

# WITTA'S ISLAND TODAY

Issue 3 - November 2014

## SUMMER OF 2014

With another summer season over, its always a good time to reflect on what we have achieved?

The answer is thankfully a lot!

To kick things off we received a visit from the then Provincial Grand Master and Assistant Provincial Grand Master for our Installation meeting in April 2014. The latter, W.Bro. David Laidlaw had worked with our Master Elect Bob Swanton for many years in the Fire Service and had insisted on accompanying the PGM to the meeting to see his old colleague installed as

Worshipful Master.

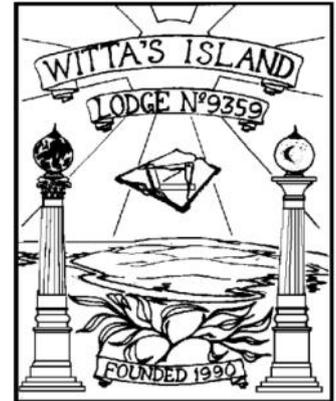
We for the first time in a long time initiated 3 new members! Not only that but we had 2 new joining members, bringing the total new membership up to 5 for 2014!

The number of initiates is particularly pleasing, with two coming in directly via current, and more importantly recent new members, proving a happy new membership can quickly bring in further candidates. Another candidate came via the internet. This is a relatively new and welcome phenomenon. Those that approach the Province

on their own initiative are clearly inspired enough to find out more and he has certainly proved to be a great addition to the Lodge!

One of our Brethren reached his 50th year in Freemasonry - W.Bro. Alan Braden PAGDC, who subsequently received a 50 years certificate presented to him by the PGM at the Oxfordshire Lodge of Installed Masters in September.

We also successfully re-established the Witta's Island Summer BBQ, incorporating a vintage Tea resulting in burgers and cakes for all!



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## WINTER IS COMING!

With the summer over, we go into our 'dark months' with the Lodge not meeting until April 2015. We have made some effort in recent years to work on ways to bring our members together during this time.

Visiting is a key to this, with a focus on those Lodges who have supported us most. This therefore leads us once

again to Gateway Lodge (our mother lodge) and Weyland Lodge, both of which were represented in impressive numbers throughout the summer.

We hope to get good numbers going to each!

We have the traditional Witta's Island and Gateway Lodge Christmas Carol evening on 21st December 2014 for Brethren, friends and

family.

Our Worshipful Master has also decided on a Ladies Festival with a 1940s theme (see p.5).

Brethren who want to work at their ritual have a standing invitation to attend the Gateway Lodge LOI, who work the same ritual - Ritus Oxoniensis.

### PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE OF OXFORDSHIRE

At a special meeting held on 12 September 2014 at the Kassam Stadium, V. Worshipful Bro. David Williamson (Past Assistant Grand Master) presided over the installation of the new Provincial Grand Master of Oxfordshire W. Bro. James Hilditch. The new PGM went on to install W. Bro. Neal

Spencer as Deputy Provincial Grand Master and W. Bro. Alan Knowles as Assistant Provincial Grand Master.

This was followed three weeks later on 1 October by the annual meeting of Provincial Grand Lodge of Oxfordshire, at which the new

PGM appointed his new Provincial officers for the year.

Witta's Island was well represented. Whilst it is a meeting of the Provincial Grand Lodge, all Master Masons can attend and is a great occasion to attend.

### PROVINCIAL APPOINTMENTS



**E. Comp. Anthony Taylor**  
Provincial Scribe Nehemiah

*Left:* Our very own **W. Bro. Tony Taylor** stepped down as Provincial Grand Secretary after 7 years in the job! W. Bro. Tony was rewarded with a Provincial promotions in Craft to Past Provincial Senior Grand Warden (PPrSGW) and in Chapter to Provincial Grand Scribe Nehemiah!

*Right:* Our Director of Ceremonies **W. Bro. Dave Carpenter** was honoured for all his hard work in both Windrush Lodge and Witta's Island, not to mention the Witney Masonic Centre Ltd with promotion to *active* Provincial Junior Grand Warden (PrJGW)!



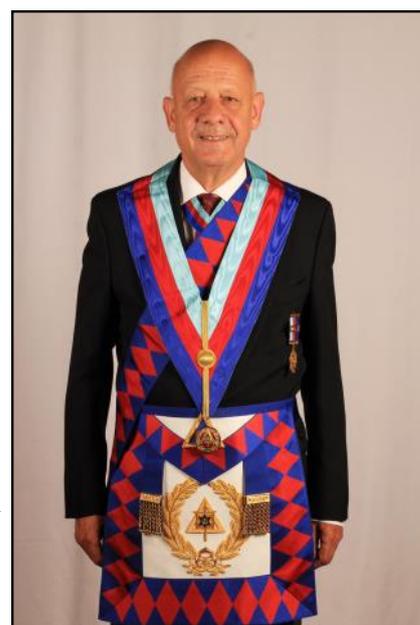
**W. Bro. David Carpenter PrJGW**



**W. Bro. Malcolm Bennett PPrJGD**

*Left:* Our Treasurer **W. Bro. Malcolm Bennett** has received his first promotion to the rank of Past Provincial Junior Grand Deacon (PPrJGD)!

*Right:* Our Immediate Past Master **W. Bro. Geoff Goodman** has been recognised by Supreme Grand Chapter and was promoted to the rank of Past Grand Standard Bearer at the Royal Arch Annual Investiture at Great Queen Street on 1 May 2014.



**E. Comp. Geoff Goodman PGSB**

## PGM'S ADDRESS (EXCERPT)

“Brethren, as a province, we have a number of challenges facing us and I am sure that I do not need to list them all out now, but I do want to offer my perspective on some and how we might start to address them.

The sale of 333 Banbury Road was a real loss to the province. However, we cannot turn the clock back, so we must look to the future. The Board of the Oxford Masonic Hall Company is working very hard at finding a new location. I am fully supportive of what they are doing and believe that in due time they will be successful in finding an appropriate site for a new temple.

Recruitment of new members, as well as retention of our existing base, is an important challenge not just for Oxfordshire masons, but across the country. As I announced at my installation on 12 September, I have asked my Deputy to lead in this area and he has already started work. It is early days yet, but he already has a small team with appropriate expertise, that will help us raise awareness of and promote Freemasonry in the wider community. For example, we are looking at publicity material and banners that Lodges or Centres could use for Open Days or at local Fetes. We will look at how we can use technology to support and drive this forward, in particular our use of the internet and social media. The team is small at present and there is room for more volunteers.

The Province will do all it can to help and support, but the real impetus has to come from individual Lodges and members. No lodge can afford to be complacent these days. Even those lodges with a healthy membership and steady stream of candidates must continue to consider how they will move forward and refresh the membership base over time. I am therefore asking every Lodge committee to have a regular discussion on membership and to set themselves an appropriate target. As a minimum, I would hope that every Lodge would look to increase its membership by at least a net 1 per year, and

to reduce its average age, but I am sure that some will be bolder and more ambitious than this.

The discussion on membership will be far reaching and there is no easy answer. However, without an open debate, Lodges will not evolve to meet the changing environment and will not survive. The provincial team can help to facilitate such a discussion if you wish. We will also help share potential solutions across the province (and indeed from other provinces) and where appropriate work with all the Lodges in a centre, for example on an open day.

An important driver of success is enjoyment. We have to remember that Freemasonry is a hobby and like all hobbies we will only participate if we get something out of it. It cannot be a chore. We all enjoy different things in life and masonry is no different. Some enjoy good ritual, others really value the dining. Friendship and good company is also important. Without some or all of these, we will choose not to turn up, but instead stay at home. So we need to ask ourselves, how do we make the evening an enjoyable and attractive experience so that members want to turn up and also want to invite guests?

One area that raises strong views is ritual and I have already been asked on a number of occasions for my views on the need to learn ritual. The ProGM set out very clearly his views at the June meeting of Grand Lodge and if you want the party line, I would refer you to that. I am perhaps a bit more sympathetic to the challenges that working life brings in terms of having time to learn great chunks of ritual. But I will offer the following thoughts. It is preferable for ritual to be learnt rather than read. But a well delivered ceremony is better for all present, especially the candidate, than one that is constantly interrupted by prompting and pauses. A well delivered ceremony needs preparation. Attendance at rehearsal or Lodge of Instruction is crucial so you understand how the ritual fits together. Consider farming bits of ritual out so

that you can learn and deliver a small bit well. It will also help retention if more are involved in the ceremony. Learning the ritual helps to understand its meaning and when you understand it, you will deliver it better. And finally, if you do have to read it, preparation is still crucial. Make sure you have read it a good number of times before the meeting – understand where the pauses are, practice the difficult words and practice reading it out aloud, perhaps to another member of the Lodge.

Development and succession planning is another important challenge at both provincial and lodge level. My own letter of appointment clearly says that one of my most important tasks is to identify my potential successor, and indeed on an annual basis I have to name three potential successors. I have asked my own team to consider their successors as well. The same should apply at Lodge level to those key executive officers – Secretary, Treasurer, and DC, but also Almoner, Charity Steward and Mentor. These are important offices and I have often seen a Lodge fail where one person has held onto office for too long. We can all find valid reasons for not changing, but I would ask every Lodge to ensure that no-one holds office for more than ten years, and ideally changes should be made sooner than that. To do so means that you need to identify and train your successors early on, so that they are not too daunted by the prospect of stepping into your shoes. I also hope that this will help the process of retention.

I see the Light Blues Club as filling a crucial role, and having attended one of their meetings earlier this summer, I have seen at first hand the passion they have for masonry and desire that it should continue to flourish. I am fully supportive of what they want to achieve, and would ask the Dark Blues to give them their chance.

We will continue to work on other areas and in due time look for your support”.



## A WORD FROM THE WORSHIPFUL MASTER

“Next year will be another busy year with a second and a number of third degree ceremonies to perform ensuring that our lodge continues to flourish.”



I hope you have all had a wonderful summer and enjoyed the meetings this year.

I was told at my installation that the year would go by quickly but it only seems like a few moments in time and here we are heading into the winter months with a very busy year already behind us.

I was very lucky to have new candidates this year with Tom, Sean and Paul going through allowing me to do two firsts and a double second which I thoroughly enjoyed before heading off on holiday with the Provincial Grand Secretary so a big thank-you to Geoff Goodman for standing in.

We held a very successful summer Vintage tea party

and BBQ where 65 people attended and allowed us all to get together on a social occasion which we hope to keep doing in the future.

My ladies night is booked at the Witney Masonic Hall for 28<sup>th</sup> March 2015 where we will again have a 1940's style dinner with cabaret so please do put this date in your diaries.

I intend to get out visiting during the coming months so please come along where possible as Andrew, our secretary, will keep you informed of any Witta's Island group visits.

I am very much looking forward to installing W.Bro. Martin McBride in to the chair at our installation

meeting in April 2015 when I am sure you will give him the same wonderful support that I have received this last year .

Next year will be another busy year with a second and a number of third degree ceremonies to perform ensuring that our lodge continues to flourish.

Our next big event will be the Christmas Carol night on 21st December 2014 at the Witney Masonic Hall which is always great fun for family and friends and I look forward to seeing as many of you as can make it there.

Yours fraternally

*W.Bro. Bob Swanton*



W.Bro. Bob Swanton on the night of his Installation (17 April 2014) with his Proposer W.Bro. Dave Shorten PPrAGDC (right) and Seconder W.Bro. John Tweney PPrGSwdB (left)



WITTA'S ISLAND LODGE No. 9359

*The Worshipful Master and His Lady  
Bob and Jo Swanton cordially invite Brethren, Family and  
Friends to attend:*

***1940's Vintage Ladies Evening Festival  
on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> March, 2015***

*To be held at The Masonic Hall, Witney  
6.30pm Arrival for 7pm Sit Down to Dinner*

***A fabulous evening with live entertainment from  
the talented and beautiful all-engaging  
singer Lola Lamour  
with four course meal served with wine***

***Tickets: Adults Only £35 p.p.***  
*(Limited Tickets, So Please Book Early to Avoid Disappointment)*

***Vintage Menu:***

*Paté*

*Beef Stew and Dumplings  
with Dig for Victory  
Vegetables*

*Jam Roly-Poly and Custard  
Cheese served with Port*



## THE MARATHON MAN - BRO. ROYSTON WILLIAMS

After being inspired by our Charity Steward, Brother Don, I was reminded of one of the keystones of Freemasonry is charity. I then asked myself what could I do personally to fulfill my obligation as a Mason in raising monies for one of charities being supported this year by Grand Lodge.

Being a father of three children, I decided on the charity 'Life Lites' – this is an organization that empowers 9,000 children and young people in hospices with life-limiting, life-threatening illnesses and disabling conditions using assistive and inclusive technologies to create, communicate and take control.

Now in my early forties I had been concerned with how much weight I had gained over the years so during the course of 2013/2014 I decided to go on a diet. Now being two stone less enabled me to run a half marathon and a number of 10k runs earlier on this year, so feeling fitter than I ever had before I thought it would be a good idea to do a marathon.

I looked online and earmarked the Wolverhampton Marathon which was taking place on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2014, this gave me six weeks to do some serious training. The day of the race came surprisingly quickly and whilst standing on the start line, I asked the question 'What the hell am I doing here' but fortunately the horn sounded the start of the race so now there was no going back.

Everything went well during the race until I reached seventeen miles when I felt searing pain in my right knee. I knew I couldn't give up as I

would be letting not only myself down but the many people who had kindly sponsored me so I decided to hobble the remaining nine miles. I managed to get to a St John's Ambulance station where some very nice people gave me some paracetamol to help with the pain. Thankfully after about a mile my knee felt so much better and I was able start running again. I took a lot of inspiration from a very supportive crowd who supplied me with jelly babies and I managed to complete the marathon in a respectable time of 3hr.58 mins.

Without a shadow of doubt this was the hardest thing that I have ever

done with such a roller coaster ride of emotions from the feeling of despair to jubilation. It must be said that I have been overwhelmed with the level of support and donations made from friends, family and brethren alike. When I initially spoke to Brother Don about doing an event like this I said that if I could raise £250 I would be over the moon but at the last count people had donated a staggering £472.

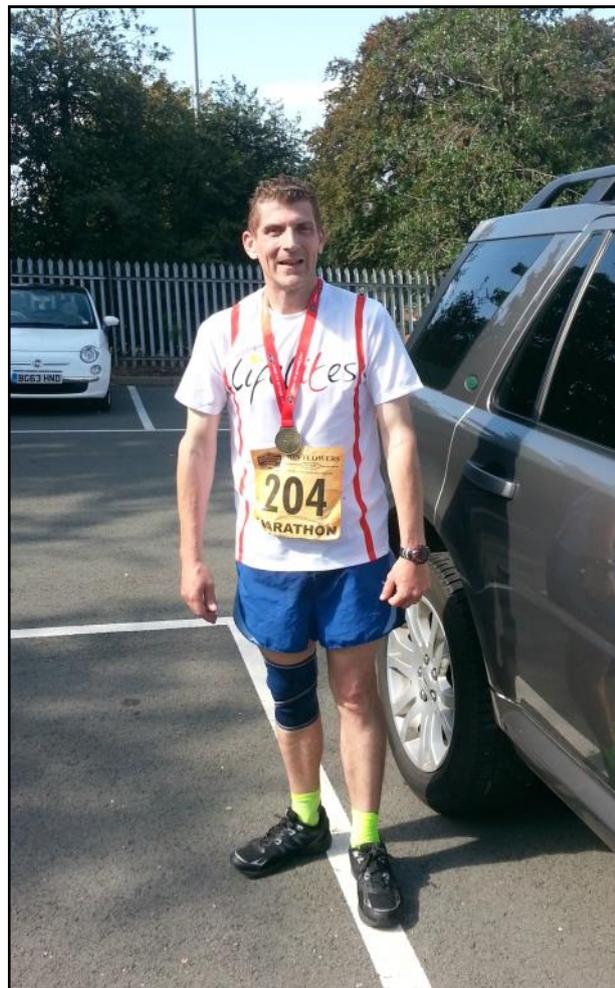
I know that this money will do so much good but if anybody would like to donate anymore please go to the following web-link:

[www.justgiving.com/Royston-Williams](http://www.justgiving.com/Royston-Williams)

For more information on Lifelites go to [www.lifelites.org](http://www.lifelites.org)

  
Giving kids with limited life unlimited possibilities

*Bro. Royston Williams*



## FOREIGN VISITORS

On 15 August 2014, the Wittas Island Lodge was honoured to receive a visit from Brethren from Denmark and Germany. All four were friends and had decided to visit the UK and attend a Masonic

meeting. Considering the time of year, Wittas Island seemed a good fit and we welcomed them into our Lodge.

It is always special to have visitors and we are usually blessed with

receiving many, but having visitors from overseas makes you realise the global and universal nature of Freemasonry. They presented gifts and spoke of their delight to experience an English Lodge meeting!



**Top:** W.Bro. Alan Braden, W.Bro. Philip Purves, W.Bro. Martin McBride, W.Bro. Geoff Goodman, W.Bro. Keith Herring, W.Bro. Alan Knowles

**Bottom:** Bro. Adam Elmholt (Grand National Lodge of Freemasons of Germany) & Bros. Claes Olsen, Morten Boserup, Jan Fomsgaard (Danish Order of Freemasons)



**Left:** Coat of arms of the Danish Order of Freemasons. The crown in the top of the coat of arms is used with permission by King Frederick VII of Denmark, who was a member of the Danish Order of Freemasons.

**Right:** Logo of the Grand National Lodge of Freemasons of Germany





## WITTA'S ISLAND TODAY

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### Dates for the Diary

**Witta's Island Lodge Official visit to Gateway Lodge** - 24th November 2014 (Initiation). We will have 21 members of Witta's Island in attendance (2 members of both)!

**Windrush Christmas Cabaret** - 20th December 2014 at the Witney Masonic Hall. Las Vegas Style Entertainment plus Hot Buffet Supper Cabaret Featuring Alvin Printwhistle "Elvis is in the Building" and Mark Haddock "Songs from the Las Vegas Strip"

**Witta's Island & Gateway Lodge Christmas Carols Night** - 21st December 2014 at the Witney Masonic Hall. Details to follow.

**Witta's Island Official visit to Weyland Lodge** - 15th January 2015 (Initiation) at Bicester Masonic Hall.

**Witta's Island new Winter Lodge of Instruction** at the Witney Masonic Hall - 20<sup>th</sup> January, 24<sup>th</sup> February & 24<sup>th</sup> March 2015.

**Witta's Island Lodge Ladies Festival** - 28th March 2015 - 1940's Vintage Ladies Evening Festival at the Witney Masonic Hall.

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## OFFICERS OF THE LODGE — AN ALTERNATIVE VIEW

### **The Worshipful Master**

Leaps tall buildings in a single bound, Is more powerful than an Intercity Express, Is faster than a speeding bullet, Walks on water. Gives policy to God.

### **The Senior Warden**

Leaps short buildings with a single bound, Is more powerful than a goods train. Is just as fast as a speeding bullet, Walks on the water if the sea is calm. Talks with God.

### **The Junior Warden**

Leaps short buildings with a running start and a favourable wind. Is almost as powerful as a goods train. Is faster than a speeding airgun pellet. Walks on water of a swimming pool. Talks with God if special dispensation is given.

### **The Senior Deacon**

Barely clears a garden hut. Loses a tug-of-war with a train. Can fire a speeding bullet. Swims well. Is occasionally addressed by God.

### **The Junior Deacon**

Makes high marks on the wall when trying to leap buildings. Is run over by trains. Can sometimes handle a gun without inflicting self-injury, Doggie paddles, Talks with the animals.

### **The Inner Guard**

Runs into buildings. Recognizes trains two out of three times. Is not issued ammunition, Can stay afloat with a life vest. Talks to walls.

### **The Steward**

Falls over doorsteps when trying to enter buildings. Says "Look at the choo choo's" Wets himself with a water pistol. Plays in mud puddles, Mumbles to himself.

### **The Secretary**

Lifts buildings and walks under them. Kicks trains off the tracks. Catches speeding bullets in his mouth and eats them, Freezes water with a single glance. *He is God!*