



FORUM

Brethren,

As we creep toward May 17th and June 21st it is abundantly clear from the hospitality sector, that restarts are not as simplistic as they may seem. It is not straight forward and one size does not fit all. Many uncertainties lie before us and it will be our responsibility to navigate around them.

Suffolk Freemasonry has remained steadfast throughout this unforgettable journey and through invention and emulation alike, has remained strong to the core. We were all taught to be cautious and now is a good time to exercise that virtue. Please realize that there is no negativity within this, but absolute positivity that when we start, it will be as a bullet out of a gun.

There is so much for us all to look forward to, that we must not get it wrong. Lodge meetings, festive boards, singing at the top of our voices 'we will take wine...with you' and to celebrate 250 years of all that in October, we just don't want to miss that for the world.

Suffolk was riding on the crest of a wave when Masonry was suspended and I sincerely hope that we will all return, at the same time and in the same boat and on the same wave.

So, we will soon be able to dine out with family and friends, enjoy a pint, actually inside a pub and let the summer unfold along with our freedom.

What an absolute treat to look forward to.

Ian Yeldham

R.W.Bro. Ian J. Yeldham Provincial Grand Master



FORUM

The Suffolk Freemasons Magazine

Editor: Kelvin Avis

Telephone 07771 644716 comms@suffolkfreemason.org.uk

We are very pleased to receive all your reports, particularly if accompanied by a photo or two, on what you have been up to, what you are organising, your thoughts, letters and indeed anything you feel might be of interest.

Have you got an idea for an article?

Have you something or someone you would like us to feature?

Have you researched your lodge or masonic hall history?

Why not get in touch and share it with us all?



Jottings from The Provincial Grand Secretary

For the first time in over a year I think we can, at last, look forward with a much more positive attitude. Many of you by now will have had your first Covid vaccination and a good number will even have had a second dose. Whilst this will not mean that we are 100% safe it does give us a certain degree of confidence to start planning to meet each other again.

With effect from the 17th May groups of up to six people can again mix indoors so Masonic meetings of a sort can recommence. This will allow lodges who have essential business to conduct, like charity donations or the election of their treasurer or Master Elect, to carry out these

ballots. In addition, provided the venue is a Covid secure environment and has conducted the necessary risk assessment, then up to thirty members may meet; or the maximum number permitted by the risk assessment, whichever is the lower. Please remember that a lodge may meet at any venue which can be properly tyled and on most days except Sundays, simply by applying for a dispensation. The minimum number necessary to form a quorum is only five so there is a good deal of flexibility in how, where and when we can meet.

As the government guidelines stand at the moment with effect from 21st June all restrictions effecting the holding of Masonic meetings and Festive Boards will be lifted and we will once again be able to meet as we used to, subject to any further government guidance applying at that time.

The decision to attend meetings will be an individual one of course and no member should feel obliged to attend, irrespective of the office he holds, and no one should be put under pressure to attend.

Going forward I suspect that in reality most lodges will decide not to recommence meetings until the autumn. The provincial executive is well aware that there are many Initiates wanting to join our fraternity, who have been forced to wait for over a year; we should not extend their wait any longer than we possibly have to. Although not always popular multiple ceremonies can help to clear the backlog, if not for Initiations then possibly for Passings or Raisings. There are already plans in place for joint meetings of two or three lodges to meet at the same venue on the same night, with a joint Festive Board to follow. These will be unique events for our Province, at which all three Rulers intend to be present and I'm sure will lead to the enjoyable atmosphere which only a room full of people can generate.

I understand that in the autumn UGLE will be launching a campaign to capitalise on the excellent press coverage we have been enjoying, following the enormous number of charitable donations of time, and money Freemasonry has made within the community in recent months. This too could well generate many new applications to join which we must be ready to respond to quickly.

For now we must monitor the government guidelines and hope that the warm weather we are currently enjoying combined with the continued uptake of the vaccine continues the decline of this pandemic in the UK so we can once again meet on the square.

Roger Nash Provincial Grand Secretary



PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE OF SUFFOLK

Office: Freemasons Hall, Soane Street, Ipswich IP4 2BG – Tel. (01473) 232432
Website: www.suffolkpgl.org.uk Email: pgl@suffolkfreemason.org.uk

Provincial Grand Secretary: Roger E Nash
secretary@suffolkfreemason.org.uk

Her Majesty The Queen,
Buckingham Palace,
London
SW1A 1AA

10th April 2021

Madam,

I am directed by our membership, in the Masonic Province of Suffolk, to offer our most sincere and heartfelt condolences at this sad time, following the passing of our beloved Philip the Duke of Edinburgh.

He was an inspiration to our members over many years, and will be very greatly missed.

Regrettably, due to the Pandemic, we are unable to hold our meetings at this time, and so we are unable to formally record our homage and recognition of his lifetime of service.

Your Majesty, please be assured that once we are able to reconvene, we shall mark and record our feelings and appreciation in the history of Masonry in Suffolk.

We have the honour to be Madam, your Majesty's humble and obedient subjects.

Sincerely and Fraternaly,

Roger Nash
Provincial Grand Secretary

Medical Detection Dogs delighted to receive £7,000 funding from Suffolk Freemasons

Medical Detection Dogs train dogs to detect the odour of human disease with the aim of developing faster, more efficient and less invasive diagnostics that lead to better patient outcomes.



The charity is at the forefront of the research into the fight against cancer and other life-threatening diseases, including Parkinson's disease and bacterial infections. Their Bio Detection Dogs detect the odour of diseases like

malaria in the charity's training room, on samples. Their work could help scientists and medics develop faster, cheaper, non-invasive methods of diagnosis that could impact upon thousands of lives.

The charity apply what is known about the science of canine olfaction to benefit people by training Medical Alert Assistance Dogs to support individuals with complex health conditions by alerting them when they are about to have a potentially life-threatening medical emergency. Conditions like diabetes, severe allergies, PoTS and Addison's disease are among those the dogs can be trained to detect and alert well before their human partner is aware that an episode is about to occur.



Medical Detection Dogs take the welfare of their dogs extremely seriously, from the moment they arrive as puppies the charity ensure the highest standards of care. They have a strict no kennel policy and all dogs live in the homes of their staff or fantastic local volunteers where they are loved and cared for as part of the family.

Rick Orme, the Provincial Grand Charity Steward for the Province of Suffolk, said: "I'm delighted that we are able to offer some support to this fantastic charity following the presentation done by Norma Howell at our Almoners' Conference some time ago. I understand that the charity is also conducting research into whether the detection dogs can assist with the Covid-19 pandemic and we all realise what an impact that has had on everyone, so I wish them continued success and I am delighted to be able to offer some support for their cause."

This grant from Suffolk Freemasons was made up of £2000 donated by Apollo Lodge, £1,500 donated by Provincial Grand Charity and then match funded by the MCF up to the total of £7,000.

For more information about the charity visit www.medicaldetectiondogs.org.uk

Les Hutchinson appointed as new Chief Executive for the MCF

The Masonic Charitable Foundation (MCF), has appointed Bro Les Hutchinson as its new Chief Executive after more than thirty years of working for masonic charities. Les joined the Royal Masonic Trust for Girls and Boys as a Management Trainee in January 1988, and spent time working within each of the charity's departments whilst completing a part-time degree and masters.



In 1992, he was appointed a Senior Case Administrator and Team Leader within the Petitions Department, a post he held for five years. In this role, he gained a valuable insight into the needs of the masonic community and, in an environment where education and provision by the welfare state was changing rapidly, Les classes this as the best job he has ever had and feels privileged to have been able to make such a difference, to so many, on a daily basis.

In 1997 he was promoted to Planning and Development Coordinator with responsibility for supporting the Chief Executive and helping to devise and implement strategies for the future direction and development of the charity. During this time, Les successfully petitioned for the restoration of the 'Royal' title for the RMTGB and helped established Lifelites, a separate charity which supports all children's hospices in the UK.

In 2005, he was appointed Secretary to the Council, reporting directly to the Board. Undertaking a major review of the fundraising strategy, he recommended the introduction of a new honorifics-based incentive system and the annual Festival Forum. He also acted as Secretary on the newly-formed strategic Committee, comprising the Presidents and Chief Executives of the four central masonic charities, a committee that would sow the seeds of the MCF.

Appointed Chief Executive of RMTGB in 2008, Les also acted as Secretary to a Project Group, which by then was supporting the Deputy Grand Master in the process of creating the MCF. In the two years prior to the creation of the MCF, Les chaired the Charitable Support sub-Project Group charged with creating a simplified application process with unified eligibility criteria, and was very pleased to work alongside David Innes in creating and embedding the MCF as Freemasonry's principal charity, succeeding him as Chief Executive when David retired in September 2020.

Bro Les has been a Freemason for over 30 years having been initiated into Fortis Green Lodge No. 5145 in 1989. He was promoted Past Senior Grand Deacon in 2017 and acted as Grand Steward for Jerusalem Lodge No 197 in 2018. As a member of several other units and orders, Les says his biggest failure in Freemasonry is the ability to say no!

For further information about the impact of the MCF's work in 2019/20, including details of the support provided to Freemasons, family members and local charities in your area, you can access the MCF's digital-only impact report by visiting: impact.mcf.org.uk/2020



Freemasons take lead role in NHS Frontline Workers' Day

WE THANK YOU



The inaugural celebration of NHS, Social Care and Frontline Workers' Day is set to take place on 5 July 2021, with Freemasons leading the event. In Suffolk the event is being marked at many of our Masonic Centres across the county who will be raising a flag or banner in support of the NHS and individual Lodges are in addition marking the day with an Afternoon Tea shared with family and friends.



At Ashlar House in Bury St. Edmunds it is also planned to have Town Crier Michael Wabe in attendance to announce a specially written proclamation.

The United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE), the governing body for Freemasons, is inviting its 200,000 members to fly specially designed flags at 10am on 5 July, to celebrate this unique day dedicated to the NHS, social care and all those that work on the front line, who have saved so many lives during the pandemic. The celebration will also remember those workers we sadly lost.

The UGLE is one of the core supporters of the event alongside the Cadet Forces, English Heritage and the Women's Institute. A £5 donation from every flag and length of bunting made will be equally divided between NHS Charities Together and the National Care Association.

Freemasonry for Women and the Order of Women Freemasons have also joined the UGLE in this initiative, as Freemasons aim to set a record for the number of flags raised simultaneously across the nation. Subsequently, at 11am, Freemasons are planning a moment's silence to remember NHS workers and all those who died from Covid-19. The day continues with a toast to the NHS at 1pm, raising a

cuppa to the NHS during afternoon tea at 3pm, followed by an address to the nation at 6pm. At 8pm, the Freemasons will join the nation in an evening clap for NHS workers, while church bells are set to ring 73 times to celebrate 73 years of the NHS. Closing the celebrations at 9pm, there will be a #timetotoast for all NHS workers.

In addition, Dr David Staples, chief executive of the UGLE, and a Consultant in Acute Internal Medicine at Peterborough Hospital, said: "We are facing the greatest global pandemic in living memory, and the NHS has never been so tested in its history. Its staff have been stretched beyond comprehension over the last year and they deserve our gratitude, our applause and all the support we can give. We are encouraging not only our 200,000 members, but the entire population to celebrate the day honouring and remembering the NHS workers with a complete programme of events on 5 July."

Since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, Freemasons have been supporting the NHS in a great many different ways. They have donated more than £2.5m so far to the Covid effort and complete 18.5 million hours of volunteering to help those in need each year. The donation is being used to help with food, personal protective equipment (PPE), supplements for hospitals and hospices, funds for NHS workers and ambulances.

To find out more about NHS, Social Care and Frontline Workers Day and to register your participation in the event, please visit: www.nhsfrontlineday.org or contact comms@suffolkfreemason.org.uk

Suffolk Masonic Clay Shooting Society



Charity 100 Bird Clay Shoot

Eriswell Lodge Shooting Ground
Saturday 3rd July 2021

100 Sporting clays

Coffee and Bacon roll on arrival

Lunch option available

Raffle

Briefing starts at 09:15 Shooting starts 09:30

Spectators welcome



**In aid of Addenbrooke's Hospital
Radiotherapy unit & Ipswich
Lighthouse Womens Aid**



Shoot + lunch £55.00

Shoot Only £45.00

To book in contact Neil Tweed on 01394 677000

or smacsssecretary@gmail.com

www.suffolkpgl.org.uk/news/smacss-news



Suffolk Light Blues Update

The advent of Covid-19 and the resulting lockdowns has precluded the Suffolk Light Blues from doing what we do best – visiting, supporting and experiencing Suffolk lodges. As we move towards the beginning of the end of the pandemic, we can start to get excited about, and plan, lodge visits and other events. To that end, when visiting resumes and you have a lodge meeting, please advertise it on the SLB Facebook page! If your lodge is gearing up for a special occasion (centenary, multiple candidates etc) make sure the SLBs know so we can support your lodge and help our newest members get out and see the best of Suffolk freemasonry. Likewise, as we begin ramping up to full lodge meetings, keep an eye out for any meeting or event advertised on the Facebook page, and try to bring your newest members along!

In light of the upcoming resumption of masonic activity, the SLB committee have begun preparations for the resumption of meetings and new masonic season.

Committee Changes

Two members of the committee have decided to step down from their roles, and we thank Bro Ollie Coote and W. Bro Ollie Fordham for all their efforts and contributions over the past few years. They have been at the forefront of all we have done and spearheaded the SLB movement.

In their places, Bro Max Wiseman will take over as Group 3 SLB rep, and W. Bro Ryan Harvey will take over as SLB Vice-Chairman. They are two individuals who epitomise not just what the Suffolk Light Blues are about, but also what freemasonry in general is about.

Restart Event

The Suffolk Light Blues committee are beginning to plan an event for all Suffolk freemasons – a celebration of the end of the pandemic! This will be an all-day event, catering to all ages, with food and drink available. Keep an eye out on the SLB Facebook page for further details, and if you fancy getting involved with the planning and preparation, let your SLB rep know!

In the meantime, if you have any ideas for future SLB events, then get in touch. We'd love to hear what you want from freemasonry and the Suffolk Light Blues. The Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Communication Officers, or SLB reps are always available to chat.

Will Lambarth

SLB Communication Officer - North

Porch Project receive £15,000 funding from Suffolk Freemasons

The Porch Project's aim is to provide a quality youth work so that the young people of Hadleigh, Great Cornard and the surrounding areas have the opportunity to achieve their full potential in life. The charity works with disadvantaged young people in the community to create opportunities to educate, inform and support.



The project runs evening drop in sessions each week to provide a regular, safe and supervised place for young people to meet and socialise. It also offers small group learning programmes which aim to build emotional resilience and intelligence. The charity helps young people to develop wider opportunities, responsibilities and experiences and address the challenges of growing up.

Kayleigh Diss, Youth Work Manager/Deputy Safeguarding Lead commented "The Porch Project would like to say a huge thank you to the Suffolk Freemasons for their incredibly generous donation of £15,000 over 3 years and ongoing support of our charity. In what has been an incredibly challenging year, this funding has allowed us to continue our services, albeit adapted, and support many children, young people and their wider networks."

We are currently supporting around 30 young people a week with 1-2-1 coaching in a virtual capacity, around 100 people and their families have registered with our personal hygiene scheme and receive monthly packs free of charge and we have also continued to support our hard to reach and most vulnerable young people through outreach in both Hadleigh and Cornard. As expected, these numbers are slightly less in comparison to our usual figures, however considering the current climate, we are thrilled to still be engaging with so many through our adapted services. Without funding such as the Suffolk Freemasons grant, this just would not be possible and we would like to send our sincere thanks to everyone who has made this possible and has enabled our work to continue."

Rick Orme, Provincial Charity Steward of Suffolk Freemasons, added, "I am delighted we have been able to give our support to The Porch Project, they do wonderful work supporting young people and their families throughout our local community and we know that this grant will help them to further develop the vital work they offer."

*For more information about the charity visit
www.porchproject.co.uk*



Talking Freemasonry... with the Father-in-Law!

An observation on how little has changed...

Since joining Freemasonry late in 2017 it is nice to see how little it has changed and for me, this is one of its most endearing things.



In speaking with my father-in-law Terry Hatcher who was a member of a lodge in London, Gothic No. 5525, it was good to hear his thoughts on what Freemasonry was like when he joined back in 1977.

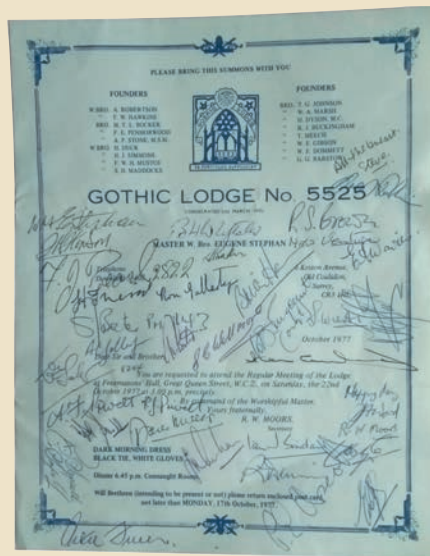
Terry was born in 1945 and at the age of 31 he joined Freemasonry after being proposed by his younger brother, Stephen. Stephen was someone who was very focussed on his Freemasonry and after a seemingly innocuous chat, before he knew it, Terry was blindfolded and being led around the room by a bunch of strangers ... we've all been there, and there is some genuine comfort in that.

His first year back in the late 70's wasn't all that different to my own. It consisted of a lot of dark suits, ties and white gloves, hearing and learning parts of ritual, and genuinely doing as much as he could to help his fellow brothers.

The main difference between us was that being a London Mason, his initiation and all his Lodge of Instructions and meetings were held in Freemasons Hall. Now, this is somewhere I've yet to visit myself having just become a Master Mason shortly before lockdown and I've not had the chance to attend yet. To Terry though, this was his Masonic home, and it was the norm for him.

Terry was lucky, with a younger brother who took him under his wing he had a ready-made training partner to help with his ritual, and having Freemasons Hall as the location for his LOI was certainly different to my own experience.

Terry, like me, has kept his summons from his initiation. However, his is a genuinely printed 4-page summons which is not something I've seen before due to the ease of modern-day email. What is funny though is that the content of it is pretty much a carbon copy of what we have in our provincial summons today. After all, why change a winning formula.



***“A printed 4-page summons
which is not something I’ve
seen before”***

So, on Saturday 22nd October 1977 at 3pm, Terry began his journey in Freemasonry and from talking to him it was just the same as it was for me. A Tyler helped him get ready and then it was on with the ritual. It's funny, as with me he said he remembered smiling a lot despite not knowing what was going on as he was led around the temple.

I had one advantage though, being in Round Table Lodge I knew a few people before I joined, and there were some voices that I recognised even

without seeing them.

When we spoke, Terry talked about how at Freemasons Hall, they would meet in any number of the Temples inside the building and that their meetings varied as well. Also, we talked about how quickly he progressed. He did his 3 degrees very quickly but mine were at a more slower pace.

In 1977, there were no home visits as we have now which was another difference as well. Most of all though, Terry enjoyed the Festive Board.

The dining was an experience which always stuck with him. In London, with it being the home to all global Masons, there was always a good haul of international visitors in attendance. He said he met many people from all over the globe. Freemasons from Israel, Costa Rica, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand were the norm as guests looked to dine with Gothic Lodge.

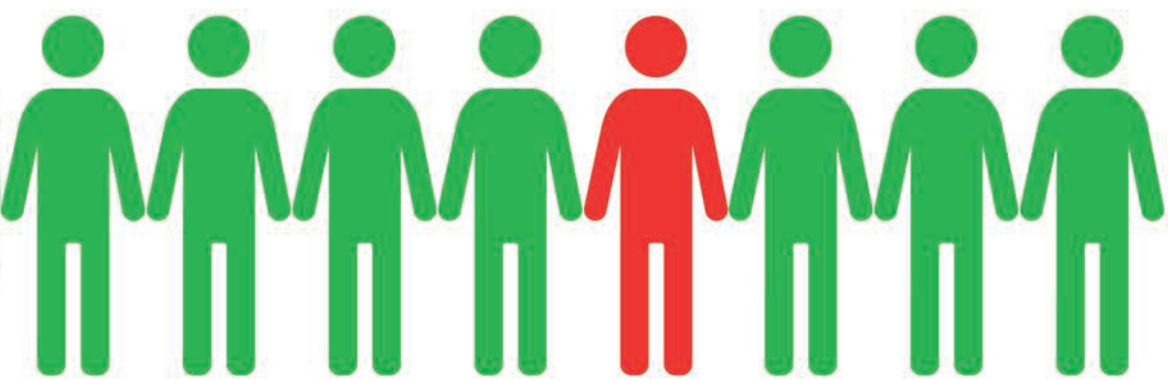
So, aside from the locations being different, the experience was pretty much the same. He made great friends, had a lot of fun and enjoyed his Saturdays as a Freemason.

Then, when finished it was time for a few drinks afterwards and a train back to Harold Wood before gathering the kids and his wife from his mother-in-law's house so his wife could drive them all back to Tiptree.

Terry, as I hope to, progressed into Chapter, joining Gothic Chapter which met in Kensington Palace and although it was a long time ago, in fact his first year had all the hallmarks of my own. It was shared with good men, enjoying what we all do.

With times as they are, I dare say having Masonic friends is as important now as it has ever been and hopefully before long we can all meet again and enjoy progressing through our lodges.

Craig Sennett
Communications Team



Provincial Prostate Cancer Screening Initiative

The PSA Prostate Testing Days have been running in the Province of Suffolk for four years. During that time there have been many referrals for further investigation and it can be said that a number of lives have been saved, and a further number have avoided invasive surgery because of early detection of this Cancer.

As we embark on the 2021 programme, in which there are six days confirmed, the Province has taken a massive step forward in joining with CHAPS, TACKLE and the METROPOLITAN GRAND LODGE to develop a new screening/recording programme based on keeping and maintaining a long term record of all tests, to inform those who could agree a National Prostate Cancer Screening Programme.

In the UK the number of cases of this cancer grows year on year and we are now seeing 48000 per annum, with 12000 deaths and many thousand more whose lives are completely changed.

Men who are at high risk need testing every year, intermediate risk every two years and at low risk three yearly. During 2020, 179 of our Members were tested in Felixstowe and Mildenhall; the results were a warning to us all. 27 were classed as high risk, 33 were intermediate risk and together 36.8% of all those tested needed a follow up.

The test days for 2021 are:

FELIXSTOWE PRE-BOOKED FROM 2020 - NOW 24th APRIL 2021

IPSWICH 12th JUNE & 10th OCTOBER

BURY ST. EDMUNDS 26th JUNE & 6th NOVEMBER

SUDBURY 30th OCTOBER

LOWESTOFT 20th NOVEMBER

The test days for 2021 are specific to Suffolk Freemasons, however it is hoped that later in the year they can be opened up to the wider community, further information will follow.

Put these dates in your diary and make sure you attend an event.

Book at <https://chaps.mypsatests.org.uk/events/>

You will need to use the password - MASONS

The impact of COVID-19 has meant thousands of men across the UK have undetected cancer and risk being diagnosed too late, by when it's incurable. There has been the biggest drop in referrals for this specified cancer in ten years.

**ALL TESTS BOOKED BY SUFFOLK FREEMASONS IN THIS PROGRAMME,
FOR THE NEXT 3 YEARS WILL BE AT NO COST TO THE INDIVIDUAL.**



Suffolk Freemasons working with the community

Ancient and Accepted Rite - Suffolk District



Princes', the tunnel is beginning to straighten out and I am now hopeful that the glimmer of light flickering in the distance will soon become a beacon to guide us back to Masonic normality. We have endured all that the Pandemic has thrown at us and we have lost friends and loved ones too. As Easter approaches, the Ancient & Accepted Rite in particular, will look towards that light that signals hope and gives us a faith for a better future.

We continue to remain vigilant and to that end the King Edward VII Chapter of Improvement has made the decision to postpone their demonstrations until 2022. For those of you who are not Rose Croix Masons, the KE7 Chapter demonstrates what are known as the Intermediate Degrees to Rose Croix audiences across England & Wales. As part of a candidate's entry into the Order, the degrees from the 4° to the 17° are conferred in name only and the ceremony of the 18° worked in full. These Intermediate Degrees are demonstrated in full by the KE7 Chapter, and the particular degree or degrees, changes each year. They are extremely popular and form an important part of a Rose Croix Mason's knowledge of the Order. A demonstration of the 14°, Grand Elect, Perfect and Sublime Master will be rescheduled for next year. For those interested, further information can be accessed on the KE7 website; www.kevii.org.uk

Closer to home, the Rose Croix now has a Facebook group for its members in the District of Suffolk. It is a closed group but if you are a member of a Suffolk Rose Croix Chapter you will be made welcome. You personally have to be registered with Facebook but access to the group is via;

www.facebook.com/groups/3515672728530224

Good news and congratulation goes to one of the Members of Victoria Chapter Rose Croix No22 in Ipswich. V.° Ill.° Bro. Paul Tarrant 33°, the Inspector General for South Essex is to be appointed Provincial Grand Master & MEGS for Essex. Paul lives in Ipswich, joined the Victoria Chapter, and has strong links to Suffolk Masonry. On behalf of the Ancient & Accepted Rite, I extend our best wishes to him and every success for the future.

Staying with Victoria Chapter, Ill.° Bro. David Boswell 30° became Provincial Grand Master for the Degree of Mark Master Masons, East Anglia at the beginning of this year, Ill.° Bro. Raymond Pascoe 32° has been Deputy Grand Superintendent in Charge of the Royal Arch, keeping the Province in good heart until a certain E&PP Ian Yeldham 18° is Installed as the Most Excellent Grand Superintendent. Not to be out done in the west of the District, three members of St. Edmunds Chapter Rose Croix No162 received their 1st Appointment to Craft Grand Rank. My congratulations go to each and every one of them.

To members of the Craft who are not Rose Croix Masons please ask more about this lovely Order. It does explore Masonry from a Christian aspect. A belief in the Trinitarian Faith is a requirement for membership as is being a Master Mason for 12 months or more. However, the true honour bestowed in this Order lays in its membership more than anything else.

Any Brother interested in membership of the Rose Croix may contact the District Recorder for further information or visit the District website: www.suffolkdistrictrc.com

Or visit the Supreme Council website: www.sc33.org.uk

V.° Ill.° Bro. Ralph Robertson 33° Inspector General Suffolk District

Gatehouse Foodbank grateful for donation from Abbey Lodge



During the lockdowns caused by the Covid 19 pandemic, members of Abbey Lodge No. 1592 have resorted to modern technology and new ways of keeping in touch, something that is not often said given our traditionalist approach, by having Zoom meetings. These meetings have proven to be invaluable in keeping in touch with each other. As with all Freemasons, we are aware that 'relief' is one of our core objectives and following discussion and agreement, I arranged a collection from the brethren for a charity of our WM Gareth Scourfield-Thomas choice, which was Gatehouse.

Gatehouse was started in 1986 with the aim of helping those in material and emotional need throughout West Suffolk. It now covers the whole of East Anglia and helps anyone in need who is referred to them. These include those on low incomes, people with housing needs, disability, the elderly and other vulnerable groups. The foodbank works with local care professionals to identify those in need and to be able to provide short term relief and support by providing emergency food as well as signposting people to organisations able to help with the long-term problems.

The photograph shows Abbey Charity Steward Stewart Chapman handing over a cheque to the value of £750.00 to Amanda Bloomfield the Charities Chief Executive, socially distanced, masked and Covid compliant on 21 December at their premises in Bury St Edmunds.

Stewart Chapman



Forum asked Geoff Spencer to tell us all about Hermes...

You may well have heard a lot of talk about 'Hermes' just recently – and on this occasion I'm not talking about the parcel delivery service with which we've all become so familiar over the past months, and which has come in for a fair amount of 'stick' in some quarters!

What is Hermes?

The membership computer database used by UGLE is called Adelphi and, as well as being used by the admin teams at Freemasons' Hall in London, Adelphi also allows remote access from what UGLE terms regional centres, such as Provincial and District Grand offices.

However, individual Lodges and Chapters do not have access to Adelphi and have to manage their units by completing and submitting paper forms to their regional centres, which introduces delay and the opportunity for inaccuracy.

So, while Adelphi will remain at the heart of our membership system, the new Hermes system will provide a 'front end' to connect Lodges and Chapters to the data held in Adelphi, thus enabling them to keep their records updated in 'real time' and save to save huge amounts of time and effort on some of the may paperwork-based tasks expected of them today. Of course, this will mean that Lodge Secretaries and Chapter Scribes Ezra must have a reasonably modern computer or 'smart' device, and access to the Internet. Where this is not possible, it will be perfectly acceptable for another member of the masonic unit (e.g. Assistant Secretary) to take on the Hermes role.

Our Lodge Secretaries and Chapter Scribes are the beating heart of our masonic units and while Hermes will present them with a new challenge, the benefits are huge – streamlined processes, elimination of duplication and removing a great deal of the drudgery from their role.

Where are we on Hermes?

At present, we are in the middle of the build phase. Richard Gutteridge, Nottinghamshire's Grand Superintendent and the Chairman of the Hermes Transition & Rollout Working Party, in a recent article for Freemasonry Today wrote :-

"The Great Software Architect's very detailed plans have been circulated and approved with a broad consensus that the result will be a truly splendid edifice fit for the twenty-first century. But now it is a job for the craftsmen

(designers, programmers and testers) to deliver the intended structure and that is happening now. We are starting to see the first working screens emerge from the development team and they look really exciting.

"The task for my working party is nowhere near as glamorous as that of the design team! Ours is to use the time, while the build phase proceeds, to plan how we can make the transition to the new system as smooth as is possible, and to consider the order and the rate at which the total UGLE and Supreme Grand Chapter community can be rolled out to the new system.

"Within the constitution there are approximately 10,100 Lodges and Chapters, so that is the size of the challenge."

I am indebted to E.Comp Gutteridge for his permission to reproduce the above extract. GS.

Training and Support for Hermes Users

Each Province was requested to form its own working party, chaired by a member of the Executive, and to nominate what UGLE are calling a Hermes "Champion" – i.e., someone to oversee the rollout of the new system. VWBro David Clarke, our past Deputy PGM, is chairing our group and I have been chosen

[honoured/lumbered/elevated] (delete as applicable) to assume the role of champion. The remainder of the project team comprises the Provincial Secretary and Scribe E and their respective assistants, Richard Vickerstaff Jnr who puts his past IT experience to work as part of the Provincial Secretariat, and Paul (known to many as Cyril) Filby, a former Lodge Secretary with significant experience as an IT trainer in his former working life.

We have had 'Zoom' meetings with UGLE Hermes team, and with the teams from our neighbouring Provinces of Norfolk,

Cambridgeshire, Essex and Hertfordshire who together with us form RCG7 (Regional Communications Group 7).

Hermes is being designed to be easy to use and to be intuitive in its operation, similar in complexity to that of internet banking or online shopping systems. Every task to be completed will be a set of simple steps with entries being checked for validity before proceeding to the next step. A key task of the working parties is to ensure that the training package being designed by our professionals at UGLE, will also be top class, to which end the RCGs have had the opportunity to provide feedback to the centre.

In the first instance, key individuals from the project team will receive the training package and will then become a local centre from which to deliver the Hermes training to Secretaries and Scribes and be part of the support team when assistance with Hermes is required. They will be assisted by a number of other enthusiastic Brethren and Companions who have either been recruited or, in some cases, have volunteered to act as 'Group Champions' so it is hoped that they will then become the first group to be trained by your local trainers and will also become the first point of assistance for members of their group.

When will all this happen?

It is unlikely that all Provinces will move to the new system at the same time, given the nature of the project and the diversity in size of the various regional centres. For example, while our Cambridgeshire neighbours have a total of 44 Lodges and Chapters, our Essex neighbours have 420 - I don't envy them their task!

The first 'train the trainers' sessions are currently scheduled to take place in the last quarter of 2021 but, given the extent of the project, it would not be totally unreasonable to expect a little 'slippage' in the projected timetable. We are also mindful of our Province's commitment to its 250th anniversary celebrations in October and have asked UGLE to avoid, if possible, any potential clash.

Needless to say, in the current climate it is highly likely that all such training will be conducted remotely using 'Zoom' or similar technology.

If you want to know more, please don't hesitate to contact me using the Provincial Office's email address, pgl@suffolkfreemason.org.uk

Geoff Spencer ProvSGW



Ipswich Charity Emmaus receives Grant of £30,000 from Suffolk Freemasons

Emmaus Suffolk first opened its doors in 2016 and since then have grown rapidly and now run groups and workshops on a regular basis in Ipswich and Felixstowe to support those within the local community who would otherwise be socially isolated, are struggling with long-term unemployment or are at risk of homelessness.

Emmaus Suffolk provides work opportunities and experience through their shops in Felixstowe and Ipswich, as well as in a new warehouse on the waterfront in Ipswich. Among those volunteering with Emmaus Suffolk are those who have been unemployed for a long time, and through offering volunteering roles Emmaus Suffolk gives people the chance to make a difference for themselves, in a supportive environment through work related experience and training.

The ambition of the charity is to introduce to Suffolk new ways of tackling entrenched homelessness and unemployment by enabling and empowering people to help themselves through meaningful activity that will benefit both themselves and others.

Claire Staddon, Chief Executive of Emmaus Suffolk said "We are incredibly grateful to Suffolk Freemasons for their generous grant, which will enable us to offer a second community house. Our houses give people who would otherwise be homeless or insecurely housed a safe place to call home. People living within our Community Houses receive support to live as independently as possible. They can claim Universal Credit and are responsible for managing their own budgets, paying their bills and shopping and cooking for themselves. They still receive support from the Emmaus Suffolk team, but we do not have a staff member living on-site. Our companions volunteer up to 15 hours a week in our social enterprises, giving them hands on experience, training and a supportive environment in which they can reach their full potential.

The aim of our Community House is to provide a stepping stone to help people rebuild their lives and move on to live and work completely independently. But, like at all Emmaus communities around the UK, there is no time limit on the support offered, and our tenants are free to stay for as long as they want to."

Deputy Provincial Grand Master of Suffolk Freemasons, Tim McCormick added "We are very pleased to be able to give our support to Emmaus, they do wonderful work supporting people and their families throughout our local community and we know that this grant will help them to further develop the vital work they offer."

The grant from Suffolk Freemasons comes through the Masonic Charitable Foundation, which is funded by Freemasons from across England and Wales.



For more information about the charity visit emmaus.org.uk/suffolk/

Suffolk Freemasons Social Media

Provincial Grand Lodge of Suffolk has a presence on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter which are all open to public



viewing and run by your Communications Team. They will give you exclusive up to date information on what is happening around the Province as well as having topical posts from United Grand Lodge, the Masonic Charitable Foundation, RMBI, Supreme Grand Charity and many others. We are wanting to expand our social media with the use of video, if you have experience of this and would like to join the team in promoting Suffolk Freemasons we would be pleased to hear from you.

If you have anything you want to share on our social media, simply get in touch - comms@suffolkfreemason.org.uk



A date for your diaries!!

The Annual Provincial Grand Lodge meeting at the Royal Hospital School, Holbrook now postponed from 4th June, is being re-organised for 29th October and will be combined with the celebration of the 250th Anniversary of the formation of Suffolk Provincial Grand Lodge.

Further details to follow.

Freemasons' inaugural Annual Report showcases commitment to modernisation

The United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE) has launched its first annual report, in its 300 year history, marking another major step forward in its commitment to modernisation, transparency and normalization. The annual report includes the new mission statement, which sits alongside the UGLE's four key values of integrity, respect, friendship and charity. In addition, a recent study found that 75% of Freemasons take part in civic or charitable activities, compared to only 31% of non-Freemasons, in a matched geodemographic profile. Dr David Staples, chief executive of the UGLE, said: "Our first ever annual report is a major step ahead for the organisation in terms of the transparency and normalisation of Freemasonry, we want to tell the public who we are and what we do. This year, we have raised more than £42m for charity and given more than 18.5 million hours of our time in unpaid social and civic volunteering. I am enormously proud to serve an organisation with such a story to tell."

The vast majority of the beneficiaries of charitable grants from Masonic charities are not themselves Freemasons. In fact, 90% of the donations are given to thousands of projects and people across the country to provide relief from suffering, misfortune and poverty. Only 10% of the total money disbursed goes to UGLE members and families, on a means-tested basis. During the pandemic, it was gratifying to discover that fewer than 2% of the UGLE membership were actively considering leaving Freemasonry. The UGLE had planned for a significantly

higher drop in membership, comprising those leaving because of financial hardship and those sadly passing away. Instead, the vast majority are greatly looking forward to things returning to normal and to resuming their Masonic lives.

Elsewhere, many members responded magnificently to the crisis, raising £3m for those in need across the UK, via the Covid Community Fund. In the early days of the pandemic, the group prioritised the need for personal protective equipment, food-based projects and the supply of tablets to hospitals and nursing homes to enable Covid-19 sufferers to contact family members. Now, the project is focusing on helping homeless people, young carers and mental health projects.

The essence of Freemasonry is the practise of charity. It is so inextricably linked that every Lodge meeting includes a charity collection and every Lodge and Province has a charity steward, who is responsible for coordinating the financial commitments and voluntary actions of the members. Many of the charitable efforts of the UGLE and its members are channelled through the Masonic Charitable Foundation, the Freemasons' primary charitable grant-giving body. Among other charities that the UGLE is actively supporting is the Freemasons' Fund for Surgical Research (FFSR), which supports the Research Fellows of the Royal College of Surgeons (RCS) with grants each year to pursue cutting-edge research work, which might otherwise not have been funded. For more than 50 years, the FFSR has supported much groundbreaking research and many of the Fellows have gone on to distinguished careers. In addition to the RCS, the Freemasons also support Lifelites, which gives life-limited and disabled children in hospices the chance to play and be creative, through the power of assistive technology.

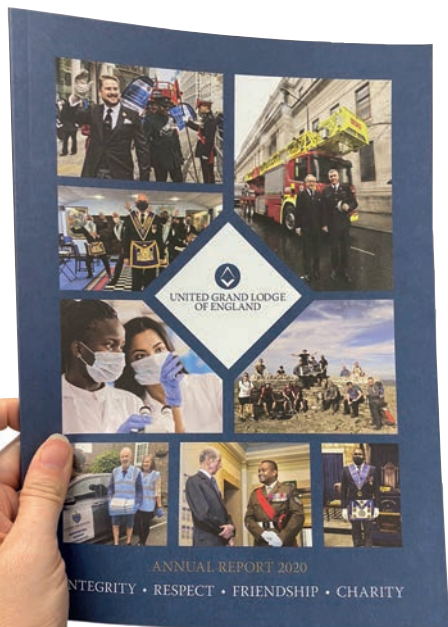
Since taking over as CEO of the 200,000-member UGLE, Dr Staples has targeted many improvements within the organisation. "The challenges I have set myself are to improve the public perception and understanding of Freemasonry, and to improve the administration of the organisation, modernising our systems and processes within this context," he explained. In the last few years therefore, Freemasons have

been busy modernising and launching campaigns inviting the public to experience the world of Freemasonry. As a result, since 2018 the public's perception of Freemasonry has improved significantly, according to external opinion surveys. "All the effort and transparency has brought surprising results. Recent research showed that one in four people would consider joining Freemasonry today. The change is significant, because in 2018, the result of the same survey was one in ten," explained Dr Staples.

The same research showed that those aged 18-34 are the most favourable towards the organisation, suggesting a real opportunity exists to engage and attract a newer, younger membership. Looking to these segments of the public, the UGLE has done much in recent years to encourage younger men, such as establishing the Universities Scheme and the New and Young Masons Clubs. Currently, the Universities Scheme has approximately 3,500 subscribing members.

Improvements are also being made in communications. For the first time, the UGLE is able to talk directly and regularly with its membership, and a planned member survey will ensure that Freemasons will have been able to provide feedback directly to the organisation. Further modernisation is underway with Project Hermes, a modern and simple web-based system to be used by Lodge and Chapter secretaries, which will transform the way in which the organisation is administered and mark an end to lengthy, manual form-filling processes. One of the major design principles of Hermes is that it must be intuitive and easy to operate, similar to using an online banking system.

Looking further ahead, an important milestone to be celebrated is the consecration of Lodge number 10,000, which will be duly heralded next year. That and other upcoming events will offer the UGLE the chance to match its Tercentary celebration in 2017 at the Royal Albert Hall. These occasions demonstrate the richness and importance of the Freemasons' history and heritage, as well as the essential benevolence of the organisation's core values and teachings – all while showcasing the fun side of Freemasonry.



You can download the report here: www.suffolkfreemason.org.uk/news

Reflections on the Covid pandemic from the NHS front line...

For those who don't know me I am a Consultant in Intensive Care Medicine at Ipswich Hospital, where I have worked for 20 years, and I am also the Divisional Director for Medicine in Ipswich, which includes being responsible for the Emergency Department, and the Emergency Assessment Units. I must stress that all opinions expressed here are my own, and are not the views or policies of the ESNEFT hospital trust.

Winter 2019/20 started off like any other winter, with an increase in admissions with respiratory symptoms which we managed in the usual way. There were some initial rumours of a new virus in China which was causing some problems in one city, but nothing that we needed to do anything about.

By early February, when we would normally be looking forward to the end of the winter pressures, it was clear that this new virus was going to be a significant problem. It seemed to be transmitted very easily, made about 15% of people significantly unwell requiring admission to hospital, and in about 1% of patients caused significant lung damage, requiring admission to intensive care for ventilation. The disease, now called Covid-19 (COronaVirus Induced Disease – 2019) was causing huge problems in Northern Italy, where the health services were overwhelmed, patients were being ventilated in corridors and large numbers of people were dying.

We were asked to plan for the pandemic coming to the UK, and prepare for the impact on the NHS with a huge increase in intensive care beds and emergency admission capacity. The main problems were lack of equipment and suitably trained staff, so plans were made for rapid training courses for non-intensive care staff to be able to work in the units, and we purchased as much new equipment as we could get hold of. As we had a lack of ventilators and space to put patients in, we had to significantly reduce operating theatre capacity so that the anaesthetic machines could be used as ventilators and the theatre staff could be released to help out on ICU.

For those unfamiliar with intensive care, we usually have about 12 beds in Ipswich, which are staffed on either a 1 or 2 patients per nurse basis, depending on what support the patient needs. We usually have about 10 nurses on a shift, and they provide care including several different forms of ventilation, blood pressure support, renal dialysis and administration of many different drug infusions. We immediately expanded to 21 beds, which required pretty much doubling of the number of staff on each shift, and while there remained a nurse by each bed, only 1:2 to 1:3 of these were trained intensive care nurses, while the rest were a huge group of volunteers including theatre staff, paediatric nurses, research nurses, and various nurse specialists from around the hospital.

The first patient was admitted to intensive care in Ipswich on 13th March, and then we had an extremely busy time with 40 more patients admitted over the following 6 weeks.

One of the biggest difficulties that we experienced was the lack of patient relatives on the unit. When patients have visitors several times a week it is much easier for us to keep them apprised of what is happening to their loved ones, and if there is deterioration, we call them in to discuss it and to see their relatives. During the first wave there was a complete ban on visiting the hospital and therefore all contact with relatives was by telephone. We did try Skype with some younger relatives to allow them to see their loved one but this was not always possible. Unfortunately, we had a significant number of patients who died without their loved ones being present – although there were always our staff there, so that no one died alone, this made things extremely difficult. We lost quite a high proportion of patients – about 35%, when we normally only lose 10-12% of patients, and this number included a number of patients in their 20s and 30s which we never see.

At this time the response of the public was amazing – huge numbers of gifts of food, PPE, scrubs etc., the Thursday evening clap, prioritisation of NHS staff in the supermarkets etc. – it made what was a physically and mentally exhausting period bearable.



The true heroes were the nurses, physiotherapists and junior doctors, who were spending 4 hours at a time in PPE – as a consultant I never really spent more than an hour and that was very hot and uncomfortable!

The last patient in the first wave was admitted to intensive care on 30th April, but there was a significant tail as these patients have an average 2 to 3-week intensive care stay, and a proportion much longer – our longest staying patient was on intensive care for 9 weeks.

There was a worry that numbers would go up when the children went back to school and the students returned to university. Unfortunately a proportion of the population now appeared to be fed up of restrictions, and were not taking the required social distancing precautions. The numbers inevitably started to rise, resulting in the 2nd national lockdown in November. Compliance with the lockdown restrictions this time did not seem as good – partly due to mixed messages from the government, and so it did not have the effect that the first lockdown had.

A trickle of intensive care admissions in October started to ramp up in November, with an admission every other day on average. At this time the hospital was still trying to continue with all of its usual activity, on top of an increasing Covid workload, which started to put pressure on all of the urgent care services. The big problem for us was the end of the lockdown, the relaxation of restrictions over Christmas, and a

population who appeared – at least to us – to have completely forgotten the problems earlier in the year, and were not complying at all with the restrictions.

As was entirely predictable, intensive care admissions increased quickly over this period, averaging an admission a day over December, but the period between Christmas and New Year was very busy, with up to 4 intensive care admissions per day. The rest of the hospital was very busy, and we had up to 250 inpatients – about 40% of our bed base – who were infected.

This winter has been awful, and in intensive care we have had nearly 3x the number we had in the first wave. The staff are exhausted from the past year of hard work and feel totally demoralised. The gifts have stopped, the general public do not seem to care anymore, and all we see on the news are large gatherings of people flouting the restrictions, no social distancing in the supermarkets, the sea-front at Felixstowe thronged with people despite that there is still a stay at home order in place! Constant stories in newspapers and on social media denying the pandemic, rubbish from anti-vaxers etc. all cause significant anger in a workforce who are struggling. We do realise that our perceptions are not correct, and that this is only a minority of the population, but they seem to be given far too much air-time and do not reflect the views or behaviour of the majority.

There are some positives. The vaccine roll-out has been amazing – beaten only by Israel, who have a much smaller population. The numbers of admissions to hospital and intensive care have gone down significantly. Ipswich hospital now only has 1 covid ward, and is restarting some visiting. Applications to nursing and medical degree courses are apparently higher than they have been for years, which bodes well for the future. We have also made some changes in the way we work which will undoubtedly remain, which will allow us to provide care more efficiently in future, without patients having to come up to the hospital for a clinic visit. We have had a huge investment in testing – at the beginning of the first wave it took us 6-7 days to get the result of a covid swab, but we have now built a molecular laboratory in Ipswich which means we have a 2-hour turnaround in results!

I think that the NHS as a whole has done an amazing job despite the historic underfunding and understaffing, although there will undoubtedly be a significant effect of the delays in treatment for some patients. It is important that lessons are learned in society and in government so that when the next pandemic comes – albeit may be in the next century, the NHS is in a better position to manage it in terms of staffing, equipment, testing capacity etc.

Mark Garfield

Gerald Tedder - In memoriam

Jervis Kay QC writes...



Gerald Tedder was a man who epitomised excellence. A successful banker by profession, a fine shot, an accomplished off-shore yachtsman, a keen bridge player, an amusing raconteur and, above all, a wise and kind man who took a genuine interest in all within his circle. We will remember him as a dedicated freemason who held high office and successfully rose to the highest office in Rose Croix which he served with dedication and great success.

I first met Gerald in the late 1980's, shortly after he had brought his yacht out of Dubrovnik and sailed her to Malta at the beginning of the break-up of Yugoslavia into the Balkan states which now exist. As they left Dubrovnik marina, artillery rounds were beginning to fall near the fuelling jetty and, as a result, he had been unable to top up his fuel tank. During the course of the passage an airlock occurred stopping the engine. He nonetheless continued to sail towards Valetta and, as he approached, he accepted a tow into harbour from a local work boat. Although Gerald offered to pay for what was a straightforward tow the Maltese owner of the workboat then claimed for salvage in bringing the boat into harbour which, if successful, would have meant he received much higher remuneration, possibly amounting to a sizeable proportion of the value of the yacht. Gerald's insurers decided to contest the claim and I was instructed to act for him.

I remember that we held a conference in my chambers during the course of which he showed me a photograph of his boat which, as I saw, was flying what appeared to be the distinctive ensign of the Aldeburgh Yacht Club. I asked whether it was, he said it was and that lived at Badingham. A rapport was established when I told him that I too had been a member of the AYC and was brought up in Suffolk. In due course we fought the case, Gerald and members of his crew gave evidence and the arbitrator, himself a keen yachtsman and Captain in the RNR, held that Gerald had been effectively sailing his boat into harbour quite safely, had only accepted the offer of a tow as a matter of convenience and, as a consequence, the yacht was never in

any danger so that a salvage claim was not established. The matter was noteworthy because it is very rare for claim for maritime salvage to be refused when a tow has been accepted and we were all very pleased with the result.

Not long after wards, in 1992, I was one of the Deputy GDCs on duty at the London Grand Rank ceremony and was handing up the candidates to be invested when a brother, who looked familiar, smiled at me as he passed. After a few moments I realised that it was Gerald by which time he had passed back to the floor. Until then I have not realised that he was a freemason. We sought each other out after the ceremony. I and my family had recently moved back to Suffolk and Gerald and Ruth frequently entertained us at his beautiful home at Oakenhill Hall and it was the beginning of a great friendship. It was also about the time of Gerald's meteoric rise in freemasonry.

Gerald was initiated into Quarries Lodge (No.5608) in 1971. He joined British (No.8) in 1986 and served as its WM and Grand Steward in 1997, becoming a member of the Grand Stewards Lodge (the lodge without number). In 1999 he became a member of the Supreme Council of the Ancient and Accepted Rite (Rose Croix). It was unusual for a member of Supreme Council not to hold Grand Rank in the UGLE and he was made PJGD (Eng) and PAGSoj in the Royal Arch in 2003. In 2004 he became Sovereign Grand Commander of the Ancient and Accepted Rite and in 2005 he was promoted to PGSwdB in UGLE and GSoj in the Royal Arch. In 2009 Gerald became the Senior Warden in Grand Stewards Lodge and was made PJGW in UGLE.

Having commenced his masonry in London, Gerald was not a Suffolk mason and his involvement began when he and Bob Tile, the then PGM, met whilst shooting and recognised each other as masons. The story according to Gerald, told with a wry smile, is that one of them made an innocent remark with masonic connotations and the other gave a suitable response. That led to a firm friendship based upon mutual respect. Bob was keen for Gerald to join a Suffolk Lodge but recognised that his

commitments in London would make it difficult for Gerald to proceed up the ladder and become WM of an existing lodge within a reasonable time span. As Bob Tile was also keen to form a Suffolk Lodge which could provide a home to brethren who had commenced their masonry outside Suffolk, it was decided that a new Lodge would be consecrated with Gerald as its first WM.

With the support of Suffolk brethren who also had masonic ties outside the province, a suitable number of founders were found, a significant number of whom had begun their masonry in London or were members of the Grand Stewards Lodge. Laconic Lodge (No.9771), so named because it was intended that its work should be pithy, its toasts should be few and there should be no speech making, was consecrated by Bob Tile and a team from Provincial Grand Lodge on 18th October 2003. Under Gerald's leadership it quickly took on the style and modus operandi of a 'red-apron' lodge with excellent working and a relaxed social atmosphere.

In recognition of his achievement and of his status as a senior freemason, Gerald was made Past Provincial Senior Grand Warden of the Province of Suffolk in 2004. In 2007, as Sovereign Grand Commander, he consecrated and became the first Sovereign of Laconic Chapter Rose Croix.

He stood down as Sovereign Grand Commander in 2009 and in 2012 he was installed as WM of Grand Stewards Lodge which was, I believe, the last active masonic office held by him. However, he continued to take an active interest in both Laconic Lodge and Laconic Chapter and he became a founding member of Sparta Chapter No.9771 (in the Royal Arch) which was consecrated on the 2nd August 2019 but which has sadly been unable to meet since because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

He was loved and revered and greatly respected by all who knew him and will be sorely missed.

Gerald went to the Grand Lodge above on Easter Sunday 4th April. He is survived by his widow, Ruth, and a daughter and two sons. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family.



Companions,

As I write this it's been a cold Easter weekend and we have some snow showers this bank holiday Monday. My children and grandchildren have face timed and I just long to see them all and have a cuddle. My daughter and her family live in London and my two sons and their families live in Gloucestershire. We haven't seen them for ages. My eldest son is also a Freemason and like many of us is missing his Freemasonry he holds regular Zoom meetings but as he says "it's nothing like the real thing dad and I can't wait to get back in the Chair again".

Without any shadow of doubt this pandemic has affected us all in one way or another, it is well over a year since many of us attended a Chapter Convocation and enjoyed the companionship of likeminded companions followed by an enjoyable festive board.

Apart from the disruption to our Freemasonry family lives have been disrupted and we have had to deal with varying levels of stress and upset, some of us will face the future without a love one who may have died from COVID-19 or some other cause but, whatever the cause, the restriction on movement has been very hard especially when we haven't been allowed to offer support and comfort to them in their time of need. Companions this is a reminder that we shouldn't take anything for granted.

The success of the Vaccine fills me with increasing optimism and I am looking forward to the end of this lockdown. I suspended our Chapter convocations until the 17th May which is Step 3 of the lockdown when meetings of limited numbers and dining of groups of 6 are permitted but we must still adhere to whatever the government guidelines are. I am looking forward to the 21st June when I hope the outpourings from the Government regarding the lifting of restrictions is followed by supporting advice from UGLE/SGC and we can begin our own progression into physical meetings instead of the virtual meetings on zoom. I am amazed at how the response to zoom meetings has taken off and I salute all those who have managed it and enjoyed it.

I am looking forward to larger gatherings and a festive board but I appreciate the concern some may have about returning to large gatherings and the advice from UGLE/SGC is that no one should feel pressured into attending if they still feel it's too early to go to meetings and meet others.

Our Provincial Grand Chapter meeting for 13th May will not take place due to the lockdown but I shall organise Zoom meetings in its place. The Provincial appointments and promotions have been announced and a vast number of the active appointments will remain as in 2020 and I hope they will have the opportunity to go visiting and enjoy themselves as they support our Province and the Chapters.

In September, a date yet to be confirmed, R.W. Bro Ian Yeldham MEGS Elect will be invested and I am really looking forward to this. I don't know what the arrangements are or any limitation on attendance but rest assured you will be kept informed.

Another change to the executive is the appointment of Roger Young as Provincial Third Grand Principal who was Provincial Grand Treasurer and is replaced by E. Comp Keith Cook, and I thank Paul Norman for his support during his period of office as TGP.

I shall say more about those who have retired and given sterling service to this province after our Zoom meetings.

Companions, as we look forward to the resumption of our convocations and indeed Freemasonry in general, we will have to be united in dealing with the challenges that confront us, Installations, exaltations, loss of members, problems with meeting venues and many other issues that will require some resolution, don't be disheartened together we can overcome these matters.

My very best wishes to you all,

Raymond

Deputy Grand Superintendent in Charge

