



PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE OF SOMERSET

Minutes of the Annual Meeting held on Thursday April 4th 2024

The Annual Meeting of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Somerset was held at The Webbington Hotel and Spa, Loxton, Nr Axbridge BS2 2HU on **Thursday 4th April 2024 and commenced at 11.00AM.**

In attendance were R W Bro Raymond Guthrie, Provincial Grand Master for the Province of Somerset, V W Bro Benjamin GW Batley PGSwdB, Deputy Provincial Grand Master, W Bro Anthony Guthrie PSGD, Assistant Provincial Grand Master, W Bro Richard Winter PSGD, Assistant Provincial Grand Master together with a large gathering of Grand Officers and other Brethren.

The R W Bro Raymond Guthrie, Provincial Grand Master for Somerset and Officers of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Somerset entered in procession.

The Provincial Grand Lodge was opened in due form at 11.00 hrs. by R W Bro Raymond Guthrie Provincial Grand Master for Somerset.

Under the direction of the Provincial Director of Ceremonies salutations were accorded to R W Bro Raymond Guthrie, Provincial Grand Master for Somerset.

The R W Provincial Grand Master made welcome the distinguished guests present:

From the Province Gloucestershire:

The PGM R.W. Bro. Tim Henderson-Ross
The DPGM W. Bro. Chris West
The APMG W. Bro. Ian Davies
The Prov. Grand Secretary W. Bro. Geoffrey Warburton

From the Province of Monmouthshire

The PGM R.W. Bro. Richard Davies
The DPGM V.W. Bro Christopher Evans
The Provincial Grand Secretary W. Bro. Keith Evans

From the Province of Bristol

The PGM R.W. Bro. Jonathan Davis
The DPGM W. Bro. Timothy Brunton
The Prov. Grand Secretary W. Bro. Philip Nicholls
The Past PGM R.W. Bro. Alan Vaughan

From the Province of Herefordshire

The PGM R.W. Bro. Michael Holland
The Prov. Grand Secretary W. Bro. Donald Preddy
The PrJGW W.Bro. Geraint Hopkins
The Asst. Prov. Grand Secretary W. Bro. Bryan Wood

From the Province of West Wales

The PGM R.W. Bro. James Ross
The DPGM V.W. Bro. Ryland James
The APMG W. Bro. Michael Eckley
The Prov. Grand Secretary W. Bro. Anthony Trumper

From the Province of South Wales

The PGM R.W. Bro. Gerald Rowbottom
The DPGM W. Bro. The Rev. Canon Huw Mosford
The Prov. Asst. Grand Secretary W.Bro.Martin Williams

From the Province of Devon

The PGM R.W. Bro. Nicholas Ball
The DPGM W. Bro. Richard John Ebury
The APMG W. Bro. Reuben Ayers
The Prov. Grand Secretary W. Bro. Anthony Jordan

From the Province of Oxfordshire

The PGM R.W. Bro. Prof. Stephen Tucker
The Prov. Grand Secretary W. Bro. Bernie Wegerhoff

From the Province of Cornwall

The DPGM V.W. Bro David Leaity
The APMG W. Bro. Graham Bennett
The APMG W. Bro. Michael Pritchard

From the Province of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight

The APMG W. Bro. Adrian Cleightonhills
The APMG W. Bro. Christopher Lockwood
The Prov. Grand Secretary W. Bro. David Ryan
The Past PGM R. W. Bro. Michael Wilks

From the Province of Jersey

The Past AGDC W. Bro. Brian Williams
The Prov. Grand Secretary W.Bro. Jason Lane

From the Province of Wiltshire

The Prov. Grand Secretary W. Bro. Robert Evans
The Prov. Grand Charity Std W. Bro. Clive Emerson
The Prov. Asst. Grand Secretary W. Bro. John Deane

WE WELCOMED FROM OUR OWN PROVINCE OF SOMERSET:

The Past Provincial Grand Masters for Somerset:

R. W. Bro. David Jenkins
R. W. Bro. Stuart Hadler

The Past Deputy Provincial Grand Master

V.W. Bro. John Winston

The Past Assistant Provincial Grand Masters

W. Bro. Terry Hart
W. Bro. David Mason
W. Bro. Barry McCormack



Sommerset Freemasonry



From the Provincial Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Somerset:

The Deputy Grand Superintendent
W. Bro. Neil Hurcum
The 2nd Prov. Grand Principal
W. Bro. Martin Slocombe
The 3rd Provincial Grand Principal
W. Bro. David Maddern
The Prov. Grand Scribe Ezra
W. Bro. Charlie Barker

The Past Grand Superintendents

V. W. Bro. Denis Calderley
V.W. Bro. John Bennet

From the Provincial Grand Mark Master Masons:

The PGM – W. Bro. Philip Voisey
The DPGM – W. Bro. Tony Guthrie
The Prov. Grand Secretary W. Bro. Ian Strickland
The Past PGM – W. Bro. John Morgan

From the Ancient and Accepted Rite:

The inspector General W. Bro. Clive Lambert
The Past Insp. Gen.– W. Bro. Ray Johnstone-Smith

From the Red Cross of Constantine:

The Intendant General – W. Bro. David Palmer (apologies)

From Royal and Select Masters:

The District Grand Master – W. Bro. Keith Surry

From the Order of the Secret Monitor:

The Provincial Grand Supreme Ruler – W. Bro. Julian Frost

From the Royal Order of Scotland:

The Provincial Grand Master (Somerset) – W. Bro. Trevor Cooper (apologies)

From Somersetshire Lodge No. 2925 (London):

The Worshipful Master – W. Bro. Garry Sharp
The Lodge Secretary – W. Bro. Gerry Chilcott

The Roll Call of Lodges.

The Provincial Grand Secretary announced that ALL Lodges were present and were represented by many members.

Brethren were recorded as signing the attendance register for the purposes of Fire Safety. 550 attended with 405 dining.

There were 40 Invited guests from other Provinces and 28 from Somerset.

Attendance of Provincial Grand Officers.

The Provincial Grand Secretary reported that all Acting Provincial Officers were present, except for W Bro Chris Cluff from whom an apology was received.

In Memoriam

The PGM rose to say a few heartfelt words regarding the passing of RW Bro Stanley Hopkins and VW Bro Peter Layzell, two prominent past leaders in Somerset Province.

All details of those who had passed to the Grand Lodge since 1st April 2023 were recorded in the 2024/5 issue of the Somerset Masonic Reference Book and listed in the summons.

There were additional Brethren who passed after the publication who were mentioned by the Provincial Grand Registrar.

The Brethren stood to order as a tribute to all departed merit.

“Mors janua vitae’ Death, the gateway to life.

Confirmation of Minutes

The PrGSec rose and announced that the minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Provincial Grand Lodge held at the Webbington Hotel & Spa, Loxton, Axbridge, Somerset BS26 2HU on Thursday 6th April 2023 had been circulated to all lodges.

Proposed for adoption by W Bro Colin Martin PrSGW and seconded by W Bro Ian Evans PrJGW.

Those minutes were voted on and approved for adoption by the brethren.

Treasurer’s Report and Accounts

W Bro Keith Surry, the Provincial Grand Treasurer advised that the Treasurer’s Report and Accounts to 30th September 2023 had been circulated and included in the summons.

There being no questions for the Provincial Grand Treasurer, it was proposed by W Bro Steve Coles PrDGDC and seconded by W Bro. Andy Broad PrDGDC that the Report and Accounts should be adopted.

They were approved by the Brethren.

The Provincial Grand Master thanked W Bro Keith Surry for his diligent work and also W Bro David Lockyer the Account Examiner for his excellent support.

Election of Treasurer.

Given only one nomination, the PGM declared W Bro Keith Surry PPrJGW of Royal Albert Edward Lodge No 906 be re-elected as Treasurer.

Election of Independent Examiner.

Given only one nomination, the PGM declared W Bro David Lockyer of Somerset Tablers Lodge No 9075 be re-elected as Independent Examiner.

Notice of Motion from the Treasurer.

The Treasurer rose to give notice of motion that at the next Provincial Meeting he will propose an increase in the Provincial Fees up to a maximum of £15.

The R W Bro Provincial Grand Master then Invested his officers:

VW Bro Benjamin G W Batley PGSwdB was re-appointed as Deputy Provincial Grand Master.

W Bro Anthony Guthrie PJGD was re-appointed as Assistant Provincial Grand Master.

W Bro Richard J Winter PJGD was presented to the PGM.
The PGM presented WBro Richard with his Past APGM Jewel and thanked him on behalf of the Province for his support during his term. The PGM then presented WBro Richard with a gift as a token of gratitude for his commitment in the role.

WBro Russell Kim Woodland was then presented to the PGM.
The PrGSec read the Patent and WBro Russell accepted the role as APGM.
Following his Obligation the new APGM was invested with his chain of office.
The PrGDC then proclaimed WBro Russell K Woodland as an APGM for the Province of Somerset in fine style.
The brethren present saluted our new APGM who then took his place adjacent to the PGM.

Investiture of Officers

The RW Provincial Grand Master thanked all outgoing Officers for their support through the year.

The RW Provincial Grand Master appointed W Bro Garry Hawkes of the Birnbeck Lodge No 7160 as Provincial Senior Grand Warden.

He then called for WBro Colin Martin to be presented so he could thank him for his service in 2023.

The RW Provincial Grand Master appointed as Provincial Junior Grand Warden Robert Hughes of the Lodge Marine No 232.

The outgoing JW W Bro Ian Evans was also presented to the PGM who thanked him for his service in 2023.

The Provincial Grand Secretary then read out the list of re-appointments, the brethren stood and were addressed by the Provincial Grand Master.

The Provincial Grand Secretary announced the new Active Appointments, Past Ranks and Promotions. They were escorted by a carousel of deacons to the PGM who duly invested each of them with their collar.

At the conclusion of the main investiture the PGM also thanked all the Assistant Officers of the Province for their service.

The PGM received the Somerset Travelling Trowels.

The representatives of the Lodges returning the trowels came before the PGM:

L261, L329, L772, L906 and L1750

The Trowels were presented to the PGM who received them with pleasure and passed them to the PrGSec to be reassigned.

The PGM thanked those brethren presenting the Trowels and all the brethren throughout the Province of Somerset for supporting the programme.

Appointments to the Masonic Charitable Foundation

In the absence of any other nominations W Bro Adrian Robson and W Bro Graham Puddy were re-appointed to represent the Province of Somerset as members of the Masonic Charitable Foundation.

RW Provincial Grand Master confirmed the re-appointment and thanked them for their sterling work.

The Provincial Grand Masters Address.

Having already welcomed our distinguished guests from other Provinces, I now welcome you all to our Provincial meeting. It is a special day for those brethren whom I have appointed or promoted in Provincial Grand Lodge. Congratulations to you all. It is your day, please enjoy it. Enjoy your new rank and remember that it is not just a reward for your past services to your Lodge and the Province, but an earnest of what we trust you are going to contribute in the future.

I must thank the outgoing active Provincial team, you have all done a fantastic job. Your support at Provincial Fraternal visits and Installations last year and your enthusiastic support for our Membership Challenge visits this year has been much appreciated. Your company has made our Team outings very enjoyable both for us and for the Lodges we have visited. A special thanks to two team members standing down after several years distinguished service.

W.Bro Richard Winter, I thank you for your four years of dedicated service as Assistant Provincial Grand Master and W.Bo Colin Snook, who standing down after twelve years as Provincial Tyler.

On 24th April at the annual investiture at Grand Lodge in London the following Somerset brethren will be honoured by the Grand Master.

First appointments - W.Bro Russ Woodland to PJGD and W.Bros Garry Sharp and Keith Baker to PAGDC.

Promotions - W.Bro Malcolm Bell to Past SGD and W.Bro John Peters to Past Junior Grand Deacon.

The following day in Supreme Grand Chapter - The First Grand Principal will appoint E Companion David Maddern as an Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies and promote E Companion Neil Hurcum to the rank of Past Grand Sword Bearer. We congratulate you all brethren and Companions.

Brethren, on a sad note I would think we all know at least one brother whose name appears on the In Memoriam list in the summons for this meeting. Over the last twelve months we have lost many dear friends. It would be remiss of me not to remember two in particular R.W.Bro Stanley Hopkins, Provincial Grand Master from 1990 to 2002. He was a visionary leader who helped bring Freemasonry into the 21st century. Also V.W.Bro Peter Layzell Deputy, PGM from 2001 to 2010, another wonderful mason who did a great deal for the Province and was a good friend to many of us.

When visiting your lodges many of you have asked me “how is David Medlock”? He is as well as can be expected in the circumstances brethren, he has asked me to relay this message to you.

Some of you will have read this in yesterday’s edition of Midweek Mason:

“Brethren, My children and I have been touched by the hundreds of cards, notes, emails and even flowers over the period since my wife Jacky passed away in a tragic road traffic accident in January. Your kind thoughts have helped us through our bereavement. We now have to move forward without the heart of our family and despite the pain, continue as she would have wanted.

I will be starting back slowly into Masonic life during April and look forward to once again enjoying your company and your continuing support.

With grateful thanks David”

In my address to you last year I focused on the fall in membership we have experienced in the Province over many years, an average annual loss of 70 members every year for the last fifteen years. In 2023, the loss was down to 50, below average but still a significant loss.

I suggested that in order to halt the decline we have to make sure that our Lodges are welcoming and happy places. Lodge meetings should be an occasion we look forward to, with an enjoyable Festive Board in the company of friends.

Using the new Members’ Pathway, Lodges should make a plan for the future that their members could all buy into. At heart, these plans are simple. Involve every member, agree a realistic officer progression for the next five years, raise the profile of the Lodge on social media and the Provincial website and engage with other organisations in their local community. Last but by no means least, make sure that everyone enjoys the journey.

I also spoke of the Pro Grand Master’s strategy for Freemasonry, with its three pillars of Thriving Membership, Coherent organisation and Community engagement. The membership Challenge, to turn the gradual decline we have seen in our numbers into a positive growth of 1% a year in membership by the end of this year.

The strategy also includes the Royal Arch, the journey from initiation to exaltation. One journey, one organisation. Every Master Mason now receives the Royal Arch Discover More brochure when presented with his Grand Lodge certificate.

Our Provincial strategy is aligned exactly with that of the Pro Grand Master and Grand Lodge. Everything I said last year is still very relevant but we need to step up a gear Brethren all. Since the beginning of this year, the Deputy Provincial Grand Master, the Assistant Provincial Grand Masters and I have been visiting Lodges to discuss the Membership Challenge. To impress upon all the brethren the seriousness of the problem and to have a conversation about how we might turn things round. This has been quite a radical change for us and for the Lodges. The Membership Challenge visits have meant that we can no longer attend Lodge installations and I am grateful to the Provincial Wardens and Grand Officers who are stepping in to represent me on those occasions.

At the time of this meeting, we have made 26 Membership Challenge visits to Lodges and 11 to Royal Arch Chapters. We have been greeted with great courtesy and our presentations seems to have struck a chord with a lot of members. One thing that has impressed us, is the readiness of Brethren and Companions of all levels of experience, who are willing to join in the debate and provide interesting and constructive ideas about how their Lodge or Chapter can move forward. We can see that there is a pool of talent in every Lodge and Chapter that could, if properly organised propel it forward.

Lodges must have not only a membership officer but also a membership team around him, comprised of that pool of talent we know is there. Every brother in the Lodge is responsible for maintaining its membership. It isn't acceptable to say "I'm over seventy and I'm Billy no mates, the young guys all have friends they can bring in new members." 45% of our members are over seventy, only 8% are under 40. It is unrealistic and indeed selfish to expect that 8% to provide all our new members. No matter what our age, we are all ambassadors for freemasonry.

As your Grand Superintendent I am encouraging Chapters to appoint a Mentor, share the ritual, Improve the quality of ceremonies and keep all Companions engaged. I am pleased to say that a number of Chapters are now adopting or seriously considering adopting The Savage Ritual. It provides a much better and more understandable experience for the candidate and all Companions. The Royal Arch like the Craft has to be enjoyable for all.

Every Lodge and Chapter will have a Membership Challenge visit this year, we plan follow up action with a further visit to every Lodge and Chapter next year to evaluate how Lodges and Chapters are implementing plans to improve membership and retain members. As always brethren the Province is here to help when required.

Moving from the health of our Lodges and Chapters to personal health. According to NHS England Cancer Registration Statistics - 2020, prostate cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer among men over the age of 45. Prostate cancer is responsible for 12,000 male deaths every year in England. Yet, there is no NHS screening program for prostate cancer, nor is there a simple, accurate test for the disease. Perhaps that is due to the age old problem of men not wanting to "make a fuss" about a possible health problem. The only option available to most men who think they may have the disease or who just want the reassurance of knowing they haven't got it, is the PSA or Prostate Specific Antigen test.

If you have tried to get a PSA test via your GP then you will be aware that it isn't easy. Now in common with quite a few other Provinces we have decided to offer our members and their

families the option of taking a simple PSA test. Adrian Robson, the Provincial Almoner has organised two testing events, the first at Keynsham Masonic Hall on Saturday 19th October and the second at Taunton Masonic Hall on Saturday 16th November. Testing will be conducted by the Graham Fulford Charitable Trust. Full details are included in the leaflet that was placed on your chair. All this information will also be available on the Provincial website after this meeting. Please consider the information carefully, if you decide you would like to take the test follow the instructions on how to book in on-line.

There are many thanks that I need to make today Brethren, this meeting takes a great deal of organisation. My thanks go to the Provincial Grand Secretary, Mike Greedy and his Team, the Provincial Grand DC Garry Sharp and his team, W.Bro Richard Dredge and his team, the management and staff here at the Webbington Hotel and last but by no means least, W.Bro Toby Hammond for providing the sound system. All are working together in organising and running this meeting and the lunch that will follow and in ensuring we have an enjoyable and successful day. If I've missed anyone out, it's the Provincial Secretary's fault and I apologise on his behalf.

Finally Brethren, I thank you all for coming today and helping to make this Provincial meeting a success, I look forward to your company in the bar and at lunch. To those of you who can't stay, safe journey home. I look forward to being with you in your Lodges and Chapters in the coming twelve months.

Ray Guthrie – Provincial Grand Master for Somerset.

Any Other Business.

The PGM rose to call for W Bro Norman Hucker to be presented to him. The PGM then awarded WBro Hucker with The Provincial Grand Masters Certificate of Merit on behalf of the province for his good work.

The PGM then called for the outgoing Tyler WBro Colin Snook to be presented. The PGM then awarded WBro Colin with a special gift on his retirement as Provincial Tyler after 12 years of sterling service to the Province.

The Brethren then applauded our two special recipients.

The Provincial Grand Secretary reported that he had received apologies which would be recorded and that the next Annual Meeting will be held at the Webbington Hotel & Spa, Loxton, Nr Axbridge, Somerset on Thursday 3rd April 2025.

Close Provincial Grand Lodge

The Provincial Grand Lodge was closed in due form at 12.35 hrs.

Alms were collected and donated to Somerset Masonic Charities

Alms collected amounted to £2183.20 plus £482.88 gift aid.

The closing ode was sung.

The first verse of the National Anthem was sung.

Retiring Procession.

The RW Provincial Grand Master, Officers of Provincial Grand Lodge of Somerset, and distinguished guests retired in procession.

Signed.....

Provincial Grand Master

Date.....