



In touch > On line

The newsletter for Wiltshire Freemasons

Freemasons are going back to work



August 2020

We are coming back...

Wiltshire Freemasonry



I want to start this piece with an acknowledgement to the incredible efforts of the many Brethren who have worked tirelessly in preparing for a return to Masonic activity. I know that for some the decision of UGLE to rescind the suspension notice was seen as the green light to immediately recommence Masonic meetings; indeed I am aware that in some cases Summonses had been prepared and were due to be mailed out. In order to open our Masonic Halls and to achieve a return to something close to normality requires an immense amount of preparatory work to be undertaken, not least the compilation of a detailed Covid-19 Risk Assessment and a series of workable, practical and enforceable protocols for Brethren to follow.

The Provincial Grand Secretary has circulated guidance from UGLE on the conditions which must be followed by all Masonic Halls and Lodges in order that we can all meet again in a Covid-19 secure environment, and I concur in the view that every individual's safety is considered ahead of a general desire to return to Masonic meetings. I know that Masonic Hall committees have taken their legal responsibilities very seriously, after all there are significant penalties should they get things wrong. I also recognise that they have taken due notice of all the suggestions contained in the 'General Guidance for the Resumption of Masonic Meetings' jointly published with Supreme Grand Chapter.

While UGLE guidance is very welcome and provides a clear basis for Masonic Hall Committees to work to, it does not override Government Covid-19 guidance as set out in the documentation covering the safe use of multi-purpose community facilities. I mention both sets of guidelines simply to indicate the breadth of work that Masonic Hall Committees must engage in before they make a final decision on whether or not Lodges can use the facilities. Brethren, please be patient and allow the Masonic Hall Committee to complete the necessary risk assessments, and to review the costs of implementing any recommendations and changes suggested in the assessment process.

The overarching consideration is that the Masonic Hall committee can ensure that the building is COVID-19 secure, and that the facility provides a safe environment for Masonic meetings and that all legislation has been complied with.

I would remind you that the General Guidance states that the following activities are not yet permissible under the current restrictions: singing, Ceremony of Raising, and Festive Boards. It is also strongly recommended that the practice of wearing white gloves be suspended in favour of regular hand-washing/sanitising instead. I would confirm that I have mandated that white gloves and Lodge officer collars should not be worn in any Craft Lodge meeting until further notice.

Brethren, there has been some critical comment about the adaptations to our ceremonies, such comment is made with the best of intention and to provoke debate. However, it should be clearly understood that these adaptations are not 'optional' - if you conduct a ceremony of Initiation or Passing the adaptations as prescribed by UGLE **must** be adopted. Doubtless these will seem strange at first and, for that reason, it is recommended they be practiced and rehearsed thoroughly if Lodges wish to perform these ceremonies. I also recognise that some Brethren may be reluctant to return to Masonry at this time, and I would remind all Brethren that **nobody**, particularly elderly or vulnerable members, should feel coerced into attending meetings – irrespective of their office.



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In last months newsletter, the Assistant Provincial Grand Master indicated that a number of Lodges have their Installation meetings scheduled for either September, October, November or December of this year. He reminded you that the precursor to the Installation meeting is a meeting at which the incoming WM is elected, thus becoming the ME. The Provincial Grand Secretary has sent Guidance Notes to Lodge secretaries which cover the essential actions which must be taken to regularise matters.

Any planned Masonic meeting must be restricted to no more than 30 attendees, with all social distancing precautions in place. I would remind Brethren that the 2 metre distance rule applies to all meetings held indoors, unless full Covid-19 secure mitigation measures are in place, at which point 1 metre is allowed.

As and when information is received from UGLE or when the Government issues further guidance on Covid-19 protocols, members can be assured this will be communicated to them as quickly as possible. It is my intention that clear and unambiguous guidance will be issued before September. In the meantime, I would urge you to refrain from speculating on what may or may not happen with regard to the resumption of Masonic meetings in the Province.

I have thoroughly enjoyed meeting with Brethren across the Province through the incredible medium of ZOOM and would like to congratulate every Brother (especially those of more senior years) who have adapted to this unique way of meeting. I am aware that this vital form of contact has proved to be a lifeline to many Brethren suffering 'withdrawal symptoms' as a result of not being able to meet with their Masonic friends. I have also been impressed to discover that Wiltshire Freemasons living abroad have 'zoomed' in.

Communication is key to our success as a Province, not only in terms of how we speak to the membership but also the way we present ourselves to those who are not Freemasons. Have you seen the changes to the provincial website? I am delighted at its new appearance, lighter, brighter and presenting a clearer shop window for a vibrant Province.

Michelle Worvell ZOOMS into Swindon....



**VASTERN LODGE
NO. 8977**

invite you to hear

Michelle Worvell
Director of Communications
United Grand Lodge of England

**COMMUNICATION
FOR 21ST CENTURY
FREEMASONRY**

Tuesday 4th August 2020
7.00pm
ZOOM

To reserve your place
email: pcowiltshire@gmail.com

Talking of Zoom. On Tuesday 4th August Vastern Lodge No.8977 will be hosting a special event with Michelle Worvell the Director of Communication for the United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE)

The Lodge has been very active during the suspension period, holding a regular Tuesday evening learning meeting which, I am advised, includes a very interesting question and answer session.

The meeting starts promptly at 7.00pm and all enquiries to join the meeting should be made by email to pcowiltshire@gmail.com



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Chippenham Lodges continue the good work....

On Thursday 23rd July Chippenham Freemasons met with Chippenham Hospital Radio Chairman John Leyden and their fundraising Coordinator Linda Dubber and presented a cheque for £300. The donation was very well received by John and Linda as all the usual fund raising activities had ceased since the lock down and the radio station is in need of support to enable the service to continue over the next few months. Once we are able to we will be visiting the station for a tour. The £300 donated was the balance left over from the fund raised by members of Vale of Avon No. 8432 and Lansdowne Lodge of Unity No. 626 to provide PPE and morale boosting packs for staff working in eight local care homes.

Wiltshire Freemasonry



Mark Fuller presents a cheque to Chippenham Hospital Radio

In the last few weeks members of both Lodges completed the PPE and morale deliveries with visits to the Leonara Care home and Seymour House in Chippenham. Even though the initial phase of the project has now ended, as a result of the success of this initiative the members of both Lodges are determined to continue working together in the future to support the needs of the local community.





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Dr David Reed - a personal view about Covid-19...

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Brethren, we find ourselves in a situation that tests us all in many ways. We all have ideas and points of view and some of us express them with more vigour than others. The recent publication from UGLE, and the very precise guidance covering the circumstances in which Lodge and Chapter meetings can recommence is welcomed by everyone wishing to reactivate their Masonic life.

The most important item in the guidance is that meetings can only recommence when Masonic Hall management committees are in a position to offer cast iron assurances regarding Covid-19 security. A requirement which I am sure we all agree is necessary.

As a clinical scientist it will not surprise you to know that I read scientific journals, always taking care to avoid journalistic script designed to alarm and sensationalise stories simply to increase sales and circulation figures. You will doubtless have read that there is concern in some parts of the scientific community that this coming winter may see a second wave of the Covid-19 virus possibly with more fatalities than we have seen to date. It is always important to realise that this is an opinion based on modelling and can therefore be challenged by other models created by equally learned scientists. However, apart from avoiding the virus infection there does appear to be some things we can do to help survive the worst effects of the virus.

Have a sufficient level of vitamin D

Many of the people who have died with the Covid-19 virus have been deficient in vitamin D. In the UK people with darker skin absorb less vitamin D due to their skin colouring. It might also be why older people have been more susceptible to the virus, because they go out less and cover up more. Vitamin D has several important functions. Perhaps the most vital are regulating the absorption of calcium and phosphorus, and facilitating normal immune system function.

On a personal level I have for a long time taken vitamin D tablets through the winter months, I feel better for it.

Have a body mass index of 18.5 to 25

Sadly obesity is proven to be a contributory factor in Covid-19 virus deaths where men in particular with a high Body Mass Index (BMI) are at a higher risk of not surviving the virus infection. There are many apps or websites that you can look up how to calculate your BMI. It really is easy; take your height in metres and square it, divide the answer into your weight in kilograms. If your BMI is over 30 you need to take the matter very seriously and look to reduce it in a healthy way (In a recent study 73% of critically ill patients with Covid 19 had a BMI over 30).

Now I am as keen about eating as anyone, so I am not taking a moral position with this one. I like meat, cheese cream etc and plenty of it. I exercise because I like eating, not because I like exercising, but, maybe now is the time to draw the line in the sand and cut back a little and take more time to think about what we are eating?

IMPORTANT NOTICE

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