

Ross Masonic Club



Supporting Local Freemasons

The Craftsmen

Week Commencing 28th September 2020

Issue Number Twenty Six

Welcome to the twenty sixth edition of the Ross Masonic Club Weekly Round-Up.

26

Weeks



Greetings from the RW Provincial Grand Master for Herefordshire and M E Grand Superintendent in and over the Royal Arch Province of Gloucestershire and Herefordshire

R W Bro Michael T Holland



Brethren, it is hard to believe that it has been six months since I was asked to write a few words to include in the very first issue of "The Craftsmen" back in April 2020. What a challenging and disrupted time it has been since then, with our meetings suspended until mid-July and more recently the limited resumption under the seemingly ever-changing restrictions and guidance we must comply with. Throughout this period, the Ross Masonic Club has played a really important role in helping Brethren and Companions to remain in contact with each other. This newsletter has allowed us to share a wide array of topics and articles; not just about Freemasonry, but also other interests, hobbies and even careers which have stretched across the globe. I'm sure we would not have learnt as much about each other had we not had this weekly publication which is today into its 26th edition!

I must take this opportunity to thank WBro Andrew Moore for all his efforts to ensure the original concept was developed into the success story it has become. Likewise, I thank those of you who have given your time and talents to support Andrew and provide him with the articles and the photos to include herein. Congratulations to you all, I certainly look forward to receiving my copy each week and derive a lot of pleasure in reading it.

As we now enter the autumn months, it looks increasingly likely we will not be returning to any sort of normality until well into 2021. This is going to be difficult for us all, especially with the shorter days and colder weather. Hence, it is more important than ever that we keep in touch until we can all meet in person again, secure in the knowledge that we are not putting anyone at risk. In the meantime, take care of yourselves, your loved ones and each other and keep those interesting stories (and photos) coming in to Andrew.

Sincerely and fraternally,

Michael

PGM / MEGS

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Greetings from R.W. Bro John Gillo, Provincial Grand Master of Mark Master Masons of Gloucestershire and Herefordshire

Brethren,

I congratulate the team on six months of hard work and the Newsletter being one of a number of ways we can keep in touch with each other.

Sincerely and fraternally,

John Gillo

PGM

Follow on Twitter <https://twitter.com/PGMMarkGandH>



Thank you and on to the future

Firstly a huge thank you to those brethren who have helped keep us going for six months. I am sure none of us expected we would still be in this position when Lodges and Chapters resumed after the summer recess.

A thank you to Billy in helping set up the Newsletter - he also came up with the name, setting up the Zoom meetings and the Facebook page, our regular contributors Harry and Patrick and Nigel Donovan who can always provide a few words at a moments notice and of course Glyn's Garden has also featured regularly.

Also to all the other brethren who have contributed articles and pictures over the last 25 issues.

We already have several articles for next week and hope to kick off a few new features.

When I were a Lad

Please send in your photos of you as a baby or child with a brief clue and we can publish the photo one week and the answer the next.

How I started in Masonry

Next week John Mole describes how he started out in masonry. I am sure there are some fascinating stories of how we started out and we would love to hear them.

Any other ideas for a regular feature gratefully received!

No-one knows what the future holds, but it has never been more important to keep in contact. Back in April we formed Buddy Groups and hopefully you have managed to keep in contact to some degree over the summer.

As the evenings draw in and winter approaches it would be great if you could rekindle those Buddy Groups and keep in contact to make sure we are all safe and well. After all, we should all be spending some of our time 'serving a friend or Brother in time of need'.

Thank you for your continued support.

Andrew



Nigel Donovan Looks Back Over The Last Six Months

Well, who would have imagined what has happened over the past 6 months? When I was installed in the chair of KS back in February and my first "active" night in the chair was brought to an early conclusion by the unfortunate collapse of our esteemed organist (hope you're ok Jim?), none of us could have predicted what happened immediately thereafter. I was excited, nervous and in complete trepidation at moving into the role of Worshipful Master, but nothing could have prepared me for what lay ahead!

The word "Covid" was not in our vocabulary at that time, within Masonry or our personal lives, but has, since March, ruled our lives more than any other influence. The thought that we would by now not have held a Masonic gathering of any sort was not something we could have contemplated, but now we may be looking at a further six months of inactivity. The current restrictions make it almost impossible to hold a meaningful meeting and ceremonies have fallen victim to those restrictions also. It would be easy to be completely depressed by the situation and I am sure that many of us will have discovered things about ourselves, our partners, our homes and our general ability to cope with unique and unexpected circumstances.

It is reasonable to say that some of us may never have been troubled by the ravages of life in general, but good fortune has followed us around, sometimes by planning and other times good fortune. It has been a great opportunity to be reminded why we all engaged in Masonry and brought us closer to those less fortunate than ourselves and a desire to help anyone we can. As one of those people designated "critically vulnerable" and advised to shield ourselves for the duration of lockdown, I was warmed and uplifted by the extreme kindness of people around us, people that we had never even met!

This reminds me of what we are all involved with Masonry for – mostly to help people we have never even met – complete strangers who are less fortunate than ourselves. We do this in respect of our caring for our fellow mankind, so we must now be looking forward to the new beginning for our Masonic lives. There are those amongst us who see this all in a rather negative light and imagine that when we are able to resume meetings, ceremonies and other Masonic activities, that we will lose half our members and struggle to attract new ones.

Being a "glass half full" sort of chap, I see it the other way. As someone who has had more than my fair share of setbacks dealt to me, the only way to respond to these setbacks is positively, and with more fight and resolve than ever before. This is the approach we must all take in our Masonic lives, to make sure it bounces back even stronger than ever, as the demands will become greater post Covid.

I look forward so much to resuming our Masonic lives, to seeing everyone again, when we can, and to making the very most of the opportunity that we have to help and improve other people's lives. I really hope that all of us harbour those same strong feelings and look forward to catching up with you all through "The Craftsmen" and Zoom meetings on a Friday, where we can maintain social contact with all the brethren and remind ourselves why we are Masons. Stay safe, stay positive and keep those glasses half full – we are all here for each other.

Very best wishes to you all,

Nigel

Would I know the answer? Did I know the answer?

By W.Bro. Dennis W. Roberts, PAGDC Group Leader Information and Guidance Group

Last time I asked:

What is the significance of Reverence or Fidelity Signs? Thumb Up or Down? What does your Lodge do?

The use and misuse of the Sign of Fidelity and the Sign of Reverence has been an issue for preceptors for generations. At the end of the meeting, having closed the Volume of the Sacred Law, the IPM steps forward and delivers the final words 'Fidelity, Fidelity, Fidelity'. Visitors surreptitiously peer around to see if this is a 'thumbs up' or a 'closed hand' Lodge. The courteous will adjust their fingers in keeping, the dedicated will proudly maintain the posture of their own Lodge. But which hand position is correct?

The Sign of Fidelity is explained in the Emulation Lodge of Instruction, 'emblematically to shield the repository of my secrets from the attacks of the insidious'. It is defensive in nature, and it seems logical therefore to expand the hand with the thumb to provide the greatest are of protection. For the thumb's position to be at right angles makes good sense.

The Sign of Reverence however is not recognised or taught by Grand Lodge, even though it appears in the custom of Emulation working. This sign however, with the fingers (thumb down) touching the seat of human emotion, the heart, has long been employed and respected outside Freemasonry. As a cortège passes by, at a church service, at the loss of a family member or friend; even when an American President takes his Oath of Office it can be seen. It is not a defensive sign; but rather represents a positive outpouring of love, sympathy, respect or reverence from the heart. It is therefore quite appropriate inside a Lodge when a candidate unites in prayer to the Great Architect of the Universe.

At the closing, with the VSL closed, the Emulation practice says simply but clearly, 'All touch the left breast lightly with the word Fidelity'; which very action mirrors a sign of reverence. This sign reminds departing Masons of their duty to keep faith and remain

loyal to those moral principles stored therein, a respect for one's Creator, the love of our fellow man and relief for his sufferings, and the courage to be true to one's own nature. Indeed these are the principles that should govern all of our life, not least when we depart our Lodge building

My Lodge has a simple way of remembering: Thumb up for masonic ritual; thumb down for prayer. Most of all, follow the Master, he is always (mostly!) right!!

For next time, let me pose the question What is the significance of the Gavel?

You can always check your thoughts by visiting 'Solomon' of course!

<https://solomon.ugle.org.uk>

Dennis Roberts - Group Leader Information and Guidance Group
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Keeping in Contact and Staying Sharp

Facebook



We have set up a Facebook Group for Ross Masonic Club. We currently have 28 members across the Lodges and Chapter. Any members of Lodges or Chapter that meet at Ross Masonic Hall are welcome to join in.





One Man's Muck ...

An Article by Tim Fycun on something many of us take for granted.

As some of you may know I work as a sewage consultant, primarily dealing with rural properties that are not connected to the Main sewer. There are primarily three options, a cesspool, which is a large holding tank and needs emptying on a monthly basis. A septic/cesspit, which is historically the most common which allows the heavy solids to separate and the water runs to a drainage field. Finally there is a sewage treatment plant which first appeared in the mid to late sixties which treats the water to a standard where it can discharge to a running watercourse or a drainage field. I regularly get called to properties where a client has just purchased the property that has a problem. This is usually down to the fact that most surveyors check for damp, water ingress in the house but the tank at the bottom of the garden gets forgotten about. Sadly the tank at the bottom of the garden can cost a lot of money to put right and I always advise a separate survey on any off-mains system so that any future bills are mitigated.

The most common tanks I see are old brick/block built tanks that are many decades old. These are usually allowing groundwater or surface water into the tank, which sadly means that it is classified as a fail by the EA. Any tank must be sealed, with no surface water or groundwater ingress. The ingress is usually down to the mortar between the bricks failing and becoming porous. The roof water from a property should not run into the foul drainage either and on some older properties this is the case and should be removed to a separate drainage area. Some of you may have heard talk if you have an off-mains drainage system of the 2020 binding rules.

These actually came out in 2015 and stated that the discharge from a septic tank must not go to a ditch or watercourse and if they did the system needed to be upgraded by the 1st of January 2020. Like most Government departments the EA did not really advertise this and a lot of people were not aware of the new legislation. Primarily it also stated that if a property was sold in the period between 2015 and 2020 it had to be upgraded at the point of sale. Sadly a lot of properties were sold and the new owner left with the cost of upgrading which can run into many thousands of pounds in costs as well as the upheaval in the garden.

A sewage treatment plant is a system that creates an environment within the system so that bacteria can grow and digest the waste. The bacteria are actually naturally occurring and are present in the faecal matter entering the system. This is an aerobic process so that the bacteria have the 3 elements required to live, air, water and food. The process in a septic tank is referred to as anaerobic (no air) and is just a basic breakdown with the bulk of the treatment being done when the effluent drains into the ground and is broken down. Sewage treatment plants come in many guises, and several different methods such as rotating discs, air compressor systems with floating or fixed media (so the bacteria has something to live on), or activated sludge. Some of the newer plants operate as a batch reactor treating a small amount of waste at the time, leading to a more consistent higher effluent standard. All the manufacturers claim their unit is the best and the final effluent claims vary greatly. This is good but in reality all plants must meet a basic standard referred to as BS EN 12566-3 and must be tested and certified to that standard.

So what are the pros and cons of septic and treatment plants? I leave out the cesspool as in my opinion it is the last resort as the running costs are extremely high due to the high emptying frequency. A septic is a basic system and if you have a large garden or field with good draining soil is a good option. They should be desludged on a regular basis, depending on population usually once a year, not as one customer who called me saying that they could not flush the loo as it was backed up. It turned out the septic had not been emptied for more than 10 years! The septic tank does not require electricity so ongoing maintenance costs are minimal. Sewage treatments plants on the other hand usually require an electric supply. There are one or two that are trickle systems where the waste comes in the top and out the bottom but that in itself creates issues as the outlet is usually some 2m below ground and difficult to get away and they also cost a lot more in the first place. The benefit of a sewage treatment plant is that if you have a watercourse adjacent to the property or running ditch you can discharge to that saving the cost of building a drainage field which can cost a few thousand pounds, though the drainage field for a sewage treatment plant is 20% smaller than that of a septic as the water is treated. A sewage treatment plant should be serviced and desludged on an annual basis and ongoing costs are things like air compressor, motors belts etc. but like all mechanical items if looked after they will last many years. As a guide a 6 person sewage treatment plant, which would cater for up to a 4 bedroom house, will use approximately £60 a year in electricity so not a huge amount.

If you are uncertain on your system, or are buying a property with an off-mains system it is always best to have a specialist check it over, usually best done when the tank is emptied so that it can be properly checked. Like a car a good service history on your septic or treatment plant will be a bonus as and when you come to sell. The information will be there and save a lot of questions from the buyer and their legal team.

‘When I Were A Lad’

A new feature which we hope we can run over a few weeks

Please send in your pictures of you as a child and a short clue. We will publish the photo one week so people can guess who you are and publish the results the following week. Either a scanned image or take a picture of the photo with your phone and send it in with a few words of description. Just for a laugh - nothing too serious!



Did you Guess? This is Eddie Bamber a recent joiner to Vitruvian Lodge but already a regular to our Zoom Meetings.



Here is Eddie on last week’s Zoom Catch Up. (Not aged a jot and still full of sartorial elegance!)

Of the picture to the left he says:

Nothing remarkable about it, I think it was around 1947, a young working class lad growing up in Birmingham but, as you can see, already developing a degree of “sartorial elegance!!”



Any idea who this young chap is? Apparently in a spot of bother but already adopting a masterly face! Answer in next week’s edition.

A Brief Return of Aeron’s Curiosities

But with a twist this week - Aeron doesn’t know what it is and needs our help!



Does anyone know what this badge represents?

Harry’s in Hot Water! (Part VIII)

The further adventures of Harry Holwell

Swindon Detective Duties

The date is now early 1982 and I had been a detective for three years. At this point I was put forward to join our Swindon/Gloucester office of the Regional Crime Squad. This squad of 12 experienced detectives was put in place to tackle targeted top echelon criminals who travelled across county borders and would take considerable manpower, resources and equipment to catch.

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The regional part of this unit was set up across the country and I was to be part of the South West region. This consisted of the forces from Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, Dorset, Avon and Somerset and Devon and Cornwall. Wilts and Gloucester had a joint office, one in Swindon in a small nondescript office block on the outskirts of Swindon and the other part office in Cheltenham.

The individual offices would gather intelligence and build cases on criminals such as large scale drug dealers and serious high value travelling criminals, such as burglars carrying out country house burglaries. One of these offences was a large country house break-in just outside Chippenham in Wiltshire.

Harry's in Hot Water! (Part VIII) Contd.....

The further adventures of Harry Holwell

Swindon Detective Duties

After protracted enquiries we suspected the break in was carried out by a team from Brighton. There were numerous teams from this locality known as the Brighton Knockers. They were small teams of criminals who travelled the country often carrying out burglaries and stealing to order. In this case it was high value almost priceless jewellery valued in the millions. We travelled and worked in the Lanes district of Brighton. Working with a special unit, Antique Squad in Brighton specially set up to combat the criminal teams working from there. Arrests were made and most of items stolen were recovered. Unfortunately none of the offenders appeared before a court for this offence. Although we felt we knew who had done exactly what proving it in court is a different matter.

This was in the 80s and it is even worse now as the CPS require a far higher degree of evidence now than back then. I always look on it that they, the CPS do not give jurors the credit of having minds of their own and want to spoon feed them a guilty verdict. The real law doesn't work like that way to my mind. Before the CPS came into being local CID offices used to prepare cases and take them to local large appointed local prosecuting solicitors. We would sit down with detectives and go through all the evidence. In their own time they would then go through it with a fine comb and contact us direct to gather further statements or particular additional evidence. We found that if we had charged a person with offences in almost cases they would take it through the courts. That was a time when the police took decisions on charging. Most of these cases, I would say almost 99% go through the courts with a guilty plea. The remainder would go to trial and most, not all would be found guilty. At the time the changing process was taken over by the CPS to charge someone you have to have almost a concrete case including forensic positive I/D or caught on the job.

Even where they charge someone that is no guarantee they will appear before a court as CPS often drop the case before or even on the day of court. Defence lawyers are aware of this and consequently not guilty pleas are given right up to the day of Crown Court trial hoping the prosecution will pull the plug on the case. If they don't you then often get a guilty plea. I am not using this column just to air a gripe I feel I am merely telling you how it now plays out in the Criminal legal system.

On the crime squad we were dealing with the higher echelon criminals and they knew how the police worked. Consequently we used other methods of trying to catch them. We used vehicle and foot direct surveillance using covert radios. Vehicle follows using a team of five vehicles sometimes less and generally at least one high powered motor cycle. All the drivers were trained pursuit drivers. Whilst on surveillance we would always carry a clothes bag with full clothing changes to possibly alter our appearance during the follow also due to the fact that we would leave home on a Monday morning and if on a follow you would go where the target went and stay with them. This occasionally led to you being away for days on end and a quick phone to say you wouldn't be home.

We would also use vehicle electronic surveillance where a device would be put in the target's car. We would also use telephone taps on both mobile and fixed phones. We would trace bank accounts and movements of money. These were all carried out on a regular basis, but you would require a high level of authority from the courts right up to the Home Secretary level. These methods were never used lightly without having exhausted all other methods first.

A further case I was involved in was a drug's importation. The offenders were flying the drugs in by light plane. The drugs in this case were cannabis resin.

We worked the case for some four months on and off before we were ready to strike. The suspects were known to use firearms so when it came the time to call the strike we had to use the local forces firearms unit. The plane we knew was to land at a small local airstrip alongside the M5. They would be met by others involved who would unload the plane and take the drugs away. The plane would then fly onto Bristol as it would for its planned route. Plans nearly always need adjustment and because of the time the firearms team took to arrive on scene the suspects realised they were compromised and the plane took off with the drugs still on-board. Fortunately we had the Avon and Somerset helicopter on site nearby and it was able to follow the light plane to Bristol Airport where arrests were made and large quantities of cannabis resin recovered.

I will now give a very brief overview of how these squads work. The officers of each squad would be paired off into individual teams of two. These two would be paired with each other all the time and often eat, worked and often slept in the same hotel room. They would have a high power vehicle which they used daily. They each kept different registrations for the same vehicle in the boot in case a change was needed. They would liaise with their own force areas and CID departments and they would put forward targets for the squads to take on as targets. The individual teams would then build a case to either take forward as a squad target or to return to the force as not suitable for our required criteria to take on. Those individual officers would then take those targets cases forward to conclusion whatever that may be. On these squads you were limited in the amount of time you spent on them because of pressure from both the job and the home front in the hours you spent at work. I will conclude here for now and next time move on to returning to my home force and promotion.

There's more than one way to earn a living Part 9

Patrick Eyre continues to recount his career moves.

I needed to know more about the firm that manufactured the concrete conveyor before I committed my company to purchase one, and I learned that the company was French and located in Nantes in the west of France. I also learned that the owners didn't speak English, but my secretary did, and was delighted when I told her she would be coming with me



The accurate placement of concrete from a truck mixer was never in doubt as these two examples demonstrate.

Air France carried us to Nantes in a French Caravelle and we were met by our hosts who graciously took us to their very nice home for an early lunch. Lots of smiling and nodding heads as you do when you don't speak the language, and have to do it through an interpreter, but we got there in the end, my secretary having spoken to them on the phone several times explaining the reason for our visit.

It was a family business in every sense. Husband and wife drove us to the place where the conveyor was manufactured, which turned out to be a very impressive boat yard on the side of the river. There was also a hanger type building where the conveyor was made, and several people were engaged in the process of doing just that. I must admit that I was very interested in the quality and pure magnificence of the luxury yacht that was having the finishing touches made to it, before the lucky owner would place his deck shoes on that polished deck. It was surely an example of the company's care and attention to detail to what they were about, and from what I saw of their manufacturing facilities in relation to the conveyor I was left with no doubt about their professional expertise. Why this diversification? I asked through my interpreter,

It seems they made conveyor systems for loading boats and ships and they were asked by people in the Concrete business to make one for a truck/mixer, which they did of course.

After more smiles and nodding of heads we were returned to the airport satisfied that we would be doing the right thing when ordering that first conveyor for the demonstrator and another one for my customer in Dublin.

Back in Hatfield, I raised the order for the conveyors and they arrived some 2 weeks later on a truck in sections, and wooden boxes. I had obtained the installation drawings in France and armed with these I convened a meeting with the guys who were going to install it on the demonstrator. One of the reasons I had faith in what I had committed my company to, was the confidence I had with the skills of these engineers, fitters, welders, whatever you like to call them, to follow those drawings to the letter. We had fantastic workshop facilities at Hatfield along with the hydraulic guys who would know how to tap into the mixers hydraulic system which they didn't have a drawing for.

It was game on, all I had to do was find a driver for the demonstrator. It would be a temporary job, and how long is a piece of string? I needed someone who was out of work and would be grateful for anything, but obviously he had to be someone suitable for training as a truck/mixer driver and conveyor operator as well as someone who was prepared to work away from home, drive long distances if needed, and put up with me suited and booted, and telling him what to do. You will have gathered that I will be the one in the nice company car arranging the demos with the right people and being ahead of him when he gets to site. Who better than my son-in-law who has just left the army having served 12 years, mostly in Germany, 3 tours in Northern Ireland, some of it under cover. You do have to have brains for that to stay alive. In my view he was good enough to marry my daughter and deliver me my first grandson.

He would be trained to operate the truck/mixer by myself, he had the necessary license to drive the vehicle, and we would teach each other how to operate the conveyor system. Blind leading the blind!!!

In the meantime the money arrived from Dublin to pay for their conveyor, quickly followed by the Hino chassis/cab, There was obviously a learning curve for the workshop but they had the conveyor installed, and working in the yard in 8 days. A real thrill for me personally, like looking into the future, but not knowing how it would turn out. My MD was there. The man who had referred to the mixer/units as 'elephants' jokingly said 'Now we have the giraffes, what's next?'

I never knew how to take him. He never made a comment such as 'well done' when sales were really good, and I was making the company a lot of money. But by the same token he never said 'on your head be it' when I took a flyer, like the present conveyor project which was costing the company a lot of money to set up.

Tony, my son-in-law and driver was now working for the company and I had put him in the workshops assisting and watching the guys throughout the conveyor assembly and installation. That way he would know more about it than me. I was spending my time trying to put a programme together for demonstrating the advantages of having this revolutionary alternative method of delivering concrete, to the right people. They had to be the top people in the business, those who would make the decision to buy, which meant drawing on the influence I already had with such people and the mutual respect we had for each other. They would be the same people who I had previously met, and hopefully persuading them to buy my firm's mixer/units and batching plants. The same people I had taken out to lunch, flown them to the building sites in Europe in a private plane, had dinner with them at trade functions. I was relying on them heavily, but would they make that massive commercial decision that could change the face of the ready-mixed concrete business? But by the same token, put one over the competition? A business I knew so well myself. These were my fears. Find out next week brethren.

The Return of Fifty Sheds of Grey

This week a final instalment from Emyr Jones

Yes, you guessed it – the SHED!

It's been a while since I last signed in with a progress report on the shed.



Life, despite Covid-19, goes on. Since my last missive (I'm a very patient man), items of great interest (FREEBIES) were offered to me from 2 sources, that I JUST COULD NOT REFUSE!

However, these contributions did slow progress down by a few weeks, as I had to patiently wait for them to become available – shame on my wonderful donors for holding me back! Perhaps at this stage, I should emphasise that my forefathers came from Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire, and Cardiganshire. It is an acknowledged fact that anyone with Cardiganshire Heritage (BLOOD) and known colloquially as a CARDI, is intrinsically tight, tighter than your devout Scotsman or a duck's ****, to the point that when he moves house, he strips the wallpaper off the walls, and takes it with him for his new home. Enough said!

Anyway, Aeron Lewis had a new kitchen fitted (the man is made of money), and I really helped him out by taking the majority of the old kitchen units away. Saved him the cost of a trip to the tip, no less!

I duly altered the donated items to produce the workbench units running along the window wall, augmented by scraps of worktop from my own hoarding (23 years waiting in the garage), and contributions from others (and they all match!).

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The Masons saying concerning charity being "TWICE BLESSED" worked for me, as the new owners of one of our neighbouring properties were also changing their kitchen.



YES (big smile on my face), you guessed correctly – I scrounged those units as well, and fitted them (with some alterations) to the rear wall. The photographs illustrate the outcome. How pleased I am!

The SHED is now almost completely weatherproof – some draft excluders are yet to be fitted – and I've painted the external walls with suitable wood treatment, using a spray gun that came with my newly acquired compressor, certainly quicker than using a brush.

The shed electrics have been tested, and certified as meeting all current (sic) standards.

Wi-Fi reception in the SHED was a bit hit and miss, but BT kindly provided another mesh DISK, and this problem is now solved. This improvement has also enabled me to provide enhanced security within the shed, and I also have TV reception within!

I was able (using my old computer), to conduct my first proper "Outside Broadcast" from the SHED on Friday 18th September 2020 for the 9.00pm Toast.



Fitting out of the shed continues, and I'm pleased to confirm that it's fully meeting my expectations.



My power tools are neatly labelled (with the able assistance of Stephanie, who has also been very supportive and tolerant), and are easily accessible within the cupboards.

I do wonder how I ever managed without a shed!

Already, I've started doing 'things' such as minor repairs to bits and pieces in the SHED, and I have a long list of items needing attention, which hopefully will keep me occupied and entertained over the coming months. These include making some bird feeders and nesting boxes.

Well folks – that's it for now!

You are all welcome to visit (having tolerated my ramblings), once the Covid-19 situation is resolved.

Just remember that the entry fee is a bottle of Real Ale. If you bring LAGER, you will be denied entry!



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W.Bro Ron Baker PPAGDC (Bucks.) Queensman Lodge 2694

Former member of Vitruvian Lodge 338



Some of you may remember Ron from when he was a member of Vitruvian Lodge. He is not only a prolific freemason but also a prolific painter. His paintings of lodge banners are in use all over the world. He says he paints for two reasons:

“1. To raise donations for either ‘Service’ or children’s charities, only via my masonic connections. I do this without any charge and never want to know what has been donated.

2. I have painted for my own benefit doing family christmas cards and the like for some years. This came about when I was diagnosed with PTSD (in my case for two separate occasions) ...something in my day was “not talked about”. These days it’s a bit different. So at times I need to totally absorb myself in masonic banner paintings. That’s why it’s for free!

My full size masonic banners, are sometimes for a new lodge that cannot afford a material one, sometimes for a Lodge that’s lost one! Yes that has happened, or as in the case of Vitruvian and Delphis lodges, for a commemoration. Also even a personal half size set of tracing boards for a friend.

So I am always open to suggestions for a commission, and now you know the reason why!”

Ron painted a canvas depicting the three lodge banners for Vitruvian Lodge to mark their bicentennial. He has also painted other banners in the province including the one on the right for Delphis Lodge in Hereford which is displayed every St Georges Day at the festive board.

In fact Ron has been painting banners for Herefordshire lodges for the past 20 years or so.



An ongoing project is with Palliser District in Canada where Ron has painted the lodge banners for all five lodges.

The project began in May 2019 and was initiated by DDGM RWBro Stuart Hardiker who notes that very few lodges in Alberta and particularly in Palliser District had lodge banners.

RW Bro Hardiker, originally from Scotland, found this unusual so he enquired about the cost of making cloth banners for each lodge.

Finding the project was too expensive he sought other means. He learned of Ron's work through the UGLE and got in contact to discuss the project.

Ron paints the banners on very large picture frames, lacquers the finished work and then ships them to the District at no cost. In return he asks that each lodge makes a contribution to a masonic, military or children's charity. Given that Ron is a military veteran and caretaker of a Canadian War Cemetery in England two of the lodges decided to make a contribution to the Invictus Games.

Ron Says: "I have over the last year Painted 6 full size lodge banners and packed and posted them at no charge at all so long as charitable donations were made." (Without me knowing the amount!)

However I was told that one of the paintings raised \$1000 Canadian Dollars for the Invictus Games.

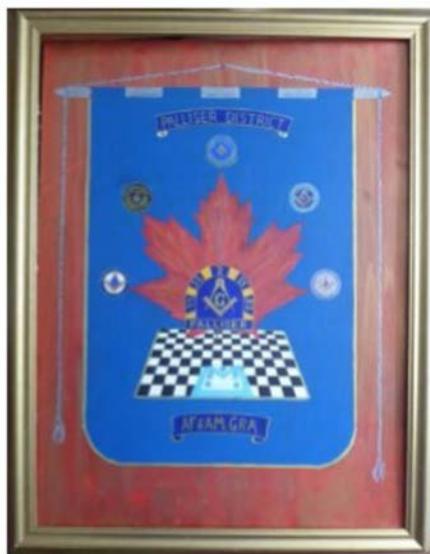
Each banner was constructed in a similar way. The centre of each banner displays the mosaic floor of black and white tiles and bordered by exact replicas of each lodge's pillars.

Various other prominent masonic symbols are placed on the floor such as an altar along with the ashlar, a square and compass or level.

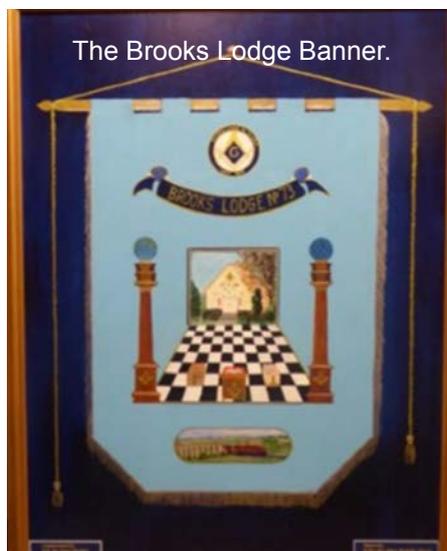
The culmination of the project was the painting of a District banner with the five lodge logos positioned at five points of a Canadian maple leaf.

The Lodge banners are proudly on display in the East at each of the lodge rooms in Palliser District."

The Palliser District Banner will be presented at the upcoming District meeting on the 3rd October 2020.



The city of Brooks was founded by the railroad in 1883 but grew in prominence in the early 1900s due to the formation of the Eastern Irrigation District. The Brooks lodge banner showcases their lodge building in the centre along with a locomotive passing through the local historic Brooks aqueduct. See below.



The Brooks lodge banner was presented on 18th November 2019.



'An Artists Mind' From empty canvas, through planning to the finished banner - the Brooks lodge banner.

