



## PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE OF WILTSHIRE

### 2020 Provincial Grand Lodge Address.

Brethren,

During the year 1900 the Rt Hon Jacob Pleydell Bouverie, 6<sup>th</sup> Earl of Radnor was installed as the seventh Provincial Grand Master for Wiltshire. During his 27-year tenure, the Province faced and came through two world crises, World War One and the outbreak of Spanish Flu.

1918 became a significant point in World history, the signing of the armistice agreement on 11<sup>th</sup> November, which ended four years of the most appalling loss of life inflicted during World War One, and then earlier in February 1918 the start of one of the greatest medical disasters of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the start of Spanish Flu.

The pandemic lasted for two years with the direct loss of 228,000 lives here in the United Kingdom, and tragically it is estimated in killing millions worldwide. One can only imagine the stress of how this impacted on families not only coping with the outcome of First World War, which touched most families throughout the United Kingdom, but and then having to face a pandemic with limited medical treatments or indeed the amazing value of a National Health Service.

From late January of this year, when the first person in the Country had been diagnosed with Coronavirus, the infection rates have escalated through-out the length and breadth of our Country. The impact on our lives has been substantial, affecting our jobs, our family and social lives and of course our enjoyment and continuation of Freemasonry at a level we would have wished.

History has taught us that circumstances are mostly a temporary situation. Our Country and certainly Freemasonry has survived worse catastrophes, and we have survived, and I have no doubt that Freemasonry; will come back the stronger.

To do so we will need to be pragmatic utilising your strengths and capabilities for the benefit of our membership and their families, and at the same time demonstrating admirably those principal's Freemasons hold dear, Integrity, friendship, respect, and charity.

By using the resources we have and by having a firm belief that though inspired thought, kind words and deeds; we will come through this Covid-19 pandemic returning to sharing our companionship and the enjoyment of Freemasonry.

It also seems to me that we should not let this serious crisis go to waste, but rather to see it as an opportunity to do things you may have thought you were unable to do before.

I have been truly amazed by the actions of many examples of members within the Province who have gone that extra mile to assist those in time of need and to demonstrate that we have indeed in our Province grasped the opportunity to excel.

Members who through their kindness and inspiring creative thinking have demonstrated their desire to help, from deliveries of food, to showing appreciation to the many, who on our behalf, place themselves in front line roles at great risk to their own lives to combat this insidious virus. And I will say more on this subject later in my address.

Freemasonry provides a structure for members to come together, and my thanks to the many members within our Lodges, supported by the dedication of our Lodge Almoners, who are making regular contact with their members; I am very proud of what you're doing, by demonstrating the true spirit of Freemasonry.

As I highlighted in my opening remarks, the Covid -19 pandemic has had a profound impact on virtually every aspect of our lives. Unfortunately and, for the first times in decades our traditional home for our annual meeting, The City Hall, Salisbury had to be cancelled during the year when it became apparent we could not meet with our normal level of attendees, and therefore, required a more suitable venue.

My thanks, therefore, to Bro Paul Sharp for his kind permission to enable holding our annual Provincial Grand Lodge meeting within his business premises, keeping within the restricted numbers attending to just six. However, despite this limitation, and with the aid of video conference Zoom software, organised by the Provincial Communications Officer Des Morgan and his Team, I am delighted to be able to welcome the newly appointed Provincial Active Grand Officers via this video link.

Each year we have dedicated and committed team of Provincial Officers who never fail to impress with their dedication, and enthusiasm, for which Province and myself are deeply appreciative and my thanks to each of the Provincial Officers some of whom have retired today. The Deputy, Assistant Provincial Grand Masters' and I send each of you our grateful thanks for your commitment.

Provincial Grand Lodge Meetings are of course a special occasion for Members receiving Provincial Appointments witnessed not just by Brethren attending, but uniquely by their wives and partners, always a highlight of our meeting. Regrettably, this cannot be physically undertaken for this year, but my sincere congratulations to all those who I have appointed and invested to Provincial Grand rank and those whom I have promoted within Provincial Grand Lodge. All highly deserved appointments awarded because of your dedication to your Lodges, and to the Province as we go forward building together a stronger base for Wiltshire Freemasonry to thrive for now and for the future.

Earlier, during our meeting, I was delighted reappoint V W Bro David Davies as Deputy Provincial Grand Master, my sincere and grateful thanks to him for his friendship, astute advice and his dedication and commitment to our Province.

Equally, it was a pleasure to reappoint the Assistant Provincial Grand Master, W Brother Simon Leighfield, who I am also indebted for his dedication support and friendship, my grateful thanks to you both.

The Province of Wiltshire has a truly an amazing Provincial Team; each member works tirelessly focused on ensuring that our Province is always to the fore and never one that follows, and I feel immensely proud to lead such a brilliant team and my personal thanks to each of them for their commitment to the Province and myself.

Brethren, there are, in my opinion, three essential elements to an annual Provincial Grand Masters address; the first is the opportunity to thank the Provincial Grand Officers appointed and invested to Provincial Grand rank and to thank my immediate team for their support. Then reviewing the highlights of the past year, and finally to be able to share with you the Provincial objectives for the coming year, and having pleasure to cover the initial element, may I now refer to the second.

### **2019 achievements:**

Perhaps the most significant of many examples achieved last year, would have to be the 119 new members we welcomed into the Wiltshire family of Freemasons. My grateful thanks to the many Lodges and individuals who pro-actively expedited the initiations with the minimum of delay, frequently, conducting double initiation ceremonies at a level not witness since the immediate post-World war when recruitment was at its high level.

This tremendous effort recorded the Province a membership gain at levels not enjoyed for well over fifty years, achieving the highest growth rate over all other 47 Provinces in England and Wales; this is an amazing result, and my grateful thanks to you all.

### **Training Team:**

The Provinces Training and Educational Workshops were very busy during 2019 providing opportunities to help our newer members to learn and improve and to understand their Craft Freemasonry. The aptly named Finding your feet was received and acclaimed by all who attended the two courses held at Swindon Masonic Centre and at Salisbury Masonic Hall. The workshops were praised for their professional content and presentation, and I am indebted to W Brothers Steve Lee, who leads the team, along with W Brothers' Richard Wright, David Logan, Andy Entwistle and Barry Jordon Davies, all of whom I thank for their enthusiasm and hard work in developing a first class training programme.

Clearly, the current restrictions on numbers attending meetings have regretfully put on hold training plans we had for this year.

However, since the lock-down, the team has been looking at different ways to keep the brethren interested and educated. Indeed, W Brother Steve's Lee and his team have been looking to meet this objective when the 'Rule of 6' came in which scuppered our plan to start offering the course in a physical location, albeit with a restricted number.

Our current plan is now underway. The Team are currently in the process of creating small 20-minute presentations that will then be offered over Zoom, on a rolling calendar. Content will aim to educate newer Masons and will most likely be based on the Finding Your Feet presentation but broken down into digestible chunks.

Each presentation will have a script and, once created, the training team will themselves be trained on how to deliver them. They will then work with the Provincial Communications Officer to publish the calendar, publicise the courses and devise how we accept attendees without being overburdened with administration.

Please do look out for more information published by the Comms team.

### **Provincial Communication Team:**

The Provinces web site continues to serve as our principal social media outlet providing an essential communications link not only for our membership to gain information but also to provide a 'shop window' to the general public on who and what we are. During this year, the design of the page structure underwent a change in terms of visual appearance, which is so essential to keep the site fresh and preventing it becoming stale uninteresting and not inviting.

The monthly newsletter launched in January 2017 instantly became an overnight success, giving the reader articles of interest, many of which encourage interactive feedback and critical comment. It was decided during this year to rebrand the newsletter to the new title **In Touch** which perfectly describes one of its principal objectives to keep our membership informed.

I appreciate the hard work applied by the Provincial Communications Team which has extended in producing the In Touch newsletter to a more frequent bi-monthly publication providing additional contact during these difficult Covid -19 restriction's times. In touch also has the benefit of not only being able to be read on-line but also uniquely has an audio version and my grateful thanks to W Bro Andrew Hargreaves for providing his excellent narration skills.

### **Provincial Display trailer:**

The stringent restrictions imposed on County summer events, has of course resulted in the grounding of using our Provincial display trailer for this year. However, I am constantly aware of the many dedicated and committed brethren that work tirelessly for the benefit of the Province giving much of their week-ends up attending events.

The Province and I are deeply indebted to the dedication of Bothers Paul Sharp and Gordon Lindsay, who between them manage the trailer diary and with the commitment of a considerable team of supporters who crew and tow the display unit to locations the length and breadth of Province allowing the Province to promote and educate the general public by inviting them to enquire about Freemasonry. .

Equally, my thanks to the creative talents of the Provincial Communications Officer Des Morgan and Ian Lever in designing the graphics newly liveried for the unit. The results are quite stunning, clearly identifying as representing Wiltshire with a distinctive 'Stonehenge' feel to the image, and at the rear end of the unit a superb graphic dedicated to Teddies for Loving Care, promoting a brilliant charity its function not widely known to the general public.

### **Peter Winton Trophy:**

The Peter Winton Trophy was launched during last year's Provincial Grand Lodge Meeting, when we were honoured to have the trophy presented by the late Peter Winton's wife Mrs. Virginia Winton.

The idea for the award was developed from the kind and the most generous donation of a splendid silver trophy by W Brother Stanley Iles, who approached the Province with a proposal designed to honour the name of the late Deputy Provincial Grand Master V W Brother Peter Winton to encourage and reward a Lodge which promoted Freemasonry in the community. Covid -19 gave Lodges the perfect opportunity to rise to that challenge, joining forces to provide Personal Protective Equipment and morale boosting goody bags for front line care workers, while others developed the innovative idea of producing 'Heart that care which was donated to NHS and emergency staff – all perfectly fittings to Wiltshire's own versions of charity its in a Freemason's DNA.

Therefore, a somewhat difficult task for the Deputy Provincial Grand Master and his small committee to determine who out of many nominations all of which were so deserving of winning. However, a decision was reached, and as recently announced Corsham Lodge No; 6616 were determined to be the winners for their outstanding work, who organised an emergency food box delivery service for members self-isolating or shielding unable to leave their homes. This initiative quickly expanded leading to an increase of the service to include Masonic Widows, neighbours, friends and members of the local communities. Earlier in this month of October, The Deputy and Assistant Provincial Grand Masters' and I had the pleasure of presenting the trophy and Lodge Certificate to members of Corsham Lodge this month, and my congratulations to all members of Corsham Lodge No: 6616 a most well deserved award.

### **Objectives 2021**

Until we are all safeguarded against being infected by Covid-19, life will remain largely restricted for the time being. It is clearly imperative that we maintain regular contact with our membership, our Lodge Widows and not forgetting our many candidates waiting to be initiated.

Frustratingly, we have 'on the books' at least an equal number of candidates if not slight more waiting to be initiated, and I am aware of Lodges who are gearing up to conduct initiation ceremonies, In the intervening time, please do ensure regular contact is maintained with candidates waiting initiation. The Province is looking at ways to assist Lodges with this objective.



## **Lodge Mentors:**

The appointment of Divisional Officers a few years ago proved highly successful working closely with Visiting Officers in developing their role with the reward of a more constructive and meaningful interaction with their respective Lodges'

Therefore, it became a natural development to build on this success by utilising the same model by appointing of three Divisional Officers responsible for the key role of Mentoring, and my congratulations to W Brothers Richard Wright, Alan Colman, and Foster Telford.

Lodge Mentors have a most important role within their Lodges, and it is imperative they have the support and guidance from the Province in carrying out their Office; the Divisional Officers will provide that resource, and you will see this role develop in the future.

2019 was a very productive and rewarding year, and I am sure you would not expect, that we would just be sitting on our laurels, far from it.

I am delighted to announce that in 2021 the Province will inaugurate a series of presentations as part of **The Anthony Wilson Memorial Lectures**. For many, the name of Anthony Wilson will probably mean very little, while for others, Anthony Wilson will be remembered for what he achieved during his long tenure as President of The Board of General Purposes, an office which suited his outstanding abilities as a moderniser and advocate of open governance.

In the words of the pro Grand Master, he was an incredibly hard-working and efficient President who managed to carry out his role without acrimony with anyone.

And I am most grateful to have been given permission by Mrs. Wilson, who was delighted for our Province to use the late Anthony Wilson name for this prestige lecture.

While Anthony was not a subscribing Wiltshire Freemason, he did live in the County and when circumstances permitted he was a great supporter of the Province.

**The Anthony Wilson Memorial Lectures** will feature four lectures every year delivered by excellent speakers drawn from across the Masonic community. Anthony was a man who prized quality above quantity, and we will ensure the lectures reflect this aspect of his life.

Our Communication Team will be organising the lectures, and I am sure everyone will give their wholehearted support to this new initiative.

Brethren, despite the limitation of members attending to just six, I have enjoyed our annual Provincial Grand Lodge Meeting, particularly with the benefit of the active Provincial Grand Officers attending via Zoom conferencing.

My thanks to the Provincial Grand Secretary and his team, who although had slightly less work in planning and organising today's meeting, has, nevertheless, produced a first class Provincial Grand Lodge Meeting, ably assisted by the Provincial.

Communications Officer and his team, and my thanks to Brother Mark Numan, for his valuable help with the video conferencing system.

**Brethren,**

May the Great Architect of the Universe protect you and your families during these difficult times, and I trust that we will be able to meet next year with our normal large attendance at the City Hall, Salisbury.

Brethren, Stay safe and well,

Thank you

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