



The Provincial Grand Lodge of Somerset

News Digest – December 2009

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1. Provincial Grand Lodge announce promotions within the Executive



Peter Layzell (pictured left), who has provided nine year’s tremendous service as Deputy PGM and six previously as Provincial DC has announced his retirement plans with effect from the AGM in March 2010. A full appreciation of his significant contribution to the Province will follow.

We congratulate Stuart Hadler (pictured right), currently Assistant PGM, who is to fill the vacancy left by Peter and who will be formally appointed Deputy PGM on 25th March 2010. Stuart has been very active within the Province during his time as Asst. PGM leading the Information and Communications team as well as the Provincial Education team. From March, Asst. PGM David Medlock has kindly accepted the responsibility for the communications brief.



John Winston (pictured left), currently Provincial Grand Almoner, is similarly promoted to fill the vacancy left by Stuart as Asst. PGM with effect from 25th March 2010. John will then take over from Stuart leading the education team.

All Masons within Somerset and several beyond will want to congratulate both Stuart and John on their promotions and wish them many happy and productive years’ service.

Congratulations also to Rod Pring who becomes Provincial Grand Secretary and to Peter Hodder who now takes over as Provincial Grand Almoner.

2. Forest of Mendip “step out of the shadows” with a brilliant fund-raiser

Forest of Mendip’s newly installed WM Adrian Moore has hit on a great idea for raising urgently needed money to support their Lodge Building Fund. Their Lodge is in a former private chapel in Rickford which is sadly in need of repairs and renovation. Adrian, a keen guitarist who regularly plays gigs in a Shadows tribute band has donated a replica “VOX Phantom” Electric Guitar with amplifier as a lottery prize.

Here’s how to play. Contact adrianjmoore@googlemail.com or telephone 01761 221033 to buy tickets. Each ticket will offer you the chance to choose a number – any number – and the winner will be the first number actually announced on air on the BBC 10 O’clock News, 21st June 2010. As an example, if the first news item said “22 people were rescued from the Bristol Channel”, then that would be the winning number. The lucky winner will be invited to the following Lodge meeting to collect his prize and who knows, may even get to jam with Adrian who does a mean Hank Marvin impersonation!



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3. Jack Straw finds in favour of the United Grand Lodge of England



“Since 1998, all first time successful candidates for judicial appointment or the magistracy have been required to declare whether or not they are freemasons, the aim of the scheme being to promote public confidence in the judicial system. The policy was put in place in response to a report of the Home Affairs Select Committee. The report itself made no finding of impropriety in the conduct of the judiciary arising from individual members of the judiciary [being] freemasons. Its recommendations were therefore of a precautionary nature”.

The United Grand Lodge of England made representations in May 2009 drawing attention to the decision of the European Court of Human Rights regarding action taken in the Italian courts against similar policy. UGLE indicated that they might seek judicial review regarding the application of the policy in the UK. Jack Straw has since decided to review the policy issuing the following further statement.

“As a result of this review we have decided to end the current policy of requiring applicants for judicial office to declare membership of the Freemasons. The review of the policy operating since 1998 has shown no evidence of impropriety or malpractice within the judiciary as a result of a judge being a freemason and in my judgement therefore, it would be disproportionate to continue the collection or retention of this information”.

Taken from an official release by the Secretary of State for Justice, Mr Jack Straw, 5th November 2009.

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4. Roy Howes celebrates 50 years in Masonry at Woodspring Lodge

Roy Howes was initiated into freemasonry on 7th November 1959 in the Canynges Lodge No.1388 in the Province of Bristol, eventually becoming WM in 1976. With his excellent administrative and management skills, he became Provincial Grand Secretary in 1983 and held the post for 11 years before being promoted to Deputy PGM in 1994.

Roy has been an honorary member of Backwell Lodge and recently became a subscribing member of Woodspring Lodge in the Province of Somerset.

He certainly enjoys his Masonic activity in Somerset which provides some relaxation from the inevitable formalities of his Bristol commitments. Here we see him receiving his presentation at Woodspring from Stuart Hadler.



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5. The Freemasons' Grand Charity provide aid for flooding in Cumbria and India



THE FREEMASONS' GRAND CHARITY

In response to the extreme flooding which has taken place in Cumbria, the President of The Freemasons' Grand Charity has approved an emergency grant of £10,000 to the Provincial Grand Lodge of Cumberland and Westmorland who are directing the funds to the Cumbria Community Foundation. It is estimated that at least 1300 homes across Cumbria have been badly affected with hundreds of people being displaced and over 1000 homes left without power. Assistance may also be provided on a case by case basis through Masonic Relief Grants for individual freemasons and their dependants who have been very badly affected.

Serious flooding has also been caused by the Kirshna River bursting its banks inundating five districts within India. An emergency grant of £25,000 has been made to Save the Children who are assisting the plight of over 30,000 people with the supply of water pumps, household and educational kits and safe refuges where children can access food and clean water.

Visit The Freemasons' Grand Charity website at www.grandcharity.org

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6. Harold Thompson becomes an Honorary Member of Birnbeck Lodge



On the 21st October 2009, with over 60 years in Freemasonry, Harold Thompson aged 94yrs. was elected an Honorary Member of Birnbeck Lodge No.7160 for his services to freemasonry in general and to Birnbeck Lodge in particular. He was initiated into Romney Marsh Lodge No.4743 on 18th November 1948 and became a joining member of Birnbeck on 18th May 1977.

In a very moving ceremony, he was presented with a certificate to commemorate the occasion by the Lodge's most senior member Mike Skyrme. In response, Brother Harold said he was humbly honoured. He had enjoyed every one of his nearly 61 years in Masonry and had been very happy with the last 32 years in Birnbeck.

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7. UGLE outlines the way forward in a speech from the Grand Secretary

Extensive works have been carried out at Freemasons' Hall in Great Queen Street, London and to the adjoining Connaught Rooms, now known as the Grand Connaught Rooms. A lucrative source of income which helps make such things possible is the letting out of parts of the historic building for TV and Film locations and other functions. But it's not all about income alone. UGLE is deliberately seeking to open its doors and build bridges with the wider community as the future of Freemasonry lies in broader acceptance by and involvement with the public at large. As already reported in news item (3) above, UGLE has been successful in persuading the Secretary of State for Justice to reconsider an outmoded statute requiring declaration of Lodge Membership within the Judiciary. In other words, being a freemason should not be and is no longer in the case of Judges, prejudicial to ones job or other prospects simply because of people's ignorance concerning Masonry. Through greater interaction with the public and business, UGLE seeks to dispel some of the myths and build confidence within the community.



The development of this theme is amply explained in the Grand Secretary's address of the 9th September 2009 which can be read in full by following this link: <http://www.ugle.org.uk/news-events-page/all-quarterly-communication-speeches/building-bridges-freemasons-hall-in-the-21st-century-a-speech-by-the-grand-secretary/>

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8. Corinthian Pillar receive a most moving dedication ceremony

The late Tony Chant was initiated into Corinthian Pillar Lodge on the 19th November 1982. He became Master in 1984 and received Provincial Honours in 2000. He was a wonderful and constructive Mason, who gave unstintingly of himself to Freemasonry. Following his death in 2008 it was learnt that he had made a bequest for the purpose of obtaining a new Volume of the Sacred Law and sufficient funds were actually left which enabled a new set of Working Tools to be acquired too. Through the enquiries of Derek Marpole, a Past Master, the Lodge was donated an 1854 St James Bible by Revd Roger Burt Vicar of East Coker.



The Deputy Provincial Grand Master, Peter Layzell, accompanied by no less than 24 of the Provincial Team attended the Lodge at Yeovil on the 20th November 2009 to dedicate both the Bible and Working Tools in the presence of Tony's widow Angela.

The Team with the vocal assistance of the St Cecilia Choir provided a truly wonderful and unforgettable Masonic experience. After the new items had been formally processed into the lodge and dedicated, an Oration was delivered by the Provincial Grand Chaplain, Rev Stuart Boyd. His address emphasised the importance of the Bible and of the Working Tools for Freemasons. The full text of his address can be found by clicking [here](#).



The ceremony concluded with Angie Chant speaking to the Lodge and reminding the members that it had been 27 years, almost to the day, when her husband Tony had been initiated into the Lodge which he loved so well. She thanked the Lodge for honouring Tony's wishes and the Deputy Provincial Grand Master and Team for making it a unique and memorable occasion. She took comfort that the Bible and Tools would be used in every future lodge meeting and be a lasting testimonial to her late husband.

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