

# CONCORD



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Cover price: £5



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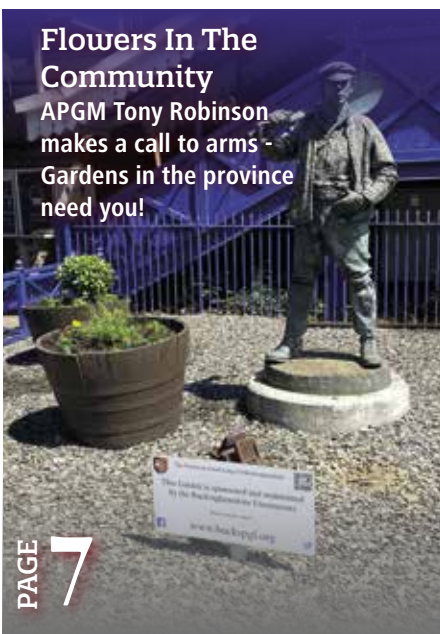
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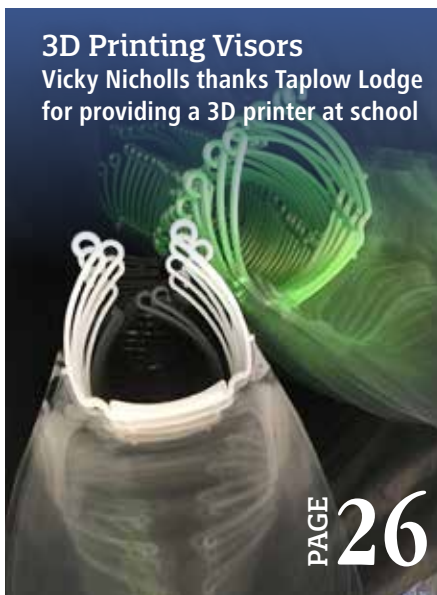
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# Welcome

## From the Provincial Grand Master

**A lot has happened since our last edition of Concord and I am very proud of the way that Buckinghamshire Freemasons have responded to the COVID-19 Pandemic. It is no surprise that their first thought was to look after others.**

It has only been possible to include a fraction of the great charitable, feet on the ground, work that has been carried out by many of our members during the last few months in this edition.

We have received some wonderful letters of thanks and I sincerely thank everyone that has been involved. This work has helped to demonstrate to the public, once again, what a wonderful organisation this is and what a kind and generous group of people we are.

Our Provincial Almoner has played a very important role during this difficult time and has responded with help to every request for assistance from our members and their families. I have been absolutely delighted with the way that he has taken care of our vulnerable members and those shielding.

During this difficult time for all of us we still managed, with the assistance of the MCF, to help out victims of the Bangladesh super cyclone with a donation of £15,000.

It is with great sadness that I have decided to move the Provincial Meeting from London this year due to concern for the health of our members. I know how much we all love our day at Freemasons Hall, and I look forward to returning there next year. You will find in this issue, a summons from the Provincial Grand Secretary for a minimal Provincial Meeting to be held at Slough Masonic Centre on Monday

26th October 2020. While everyone has the right to attend, I do hope that only the acting officers that need to take part will do so. It is intended that we will invest those being appointed or promoted who would like to attend and that they will enter the building one at a time. Full details will follow for those involved. There will also be a second part to the investiture on Tuesday the 27th October at Bletchley Masonic Centre for those investees who would prefer to go there.

With Lodges and L of I's starting again from the 1st September, I shall be Initiating my son David at Slough Masonic centre on that day. His brother Jack will be Junior Deacon. I have explained to David that due to COVID-19, there will only be 15 or 20 in attendance with a distanced ceremony and we have promised him a very big show for his 3rd sometime next year.

Due to safety measures and the low numbers possible at meetings, I have instructed the Provincial Executive not to attend meetings officially until the end of December 2020. This is to make sure that we do not take up valuable restricted places at lodge meetings.

As you know we have had a huge success with our new Membership team and with over 300 new enquiries during the last 3 months, managing this process has now been automated with the addition to HeliPAD of a membership tracking system which was developed and in use in just 3 months. Please use this magazine to try to encourage a friend or family member to join us. My wife Sarah and I have enjoyed some great Zoom video calls over the last few months to keep the social side of our organisation going and I encourage you all to do this



with partners and the odd drink! One such meeting we attended with new potential candidates was also attended by their partners.

In July the North East Corner Club for new Freemasons hosted an "Ask the Executive Anything" Zoom Video Call (Attended by 76). There were no prearranged questions. I would personally like to thank Grae Laws, Steve Barker, Ranj Sagoo, Marco Davi, Devinder Sudera and Ewan Gordon for their exemplary work in developing the NECC and the very professional manner in which the Zoom meeting was conducted. It was a great success.

I am looking forward to seeing Graham Dearing finally installed as Most Excellent Grand Superintendent on Monday 14th September 2020 at Freemasons Hall. It is a great shame that so few can attend, and we will make sure that we make the most of his first actual Provincial Convocation meeting in March 2021.

Thank you again to my wonderful Provincial Executive team who have achieved so much during these testing times.

Please be careful when you return to Masonry that you put everyone's health first and follow all government and UGLE guidelines. There are some very exciting times ahead with our biggest problem at the moment being too many new members to process and the lowest number of resignations for many years. Oh, how things have changed in the last 6 months.

*John*

**RW Bro John Clark**  
Provincial Grand Master



# A NOTE FROM THE DEPUTY IN CHARGE

**Companions,** I am sure you are all aware now that the suspension of Freemasonry has ceased and we can all start planning to get back to our meetings and the companionship of the Royal Arch.

The new guidelines for meetings have been circulated to Scribes across the Province, and the excellent "First Risings" mailshots have allowed all companions to see the latest updated information direct from Great Queen Street. Our Provincial Scribe E Mel Shah, along with our Provincial DC Ray Harrison have both held very informative Zoom meetings for all those holding those Chapter offices. Both sessions were very well attended and were very helpful to everyone. Thanks to all who attended and to Mel and Ray for arranging.

## Postponed Meetings

Despite Freemasonry being suspended for four months, it has still been a hectic time for the Royal Arch in Buckinghamshire. Our Provincial Convocation, which was due to be held on the 23rd March, needed to be postponed. In compliance with the Provincial by-laws, we are looking to hold a small business meeting later in the year; to allow for safe practices it will be essential to limit attendees. A summons will be issued and sent to all companions before the meeting for your information. Our Provincial Convocation was to be a celebration of last year's officers and to welcome and congratulate this year's new acting officers. I am looking forward to inviting them to a meeting later in the year to give my hearty thanks when circumstances allow us to hold a meeting which is safe for everyone. A list of those Companions who were honoured



this year with acting Provincial Rank is also on our provincial Royal Arch website [www.buckspgc.org](http://www.buckspgc.org). So that when you do see them, you can congratulate them personally. All of these companions, while not invested on the day of the Convocation, hold their active rank from the 23rd March 2020. Their certificates have been sent with a personal message, and all Acting Provincial Jewels will be hand-delivered to all acting officers during August.

There are a few notable exceptions to this. E. Comp Mike Stephens was due to be invested as Deputy Grand Superintendent. Whilst he has all the responsibilities of that office he cannot be invested until I am invested as Grand Superintendent. The same applies to E. Comp Stan Green who was due to be invested as Third Provincial Grand Principal. With this in mind, I am pleased to announce that my investiture as Provincial Grand Superintendent, along with the other Principals, will take place early September at Great Queen Street. This meeting has been kindly arranged by the Supreme Grand Chapter and will follow all the strict rules and guidelines to allow meetings to happen. However, this does mean that unfortunately, due to number restrictions only eight of

us will travel to London, we will have the investiture meeting and then come straight home. While I know many of you would have liked to have seen the investiture, this seems the most pragmatic and safe way for the Province to be able to move forward with a fully invested Executive in place.

E. Comp Stan Green is well known to many in the Province, but we thought it might be interesting to have a Q and A with Stan about what makes him tick, so again please visit our website and read about the real Stan.



The plan is, over the next few months, to have Q and A's with all members of the Provincial Executive, myself included. Enjoy them all, and you will find out things you never knew. I will update you all about any investitures once we have dates confirmed. Go to [www.buckspgc.org](http://www.buckspgc.org) and click on news.

### RAVC (Royal Arch Vision Club)

You will all be aware following on from the Constant Contact sent out in June that the RAVC (Royal Arch Vision Club) which was due to be launched in May 2020 is now on Facebook, ready for an Autumn/Winter launch. My thanks go to the RAVC team lead by E. Comp Nick Wilson for making this happen. As I write this note, there are over 110 members of the RAVC. Please look up RAVC on Facebook and join up, you will get the latest news of dates and information about what is happening with Royal Arch in Bucks.

#### How to join on Facebook:-

- Log on to Facebook online, or use the app on your smartphone.
- Search for "Royal Arch Vision Club"
- Click "Join Group"
- Answer the pre-set question (which is your chapter name and number)

### Chapters of Improvement

I am also delighted to say that Chapters of Improvement will be starting up again once circumstances allow in both the North and the South of the Province. In the south E. Comp Tim Gerrard has been asked to help facilitate this initiative; we will share with you dates and venues as soon as possible. In Bletchley, we will now have a separate Chapter rehearsal room; this will be permanently set up and be a fantastic aid to everyone who wants to practice our beautiful ceremonies. I, for one, am looking forward to visiting both as after four months off, I think I need some practice.



### History of the Holy Royal Arch

You may not have thought it possible, but from an early age it was evident to others that I was not a good scholar. However, I have always enjoyed history, and in particular the history of the Holy Royal Arch. However, for me, and I am sure for others, it has always thrown up more questions than I could find answers. Watch out shortly for some more exciting developments with our wonderful Province, which will help us understand and enjoy the Holy Royal Arch in Buckinghamshire more. On the theme of learning, I would like to thank E. Comp John Stribling for his fantastic quizzes which were on our website throughout the lockdown. They were fun and informative, and certainly did while away a few hours. They were enjoyed by many, and we all learned something. It was that daily advancement in masonic knowledge which helped keep some of us sane.

### A time for empathy and understanding

As we now look towards resuming our Masonic activities, we must remember that perhaps not everyone went through the last few months unscathed. Be mindful of your fellow companions feelings; sometimes we don't always know what has gone on throughout this period. They could have

lost loved ones; they could have lost jobs and have had financial worries; they could have suffered ill health both mentally and physically. As Freemasons, I know we will all be ready with words of comfort and active support if needed. To any companion who does need some assistance, please contact either your Chapter Almoner or our Royal Arch Provincial Almoner E. Comp Nick Wilson. He will be only too pleased to assist.

Let us get ready to return to our meetings; to practice social distancing, work within the guidelines set out for us by the Government and be aware of the advice and directions which will be given to us by Supreme Grand Chapter. Please remember this is all about personal choice. Some members will be comfortable with returning others will not, respect and understanding of individual needs is vital. Thankfully, empathy and understanding the needs of others are attributes which I know Freemasons have in abundance.

Many of you know my favourite quote, I have a habit of using it in my responses at festive boards. It is :-

*"You may not remember what I said, you may not remember what I did, but you will always remember how I made you feel"*  
Maya Angelou.

I was once asked the question why it means so much to me, companions, this is my version of that beautiful quotation.

*"I may not always remember ritual, I may not always remember what to do next in a ceremony, but I always remember how Freemasonry makes me feel"*.

It is something I will always be eternally grateful for and something which makes me very proud to be a member of our wonderful institution.

I look forward to seeing you all soon.

*Graham Dearing*

**Deputy Grand Superintendent in Charge**

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO THESE TWO CHAPTERS, COME AND JOIN IN THE CELEBRATIONS

**Thursday 10th December 2020**  
**BUCKINGHAM CHAPTER NO 591**  
**150 YEARS!**

Celebrate 150 years since consecration; a fabulous chance to be part of the Province's first Chapter to record 150 years of distinguished history. The Royal Arch Province of Buckinghamshire will be represented at the Celebration Convocation by a team visit from Executive and Acting Officers of the year led by our Most Excellent Grand Superintendent Designate, Graham Peter Dearing. The Celebration Convocation will be held at The Masonic Hall, Ripon Street, Aylesbury on 10th December 2020. The very Popular E. Companion, Stan Cochrane, is to be Installed into the First Principal's Chair, followed by a celebratory Festive Board worthy of the occasion.

Places for this are limited as this is a full Provincial Team Visit.

To book your place at the Convocation:  
E. Comp Stephen Knight: [stephen6094@me.com](mailto:stephen6094@me.com)

**Saturday 17th April 2021**  
**STEPHENS CHAPTER 3089,**  
**100 YEARS!**

Celebrate 100 years with Stephens Chapter on Saturday 17th April 2021; the Celebratory Convocation will be held at the Beaconsfield Masonic Centre. The Very Revd J Studholme Brownrigg, ME Grand Superintendent of Buckinghamshire, consecrated Stephens Chapter at the Pagani Restaurant, Great Portland Street, London on 6th April 1921. At the 100 years Celebration Convocation our Most Excellent Grand Superintendent Designate, Graham Peter Dearing, is to lead a Provincial team consisting of Executive members and Acting Officers of the year, to congratulate Stephens Chapter and to add to the enjoyment of the occasion.

All who attend will receive a hardback copy of the Chapter's distinguished history. There will be entertainment at the Festive Board as there was at the consecration in 1921, and the Festive Board dining will reflect the six courses served in 1921. It has been six years since the last Chapter in our Province held a Centenary Celebration and it will be a few years until the next; don't miss out on a superb Masonic occasion.

To book your place at the Convocation:  
Roger Perry: [rogerperry864@btinternet.com](mailto:rogerperry864@btinternet.com)



## INITIATION TO EXALTATION COMPLETE YOUR JOURNEY IN PURE ANTIENT FREEMASONRY

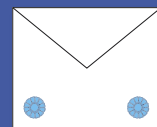
IT IS YOUR RIGHT AS A MASON



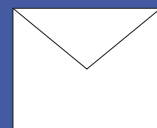
THE FOURTH AND FINAL STEP:  
THE HOLY ROYAL ARCH (CHAPTER)



THE THIRD STEP: THE MASTER MASON



THE SECOND STEP: THE FELLOWCRAFT



THE FIRST STEP: THE ENTERED APPRENTICE

ARE YOU ONLY THREE QUARTERS OF THE  
WAY THROUGH YOUR JOURNEY?



TO FIND OUT MORE SPEAK TO YOUR  
ROYAL ARCH REPRESENTATIVE OR GO TO:

[WWW.BUCKSPGC.ORG](http://WWW.BUCKSPGC.ORG)



# Flowers *In the Community*

*Throughout the year our 'Masonic Gardens' require regular tending if they are to be at their best for the public to enjoy as they pass through a train station on their way to work, enjoy refreshments at MK Hospital or pay tribute at a memorial, especially during November each year.*

## CAN YOU HELP?

Some of the gardens, in particular High Wycombe Station entrance and Gerrards Cross concourse, have been maintained by the same people for many years and we are now looking for some new, enthusiastic members to continue this worthwhile venture. You do not have to be a 'green fingered' gardener but able to plant and weed flower beds or containers.

If you have the time and inclination to assist, please contact **Tony Robinson (APGM)** at [trobinson@buckspgl.org](mailto:trobinson@buckspgl.org) for more information.

Our thanks and appreciation go to all those who volunteer their time and energy to help maintain our gardens.



For many years now a group of dedicated Bletchley Masons including John Elgie, Vincent Leiu, Peter Loake, Malcolm Wheeler and Brian Wright, along with others, have caringly maintained two gardens. Both gardens are flourishing and are enjoyed by visitors and a tribute to their dedication.

The High Wycombe Station Garden is one of our largest and does require very regular maintenance. At the present a ground crew visits monthly to keep the flower beds tidy and to cut the grass. However it is a large area and **WE NEED MORE HELPERS** if we are to continue with this garden. If you live locally and have a couple of hours each month and would like to help, please contact the Provincial Office or Tony Robinson (see contact details on left)



Our other delightful 'station garden' at Gerrards Cross Station always looks immaculate, thanks to the time and effort of David Durn and his helpers. **BUT THE TIME HAS COME TO FIND A NEW 'GARDENING CREW'.** The garden layout is in easy to maintain tubs and low level container beds. If you live locally and have time to help then please contact the Provincial Office or Tony Robinson (see contact details on left)

# The story of Marie Biswell

Marie works with children with sensory needs. Her car was broken into and all the props that she uses to teach the children were stolen. Bucks Freemasons arranged to replace them but then her laptop failed so becoming another item that she could no longer use for the children. Mark Duncan informed Phil Blacklaw and the rest is history...



**Above:** from left: Alex Denes, Joe Aquino, Phil Blacklaw, Marie Biswell, John Woodhead and Mark Duncan  
**Below:** Phil Blacklaw presenting Marie with the new Laptop.

Dear Phil,

I wanted to take this opportunity to express just how grateful I am for your generous donation to the work I do. It has blown me away that even in the event of something so horrible, where my car was broken into, something so lovely can come out of the situation.

I am a freelance British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter. I work predominantly for myself but also work with charities such as Sense for Deafblind people and Access Bedford; working to get better access for deaf and hard of hearing people within Bedfordshire. I have put together some favourite children's stories and taught them the signs to go along with them:

[www.facebook.com/HandTalking](https://www.facebook.com/HandTalking)

My favourite job is supporting and working with the children that I have met over the years and continue to work with now.

I started a Baby Sign Language group on a Friday morning inside Tesco, Broadfields, in Aylesbury. I also work with and support children through to adults who are Deafblind and have additional needs. Through my work with Sense, I go away on holiday through the summer with a group and do things with them that they won't necessarily always have the chance to do. I am a strong believer in the people I take away can do anything they want to and who are we to tell them they can't, this has seen me ice skating with children who use wheelchairs to make it more accessible and getting adults with limited mobility on a Ferris wheel by Blackpool beach so they could experience it too.

In my BSL work I have been lucky enough to volunteer for various music events and festivals and also to provide interpretation for a number of theatres as well. I had the incredible experience of interpreting for Glastonbury Festival in 2019 and with being involved in another festival called 'A Different World'. I witnessed people with all kinds of abilities come together to enjoy music in their very own way such as lying on top of the speaker or holding the guitar as the band played on stage.

Your donation to the work I do will mean that I am able to keep in contact with the people I support; I can work online again by interpreting or teaching sign language, and I am able to replace the resources that I use with the different groups I run or support.

Thank you so much again.

Marie Biswell







**OVER £9,000 RAISED BY  
THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE FREEMASONS  
ELITE WALKING TEAM IN SUPPORT OF  
THE FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE HOSPICE  
“NOT THE MIDNIGHT WALK”**



**Florence  
Nightingale**  
HOSPICE CHARITY

**On the morning of July 18th, many well-known Buckinghamshire Freemasons took part in the Florence Nightingale Hospice “Not the Midnight Walk”.**

Due to COVID-19, the usual Midnight Walk, held annually and so well supported both financially, and with supplying Buckinghamshire Masons as marshals, could not take place.

This event regularly raises in excess of £50,000, so it was a massive blow to the Hospice to cancel.

However, the solution was easy, let everyone have a walk, starting from wherever they are, either 5 or 10 miles and raise sponsorship that way. Buckinghamshire Freemasons had already agreed to be key sponsors of the original event and were only too pleased to continue support for the revised walk. Buckinghamshire Freemasons always



W Bro Stan Green (left) and W Bro Phil Blacklaw (right), walked around and around Willen Lake.



W Bro Graham Dearing decided to go to Norfolk to walk, ensuring he had company on the way.

support this fantastic event and we now had an opportunity for our members to actually participate in the walk.

A team of well-trained Masonic Athletes were led by our Provincial Grand Master, John Clark, and our Deputy Grand Superintendent in Charge, Graham Dearing. The ever growing team included many members of the Executives and well-known Masons all prepared to dust off their walking boots and help raise funds. To all of you who did sponsor anyone who was walking, thank you!

I am delighted to say that the event raised £100,000 for the Hospice, with



RW Bro John Clark and Family, with VW Bro Robert Wharton & W Bro Eraldo Guarino hiding in the background with their wives. This team walked along the Ridgeway, a case of safety in numbers.

the Buckinghamshire Freemasons team raising more than £9,000 towards the fantastic total.

Here are just a few action shots of some of our team on the day; to those I have missed out I apologise.



W Bro Bill Smithson (above) broke three toes a few weeks beforehand and still walked.

*Brethren, this is  
Freemasonry at  
its best, we will  
ever continue  
to go that extra  
mile... literally!  
Ordinary  
People doing  
extraordinary  
things.*

# ***Great Sadness in Buckinghamshire***

**It is with great sadness that I write to inform you of the passing of RW Bro Eric Deung, Provincial Grand Master of the Province of Buckinghamshire from 1993 to 1998 and Most Excellent Grand Superintendent of the Royal Arch in Buckinghamshire from 1991 to 1998.**

Eric served the Province in an outstanding manner. I was only just over 4 years in Freemasonry when Eric became PGM and I remember the great esteem in which he was held by all and I thought it would be a nice tribute to such an outstanding man to hear from our other past PGM's and Grand Superintendents about their thoughts of Eric.

RW Bro Eric Deung was an inspiration to all as our Provincial Grand Master and Grand Superintendent, I was privileged to know him well and I am very saddened by his death.

I initially met Eric when I was WM of the Bourne End Lodge in the mid 80s, a tall imposing man, friendly, supportive, a great communicator and motivational speaker, he impressed all. One of his greatest successes was as the first chairman of the BMCF. He



asked Ian Chalk and me, a committee member, to visit one of the applicants. We found this young charity was virtually broke, but what we saw was impressive and we recommended the PACE Centre as worthy of our support. Eric and the committee agreed, and look at what happened to PACE, moving from virtual extinction at the time to the amazing organization of today. The Province has continued to support PACE for close on 25 years, we can be proud of that support which

Eric identified and authorised.

He was a brilliant mentor to all who knew him, always willing to provide valuable advice. His natural ability, along with Don Varney and Roy Fender, whom he also developed, was his extraordinary ability to identify and develop young men to achieve amazing success. We extend our sympathy to Jackie, his rock, and the rest of his family.

**Ray Reed PPGM**





**May I first say** how sad I am to hear of the death of RW Bro Eric Deung who was an inspiration to me and others in my early years as a Freemason in Buckinghamshire during the 1980s and 1990s. He will be sadly missed and remembered with high regard by many members who were around during that period.

One of my earliest memories of Bro. Eric was as Deputy ProvGM when he visited Heatherden Lodge in the middle of the 1980s and, as a reasonably new member at that time, I was struck by his friendly manner and obvious love for the office he held and the duties he was performing. At that first meeting, I remember him as a tall imposing figure, a good speaker and a person the members were extremely honoured to receive. He was a Freemason who inspired confidence in others and one who encouraged an ambition in all to progress and achieve whatever they could throughout their masonic journey. It was no surprise to me that he went on to become Provincial Grand Master in 1993 and served with distinction until succeeded by The Rt. Hon. Lord Burnham towards the end of the decade. Bro. Eric held many other high offices during his active years in Bucks, not just in the Craft but also in the Royal Arch and other orders as well, and I am certain that those orders will also hold fond memories of his time with them. His name will live on through the Eric Deung Lodge No. 9695 consecrated in his name in 1999 and he will live on in my personal memory as the PGM who put me forward as Provincial Grand Steward before he stepped down. I was fortunate enough to meet him for what has now become the last time a few years ago at Eric Deung Lodge. I remember it as an extremely enjoyable occasion and how well he coped with his increasing lack of eyesight.

For those of us who were around at the time, he will be remembered with affection, and I'm sure all of us wish to extend our sincere condolences to his family, friends and lodge members.

**Gordon Robertson PPGM**

**My memories of** RW Bro. E.Comp Eric Deung began in 1991 when I was privileged to have him, as Most Excellent Grand Superintendent, present my Grand Chapter Certificate. Prior to then he was just a name in the hierarchy of Buckinghamshire Freemasonry. His presence and personality shone out, his explanation of the Certificate and his obvious passion for the Royal Arch, made a lasting impression on me and had a significant impact on my subsequent love of the order.

**John Keeble PGSupt.**

**I first met** RW Bro Eric Deung as a young entered apprentice in 1996; he was visiting my mother Lodge Vale at the Aylesbury Centre. I remember being told that someone very important was coming along, and to be on my best behaviour. During the meeting, he must have noticed my EA's apron, straight after the meeting, he came to find me. He then spent a healthy amount of time asking me how I was doing and what questions did I have about Masonry. He showed a genuine interest in me, someone who had only been in Masonry a few months. RW Bro Eric was more interested in who you were rather than what you were. It is something I have never forgotten and have tried to emulate over the years.

As I progressed in Masonry, when faced with any problems, I have always asked myself what would my predecessors have done in this situation. As I now look forward to taking over as the Most Excellent Grand Superintendent, I will continue to use Eric as an excellent role model. With his passing, Buckinghamshire Royal Arch has lost a guiding light; however, the legacy Eric has left behind for us all to follow, is one which will ensure Masonry in Buckinghamshire will continue to grow from strength to strength.

**Graham Dearing  
ME G Superintendent**

**I too was sad** to hear of Eric's passing, together with tributes from Ray, Gordon, John and Graham. I first met Eric when, as Provincial GDC in Berkshire, I served on the 1990 Committee formed to organise the celebration of our joint Provinces split in 1890. He had a forceful character but if you stood up to him, as I fondly remember doing so shortly after we met, then he respected you and we got on like a house of fire.

When I became PGM of Berkshire, a year after Eric followed RW Bro Bill Burnham into that office, we got to know each other well. But my abiding memory of Eric was his kindness. As an example he agreed to travel up from Dorset, in spite of failing eyesight, to serve as Chaplain during my year as Master of Methuen.

With my best wishes to you and the Province at this sad time,

**Digby Woods PPGM (Berks)**

**As you can see** Eric was held in great esteem by everyone that has been fortunate enough to spend time with him. He passed away on Sunday 14th June 2020 at Great Oaks, a private care home in Bournemouth.

His wife of 40 years, Jackie, said it was a delightful place to be. He moved there on the 21st February 2020. Even though a long way away, our Provincial Almoner kept a watchful eye over him and his wife in his declining years which were marred by blindness and a dislocated and fractured shoulder which gave him a lot of pain.

***Eric will be missed by all but I am sure that thinking of him will always put a smile on our faces.***

**John Clark  
Provincial Grand Master**



# Buckinghamshire Freemasons

## The Provincial Grand Lodge of Buckinghamshire

Provincial Grand Master RW Bro John Clark

Dear Sir and Brother

The RW Provincial Grand Master is pleased to announce the ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE, to be held on **MONDAY 26th OCTOBER 2020**, at the Masonic Centre, Ragstone Road, Slough, Berkshire, SL1 2PX. Whilst all Master Masons in the Province are entitled to be present, owing to the Government's restrictions on numbers imposed because of the COVID-19 pandemic, **Brethren, other than those whose attendance is essential, are requested not to seek to attend Provincial Grand Lodge**. Admission will be by ticket only. If you would like to vote on any item but cannot attend, then please send your vote to the Provincial Grand Secretary directly at least two weeks prior to the meeting.

The Annual General Meeting will be opened **punctually at 10.00 am**. It is requested that all brethren have taken their seats in plenty of time and observing social distancing. The Annual General Meeting will conduct the business of the Province and close at approximately 11.00 am.

Please note that all brethren that have been honoured with 1st Appointments or Promotions will assume their new ranks as from this day, whether they can attend or not. Certificates will be posted to all recipients.

While everyone has the right to attend, it is requested that only the acting officers that need to take part will do so. It is intended that those who would like to be invested will enter the building at a scheduled time starting at 11am, will be invested and then retire. There will also be a second part to the investiture at 10.00 am on the Tuesday the 27th October at Bletchley Masonic Centre for those investees that would prefer to go there. Full details will follow for those who apply, but numbers will have to be restricted.

**All Brethren must book via the Provincial Grand Secretary, either in writing to The Old School House, Windsor End, Buckinghamshire, HP9 2JW, or by email to [office@buckspgl.org](mailto:office@buckspgl.org) not later than MONDAY 12th October 2020.**

By command of the RW Provincial Grand Master.

Yours sincerely and fraternally,

**Barry Sparks**

Provincial Grand Secretary.

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### Clothing & Regalia

Dark morning dress or uniform, white gloves, Provincial Craft or black tie and full-dress masonic regalia.

Provincial Grand Officers will wear the regalia of their Provincial Rank, and the Masters, Wardens and Past Masters, the Collars and Jewels of their Office or Rank.

**The Provincial Grand Lodge of Buckinghamshire**

The Old School House, Windsor End, Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire, HP9 2JW.  
Telephone: 01494 670 194 Email: [office@buckspgl.org](mailto:office@buckspgl.org) [www.buckspgl.org](http://www.buckspgl.org)



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# ORDER OF PROCEDURE

10.00 am

1. The RW Provincial Grand Master will enter the Temple and Provincial Grand Lodge will be opened in due form.
2. In Memoriam.
3. The RW Provincial Grand Master will be saluted.
4. To submit for confirmation the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 28th October 2019.
5. To receive the Provincial Grand Secretary's report.
6. Pursuant to a Notice of Motion at the meeting on 28th October 2019, the Provincial Grand Secretary will propose the following Provincial Grand Lodge By-laws be changed as follows:

*By-law 3, first sentence to read: "At least twenty one days before any Meeting of Provincial Grand Lodge, the Provincial Grand Secretary will send by mail or electronic communication to each UK based member a copy of the Summons convening the meeting, including its agenda."*

*By-law 4 to read: "Every Lodge in the Province shall be represented at the Provincial Grand Lodge Meeting either by its Master, one of its Wardens or one of its Past Masters of the Lodge (unless otherwise directed by the Provincial Grand Master)."*

*By-law 9.1 to read: "For registering a new lodge £100.00"*

*By-law 9.5 to read: "For every dispensation £10.00. (Requests later than 21 days before the required date £20.00)"*

*By-law 9.6 to read: "Provincial Long Service Award Certificates issued free of charge"*

*By-law 11. ii) to read: "Details of all Initiates or Joining Members, on a Grand Lodge Registration Form P, who become members of the Lodge as soon as possible after the event, giving the full names, date of birth, titles, occupation, postal address, telephone number and email address (where applicable)."*

*By Law 13 to read: "The Secretary of each Lodge shall forward to the Provincial Grand Secretary a copy of every Summons convening an Installation, Regular Meeting, or Emergency Meeting of that Lodge, at least 10 days before that meeting. An electronic copy of the summons is the preferred method. **All communications to the Provincial Grand Master must be made through the Provincial Grand Secretary.**"*

7. To receive the Provincial Grand Treasurer's Audited Accounts, his report and recommendations.
8. To elect the Provincial Grand Treasurer – there is only one nomination – W Bro Daniel Cole of Bourne End Lodge No. 7943 who will be declared.
9. To elect the Account Examiners.
10. To receive and adopt the reports & accounts for the Buckinghamshire Masonic Centenary Fund and the Buckinghamshire Masonic Benevolent Fund.
11. The RW Provincial Grand Master will announce the appointment of two Provincial Representatives on the MCF.
12. The RW Provincial Grand Master will announce the continuation in office of the Deputy Provincial Grand Master.
13. The RW Provincial Grand Master will announce the continuation in office of the Assistant Provincial Grand Masters.
14. The RW Provincial Grand Master will appoint the Provincial Grand Officers.
15. The RW Provincial Grand Master will address the Brethren.
16. To transact any other Provincial business.
17. The Provincial Grand Lodge will be closed in due form.
18. The Provincial Grand Master will retire.

## The Provincial Grand Lodge of Buckinghamshire

The Old School House, Windsor End, Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire, HP9 2JW.

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THE ST PETER & ST PAUL'S LODGE NO 1410 WAS CONSECRATED AT THE ANCHOR HOTEL IN NEWPORT PAGNELL IN 1872. IT WAS THE SECOND MASONIC LODGE TO BE FORMED IN NORTH BUCKS, THE FIRST BEING SCIENTIFIC LODGE 840 WHICH WAS FORMED IN WOLVERTON FOLLOWING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOWN AS A MAJOR CENTRE FOR THE EMERGING RAILWAY INDUSTRY. THE LODGE DREW ITS EARLY MEMBERSHIP FROM THE ECCLESIASTICAL, FARMING AND BUSINESS COMMUNITY, AND IT'S FIRST MASTER AND OFFICERS WERE LARGELY CHURCHMEN FROM THE AREA. NOT SURPRISINGLY, THE LODGE TOOK ITS NAME FROM THE LOCAL PARISH CHURCH OF ST PETER & ST PAUL...

## BACK <sup>TO</sup> THE FUTURE

...as was the case with many Lodges at the time, it met in a variety of locations within the town over the years, notably among which was the Swan Revived Hotel, prominent in the High Street, and next to the Church. It also found a home for a time in the Town Hall, several local community halls and hotels, before settling in 1972 at the Masonic Hall in Wolverton.

Wolverton was now a fairly small town – the railways being in decline – about 6 miles from Newport Pagnell on the Northern edge of Milton Keynes. The Masonic Hall accommodated six craft Lodges, along with a similar number of side orders, and provided all the facilities needed for Masonic practice. For a time, the Lodge thrived at Wolverton, with membership peaking at around 60 in the late 1990's, but slowly, over the next decades, it began to decline.

Various recruitment drives met with limited success. Having five other Lodges in the same Centre made it hard to compete for new members in what was a relatively small catchment area. Also, it became apparent that Wolverton was not our natural home. When talking to prospective members, the inevitable question was always "...but why is a Newport Pagnell Lodge based in Wolverton?" Furthermore, when trying to initiate community activities back in Newport Pagnell, it was difficult to raise enthusiasm either in the community, or in the Lodge. Wolverton had in many ways become too comfortable, and the brethren were falling into the habit of just attending meetings, enjoying the Festive Board, and then going home, and not having to think any more about their Masonry.

### THE NEED TO MOVE

The desire to move back to Newport Pagnell had long been felt in the Lodge. We still had members who remembered the days when the Lodge met in the town, and would speak with great pleasure about the trials and tribulations of meeting in pubs and hotels, and the sense of belonging that this created. A number of studies were carried out about the possibility of moving, but somehow finding the perfect location, the likely cost, and the logistics of obtaining all the equipment that would be needed simply defeated us. Wolverton was not ideal, but it was easier to stay.

However, the spark remained, and it finally took hold among a group of younger Brethren who were finding that Masonry at Wolverton was not living up to their expectations. They wanted more from the Lodge and the Masonic experience, and having the energy of youth on their side, they persisted in their aim of transforming the Lodge. A new study was carried out, this time using local friends and contacts, and a plan emerged that would see the Lodge re-establish itself at the Swan Revived Hotel in the centre of Newport Pagnell. It would mean that compromises were needed, but if we could put aside the inertia which had gripped the Lodge, we could achieve a move back to our home.

When the plan to move was put to the Lodge, the ensuing debate brought out a number of other positive advantages. Newport Pagnell was now a thriving town of some 20,000 people with no masonic presence. Although many Masons lived within the area, they often had to travel to Lodges in Bletchley, Towcester or even London to practice. A local Lodge would attract both new and existing Masons, and



would establish a Masonic community within the Town. Furthermore, the town had many worthy community-based organisations who would welcome support from a local Lodge, and contacts already existed with these, and the town council, through our brethren. The move would open up the possibility of the Lodge becoming an established part of the local community, and contributing to the life and well-being of the town. The vote to move was passed unanimously.

## MAKING IT HAPPEN

Building a new Lodge is not a simple matter. The amount of equipment which is needed is quite daunting, and although we owned a few of the basic items – our Bible, collars and cuffs, and other bits and pieces – almost everything else needed to be found. We are not a rich Lodge, although a recent bequest did give us a backstop if needed. However, the Brethren rallied round. Some items were purchased and donated, others were made, and others found by calling in friends and contacts in other Lodges and Provinces. The largest single item – the carpet – was donated by a very generous member.

The administrative process proved to be easier than at first envisaged. With advice and assistance from the Province, permissions were sought – and granted – and by-laws changed. We had a very helpful visit from the Provincial DC who approved the new set-up, and gave useful advice on conducting ceremonies in what was a new and different Temple. All in all, the various pieces came together, and just six months after the motion to move was passed in the Lodge, we held our first meeting in the Swan Revived Hotel.

## FIRST STEPS INTO THE FUTURE

We now took our first steps into the future. The Lodge took a stand at the Newport Pagnell Carnival and, again with the help of the Province, engaged

with the local populace, introducing Masonry and informing them about the Lodge. We invited those interested to a presentation on Masonry which we held at the Swan, and was given by members of the Province. Both existing Masons and non-masons attended, and we were delighted to obtain two new joining members and three candidates. At our subsequent meetings, many other local Masons attended, and we are hoping for a further influx of members in the near future.

A very popular and well attended event within the town is the remembrance day parade. This year our Worshipful Master laid a wreath along with the other representatives of organisations within the town, on behalf of the Lodge, and in future years, we hope to take a more active part in the parade.

After discussions with the town council, and some prominent local organisations, our Worshipful Master is this year making donations to a series of local charities. The word is gradually spreading that the St Peter & St Paul's Lodge is firmly based in the town.

## CONCLUSIONS

I think we have learned a number of important lessons in our move, although these do not necessarily apply to all Lodges. My own personal feelings are that Masonry, as with any successful organisation, can become too comfortable, and can lose the energy which it needs to drive it forward. As Masons, we talk a lot about coming out of our 'secret' phase and engaging with our local communities, but the Masonic Centres that we have hidden in for some time are rather too cosy, and protect us from the realities of the outside world. Sometimes we need something to remind us about what Masonry used to be like – rather less cosy, but more in touch with our natural communities.

## Happy Birthday Brother Bertie



On his 99th Birthday, Bro Bertie Gladwin received an in-field promotion to Past Provincial Assistant Grand Standard Bearer.



His promotion is effective immediately and was presented to him (under social distancing guidelines) at his home with his wife Wendy.



The Provincial Grand Master, John Clark performed the promotion in person and it was a lovely birthday surprise for this dedicated and charming mason



*During the COVID pandemic, many Buckinghamshire Freemasons have volunteered their time and services to help their communities get through the worst of times. No doubt many of you will have seen some of the efforts made on social media showing the tremendous work that was carried out, but in this article we feature a few of our newer members who have not been in the Craft for very long, many of whom are part of the Bucks NECC. This is what they did to help out during the emergency, embracing the true spirit of Freemasonry at an early point in their Masonic careers.*

## Light Blues lead the way

Bro Grae Laws

Lodge: Verney 8849 (JW)

Years in the Craft: 5

**Salute the NHS:** This initiative was set up by Ron Dennis with the aim of getting 1 million meals to the NHS frontline in 3 months. It involved over a 1,000 volunteers, and 100 companies contributed time, people and materials to make it happen. This included the PGM's own label printing business providing food labelling for the meal packs. I was invited in to support the setup of the warehouse and get it running to maximum capacity. It was a challenge but was extremely rewarding. The spirit of volunteering was massive, and I felt honoured to have been part of this endeavour. I am now working with local authorities to harness this new volunteering force to continue to support local charities in Oxfordshire and for national causes.



Bro Mark Lucas

Lodge: Bowen 2816 (JD)

Years in the Craft: 3

I have been a volunteer for **Beaconsfield Connected**, a local charity group collecting prescriptions, shopping, calling up isolated individuals for a chat and collecting food parcels for a local food bank. I also help out at the Lindengate Garden, a charity offering a respite to NHS and key workers where they can visit a quiet and reflective space, giving them some personal time in order to de-stress. This role involves gardening duties and being on hand if anyone needs to talk. All this has been going on since March, when the lockdown started, and is now set to continue. It has helped me personally, providing me with a 'purpose' during the lockdown period; I would have felt helpless in my own house without any regular work to do.

Bro Carlos Sepulveda

Lodge: Marlow 2752 (SW in September)

Years in the Craft: 3 in the UK and 12 in Chile

My wife and I volunteer at the local food bank. We started four years ago and at the peak of the pandemic, we were distributing food to almost 100 families in the Maidenhead area, a 30% increase from regular times. We have also clocked up over 3000 hours between us as NHS Responders.





### W Bro Ryan Pike

Lodge: Fairway 8614 (WM)

Years in the Craft: 4



It was shortly after I held my first meeting in the Chair that the lockdown began. This also coincided with me being placed on furlough at work. Having caught up with all the DIY, gardening and household chores I volunteered at Stoke Mandeville Hospital as an **NHS COVID-19 Emergency helper**. My role involved being the first point of contact, three days per week, for patients visiting the hospital during the peak of the pandemic. The hospital was operating on reduced capacity and a new entrance and colour coded routes around the complex easily caused confusion for the patients. I was there to help them find their way to where they needed to be. It was tremendously rewarding and the staff, doctors, nurses and porters were wonderfully friendly and jolly in what were some fairly grim times. In addition to this I also totted up 1403 emergency responder hours with the UK Royal Voluntary Service. The NHS has looked after me for 47 years and it was my time to try and repay a very small amount of the debt I owe them.

### Bro Ben Housego

Lodge: Wendover 9616 (Steward)

Years in the Craft: 18 months

I am thoroughly enjoying my masonic journey so far and look forward to the times ahead, moving into the chair and beyond. When COVID-19 hit us everything came to an abrupt halt including our Masonic meetings. I was talking to Mark Burnham one evening and he mentioned that Phil Blacklaw and Mark Duncan were looking for volunteers each Friday to deliver food parcels for the Bucks Young Carers; I immediately sent a text to Mark putting my name forward. The food was lovingly prepared by the ladies in the Aylesbury centre and people were given choices of either Steak pies or Cottage pies; from personal experience these were very nice! Each week we targeted specific areas all over the Province, delivering the pies to families.

Everyone was so thankful to us for the gift, I remember one lady crying, thanking me so much and that I was one of the only people she had seen during the lockdown. This made me feel that I was doing something good, giving back to people who needed help. We did this every week throughout lockdown and I thoroughly enjoyed it.



### Bro Ranj Sagoo

Lodge: Chalfont St Peter 9656 (SD)

Years in the Craft: 4

During a NECC team meeting I became aware from John King of an initiative Phil Blacklaw was heading up. Phil was arranging essential food and cleaning items to be provided to those vulnerable people in need. Coincidentally I was already responding to an email I had received from my daughters' school where the Head Teacher had reached out for donations as there were a number of vulnerable families in my village that did not have access to food due to COVID-19; whether through lost employment, sickness or lack of availability of such items in the shops.



I had already donated food and treats to the School's foodbank, but I wanted to do more. I contacted Phil, and liaised with the Head Teacher and the School's assigned representative. Through Buckinghamshire Freemasons, namely Phil Blacklaw and the team at Bletchley Masonic Centre, Rob, Annette and Mark, we gifted a significant amount of food (fresh, dry and canned), milk, treats and cleaning products to 28 vulnerable families, completely free of charge. It was truly a team effort by Masons responding to people in need, without detriment to ourselves; satisfying our masonic principles. The School has since delivered further essential supplies as it wasn't a lack of funds but lack of availability and access to such supplies.



When Brother Mehmet Adali, a member of Eton Lodge, found himself experiencing increasingly intense headaches the NHS 111 Helpline was called and an ambulance was immediately dispatched to his home. It was soon established that Mehmet had contracted the COVID-19 virus and he was rushed to Wexham Park Hospital.

En route to the hospital his condition rapidly deteriorated and on arrival he was taken straight to the Intensive care unit and put on a ventilator.

Mehmet was intubated for 3 weeks and during this time his kidneys deteriorated to such an extent that he had to receive dialysis treatment. Whilst under treatment he experienced delirium and hallucinations and for a while things were 'touch and go'.

By April 23rd, however, Mehmet had recovered sufficiently for his Medical Consultant to declare him fit to return home and to his great relief he was discharged.

Mehmet's experiences had given him a first hand insight into just how hard the frontline NHS staff were working, with regular 12 hours plus shifts being the norm. He was concerned by comments he heard from staff about their lack of PPE equipment.

At home a brother Mason called to see how Mehmet was doing and during the conversation Mehmet happened to mention the difficulties the hospital was having in securing PPE. This message was passed up the line and very soon Buckinghamshire Province had offered to supply the ICU unit at Wexham Park with 200 face visors.

When Mehmet visited the hospital to hand over the visors the whole ICU team together with the Physio and

the Head of Fundraising came out to greet him and thank him personally for what he was doing for them. Mehmet says that this was a hugely emotional experience. He has also managed to raise £200 from Eton Lodge which he has donated to the Hospital.

Mehmet has asked to thank Buckinghamshire Masons for their support and said he cannot believe how a passing comment resulted in such an immediate and appropriate response.

**The Province, though, would like to thank Mehmet for getting well and allowing us to support our wonderful NHS.**

**Gary Brodie**

*Assistant Provincial Grand Master*





# Province of Buckinghamshire COVID-19 PPE Effort

When the Buckinghamshire Provincial Executive met to decide where to concentrate their efforts for the COVID-19 crisis, it immediately became apparent that Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for key workers was of paramount importance. With this in mind the Provincial Grand Master tasked the Assistant Provincial Grand Master, Gary Brodie, with sourcing, purchasing and delivering Face Visors to the NHS and other Key Worker units.

The first positive result lay with a new Buckinghamshire Mason and member of the Bucks Motorcycle Lodge, Kevin Ansell, who turned part of the production at his engineering company towards Face Visors. Kevin had soon produced some **1000 units** at cost price for the provincial initiative.

A second source was located through yet another Freemason, this time from Lancashire, David Tilsley-Curtis. He is a director of a company which, like Kevin's, had turned part of its production towards Face Visors and he had soon supplied Bucks with **2000 units**, again at cost price.

The **3,000 units** were delivered to a warehouse in Aylesbury owned by the Provincial Grand Master who had given permission for us to assemble, label and pack the visors on site. This work was done over several days by a small but very enthusiastic group of Buckinghamshire Masons : Jack Clark, Simon Williams, Paul Williams and Gary Brodie.

The visors were then delivered to the following hospitals:

Milton Keynes University Hospital: **500 Visors**

COVID-19 Acts of Kindness Group at Stoke Mandeville Hospital (for distribution to the three main hospitals in the Bucks Healthcare Trust, Stoke Mandeville, Wycombe General and Amersham) **1500 visors**.

They were also delivered to the following Care Homes and other Key Units:

The Croft Care Home – Amersham, Windsor Lodge Care Home – Gerrards Cross, Rock House Care Home – Gerrards Cross, Farnham Common Care Home – Farnham Common, Lent Rise Care Home – Slough, Ascot Towers Old Peoples Home – Ascot, Thames Hospice – Windsor, Sir Aubrey Ward House Care Home – Marlow, Hazlemere Lodge Care Home – High Wycombe, Willen Hospice – Milton Keynes.

All the units supplied with the face shields were extremely grateful and could not thank us enough for our efforts and it has been very humbling to be part of such a fantastic initiative delivering much needed protection to our wonderful NHS staff and other brave Key Workers.

In addition to the face shields Buckinghamshire has also been able to provide Galaxy Tablets to Milton Keynes University Hospital, Willen Hospice, a Bletchley Care Home and Bucks Healthcare Trust. These will enable many infirm patients to keep in touch with their families during these trying times.

The PPE deliveries came to an appropriate end when Mehmet Adali, a member of Eton Lodge who was seriously ill with COVID-19 and who was treated and recovered at Wexham Park Hospital, presented 200 Face Shields to the hospital staff.

Brethren, I would like to thank the following for their great support and enthusiasm during our efforts; Simon Williams, Paul Williams, Jack Clark, Tony Robinson APGM, Phil Blacklaw APGM, Eugene Matthias and John Clark PGM. It has been a real privilege to be part of the scheme which could not have taken place without ALL your charitable contributions, many thanks to you all.

**Gary Brodie**

*Assistant Provincial Grand Master*



## In Perfect Harmony

After 105 years, the WI have done amazing work for charities and their local communities, and the COVID-19 crisis is no exception. The WI have been producing scrubs for use in local hospitals. One such hospital is Wexham Park Hospital. However, the requirement of the hospital was so great that the WI asked for help with paying for the large quantities of material involved in their production. The Freemasons of Buckinghamshire and Berkshire stepped up and donated £6,000 to pay for the material and to allow the production to continue.

Kate Wratten of the WI said "The grant will be spent on fabric and other equipment and consumables for making scrubs. This will initially be for the hub run by Sally Beer, but in view of your generosity we may pass some of the money to the fabric fund for the main project Scrubs Glorious Scrubs - this project has so far delivered to Wexham Park and Frimley Park hospitals a total of 1,000 of the 2,000 scrubs requested by NHS Frimley Health Foundation Trust.

We are very grateful to the Provincial Grand Lodges of Buckinghamshire and Berkshire for their generosity and to Hugh Douglas-Smith and your other members for making this happen so quickly. This has enabled us to keep the project going at pace."

The scrubs will be collected and distributed by a team of Freemasons as they become ready for use. Thanks to everyone involved in this amazing project.

## Kindness for Kids

On Christmas Day morning 2019 Brethren of St Peter & St Paul Lodge Newport Pagnell wanted to put an extra smile on the faces of 13 local children who were unable to live with their parents. This is the story of what was behind one of the smiles, 9 year old Tim, (name changed).

Prior to Christmas, MK Family Support Workers delivered the gifts our Brethren had purchased for each child. For Tim they included a mega surprise, - a "VIP Invitation" from The Saints Rugby Foundation.

Extract of a message received from the Manager of Tim's Family Support Worker *"Sue has just been out to deliver the gifts to the young person and basically he cried with happiness.... The Saints are actually his favourite team.... Sue (name changed) had never seen him so happy... and commented that this was probably the nicest thing she had ever done in her role as a Family Support Worker and she has been here over 7 years"*.

On 12 January 2020 I met Tim and Sue for the first time as we set off for Northampton. After less than 200 metres Tim announced in true mega-star fashion "I'm a VIP" and this became his catch phrase with everyone he met at the Saints from Receptionist to the Team Captain.



Taking a birds eye view of the rugby pitch.



From left: Stephen Isherwood – Lodge Almoner, Gary Lake Family Support Team Manager, Richard Freeman – Lodge Charity Steward

Captain's Bar, Players' Gym, Changing Room, he saw everything backstage prior to kick-off. In the Boot Room he was presented with a genuine Saints Rugby match-ball. He was totally overwhelmed by this unplanned generosity and it then became the focus for subsequent autographs from players and club dignitaries.

After lunch Tim practiced his ball management skills at one of the 'Have a Go' stands just in case the Saint's Captain needed to call upon his services later.



Tim supporting The Saints.

When both Teams entered the field VIP Tim was equipped with an ear to ear smile plus a big foam hand to wave in encouragement of every try and conversion by his favourite team. Saints and Benetton supporters cheered on their champions and much to Tim's delight it was a Saints victory. Final

whistle, loud applause, loud music, crowd instructions, and Tim's dash for some final autographs on his precious Saints Rugby Ball.

"Happy", I enquired? "Yes thank you" he responded and the three of us set off for MK, exhausted but delighted that the day's events had truly exceeded all expectations and Lodge had delivered one of its "Kindness for Kids" goals. Safely back in the Family Support Office, Tim was reunited with his Grandmother and he volunteered a big hug of thanks to both me and Sue; a day never to be forgotten.

Hopefully Tim's VIP experience will serve as positive reinforcement of peoples' kindness and help to mitigate some of life's more negative occasions in the future.

"Kindness for Kids" was a first-time experiment for the Brethren of St Peter & St Paul and thoughts are already being processed for more projects for the MK Family Support Team and of course Christmas 2020.

**If any Lodge wishes to discuss any aspect of our experience, then you are most welcome to contact Stephen Isherwood on 07831 494423 or [stephen@iyc.co.uk](mailto:stephen@iyc.co.uk).**



## Laptop Keeps Young Carers Caring

The recent COVID pandemic has hit all families. However, for some young carers it has put them in an impossible situation. Young Carers Bucks supports many such families but were particularly concerned about two young sisters who care for their mother. With lockdown and home schooling, they were suddenly isolated and were unable to do their school work and stay in contact with their friends.

Young Carers Bucks has a long standing relationship with Buckinghamshire Freemasons, and have been working together during COVID to provide hot meals and other support. After a call to see if the Freemasons of Buckinghamshire could help in some way, Phil Blacklaw (Assistant Head of Buckinghamshire Freemasons) leapt into action.

Shortly afterwards, Phil delivered a brand new laptop computer to the girls, who were very grateful to receive it.

It has made a huge difference to the home schooling for these hard working young carers.

Rahat Butt, of Young Carers Bucks said "I am writing to sincerely thank Buckinghamshire Freemasons for their generous donation of a laptop for our Young Carer family in need.

The family are very grateful for the kind donation of the laptop and it has made a huge difference. Since lockdown the family were having to share one laptop between five children, school work was not being completed, and the school had concerns about the teenage girls one of whom is a GCSE student.

Mum and school contacted me to inform me of the difficulties that had arisen. There are two young children who have significant care needs so the mother was becoming more stressed, juggling school work, care needs and hospital visits. The two teenagers are now able to do vital school work which



will greatly increase their chances of higher academic achievement and a brighter future.

Young Carers Bucks said "We are so fortunate to have a kind donor like the Buckinghamshire Freemasons. Your contribution and support allows us to make a positive impact in the lives of the Young Carers."

## SLOUGH FREEMASONS HELP CARERS TO STAY CONNECTED

During the recent National Carers Week, Slough Freemasons approached Slough Council Voluntary Services and asked if there was anything on their wish list they might be able to help with. The request came back for computer tablets to allow those isolated during the COVID crisis some relief and communication with the outside world, giving them the opportunity to join in online group activities. The request was for 16 tablets.

Slough Freemasons immediately set to work and had soon come up with the funds to supply the number of tablets required, a fantastic effort on their part. These were recently presented to The Worshipful the Mayor of Slough, Councillor



Preston Brooker, CEO of Slough Council Voluntary Services, Ramesh Kukar, and Chairman of Slough CVS, Jamie Green. The presentation was made by the Assistant Head of Buckinghamshire Freemasons, Gary Brodie, and Chairman of Slough Masonic Centre, Gary Mason.

Gary Brodie said, "I am delighted to have had the honour of presenting these vital

pieces of equipment to the hard-working carers of Slough who are doing such sterling work in these trying times and I hope that we will lend further support in future."

Mayor Brooker replied "It is wonderful to receive these tablets on behalf of our dedicated carers, they will make a huge difference to the service we provide."

### *Women's Refuge and Bucks Young Carers*



*The Province has been very active, and most certainly in conformance with the edict from the Pro Grand Master, regarding Freemasonry in general during the restrictions imposed by COVID-19. There are many excellent stories of support provided by Brethren throughout Buckinghamshire and here are two good examples.*

“ We have supported the Aylesbury Women's Refuge practically every week since the lockdown started, delivering nourishment in the form of a variety of pies, sweets, games and puzzles. This week, in addition to more pies, it was chocolate chip brioche rolls. Whilst the hardship faced by those using the refuge remains present, these small acts of support bring a smile to their faces and some sustenance to their day. ”

Main photo: Pies and brioche rolls ready to be delivered to the Aylesbury Women's Refuge.



*Athos (Ben Housego), Porthos (Mark Burnham) and Aramis (Ameet Doshi)*

“ The 3 Musketeers, Athos (Ben Housego), Porthos (Mark Burnham) and Aramis (Ameet Doshi) are on the regular Aylesbury Masonic Centre volunteer list. This week they delivered much anticipated fare to some Bucks Young Carers living in the Chesham, Amersham, Winslow and Oving areas. In previous weeks similar deliveries have been made to Milton Keynes, Newport Pagnell, Bletchley, Wolverton, Great Linford, Conniburrow, High Wycombe, Princes Risborough, Hazlemere, Wooburn Green, Downley, Flackwell Heath, Wingrave and Aylesbury; a very wide coverage from HP2 to HP27. ”



# Thank you!

We would like to thank the Freemasons on behalf of everyone at the Emergency Food Centre for their incredibly generous donation received yesterday. It will make a huge difference for so many in need at this very difficult time.

**Annie Carter**

*Buckingham Food Centre*

---

Thank you so much for your generous donation of pies, Easter eggs and a tin of Celebrations you recently gave to the refuge. These will be shared out amongst the women and children here. This is exceedingly kind of you, thank you again for thinking of us.

**L J Barnett**

*Support Worker for Aylesbury Women's Aid*

---

Lots of thank yous, excellent, brilliant remarks about the meals best summed up by this one

*"Good evening Bob, hope you are well. Would it be possible for you to give fantastic feedback to the people who cooked the dinners. The dinners were absolutely beautiful and full of flavour and could you pass on the biggest thank you".*

And I add my own thanks to you and everyone involved

**Bob**

*Young Carers in Buckingham and Winslow*

---

I would just like to say a big thank you for the cottage pies we had delivered by the Freemasons last week, there were lots of compliments by the residents. Well done!

**Debbie Batham**

*Sheltered Housing Officer, Milton Keynes Council*

---

Please could you pass on a big thank you to the Freemasons from the tenants at Flintergill. The pies were much appreciated.

Thank you

**Sally**

---

I'm getting lots of comments and pics in of the dinners!

The dad of one young carer called me and said 'is this the meal from the Bell?' and told me that he and his mates from work were sometimes treated by the boss to a breakfast there. He said it was the best ever you could get and advised me to try it out!

Many thanks to everyone involved. This has been a real treat for our families and we are so appreciative

**Margo**

*YC2 Family Liaison*

---

Thank you so much for your generous donation to the village network group who are supporting local vulnerable families from our school. These families were so pleased to receive the food packs and were overwhelmed by everyone's kindness.

Please pass on my heartfelt thanks to the Buckinghamshire Masons.

**Mrs Peal**

*Head Teacher Chalfont St Giles Village School*

---

We at Milton Keynes Sheltered Housing are most grateful and thankful that you thought of our tenants at this time, some tenants are very vulnerable but it is also a very worrying time for many.

Just knowing people care and will to go out of their way means a lot and you have certainly demonstrated this over the last few weeks delivering delicious pies, a meal for most people that by all accounts were wonderful and gratefully received by 420 older people across Milton Keynes.

From the Bell Hotel to the delivery drivers, the communication between ourselves and Phil certainly made for a smooth operation.

The Freemasons have been very good to us at Sheltered Housing over the years, including us in Community events and helping out on projects where possible.

My Colleague and I, on behalf of Milton Keynes Council, want to thank you for supporting all the tenants in 13 Schemes, to sum it up from a few tenants what a wonderful Community of People you are.

**Will Pearce & Nora Gibbard**

*Sheltered Housing Managers*

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Please can you thank the Masonic Hall for sending over those lovely pies last week. Everyone really enjoyed them very much so much so some of them asked for another one the following day.

**Lynn Cooke**

*Sheltered Housing Officer for Springfield Court*

---

I just wanted to take a moment to thank yourself and your colleagues from the Freemasons for your generous donation of pies to our scheme here at Dovecote. It was such a kind gesture and the fact that you had to go out of your way to collect and then deliver the pies was very much appreciated.

Our residents have been feeling quite negative about their containment and although they are trying hard to keep spirits high, it has taken its toll on many of them. Your kindness has been well received, especially as many of the residents have been surviving on microwaveable meals and the idea of a fresh pie has been a blessing.

We are also appreciative of your kind offer to assist us in the future with errands. We will be in touch if the need arises!

**Sarah Carthy**

*Sheltered Housing Officer for Dovecote*

---

On behalf of the tenants at Petworth House, I would like to thank the Freemason's for their generous donation to the scheme.

I have had positive feedback from many of the residents who really enjoyed the cottage pie and some asked if it was possible for another one to be delivered !!

**Darren Stanger**

*Sheltered Housing Officer*

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Thank you very much for the free pies delivered to Dexter House yesterday they were very much appreciated, the tenants all reported that they were very tasty and some have requested contact details so they could order some themselves.

**Barbara Stephens**

*Sheltered Housing Officer, Dexter House*

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## Lodge Almoners during COVID-19 Lockdown

Since the COVID-19 lockdown in March our lifestyles have experienced profound changes and have sadly prevented our attendance at Masonic meetings, which provide an eagerly anticipated focal point for us to get together and enjoy each other's company.

### Keeping in contact

Video conferencing using popular computer applications, which most of our members have found surprisingly easy to manage, have proved highly successful in establishing meaningful contact with each other; we can sustain social contact whilst observing social distancing. Regular newsletters have maintained communication as has the "buddy system" of telephone contacts. These online meetings have given the Lodge Almoner, who has the welfare of his Lodge members at heart, an ideal opportunity to ask members how they are coping and if they are aware of any member in the Lodge who may need some assistance. In normal times we would advise the Lodge Almoners to arrange a home visit by one of the Provincial Almoner's support team to a Brother in difficulty, but these have not been normal times. We are currently increasing our Almoner video conferences to connect with members who are going through hard times so that we can arrange assistance but we rely completely on being informed by our members about problems occurring in members' lives.

### Keeping families safe

The Government furlough scheme provided many of our members and their families with an income, offering them some security and certainty. However, it also exposed the situation of many self-employed members who were not eligible for furlough payments. The provision of a decent and secure income

is crucial to keeping them and their families safe, stopping the crisis from pushing them into debt and poverty, and enabling them to have a decent quality of living.

### BMBF

The **Buckinghamshire Masonic Benevolent Fund (BMBF)** was set up 120 years ago to give Buckinghamshire Freemasons a helping hand in time of emergency. We are making good use of the fund; since March, thirty members have received grants totalling **£23,000** which has gone a long way to relieve stress and anxiety about their current situation and increasing a greater sense of security. The normal daily work of the BMBF continues and the increased communication has resulted in an increase in the number of stairlifts we are installing and electric mobility scooters we are supplying to members with mobility issues.



I have referred ten new petitioners to the **Masonic Charitable Foundation (MCF)** since lockdown, about three times the normal rate. The MCF is the main Masonic Charity based in Great Queen Street and they have responded very well within a short timescale with grants totalling **£22,865**. These are followed up on a regular basis to ensure effectiveness and will be reviewed as required. The MCF's long term aim is to give all Freemasons and their dependants an acceptable quality of life. The normal practice of the MCF with case reviews and ongoing grants awards are currently made after assessment of prolonged distress by the Advice and Support Team (AST) over the telephone, with input from the Provincial Almoner, as all Visiting Volunteers have been stood down until such time it is deemed safe to make personal home visits. We are currently going through some challenging times from the impact

of COVID-19. The work of the BMBF and the MCF is far from over as our members and their dependents have not returned to full normality and may not do so for some considerable time.

### Moving forward

Knowing how we can adapt and move forward in these times is key to providing as much help as we can. We have heard some very positive stories from the members about our support and what we should do in the future, but the challenge of managing the long-term impact of COVID-19 on our members remains. We may have come through the first phase, but some are predicting not only a second wave of infection but also a second phase of financial difficulty. There may even be a third phase of hardship in October when the furlough payments cease. Even those on a fixed pension income may have to face up to increased taxation and rising prices. Many of us, or our friends and members of our families, may struggle to maintain good mental wellbeing during this time. Professional advice anticipates that the coming months will see a significant increase in people needing emotional support. Common concerns include relationships, bereavement, anxiety and stress.

We can all help by signposting Freemasons and family members with issues affecting their mental wellbeing to the **MCF's Counselling Careline**. The MCF also offer a wider range of benefits to all Masons and their close family covering needs focused on Finance, Health, Family, and Care. You are most welcome to call the **Provincial Almoner on 07774 225320** for a confidential discussion or speak directly to an **MCF Advisor on 0800 035 60 90**. These facilities are there to help those in need in a sensitive and confidential manner. There are other agencies able to assist and the PGA has a list for those interested [Stephen6094@me.com](mailto:Stephen6094@me.com)



As with the first phase, we want to support those in need in a timely manner, but we can only help those members we know about. Please make us aware through your Lodge Almoner or directly to the Provincial Grand Almoner, of unexpected loss of income, disturbances caused by social

distancing or isolation, especially in the older groups, problems with children unable to continue with their education, medical problems that have taken low priority during the first phase and mobility problems which have prevented members and dependents keeping safe and comfortable in their own homes.

If we know about a problem then we can deal with it so that all of us can return to enjoy our meetings safely and well.

**Stephen Knight**  
*Provincial Grand Almoner*

## Grocery Superheroes

In September 2019, Robert Pulford and Annette Buckler were appointed as the franchisees to the Bletchley Masonic Centre to operate the catering and bar facilities as required by the Lodges, Chapters and other Orders which meet at the Centre as well as hosting the Ladies Lunch Club, Blood Donors and many private functions. All was going well until March 2020, Lockdown! All Masonic meetings and associated functions ceased overnight, no more Festive Boards or the like until further notice.

Apart from the cessation of Masonic meetings, it immediately became obvious that a great deal of people were going to be adversely affected by COVID-19 and the normal lifestyle of thousands was about to encounter a dramatic and, in many cases, desperate situation. After a positive conversation with members of the Bletchley Centre, Rob and Annette volunteered to contact food banks throughout Buckinghamshire with a view to ascertaining which non perishable groceries they would most like to receive. With the given information, and after contacting Prebendal Close,

they proceeded to collate orders from suppliers for the required groceries and arranged for all the foodstuffs to be delivered to the Bletchley Centre. After all the deliveries from the suppliers were received, Rob and Annette proceeded to decant all the items into stillages which were collected and delivered by members of several Centres and delivered to their local food banks. This operation continued for several weeks with thousands of items being distributed throughout the Province.

Rob and Annette live in a small village near Winslow which has a population of five hundred people. There is no local shop and the only pub in the village was closed. The nearest supermarkets of any size are several miles away and shopping for the village residents was becoming more and more difficult as shelves were emptying and the queues were getting longer. To assist their neighbours with the worsening situation, Rob and Annette decided to open a mobile shop on the village green. Rob converted a trailer he owned into a shop complete with power and WiFi to enable contactless payment. Meanwhile, Annette contacted



*Robert Pulford and Annette Buckler in their mobile shop on the village green.*

everybody in the village, set up a WhatsApp group and started to take orders for anything and everything that the locals needed, she even baked so as to make fresh bread available on a daily basis. The shop proved to be very popular with the residents all of whom are most grateful to Rob and Annette for all their time and effort. They have received dozens of thank you messages for the service they provided.

Rob was Initiated into Claydon Lodge in 2016 and is currently Junior Deacon.

***“For me, being a Freemason gives me the perfect platform to help others and by so doing to promote Freemasonry in the Community”.***



### 3D Printed Visors

**Taplow Lodge 3111 had a personal collection and raised in excess of £350 to buy a Buckinghamshire school a 3D printer, enabling teachers to print 3D visors for front line staff.**



Worshipful Master, James Tait, and his Charity Steward arranged the collection from the lodge members. James said he was delighted to help support

this fantastic cause and help the local school to produce these lifesaving visors

Mrs Vicky Nicholls, Head of Resistant Materials at Holmer Green Senior School explained she had first seen an article on a Facebook page for Design and Technology in schools, which had placed the designs on the internet to encourage schools to make the visors. The school set to work and had been supplying GP surgeries, hospitals, care homes, pharmacies and the police.



Unfortunately, they only had one printer but with the donation from Taplow Lodge they were able to buy a further printer to up-scale their production line. Vicky said "it's amazing, now we have two 3D printers in the classroom we are able to meet the demands of the frontline staff and, in future, we will be able to teach and design with 3D printed objects with more children getting involved". Approximately 2500 visors were made. Vicky went on to say "We would have never been able to produce anywhere near that quantity in the time that we did without your generous support so a massive thank you!

Thanks to the extra printer it meant we were able to meet every request that we got within days".



Bernard Friess, Charity Steward at Taplow, said "this was a really good project because not only did it enable the school to produce these visors it will also be very useful to the school in the future. The school has invited Taplow Lodge to visit the school and see the printers in action which we are very much looking forward to".

### On Your Bike Doc!

After a long night shift at Milton Keynes Hospital, Dr. Suhel Chagani was eager to go home. His wife was expecting their first child imminently. Unfortunately he left the building and discovered that his bicycle had been stolen from the hospital grounds. Clearly at such a difficult time, this caused distress to him and his wife.

The close association Buckinghamshire Freemasons have with Milton Keynes Hospital triggered a 'chain reaction' to the situation. This resulted in the freemasons of Buckinghamshire donating a new bike just in time for his return after paternity leave.

Dr Chagani is pictured here with Phil Blacklaw APMG, who orchestrated the great initiative. Suhel said "Many thanks to Buckinghamshire Freemasons for your most generous donation, I am very grateful for all your help and support."

This was a great opportunity to help a front line NHS Hero in their time of need and sits alongside many other initiatives by Bucks Freemasons during the pandemic including hot meals for



women's refuges, care homes and young carers, the provision of tablet computers into hospitals and hospices and, of course, the provision of much needed PPE.



# Bucks Freemasons Delivery When Called Upon!

On the 17th March 2020, the United Grand Lodge of England made the unprecedented decision to suspend all masonic activity for a period of four months.

No more lodge meetings, no more social events or charitable fund raisers. However, this did not mean the end to helping those in our local communities. In fact, Buckinghamshire Freemasons have been busier than ever during lockdown. Under the direct supervision of the Provincial Executive (in particular Phil Blacklaw), they have been delivering food parcels to housing associations, carers, and sheltered housing associations.

Over the course of the four month period, many Freemasons and their families helped to deliver groceries and meals to the vulnerable in our community. The Bell in Winslow stepped up, producing large pies which were distributed to the grateful recipients of North Buckinghamshire.

The equivalent of two weeks' groceries were delivered to the **thirty six residents of Prebendal Close**, on three successive weeks as well as 40

large steak pies. This provided much needed sustenance for a group who were told to shield, but also assisted in the mental welfare of the residents who otherwise may have felt forgotten.

Bucks Freemasons delivered packs to **food banks in Buckingham, Aylesbury, Chesham, High Wycombe, Slough and Milton Keynes**. These deliveries were repeated every two weeks for ten weeks, a total of thirty deliveries. Each of these deliveries provided over half a tonne of food to the food banks at a time when they faced unprecedented demand with significantly reduced donations.

Bucks Freemasons delivered meat, vegetable & potato pies to some **thirty sheltered housing schemes in the Milton Keynes area**. This averaged four deliveries a week for eight weeks, over a thousand pies in total. This provided nourishment for the body, mind and soul for these vulnerable residents.

**The Young Carers of Bucks** were not forgotten with our efforts. Over the course of lockdown, 160 steak and chicken dinners were provided to **carers and their families in the Buckingham and Winslow area**. This was repeated weekly, meaning that, in all, some two

thousand five hundred meals were provided.

Freemasons also made deliveries to **Young Carers families in Milton Keynes, Aylesbury, High Wycombe, Wendover & Chesham**. This totalled nearly two thousand large steak and/or chicken pies.

**Women's Refuges** were also helped during the efforts, Bucks Freemasons delivered an average of twenty chicken pies and twenty steak pies every week for fifteen weeks. This totalled approximately six hundred pies. Also delivered were Easter eggs, confectionary, colouring books, crayons etc to their children who live in these fantastic refuges.

And finally, **Holmewood School in Milton Keynes** received one hundred steak and chicken dinners and two large grocery deliveries to **a school in Chalfont St. Giles**.

*Many thanks to all of the brethren and volunteers involved and to our Provincial executive who organised, funded and mobilised these noble efforts. Too many people to mention were involved but our heartfelt thanks go to each and every one of them.*

## Bucks Freemasons - Covid Response Examples

### Pies Glorious Pies!

40 meat pies delivered to Prebendal Close on w/c 13th April



160 pies delivered an average one hundred and sixty steak/chicken dinners to Young Carers families in the Buckingham & Winslow area



Thousands of large pies to some thirty Sheltered Housing Schemes



Two thousand large Steak/Chicken pies to Young Carers families in Milton Keynes, Aylesbury, High Wycombe, Wendover & Chesham

## India and Bangladesh super cyclone victims receive £15,000 from Buckinghamshire Freemasons

**Some of the thousands of people whose lives were devastated when Super Cyclone Amphan hit Bangladesh and India on 20th May, will be given urgently needed humanitarian assistance, thanks to a grant of £15,000 supported by Buckinghamshire Freemasons.**

More than 100 people have died, despite a mass evacuation in advance. Tens of thousands of homes have been destroyed and power has been cut off in many regions. There has been massive damage to roads, bridges and other essential infrastructure, and many villages have been flooded or cut off.

There is a major shortage of food and drinking water supplies have been contaminated. £15,000 is enough to provide more than 700 families with a comprehensive food basket that will last them up to 20 days in the wake of the disaster. This vital support will ensure children who have lost everything will not go hungry, and families will have access to basic necessities like rice, wheat flour, dal and high-energy biscuits.

In Bangladesh alone, more than 2.4



million people were evacuated to cyclone shelters, three times as many as were evacuated during the last cyclone alert in 2019. There are fears that the cramped and overcrowded conditions in temporary shelters will greatly accelerate the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Cases of the coronavirus were on the rise in both countries before the cyclone hit.

Freemasons from Buckinghamshire have contributed to the grant that comes through the Masonic Charitable Foundation, which is funded by Freemasons, their families and friends, from across England and Wales.

Rose Caldwell, Chief Executive of Plan International UK, said:

*"We're hugely grateful for this generous contribution to Plan*

*International's disaster response to Super Cyclone Amphan. The damage is colossal across large parts of Bangladesh and India. This donation will enable us to provide urgent support to those most in need, especially children and girls."*

John Clark, the Provincial Grand Master of Buckinghamshire, said:

*"Sadly, many people have died and hundreds of thousands more have been displaced by this terrible cyclone. I'm very pleased that Freemasonry is able to move so quickly to provide this essential funding for Plan International UK who are providing rapid support to those worst affected by this disaster."*

Above: the remains of a house in the Indian state of West Bengal. Tens of thousands of homes like this one have been destroyed following the landfall of Super Cyclone Amphan on 20th May



# BMCF Receives grant from The National Lottery Community Fund

**When the lockdown in the UK began, the government put in place a huge number of measures to help protect businesses, individuals and charities against the rapidly changing economy.**

One of these measures was the launch of a National Lottery Funding Grant to help charities with COVID-19 related projects that supported local communities in need of assistance.

As a board of trustees, and with the great assistance of our secretary Andrew Hough, we submitted an application to the National Lottery. I am delighted to announce that our application has been approved and the grant will be made available immediately to help fund our project of:

## **'COVID-19 Feeding the Vulnerable'**

This grant will have a huge impact on the BMCF. At this time the income from the fund's investments have reduced as the stock markets have declined which has limited our

ability to provide assistance to those in our communities in need. At the same time, the current climate has meant there are more people and organisations in need of our support. In addition, it is very gratifying to realise that a national institution like the National Lottery has recognised and provided grant funding to a masonic charity. The BMCF does not of course differentiate.

It was setup to provide assistance to those organisations in Buckinghamshire that provide charitable services to the wider community. However, our funding is normally reliant on the £3 per capita donation provided by all of our members and any bequests that we receive. This grant, therefore, does make a huge impact on what we have

available to spend at this time.

The grant must explicitly be used for projects and work in line with our application and will provide meals and food packs to carers, young carers, women's refuges, vulnerable children and family groups included the disabled. Our challenge now is to rapidly put this money to work to assist those that need it most within Buckinghamshire.

I look forward to being able to update you in the future via our provincial website on some of the good news stories this will be able to generate, but for now, thank you to the National Lottery and all of you that have continued to support the BMCF.



All of us will feel the pain and heartache of losing a loved one at some time in our lives...



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# Ask us Anything!

*On Sat 11 July the NECC held its first monthly Zoom Meeting titled 'Ask Us Anything!' It featured the entire Provincial Executive team. The purpose of the meeting was to bring members up to speed on news from the Province. Over 70 people participated in a lively Q&A with the Exec and took several polls*

## Opening address from PGM

### John Clark:

*"Since the lockdown in March the Exec has not been visiting but they have been busy:*

- *Since March the Exec have worked harder than ever before in our lives as Freemasons.*
- *Food and assistance support in the community was led by Phil Blacklaw.*
- *I joined a COVID-19 Committee at Grand Lodge, consisting of 10 PGM's leading a group of 5 Provinces. We shared best practice, offered advice to Grand Lodge on what we were all doing as a force for good in our regions.*
- *Membership led by Gary Brodie has changed quite a lot in last 12 months. Driven individuals now are driving the capture of enquiries, normally at 12-15 per month has grown to over 100 per month and there have now been up to 300-400 individual enquiries. These need to be followed up and engaged. We need to entertain them and keep them engaged whilst we cannot hold meetings to initiate them. So the team are holding quizzes and chats with prospects to keep them interested.*
- *Bucks is now seen by UGLE to be one of the most progressive Provinces in respect to Membership. The Team are helping other Provinces in Zoom meetings to get them started on a similar path. They are also advising the membership team at Grand Lodge in August.*
- *A new brand has emerged following surveys. Different wording, new Provincial shield, we are Freemasons*

*not Masons, we talk about Masonry and no longer use the word masonic. We are starting to remove the square and compasses from our branding slowly and responding to what surveys amongst the public like and don't like.*

- *We will receive funding from Grand Lodge for new videos and promotional materials.*
- *HeliPAD: Our DepPGM has developed a sophisticated CRM system for handling membership to ensure that we do not lose anybody. It follows from the initial inquiry right through to the people joining the lodge and then the mentoring team taking over.*
- *First Rising: 3rd monthly edition now gives news that Meetings can commence from July 17th. Most lodges to commence from Sept 1st but only with a small number. Therefore, you will not be seeing members of the Exec attending your meeting for the foreseeable future.*
- *Grand Lodge has said that depending on the size of the centre up to 30 people can attend meetings, I don't feel comfortable with that and would suggest that lodges meet with between 7 and 10 members only for now and let's see how it goes later in the year.*
- *Tony Robinson led a team to provide PPE and facemasks to Hospitals and private nursing homes. Never have I been prouder to be a Freemason seeing all this wonderful work undertaken in the community. The more that we do in our community the more people are interested in becoming Freemasons. We have an interesting future.*

- *Going forward it is up to us all to make New Members welcome and make it fun! When they come to your lodge be the first one to go across and talk to them. Don't stand at the bar with your mates and leave them on their own. Make sure they are entertained and that they love going there. All of our hard work on driving up membership inquiries will be completely wasted if their early experiences fall short of their expectations and time that they spent with the membership team, leading up to their initiation."*

The NECC was commended for being part of the Mentoring process and explained that they will continue to be active in retaining new members. It was hoped that each Lodge would encourage new members to sign up to the NECC via TeamApp [bucksmentoring.teamapp.com/](https://bucksmentoring.teamapp.com/)

### Their forward plan is as follows:

- Monthly podcasts on topics such as, learning ritual, supporting your community, using Solomon
- Running Zoom meetings for NECC and wider Provincial Exec
- Creation of downloadable ritual learning soundbites for Working Tools, speeches, and light lectures
- Sunday with Solomon – sharing of interesting posts on Facebook from the Solomon



# Q&A

## 1 What is the current thinking about the Provincial Grand Lodge in October and its viability?

*The Provincial meeting will go ahead, as is declared in the by-laws, but obviously in a vastly reduced form. Plans are being made now to recognise all who are going to receive 1st Appointments and Promotions*

## 2 Will there have to be guidance for each Masonic Centre how they will operate. For example, what is the limit of the number of Brethren allowed?

*Yes. All meeting places have received the guide-lines given out by UGLE and ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England). All meeting places must comply with the Government/Local Authority legislation and guidance in force at time of opening.*

## 3 Will each centre have Guidance on Restarting Meetings?

*All centres must follow guidance, or we run the risk of being shut down. There are detailed instructions in place for the centres. Each Lodge needs to check the process and seek guidance on how to restart e.g. Perambulations in and Out, Robing, Hand Washing.... All done with Social Distancing! Each Lodge has to ensure compliance at each meeting*

*Things will be different; no Executive at meetings until the end of the year; no charge for emergency meetings – small numbers and brief ceremony. Then call off to video for the rest of the members to join.*

## 4 What's happening with our Centre staff? Are they on furlough, etc?

*Our meeting places vary vastly, from large centres with up to 52 different units meeting there to village halls with only one unit meeting there. Each meeting place is independently managed. Very few meeting places (if any?) employ full time staff, the catering is usually an 'outside firm' and cleaners are part-time. Very few staff, if any, would qualify for the Government furlough.*

## 5 I would be interested to hear the views of the Executive on the amendments to the first degree ceremony and how that will impact on the candidate's initial experience, particularly

*It is felt that although it will not be the same, it will still be special, and quite unique. The ProvGM is hoping to Initiate his second son on 1st September, so obviously thinks it will be memorable. He intends to make his 3rd Degree a big occasion.*

## 6 With some of the lodges senior members holding senior offices in Lodges, who will likely be shielding for some time to come, will it be possible to change the quorum regulations, to enable lodges to continue installing their new Master Elect?

*We always have to abide by the Book of Constitutions. It states that a quorum consists of five Brethren, excluding the Tyler and any Candidate.*

## 7 Will the 2021 Festival be extended to allow targets to be met? And do we know yet if we are falling short of the targets? And what can we do to minimise the overall impact on the province?

*The figures for the 2021 Festival are tallied up in April. This date will not alter. The Exec do not have 'Targets', but are pleased with the response so far. Obviously, the higher the figure, the better.*

**NORTH EAST CORNER CLUB**



**DO MORE, BE MORE, GET MORE!**



**Late last year I assumed the role of Assistant Provincial Grand Master, responsible for Membership and Marketing.**

The two areas had previously been organised separately but it made sense to bring them together. At the same time we increased and reshaped the team to support the task, continuing the excellent hard work performed by Paul Gausden, then the Provincial Membership Officer, and many others. We then set about creating a 'joined up' approach to our activities.

Further development has led to new responsibilities for each function within the team. Marketing is led by Phil Witney, Provincial Marketing Officer, who is responsible for advertising and video presence on our various social media platforms. Phil's work runs in conjunction with that of the new Provincial Communications Officer, Matt Perkins, who is responsible for all content on our social media sites and outside publications. Matt is now supported by Andy Collins who is about to take over responsibility for Concord Magazine which is developing into something really special. The membership enquiries generated by their work are fed to our new Provincial Membership Officer, Simon Williams, whose team is tasked with turning those enquiries into new members. Simon has prepared a report on what he and his team are doing which you can read in the next article.

The success of the reorganisation and creating an outward facing presence on our social media platforms has generated a massive increase in both the number and quality of new membership enquiries. This in itself has created problems, albeit good ones, and we are very grateful to the Deputy Provincial Grand Master, Hugh Douglas-Smith, who has put in a tremendous amount of work to develop a recording system which will run as part of HeliPAD and will make monitoring all enquiries much simpler.



Once membership enquiries have been processed and candidates are passed to lodges for initiation our need to monitor and nurture the relationship does not stop there. They then become the responsibility of our Provincial Grand Mentor, John King, and his team. John is already doing a brilliant job in retaining newer members and I am sure he will continue to do so when we resume our regular meetings, utilising the North East Corner Club and our other provincial assets for support such as Stewards and Addington Lodges.

There can be no doubt that the membership issue is the greatest challenge facing Freemasonry today but with the efforts of all our hard working team and with your continued support I firmly believe that this wonderful Province can turn the situation around once the go ahead is given to resume masonic meetings. We have at the moment approximately 150 ongoing firm enquiries from potential new candidates.

Brethren, I hope this has given you a small insight into just part of what the Province has been doing behind the scenes. I wish you all good health, please stay safe in these uncertain times and I very much look forward to meeting you once again in the near future.

*Gary*

**Gary Brodie**

*Assistant Provincial Grand Master*

## Provincial Membership Update

As Provincial Membership Officer I am charged with the important task of ensuring we do not see a decline in our membership numbers moving forward. I took over the role in March with a view to continuing the good work that had been previously achieved, whilst looking at new ways to increase membership in the future. March also coincided with two major changes for us as a team. Firstly, due to the great efforts of Phil Witney and Matt Perkins we witnessed a massive increase in enquiries of people considering joining Freemasonry. Historically there were 17 enquiries per month on average but this has now expanded to 105 enquiries per month for March, April and May. Secondly, we were confronted with lockdown caused by COVID-19

Dealing with the volume of enquiries caused us to expand the team and we are now 18 strong. The expansion also drove the need to devise a new process for maintaining engagement, particularly in the face of lockdown and the suspension of Masonry for the foreseeable future; we would not be able to meet face to face with all these people who had expressed an interest.

The new process has required a great deal of effort by the team who have been in constant contact with the potential candidates over the last few months. This has been via:

- Regular telephone conversations with each candidate
- Arranging to forward a copy of Concord to provide a better understanding about Freemasonry in Buckinghamshire
- Holding Zoom presentations with up to 10 potential candidates at a time, giving them some of the information needed to help them make informed decisions about becoming a Freemason.

We also wanted them to understand that Freemasonry is not just about the serious work we do, it's also about friendship and having fun; we will be hosting a number of quiz nights via Zoom and invite the potential initiates and their partners to participate. The winners will get to choose a local Buckinghamshire charity to which we will donate £250.

These are different times where we have had no choice but to change our approach. However, the team's efforts have been handsomely rewarded. If you are someone that enjoys talking to people, building relationships and likes to share ideas we are still looking for new team members. Please contact Simon Williams on 07961 126007.



# Keeping on track of enquiries

# HeliPAD

Traditionally we have dealt with new member enquiries in a rather manual way, as I expect many other provinces and organisations have. The Provincial Membership Team are handed details and it is left with them to follow up and assign to Lodges. This has had varying degrees of success over the years but has proved very difficult to track. With all of the efforts of the Marketing team, and the results coming in from the various online advertising campaigns, it became obvious that a more regularised method of tracking and reporting was required. Since almost half of the Province is registered on HeliPAD, that seemed like the logical place to manage enquiries and the process of getting candidates paired up with the most appropriate Lodges.

The membership tracking system has been developed and is now live. It has been built specifically with the aim of tracking new enquiries through the Membership team and offering full visibility to both the Exec and potential Lodges of each interaction. Now, when a lead is assigned to a member of the team, a task is set with a deadline for completion. Notes are added to each

conversation and when it becomes time to suggest an appropriate Lodge, the system provides details of those lodges that best meet the criteria, for example, where the meetings are held, which day(s) of the week and whether there is any special interest.

When the Secretary of the Lodge becomes involved, they too have access to the information that has been collected and have tasks assigned which can be updated through HeliPAD. What is more, the process continues post Initiation with involvement of the NECC and beyond, through the three degrees, ensuring that having taken so much time and effort to attract candidates

in the first instance, we make the most of keeping them by providing the best environment to retain their interest and involvement.

As we go forward, the system is already being tuned with new features added and I am indebted to the members of the team, in particular Simon Williams for the countless hours he has spent helping design it and make it workable. If as a Lodge secretary you get invited to participate with a new candidate, please make sure you logon to HeliPAD frequently and keep your tasks up to date.

Hugh Douglas-Smith  
Deputy Provincial Grand Master

## Membership Team Leads Funnel

### Landing Page Enquiry Analysis



## Membership Team Leads / Progress



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## Brothers Lee James and Richard Clayton share their experiences of Freemasonry since they joined.

### Bro Lee James: *My experiences since becoming a Freemason.*

I am an Entered Apprentice at the Bowen Lodge. I applied online to join the Freemasons and a meeting was arranged very quickly at the centre at Beaconsfield.

I spoke to the Lodge Secretary and it was decided I would be a good fit for Bowen Lodge. I was then introduced to various members of the Lodge who were also present. Following this I had a few social meetings with the Secretary and some other members. I thoroughly enjoyed these meetings and I was invited to various social events

which I attended when possible. I was always made to feel very welcome and I engaged with so many Masons it was hard to keep track of their names.

After a few months I was lucky enough for my application to be accepted and a date was set for my Initiation. This date seemed to arrive very quickly. I was picked up from my home address and hosted the whole evening. I was so nervous on the day but I needn't have worried. The whole evening seemed to pass in a blur but the parts I do remember will stay with me for life.

Since becoming a Freemason, I have attended two other Lodges to see their rituals and reflect back on my initiation and experience. It is great to witness the ritual while being in full control of your senses! I like the ritual and I have been lucky enough to be asked to act as Inner Guard during an Initiation which was really good to see.

I am now looking forward to becoming a Fellowcraft in the near future and taking up the role of Junior Deacon once things return to normal during these testing times.

### Bro Richard Clayton: *The tale of my Masonic experience so far.*

Having been aware of the existence of Freemasonry over the years, I had little or no knowledge of what to expect. I always thought that one had to be invited to become a member of the brethren. It was a chance encounter for myself that I was approached when passing the Masonic Marquee whilst attending a local hill climb event in Bucks. I was curious and the banners that were flying that day caught my attention, particularly "Integrity" so I left my details with the gentleman who approached me.

About a week later I received a call and was invited to meet up with a few chaps in a pub in Aylesbury, not realising this was part of the interview process. I was pleasantly surprised at the informal location and chat and that they were all normal people! After various discussions I decided that I would like to join a Lodge slightly closer to me and found that it would be meeting shortly.

I met up with several members of Bowen Lodge in Beaconsfield and they were very relaxed and made me feel welcome. I was asked a few questions about past beliefs and conduct (thankfully a speeding ticket was not held against me). I was pleased to be among like-minded men who held and shared similar principles. At the end of the evening, it was proposed to move forward to a more formal interview at

the Lodge.

I was a little apprehensive as I followed Lodge Secretary Simon Thorpe into the Centre for the first time as there were many men all smartly dressed in suits and I was in jeans and a shirt. However, it was explained to me that all was well. I was introduced to our current Master, Allen, and the team and they explained some of their roles to me. I just nodded and smiled not understanding the significance. After a series of polite questions about myself and what attracted me to Freemasonry, I was asked to leave the group while they voted on whether to accept me. A short while later it was "yes". Much relieved I was still (as to be expected) very much in the dark as to the next steps. Being invited to a curry night and being accompanied by my wife Sally was a very good icebreaker before my Initiation.

I received a summons to attend my Initiation a couple of weeks later. Now I was getting apprehensive as I had heard all manner of rumours over the years as to what was expected. I remember parts of the Initiation and being conscious of the gravity of some of the oaths that I was repeating and the depth of the meanings as I was manoeuvred around the temple. A lot of the detail soon passed over me as the ritual continued and it was only

later, whilst present at an Initiation at another Lodge, that the ceremony began to fully sink in. I remember the confidence of Junior Deacon, Mark Lucas, as he guided me around the Temple and prompted my responses.

The Festive Board was a pleasant surprise and I enjoyed trying to keep up with the rituals, guided by very experienced and friendly brothers around me. I remember arriving home bursting with pride that I was now an Entered Apprentice.

Being invited to the Christmas lunch and able to be accompanied by my wife Sally was a very good icebreaker before my initiation. We both enjoyed meeting lots of new people and getting to know their backgrounds. We were pleased to be invited to the Ladies Night at the Cricket Club and ended up winning a very expensive pair of toilet rolls in the charity raffle. They remain today unopened and labelled for "Emergencies Only"

The LOIs have been a great time to get to know the Brethren and start to understand the ritual, aptly delivered and explained by Simon Thorpe. All in all, my experience on beginning my journey into Freemasonry has been very comfortable and positive. I look forward to our return following this unprecedented time.

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