



Province of Somerset Orator Report - June 2010

This report is to bring the Orator situation in the Province up-to-date, following a period of about 2 ½ years, since the first Oration was presented at The Lodge of Brotherly Love No 328, Yeovil; on 21st November 2007.

I have included tables of statistics to indicate some specifics of what has happened since November 2007, and the overall picture indicates that we have presented approximately 2 Orations per month – although the invitations have not come with such convenient regularity!

The welcome from the Lodges is warm and helpful, and the DC generally likes to talk over the details of the presentation prior to the Opening.

It is a feeling generally shared by those who have been involved over this period that our Orator scheme has been a success; judging by the responses from the Lodges and the degree of interest the Orations have raised on a consistent basis over what amounts to almost three Masonic winter seasons; and the simple fact that invitations have been coming in progressively over this period – often as a result of visiting Brethren taking good reports back to their Lodge committees. In other words, one Oration has led to another through positive word-of-mouth, rather than a feeling that it's something that a Lodge “ought to do” to support the Province.

Of course, there are other occasions when invitations were received because the Lodge was unexpectedly without business – but a planned Oration was the rule, and the finger-in-the-dyke the exception.

However, a qualitative term like “success” always needs justification and clarification; a process that hopefully will lead to greater success and adjustment to the needs of the situation in the future.

Method of Presentation

The initial instructions (guidance) from UGLE was that we should simply read the Orations pre-approved by the GL committee, preceded by an Introduction – and the Introduction to remain the same whatever the title of the Oration. This has not proved universally successful as the quality of the presentation depends on the presenter as much as the Oration itself. I have had reports about “boring” Orations experiences by our members in other Provinces, and one secretary actually expressed the hope (without, I suspect, much expectation) that the Somerset presentation would be better.* I tried to assure him that we did things differently in Somerset and I believe he went home from the Somerset Oration a happy man!

The method I have adopted is a tripartite presentation; followed by discussion.

+ Firstly a Preface that both explains the purpose of Orations in general, and also gives a general background to the idea of what “speculative” means. This also helps to put the members at ease, as they don’t quite know what to expect, and may have been subjected to some pretty boring talks in the past.

+ This is followed by the Introduction, which will vary a little with the subject matter of the particular Oration.

+ As far as the Orations themselves are concerned I use a small number of Orations during the year, so that I become familiar with the words and general content. This enables a more extemporary presentation, rather than a reading. I am also inclined to take small detours here and there to explain, question or emphasise a particular point.

Questions can also be put for answering later.

+ This is followed by questions, answers and contributions – mainly on the subject for the evening, but not universally so. It has generally been necessary to initiate the discussion part of the evening by asking direct questions of the WM, DC or other Brethren to get the discussion underway. It is a little counter-intuitive to Brethren in a Lodge to move outside the comfort zone of their office, but once the discussion gets underway it generally ensures that the Oration lasts about an hour; to the general satisfaction of all concerned. It is notable that newer Brethren are often quite willing to express opinions when asked to do so - and a general theme from these newer Brethren was that although open-ness may be desirable, loss of the “mystery” was definitely

undesirable, and that any unveiling of the actual ceremony prior to Initiation would be a serious mistake.

*(The Orator in question in that other Province had apparently simply read three Orations in succession - and then sat down without further comment or questions.)

Subjects for Orations

UGLE has approved a large number of Orations (50 or more), but many do not make a direct impact on the practical applications of Freemasonry as experienced by our members, and are more suitable for discussion by an audience predisposed both to the subject and to discussion in general.

I have written a number of Orations (they have been approved) that challenge our members in a more direct way, by asking them why they come to Lodge and stay in Masonry – speculation about what the future may hold for Freemasonry etc – as well as insights into the meaning of the Working Tools and other well-known symbols in every Lodge Room. These themes are accessible to all members and have a direct impact on their lives and membership implications.

I am presently of the opinion that we (in general) are not yet ready for discussion of a more “spiritual” nature, as some preparation is necessary by Brethren prior to embarking on this type of discussion. I look forward to the time when this will change.

Numbers

We have had numbers from 20 to 100 at Orations, but this doesn't make a large difference in the profit and pleasure derived from the Oration evening.

Calling Of & Calling On

Sometimes Lodges want to call off before the Oration is presented – despite the fact that they are official Masonic business and appear as such on the Provincial website and in “Compass” magazine. I try to correct this in the information sheet sent out when the Oration is arranged.

UGLE

Orations were started in Somerset at almost exactly the same time as the UGLE Orator scheme was launched (I was appointed by the PGM immediately the scheme became

official policy), and we have had one national meeting of all orators in November 2008 at Great Queen Street under the chairmanship of the Lord Northampton, who retired as Pro-GM soon afterwards. We had no meeting in 2009 (but a Grand Orator has now been appointed and the gossip is that there will be another meeting in 2010) so I have had no opportunity of gauging what is happening around the country. However, each Province seems to be interpreting the scheme in its own way and I am confident that we are proceeding within the spirit of the scheme; as we are both enlightening our Brethren and doing it in an interesting and profitable manner.

Campass Magazine

Publication of the planned Orations is very helpful and appreciated, as is the opportunity to write pieces in the Compass – both of which publicise the Orator scheme and help to integrate it into the fabric of the Province. There will be another Orator article in the summer 2010 edition of Compass.

The Future in 2010/2011

According to my calculations, we have some way to go before we have visited all the Masonic Centres and Lodges in the Province.

<u>Centres</u>		<u>Lodges</u>	
Total	27	Total	88
Visited	16	Visited	33
Not Visited	11	Not Visited	55

However, what is in the mind of Grand Lodge for Orations is not yet clear, and the new Grand Orator may have initiatives that he wishes to pursue. There are a number of possibilities, but until advised otherwise, my plan is to proceed in the future as we have in the past, but making adjustments as experience indicates. I believe we must try to visit all the Centres, and as many Lodges as possible, although I acknowledge we are unlikely to give the benefit of an Oration to all 88 Lodges.

However, on a practical level, I also believe we have created a platform for future development; and that we should start to involve other Orator(s) in a more regular way. I hope to discuss this with John (Winston) and Brian (Rushton) at our upcoming Education Meeting so that we can indeed progress during the next Masonic Season.

I plan to write to the Lodges who have not had Orations, in the hope that we may reach those parts of the Province we have not yet reached.

Letter for Secretaries concerning Orations, and some figures follow.

Frank Clarke / 17 June 2010

Provincial Grand Lodge of Somerset ORATION PRESENTATION

Background The ORATOR scheme is an important development from the Grand Lodge. It is aimed at increasing Masonic understanding and perception amongst all our members. In the Province of Somerset, we have presented over 40 Orations since we started in November 2007.

General Guidance Notes

- An ORATION meeting is at the invitation of the Lodge.
- An ORATION must be shown on the Summons for the meeting. The Title of the Oration must be included on the Summons and Lodges should not be “called-off” for the ORATION because it is formal Masonic business.
- The Orator will give the title of the ORATION to the Secretary in good time for the Summons, and will arrive at least 30 minutes early (To discuss any points with the Sec DC and WM).
- An ORATION meeting should always be the main business of the Lodge Meeting. It should not be combined with a Degree or Installation Ceremony. However it would be quite compatible with the election of officers, presentation of Grand Lodge Certificates etc: or other similar Masonic business.
- ORATIONS are publicised on the Provincial Web Site and in Compass Magazine.
- Please send the Orator a copy of the Summons when it is circulated to members.

An ORATION Presentation is in four sections:-

- **Firstly** - Informal Preview
- **Secondly** - Introduction.
- **Thirdly** - Oration
- **Fourthly** - Discussion - The Orator will open and lead a discourse amongst all those present who wish to contribute. This would mean discussion, contribution and questions from both newer and younger Brethren as well as those of more mature understanding
- The Preview, Introduction & Oration last about 15 minutes; and the whole Orator Presentation generally lasts about an hour – but this is variable from Lodge to Lodge; and depends on the input of Lodge members on the evening.

- The objective of an ORATION meeting is to deepen knowledge, but also – and this is central – understanding, of our Masonic system. Or, to put it in other words “what it’s all about”. It’s important that all those present have a chance to contribute if they wish; but no Brother should feel obliged to speak if he prefers to listen and inwardly digest.

Orator Report – June 2010 - STATS

(Period from first Oration 21 Nov 2007 to June 2010)

No of Orations **41**

No of Members who attended **1,761**

No of Miles driven to present Orations **2,050**

No of Lodges **33 Lodges + 1 LOI**

53	Royal Sussex	6540	St Luke’s
261	Unanimity & Sincerity	6817	Estune
285	Love & Honour	6913	Priory
328	Brotherly Love	7160	Birnbeck
437	Science (2)	7552	Corinthian Pillar
772	Pilgrims (2)	7964	Backwell
814	Parrot & Axe	7994	Tynte
973	Royal Somerset (2)	8215	Taunton School
1222	St Kew	8633	Saltford
1953	Prudence & Industry	8654	Vivary
2761	Royal Naval	8999	Gerard
4399	Severn	9011	Wraxall (2)
4491	Abbey (2)	9033	Athelstan
4494	Tyntesfield (3)	9180	Somerset Farmers
4947	Tennyson	9251	Somerset Fairway
5007	Progressive Science	9341	St Cecilia
5736	Uno Corde	===	Nailsea LOI

No of Masonic Centres **17**

Bath	2	Royal Sussex - St Luke’s
Bridgwater	1	Tynte
Chard	1	Prudence & Industry
Clevedon	1	Tennyson
Crewkerne	1	Parrot & Axe
Frome	2	Royal S’set (2)
Glastonbury	2	Pilgrims (2)
Keynsham	6	Abbey (2) – Gerard – Priory Uno Corde – Saltford
Langport	1	S’set Farmers
Nailsea	9	Tyntesfield (3) – Estune – Wraxall (2) Backwell – Severn – Nailsea LOI
N Wootton	1	Love & Honour
Taunton	3	Vivary – Taunton School – Unanimity & Sincerity

Wedmore	1	St Celia
Weston	3	Athelstan – Birnbeck – St Kew
Wincanton	2	Science (2)
Yatton	1	S’set Fairway
Yeovil	4	Brotherly Love – Corinthian Pillar – Progressive Science – Royal Naval

2 of these Orations were presented by W Bro Peter Ball (Vivary & Progressive Science)

List of Masonic Centres in Somerset

A Masonic centre is defined for this purpose as any place where a **CRAFT** Lodge meets, irrespective of the number of Lodges meeting at that place.

BOLD /UNDERLINED/ITALIC = Orations held at this centre as at May 2010

<u>Centre</u>	<u>Craft Lodges (that have had Orations)</u>		<u>No of Orations</u>
<u>BATH</u>	8	2	2
BLAGDON	1		
<u>BRIDGWATER</u>	3	1	1
BRUTON	1		
BURNHAM-ON-SEA	2		
<u>CHARD</u>	1	1	1
<u>CLEVEDON</u>	6	1	1
<u>CREWKERNE</u>	1	1	1
<u>FROME</u>	2	1	2
<u>GLASTONBURY</u>	2	1	2
ILMINSTER	2		
<u>KEYNSHAM</u>	9	5	6
<u>LANGPORT</u>	2	1	1
MIDSOMER NORTON	2		
MINEHEAD	2		
<u>NAILSEA- Incl LOI</u>	9	6	9
SHEPTON MALLETT	1		
<u>TAUNTON</u>	9	3	3
WATCHET	1		
<u>WEDMORE</u>	3	1	1
WELLINGTON	2		
WELLS	1		
<u>WESTON-S-MARE</u>	7	3	3
<u>WINCANTON</u>	1	2	2
WIVELISCOMBE	1		
<u>YATTON</u>	6	1	1
<u>YEOVIL</u>	4	4	4