

## **PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE OF SOUTH WALES**

### **MINUTES OF PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE COMMITTEE HELD AT BARRY ON FRIDAY 9th MAY 2014 AT 6.00PM**

#### **PRESENT:**

R.W.Bro. G. Jones, OBE	Provincial Grand Master
V.W.Bro. H. E. R. Woodward	Deputy Provincial Grand Master
W.Bro. P. R. Marshall, OBE	Assistant Provincial Grand Master
W.Bro. Rev. A. E. J. Swinford	Assistant Provincial Grand Master
W.Bro. D. G. Rowbottom	Assistant Provincial Grand Master
W.Bro. W.E. Jenkins	Assistant Provincial Grand Master
V.W.Bro. P. Frost	Past Deputy Provincial Grand Master

Also 23 Acting Provincial Grand Officers, 37 Grand Officers, 6 members of the General Purposes Committee and 149 Masters and Past Masters representing Lodges; W.Bro. D. C. Davies, PPrJGW, Lodge No. 3769; W. Bro. S. C. E Harries, PPrAGR, Lodge No. 8752; W.Bro. R. Jones, Lodge No. 3769 and W. Bro. E. M. Jones, Lodge No. 679.

Valid signatures were not appended to the attendance sheets in respect of the following Lodges, who are therefore deemed not to have been represented: 36, 2357, 3977, 4026, 4113, 4213, 5257, 5461, 5823, 5857, 6112, 6265, 6700, 6973, 7092, 7194, 7196, 7528, 8418, 8599, 8601, 8625, 8713, 8757, 8771, and 9038.

#### **IN MEMORIAM**

The R.W. Provincial Grand Master referred to the 73 Members of Provincial Grand Lodge who had been called to the Grand Lodge Above during the past year, among whose number were Grand Officers, W.Bro. Jeffrey P Thomas, PSGD; W. Bro. William J. Northway, PJGD; W.Bro. J. Arthur Cowley, PAGDC; W. Bro. John I. Brown, PAGDC; W. Bro. Walter Hammond, PAGDC; W. Bro. Robert W. Lee, PAGDC; W. Bro. Normand H. Bullock, PAGDC; W. Bro Paul L Botfield, PAGDC; and W. Bro. Anthony R. Ough, PAGDC. A full list would appear in the 2013-14 Provincial Yearbook. The Brethren stood to order as a mark of their respect for departed merit.

#### **CONGRATULATIONS**

The R.W. Provincial Grand Master warmly congratulated those Brethren who had recently been Appointed and Promoted in Grand Lodge and Supreme Grand Chapter.

#### **PROVINCIAL GRAND TREASURER'S REPORT**

The Provincial Grand Treasurer, W.Bro. John Child, FCA, DL, reported that Accounts to 31st March 2014 had been completed and submitted to the Auditor. The draft Accounts, despite the ad hoc expenditure of the Installation of the PGM, showed a surplus of income over expenditure of £4,097. The Treasurer thanked the Staff and volunteers at the Provincial Office for their assistance in preparing the Accounts and for their support throughout the year. The fully audited Accounts would be presented for approval at Provincial Grand Lodge on 30th June 2014.

#### **PROVINCIAL GRAND REGISTRAR'S REPORT**

The Provincial Grand Registrar, W.Bro. Richard Jasinski, being absent, the Provincial Grand Secretary presented his Report as follows:

"The Province began 2013 with 167 Lodges and ended it with two fewer – 165. Despite having fewer Lodges the average number of members per Lodge has also reduced from 44.1 in 2012 to 43.9 in 2013. Traditionally this Report has referred to the number of memberships, but to avoid duplication I have this year concentrated on the number of members. This year saw a continuation of the decline prevalent in recent years. Overall there was a reduction of 3.4% to 5994 members, compared with a 2.7% decline in 2012. There was a minimal decline in the number of Initiations, 228 compared to 232 in the previous year, and there were also 129 Joining or Rejoining Members. However the striking facts were that resignations rose 12.4% compared

with 2012, deaths increased by 42.8%, from 70 to 100, whilst Exclusions and Cessations dropped by 41.6%. Currently the average age of an Initiate in our Province is 44.8 and that of a Master 59.8 years. At present 78.9% of our members are 51 years or older.

Finally, RW Provincial Grand Master I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude and thanks to the Deputy Registrar, W. Bro Kelvin Jones, and the Assistant Registrar, W. Bro. Les Pickford both of whom, despite considerable ill health, have made a significant contribution to the work of the Registry."

The Registrar's Report was received and adopted.

### **PROVINCIAL CHARITY REPORT**

The Provincial Grand Almoner, W. Bro. George C. Royle, RRC, TD, PAGDC, gave a comprehensive verbal report of benefits received in the course of the previous year. During the year Beneficiaries of our Province had received relief totalling £1,049,563. This figure represents a significant increase on the previous year, due in the main to a massive amount of assistance received from the Masonic Samaritan Fund (£433,822) and equates to approximately £175 for every member in the Province. A detailed report would be submitted for confirmation at the Meeting of Provincial Grand Lodge to be held, in Barry, on the 30th June 2014.

### **GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

The Provincial Grand Secretary reported that the Provincial General Purposes Committee had met earlier in the evening and consequent to the Report of the Provincial Grand Treasurer has recommended that the annual dues payable to Provincial Grand Lodge remain at £12.50 (excluding VAT) per member and that there be no change in any of the other charges made to Lodges.

The Committee had further recommended that the charge for the Year Book remain at £4.75 per copy and that they would be distributed on the basis of one copy for every two Lodge Members. It was also recommended that charges made to other Orders remain at their current level.

The Report of the Provincial General Purposes Committee was received and adopted.

### **ADDRESS BY THE R.W. PROVINCIAL GRAND MASTER**

"Brethren, good evening and thank you for coming here in such large numbers for our annual business meeting, at which we generally present information on what is going on in the Province, report progress on strategic issues and provide a few helpful pointers for Lodges so that we can continually improve our Freemasonry and the Craft.

This has been my first year as your Provincial Grand Master and I must tell you how delighted I have been with the warmth of your welcome at every lodge I have had the pleasure of visiting. I know that all of my Executive feel the same, so thank you to all Brethren who have made this year such an enjoyable one.

We started the year by launching our 7 point plan for the future of the Province, so I will structure my address around those 7 points, setting out what has been achieved so far and what I hope we will achieve in the very near future.

You will all know how important I think leadership is to the success of any organisation; and Freemasonry is most certainly no exception. After a wonderful day in September last year when the MW Pro Grand Master honoured us by visiting and installing me as PGM, there followed almost immediately a tragic loss in the passing to the Grand Lodge above of W Bro Jeffrey Parry Thomas. He was – and still is – sorely missed by me and I am sure all of us; his infectious laugh was a source of great fun and inspiration to us all and the Province of South Wales is the poorer without him.

I was pleased to appoint W Bro William Jenkins as an Assistant in the January Hendre meeting and his contribution has been very significant since then. As you will all know, I have also recently announced the appointment of W Bro Gerald Rowbottom PSGD as our new Provincial Grand Secretary to succeed W Bro Jim Bevan, someone whose shoes will be very hard to fill. W Bro Jim has completed over 25 years working in the Provincial office; he is the longest serving Secretary in the Constitution; and his knowledge, expertise and experience will be impossible to replicate in short order. I shall say a good deal more about W Bro Jim at our PGL meeting in Barry on 30 June.

W Bro Gerald's appointment, with which I am sure we are all delighted, leaves a gap on the Provincial Executive. W Bro Gerald is very keen to channel all of his efforts into the new role of Provincial Secretary so it is important with such a large Province as ours that we move quickly to appoint a new Assistant PGM to share the workload and ensure Lodges get all the support and attention they deserve. I am therefore very pleased to be able to announce today that at our annual meeting on 30 June I will be appointing and investing W Bro Roger Richmond, PJGD, as Assistant PGM. W Bro Roger has a wealth of experience, having contributed so enormously to 2 Craft Festivals and having been so prominent in our Freemasonry in the Community efforts, now over a decade ago. I am sure you will all join me in wishing W Bro Roger well in his new and arduous role.

But leadership is not just about the Executive team Brethren. That is why I am asking Grand Officers to take on more of a role in reporting on progress in Lodges against our aspirations set out in the 7 point plan. I shall be addressing them on this issue at Lodge of Benevolence next week. And Masters of Lodges have a key role to play too. It is they who need to take the lead in ensuring action, especially on issues such as recruitment and ensuring high standards in all our work.

Turning to Standards, I have been pleased with reports I have been getting from my Executive officers following their visits to Lodges. In general, standards of ritual are good, though I still occasionally hear of instances where too much of the ritual is read from papers or, worse still, hand held electronic devices. Brethren, we owe it to our Candidates, be they Initiates or Masters Elect, and to our beautiful ritual, to do our very best to learn the ceremonies. The ritual is so much more meaningful if it is delivered by looking the Candidate in the eye and with an understanding of what the allegory is trying to represent. If a Brother is not capable, as the Royal Arch ritual tells us, it is our responsibility to supply their wants. The ritual can be shared if necessary to help a struggling Brother out, but none of us enjoys seeing a Brother falter his way through a ceremony, particularly where it is obvious that insufficient preparation is to blame for a poor performance.

A few small points to add Brethren: at Installations I do not like to see any Brethren being admitted after the Installed Board and not being given the chance to greet the new Master. It is often the Organist, but sometimes other Brethren who are let into the Temple without greeting him properly with the salutes of the various degrees. Please ensure that, in future, this practice is stopped. Similarly, I see no reason why Stewards should be let out of the Lodge before the Executive Officer leaves. For one thing, they miss the pomp and ceremony of the retiring procession, for another they may miss important information in the 3<sup>rd</sup> rising, which they, as Lodge Members, are entitled to hear. And please Brethren, be fastidious about timings after Installation Ceremonies. My Executive team and the Provincial officers often have long journeys after they have left for the evening. There is no reason why there should be an extended gap between the Ceremony and Dinner; and Lodge DCs have a clear responsibility to keep proceedings going without long periods where nothing seems to be happening. I see no reason why the Executive Officer should not be able to leave before 9.30 after Installations; please do your utmost to make that happen in your Lodges.

Standards of summonses are generally very good and I know that the Provincial Office keeps a weather eye on them on my behalf. I would appreciate it though Brethren if Installation summonses could include names and ranks of incoming Officers, together with Christian names. It makes it so much easier for the Executive Officer to be part of the evening if he can refer to Brethren in a friendly manner and he can discuss with the local Grand Officer those Brethren coming into office.

The 3 Rs: Recruitment, retention and retrieval, continue to be our biggest challenge. We – like other Provinces – are losing around 2% of our members a year and if we are to reverse this trend, we can not sit idly by waiting for men of good character to simply appear and ask to join us. We must take action now; and there are some great examples of Lodges who, having taken action, have seen that it pays dividends. All of our Masonic centres have Lodges that seem to be able to attract members. By and large they are Lodges that have tried to do something about falling numbers. White table events, especially those which involve Wives and Partners, work well and there is no doubt that having a cyber presence in the form of a website, with social media if wanted, is a sure way of attracting young men into our Craft.

I still hear of Lodges which have not formed sub committees to address the 3 Rs. I will be taking that up with Grand Officers shortly, but Masters can make early progress on this issue by leaving this evening and giving thought to which Brethren they would want to form such a committee and convening an early discussion before the end of this Masonic year.

I mentioned websites and Communications is another element of our 7 point plan. I have been very pleased with the establishment of our new, refreshed website, which now incorporates the Royal Arch. There is no doubt that it not only provides a useful source of information; for example, we can now put this current address on the website for all Brethren to read, it is also a good marketing tool too. The number of membership enquiries has rocketed since we went live and this can only be a good thing for our recruitment objectives.

Y Dalaith continues to go from strength to strength and is the envy of many Provinces. While putting it online will be important, I like to have a hard copy for my coffee table at home and I'm sure that many of you use it to ensure elderly Brethren who perhaps don't attend as often as they used to, can be kept up to speed with what is going on.

Just one small point about communications from Lodges to members, Brethren. This needs to be electronic wherever possible. In particular, there should rarely be a need for Lodge Secretaries to read out communications in risings if they have previously circulated them electronically to all members. My vision remains for a Province where all Lodges will have their own websites to hold such communications, to book meals, to act as a recruitment tool and to link with the Provincial website for continuity. Guidance will be forthcoming soon about formats and rules regarding social media. We must embrace these technologies to save money and time and to ensure we can communicate with the new generation of Brethren and prospective members.

Finally, I want to mention Charity. Our Lodges continue to do excellent local work for the needy in their areas – and long may that continue. More generally, we still have the Festival system in place and the Province of South Wales will be hosting a Festival in 2021 on behalf of the Royal Masonic Benevolent Institution. This is a Charity very close to our hearts brethren with the Albert Edward, Prince of Wales Court Home situated in our Province and I am sure I can look to all Lodges to support this Festival as they have on so many occasions in the past.

I am pleased to announce today that W Bro Sir Paul Williams JGD has agreed to chair the Festival Committee, which will be charged with organising and leading our efforts over the years leading up to 2021. He will shortly be establishing a Festival Committee and a regional structure, with the aim of formally launching the Festival for a period of 6 years at the Hendre Lodge meeting in January 2015. Brethren, there will be much work to do but with W Bro Paul's leadership and your enthusiasm and support I am confident that the Province of South Wales will once again play its part to do what we do best, that is enjoy contributing to those who need it most.

Brethren, that is all I have to say for now. I thank the Provincial Grand Secretary and his team for arranging this meeting and for all they will do as in every year to ensure a wonderful day in Barry on 30 June. Most of all I thank you all for coming today and listening so attentively. We must all continue to enjoy our Masonry as we always have. It must be fun as well as solemn and serious. And above all, we must continue to enjoy our friendships and comradeships that have been cemented over the years by our wonderful Craft.

I wish you safe journeys home; and I look forward to seeing many of you at our Church Service tomorrow and at our Annual Meeting in June."

### **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Provincial Grand Secretary advised that he had not been notified of any other matters which were required to be laid before the Meeting.

### **VOTE OF THANKS**

The Deputy Provincial Grand Master, VW Bro. Roy Woodward, PGSwdB, then proposed a vote of thanks to the Provincial Grand Master in a most eloquent and able manner, thanking him, on behalf of the Brethren, for the able manner in which he had conducted the business of the evening. The Brethren enthusiastically and vociferously associated themselves with the comments made.

### **CLOSING**

There being no further business, the Meeting closed at 6.38 p.m.