



WYP Monthly Newsletter

Staffordshire Freemasons Digital News



Sept 2021

A Message from the Provincial Grand Master

Brethren

It has been nearly two years since I last wrote the forward for our magazine. The covid pandemic which so disrupted our regular meetings in March 2020 caused us to rethink our communications strategies. The weekly newsletter was born under the guidance of APMG Mike Santopietro which was a mammoth task and who would realise just how long we would be subject to lockdowns and the like. To W Bro Mike a huge thank you from me and I'm sure all of you who were kept in touch with the news from around our great province. Other forms of media graced our laptops and PC screens primarily in the form of Zoom. They enabled us to work as an enhanced team bringing the heads of orders together on a weekly basis to share projects and initiatives.

Whilst freemasonry was in lockdown we did not stop promoting and supporting charity in its many forms. To the members of our province who rose to the challenges of which there were many, from PPE, vaccination centres, food banks, meals on wheels, refuges, mental health, children's charities the list goes on. We have donated £51 million pounds and over 18 million hours in volunteering. We can take pride that we, The Freemasons have achieved all of this and much more supporting the communities in which we live and work. It would be wrong to single out individuals who have instigated projects and took the lead in many more, but to them on behalf of all those who have benefited thank you. The Most Worshipful the Grand Master has contacted provinces to name individuals involved to receive his letter of commendation, a task which is impossible. I have asked for a province wide commendation as the province together made it possible.

This pandemic will be with us for a while yet

and I'm sure it has affected us all in one way or another, so as we gradually return to a new normal and our meetings resume, I must stress freemasonry is here for you when you feel comfortable to return. The overarching principle is that your health is far more important and there is no pressure to return and please, only when you consider it safe to do so. I really do look forward to being with you in your lodges once again and to share your company and friendship. It is an honour to be your Provincial Grand Master and I'm so proud to represent and serve you. Thank you for being freemasons and for being all that Freemasonry represents.

God bless you all.

John.



The Staffordshire Provincial Lodge Masonic Armed Forces Covenant

The Staffordshire Provincial Lodge Masonic Armed Forces Covenant is to be signed on Thursday 23rd September at 11am. It is happening at our National Masonic Memorial Garden in the shadow of the Armed Forces Memorial and will be the first of the many Provincial Grand Lodges to sign.

Freemasonry has in fact been supporting our Armed Forces Community for more 300 years mainly through military lodges. Many of our older lodges in Staffordshire have their origins based upon local militias of the 18th century. Many of our rituals and the festive board traditions today could be found in the officer and sergeant messes of these early military lodges.

When I came to the light, admittedly totally confused, I immediately recognised at the festive board that a number of my mother lodge's (St. Johns of Lichfield No.1039) traditions were firmly based on its military past. As a former soldier I recognised them, they were not unfamiliar to me as they reminded me of my regiment's mess. I felt I had found a home amongst my new brothers.

Our own Staffordshire Masonic Armed Forces Covenant has been over seven months in the making and we are signing up to the following pledges:

The Provincial Grand Lodge of Staffordshire recognises the value Serving Personnel, Reservists, Veterans and Military Families bring to our business. We will seek to uphold the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant, by:

- **Promoting the Armed Forces: promoting the fact that we are an Armed Forces-friendly organisation, to our brethren and wider public.**
- **Veterans: supporting veterans, recognising military skills and qualifications in our membership recruitment and selection process.**
- **Reserves: supporting our brethren who are members of the Reserve Forces.**
- **Cadet Organisations: supporting our brethren who are volunteer leaders in military cadet organisations, supporting and encouraging our members join local military cadet units.**
- **National Events: supporting Armed Forces Day, Reserves Day, the Poppy Appeal Day and Remembrance activities.**
- **Armed Forces Charities: supporting Armed Forces charities with fundraising and supporting brethren who volunteer to assist.**

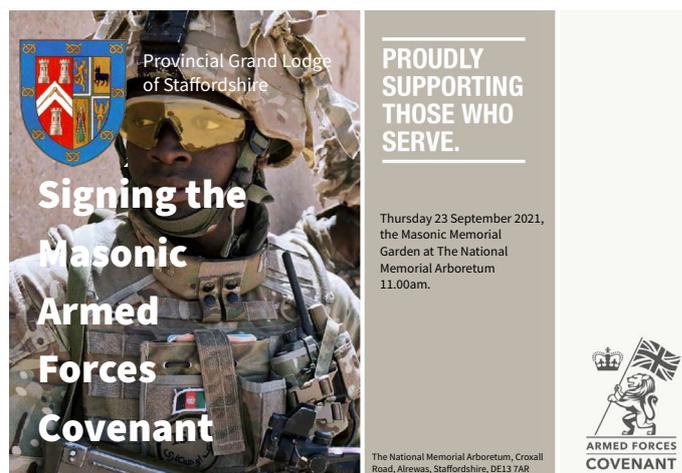
W.Bro Bob Rankin, Kibblestone Lodge and The Queens' Regiment

Pre-booking your visit

The National Memorial Arboretum are recommending that we prebook our visit to avoid being turned away as they have reached their capacity under Covid-19 Regulations.

<https://thenma.org.uk/visit-us/plan-your-visit/book-tickets>

I sincerely hope that I see you on the day.



Science Fiction and Fantasy Lodge - One step nearer

To paraphrase a very famous person, the proposed Science Fiction and Fantasy Lodge has taken one small step and achieved one giant leap in its journey towards its consecration; a task which, with the pandemic, is nearly approaching something akin to the Starship Enterprise's five year mission!

Notwithstanding all of the issues that have faced us all over the last 18 months, the group of Founders have kept in contact and have been working hard in the background to ensure: arrangements for specialist Lodge Furniture; designs for the banner and jewels etc. have been produced; that the chosen ritual has been adopted; and that one or two tweaks to the 'non-ritual' aspects have been agreed.

The one thing that could not be taken forward was the completion of the actual application form, as we had to wait for:

- **A minuted note that an existing Lodge had agreed to be the sponsoring (Mother) Lodge - Andresey Lodge kindly agreed to do that for us.**
- **The application form had to be signed by every Founder, and of course restrictions around travelling and meeting have only recently been lifted.**

On 14th August the majority of Founders were able to meet at their chosen meeting place, Chase Golf Club, Penkridge. At this meeting, rehearsals for opening and closing processions took place. You may be interested to know that the Founders come from all parts of England, and this brings with it a number of different styles which are seen in the various Provinces, so this was an interesting exercise, although very rewarding. The most important thing however, was to get the signatures of the attendees onto the application form.



Pictured are some of the Founders at the pub after a morning of rehearsals. From Left to Right they are: W Bro Mike Santopietro, W Bro Justin Tepper, Bro Justin Randle, Bro Chris Swain, W Bro Chris Priestley, and W Bro James (Chip) Plowman.

At the end of the event, of the 31 Founders, a total of eight signatures were still needed. W Bro Mike Santopietro, Assistant Provincial Grand Master therefore arranged to meet with those Brethren, to obtain those final 'marks'. W Bro Mike has been happy to report that following his travels to Warrington, Stoke, Leek, Telford, Uttoxeter, and Halesowen, where he met Brethren from as far afield as Blackpool and Bath, the form has now been fully completed and has been passed on to the Province to be

countersigned and sent on to UGLE, along with the designs for the banner and jewels which need to be approved too.

We await approval, and a date for the consecration - fingers crossed!

Long Service John Whittaker

E. John Whittaker, PPrSGW, Forresters Lodge No. 456, Dove Lodge No. 8519

Three days prior to Sunday, 8th August, 2021, it rained solid around Uttoxeter. However, on Sunday, 8th August, the rain abated (well almost) and allowed a very happy celebration to take place.

It had been more than a month in the preparation and two weeks prior to the 8th, W. Bro. Malcolm Barlow, of Dieu La Cresse Lodge, arrived at Grove Farm, along with his two sons, Bro. James Barlow and Bro. Richard Barlow, towing a trailer in which was W. Bro. Malcolm's large marquee. The marquee was erected on W. Bro. Whittaker's front lawn, extra labour being provided by Brethren from Forresters Lodge. W. Bro. John's next-door neighbour, Bro. Steve Shields joined in to wash the marquee and make it fit for the occasion. Over the next two weeks, trestle tables and chairs were installed in the marquee and a local caterer engaged to provide a suitable buffet. Drinks were acquired by W. Bro. Martin Birkinshaw and all was good to go.

Although W. Bro. John is well known in many other Masonic Orders, attendance was limited in number to the Brethren of Forresters Lodge and Dove Lodge and their wives and significant others, with one or two of W. Bro. John's family, sisters Freda and Kath, and friends.

If you haven't guessed yet, the celebration was to mark W. Bro. John's 50 years of very active membership, in Forresters Lodge No. 456. The Brethren of Dove Lodge also turned out in force and in support of W. Bro. John.

The occasion was enhanced by the attendance of our Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master, RW Bro. John Lockley, who was accompanied by Mrs. Jane Lockley, both of whom had only recently recovered from a dose of the

Covid 19 Virus. The Provincial Grand Secretary, W. Bro. Dr. Matt Gibbons was also on hand, to read out the terms of the Certificate, which the PGM then presented to W. Bro. John with many kind words for a very deserving Brother. In accepting the Certificate, W. Bro. John remarked upon how gratified he was to hear that, despite a very shaky past eighteen months, Freemasonry was resuming, with great interest expressed from many potential future members.



We had intended to display the Provincial Trailer, which W. Bro. John kindly allows us to store in one of his barns. However, whilst it was there to see, we did not open it up, due to the rather wet and muddy conditions that were underfoot.

The quality of the buffet was excellent, the beer was cold and the wine provided the sunshine that the skies did not. W. Bro. John expressed his complete satisfaction as to how the day was organised and enjoyed.

Though W. Bro. John, a farmer all his life, is not as spry as he used to be, he remains a well-loved Brother among Masons and when circumstances and health permit, will still be found attending Forresters and Dove.

W. Bro. John, here's to the next 50!!

The Charity Stewards Corner

Freemasonry has restarted, but not as we know it! to coin a phrase from our proposed new lodge. But really, Freemasonry has never stopped despite all the Covid-19 restrictions and lockdowns. The masonic halls may have been closed for many months and now only just opening for meetings, but much work has been going on both nationally and within the province in providing care and relief to both masons, their families and the public at large.

The MCF under its new Chairman Sir Paul Williams has been spending an additional £3.2 million in giving 607 Covid-19 related grants as well as £46 million to charitable causes. In the Province grants have been made in continuing to support local foodbanks, hospices and the homeless, indeed only recently a grant from the MCF for £15,000 was made to Sandwell Parents Support Group for Disabled Children. The Provincial Grand Master and I had the privilege of visiting the group when they had their first 'Outing' since the start of this pandemic. The children had been taken to Blackwell Adventure Park for the day and in glorious sunshine had the opportunity to experience some hair-raising rides, the joy on their beaming faces that day made all our fundraising so worthwhile. Also, Lodges have been raising monies for their specific Charities via zoom quizzes, virtual raffles and auctions and sponsoring various events, well done to you all.

The Staffordshire County Show which is normally held in the Spring was eventually held in late August, we were blessed with good weather and how the crowds came, with nearly 26,000 visitors. Thanks to the tremendous efforts of W. Bro David Watt, our new Provincial display trailer was having its first outing and along with the new Air Ambulance display pod and Phil Barley promoting the 'Blood Bikes' made

our stand a real crowd puller. I'm not sure all the 26,000 came to our stand but I am sure that this certainly raised our public image.

A recent survey conducted on behalf of UGLE has indicated

that Freemasonry is at long last being seen as a power for good in the eyes of the general public. You will see in the article by W. Bro Mike Vozza that we as Freemasons have donated over 3 million Teddies to young children when in times of distress, the money for which comes from the you.

I am sure that you haven't forgotten that the Staffordshire 2024 Festival fundraising is still active and needs your support. It has been decided that the Festival will be relaunched in February with a new brochure, with ideas and incentives for fund raising events as we make a determined effort to reach our target of £2 million. Yes, I know we have been somewhat side-tracked by this wretched virus in our fundraising, but the target is possible if we all give it our best effort. The MCF relies on Festivals for its income, if we don't collect, they cannot give to all the often-desperate charities and causes, which unfortunately will be with us for many years to come.

So as we restart, I ask brethren to consider their own personal situation regarding donating to the Festival. I know that many



of you are facing difficult home situations regarding both health, with Long Covid and financial issues, with Furlough ending, but I do hope that if this is the case you have sought advice / help from the Provincial Almoner Tony Coates and his team, even if it's only to talk through your problems with them. However, there are I know many of you who can donate a little more, think of all those masonic meals and lodge raffles you have saved on. It is easy

to boost your RPP (regular payments) or send a single donation by using the Staffs 2024 QR code or going onto the Provincial Web site and using one of the many donating avenues. Please give it a thought.

Stay safe, stay sane.

John Skellern Prov G.Ch. Stwd.

Sept 2021.

Provincial Trailer

It has been many years in the completion, but The Provincial Trailer is now in use, and it must be said it is looking great. It is ready and available for members to use to advertise Freemasonry, and the wonderful work that Freemasonry does at organised events. It has already been booked by Staffordshire Universities Lodge for their Freshers Fair events, but if you would like to make use of it at your event, please contact me, W. Bro. David Watt at mentor@staffordshirefreemasons.org.uk



Supporting the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal 2021

This year's poppy appeal will take place between 28th October and 13th November. The Royal British Legion has a long-term relationship with the Freemasons and this year is no exception as they once again ask for our valued support.

This is, of course, part of our Armed Forces Covenant and in supporting it are also supporting our Brethren and Companions who are part of Her Majesty's Armed Forces, as well as the relatives of personnel who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

The Poppy collections will take place at the local supermarkets listed below and it is hoped that the Brethren and Companions of the Province will assist the RBL at these collection points.

The supermarkets will store the equipment and supplies and will take care of the collection boxes at the end of each day.

It is hoped that, with our support, the RBL can staff the



collection stall for as many days and hours as possible to get the maximum impact and support for the RBL Poppy Appeal.

The suggested "shifts" at each collection point are for two hours, or more if you are available and able to do so.

A short application form is required for safeguarding purposes and anyone who wishes to assist can contact E Comp Ralph Howarth who will supply you with the necessary paperwork and briefing document.

Ralph can be contacted by email via **2gp@pgchstaffs.co.uk**, or by phone on **07734 702231**.

Tesco	Marston Road, Wolverhampton
Tesco	Neptune In Estate, Willenhall
Tesco	Littleton St W, Walsall
Sainsburys	Heath Mill Rd, Wombourne, Wolverhampton
Sainsburys	1 Anders Square, Wolverhampton
Sainsburys	Ring Rd St Marks, Raglan St, Wolverhampton
Sainsburys	Rookery St, Wolverhampton
Sainsburys	Reedswood Way, Walsall
Morrisons	50 Blaydon Rd, Wolverhampton
Morrisons	125 Lichfield St, Walsall
Morrisons	239 Holyhead Rd, Wednesbury
Morrisons	169 Beacon St, Lichfield
Tesco	Victoria St, Hednesford, Cannock
Tesco	Power Station Rd, Rugeley
Tesco	Clough St, Hanley
Tesco	Brookside Rd, Uttoxeter
Morrisons	Newcastle Rd, Leek
Morrisons	Market St, Rugeley
Sainsburys	Churnet Way, Leek
Sainsburys	Etruria Rd, Hanley,
Sainsburys	Minton House, London Rd, Stoke-on-Trent
Sainsburys	Freeth Street, Oldbury

Staffordshire Freemasons donate £15,000 to Disabled Children.

Staffordshire Freemasons through the Masonic Charitable Foundation have donated £15,000 to the Sandwell Parents for Disabled Children charity based in West Bromwich. The charity was founded in 2003 and supports physically disabled children as well as children with special needs and also their parents and siblings. They cater for children up to 8 years old and provide a wide variety of activities.

On Tuesday 9th August John Lockley the Head of Staffordshire Freemasons and Charity Steward Dr John Skellern caught up with the children and their parents as they met up for the first time since the start of the Coronavirus pandemic, having hired the Blackwell Adventure Park in Worcestershire for a fun day out.

Together with Operations Manager Linda Lloyd and Activities Co-ordinator Sam Ward they watched as the children took part in many exciting activities, including the 3G swing which allows children with parents to swing through the air at high speed, helping to overcome fear of heights and speed. Other attractions included a Tree Top walk where children are securely

and safely hoisted into the tops of trees and along cat walks.

John Lockley said 'It is a pleasure to see the children enjoying themselves so much, the money is going to such a worthwhile cause. This charity gives wonderful support to the children and gives them experiences they would not otherwise enjoy'. Linda and Sam thanked John for the generous donation.



Teddies for Loving Care

The Teddies for Loving Care initiative provides unique cuddly bears to Accident & Emergency departments for medical staff to give at their discretion to young children. The bears are used to calm children down, reward them for being brave or to demonstrate procedures. Often the bears distract children so nurses and doctors can get their jobs done quickly and efficiently. The TLC teddy has become an invaluable tool for medical professionals and a real comfort for children.



The work of TLC is funded through the generous donations of Freemasons, their families and supporters of the programme. Many Freemasons also volunteer hundreds of hours each year to manage the scheme, deliver bears to hospitals, campaign

to raise funds and increase awareness through events and talks. Each Province funds its own teddies to give to their local hospitals and here in Staffordshire the bears are completely funded by the SMCA.

Only recently the 3 millionth Teddy was presented to Jackie James, Play Specialist at Peterborough City Hospital by Dr David Staples, Hospital Consultant Physician and CEO of UGLE. On receiving the Teddy,



she commented “The Teddies for loving Care are very special to us in the A & E department and have wonderful, positive impact on children who are receiving care. When a child first arrives at hospital not only are they feeling unwell, but they may also be feeling scared and anxious. The little TLC Teddies provide some comfort and really help make them feel at ease”.



Dr David Staples added: “We are delighted to be able to present the three millionth bear from ‘Teddies for Loving Care’ initiative to the hard-working staff at Peterborough City Hospital. As a doctor, who also works at this hospital, I know how important these bears can be; both for the children who receive them and the staff who give them.

At present we Freemasons in Staffordshire are not reaching all the hospitals in the province and so we are looking for Staffordshire Freemasons who can spare a little time to assist in their distribution. If you are willing to assist, please contact the Provincial Grand Charity Steward **W. Bro John Skellern** or **W. Bro Mike Vozza** on ch.steward@staffordshirefreemasons.org.uk

Freemasonry at the Staffordshire County Show

A very useful and pleasant two days were spent at the County Show in August, we had our usual location which was more than enough to accommodate not only our new Provincial Trailer but also the new Midlands Air Ambulance display pod and the blood bikes.



The main object of our presence at the County Show is to demonstrate to the public, our charitable relationship with the two above mentioned major, Midlands Charities and indeed other Charities and to raise public awareness of our special relationship with those Charities.

There were nearly 26,000 visitors to the show and all three exhibits attracted much public interest and the representative(s) from each, answered questions on their specific area of expertise, giving out information on all sorts of aspects of Staffordshire Freemasonry, Air Ambulance and Blood Bikes. The Provincial Grand

Master, RW Bro. John Lockley, joined the Provincial Charity Steward, John Skellern, Provincial Photographer, Mike Sharples, W. Bro. Mick Seddon and me in manning the stand.

A big thank you to you all. Thanks also to Jo, Andy and their volunteers from Midlands Air Ambulance but also for allowing us to host the new display pod. We sincerely hope that you will be back with the pod in 2022. Finally, thanks to our own W. Bro Phil Barley, PM of Gordon Lodge, who brought along his Blood Bike and who explained so well, the many facets of being a Volunteer Blood Bike Rider. A great hit with the kids and bike fans of all ages.

We now look forward to the 2022 County Show in June which will be upon us quicker than you think.

W. Bro David Watt



From the Provincial Director of Ceremonies

Dear Brethren, It looks like the Covid brakes are coming off Freemasonry and that we can meet again. For the last 18 months The Provincial Secretary's and DC's Offices have been busy navigating through the challenges which the pandemic presented us with. The great news is that, as we go to press, there are no restrictions placed on us meeting and conducting our ceremonies again; save those of any local hall restrictions and your personal safety wishes.



Our inability to meet has decimated our calendars and plans. Many Lodges want to start meeting again and crack on with their ceremonies, in particular, to break the log jam of initiations which have built up over the closed period. Quite simply,

it is brilliant news for Freemasonry. I do, however, need to remind all Lodges that they need to make sure that they constitute themselves correctly by making sure that, where applicable, you should either be having an Installation Meeting or The Master Appoints and Invests his team on the very first time you meet again. There were a handful of Lodges who managed to have Installation Meetings last Autumn. Everyone else needs to take a close look at Rule 108 in the BOC. Please let The ProvGSec or me help if you are unsure what to do. It's complicated and you're not there to be tested. Let us help you.

I am delighted to welcome 2 new Provincial Assistant Grand Directors of Ceremonies to the team, albeit they



joined in 2019, we just couldn't meet! They are W. Bro. Matthew W. Adderley from Josiah Wedgwood Lodge No. 2214 and W. Bro. Brett C. Turner-Farmer of Etruscan Lodge No. 546. W. Bro. Adderley was initiated into Freemasonry in March 2011 and became the Worshipful Master in November 2018. W. Bro. Turner-Farmer was initiated in



October 2007 and became Master in January 2015. He was also appointed as a Provincial Grand Steward in May 2018. Both are Companions of The Royal Arch. I am sure that you will join me in wishing them every good fortune in their new Offices.

The DC team continues to be expertly reinforced by W. Bro. Scott A. Wilkins and W. Bro. Nicholas J. Collumbell as ProvDGDCs and W. Bro. Matthew S. Shaw as ProvAGDC. The Provincial DC

Team will be looking to engage with you on the lead up to your Installations. Please don't be hesitant to reach out for help if your Lodge needs it. The pandemic has forced us into odd situations, your DC can help you get out of them.

We are also seeing many Lodges who are worried about the quality of their meetings as they have been out of practice for so long. As a consequence, the thought of a Ruler visiting their Lodge so quickly after Lockdown is causing some sleepless nights for the conscientious amongst them. My advice is don't worry. We're here to enjoy ourselves. The craftsmanship of your Freemasonry will return with time and diligence, enjoy the journey! Remember, the Provincial Team are also out of practice.

Finally, it will not have escaped your notice that W. Bro. John E.G. Brackpool is not writing this section. I would like to thank W. Bro. John for his mentoring and support of me as his Assistant and Deputy. The truth is that he has continued to support me as Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies as I get up to speed in the Office and navigate my way through Covid's destructive impact on Freemasonry.

The Provincial DC team look forward to coming to your Lodge and spending an evening with you. If I can help you, please contact me on:

dc@staffordshirefreemasons.org.uk

W. Bro. Jeremy F. Roberts Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies.