense pride felt by the Lodge when the Scouts invited them to attend their annual St George's Day parade where the new flag was proudly paraded. It was a thrilling moment, one to be treasured forever.

I'm proud to be a Wiltshire Freemason.....



In 2017 the Assistant Provincial Grand Master Stephen Bridge introduced a superb initiative to support the Tercentenary celebrations - it was labelled 300 hours for 300 years, and centred on 'giving by doing'. Throughout the year, members of Lodges across the Province came up with some incredible ideas and turned them into practical events. What made them very special was the fact they were acts of support which benefited local communities.

They ranged from litter picking to path clearing, painting schoolrooms to refurbishing tables at The Olive Tree Cafe; and my all time favourite, the building of a therapy goat centre at The Great House a Leonard Cheshire Home



It looks as if the goats are paying attention

The gardens at the Great House incorporate a lake which provides a much needed and valued sensory experience for the residents. Unfortunately access to the lake was very restricted due to the amount of overgrown vegetation, and this prohibited its use for all but the ablest. Members of Vale of Avon Lodge took on the project of clearing the path in order that residents including those using wheelchairs had access to the lake. Sadly, as we go to print we have been told that due to cost issues the Great House will close this July.



Ian, Maureen and Tony put their back into clearing the path for residents of the Great House



Litter pickers from Lansdowne Lodge of Unity are ready to go

Members of the Lansdowne Lodge of Unity No.626 gave up two hours of their time on a Saturday morning in March to assist the local Chippenham community in the Great British Spring Clean by litter picking in Monkton Park, Chippenham.

The working tools of a litter picker were provided and the intrepid band set to work. After a surprisingly physical two hours the job was done, and the park was in a far better state than before with 43 bags of rubbish being recovered which included such items as a skeleton leg (thankfully made of plastic and not a real one) and 22 bags of recyclable material.



Border Lodge celebrate with Baden Powell Scout troop

In 2017 Border Lodge meeting in Ludgershall achieved significantly more than the planned 300 hours of support to the local community, and made a decision to continue with the 300 hours programme during 2018. They donated money to the local Baden Powell Scout troop to enable them to buy a new flag of St George – The flag was presented on St George's Day (picture above). The Lodge has also decided to make a contribution to the 1914–18 War 100 Years Commemoration group towards the construction of a new garden in the centre of Ludgershall, which will have as its centrepiece a mosaic in the form of a poppy.

I was appointed to the office of Provincial Grand Charity Steward in 2014 and sprung quickly into action, holding the first of what has now become the regular annual charity presentation evenings; and what a success it was. I was also extensively involved with the MCF's Community Awards Scheme in which £3 million was donated to a number of charities throughout the country. Wiltshire was allocated £50,000 and I proposed four super organisations who went head to head in a public vote with the winner receiving £25,000. In fact there were four winners as each of the charities received a substantial sum from the programme.

In one of my last jobs before I leave office in October, I had the opportunity to speak with Duncan Washbrook, Legacy Manager of the MCF who told me something about his work and the importance of Legacy Giving. He began by reminding me that despite our best intentions, for many of us, the annual psychological battle to keep New Year's resolutions alive probably ended some months ago. This is what Duncan had to say about Legacy Giving.

"I have a suggestion for a resolution that should be easy to make and achievable. If you haven't got a will, make a belated promise to write one. Contrary to popular belief, making a will is not akin to signing your own death warrant! It is sensible financial planning for the future.

It's never fun to think about our own eventual mortal demise, and yet there is no getting away from the fact it is a club of which we are all going to become members. However, a club you definitely do not want to be a member of is the intestate club. To join, you need to be one of the third of adults in the UK that dies every year without having made a will – known as dying intestate.

If you die intestate, a set of inflexible rules dictate how your estate will be distributed and to whom. As you've worked so hard during your life to attain the savings, property, etc. that represent your personal wealth, why would you not want to decide for yourself who gets what after you're gone?

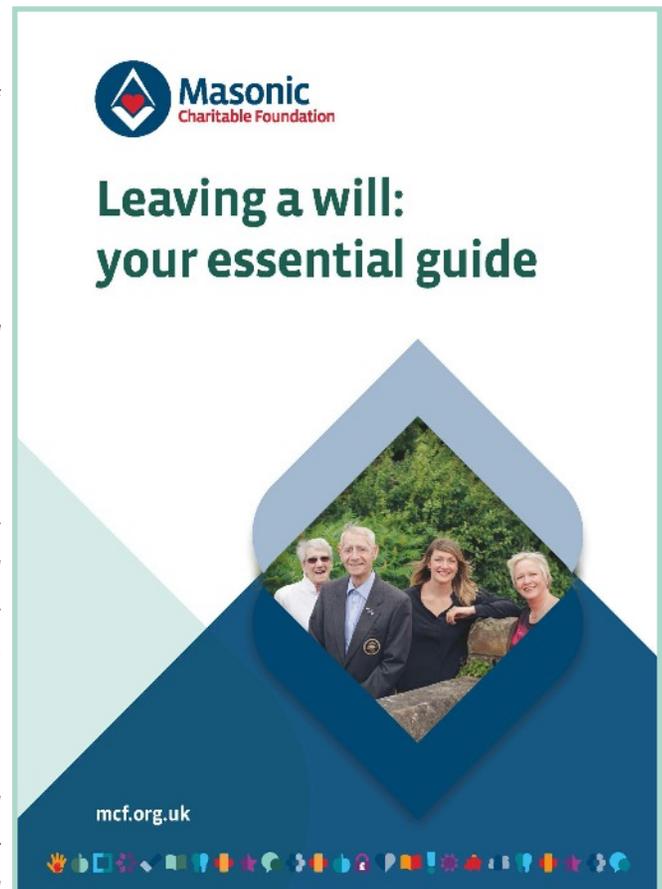
Under intestacy rules, any unmarried partners are ignored, however loving and long their relationship may have been. Step-children are ignored under intestacy rules too. Even if you plan to leave everything to your spouse, without a will, your loved one as beneficiary becomes responsible for attaining 'grants of letters of administration' via the probate registry, which involves an interview and much bureaucratic form filling. It will delay the release of funds and place added strain on your loved one who is likely already fragile and grieving at this time.

You can't leave a gift to charity without a will. Did you know that if you leave at least 10% of your taxable estate to charity you could reduce any inheritance tax liability against your estate?

If you're still not sure it's time to make a new resolution and make your will, take a look at the Masonic Charitable Foundation website. We have lots of information about will-making and legacy giving, and a useful downloadable guide. We even have an online will making service in collaboration with Law Vault, which is available at www.mcf.org.uk/legacy

I nearly forgot. Did you know that on average people that have written a will live longer than those who haven't? And people who leave a gift to a charitable cause in their will live longer still. Make a promise to look after yourself, those you love and the causes you support – make a will."

Duncan Washbrook is the Legacy Manager for the Masonic Charitable Foundation. Contact legacy@mcf.org.uk



**Generosity consists not only of the sum given, but also the manner in which it is bestowed.
Planned giving is an easy way to manage your charitable donations**

'...do you suffer from a wiggly thumb?'



Have you ever been affected by the dreadful affliction of wiggly thumb? It generally occurs very early in a Masonic ceremony, just at that point when the Master intones "Brethren, the Lodge being duly formed, before I declare it open....." and suddenly for no apparent reason there is a frenzied dance where thumbs are up, down or even something in between, before a sense of peace and tranquility is arrived at, but still no universal agreement on whether the thumb is in the right position. So what is the correct position of the thumb, and indeed is there a historical and ritual accuracy of the use of 'thumb up, thumb down or even thumb covered' in respect of a sign of reverence as used during a prayer, and is there any way you can be cured of 'wiggly thumb'?

The late Bro Harry Carr suggests in his well regarded book **'The Freemason at work'** that the use of a sign of reverence has no place in Masonic ritual, because neither is it a sign of recognition, nor is it ever 'entrusted' to a candidate during the Degree work; whereas the Sign of Fidelity is most assuredly entrusted to a Mason. Carr goes further, while acknowledging a sign of reverence to be a recognised sign (as opposed to a sign of recognition) it is not a Masonic sign and is a development of the Sign of Fidelity as mentioned below, or a lazy attempt at the fidelity sign. Perhaps another way of putting it is to say that these two signs are similar but with a distinct difference. The Sign of Fidelity is 'authorised' and has its own place in Masonic history, whereas a sign of reverence cannot be traced 'historically'. Nor is a sign of reverence authorised and approved by Grand Lodge.

In Prichard's exposure of 1730 the Sign of Fidelity is mentioned with the right hand noted as being in the 'customary place' no mention is made of either fingers or digits. Prichard also indicated that the Sign of Fidelity was once the posture adopted by the Wardens when the Worshipful Master asked them their respective positions in the lodge during the Closing. It is probably the case, that over time the Sign of Fidelity was used as a general posture for prayers and during the obligation, but was modified by the loss of a digit (the thumb being kept parallel with the fingers during prayers).

Carr presumed, and perhaps quite rightly, that the use of the Sign of Fidelity as a mark of respect was adopted in some lodges as 'a general posture for all Brethren during Prayers and Obligations, and in that case it was probably modified (in the 19th century) by the 'loss of a digit' simply to draw a distinction between the postures for different parts of the proceedings'. Carr continues his discussion by assuming that although the earliest mention of the sign made no reference to digits, the 'squared' position has been established practice in England for well over 200 years, and the same sign was certainly in use in France and England during portions of other ceremonies. However, it cut little ice with Bro Carr that a manufactured sign of reverence had been used for such a lengthy period of time and he held an uncompromising approach to its use. Bro Carr supported by Dr E Cartwright another eminent specialist in Masonic ritual, took the view that while widely used, that did not make the practice of a sign of reverence in any way correct, nor in Carr's opinion did Freemasons *"have any right to introduce this practice as a new and wholly unauthorised sign, regardless of what title it was given or the purpose for which it was used."* Strong words indeed, and yet even today, for many, custom and practice allied to their concept of what constitutes tradition, remain important factors in restricting what an equal number see as the natural evolutionary process of change. What do you think?

In **Emulation Ritual** the Brethren are instructed to stand to order with the sign of the degree being conferred. It also clearly states that Brethren should stand to order with a sign of reverence during prayers. But what is this sign of reverence and what does the Ritual Book have to say about the configuration of the sign; amazingly it is silent in every respect. It simply doesn't offer any explanation as to how it should be made, this being in stark contrast to every other Masonic sign where clear and precise instructions are to be given to every candidate in each of the three degrees. What, if anything, should be read into this omission? I suggest that we should not get too 'hung up' on the minutiae of detail but look instead to what we understand by the practice. In simple terms the Sign of Fidelity is properly used at certain times to confirm an obligation whereas a sign of reverence is to acknowledge our faith and respect to that Supreme Being to whom we must learn to submit and humbly to adore.

However let's get back to 'wiggly thumb' and ask what to do with that elusive thumb, where should it be - down or covered? I think, we should rely on the knowledge we have, which is that there is no mention anywhere of the thumb being covered and this seems to be an unauthorised local practice, therefore Brethren let me commend to you the thought that it's thumb up for the Sign of Fidelity and thumb down (parallel with the fingers) for a sign of reverence made during the saying of a prayer.



Our front cover shows Master of Gooch Lodge No.1295 Mark Neilson who despite having no previous yachting experience signed up to sail for 27 days with a crew of amateur sailors in The Clipper Race, a 5,000-mile transit from South Africa to Western Australia.

Important information.

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If there is one event in the Masonic calendar I do really look forward to, it is the Provincial Grand Lodge meeting held at The City Hall in Salisbury. However, it appears that in spite of numerous mentions there are some Brethren who do not know that every year there is a Provincial Grand Lodge meeting. Brethren, it's the first Thursday in October every year, rain or shine. Please may I urge you all to put this year's event in your diary it will be held on **Thursday 4th October 2018**. This year's meeting will not only feature the Provincial Grand Master Investing those Brethren receiving first appointments and promotions in Provincial Grand Rank, but will also witness a very special occasion ceremony when WBro Simon Leighfield will be appointed, obligated and invested as Assistant Provincial Grand Master. It's not every year you get the opportunity to witness such an important event, so, if you want to see and hear something special, now's your chance. Don't miss it!

Talking of attending Provincial Grand Lodge, can I remind you that all Master Masons are 'summoned' to attend and in doing so you represent your Lodge at what is one of the most important meetings of the year.

Our new mobile display unit is 'doing the rounds' this summer having recently been seen in Downton, Chippenham and Swindon, and soon to visit Calne for the first time. It is available to support you in promoting your Lodge and Wiltshire Freemasonry. If you wish the display unit to enhance and support an event you are organising please contact Paul Brown via email at display@pglwilts.org.uk

There are some superb articles in the Summer edition, including Michael Lee's informative piece on *Emulation...our ritual*. Paul Sharp continues his four part analysis '*1717 - decoding the epoch*' and Ian Priest asks the difficult question - "*have you considered leaving Wiltshire Freemasonry something in your will?*" It's a tough question, but one which every charity is asking. Please don't feel offended if you are asked and please don't think it means we don't want you to be around for years to come - we do! Michael Lee is Nomad and suggests '*Visiting should be fun*' plus he explores the meaning behind the words '*Exchanging the Sceptre for the Trowel*' and finally your editor mentions that dreadful affliction '*Wiggly Thumb*' and offers a view for further discussion and debate.

If you have a story to tell or would like us to publish your article in Across the Plain send it to editor@pglwilts.org.uk

Note from the editor: Articles appearing in the Monthly Newsletter or Across the Plain have a number of purposes, to inform, to educate, to entertain and to challenge. Not every piece written will meet with universal approbation but neither are they intended to offend. The editor is delighted to receive your views on any article appearing in the Newsletter or Magazine.

How are we doing?

W Bro John Badger PAGDC, PrGReg

	No.	Name	± 1990	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	NOW	
	355	Royal Sussex Lo E	93.8	64	68	67	74	68	71	60	
	1295	Gooch	63.8	94	80	75	69	62	61	60	
	1533	Loyalty	49.5	95	96	81	64	59	46	47	
	2888	Saint Aldhelm	61.5	104	95	84	77	73	64	64	
	4037	Remembrance	73.6	72	72	67	55	56	49	53	
	4687	Pleydell	82.3	79	76	77	68	64	64	65	
North	7525	Calley	77.8	72	69	69	69	62	57	56	
	8204	Harry C Preater	46.7	75	73	65	45	39	36	35	
	8388	Good Fellowship	79.3	58	56	57	49	43	44	46	
	8435	New Temple	89.1	55	57	46	47	43	46	49	
	8692	Methuen	82.5	40	44	41	36	34	33	33	
	8788	George Duke of Kent	86.3	51	50	47	44	40	46	44	
	8977	Vastern	111.6	43	48	49	50	50	46	48	
	9009	Highworth	67.3	52	51	50	50	41	35	35	
	North Sub-Total			72.9	954	935	875	797	734	698	695
		626	Lansdowne	38.5	109	82	78	65	51	36	42
	632	Concord	98.6	72	68	71	69	72	72	71	
	663	Fidelity	46.6	118	110	88	70	66	53	55	
	1271	Friendship and Unity	67.0	100	101	96	82	69	70	67	
	2644	Chaloner	100.0	72	68	61	62	61	72	72	
	4714	Saint Edmund	95.7	69	58	69	70	60	58	66	
Central	5908	Clarendon	69.4	62	57	61	56	49	45	43	
	6616	Corsham	76.3	93	89	80	72	64	66	71	
	8432	Vale of Avon	67.4	43	40	39	32	27	26	29	
	8547	Broade Forde	73.1	52	59	56	46	39	35	38	
	8747	Moonraker	85.7	70	76	64	62	61	60	60	
	9090	Agriculture	114.3	63	66	77	76	67	69	72	
	9548	Wiltshire Summer	69.4		36	47	33	31	23	25	
	9773	Fiat Lux	77.1				48	38	30	37	
Central Sub-Total			88.7	923	910	887	843	755	715	748	
	586	Elias de Derham	46.2	106	110	110	94	66	47	49	
	1478	Longleat	87.1	85	74	75	73	69	67	74	
	2227	White Horse	72.9	70	65	65	58	43	44	51	
	3129	Border	76.5	81	83	77	73	73	58	62	
	4451	Radnor	40.8	71	72	64	59	48	28	29	
	5137	Sarum	25.3	75	47	36	30	25	17	19	
South	5955	City	86.7	60	59	60	56	54	52	52	
	6114	Stonehenge	81.5	65	65	59	59	52	51	53	
	8620	Wyvern	92.3	52	41	35	46	50	46	48	
	8718	Tisbury	128.0	25	24	31	34	36	32	32	
	9035	Forget Me Not	64.5	76	74	65	63	55	47	49	
	9064	Downton	107.1	42	49	50	36	35	39	45	
	9540	Brothers In Arms	194.3		35	43	45	59	61	68	
9587	Innocence And Morality	141.9		31	36	41	45	46	44		
South Sub-total			81.4	808	829	806	767	710	635	675	
	335	Rectitude	88.1	59	52	56	42	36	52	52	
	6731	Wilts Masters	141.2	102	78	77	128	145	163	144	
Total Membership =				2846	2804	2701	2577	2380	2263	2308	
Average Lodge Membership =				71.15	65.21	62.81	58.57	54.09	51.43	52.45	

Data is as taken from the Annual Returns for the end of the year shown.

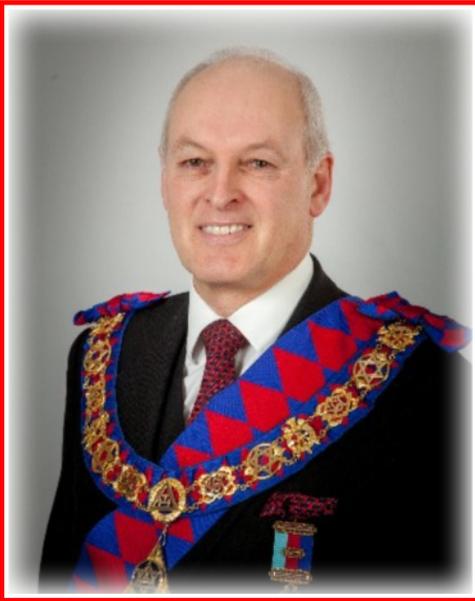
The % indicates the percentage the membership NOW has increased or fallen since 1990.

A value of 100% represents no change, <100 is a reduction, >100 is an increase.

The Same or a Gain of 1990 Level. (8)	Fall between 75% ~ 99% of 1990 Level. (18)	Fall between 50% ~ 75% of 1990 Level. (11)	Fall to < 50% of 1990 Level. (7)
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The Grand Superintendent



I want to begin my comments in this Summer edition of Across the Plain, by thanking the many Companions and members of the Craft for their congratulations on my active appointment in Craft Freemasonry. After a wonderful year as an active Provincial Junior Grand Deacon I was not expecting to be offered another active role, so when I was asked to become Deputy Grand Sword Bearer it was quite a shock. I was also honoured to be asked by the First Grand Principal to become a member of the Committee of General Purposes for Supreme Grand Chapter. I really do consider these appointments to be an honour for the Province of Wiltshire and I trust you will too. The good wishes and support of Brethren and Companions who attended the Annual Investiture was very much appreciated.

When someone asked me which of my Masonic experiences was the most memorable, I think he was surprised when I responded by saying "There was no doubt whatsoever in my mind, it was my Initiation into Freemasonry". Perhaps he expected me to choose between being Invested as Grand Superintendent, receiving

Grand Rank and being made Master of my Lodge for the first time; and while these experiences were indeed memorable, I recognise they were only able to occur after I became a Freemason. So it is, that becoming a Freemason is the most memorable of my Masonic experiences.

I was also pleased to hear of a newly Exalted Companion who recently said "I'm so glad I became a Freemason, otherwise I would never have been able to join the Holy Royal Arch". This type of comment confirms my deeply held view that Freemasonry is a journey which has numerous destinations and various routes to reach them, and the choice of destination is entirely up to the individual.

In 2018 the Most Excellent First Principal HRH The Duke Of Kent was pleased to Appoint E Comp Michael Mossman and give first appointments to E Comps Richard Palmer and Brian Amos. I was pleased to see them receiving their Collars from the First Grand Principal at Supreme Grand Chapter held in Freemasons' Hall, Great Queen Street, London on Thursday 26th April.

One of the most pleasing aspects of being your Grand Superintendent is being able to recognise the contribution made to the Province by individual Companions, first by promoting Companions to Provincial Chapter Rank, and secondly in recommending Companions for Supreme Grand Chapter Rank. At the Annual Convocation of Provincial Grand Chapter which was once again held in Melksham, I was pleased to make a number of key appointments to the Provincial team, including E Comp Simon Ellingham **PGStB** who is the new Second Provincial Grand Principal. I offer my congratulations to Simon and my heartfelt thanks to E Comp Peter Read **PGStB** who has served the Province so well during his many years in Royal Arch Masonry.

I look forward to working with the newly appointed and promoted Grand Officers and the Companions who form the 'active' team for this new Masonic year. I would remind you of my own personal philosophy with regard to our Order which is simply that - Royal Arch Masonry is to be enjoyed!

In order to improve our current Royal Arch Representatives scheme, a Working Group chaired by the Deputy Grand Superintendent have made a number of recommendations which will enhance the profile of our Representatives and the Royal Arch in our Craft Lodges. These recommendations have been endorsed in principle by the Provincial Grand Master, and were discussed at a Royal Arch Representatives seminar held on the 5th June at the Calne Masonic Centre.

Companions I sincerely thank those individuals and Chapters that have supported the Children at Christmas initiative. Since our last Annual Convocation we have procured three special ergonomically designed chairs for the John McNeill Opportunity Centre for Children with learning difficulties. These were certainly much needed items which the charity could not afford to buy.

Are you interested in joining a local Chapter ?

www.pglwiltts.org.uk/royal-arch/royal-arch-news/

“aim to make change happen”



One of our new Royal Arch pop-ups designed and printed by
Comp Ian Lever - Highworth Chapter

It was a privilege to attend the annual convocation of Gooch Chapter No.1295 where I received a cheque for £1,000 for the Grand Superintendents 'Children at Christmas Appeal

I am sure you will recall on many occasions when responding to my toast I have encouraged you to relay to our Craft members how much we all enjoy this Order; something must be working Companions as the Provincial Grand Registrar has advised an increase in membership for the second consecutive year. However, we must not become complacent as there is still much to do.

The Provincial Grand Master in his column refers to our wonderful volunteers, those Companions and Brethren who 'go the extra mile' and are ever present to help with any task, I really would like to say a heartfelt thank you to each of you for everything you do.

The next step for a Master Mason

Complete your journey

The Order of the Holy Royal Arch, more familiarly known as Chapter, is sometimes referred to as the fourth step in 'pure Antient Masonry' However, I prefer to think of it as simply the 'next step'.

It is closely associated with the Craft and is an extension of the preceding three degrees in Craft Freemasonry.

In the Royal Arch, the Exaltation ceremony provides an added spiritual dimension and follows on from the Master Mason's third degree by recovering that which was lost. It can justly be held to be the very essence of Freemasonry, the foundation and keystone of the whole Masonic structure. It has been said that *"the Royal Arch is the root, heart and marrow of Freemasonry."* Every Master Mason should take the opportunity of discovering these qualities for himself by joining the Holy Royal Arch.

The ceremonies in the Holy Royal Arch are colourful, thought provoking and uplifting. They are based on the legend surrounding the rebuilding of King Solomon's Temple and invoke simultaneous sensations of humility and our dependence on our unseen creator.

However, it is important to recognise the words of the Deputy Grand Master Jonathan Spence, who wrote *"in pure Antient Freemasonry [including the Holy Royal Arch] we belong to a secular, non-religious organisation that....fails to meet any single one of the tests of a religion"*.

One of the great joys of Freemasonry is its infinite capacity to amaze, and having been Raised to the sublime degree of a Master Mason one might think 'this is the peak' - might I suggest it's but a step along the way.

If you have any questions or would like to know more about joining the Royal Arch, then please speak to your Lodge Royal Arch representative whose name appears on the Summons and in the Provincial Reference Book.

With every best wish

John

Talk to your Lodge Royal Arch Representative

www.pglwilts.org.uk/royal-arch/royal-arch-news/

Experiencing the blistering winds and churning seas of the Southern Ocean would be a test of endurance for the toughest of sailors. Imagine how much more difficult and nerve wracking that would be if like Swindon Freemason Mark Neilson you had no previous 'serious' yachting experience before signing up to sail for 27 days with a crew of amateur sailors in The Clipper Race; a test of skill, physical stamina and mental strength, definitely not for the faint hearted.

For Mark, a member and Master of Gooch Lodge No.1295, facing 80ft swells and 60mph winds on a leg of the 5,000-mile race from South Africa to Western Australia with just four weeks of training under his belt, was to become a once in a lifetime, never to be forgotten experience.

Managing director of a local recruitment firm and professional boxing promoter, Mark said: "Sometimes we were going upwind into the waves in the middle of nowhere, with the whole front of the boat being lifted into the air and smashing back down over and over, it was relentless. Training off the Isle of Wight doesn't really prepare you for it. There were times when I thought 'Why am I doing this?' And while I didn't enjoy every minute, I don't regret doing it at all, it was a truly amazing life enhancing experience.'

"You could see everything in the sky because there was nothing blocking the horizon - every sunrise, every sunset, all the beautiful stars - things you can't take a photo of and which will stay in my memory forever".

Mark, the son of heavyweight boxer Eddie Neilson, was born and bred in Swindon and now lives in Cirencester.

He said: "I'd thought about learning to sail because I wanted to take my family on holiday to the Greek islands and I've always liked a challenge. I didn't realise how difficult it would be, it seems surreal now that I'm back at work".



"I made some good friends on the boat, we faced a lot of adversity together"

"I didn't enjoy every minute but I don't regret doing it at all"



"I made some good friends on that boat, we faced a lot of adversity together, my family are proud of me and I'm proud of myself, it's an amazing achievement, although being away from my wife Emma and three young children Alicia, Gracie and Sonny was very hard. They saw me off in Cape Town and my wife saw me return in Australia, it was very emotional. I looked like a proper grizzly old sea dog when I came back with a tan, a weathered face and a big beard!"

Having returned to dry land and home, Mark has been Installed as the Master of Gooch Lodge No.1295, and when your editor asked him for his thoughts on the ceremony, Mark said: "Having experienced what I did in the Southern

Ocean, I was sure nothing that I could possibly experience thereafter could compare and certainly not be so demanding. I really was wrong. The Installation ceremony was a really moving occasion especially as my father was present and took part".

In a previous page I have written about the work of the Masonic Charitable Foundation and in particular their Legacy Giving Campaign, which can best be summarised as 'Make a Will'. The most pleasing part of the Provincial Grand Charity Steward's job is to select charities to receive a donation from the Province and to advise Lodge Charity Stewards of suitable charities. I say it's a good part of the job because we all like to give and as I remind many members 'charity is in a freemason's DNA'. Of course there is a downside, and that occurs when I cannot offer help to a cause which I know would benefit from an injection of cash. The reason I can't offer any assistance is simply due to the fact I don't have a 'magic money tree' and while resources are finite the need appears infinite. I'm sure you all would recognise that dilemma. So what to do?

Wiltshire is a small Province, but as we have said many times before, it has a big heart, and I am constantly amazed at the generosity of its members. Because of our size we tend to live very much from hand to mouth in terms of our charity giving; and we do need to address this for the future.

At Provincial Grand Lodge in October 2017 the Provincial Grand Master launched 'The Wiltshire Charitable Fund'. The aim of the fund is straightforward; to build a capital base sufficient to produce a level of income which can be distributed to worthy causes. It's not a new idea, many other Provinces have similar schemes and the MCF is a good example of how the system works, with many national charities recently taking the opportunity to advise their supporters of the increasing importance of Legacy Giving.

As with many schemes such as *The Wiltshire Charitable Fund*, initial funding is the key to future success; and that's where Legacy Giving plays a huge role, as it is only with the seed capital gained from larger than usual donations, that a new fund can realistically attract interest income sufficient to distribute meaningful grants and awards.

Of course, it is legitimate and right to ask why not simply distribute funds as they are received, and there is no single answer to the question. What we know is that planned giving and legacy giving can provide certainty. Planned inward movement of funds allows for a similar planned outward movement, and this enables legacy funding for the future. This, in turn provides a level of security to charities and good causes; almost guaranteeing their grant income by future proofing interest income from Legacy Giving.

As disposable incomes have been affected by external

circumstances, many charities have suffered from lack of donor income. It is true that some charities have been caught in a tsunami of mistrust, especially those who receive significant funding support from the government; and as the government doesn't actually have any money of its own, that means the taxpayer. Whenever I am asked to provide funds for a charity or good cause, I always ask a number of searching questions. The first question is always 'what does this charity do? Quickly followed with 'and does it fit within a Freemasons philosophy?' For this reason you are not likely to see the RSPCA or the Dogs Trust appearing on a Masonic Lodge charity list, and it's not because we don't like dogs - I am the proud owner of a dog and he would be bereft to think I didn't care about him!

However, we would support the work of charities such as Guide Dogs for the Blind and its counterpart for Hearing Loss; indeed any charity providing 'assistance' dogs would get my vote as I am sure they would get yours and those of your individual Lodges.

Choosing a charity to support isn't at all difficult, after all there are thousands to choose from. Selecting a charity or worthy cause that resonates with Freemasonry can be a little more challenging. Have you ever thought how your Lodge arrives at which charities it will support? Is it based on the whim of the moment, when just before raffle tickets are sold a huddle of 'the wise' takes place and as the pontifical smoke fills the room a decision is announced with funereal intonation, suggesting serious and long deliberation was applied to ascertain the appropriateness of the choice made. Or is it made based on an emotional encounter made only moments before?

Charitable giving should surely be carefully considered with various elements being taken into account. After all the money you give is money you have received from your members and your guests and as we oft repeat it is 'gratefully received and *will be* faithfully applied. Just as it should be.



The Masonic Charitable Foundation is funded entirely through the generosity of Freemasons and their families, it is one of the largest grant making charities in the country.

.....decoding the epoch

In this the third and penultimate part of '1717 - DECODING THE EPOCH', Bro Paul Sharp of Gooch Lodge No.1295 will examine the selection of the 'Goose and Gridiron' tavern as the venue for the formal launch of Freemasonry, and ask the question, was it simply chance or was there a reason for choosing this venue?

During the planning of a single memorable event, it is common practice to carefully select a venue in order to further enhance the significance of the occasion. Nowadays, many factors are considered including location, parking, facilities available and cost. Some of these factors may have been taken into consideration in 1717. However, the founders were men of influence and science and therefore they may well have looked beyond these traditional parameters.

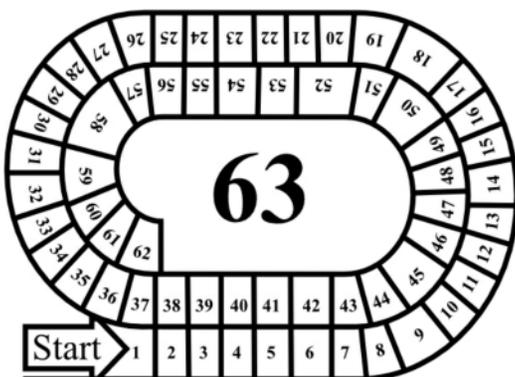
The previous hundred turbulent years in English history had witnessed considerable disruption and change. This included a revival in Numerology and Alchemy – now relatively safe subjects to study and discuss, at least in private. We are taught that Freemasonry is a peculiar system; 'veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols'. The various interests of the founders are well documented. It is therefore the opinion of this author that the venue was chosen for the hidden meanings in its name, which would enhance the significance of the event. 'All things are ready, if our mind be so'; let us begin our analysis with the dictionary definitions.

Goose: 'Any of numerous wild or domesticated, web-footed swimming birds of the family Anatidae, especially of the genera Anser and Branta, most of which are larger and have a longer neck and legs than the ducks.'

Gridiron: 'A utensil consisting of parallel metal bars on which to broil meat or other food.'

Literally taken, the 'Goose and Gridiron' is simply an eating house where meat, poultry, fish and other items are prepared on a griddle or grid. Maybe, but imagine yourself in the fertile mind of an 18th century student of Alchemy and the Occult.

The Goose: The Goose is a migratory bird. Should a goose become injured, another goose will leave the migrating flock to stay with it until it has recovered or until it takes its final breath. In Celtic Tradition, the Holy Spirit is represented by a 'wild goose'. The wild goose reveals a spirit which is passionate, noisy, and courageous. A reminder that God's spirit cannot be tamed or contained.



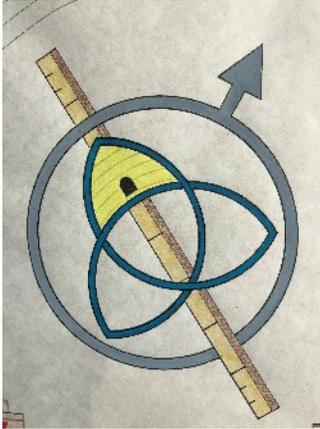
Game of the Goose: The origins of this 16th Century board game are uncertain but its invention has by some been attributed to the Knights Templar. The Templars' stated aim was to defend and protect all the pilgrims during their journeys to Holy places such as Jerusalem and Santiago de Compostela. The Royal Game of the Goose is said to be the map of El Camino. The 63 playing fields (squares) in the game are similar to different stages and landmarks in El Camino. Some of the outstanding points of El Camino in the Royal Game are; Puente la Reina in Jaca, first bridge of the game, Hospital de San Marcos en León (jail in the game) and Finisterre, the mother goose and final stage.

It is well known that many alchemists were settled along El Camino and that others travelled along this initiatory journey in search of the secrets of Alchemy, looking for places that were full of wisdom and sacred. These places were marked on the board with geese. The rules of the game state that if the first throw of the dice is a five and four ($5 + 4 = 9$), the player immediately moves to playing field (square) 53. So, what is so special about the number 9? Some suggest that the significance of this number relates to the Mother Goose being the finale (a symbol of wisdom), which is in the field 63 ($6 + 3 = 9$) and that there were 9 founders of the Knights Templar.

Old Mother Goose: Charles Perrault's name remains generally unrecognizable, yet his stories, first published in 1697 (including 'Mother Goose') are anything but. Hidden within are claimed to be the hermetic teachings of Alchemy and Freemasonry. The goose has long been an important esoteric symbol in Western Mystery tradition. Mother Goose carries the hermetic symbols and secrets concealed of what is called 'the language of the birds'. This embraces the Kabbalah, Astrology and Alchemy. The language of the birds is considered a secret and perfect language – a key to perfect knowledge. This author continues to research its relationship with Freemasonry.

Bro Paul Sharp - Gooch Lodge No.1295

Iron: The use of Iron dates back about 5,000 years. The second most abundant metal element in the earth's crust, it is crucial to the survival of living organisms. In plants, it plays a role in the production of chlorophyll. In animals, it is a component of haemoglobin, a protein in blood that carries oxygen from the lungs to the tissues in the body. Having been used to make the swords for the crusades, it is also known as 'holy metal'.



Symbol: The symbol for Iron (one of the seven metals of Alchemy) will be familiar. Its use includes the symbol for the male and the planet Mars. The fourth planet from the Sun, Mars is named after the Roman god of war. Often described as the red planet, the colour being due to the prevalence of iron oxide on its surface. Mars represents masculinity and youth – the action planet. It portrays energy, passion, drive and determination and commands us to stand up, be noticed and achieve. Desirable attributes indeed but if not controlled, they have the potential to be destructive - the imperfections of mankind.

This author may have failed to convince you the reader, that the 'Goose and Gridiron' was to our founders, much more than an appropriately named eating house. It would be easy to dismiss the hypothesis presented herein as simple coincidence. But before you do - consider the following.

- What if our founders had identified esoteric meanings so significant, that the 'Goose and Gridiron' simply had to be the venue of choice?
- What if that meaning is the journey through life in search of knowledge (the Royal Game of the Goose) of imperfect man (Iron, Mars) - the morality of which could be improved by a dedication to Masonic studies focused on seeking 'guidance' from, and 'oneness' with, the holy spirit - the Goose?

Such studies would have been a heresy in the eyes of the church and therefore would have needed to be conducted in secret.

The Sarsen Club



Sarsen Club members and guests enjoy a day out at the Bombay Sapphire Gin Distillery

Celebrating 200 years of Freemasonry



Masonry in Swindon and Wiltshire



Images provided by: W Bro Simon Grove

Visiting is fun, make sure it stays so.....

The Visitor stands to reply to his Toast. We all sit back, at ease, ready to smile at the usual pleasantries. Before too many words have passed he will have praised our Lodge for the warmth of its welcome, he will have congratulated the officers on the excellence of the ceremony and, dutifully, he will ask to be invited again. The familiarity with these words though should never disguise their truth. Visiting – to see old friends, to make new ones, to admire a ceremony, to learn from it – is the essence of the wider companionship encouraged by the First Degree and, it would be no exaggeration to say, Freemasonry would be very much the poorer without it.

The practice of visiting has a long and noble tradition. While today it is fun, in years gone by it was duty. The 1583 Old Charges state that *every [operative] Mason shall receive and cherish every stranger when they come to their country and set them to work... he shall set him a fortnight to work and give him his pay. If he has not got any stones to prepare he shall refresh him with money to go to the next Lodge.* The 1723 Constitutions go further: *...to cultivate a good understanding amongst Freemasons, some members out of every Lodge shall be deputed to visit other Lodges as often as shall be thought convenient...*

In 1778 the Minutes of the Lodge of Emulation No.21 recorded that visitors (from the Tuscan Lodge) were received and six weeks later Emulation returned the compliment and so 'exchange visits' between Lodges and Provinces have their first recorded origins.

It is worth mentioning that during 'his year' the Worshipful Master is also the Lodge Ambassador or Representative to the other Lodges within the Province. This raises two important questions. How many Lodges should a Master attempt to visit in his year and what if any is their order of importance? As ever in Freemasonry the basic rule of applying common sense applies. While the PrGM encourages every Worshipful Master to visit as many Lodges as possible during his year, you are not expected to adopt a pattern of visiting if it is any way detrimental to your personal, family or business interests. Only if and when you are free to visit should you attempt to do so.

There are 44 Lodges within Wiltshire each holding around six to eight meetings a year so you have, say, some 300 meetings to choose from. The Provincial Year Book contains a list of every Lodge meeting, every date and every location. In addition Lodge Installation meetings are featured in the calendar on the front page of the Provincial Website. Each Lodge Secretary receives timely Agendas from most nearby Lodges, if you are interested in visiting any Lodge simply ask him to send you copies.

While a recent Master of a Lodge managed to visit some 38 lodges during his year this was exceptional. Your own personal circumstances will obviously and always determine what is practicable for you, and for most Brethren without business commitments, enjoying retirement and not wishing to consult a divorce lawyer, 20 or so visits may be a reasonable target.

Should you choose to visit an Installation meeting or a 'Working meeting' or a mix of the two? While a mix is possibly ideal, if forced to choose then I would recommend attending the Installation Meetings. There are several reasons. You will have a frequent opportunity of seeing the Provincial Team at work – and you may well be in it one day! If another Lodge member has Provincial Office you can possibly share the travelling together. It can also provide an opportunity at the bar to get to know the Provincial 'team' better and of course they can enjoy your company too.

Possibly the strongest argument though concerns 'the Club'. Most Masters in their year try to attend as many Installations as possible. You therefore get to know the other Masters well and by your year's end know them very well indeed. Friendships spring up and for the rest of your Masonic career you can exchange private visits with each other's 'Lodge working meetings'. In a few years time you will I hope all be promoted or appointed together and these bonds of friendship grow even stronger.

There are also a few 'yes - buts' that should perhaps be mentioned. Don't underestimate the cost. Adding together the meal, alms, raffles, wine, 'hospitality drinks' let alone travelling expenses you will be budgeting for £30 or so a visit.

Finally, let me offer a word on the subject of visiting Freemasons' Hall in London. Our friends who use Taylor's Ritual can be heard exhorting the newly appointed Wardens of the Lodge *'...it is also your duty as well as your privilege to attend the Quarterly Communications of Grand Lodge that this Lodge may be properly represented'*. While it may appear a long journey, it is a most worthwhile one and will allow you time to marvel at the building which is the headquarters of our Fraternity.

So, enjoy your visiting, fly the flag – but always remember to keep it all within limits.

Have you ever noticed that the title page of your little 'dark blue book' says simply '*The Perfect Ceremony of Craft Masonry*' but then adds, significantly, '*for Emulation Workers*'. What other options might there have been?

To mirror operative practice the Emulation Lodge of Improvement established a tradition of relying solely on memory for its ritual and so for 150 years or so it never permitted a printed format. Indeed the first Emulation ritual book as such was not published until as recently as 1969.

However, Provincial lodges unable to match the Emulation Lodge's practice of weekly meetings to rehearse the three Degrees required some additional form of printed assistance based on, even if not authorised by, the oral Emulation ritual.

Amongst the earliest available printed variants were, for example, a (very popular) 'Exposure' printed by Richard Carlile in 1825; a more reliable oral transcription by an Emulation member, George Claret, in 1838; the 'Nigerian' with admirably full red rubric or 'stage directions' for isolated colonial lodges; and the 'Perfect' which is the most comprehensive, incorporating not only the Emulation ritual but also the traditional songs, Addresses and Lectures, it is well worth obtaining a copy if you can.

A question I am often asked is do we work true Emulation in the Wiltshire lodges adopting it? The answer is of course a resounding 'yes' accompanied very closely with the caveat – 'as closely as we can'. What changes have we allowed to creep in? There is perhaps little or none in the wording, save it is clear that some Lodges have taken a perverse delight in adding, removing or changing some words. However, in part because of the floor dimensions of the various Temples and the increasing emphasis on 'Retention through participation' much working is shared and corresponding changes to the ritual book's 'red rubric' have occurred. (Rubric only means 'a set of instructions or rules')

Let me summarise them: The Emulation Lodge of Improvement assumes that the Chair will be occupied by just one Installed Master throughout the ceremony and that he will conduct it *in its entirety*. There is *no* delegation of Tracing Boards, of Working Tools, of Charges etc. While 'Emulation' permitted the Master's work to be delegated to other *PMs and the Wardens*, in pursuit of wider 'ownership' of the ceremonies the Master's work is now often delegated to other MMs.

For consistency one slight change is often made after the Obligation. The printed ritual requires the Sn. to be cut and Deacons to lower their wands on completion of the WM's words. However the penal sign is widely held until the VSL has actually been sealed with a ks. as it is only then that a serious promise has become a SO.

The office of Director of Ceremonies is not to be found in Emulation working. Such an office did not exist in 1813 and when assistance was helpful a senior Past Master undertook the appropriate duties.

Silver Matchbox: The words '*Silver Matchbox*' when working Emulation are sometimes whispered in awe. This is a reference to the pleasing custom in the Emulation Lodge of Improvement of presenting an engraved Silver Matchbox Cover to any Past Master who completes from the WM's Chair *an entire ceremony* faultlessly in both word and action. I emphasise, *the entire ceremony has to be faultless without a single prompt*. In its first 150 years, 345 members of the Emulation Lol have received a Silver Matchbox for working a chosen Degree error free. I write with near incredulity that 145 of them have also met the far more daunting task *in all three Degrees*. In fairness, lest our Wiltshire Masons are acquiring dry throats and weak knees at the very thought, the Emulation Lol does meet *weekly* in London throughout eight months of the year. One can learn fast in that competitive environment!

Afterthoughts: 'Emulation' in Wiltshire? It is pleasing to say that it is still going strong. Should any Mason be tempted to question the effort involved in trying to learn the ritual with accuracy let us remember that it is a very direct and meaningful link with the Masons of 200 years ago who also had to learn these very same words and work these very same ceremonies – *without* the benefit of 'a little blue book!' For some this goal may not be achievable – but we must always do our very best.

With this 200 year history behind us, working 'Emulation' becomes a great privilege and a continuing honour. Let us rise to that challenge!

Editor's note: W Bro Michael Lee is a regular contributor to **Across the Plain** and to the Provincial Website **Pages from a Preceptor**



Here's a question you won't hear raised too often in the Lodge "Have Freemasons become obsessed with raising money and has charitable giving become the overarching aspect of our fraternity, and has this led to a lack of understanding of the real meaning of charity?" And yet it's a perfectly legitimate question to ask especially as 63% of media coverage is related to 'what Freemasons give' as opposed to 'what Freemasons do' and I believe there is a difference which we need to consider.

We are first made aware of charity at our Initiation when we are challenged to 'exercise that virtue which can justly be denominated the distinguishing characteristic of a Freemason's heart'. But what is charity?

The word itself entered the English language from the French *charite* which is derived from the Latin *caritas* meaning 'generous love' which you might agree is a little different from 'generous giving'

A Freemason cannot ignore the teaching inherent in the twenty four inch gauge, whereby his actions in life are directed to supporting a Brother in time of need. For that is the essence of benevolence, the private or public relief of a friend or Brother and moreover it must be extended further and include society in general, for as we are reminded 'every human creature has just claim on your kind offices'.

Indeed, for some Brethren, charity seems to mean raising as much money as possible, often by whatever method is deemed necessary, even if that means embarrassing or pressuring a Brother by 'persuading' him to buy the regulation £5 strip of raffle tickets sold with gusto at the festive board. Little, if any thought is given to whether the Brother can afford another £5 it is simply assumed he can.

Having bought his raffle tickets the Brother is then asked to participate in the fun game of 'heads and tails' - it only costs him a pound or two; and this can be followed by the passing round of a bowl/bucket for him to deposit his copper coins; after all that can't be too onerous, can it? Oh, and let's not forget the alms collection in the Lodge room. All in all an evening's Freemasonry can soon cost anywhere between £25 and £30. Should we be surprised that some Brethren report they feel intimidated into giving; and should we be further surprised to learn that some Brethren leave Freemasonry as a result of the financial expectations made of them.

The secret is not to take advantage of a Brother's charitable instinct, but rather rely on his sense of morality and depend on his desire to be charitable, which may mean much more than just giving money to a worthy cause. A Brother I spoke with recently told me that as he was newly retired he intended to do more for charity; when I asked him what he meant he replied "I want to give more than just money, I want to actually do something, so I am going to become a volunteer".

Making time to help someone who requires 'a helping hand' – undertaking a task in support of the work of an organisation, be it a charity or good cause, is as important as putting a few pounds in the alms bag or buying a strip of raffle tickets. However, doing something often requires a level of commitment in terms of time and can be inconvenient; but isn't this part of the process and isn't our response testament to our understanding of the real meaning of charity.

In the First Lecture (fourth section) we are told the meaning of the three principal staves of Jacob's Ladder. The third staff is that named Charity.

Charity, lovely in itself, is the brightest ornament that can adorn our Masonic profession, it is the best test and surest proof of the sincerity of our religion: benevolence rendered by Heaven borne Charity, is an honour to the nation whence it springs, is nourished and cherished. Happy is the man who has sown in his breast the seed of benevolence, he envies not his neighbour, he believes not a tale when reported to his prejudice, he forgives the injuries of men, and endeavours to blot them from his recollection. Then Brother, let us remember that we are free and accepted Masons, ever ready to listen to him who craves our assistance, and from him who is in want let us not withhold a liberal hand, so shall a heartfelt satisfaction reward our labours, and the produce of love and Charity will most assuredly follow.

Brethren I trust you will agree that Charity really isn't always about money and that charity should naturally spring from the heart and not from the wallet!

I am sure we all agree that the future of Freemasonry requires the fraternity to attract and recruit new members as well as making sure we are responsive to the needs and wishes of existing members. Sometimes, squaring the two requires a great deal of give and take from Brethren who for many reasons are reluctant to embrace change.

One of the changes we are making is to do with how we go about identifying, selecting and interviewing candidates for Freemasonry, and the Members' Pathway provides a structured approach for Lodges to follow in order to attract and encourage potential new members while at the same time retaining and adding value to the existing membership. Lodges will not be expected to use every idea or technique contained in the Members' Pathway guidelines, but the feedback from those Lodges who have used the Members' Pathway suggests an increase in an individual's interest following their initial enquiry.

The Province welcomed nearly one hundred new members last year and witnessed a reduction in leavers, particularly early years' resignations; I am sure that much of the success is attributable to the way Brethren are cared for in Lodge by the Mentor and his team - another success story in Wiltshire.

What is even more exciting is the fact that from all the current initiatives Wiltshire is now "bucking the trend" by staying ahead with growth levels well ahead of the norm. I am convinced that with this amount of renewed interest and the professional image Pathway certainly displays both to new Masons and the initial enquirer this is helping to promote a resurgence in interest and members, which has not been seen for many years.

I am pleased to be able to confirm that the whole eleven elements of **The Members' Pathway** programme is now available on the Provincial website and you can view the modules by visiting www.pglwilts.org.uk/news/the-members-pathway

If every Lodge in the Province raises just £300 each year for Teddies for Loving Care we can continue to support the two main Accident and Emergency departments in Salisbury and Swindon



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Data Protection - Frequently asked questions

Do I need to collect individual consents from members of the Lodge or new joiners/initiates?

The standard application forms for initiates or joiners collect the necessary consents from them. There is no need to obtain consents from existing members for normal Lodge business.

Do I need members' consent to store their details?

Lodges do not normally need their members' consent to store personal information such as names, initiation dates and contact details when that information is needed for normal Lodge activities. For example, Lodges can store members' contact details because they are required for the purpose of sending out summonses.

How should I store members' details?

Personal data must be stored appropriately depending on its nature. For example, the level of security for members' bank details or Almoner's reports might be higher than the level of security for members' addresses. As a minimum, personal details should be stored in locked filing cabinets if kept in places to which other people have access such as Masonic Halls, and any computer files containing personal details should be password protected. When no longer required, documents containing personal details should be destroyed unless there is a good reason for keeping them (for example, Lodge minutes must be retained as a record of the Lodge's proceedings).

How can I use members' details?

Members' details should only be used for normal Masonic activities relating to the Lodge such as issuing summonses, arranging Almoner's visits, chasing subscription payments or Lodge committee business or for activities relating to the Provincial Grand Lodge or UGLE such as submitting annual returns or contributing to disciplinary processes. Any other use of details held by the Lodge requires the consent of the individual concerned. For example, the Lodge mailing list should not be used to circulate requests for charity donations except for those on the list who have provided their consent to receiving such requests.

How can members contact each other?

Members may not use the Lodge's mailing list for this purpose. The Lodge Secretary must not use the mailing list to divulge a members' contact details to anyone without consent. If member A wishes to contact member B but does not know his contact details, member A may ask the Lodge secretary to be put in touch. The Lodge secretary can then send member A's details to member B, inviting him to contact member A directly if he wishes.

What personal data can I include in Lodge summons?

For each piece of personal data on your summons you need to be able to answer the following three questions with a "yes":

1. **Does it have a legitimate purpose?** A purpose will typically be legitimate if the data will be used for one of the Lodge's normal activities as a membership organisation.
2. **Is it necessary for that purpose?** It will typically be necessary if there is no other practical way to achieve the same result which would involve less use of personal data.
3. **Is including it a fair balance of members' rights against the Lodge's rights?** It will typically be a fair balance if it falls within what members of your Lodge would expect to happen to their data.

Does my Lodge need a Data Protection Notice?

Yes, all Lodges should adopt a data protection notice. A template is available on the Provincial website or from the Provincial Secretary. The notice must contain contact details (such as the Lodge Secretary's email address) so that Lodge members have a contact for their queries about the notice or if they wish to exercise their rights, such as the right to request a copy of their personal data that the Lodge holds.



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Across the Plain

The newsletter of the Masonic Province of Wiltshire

Rate Card 2018

Across the Plain is published twice a year. It is posted out to approximately 2,500 Wiltshire Freemasons and the widows of Freemasons during the months of June and November.

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Have your say

Have you a question to ask, or is there something you want to know about Freemasonry. Maybe you just want to express a view or make a comment, whatever it is why not write to the Provincial Grand Master?

ATPLetters@pglwilts.org.uk

All letters and emails are subject to editorial control. Regrettably due to space not all letters can be published

Would you like to play a part in promoting Freemasonry in the Province, can you write media copy? The Communications Team would be pleased to hear from you. pco@pglwilts.org.uk

Barry Cooper's Word Search

Find the nickname of the Soccer team who play home games at the following Stadiums.

Emirates Stadium
Old Trafford
Carrow Road
Vicarage Road
Etihad Stadium
Stamford Bridge
Vitality Stadium
Amex Stadium
King Power Stadium
Burnden Park
Upton Park
John Smith Stadium
Liberty Stadium
The Dell
Bet365 Stadium
The Hawthorns
Anfield
Craven Cottage
Macron Stadium
Wembley

Answers on page 27

The Provincial Grand Master replies to your question:

Q. At a recent Lodge meeting I was told that an unattached member, even one who was an Honorary Member had restricted rights to visit other Lodges. Is that right?

A. That is a very good question and raises a point which is often misunderstood. Let me deal with the easy part first. A Brother who ceases to be a subscribing member of any Lodge by resigning is 'unattached' and he can only visit a Lodge once, **and once only**, unless and until he joins or rejoins a Lodge. If a Brother becomes 'unattached' due to his being excluded from his last remaining Lodge under either Rule 148 or Rule 181, he may not attend **any** Lodge as a visitor unless and until he joins or rejoins a Lodge.



What about Honorary Members. Well here the rule is slightly different. Under Rule 127 a Brother who has become an Honorary Member of his **only** Lodge, that is he is not a subscribing member of any other Lodge, suffers the same disability as a Brother who has abandoned or put on hold his Masonic career. The Honorary Member can visit the Lodge of which he is an Honorary Member as often as he wishes, but he can only visit any other Lodge once **and once only**. Some Brethren have sought to add the caveat 'once a year' to the term 'once only' They are wrong to do so.

Turning a blind eye to a rule which one may consider unfair or even silly, may at first sight seem an act of generosity. However no Lodge should endorse doing so.

Masonic Word Search - set by Barry Cooper of St Edmund Lodge No.4714

S	D	P	G	S	I	E	S	S	S	W	A	N	S
N	U	E	C	E	U	R	L	R	E	D	S	G	G
U	N	N	E	X	S	E	I	R	A	N	A	C	U
L	T	S	T	O	S	P	U	R	S	B	S	S	N
C	A	I	H	F	E	T	T	T	R	A	E	R	N
L	H	O	R	S	S	N	S	R	T	G	S	E	E
A	O	N	E	L	N	E	E	O	S	G	R	I	R
R	R	E	D	L	E	W	U	T	A	I	E	R	S
E	N	R	D	U	Z	H	A	T	I	E	M	R	R
T	E	S	E	G	I	I	R	E	N	S	M	E	E
S	T	L	V	A	T	T	O	R	T	A	A	T	T
M	S	N	I	E	I	E	N	S	S	E	H	E	T
R	P	W	L	S	C	S	W	S	U	N	H	E	O
N	I	W	S	T	S	E	I	R	R	E	H	C	P

Michael Lee a retired Royal Air Force Officer is a regular contributor to the pages of Across the Plain. His unparalleled knowledge and clear insight on Masonic matters has been gained over many years of study. Michael was for many years Preceptor in Stonehenge Lodge No.6114 meeting in the city of Salisbury, where he continues to deliver lectures and short talks on a wide range of topical subjects. This article is one of the many to be found in Michael's extensive library filed under the title '**A Preceptor's Notebook**'.

A phrase famously emerges in the Charge after Initiation that '*Monarchs themselves...have not thought it derogatory to their dignity to exchange the Sceptre for the Trowel*'. As the Trowel is not one of our speculative Working Tools – nor was it likely that even George III would have been tempted to do a little moonlighting as a 'brickie' – we might be justified in enquiring quietly what it is all about. I suggest there are possibly three elements to any answer.

Firstly, have reigning monarchs been members of the Craft? Most certainly they have. Recently Queen Elizabeth II's father, King George VI, was an enthusiastic Mason from the time of his Initiation in 1919 (The Naval Lodge No. 2612) until his death in 1952. He became Grand Master in Scotland in the same year (1936) that his brother Edward VIII abdicated the throne and, as a Past GM installed three Grand Masters of the UGLE between 1939 and 1948. During the past century Edward VII, George V and Edward VIII all had strong Masonic connections. Today the Dukes of Kent and of Gloucester continue the custom that princes of the Royal Blood should offer leadership in Freemasonry.

Secondly, to assess the significance of the trowel, we need to explore our Masonic history pre-unification of the Antient and Modern Grand Lodges in 1813. Before this date there was no formal office of Inner Guard (nor of Deacon for that matter). As the Second Tracing Board suggests '*...the five who (can) hold a Lodge are the Master, two Wardens and two Fellowcraft; the seven who make it perfect are two Entered Apprentices added to the former five...*'. (A 'Master Mason' was not then an operative grade.) While the Temple door was protected on the outside by the Tyler, on the inside the duty was given to the *youngest* Apprentice – then known as 'the Inner Tyler'. He was armed with a sword and a trowel.

Why were a trowel and sword chosen? In Masonic legend it was the practice of the builders of the Second Temple to be equipped at their work with both trowel and sword at hand; the former to lay the stones, the latter to keep off the neighbouring Samaritans and other hostile tribes – the intruders and cowans to Masonry of those Biblical days.

Use of the trowel had another symbolic significance. It was a recognition that just as the stones in a Temple were bound together by mortar from the trowel so the masons building it were bound together into a Lodge by an even stronger cement of mutual love and charity. (By very similar reasoning the trowel was adopted much later as the Almoner's emblem.)

At the door into the Temple our young Apprentice 'Inner Tyler' placed the point of his trowel (not his sword) against the naked breast of the Initiate directly over his heart, symbolically the source of both love and charity. It was therefore a recognition that although the Initiate had been made penniless he could still offer his love, flowing from its source in his heart along the trowel towards his new Brethren – which was all they sought!

By 1738 or so the Hiram legend had been introduced into a new Third Degree to emphasise the importance of death before dishonour. In the 1816 unification of the Ancient and Modern rituals the Poniard was selected to replace the sword and trowel as weapon of choice for the Inner Guard. Possibly it was considered that while physical protection of a Lodge and its secrets remained desirable, the significance of love and charity within the human heart could now be assured from the North East Corner.

So... when our Monarch '*exchanged his Sceptre for a Trowel*' he was publicly proclaiming that in order to enter Freemasonry he was prepared to take on the humblest office a Lodge then had to offer – that of the most junior Apprentice/Inner Tyler armed only with a trowel. It was a reminder that - however lowly - to live with his fellow men in love and charity was always to be preferred to a selfish life of vanity, wealth and rank. There is perhaps a lesson here for the world today.

**Being kind towards a Brother, irrespective of rank or seniority
should be second nature to every Freemason**

Mark Master Mason – “The Friendly Degree”

You have heard people mention the Mark Degree but what is it really all about?

Mark Masonry is an enrichment of Craft Masonry. One of a number of Masonic Orders in addition to the Craft. Some of them bring extensions to the knowledge you have gained in the three degrees including extra details surrounding the building of King Solomon's Temple.

The Mark is a good example. Its ritual is centred on the building of the Temple but with particular emphasis on the materials for its construction. The story of the degree is very instructive and is founded on statements of Holy Writ, relating to the building of the Temple prior to the death of Hiram Abif. It teaches the valuable lesson that education is the reward of labour and contains a dramatic message that fraud can never succeed.

The symbol of the degree is a Keystone on which is engraved certain mystic letters, whose meaning is explained in the ceremony. Unlike many other Orders this degree combines Masonic thought with a lightness of touch, but it is not frivolous. Not only does the candidate learn more about the place of Masons in the actual and speculative construction of the Temple, but he comes to appreciate both the joys and sorrows within his own Masonic journey, as well as the fallibility of man and the need for utter humility before God.

So how did the Mark Degree come about? After the Union of 1813, the Mark Degree was no longer considered by the Craft to be part of pure Antient Masonry, however, the Mark Degree continued to grow in popularity and was worked, unofficially, in Craft Lodges and Royal Arch Chapters – a very unsatisfactory state of affairs. Then on 5th March 1856 the report from the board of General Purposes of The United Grand Lodge of England stated that they were: ‘of the opinion that the Mark Degree is a link between the second and third degrees of Craft Masonry and that the degree of Mark Mason and Mark Master Mason are not at variance with the ancient landmarks of the order, that the degree be in addition to and form part of Craft Masonry and may be conferred by all regular and warranted Lodges as sanctioned by The Most Worshipful The Grand Master’. However, at the next Communication of Grand Lodge on 5th June 1856 some members moved for non-confirmation of the minute of the previous communication which referred to the Mark Degree. After some strong arguing, the vote in favour of the Mark Degree being able to be worked in a Craft Lodge was lost.

Following this decision, the Mark Degree rallied its members and formed the Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons on 23rd June 1856, only 19 days after this apparent setback. Thus, in England, the Mark Degree became a separate entity with its own Grand Lodge. However, this is not the case in many other countries where the Mark Degree is worked. In our two Sister Grand Lodges of Ireland and Scotland, and most other constitutions throughout the world, the Mark Degree is recognised and worked as an integral part of their rituals. Additionally, in almost every other constitution apart from our own, the Mark Degree is a prerequisite for the Royal Arch. In conclusion, Mark Masonry is considered by many to be as much an extension of the Second Degree as the Royal Arch is of the Third and is certainly worthy of consideration by a Craft Master Mason to round off his masonic knowledge and experience.

As the Past Provincial Grand Master RW Bro. Francis Wakem said at the Advancement of RW Bro. Philip Bullock;

“To many Craft Masons - who do not know much about the Order, Advancement as a Mark Master Mason can seem as a quaint even humorous ceremony. Some would dismiss it as being of very little ritual significance ... they could not be more wrong ... Those who are ‘Advanced’ as Mark Master Masons, and who take the slightest interest in the Order, soon realise that it is most certainly not superficial or trivial. ... The symbolism is worthy of deep study.”

So, should you join the “Friendly Degree”? In the Mark we take our ritual seriously, but it is performed in a more relaxed atmosphere than you may be used to. The following is taken from the Ceremony of Advancement;

“... among Mark Master Masons you will ever find friends, who will Administer relief to your distress and comfort in your affliction.”

If you have any questions or would like to know more about joining the Mark Degree then please contact the Mark Provincial Grand Secretary Ian Gibson whose details can be found in the Provincial Reference Book. or visit www.mmmwiltshire.org.uk



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Barry Cooper's

Quiz Answers

From page 20

Gunners	Clarets
Red Devils	Hammers
Canaries	Terriers
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