

PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE OF SOUTH WALES

MINUTES OF PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE COMMITTEE HELD AT BARRY ON FRIDAY 8th MAY 2015 AT 6.00 pm

PRESENT:

R.W.Bro. Gareth Jones, <i>OBE</i>	Provincial Grand Master
V.W.Bro. H. E. Roy Woodward	Deputy Provincial Grand Master
W.Bro. Rev. Alistair E. J. Swinford	Assistant Provincial Grand Master
W.Bro. William E. Jenkins	Assistant Provincial Grand Master
W.Bro. Roger F. Richmond	Assistant Provincial Grand Master
R.W.Bro. Captain Sir Norman Lloyd-Edwards <i>KCVO, GSStJ, RD*, RNR</i>	Past Provincial Grand Master
V.W.Bro. Peter Frost	Past Deputy Provincial Grand Master
W.Bro. the Reverend Canon D. Huw E. Mosford	Past Assistant Provincial Grand Master
W.Bro. D. Gerald Rowbottom	Past Assistant Provincial Grand Master

Also 19 Acting Provincial Grand Officers, 33 Grand Officers, 6 members of the General Purposes Committee and 121 Masters and Past Masters representing Lodges.

Valid signatures were not appended to the attendance sheets in respect of the following Lodges, who are therefore deemed not to have been represented: 679, 1323, 1573, 1754, 3161, 3320, 3977, 4213, 5084, 5291, 5378, 5830, 5997, 6056, 6078, 6354, 6355, 6700, 7092, 7353, 7928, 7982, 8334, 8377, 8414, 8418, 8531, 8567, 8644, 8713, 8752, 8757, 8829, 9001, 9036, 9197, 9521, 9549 and 9603.

IN MEMORIAM:

The R.W. Provincial Grand Master referred to the 55 Members of Provincial Grand Lodge of South Wales who had been called to the Grand Lodge above during the past year, among whose number were two Grand Officers, W.Bro. Colin E. Mogg, PAGDC, and V.W.Bro. J. Stuart Peters, P.G.Swd.B., Past Deputy Provincial Grand Master. A full list would appear in the 2015-16 Provincial Yearbook. The Brethren stood to order as a mark of 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 2015 had been completed and submitted to the Auditor. The draft accounts showed a surplus of income over expenditure of £539.00. 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 populated on the Provincial web-site prior to being presented, in booklet form, to attendees at Provincial Grand Lodge on 29th June 2015.

PROVINCIAL GRAND REGISTRAR'S REPORT:

The Provincial Grand Registrar, W.Bro. Stephen Harries, presented his Report as follows:

"At the outset, and in my first year as Provincial Grand Registrar, I would like to express my grateful thanks to the Deputy Provincial Grand Registrar W. Bro. Kelvin Jones, the Assistant Provincial Grand Registrar W. Bro. Les Pickford and W. Bro. Mel Jones, whose experience at the Registry has proved to be invaluable and without whose help and guidance this role would have been more difficult. I must also pay tribute to my predecessors, particularly W. Bro. Martin Daly for his counsel and the established systems I have inherited, which were installed by him.

I also want to take the opportunity to thank all Lodge Secretaries for their patience and positive feedback while making changes to the way we work at Provincial Office in adopting the ADELPHI system promoted by United Grand Lodge. I hope that Secretaries will continue to see further benefits such as the example of Provincial Grand Lodge preparing Provincial Annual Returns instead of requesting the same from Secretaries. I have already attended a meeting at Freemasons' Hall in preparation for leading the delivery of a comprehensive update and improvement to the ADELPHI system; which is planned to go live in July. This newly designed and improved system has the capacity to provide the Executive with key up to date information, as well as serving as an excellent resource tool to aid implementing the 7 Point Plan.

The Province began 2014 with 165 Lodges, and whilst ending with two fewer at 163 can look forward to the consecration of two new Lodges in the Province on grant of Warrant; namely the Albert Edward Court Lodge of Research and the Music Lodge.

In analysing our data we are encouraged by the increase in Initiations from 228 in 2013 to 239 in 2014, an increase of 4.82%. Joining member numbers have also increased by 25.58% from 129 in 2013 to 239 in 2014 which further embeds total membership of Lodges in the Province at 7083. Resignations are down from 330 to 296 a decrease of 10.3%. Exclusions and Cessation have spiked from 52 in 2013 to 70 in 2014, and the number of those called to The Grand Lodge above have reduced from 100 in 2013 to 97 in 2014 This corresponds closely with the net reduction of members in 2014 at 5,890 - down 104 from our position of 5994 in 2013.

The average age of an Initiate in 2014 is 46 compared to 45 in 2013.

The average age of a Worshipful Master in 2014 is 58 compared with 60 in 2013.

The average number of Members per Lodge in 2014 is 43.43 compared with 43.9 in 2013.

The percentage of Members who are 51 or older in 2014 is 76.3% compared with 78.9% in 2013.

Finally it is encouraging that so many keen volunteers have come forward eager to assist with further research and analysis – I look forward to working with them, and in particular with the group who will work on the aspects of Retention and Retrieval of Members.”

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 2014, which were significantly lower than the previous year. During the year Beneficiaries of our Province had received relief totalling £727,097. This figure represents a decrease on the previous year of £322,466 and equates to approximately £123 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 29th June 2015.

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 further recommended that the charge for the Yearbook be increased by 25p to £5.00 per copy, and that they continue to be distributed on the basis of one copy for every two subscribing Lodge Members. It was also recommended that charges made to other Orders be increased to £18.00, plus VAT per page.

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

ADDRESS BY THE R.W. PROVINCIAL GRAND MASTER:

Brethren, it is good to see so many of you here this evening for our annual business meeting, during which we have the opportunity to discuss domestic South Wales issues. It is the one meeting every year when I can set out various issues, issue instructions regarding our Province and lodges and where you can have the opportunity of raising matters of interest and concern to be aired in a safe and friendly environment. I hope that, following a good start last year, once I have finished my address, you will feel moved to raise any issues you wish.

Let me start by saying how grateful the Executive members are for the very warm welcomes we have enjoyed during our visits to lodges this year. This is the inaugural year when Grand Officers have provided reports on their lodges and it has been extremely useful to use those as a basis for our assessments of lodges and to have excellent background information on how lodges are doing in advance of our visits. I am pleased to see that over 80% of Grand Officers believe their lodges are in good spirits, with high quality standards of ritual, proper attention to standards and a real enthusiasm to tackle the challenges set out in our 7 Point Plan. They will receive this year's report form in July and I look forward to seeing even more progress in lodges right across the Province. The reports I receive from every installation meeting confirm that good performance and I am particularly pleased to hear that, in the main, masters are learning the ritual, not relying overly on notes and providing that wonderful experience for our candidates by looking them in the eye at all times.

Of course, there is always room to improve and to continue improving by making changes which benefit our members and prospective members. I have been disappointed with levels of attendance of younger brethren at installations I and my Executive – have attended. In many cases, I am told that early start times have been to blame for their absences or sometimes their ability only to arrive in time for the festive board. Brethren, please give serious consideration to starting meetings, including installations, later in the evening. I see no reason why any installation needs to start before 5.30 and if a Past Master is being installed, 6 o'clock.

Before I hear anyone ask how they are supposed to finish by 10 o'clock with such a late start, please consider this: good quality ritual reduces the time taken for any ceremony; there is no need for officers to be re-appointed to be presented individually to the Master – I would much prefer all such officers to be asked to stand collectively and to be re-appointed en bloc, much as we now do in Provincial Grand Lodge. And please consider limiting the gap between the end of the ceremony and starting the festive board to NO MORE THAN 10 MINUTES. That will take some preparation and discussion with caterers, but it is surely worth it brethren if we can allow a later start time to accommodate young brethren who have to arrive after a hard day's work.

While mentioning installations, I still occasionally see the practice of Lodge Stewards leaving the temple before the risings. I see no reason why that needs to happen. Please consider that we are depriving Stewards of seeing the pomp and ceremony of the departing Provincial procession and, crucially, hearing the risings, which they entitled as lodge members to experience. Yes, risings are often circulated electronically before each meeting, but the Executive attending may well have additional issues he wishes to bring up on the day, which all members should have the chance to hear.

This year, we have seen wonderful progress on a number of important initiatives, many of which I will set out at our annual meeting on 29 June in Barry. I have been particularly pleased to see the installation of Automatic Electronic Defibrillators in every Masonic centre across South Wales. My grateful thanks are particularly due to W Bros Bob Barron and David Davies for their enthusiasm, hard work and determination to ensure we can all feel safer and equipped to handle emergencies should they arise. And I must also thank the History book committee and the Y Dalaith team for their strong and financial support for this excellent initiative.

Our communications continue to go from strength to strength. As well as the best regular magazine in England and Wales, for which W Bro Don Jones and his team continue to deserve our admiration for their tireless efforts, we now have a website which gets better every day, together with Facebook and Twitter accounts which can keep anyone up to speed with developments in real time. I look forward to even greater things from our communications efforts, making life easier for lodge secretaries and members to do business electronically, which is easier, quicker and cheaper and saves time in our busy schedules. I must mention the yearbook: I am sure you will all join me in thanking W Bro Charles McBride who is stepping down as Chairman of the yearbook. The yearbook continues to be an indispensable source of information and I am most grateful to the editor, W Bro Allan Miles and his team for their continued efforts on our behalf.

Isn't it wonderful to see so many brethren sporting our new Provincial ties at our meetings? Standards of dress are important at all times and I always think it a shame when I see brethren attend rehearsals, LOI meetings and committee meetings in such casual clothing these days. I have been concerned to hear of instances when new candidates have arrived for interview dressed as you would expect in a jacket and tie, only to find seated around the table lodge members who have not thought it worth dressing similarly. I wonder what sort of organisation such candidates think they are joining. I should be grateful if you would all discuss this issue in your lodge committees and come to decisions about how you think we should portray ourselves in these circumstances. Why not make it a lodge policy to wear the provincial tie, even when not in a formal lodge setting?

I have recently been approached by a brother who asked me whether his lodge could return to the practice of having the alms collection during the charity charge in the first degree. My answer was a resounding YES, brethren. I have always thought that the moment when a new brother is challenged to give to charity in his state of helpless indigence is far more impactful if it follows a general alms collection, giving him time to wonder how he is going to contribute. It is, in any case, quickly followed by a clear message that the trial was not made to sport with his feelings, so if your lodge wishes to return to that practice, you have my blessing to do so. If you want to continue your current practice, that is fine by me too.

I will say a great deal more about charity and our 2021 Festival here in this hall at our annual Provincial Grand Lodge meeting, but it would be remiss of me not to thank W Bro Sir Paul Williams and his excellent committee for the wonderful launch and early start we have seen to the Festival in aid of the RMBI. There is much work to do brethren, but we have a firm and exciting foundation on which to build and I know I can look to all lodges in the Province to step up to the mark and contribute considerably to such a wonderful cause.

We had a most agreeable few days in London at Grand Lodge and Supreme Grand Chapter last week. My congratulations to all brethren honoured, supported by 114 brethren at our Provincial luncheon on the Wednesday and 75 Provincial Grand Chapter members at the Grand Superintendent's lunch on the Thursday. These are unprecedented numbers brethren showing the enthusiasm and commitment of our lodges, chapters and brethren way above and beyond anything experienced in other Provinces. Long may that practice continue. And there have been many more positive developments this year. The Colonnade Club has been launched; we have established a new Provincial team to follow up resignations with a view to retrieving brethren if at all possible; and of course we look forward to our annual church service next week; and – something this Province has not seen for 13 years – the consecration of a new lodge, The Albert Edward Court Lodge of Research Number 9908 on 25 July, together with the prospect of another new Music lodge next masonic year. The Province is truly in good heart brethren.

Finally brethren, as we look forward to 29 June and our annual meeting, it had not been my intention to make any changes to the Provincial Executive this year. They are a great team and I continue to be amazed and thankful for their unstinting support, and first rate leadership across South Wales. However, W Bro Paul Marshall has indicated that, as a result of his continuing poor health, he wishes to retire as Assistant Provincial Grand Master in June. Paul has been a wonderful servant of this Province including 11 years as Provincial Grand Treasurer, over 3 as

Assistant Provincial Grand Master and many more besides in other roles and duties. We shall miss him as an Assistant PGM, but he assures me he is not going far and will continue to support the Province in any way he can. I am sure you will join me in wishing him a speedy recovery from his current ills and hope to see him back firing on all cylinders very soon.

As a result, I am delighted to inform you that at our Provincial Grand Lodge meeting in June I will appoint and invest a successor to W Bro Paul as an Assistant PGM. That successor will be W Bro Alan Gardener PAGSuptWks. Please join me in welcoming Alan to this very senior role, proper recognition of all that he has done over the years and all that he will do, bringing his vast experience and obvious leadership qualities to the executive for many years.

Brethren, I thank you once again for being here. As I said at the outset, I want this meeting to be your opportunity not just to hear from me and others, but to air any matters you wish to raise. So I will close now with an invitation for you to do just that. Brethren God bless you all.

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 eloquently proposed a vote of thanks to the Provincial Grand Master. He complimented him, and the Principal Provincial Officers, on the huge contribution of their time they had voluntarily made to the Province during the year. He ended by thanking the Provincial Grand Master, on behalf of the Brethren, for the able manner in which he had conducted the business of the evening. The Brethren associated themselves with the comments with a loud and enthusiastic response.

CLOSING:

There being no further business, the Meeting closed at 6.50 p.m.