

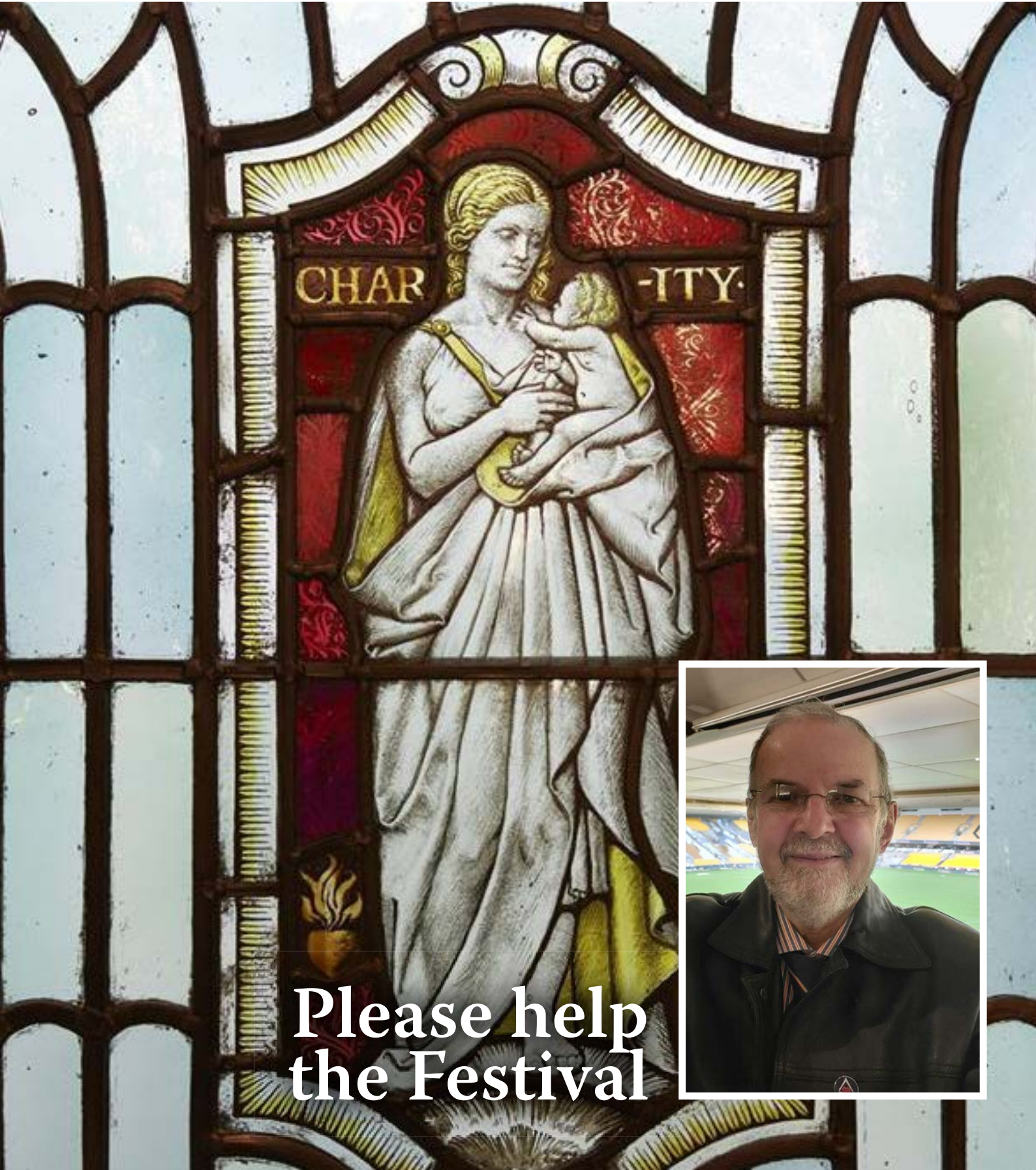


# WYP Monthly Newsletter

Staffordshire Freemasons Digital News



Issue 18



Please help  
the Festival

# PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE OF STAFFORDSHIRE



## ELEVEN MONTHS AND COUNTING TO “F” DAY The End is Near!!!!

Brethren, its only eleven months to “F” Day, that is September 2024 when the Staffordshire 2024 MCF Festival finishes.

Yes, it hardly seems 10years since we celebrated our festival in 2013, much has happened in the intervening years, Covid & Global warming, Brexit, the Fuel crisis, pressures on the NHS and now the increasing cost of living but life goes on!

The purpose of “Festivals” is to raise monies to support brethren, their families, and many worthy local and national charitable causes in times of need, well, those times have arrived on a grand scale.

I am therefore asking those who can please make one last effort to support our 2024 Festival, even a small contribution can make a difference, so please look to see if you can spare a few extra pounds to help your fellow man.

Lodges, if you are holding donations to be presented to a “Chain” at your Installation, please don’t wait, the MCF need the money now to help others.

***I can arrange a “Chain” to visit to collect your festival donation at any time, don’t wait until the “Official” visit, “Two for the price of one”!***

Your Festival Steward will soon be able to tell you what you have contributed to the Festival and those of you who haven’t reached the qualifying level to be a Festival Steward (£300 inc tax) please just top up where you fall short.

*Remember you need to reach the Qualifying level £300 to be able to attend the “Fabulous Gala Evening” to be held at Keele Old Hall, September 2024 which marks the end of our festival.*

***I know I am asking a lot of you, but those who are at breaking point will benefit from the help and relief your donation will bring. In some circumstances it could be lifesaving!***

## ***Go on, just do it !!!! BE a HERO!***

Dr. John Skellern Prov G.Ch. Stwd  
Sept 2023.





Save the  
Date!

Province of  
Staffordshire



# Provincial Charity FIREWALK

Would **you** walk through fire to support those less fortunate than yourself?

Full briefing given to participants by extensively trained staff.

Full details available from W Bro Ralph Howarth

[dgsupt@staffordshirefreemasons.org.uk](mailto:dgsupt@staffordshirefreemasons.org.uk)



**Saturday 7th October 2023 at 7:00pm**

Brewood Cricket Club, Four Ashes Road, Brewood  
Staffs ST19 9HZ

Bar (and refreshments) will be available





# The Way Youth Zone

**On Friday 28th July**, the Provincial Grand Master R.W. Bro John Lockley together with the Deputy Grand Supt E. Comp Ralph Howarth, W. Bro John Skellern, Provincial Grand Charity Steward and W. Bro. Selwyn Burton the Communications Officer attended The Way Youth Zone, located in School St, Wolverhampton.

They met with Jackie Redding, CEO of The Way, Clare Knowles, Communications and Marketing, also other members of staff and some of the young people at the centre, this was following approval of a grant of £35,000 from Staffordshire Freemasons through the MCF, which will be used by the charity to support and assist young people, allowing them access to mental health "first aid".

The Way Youth Zone is a Wolverhampton based charity to support and empower young people to succeed by providing activities for around 1,000 young people a week, covering art, music, sports, multimedia, emotional health and wellbeing sessions, mentoring, employability support, community outreach and much more



Registered charity number 1151247

depending on and responding to the emerging needs of young people.

The Way's 'Time to Talk' project is designed as an early intervention programme to identify young people in need, to offer a listening ear, support and offer resources to deal with issues at an early stage before they escalate to more serious mental health problems.

Young people may not always be willing or able to speak to parents/carers or teachers about their issues and The Way's Youth Team can become the trusted person they turn to. Staff will be trained to support young people around their emotional health and equipped to identify early signs of problems in young people, such





as depression, anxiety and experiencing suicidal thoughts.

The demand for mental health services for children and young people is under increasing pressure which can result in huge disruption to their education and wider family life. This project will be an early warning system to identify young people who are struggling with their mental health and offer early intervention and prevention.

The project offers three levels of support depending on the need of each young person - informal one to one conversations about personal issues during other recreational provision, a range of themed group workshop sessions aimed at particular issues, and a mentor working one to one with the young person to further support their needs for between three to six months. The aim is to deal with issues at an early

stage before they escalate to hospitalisation or serious mental health problems.

Jackie Redding, Chief Executive of The Way Youth Zone said "We're very grateful to Staffordshire Freemasons for their generous grant which will allow us to provide much needed mental health support to hundreds of young people who attend our Youth Zone. By getting in early, we can help prevent issues becoming much more serious."

The PGM commented "I'm really pleased we've been able to help The Way Youth Zone with their hugely important project to offer mental health support to young people in need. Unfortunately signs of poor mental health are often missed early on and catching a problem early enough can be life changing."



## Members' pathway conference

**UGLE continue to develop** the Members' Pathway based on feedback from Lodges and Provinces. As part of that process, four conferences have been created for Provincial Membership Officers, and the Provincial Membership teams, as a forum to exchange ideas and discuss the pros and cons of the Members' Pathway development. The first was held in Leeds earlier this year, the second was held in Leicester, with the remaining two to be held in London and Bristol later this year.

In Leicester, on behalf of our Province, accompanying the Provincial Grand Master, R W Bro John Lockley, were the Provincial Membership Officer, W Bro Ralph Ritchey; the Provincial Almoner, W Bro Tony Coates; and Provincial Grand Superintendent of Works, W Bro Paul Molley.

The aim of the Conference was for the Members' Pathway Delivery team to receive feedback on how the roll out was shaping up. Workshops were a key part of the day for discussion to take place in small groups and then present their findings. With fourteen Provinces represented, it was interesting to hear from others about their experiences in the delivery of the Members' Pathway into their respective Provinces.

Feedback during the workshops identified that Staffordshire is not unique in the delivery of the Members' Pathway but is definitely at the vanguard of that roll out programme.

What was very clear for those attending is the positive responses from Lodges who have adopted elements of the Members' Pathway to suit the needs of their own Lodges. Statistical evidence presented by many of the Provinces represented, including our own, demonstrated that when Lodges engaged with the tools available there had been positive outcomes. In nearly all cases, Lodges had shown positive net gains and were thriving.

Your Provincial Membership Group will be in contact with your Lodge very soon to help you develop your own Members' Pathway programme or offer assistance to further develop your engagement. Additional material is being delivered by UGLE to assist this process. Lodges within the Province can contact the Provincial Membership Officer using [members@staffordshirefreemasons.org.uk](mailto:members@staffordshirefreemasons.org.uk) to discuss their specific needs, or how to engage with the Members' Pathway.



R W Bro John Lockley said "This has been a wonderful opportunity to hear from other Provinces how the Members' Pathway has been received and is being adopted. I am so pleased with the engagement within our Province by many Lodges, and look forward to seeing the Membership Team delivering yet further valuable resources and assistance to our Lodges in the process of meeting the challenges of membership across our Province."



## Phoenix Lodge No. 9319

**Phoenix Lodge** are a small friendly Lodge, who meet only four times a year during the summer months at Wretham Rd, Handsworth, they always welcome visitors who may be missing their Freemasonry during the holiday period.

On Tuesday 27th June 2023 they were pleased to receive the newly appointed Senior Grand Warden W. Bro Richard Archer and Senior Grand Deacon W. Bro Philip Bailey, two Grand Lodge officers and fourteen other visitors, some of whom willingly assisted and took office.

A ceremony of passing was due to take place on behalf of Concordia Lodge No. 5131 but unfortunately the candidate was unable attend, and therefore the Lodge duly performed a demonstration of the ceremony instead.

At the next meeting held on Tuesday 25th July they were pleased to receive more Provincial officers namely Provincial Grand Steward W. Bro Richard Whitaker, also two Grand Lodge officers and thirty-four visitors, including returning brethren from Concordia Lodge.

Again, a ceremony of passing took place but this time on behalf of the Lodge of Freedom No. 3914 (Warwickshire), several brethren from that Lodge were in attendance including their Worshipful Master. The candidate was in attendance and the ceremony was conducted by the Worshipful Master W. Bro Mark Rae, who is also a Warwickshire Freemason and the visiting Master.

Both occasions were followed by a very pleasant and vibrant Festive Board when substantial amounts of money were raised for the Worshipful Masters chosen charity.



On

Tuesday 26th September their final meeting for the year is planned as a 'Ladies and Guests to dine evening' when you will be made to feel most welcome. So, please contact the Lodge Secretary W. Bro J. W Davis or W. Bro J. C. Cairns for a summons.





# 2024 Festival

## PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE OF STAFFORDSHIRE

The old saying 'Charity begins at home' is something very close to Staffordshire Freemasons hearts. Whilst we donate to large, national charities through Grand Lodge, we also support many local charities within our Province which means that the people we meet, see and interact with in our communities are benefitting directly from our members giving and assistance.

**The 4 Rulers in the Province have signed 10 Limited Edition Mugs to raise money for the 2024 Festival**

**Raffle tickets are priced £1.00 each and the lucky winners will be drawn at the next AGM meeting in Spring 2024**

**This is a unique opportunity to win a signed mug with the certificate of authenticity**



**Please contact the following Brethren to obtain your tickets:**

Giuseppe D'Anna – 07980 276569 [peppe@danna.me.uk](mailto:peppe@danna.me.uk)

Patrick Dunne – 07889 106040 [deforest@btinternet.com](mailto:deforest@btinternet.com)

Harkesh Ram – 0778715603 [h.p.ram@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:h.p.ram@hotmail.co.uk)





# What is the Royal Arch? Why Me? When should I join?

**The Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch**, which is perhaps better known as 'Chapter', is the progression of a journey upon which every Mason starts out at his Initiation.

Long ago, the Royal Arch ceremonies would have been worked in every Craft lodge, like yours, because it was claimed to be the 'completion' of the Third Degree. It is now more often described as a completion of a journey through 'Pure, Antient Masonry', forming a seamless thread which goes back to a brother's first night in Masonry.

Many have found the Royal Arch to be a most rewarding and enlightening step for every Master Mason to take. Why? It is the logical step to take after your Third Degree, perhaps when you have got to grips with the Craft degrees and what they teach. Why? Because, whilst the Craft degrees are compelling and full of valuable life-lessons, it only takes a Mason so far? Again, Why? Do you not think that there are gaps in Craft Masonry after the third degree? What do you think are meant by 'substituted secrets'? Do you want to know more? because there is so much more to know, and the Royal Arch is that step of further discovery.

The Royal Arch takes the Master Mason further into a bigger story which began with King Solomon in the Craft and guides him to continue his Masonic journey in different directions, by the retelling of dynamic stories and all within a drama of deeper meaning. It's a little like an archaeologist digging his way through history to try and join pieces of the story together.

Yes, it has a religious and spiritual dimension, which is very uplifting. Yes, it also has some wonderful ritual to hear and learn which is very inspiring and rewarding (don't panic, we encourage the ritual to be shared). Yes, it is very different from the Craft degrees, but wonderfully so. It offers a new perspective on what it is to be a Freemason, in which you will meet new friends and fulfil new roles.

You may have seen and wondered where the colourful regalia comes from, whilst in your Masonic Hall. In the Royal Arch ceremonies, a companion experiences a spectacular and special moment, when he emerges from the darkness of the third degree and into a true and great light in Masonry, which is revealed to him for the first time in a new and unexpected way. It is reflected in the layout of the chapter room and in the fine regalia of its members, or the Companions as we are known.

The artefacts, robes, regalia, and ritual of the Royal Arch provide a rich canvas against which the Mason takes another step along the journey of knowledge, wisdom even, and a process of self-reflection with a clear spiritual focus and promise.

When to join? When you feel ready for more! Ask members of your lodge for advice and guidance. There will be a Royal Arch contact nominated to answer such queries and give you the best possible start to what might be the best decision you will ever make in Freemasonry.



# What is it all about? My year as an active Provincial Grand Steward.

**When I opened my letter** from Provincial Grand Lodge in January 2022 inviting me to be a Provincial Grand Steward for the ensuing year, I was fresh out of the Chair of King Solomon in my Mother Lodge, and I was completely taken aback as it was totally unexpected and I had no idea what a Provincial Grand Steward was.



I assumed it was a minor promotion to get you on the foot of the ladder, I would say to friends "I guess I'll be serving wine at the Provincial meeting in May"! Well, actually, that couldn't be further from the truth as I found out, this Promotion was the best thing to happen to me in 16 years of Freemasonry!

I, like many other newer Brethren, have seen a myriad of colourful and eccentric aprons during our meetings over the years and one always stood out for me and that was the dark crimson colours of the Provincial Grand Stewards.

I have always wondered what they did and

what their role was and couldn't really get a definitive answer. What I did find out was that you get one chance, and one year only, to be an Active Steward, therefore I needed to put my all into this year as I wouldn't get another opportunity.

The active Provincial officers were all given a list of dates for the Installation meetings for the upcoming year on a large spreadsheet. Now, bearing in mind there are nearly 100 Lodges and 20-odd different meeting places spread across the length and breadth of Staffordshire, that is a lot of visiting! However, there is no requirement for you to visit everyone and attend every Festive Board, if you did then the costs could easily run away with you.

My first official meeting was the Consecration of the Sci-Fi and Fantasy Lodge at Wolverhampton. It was sold-out and you couldn't fit another Mason into the Lodge room if you tried. I was thrust into the JD chair for the meeting and, as I was fresh-out-of-the-box with my shiny new apron and collar, I hadn't got a clue what I was doing!

It was the one and only Consecration meeting I have ever been to and it was a fantastic day with a lot going on. If you get the opportunity to visit a Consecration meeting, I thoroughly recommend it as it is a real spectacle. Also, before, during and after this meeting I had many, many people





introducing themselves and shaking my hand and telling me how special the Steward role was and to enjoy my year.

Other Installation meetings followed and, as part of our usual role now, we escorted the "Chained" Officers and took our usual places within the Lodge. At every meeting I was treated as a special guest by the Lodge I was visiting, and everyone went out of their way to actively come and talk to me and make me feel especially welcomed. It was lovely.

What I also found out quite quickly is that I was visiting Lodges with the same Provincial Officers. I quickly made friends with quite a few of them and it almost became a travelling Lodge as it was the same team of people regularly going around the Province visiting Lodges together.

After 16 years in Masonry things had got a little repetitive and this was like a breath of fresh air to me. It really did reinvigorate my love of Masonry and gave me a renewed enthusiasm.

During my year I attempted to visit every Masonic meeting venue in Staffordshire, and did, except for one. I have acted as the Provincial SGW, the Provincial JGW, I have returned Greetings on behalf of the Province, I have stepped in to cover offices when the Lodges were short, and I have assisted during the Installation Ceremonies by swelling the numbers during the perambulations.

Altogether it has been one of the best years I have had in Masonry so far, being an Active Steward has meant that I have witnessed and gained many experiences from all the different Lodges visited and I am now able to take these new perspectives back and use them for the benefit of my own my Lodge.

Which is a great gift to receive and put to good use to ensure a healthy and prosperous future of any Lodge.

Along the way I have made some really good friends and visited some



wonderful Lodges and, even though my year has now ended, and my Active Collar returned to the Province, my aim is to continue visiting and try to get to all the ones I missed during my year. I have attended 35 Lodge meetings at 20 different venues, travelled 2,296 miles and consumed 60 – 70,000 calories! I enjoyed the journey to Cheadle but actually went via Cheadle in Stockport and then following a visit to Leek found the M6 was closed and finally arrived home at 5am! But it was a wonderful night in a wonderful Masonic year.

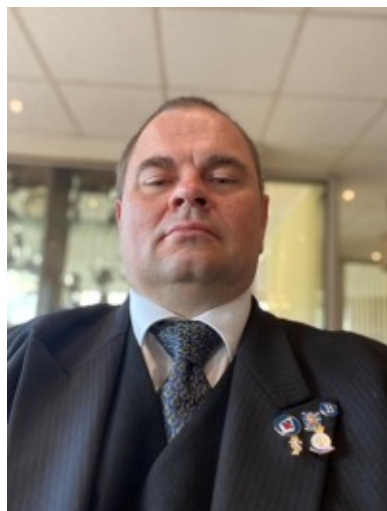
Furthermore, I found out that there was also a Staffordshire Provincial Grand Stewards Lodge that meets in Stafford! I have attended a few of these meetings and to stand there and be a part of a sea of crimson aprons is fantastic. This Lodge is there to support all Staffordshire Masonic Lodges. If any Lodge is struggling to fill a role for a ceremony, for example, then they can call on the Stewards Lodge and members will gladly travel and assist where they can.

**W. Bro J. M. Birchill**

**St Peter's Lodge No. 419**



## Kevin Davis wheelchair walk



**Kevin Davis is a keen and dedicated Freemason**

and currently Junior Warden in Sherbrook Lodge and due to take the Chair there in March 2024. Kevin, despite being wheelchair bound is a restless bundle of energy and his dedication, charm,

tenacity, and indomitable spirit have made him enormously popular wherever he goes.

Kevin recently wrote of himself in these terms:

“I am a REME veteran who lost his left leg above the knee on the 16/01/2012 due to my military service. I’ve received help and support over the years from Blesma, REME Association, The Army Benevolent Fund and Freemasonry, and feel it is right to give something back.

I am also a Freemason, involved in three Craft Lodges, those being, Sherbrook Lodge 6393, the combined services Lodge of Staffordshire, Gnosall St. Lawrence Lodge 9458 (Staffs), and Boldmere Lodge 4704 (Warks). I’m also a member of Holy Royal Arch Vesey Chapter 794 (Warks) and a member of The Vesey St. Christopher’s Lodge of Mark Master Masons 757 (Warks).

I recently executed this from my wheelchair,

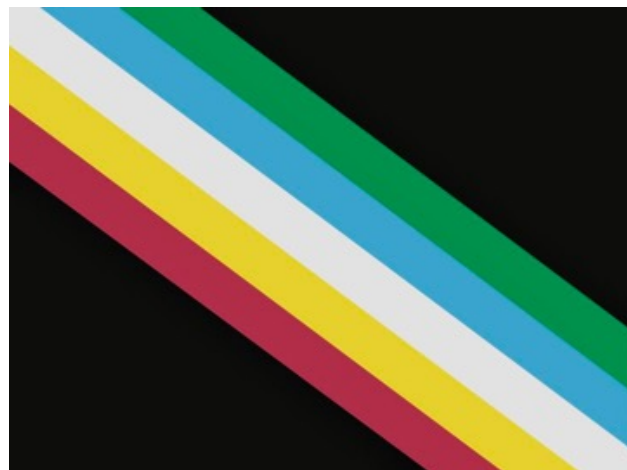


split into manageable sections, a month-long Help for Heroes 150-mile weight walk, all has been recorded and shown on the Just Giving page. I will also carry a backpack strapped to my chest which will contain 25kg of weight inside it. I will complete the

challenge on the last day of July and exceed my target for funds raised, starting the challenge on the 1st of July 2023. It will be good to give something back to my fellow service personnel. I try to stay positive in all I do, and I find Freemasonry to be a strong, supportive, and encouraging environment which is beneficial to my self-esteem, mental, and physical well-being.

After a lengthy period of study, I have recently achieved a BTEC Level 4 HNC in Art & Design (Photography), this took place during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. I’m also heavily involved with Three Spires Gaming, an amazing group of fellow tabletop war gamers who also support one another with mental health support.

I hope that those who know me will understand that July was Disability Pride Month. But do you know what our flag means? Or that there is even a flag? Every colour and shape hold a special meaning for our community, so let’s break it down. The Colours: Green for sensory disabilities, Blue for physiological disabilities/mental health. White for non-visible/undiagnosed disabilities. Gold for neurodiversity. Red for physical disabilities and the black background represents mourning for those who have suffered because of ableist violence and ableist abuse victims. The Shape: The stripes are to represent inter-community solidarity. The stripes are diagonal to represent the cutting across of disability barriers. The flag is a rectangle to represent the straight walls, floors and ceilings that are keeping disabled people isolated.”





## Le Masons Endurance Race...What a day!

On Saturday 3rd June 2023 Staffordshire Go-cart festival took place at the Midland Carting Centre near Tamworth, and indeed what a day it was with fun for all the family.



The day started well, with excellent weather and on arrival all were pleased to see the driveway to the centre lined with Classic and Performance cars and motorcycles, which set the scene for the day. Forge motorsport from Gloucester donated a wonderful race car for the line-up and provided lots of giveaways and excellent raffle prizes. The day was also well supported by the 'Widows Sons' who assisted in marshalling at the entrance and carpark.

Everyone really enjoyed the day and as you can imagine the racing was quite nail-biting at times and was very competitive amongst the 10 teams, each made up of 6-7 drivers per



team. But it was St John's Lodge of Lichfield who took the podium with a four-lap lead over Castellum Lodge, who had led the charge and made an impressive fight back from nine-laps down.

At the conclusion, the event organiser Pr.J.G.W. Mark Sewell, thanked all those involved, in particular those that had assisted in making the event so enjoyable, and everyone for all the money raised towards the 2024 Festival.





# Staffordshire Masonic Golf Society Warwickshire & Worcestershire matches Bromsgrove Golf Club 6th June 2023

The **second outing** of the golfing season for the Staffordshire Masonic Golf Society was hosted by Worcestershire at Bromsgrove Golf Centre. The Bromsgrove Golf Club has a long history, it was originally founded in 1894 and has seen many changes over the years. Most recently it was redesigned by the highly respected golf course architects Hawtree & Son and re-opened in 1996, set in a wonderful parkland area.



The rivalry between these three Provinces is very strong and Captains Bill Davies (Warks, on the right) & David Hughes (Worcs, on the left) are both keen to keep hold of their inter-Provincial Trophy!



Staffordshire was victorious in the Hadler & Logue Trophy. Mark Ashton, acting Captain, is shown holding the cup, whilst Mike Smith and Steve Mountford won closest to the pin on two of the par 3 holes. Team members Paul Walters and John Whalley flank them in the picture below.

This annual event brings together Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire Masonic Golf Association/Societies to compete for three trophies. Whilst the rivalry is prevalent, true brotherly friendship is established on the course and cemented at the festive board.

We are always on the lookout for new members of this friendly golf society, so any and all golfing brethren should contact Mark Ashton or Paul Walters using the following e-mail addresses.

[msg.ashton@virgin.net](mailto:msg.ashton@virgin.net)  
or [paul\\_smgs@icloud.com](mailto:paul_smgs@icloud.com)



## Long service award for W. Bro. A. J. Bentley

**At the April meeting of Sutherland Lodge No 451** W Bro. Anthony J (Tony) Bentley celebrated the momentous milestone of 60 years in Freemasonry, and proudly received a commemorative certificate from the Provincial Grand Master, RW Bro John Lockley. The Worshipful Master also presented W Bro. Bentley with a 60th Anniversary lapel pin, and a bottle of single malt whisky as a gift from the members of the Lodge. Saying that on his 50th Anniversary in 2013, he had been giving a decanter, and now he would have something to put in it.

W Bro. Bentley was initiated into Sutherland Lodge on 15th March 1963 and after being passed and raised, he steadily progressed through the various offices of the Lodge before attaining the Chair of King Solomon in 1971.

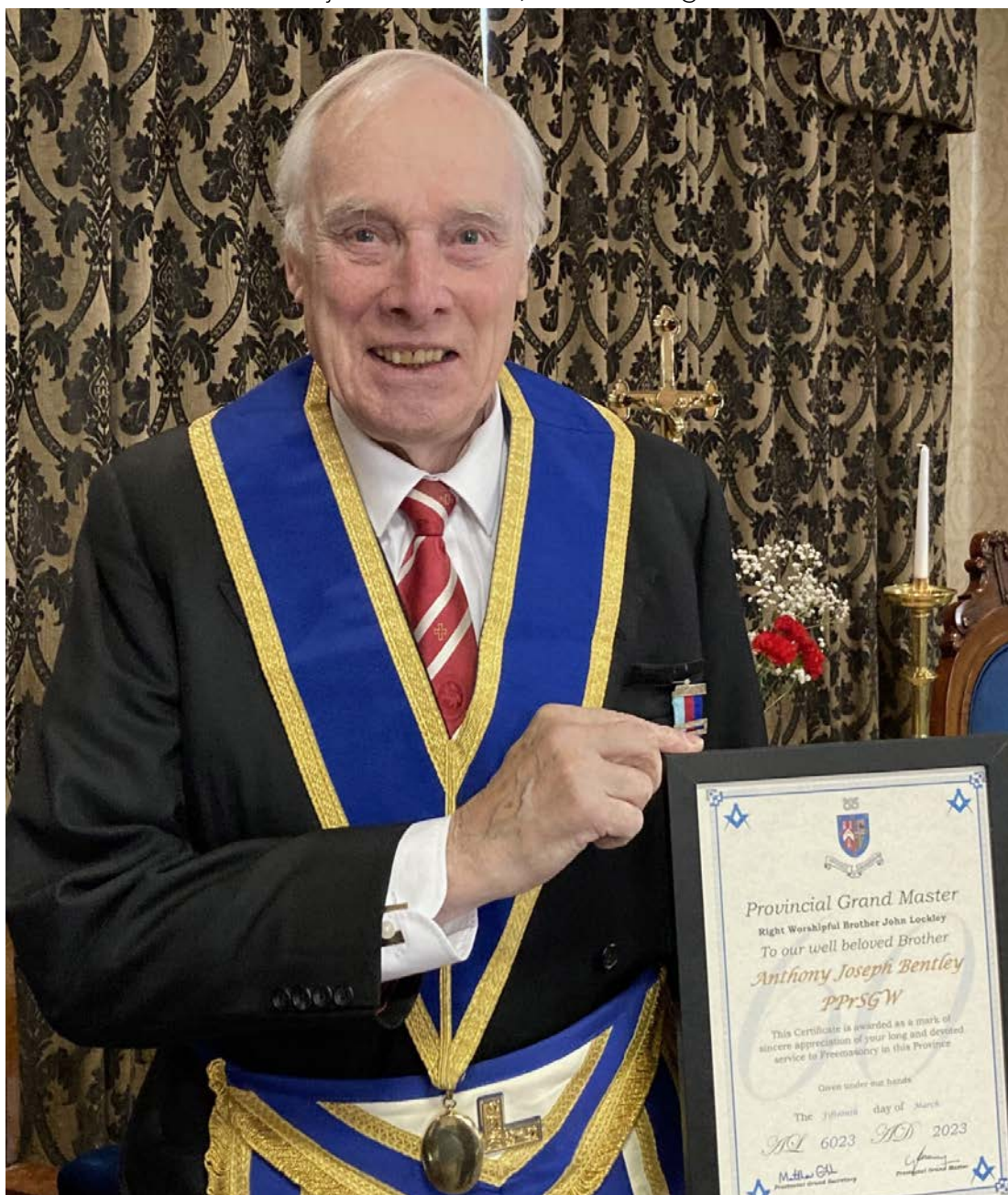
Thus, following in the footsteps of his father and grandfather, who were both Past Masters of the Lodge. He has held many offices within the Lodge including Chaplain for 11 years, Treasurer for 19 years and he is currently the Lodge Almoner and Charity Steward.

W Bro. Bentley's commitment to Freemasonry has been recognised by Provincial Grand Lodge and he was appointed Pr. G. Swd. B. in 1977, P. Pr. J. G. W. in 1991 and P. Pr. S. G. W. in 2004.

In the Royal Arch he was Provincial Grand Sojourner in 1981, P. Pr. G. Reg. in 1990 and Pr. G. Scribe N in 2003.

He attained the rank of Past Grand Standard Bearer in 2006.

His notable achievements continue with his involvement in the Knights Templar where he is active in the Godefroi de Bouillon Preceptory No 42, Mercia Praetorian Preceptory No 682 and the Grand Masters Preceptory No 678. He was Provincial Marshal before receiving Great Priory rank, and has been a Past Great Aide-de-Camp, Past Deputy Great Marshal, Past Great Registrar and is now a Past Great 2nd Constable, having held active rank in that office in 2017.



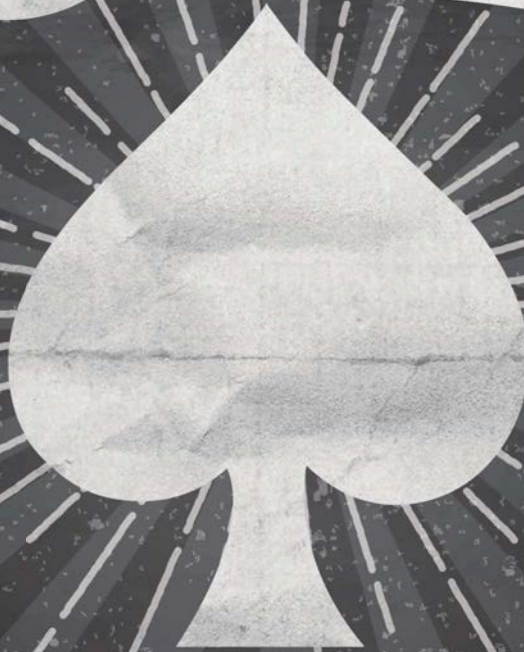




**CHEADLE MASONIC CHARITY NIGHTS**

EVERY 3RD SATURDAY TEXAS HOLD EM & OPEN BAR

**POKER**



**NIGHTS**

**£10 BUY IN | MAX ONE REBUY | STARTS: 18:30PM**

1ST PLACE PRIZE: £50 VOUCHER AND A COVETED TROPHY MUG

ALL PROFITS GO TOWARDS THE 2024 FESTIVAL

OPEN TO ALL FREEMASONS AND THEIR GUESTS - BEGINNERS WELCOME

BAR OPEN TO PLAYERS AND NON-PLAYERS

CHEADLE MASONIC HALL, CHEADLE, STOKE-ON-TRENT ST10 1PA

D.J.NEWTON@HOTMAIL.CO.UK | FACEBOOK.COM/CHEADLEMASONICCHARITYNIGHTS



# Provincial Senior Grand Wardens' mammoth Italian fundraiser.



**On Sunday 21st May 2023**, only days after being invested as the new Pr.S.G.W. at the Provincial AGM, I set off on a solo bike ride from my home near to

Bromsgrove to Gaiole in Chianti, Tuscany, some 1,200 miles away and in the hope of raising money for the Staffordshire 2024 Festival.

It took me 3 days to cover the first 210 miles to Dover going via Thame, London and Canterbury after making a stop at a bike shop in Sidcup following a major problem with the gears and two broken spokes on the back wheel. Also, a puncture on the same wheel later in the day didn't help and meant for a long afternoon, not the best start I could have hoped for.



The ferry from Dover to Dunkirk was smooth and I found myself in the

truckdrivers restaurant having a full English breakfast, before setting off to my first night of camping in Ypres and the first of several Bear Grylls style packet meals over the coming days. I then took a stroll into town to see the daily ritual of 'The Last Post' at Menim Gate and found a local bar to have a beer and raise a glass to absent brethren but also knowing how important it is to rehydrate after a long day's cycling.

I have done this ride before with my great friend, Mark Duce, the current Worshipful Master of Streetly Lodge No 7448, but on this occasion however I am doing it alone. Mark is walking 500 miles on his own along the Camino Way to Santiago, Spain, also raising funds for the 2024 Festival.

The next 3 days I criss-cross between France and Belgium, I found the people of both countries are just as friendly, but I only knew which country I was in by the registration plates on the cars! I did try to put my limited language skills to the test but found myself in difficulties and when asking "Parles vous Anglais" I was met with a firm "Non".

For those who are interested my route took me from from Ypres to Mons, Epinal and then Mulhouse cycling alongside the Mosel river for 2 days, and then on day 11 cycling into Basel, Switzerland.

Day 12 and the scenery changed, with the Alps looming up ahead, only 50 miles away. A welcome rest on the ferry ride across Lake Lucerne and then a start on the climb towards the Gotthard Pass before stopping in the small village of Wasser for the night.

Day 13 was always going to be a tough day, but it was made even worse by a head wind trying to push me back down the hill. After six and a half hours of cycling over 68 miles and climbing nearly 5,000 ft, I arrived at my nights rest, a camp site in Bellinzona. Absolutely shattered, I pitched my tent, had my final camp meal, and went to bed, knowing that the following day I would make it to the nearby Italian border.



Day 14 was uneventful as I travelled towards Milan and after a night in Monza, in Lombardy, famous for the Italian F1 Grand Prix. I set off the following day and followed the river Po, it was windy but hot and after covering 86 miles and climbing 700ft, I stopped in a village called Gramignazzo, just north of Parma in Emilia-Romagna. This region is well known for its rich and varied cuisine, well how was my luck! I found the local delicacy was famous for catfish, an interesting delicacy but I'm not sure that I will be racing back there soon!

The following morning was an encouraging start as finally, the dreaded head wind that I had been fighting for so long eased but was soon replaced by none stop rain during my route through Parma and Modena before stopping overnight in a small town called Vignola, west of Bologna.

Day 17 was nearly the perfect days cycling through Emilia-Romagna. It wasn't raining, not too hot, great scenery, good hills to climb and finally into Tuscany. All was going well until the last 40 minutes when the heavens absolutely opened. I was soaked to the skin when I arrived at the guest house in Pistoia, north of Florence, so much so I had to get undressed in the shower!

The following morning the sun was out, and I set off with great hope, but 5 miles into the day I suffered another puncture on the rear wheel. In my eagerness to

get going I managed to rip off one of the brake pads on the back wheel, rendering the brakes useless. This made for a tense last 60 miles, which included a ride along the river Arno and through the centre of Florence before hitting the hills on the south side of the city.

Believe me, it's not fun coming down some of these Tuscan hills with a heavy bike and only one working brake. But the weather was good and some 57 miles later I arrived to be greeted by my wife, Maddie, who had a warm hug and a cold beer ready. Job done.

The journey took me 18 days to cover the 1,200 miles taking me through France, Belgium, Germany and Switzerland before crossing the Alps via the St. Gottard Pass and onto Italy. Of the 14 nights on mainland Europe, I managed to find camp sites for 7 of these, while the others were spent in B&B's or small hotels. Apart from some horrendously strong head winds, which made some of the days very tough, the weather was generally very kind, with only 2 days of rain, and with no more problems with the bike until the final morning

A huge thankyou to everyone who supported me on the way, and at the time of writing I have raised £ 2,265.00 for the 2024 Festival.

If anyone would like to add to the total raised then please follow the link below to donate:-

[donate.givetap.co.uk/f/masonic-charitable-foundation/e2024-staffordshire-2024-festival/solo-bike-ride-to-italy](https://donate.givetap.co.uk/f/masonic-charitable-foundation/e2024-staffordshire-2024-festival/solo-bike-ride-to-italy)





# Provincial Assistant Grand Directors of Ceremonies

**Dear Brethren,**

The new masonic season has just started. There are currently 135 Lodge meetings in the diary where the Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master, and / or his Deputy or Assistants will be in attendance with a Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies to celebrate Installations as well as Brethren's 50 & 60 Years in Freemasonry. We will be reinforced by the Acting Provincial Grand Lodge Officers of the year, so please make sure they receive a summons from your Lodge Secretary.

I am delighted to welcome 2 new Provincial Assistant Grand Directors of Ceremonies to the team. They are W. Bro. Kevin L. Gibbons from St Peter ad Vincula and Kibbleston Lodges. Bro. Kevin belongs to 8 different masonic orders which meet across 7 different locations. He was initiated in 2009. Also joining the team is and Martyn R. Tighe JP, of Churnet Valley Lodge and University Lodge of Staffordshire. Bro. Martyn joined Freemasonry in 2008. He is a Royal Arch Freemason. He spent 25 years in the army. He is also a senior member of the Royal British Legion.

The DC team continues to be expertly reinforced by W. Bro. Nick J. Collumbell and W. Bro. Matthew W. Adderley ProvDGDCs and W. Bro. Brett Turner-Farmer ProvAGDC. I also wish to thank W. Bro. Matthew Shaw for his service to the ceremonial team. Matt was a Provincial Grand Standard Bearer, Assistant and Deputy Director of Ceremonies.

The DC team are here to provide a service for the Province. Please feel free to ask your duty DC for help and advice in getting the most out of your meetings and celebrations.

On a house keeping notice, please remember to keep your Lodges tyled at all times, particularly at Installations when the Tylers and Inner Guards are changing. CCTV cameras are also not to be used within Lodge Rooms.

The Provincial DC team look forward to coming to your Lodge and spending an evening with you. If I can help you, please contact me on dc@staffordshirefreemason.org.uk

**W. Bro. Jeremy F. Roberts**

Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies

Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies.

