

WITTA'S ISLAND TODAY

Issue 1 - November 2013

ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL SUMMER!

As we are now in October, we can collectively breathe a sigh of relief after a busy and successful summer season for Witta's Island Lodge.

After five well attended and busy meetings, we have accomplished much.

We have initiated a new Brother of the Lodge, Bro. Connor Thornhill. It is always good to keep on bringing in good men of good character and Bro. Connor has fit in straight away.

We have also raised two current members, Bro. Roy Dunphy and Bro. Stephen Hawkins. With their blue aprons and

3rd degree done, they now look forward to next year where they hope to grasp the meaning of the ritual further and get involved more in the activities of the Lodge.

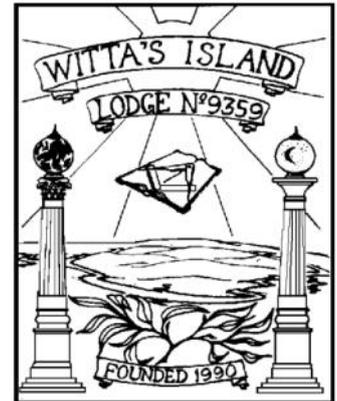
W.Bro Geoff Goodman has completed a second straight year as Master, having conducted in that time, four initiations, two passing's and two raising's. No mean feat!

All of the officers of the Lodge have done extremely well, taking on new positions and doing new ritual for the first time, whilst not forgetting to enjoy it at the same time!

All of this is against the backdrop of challenging times, where we we have lost W.Bro Peter Nelmes to the grand lodge above. We have also lost the services of W.Bro Paul Tweney to work commitments which meant he was unable to continue as Director of Ceremonies. W.Bro Dave Shorten also felt that he couldn't take the office of Master due to severe back pain.

It is due to the dedication and commitment of the officers and members of the Lodge to triumph over adversity, leading to an outstanding year.

Well done all!



SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

• *PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE - 2ND OCTOBER 2013*

• *PROVINCIAL NEWS*

• *THE LEVEL AND SQUARE*

• *IN MEMORIAM - W.BRO PETER NELMES*

• *A WORD FROM OUR WORSHIPFUL MASTER*

• *OUR MAN IN AFGHANISTAN*

• *DATES FOR THE DIARY - INC 'OFFICIAL' WITTA'S ISLAND VISITS TO WEYLAND & GATEWAY LODGES*

• *CHARITY MATTERS*

TIME FOR SOME BLUE SKY THINKING

As previously trailed in the Lodge, we are due to have a Committee meeting in late Autumn, partly as a wrap up meeting, partly as a forward look to next year, but also to ask all members of the lodge to give some thought as to what they want from the Lodge. There are many new Brethren who have

come into the lodge in the past five years with new ideas and thoughts about what they want from Masonry and Witta's Island Lodge in particular. Let's not forget the established Masons and founders who have ideas and experience to add to the mix.

We are talking Lodge

meetings—ritual, proceedings, festive board.

We're also talking about the social side—ladies festivals, Christmas Carols, white table nights, skittles nights, aunt sally etc...

Please get your thinking caps on and do consider what you want from our Lodge.

PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual meeting of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Oxfordshire was held on 2nd October 2013.

For the second year running, it was held at the Kassam Stadium banqueting rooms .

It was also the first year that the Provincial Grand Chapter of Oxfordshire met on the same day as the Craft meeting.

With the two meetings at the same place on the same day, cost savings and hopefully a greater number of Brethren can enjoy a good Masonic day out.

All Master Masons can

attend the Provincial Craft meeting and all Companions of the Royal Arch can attend the Provincial Chapter meeting.

You might ask why should I go or is this for me?

These meetings are for everyone and are very special for a number of reasons. They only happen once a year, it is the largest gathering of Oxfordshire Masons in the Masonic calendar and it recognizes those who for their hard work and dedication are given Provincial honours. It is also a good chance to meet many other masons, hear from

the Provincial Grand Master in his address to the Brethren, and is a good chance for the Lodge to sit together at the Festive board, a great occasion and atmosphere with so many Brethren attending.

This year we had 8 Brethren there this year which was a good turnout, but we could always have more!

Congratulations should go to Excellent Companion Clive Power, who was promoted to Provincial Deputy Grand Director of Ceremonies in Provincial Grand Chapter.



PROVINCIAL APPOINTMENTS

This year's meeting of Provincial Grand Lodge of Oxfordshire gave rise to a number of new senior appointments in the Province.

VW. Bro Nick Howland, Deputy Provincial Grand Master stood down after 25+ years in Provincial roles. The new most senior members of the Province now are:

Deputy Provincial Grand Master - W.Bro Mark Harwood PJGD.

Assistant Provincial Grand Master - W.Bro David Laidlaw PJGD

Provincial Grand Chaplain - W.Bro Philip Purves PDGDC.

Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies - W.Bro Alan Baverstock

Our very own W.Bro Tony Taylor PAGDC was re-appointed Provincial Grand Secretary!

You will all know W.Bro George Goodman (father of our current Master). He was given a very rare honour of being promoted from PPrJGW to PPrSGW!





NEWS FROM THE PROVINCE

Oxford Masonic Centre

The Oxford Masonic Hall Company (OMHC) continue to search for a new home for Oxford Masons. They have looked at over 80 properties and were very close to securing a site at the Oxford Rugby/Football Club, only for it to fall through (through no fault of the OMHC).

It is a difficult task to try to find a new Provincial centre, with new laws allowing offices to be con-

verted to residential use with no planning permission hampering the search.

The new site will no doubt be different from the old one, with reduced spec to acknowledge the amount of masons that usually use the centre.

The OMHC Chairman Keith Mitchell stood down from his position at the AGM and was latterly replaced by Martin Rowe, current Worshipful Master of Round Table

Thames Valley Lodge.

Roy Simmonds remains in charge of the hunt for a new property and it is worth noting that he has been working tirelessly to find somewhere.

The key message is that the OMHC are doing all they can to find a new property. The Provincial Grand Master has also commended the work that has already taken place and hopes that a breakthrough will happen soon!



New Provincial Website!

A new Provincial Website was launched on the day of the Provincial Grand Lodge (2nd Oct).

It is now more user friendly and as I understand it, in time will become customisable for each lodge. It is well worth a look, particularly for the Calendar to find

some meetings to go to during the Winter season.

Go to <http://www.oxfordshirefreemasons.org.uk>

Oxfordshire Masons in the news!

On 28th August, the Oxford Mail published a good

article on Freemasonry in Oxfordshire, including interviews with the PGM and Charity Steward. If you didn't see it, it actu-

ally had the Witta's Island Lodge banner in the paper, although it isn't on the web. Do take a look if you haven't already - [link](#)



Mentoring

The Oxford English Dictionary defines mentor as, 'an inexperienced person's advisor', which perfectly sums up the subject of this program that provides advice and instruction for the inexperienced new member of the Lodge.

Although a Candidate's Proposer may be an ideal person to assume the role of Mentor, he may himself

be a Mason 'Young in the Craft', without the experience to fulfill this role, or a Lodge Officer with little time to spend with his Candidate. It may therefore be an advantage in many cases to have a third party involved, who can focus on the new Brother for the first two or three years of his membership of the Lodge and oversee his Masonic education and introduction to

Freemasonry.

Our Lodge Mentor is W.Bro Geoff Goodman. He will be happy to answer any questions you may have and is there for everyone, not just the more recently initiated Masons.

We should all take responsibility to ensure that we all progress in the Craft and ultimately enjoy it!

OUR MAN IN AFGHANISTAN - BRO. CLINT NEWBURY

As many of you know, I have been working in Kandahar, Afghanistan for the last 2 years as a contractor supporting the military operation that is taking place here.

I am primarily reasonable for the welfare and management of around 2500 multi-national civilian personnel required to assist and support the military operation in Afghanistan. Their skills range from being a simple driver to ex Special Forces and surprisingly not all of them have a military background. Little is known or talked about the number of civilians that actually work out here, but there are more civilians working for the military than there are soldiers deployed here.

Work is hard and conditions are not the best. The temperatures can rise to as high as +50C in the summer and as low as -10C in the winter. From the constant dust in the summer to the wet thick mud in the winter, it's not a place for the homely type.

The grind of day-to-day life here is the biggest contributor to the inordinately high turnover rate of people that work here. There are basically three categories of persons when it comes to working in Afghanistan – those who thrive, those who survive, and those who just have enough and go home. I will let you decide what category I fit into!

Working 12 hours a day, 7 days a week for months on end will most assuredly test a person's intestinal fortitude and at least for some, the relentless schedule is the psychological and emotional equivalency of voluntarily submitting one's self to hard labor in a desert prison.

Paradoxically, for others it is a walk in the park. However, it is not just the work schedule, which sends people running home. Another contributing factor are the sometimes relentless rocket and mortar attacks that seem to come at the most inconvenient times – like, just after you've collapsed into your bed or are just about to eat your dinner. Having to hit the deck for cover, don your body armour then make hast to a shelter can be described as being inconsiderate and in some cases awkward to say the least, especially if you were taking a shower at the time. The almost daily indiscriminate attacks on Kandahar certainly don't discriminate who and what they hit.

Getting around Afghanistan is also a tedious and dangerous task. With no taxi service we have to rely on the military to take us where we need to be. Therefore, you can end up with a seat in the back of an armoured personnel carrier in a convoy or in the back of a helicopter. Either way, it is not a pleasant experience; and the constant threat of being attacked is never far away. At the end of the day we are living on the front line in a war zone and have to expect life to be tough

To sum up what it is like to live and work here consider trying these five simple steps:

1. Move out of your house, taking with you only that which you can put in a backpack or small case.
2. Pitch a tent within a quarter mile (preferably less) of a major airport runway and live there for a month.
3. Go down to the Army-Navy store and get some military compositions (meals ready to eat), and

eat only this during your month long camping expedition. Alternatively, you can walk a mile to an eating establishment, but when you get there make sure you stand outside for at least an hour and a half to get a sense of what it will be like waiting in line at the base dining facilities in Afghanistan.

4. When wanting to take a shower, stand on a wooden pallet; pour bottled water over yourself to wet yourself down, lather and rinse. Make sure you use only two, 2-liter bottles for the entire process. To simulate winter conditions, perform this activity inside a refrigerator.

5. When wanting to wash your clothes, make sure you wait 3 days to wear them after they are washed. Do not separate by colour when washing and use only the cheapest, most abrasive washing detergent available.

There are additional ways of testing yourself, but generally if you can do all of the above without going around the bend and can honestly say, "Please sir! May I have some more?", then you just may be a good candidate to work out here after all. Remember, the work out here is no place for anyone who is easily offended or with delicate sensibilities.

I hope this has given you a small insight into what it is like to live and work out here. It's not a nice place to be but to me it is an experience. I intend to hang up my boots for good next year when I finally come home to be with my wife and friends again. I have missed being able to attending the lodge and look forward to being back very soon!



COURAGE AND DETERMINATION

Since being diagnosed with a brain tumour in 2012, W. Bro Peter Duff has shown a great deal of courage and determination.

He was desperate to continue his Masonic duties and was installed as Worshipful Master of Weyland Lodge in March 2013. On 10 May 2013, he took part in a fundraising event and abseiled 100 feet from the top of the Women's Centre at the John Radcliffe Hospital. This was to raise money for the Cancer Care Fund at the Churchill Hospital, Oxford. W. Bro Pete has been a regular at Wittas Island Lodge this year as part of the Weyland 'Mafia' and was promoted to PPrGStB at Weyland Lodge during a visit by the PGM in an emotional extraordinary investiture in April 2013.

CHARITY MATTERS

Oxford Advocacy

Wittas Island Lodge donated £100 towards a new laptop for Oxfordshire Advocacy in September.

Oxfordshire Advocacy is a registered charity that supports people to say what they want to say, to secure their rights and services and to represent their interests. Their trained staff and volunteers offer a free advocacy service for all adults including older people,

those with dementia, learning difficulties, mental health issues and physical needs.

They were extremely grateful for the donation and would be happy for Brethren to get in touch to hear about the work they do.

Pantomime Project

The Pantomime Project is well on its way to success. Much money has already been raised, but more can be done. It is worth noting

that this is not a one-off project, but will be run every year at a different theatre. If you haven't already, please do think about joining the Pantomime project [raffle](#) - just £1 per week with a chance of winning £25 each week (with a further £10 going to your lodges charity acct). Be part of this great project to give disabled and disadvantaged children the chance of an afternoon out at the Pantomime.



New Provincial Charity Scheme

W. Bro Alan Knowles has been appointed Provincial Grand Charity Steward in the Holy Royal Arch (Chapter) and has given the task of running a mini festival starting August 2014 to November 2018

to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Great War.

All the receipts going to military charities (British Legion, Help for Heroes, SSAFA etc), especially "Care for Casualties",

which looks after members of The Rifles (Oxfordshire's local regiment).

This will be run in both the Royal Arch and Craft.



*"PETER NELMES
CONTRIBUTION
AND HIS
ENTHUSIASM
FORM THE
CORNERSTONE OF
THE LODGE."*

A WORD FROM THE WORSHIPFUL MASTER

The Secretary and I have had several discussions about the need to improve communications with the Lodge, albeit without too much extra effort being placed on to already heavily loaded Secretaries! We talked about an email newsletter being sent to the brethren during our lengthy close season. Indeed as Secretary of the Gateway Lodge I am working on my third edition.

In this first issue Andrew has asked me, as a Founder, and the current Worshipful Master to pen a few words expressing some thoughts about our Lodge.

It must be stated that whilst I am a Founder, I was not a key player in the creation, formation and Consecration of the Lodge. The driving force was W Bro Bob Stokes our Primus Master, and whilst we drew Founders from many Lodges the key players came from the Windrush Lodge and the Gateway Lodge. My connection with Bob Stokes goes back many years. He Initiated me into masonry

in January 1974, when he was Master of the Gateway Lodge

Without wishing to diminish the hard work of many brethren, such as Dave Hutton, Paul Tweney, Tony Taylor and David Carpenter, the stand out member in my personal opinion has been Peter Nelmes. Peter's contribution and his enthusiasm form the cornerstone of the Lodge. We owe him so much, and it is our solemn duty to continue to develop the Lodge as he would wish.

As a summer lodge we are an essential bridge for those who want regular masonry in the summer months. I find that so many visiting brethren enjoy our Masonic evenings during what for them is the close season. Our attendances bear this out. We should encourage this, and the best way is to visit lodges ourselves in the winter months, inviting guests along the way.

An aspect of Witta's Island Lodge, of which I am most proud, is the way that, as a small Lodge, with members often away

on holiday, everyone, including the younger members rally round, all doing there "bit!" It is most essential that this continues.

My last point is I do feel we need to improve the masonic education of our newer members. This will enable them to more fully understand freemasonry, thereby increasing their enjoyment. An active Lodge of Instruction would help, we should however be radical in our approach to ensure that we achieve this in the most effective manner, and I hope to talk to many of you about this in the near future.

In Memoriam - W.Bro Peter Nelmes, PrGSuptWks (9th December 1930 - 17th April 2013)



W.Bro Peter Nelmes was called to the Grand Lodge above on 17th April 2013 at the Sobell House Hospice. He died peacefully after more than a year fighting Cancer.

W.Bro Peter was Initiated into the Windrush Lodge on 11/03/1987, Passed on 08/04/1987 and Raised on 09/09/1987.

W.Bro Peter was Worshipful Master of the Wittas Island Lodge in 1997 and Worshipful Master of the Windrush Lodge in 1999.

W.Bro Peter received his first Provincial Honours in 2002, being given the rank of PPrJGD. In 2008, W.Bro Peter was promoted again to the rank of PrGSuptWks.

He was Worshipful Master in the Windrush Mark Lodge in 2005, where Peter was Secretary for many years and Provincial Tyler.

W.Bro Peter in his younger years was musician of some standing and played in number of local Big Bands. His love of Music was welcomed in the Oxford Gang Show and he spent many hours

writing arrangements for many instruments and played in the orchestra himself. He worked for many years in the building trade for Knowle & Sons. He loved gardening, often taking on other peoples gardens and had a fondness for growing carnations.

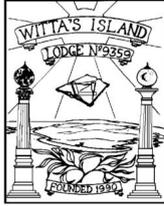
It was in his retirement that he took to Freemasonry and he went on to join many "side" degrees, reaching high office in many. He became Tyler in a number of Lodges and was well known throughout the Province for his Tyler duties. When the Wittas Island Lodge was being formed in the late 80's, W.Bro Peter was very involved in many ways and was "Founder" in all but name, holding office in every year since its Inauguration in 1990 until passed away, where he was still the Secretary of the Lodge.

His Funeral held on the 1st May 2013 and was attended by people from all walks of life whom had known W.Bro Peter over the years. Those who knew W.Bro Peter only had words to

complement him as a much loved and liked individual. There was a large number of Brethren from across the Province, including many from his Lodges, particularly the Windrush Lodge, Wittas Island Lodge and the Windrush Mark Lodge. W.Bro Peter was always available to give of his time most generously, in particular setting up of the recently formed WMC Ltd where he was a board member. Never short of attending any work parties that were set up and always attending numerous committee meetings that are always required in any organisation. W.Bro Peter will be sadly missed both for his wise council and because of who he was, a man that everybody took to their hearts, seen by the huge amount of people that attended his funeral.

The Witney Masonic Centre will not be the same without his presence and he will never be forgotten.

“IN THE MIDST OF OUR SORROW, O LORD GOD, WE PRAISE THEE AS THOU HAST RECEIVED ONE OF OUR LOVED ONES UNTO THY SELF IN GLORY AND FOR ALL ETERNITY. “



WITTA'S ISLAND TODAY

Secretary & Editor

W. Bro Andrew Trueman

E-Mail:

secretarywittaisland@oxfordshiremasons.org

A NEW MASON

Whilst visiting a newly raised brother at home one day, his wife took me to one side and said that her husband had started behaving very strangely since becoming a Master Mason.

I enquired "in what way?"

He locks himself in the toilet for hours on end mumbling to himself with his little blue book.

As the evening proceeded, I turned the talk to lodge, and asked him how he was getting on?

"Oh fine" was his reply.

I asked him about his behaviour and if there was anything wrong?

"No" was his reply.

"So why read the book in the toilet?"

Well he said "it's the only tyled room in the house"

DATES FOR THE DIARY

Witta's Island Lodge Committee Meeting (open to all members on this occasion) - **Mon 2nd December** at Witney Masonic Hall, starting at 7pm (re: blue sky thinking meeting on front page).

Witta's Island Official visit to Weyland Lodge - **16th January** (Initiation) at Bicester Masonic Hall. Please all do try to make it if

you can. You might also be interested in the **12th December** Weyland meeting which is a white table night (wives, partners, family can attend festive board) which will have the traditional Xmas carols with a band!

Witta's Island & Gateway Lodge Christmas Carols Night—**15th December** at the Witney Ma-

sonic Hall. Details to follow.

Witta's Island Lodge Official visit to Gateway Lodge - **24th March 2014** (Initiation). Again, please do all try to make it and support our own WM in his Lodge that have supported us well this year.

Visiting Other Lodges

"Visiting" is undoubtedly a central pillar of Freemasonry. At the simplest level, it is the opportunity to share comradeship, to enjoy each other's company, and as we move from "labour to refreshment" to enjoy the society of the Festive Board.

But of course, visiting another Lodge offers much more than this, it provides opportunities to exchange ideas, to achieve

a better understanding of the ceremony, and to make a fuller, more complete sense of the ritual.

Visiting reinforces those shared experiences that transcend the individual and his Lodge. Visiting helps serve as a guide, in our search for meaning and understanding within our Masonic journey. We are often led by a sense of aesthetics, to explore the linguistic and visual beauty of the ritual, as we

seek out a different perspective to our own Lodge practices.

If you are travelling overseas, plan ahead to visit a lodge during your trip. Contact your Lodge Secretary. He can confirm the Masonic Grand Lodge you plan to visit is "In Accord" with United Grand Lodge of England, and he can provide a letter indicating that you are in good standing.

"Visiting helps serve as a guide, in our search for meaning and understanding within our Masonic journey"