

The quarterly newsletter
of the District Grand
Lodge of the South Island

DEGREES SOUTH



NOVEMBER 2014

DISTRICT GRAND MASTER'S MESSAGE

Fraternal greetings to all Brethren and their families.

Well, Christmas seems to be coming faster every year and another festive season is just around the corner. This has been a very busy year and looks as though it will only get busier over the next six weeks.

Shortly Bev and I take off for Hong Kong to attend the District Grand Masters Conference and the installation of the new District Grand Master/Grand Superintendent - Brother Vivian Lee.

It should prove to be an interesting trip as I have been asked to fulfil the role of Grand Junior Warden and Second Grand Principal for the two ceremonies.

Whilst there I will be discussing with the Pro Grand Master and the Grand Secretary the arrangements for the Tercentenary in 2017. I have had an e-mail from the Grand Secretary's secretary Mrs Louise Watts with some notes as to the proposed format for the meeting. I can tell you that the meeting itself will be on October 31st at the Albert Hall in London. Apparently the hall will be able to cater for 5,800 Freemasons and their wives/partners however the following banquet will only be able to cater for about half that number.

It has been intimated that we should be doing something ourselves here in the South Island to mark this important occasion as well as the tentative plans to go to the U.K. We will be looking at this in the New Year and as is usual with these occasions we will need to form a working body to start to co-ordinate the planning.

Since our last newsletter there have been a number of Installation meetings and I take this opportunity to wish all the incoming Wor. Masters and their Officers all the very best for the forthcoming term of office. Worshipful Masters, during your term I would like to reiterate the words of the Pro Grand Master re the reading of ritual - something we should try to avoid as much as possible. Remember, ritual is a way of giving a favourable impression to a candidate but more importantly, it is a way of improving yourself.

Brethren, our Degrees South Editor is about to embark on an overseas sojourn. Richard, good luck to you and Elaine on your travels but come back to us as soon as you can. Brethren, I take this opportunity along with Bev to wish you and yours all the very best for Christmas and the New Year. If you are travelling please drive carefully and take care of each other.

Fraternally yours
Geoffrey W Rowe

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IMPORTANT DATES

- **Wednesday February 4th - Pacific Lodge of Hokitika Installation**
- **Thursday 5th March - Canterbury Lodge Installation**
- **Monday March 9th - Lazar Lodge Installation**
- **Wednesday 11th March - Conyers Lodge Installation**

WIDOW'S SONS ON TOUR 2015

In 2011 a group of Master Masons, mainly from the upper part of the South Island and who were motorcycling enthusiasts, formed the New Zealand Chapter of the Widows' Sons.

The original formation of the group emanated from the United States and now there are over a hundred chapters worldwide.

Since 2011 the NZ Chapter has travelled together to numerous Lodge meetings, including Installations, held regular meetings with its members and has been attracting new members to the Chapter.

In early 2015 the Chapter plans to hold a countrywide motorcycle ride with the intention of raising money for charity, raising the profile of Freemasonry within New Zealand and to raise the awareness of the Widows' Sons in New Zealand.

The country wide motorcycle ride will travel

around both islands to visit Lodges in the various towns and the purpose of this article is to inform those Lodges within our district of the tour and invite them to host a visit by the Chapter. Lodges interested in the project should contact the coordinator, Bro Jackie Adams whose e-mail is Jackie@wrc.govt.nz or telephone 021 1907741.

Bob Day, Chapter Secretary



THOUGHTS FROM THE DIST. GRAND MENTOR

Having been District Grand Mentor for some nearly four years now and a similar time as my Lodge Mentor it occurred to me a while back that to get an insight into how we undertake our mentoring perhaps we should look at why we now find a need to mentor whereas in the past we didn't, well, not overtly. I decided to do some research by asking the more senior members of both my and other Lodges as to the Masonic culture prevailing when they were young Freemasons and why it was felt that a specific mentoring role was not required then. The outcome was both interesting and fascinating.

I am going to ask the more senior brethren, who I hope will be reading this, to cast your mind back to the most recent boom times in Freemasonry – the 1950's, 60's and 70's – and the less experienced brethren to bear with me and try and follow my drift.

These three decades and maybe a bit of the 80's delivered to Freemasonry candidates that were more open to a brotherhood such as ours. Why? There were the returned services, young men who had served in the army, navy and air force who being demobbed found in Freemasonry a synergy with that they had experienced in being part of a military brotherhood where camaraderie and discipline, loyalty and honour were prevalent. Separately the public attitude towards Freemasonry was different, for although the public at large probably knew less about our institution than they do today they had a respect for an organisation that gave back to the community. And separate to all that there was generally more free leisure time if for no other reason than initially television and latterly information technology had yet to take off. There was more job security then with working hours more set than they are today.

During these times Lodges would enjoy high membership. My own Lodge here in Nelson, Southern Star, would regularly have 70, 80, 100+ at a meeting with the refectory, which then was more of a 'festive board', going on to the early hours of the morning. If there weren't queues at the Lodge door then there was certainly no lack of applicants who wanted to join resulting in the first to the third degree generally taking 18 months to 2 years to achieve. Back in England it took me 20 months from application to my third degree and that's with my second being a double. To become a Lodge Steward was not a certainty either. For thirty years after WW2 Southern Star averaged five initiates and three joining members per year; allowing for resignations and deaths the chances of a new member progressing to Master was, at best, probably 1 in 4. It was a competition to

join the Steward's club perhaps taking 2 to 4 years to achieve, and to progress from there you were expected to have learned the majority, preferably all, of the major charges. (I wonder how many of us today know all the major charges, even those of us who consider ourselves experienced? I don't!). Running alongside all that was the Lodge of Instruction where we were all learning the parts we hoped would come but in a manner that closely reflected what actually took place on a Lodge night. And running alongside all of that were our peers who we could bounce off all our queries and of course, our Proposers and Seconders who were always there with words of Masonic wisdom if we needed them. So, all of the above before even becoming an Inner Guard. Inner Guard was only attained if you were thought to be worthy. Once you were an officer of the Lodge there was still no guarantee that you could make it to the 'Chair', if you did not perform to the exacting demands, in either ritual or demeanour, then you just were not allowed to get there. It was not unknown to not get beyond Junior Warden.

So Freemasonry was a buyer's market and regrettably, in many instances, this led to Freemasonry becoming an elitist institution with some degree of arrogance developing as a result especially in respect of non-masons. Few cared if some fell by the wayside.

Then times changed.

Most nations drastically reduced their commitment to the armed services. We then had the advent of worldwide information sharing and communication: TV, satellite, faxes, mobiles, computers, the Internet and all the technology that went (goes) with it. Jobs became less secure, the computer could do what 10 men could do before, one robot could replace an entire assembly line. Men and women had to develop new jobs, skills and/or work longer hours. Free time became a premium and indeed what leisure time that might be available outside of sport or hobby was spent 'surfing the web'. All of this contributed to the fall off of Masonic membership but, alas, they were not the only reasons.

(Part 2 will follow in the next Issue)

“Once you were an officer of the Lodge there was still no guarantee that you could make it to the ‘Chair’, if you did not perform to the exacting demands”



FROM THE ASSISTANT DIST. GRAND MASTER

Greetings Brethren, from the Top of the South. I thought I should let you into another part of my world other than Freemasonry. I mean Amateur Radio. (Ham Radio)

I was licenced at a very early age due to my inquisitive nature about a very large Sea Chest belonging to my Father. He having been a Radio Officer in the New Zealand Shipping Company during the second world war and prior to that an Radio Amateur, also at a very early age. As you can imagine that large grey Sea Chest had very many goodies that got my young brain working. As my interest grew so did my father's become rekindled. To cut a long story short, I gained my first licence and call sign in the UK at the age of 15. I continued with this hobby throughout my service career with the Royal Air Force which allowed me to operate in many different countries throughout the World. I have continued to do so after retiring from the service and settling back home here in New Zealand where I have also joined into the fraternity of Freemasonry, taking the advice given by my Grandfather just prior to his death. I have been interested to see if there is a relationship between Amateur Radio and Freemasonry and on searching the internet and Amateur Radio sites this is what I have found.

"There are many ways to have Masonic communication, some well-known and some not. One of the ways that is not as well-known is participation through amateur 'ham' radio. Ham radio has been in existence since the early '20's, with many Masonic hams regularly active on the air.

How does ham radio interact with Freemasonry? What do hams that are Masons do on the air? Virtually anything that isn't esoteric would be discussed on the air. Subjects range from simple Brother-to-Brother conversation, to whatever the current topic of interest is at the moment. What's happening in their families, the weather, what's

happening at Lodge, or setting up a schedule to meet personally at an upcoming convention—it's nothing different than one would cover in normal face-to-face conversation, except that this is over the air, and the distances between those talking might be across the country, or perhaps on a different continent. Or perhaps, just informing a Brother, who might be away for the winter as to what is happening at the local lodge level. Subjects cover virtually anything that you would talk about with a Brother—weather, holiday plans, lodge visitations, potential candidates, how proficiency study is coming along. You name it, it's discussed.

What is required to get a license? For entry level licenses, even the Morse code is no longer required. However, most communication (fraternal or otherwise) is conducted on frequencies for which some code proficiency remains in force (due to international regulations to which many countries are signatory participants). There are several license grades and each country have their own requirements to follow, New Zealand has its own regulatory society the NZART, where information on becoming a Radio Amateur can be gained."

For more information on this subject please don't hesitate to contact me.

Wor Bro Dave Stenning, ADGM (ZL2CX)



'Radio Shack' of ZL2CX.

"There are many ways to have Masonic communication, some well-known and some not."

FASTEST FREEMASON ON WATER?



Many of you may be unaware of W Bro Graeme Gibbons' illustrious career racing power boats. Graeme has sent in some photographs of the four boats that he raced over the years and in this issue I have reproduced a picture of the first of those boats, MarJac, which was raced from 1975–80. This boat was capable of reaching speeds in excess of 70 mph (110km/hr) and is pictured here on Lake Kaniere in 1979. A picture of Graeme's second boat will appear next issue.

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Degrees South Deadlines:

There will be no February edition
April 30th for the May edition
July 31st for the August edition
Oct 31st for the November edition

SLIGHT CHANGE OF PLAN

Your Editor has succumbed to the incredible charm of the wonderful town of Geraldine, yet again, and has spent the Aussie motorhome money on a new house here instead. Consequently our year long sojourn over there has had to be trimmed and we'll now return in April. This means that by missing out on the February issue we can get by without pressing into service a new editor. **So we wish you all a very Merry Christmas and look forward to our return in April.**

W BRO JOHN CHARLES "CHARLIE" COTTON

It is with much sadness that we hear of the passing to the Grand Lodge above of Wor. Bro. John Charles Cotton, Past D.S.G.W, and P.M. (1975 and 1985) of Greymouth Lodge 1233

Charlie as he was always known to brethren was born 10th November 1917...97 years ago this month. At age 44 years, a Mine Deputy, he was initiated into 1233 E.C., 6th March 1962, 52 years ago. He was a great family man, remarried Zena after his first wife died. Great supporter of local Cancer Society, took up swimming in later life. He received his 50 year badge in February last year. He had been Treasurer, then Chaplain over many past years. He was most highly respected by all who knew him, a great ritualist and member of not only 1233 but other orders, a 32° mason.

Ceased Labour 2nd October 2014.

Aged 97

ODE TO GREYMOUTH

BY BOB (RABBIE) FRAME

We left West Melton Friday
Heading for the Coast
To meet up with the Masons there
To share a little toast

The trip was uneventful...
'Till we got into the bus,
Now Bruce has got some more grey
hairs,
And all because of us!

The atmosphere upon the bus
Was the best I've ever seen,
Singing, raffles, stories,
Everyone good and keen.

We soon arrived in Greymouth
The bus was left behind
The ladies all excited,
Bargains they could find.

The Installation at Shanty Town,
The reason we Masons were there,
Was performed with the utmost dignity,
A new Master in the chair.

With all four Constitutions there,
It surely was one of the best,
To Greymouth Lodge congratulations!
You certainly passed the test.

We all had us a great time
And Greymouth now I fear
Will never be the same again
Until we're back next year!

*(Bob is a member of the Methven
Lodge (NZ) but nevertheless managed
to stowaway on the bus without being
noticed - Ed.)*

FOR THE CLOSING OF A LODGE

With the closing of the Volume and the opening of a door,
Think not this Lodge has ended, think what has gone before.
Remember all those worthy men who as apprentice came,
And who developed love and skill and worked in friendship's name.
When you take up the Working Tools to gently put aside,
Think not their work has ended, think how they were applied.
Remember well the lessons taught, to craftsmen tried and true,
Of Masons worthy of the name and apron, white and blue.
When your Tracing Boards are covered and the Columns laid at rest,
Think not their teaching ended, think more a message blessed.
Recall the special meaning to Master Masons all,
Of birth and life and learning and waiting for the call.
With the sounding of the gavel as the lights at last go out
Think not your Lodge has ended, dispel all lingering doubt,
Master, Wardens, Brethren, recall as you depart,
Your Lodge will live forever in every Mason's heart.

*Written by J.M.Kelly for the final meeting of Torrens Park Lodge #112 South Australian
Constitution who surrendered their Warrant on 9th February 2000. (Thanks to Rex Lucas)*

W BRO DAVID GEOFFREY DAVIES

W Bro G.J. Gibbons recently received a phone call from David Davies who said "You may remember my father Geoffrey Davies who visited your Lodge several times during the years I was at the Motueka Aviation School". David went on to say that he had phoned to let us know that his father had passed away on the 23rd September, aged 84 years and when going through his possessions he and his family came across records of his visits to Southern Star and the District of the South Island which he loved so much. More details from W Bro Gibbons

Ceased Labour 23rd September 2014.

WOR BRO BILL SCOTT

Past member of Southern Star Lodge

Ceased Labour 18th October 2014.

Aged 90

CHARITABLE GREYMOUTH

As is the custom each year Greymouth Lodge makes charitable donations to local organisations on the West Coast.

Since its Charitable Trust was established 20 years ago, it has given out just over \$250,000.

This year grants have been made to Greymouth Municipal Band \$2000 (their band rooms were destroyed by tornado), Autism N.Z. West Coast branch \$2000. St. John Ambulance Greymouth, West Coast Cancer Society, SPCA Greymouth, Shantytown, CARE (Care Alternative Resources for the Elderly) all \$1500 each.

Hokitika Primary School and All Saints Church Hokitika each \$750. An additional \$500 was added to Cancer Society grant in the memory of Charlie Cotton.