



Week 46, 8th February 2021

Brethren, week 46, February rolls on and a new vaccine is with us. A reasonable percentage of our brethren will have had their first shots by now, which of course is laying down the foundations and paving the way for us to return to physical meetings at some stage in the future.

This week, more in the series about special interest lodges, and an article on a remarkable brother who is our WM featured in the next "View from the East".

A reminder on the second meeting about the Festival 2022 update for WMs and Charity Stewards, and due to unprecedented demand, we have removed the zoom limit for 100 attendees for booking in the "An Audience With..." Stephen Wyer and the 5 year plan. So if you haven't booked yet – please do so to join in tomorrow (Tuesday 9th February) at 7pm!

Keep strong, keep positive, take the vaccine and stay safe.

The Ed

View from the East....



Bryn Taylor (Right) with his father Guy Taylor

This week we chat with **WBro Bryn Taylor**, WM of Northfield Lodge No. 5056 and a serving Major in the Irish Guards.

How did you feel as you approached The Chair? Being a long-serving member of The Household Division, I have never been shy when it comes to performing ritual, but I found myself questioning my readiness to take The Chair, and overtly conscious that everyone would be looking at me for guidance. 5056 is a lodge with many eminent PMs who have held acting Provincial Rank. It was very daunting.

What are your memories of your installation?

I was installed by my Father (WBro Guy Taylor), affectionately known as 'WBro Pops', which made it very special. Having the Provincial Team there added pressure, but they were amazing, polished and heart-felt. They didn't just recite the ritual, they lived it, understood it, and believed in it. This really resonated with me and has been a real inspiration. After completing the appointment of my officers, there was a period of silence which seemed to carry on for hours but was in reality only a few seconds. It dawned on me that they were waiting for me to do something! My IPM discreetly prompted me to gavel and move on, which kick-started me into action, and the evening flowed from then on.

How was your year?

I had the whole year planned, a Ladies Evening, an advancement in masonic knowledge, an initiation, a raising, and the installation of my successor; but the pandemic put paid to everything from March onwards.

I had to make a few difficult decisions during this time, but I had the experience of the PMs to fall back on and they guided me, offering valuable advice and support. We have kept in touch since via WhatsApp and Zoom, invaluable tools in these strange times.

Do you have any advice to brethren approaching The Chair?

Take on all offices within the lodge and perform as many ceremonies as you can as you progress. It will prepare you well for taking the chair, as the ceremonies will have 'stuck' and will already be familiar.

It has been said by many before, but plan and prepare your masonic and social year well in advance.

We have a plan!

If ever there was a need for a five-year plan for the Province, then the pandemic has given that need, new relevance. On Tuesday, Stephen Wyer, Deputy Provincial Grand Master, will 'sell' to a full (Zoom) house, the Province's vision for a post-Covid future. As he explains, "this is the perfect time to plan for the future – not just for the immediate aftermath of the Pandemic, but for the development of Freemasonry in our wonderful Province over coming years. It's a new beginning!".

So, why a five-year plan?: "The simple answer? Because it's required by UGLE," laughs Stephen. "But it's much more than that. 'Hoping for the best' isn't a strategy: we need a vision for our province and, like any commercial organisation, set measurable objectives, know what we need to achieve, how to achieve them and by when. It's sensible planning that many Brethren who have been in business, will be completely familiar with".

The plan comprises 11 key headings, broadly covering governance, charity, admin, membership, education and communication, one of the most important being the latter. "It's all very well coming up with a business plan, but it will be for nothing unless we communicate it well!"

And that's where Tuesday's presentation begins.

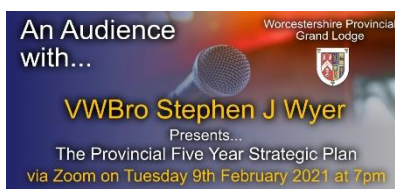
"We all want to see a happy, thriving, growing and successful province, that we enjoy, and that is relevant not just to each of us, but to the wider

community. And we aren't going to achieve that without communicating well both internally and especially externally, so that the public know what we do, why we do it and why what we do is good for society as a whole - and that we are open to welcome new members. The pandemic has highlighted our amazing work in engaging with the community. Now we need to be clear about the sort of people we are which, in turn, will attract the right men to Freemasonry", Stephen suggests.

So how does the plan translate to a Lodge? "Well, every Lodge should have a five-year plan. Led perhaps, by an enthusiastic membership officer who has the energy and vision to reach out. Every Lodge should aim to recruit at least 1.5 members per year, just for the province to stand still. "When restrictions ease, every lodge should sit down at its first full meeting and ask itself how it will develop in the future. That might need some fundamental thinking – such as changing meeting times to be more convenient for working men. 'We've always done it that way' can't be a block to change".

It is up to each Lodge to decide what's best for its members and its future. The Province five-year plan – which Stephen acknowledges will always be a 'work in progress' with an annual review – provides the structure they can use to get cracking and rebuild after arguably, the most damaging period in the entire history of Freemasonry.

Stephen Wyer was talking to Ian Crowder



[Book your place here](#)



Time to be a 'Volunteer'?

Ian Crowder chats with Richard Gale, the senior subscribing Past Master of Lechmere Volunteer Lodge No. 1874, in this latest look at a special interest Lodge



Anyone who has visited Lechmere Volunteer Lodge at its Kings Heath home will confirm that it is very welcoming, has exceptionally high standards in its ceremonies, and the Festive Board is lively and entertaining. Most Brethren who know anything about it will also be aware that it has a services background.

So where does 'Volunteer' in its name come from? "The Lodge was consecrated in 1881 at Kidderminster, simply as Lechmere Lodge (named after the then Provincial Grand Master), as there appeared to be a need to provide an additional Lodge for the growing number of local Freemasons. But in fact, by the 1890s it was beginning to struggle.

"Now at about that time, there was a group of Warwickshire Volunteer NCOs (the TA of the time), looking for a Lodge in Warwickshire but, being unsuccessful, went campaigning over the border in Worcestershire. Long story short, Lechmere Lodge was moved to Birmingham in 1896 and renamed Lechmere Volunteer Lodge, becoming a Lodge specifically for those serving King and Country in any service, not below the rank of Corporal."

Of course, following the two World Wars, the Lodge was extremely vibrant but, with declining numbers of servicemen during the second half of the 20th century, non-military Lewis's (sons of Lechmere Volunteer Masons) were admitted and in 1997, the late Chalkie White (who will have been known to many as the Steward at Kings Heath), was the first non-military Brother to be admitted.

Today, Lechmere Volunteer Lodge has around three dozen Brethren, between a third and half having a service background. "But we maintain a number of military traditions," Richard explains. "Especially moving is our November meeting, when we remember those who gave their lives for their country. And of course, every Summons confirms that you can attend in uniform, if you so wish, while the 'toast to the Services' at our Festive Board is, shall we say, enthusiastic!"

"We keep in touch through Zoom meetings, online quiz evenings and a WhatsApp group and I'm pleased to say that we are in a very strong position to press ahead when the time is right," says Richard enthusiastically. "We have an initiation pending and enough work for the next couple of years – fortunately, there is a lot of 'light blue' in our numbers. That augurs well for a very bright future."

Visitors to Lechmere Volunteer Lodge are assured of an extremely warm welcome. If you would like to find out more contact the Secretary, trevor_dean@me.com. The Lodge also has a [website](#) which is well worth a look!

A Daily Advancement....We start a new series of small articles, which are taken from a variety of sources, including Solomon, which should provide something of interest, entertainment or understanding, or just "ahhh, I never knew that!" – all contributing to your advancement in Masonic knowledge.

This week - **Masonic Fire**..The origin of the firing of toasts at the Masonic Festive Boards is unknown. The 1738 Book of Constitutions states that 'old and regular toasts' had been revived in 1719, but we do not know their form. It is clear, though, that Masonic Fire is a long-standing and important part of Masonic Ceremonial. Two thoughts lay on the origins: toasts were often drunk from specially made 'firing glasses' with very heavy bases that produced a rousing crash; or resembling the naval twenty-one-gun salute. You decide ! Read more on this topic [HERE](#)

Horses for Courses; The rise to the Sub Prior in Knights Templar....

Square News talks to Michael J Hadden on his appointment to the Knights Templar Sub Prior, during the pandemic.



"When you receive a telephone call from Right Eminent Knight Laurence Eric Bourne, the Provincial Prior, you know that you are either about to be given some of his notorious 'direct to the point' and "generous man to man" apperception for recent work, or about to be asked to take on a small task. For me, it was the latter, the small task being that he asked me to consider accepting the role as the Provincial Sub Prior for this Priory of Worcestershire. Like most members, who are not expecting an advancement to higher office there is a portion of that conversation that stops going in; thankfully the erudite experience of the man allowed the conversation to end gracefully and by his instruction, for me to conduct a follow on call with Eminent Knight David Bell (the incumbent Sub Prior) for a further chat on the subject".

We asked Michael what was he looking forward to? "The safe answer here, is being received, with other Eminent Knights, by the Provincial Prior's Bodyguard into a fully attended and healthy Preceptory. (Note a "Preceptory" is a term used for a meeting of Knights of the Temple, one of the Christian military orders, equivalent to a lodge in craft). If you haven't seen the Worcestershire bodyguard in action, then I can tell you they are a sight not to be missed.... They are a credit to the order;

"The Worcestershire Preceptories are always fully supported, by members and visitors alike - visiting by self-invitation is the norm for KT. The members, by the way, never tire of meeting and participating in KT ceremonies. I suspect the true delight that I am looking forward to is being part of the Provincial team that helps to welcome new members to the order under a crown of good and well-meaning ritual".

On asking him about any concerns he has surrounding Covid19? "We cannot seem to avoid this awful subject without seeming to be a pundit, optimist, pessimist or a defeatist, guru I am not; However I believe that the strength of an organisation exhibits fully with organic change, call it being adaptive. Good leadership, being part of something that is worthwhile and moreover helping existing members and new potential members see the value in the masonic organisation is going to be key to keeping us whole".

Tell us, Michael, a little about how great KT is; "I like horses, I have one; it does most of the things I need and we are a great team, she looks after me and I her. Not to say I might jump on a bigger, faster or a less tame one and on the odd occasion ones that jump big "too big", but as they say 'Horses for courses' I have invested hours into my horse as I have in KT, I made a very short decision when I purchased my horse (Velvet).... probably the same time I took to choose KT as a Progressive order and yes, the decision to accept the post of Sub Prior too. Each one of those choices I knew was right for me, KT is not for every freemason, joining will not stall your enjoyment of masonry, nor restrict you. It is just a great order for those who suit, as they say 'Horses for courses'....".



The next meeting is on
Wednesday 10th February

This will be for WM and Charity Stewards of lodges of Fort Royal, EFH, Unity, Sabrina, St John in Bedwardine, Catshill, Teme, Provincial Grand Stewards, Elgar and George Taylor.

Please contact WBro Chris Vandy at wfest2022@gmail.com with any issues regarding any invites.