



# WEST LANC'S NUGGETS

"PROVINCIAL NEWS DIGEST"



**Issue 15 of Nuggets being the last before Christmas is slightly longer than usual; particularly as the next issue will not appear until the New Year. Many thanks therefore to all those who have contributed since the Provincial News Digest was launched in 1 April – not as an April Fool's Day joke but to keep West Lancashire members in touch with Freemasonry during the pandemic. Who would have thought we'd have been away so long!**

**Issue 15: 16 December 2020**

## **A Christmas message from the 'Cantering Cannon'**

Even with the relaxation of restrictions, Christmas will be vastly different this year to the ones most of us have previously experienced. So many honoured parents will not be able to attend the school nativity play to watch their proud son play Joseph or their angelic daughter play Mary. One head teacher announced that there will be no Nativity this year as the three Wise Men face a travel ban and the shepherds have been furloughed. The inn keeper has had to shut down due to tier 3 regulations and the consequent slump in bookings. Father Christmas will not be working as he would be breaking the rule of six with Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Donner and Blitzen pulling his sleigh. What about Rudolph you might ask? With such a red shiny nose he should be isolating and applying for a test.

Churches, though allowed to open, will struggle to create the appropriate atmosphere without vocal carolling congregations. The customary singing of carols around town and country, raising much needed funds for blighted charities, will be limited in scope. So many will be trying to find ways of meeting family and friends whom they have not seen for months. Many will be seeking to overcome the stress of the COVID-19 mess that everyone is facing. My hope and prayer is that they will find that for which they are searching.

Although there is much change to tolerate, fresh behaviour patterns to adopt, and a new selflessness to embrace, one thing has not changed, and that is the story and meaning of the birth of Jesus. This has been described as: "The astonishing entrance of the Son of God into a wounded world."

Now as then, the world is wounded, but the good news is that he is with us now (as then) in the mess, the hurt, the pain, the disappointment, the difficulty, the sorrow, the estrangement, the bereavement, the loneliness, and the isolation. He is with us also, now, in our celebrations, our thanksgivings, our rejoicings, our festivals, our anniversaries and our hopes.

He is with us as we care for one another, he is with us in our togetherness and he is with us in our Provincial charitable endeavours.

The Church of England has so appropriately entitled its theme for the Christmas Season as 'Comfort and Joy' taken from a carol which includes these words:

.... with true love and charity  
Each other now embrace.  
This holy tide of Christmas  
All other doth deface:  
O tidings of comfort and joy  
Comfort and joy

By actively personalising the 'good tidings', by bringing comfort to others whoever they may be, in whatever form it manifests itself, we also bring them joy in meeting their needs and satisfying their longings. It is also a comforting fact, that by seeing their faces light up with true joy, our own hearts will rejoice as, for a moment, the words of the carol are fulfilled.

May many blessings be showered upon you and your loved ones this Christmastide.

The Rev Cannon Godfrey Hirst, Third Provincial Grand Principal. (Seen here at the horse blessing service at World Horse Welfare Penny Farm, Blackpool, which he has carried out for the last 21 years.)



# Food Bank Support Appeal

As the appeal nears its conclusion there has been some great engagement with social media publicising the good we do. Here is just a cross-section of photos that have appeared on Twitter from across the groups



## Sam's Picture Quiz

In issue 14, Sam asked if we knew the location of this hall on the right. Well it is St Helier, Jersey. Consecrated in May 1864, this magnificent structure was purpose built as a central meeting place for all Masonic Orders. The first Masonic lodge in Jersey was warranted in 1765, but until the St Helier Temple was built lodges met in hotels, taverns and assembly rooms at various locations. During WW2 the Temple was sacked by German occupying forces and many precious and important artefacts were transported to Germany for an anti-Masonic exhibition.

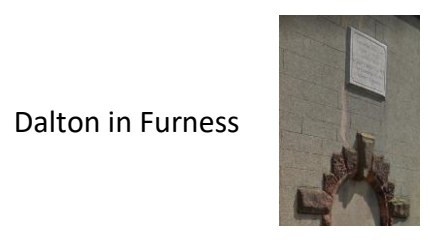


Meetings resumed soon after the liberation using makeshift regalia and furniture pending replacement, much by generous donation. The building was extensively refurbished and extended in 2017.

On the left is Sam's next test. In trying to solve it, remember that Sam travels the world cruising so you will need to think of much warmer climes solving this one! The lodge number of 1227 may well be a place to start.



### Answer's to the last hall features:



## Former Members' Care Scheme: Steven Reid, Semper Fidelis Lodge No 4428

Billy has been a good member of our lodge for nigh on 30 years. He was secretary for 10 of those years and was both diligent and efficient. Now dementia has eroded his ability to function at any useful level. We have done what we can over recent years. Someone picks him up and takes him home. Someone else looks after him at the meetings and festive board so he is as much at ease as he can be. But as things have moved on, he struggles to enjoy the meetings. His wife senses how agitated he is on that day as the meeting approaches. He knows how restless he feels at the meetings. Both of them know nothing is going to get better and many aspects of his life are going to get worse. He has decided to let his membership go.

You may well have a Billy in your lodge, so read on and share our solution. Our concern was how to keep him in our awareness. We didn't want to lose sight of him.

We considered making him an honorary member, so his name would be on the summons, but this didn't really tackle the problem. We didn't want to add to the workload of the almoner and anyway a contact each year before Christmas wasn't what we were looking for. We came up with a scheme we call the Former Members' Care Scheme. Capital letters are so important.

One brother who knows Billy becomes his 'Semper Pal'. In this case it is me and it's easy to be up to date with everything that is happening, because I do the weekly shop for Billy and his wife since lockdown began. I am going to need to keep on doing this in the future, so each week I will see Billy and his wife and chat with them.

I will be in a position to report back informally to other members and at the more formal meetings of the lodge report on Billy's progress to update all members. We have expanded the scheme. We aren't including brethren who have resigned because of loss of interest or involvement, but we do have another younger past member, John, who reluctantly let his membership lapse after heart surgery, a spell of depression and changed financial circumstances. He was well liked. Another member who knows him well will become his 'Semper Pal' and keep in more regular contact than heretofore.

What might happen in the future? Billy might need financial help from Masonic Charities and as he resigned in good standing, he remains entitled to be considered. Without the Former Members' Care Scheme, he and his wife would be unaware and not know how to go about applying. With this scheme, I will sense the increasing need and start the process on their behalf.

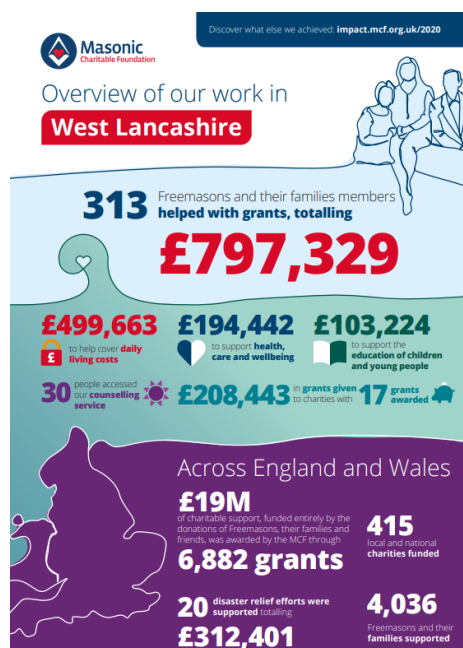
John's health physical and mental may improve and because he gets regular contact from his 'Semper Pal', he may ask about rejoining. This would be good for him and good for the lodge.

To recap the scheme, it only creates a modest workload for each Semper Pal who only has one brother to keep an eye on. It doesn't increase the workload of the almoner. It shows the brother concerned that we still care about him. It provides a means of identifying when his needs increase and how to try and meet them.

I commend it to you! Your own Billy or John will benefit from its implementation in your Lodge.



## MCF Impact Report: Phil Preston, Provincial Grand Charity Steward



The 2019/2020 MCF Impact Report is now available to view on the MCF Website. Please use this link to view it, <https://impact.mcf.org.uk/2020/> As in previous years, this is an interactive report and allows members to find out about the impact that the charity has had over the past 12 months. Also and as before, individual Impact Reports can be generated and printed off for our Province. If you visit the section entitled, 'How we helped your local community', you can select any Province to get the details. Use this link to take you directly to this particular part of the report, <https://impact.mcf.org.uk/2020/how-we-helped-your-local-community/>

Brethren, the amount that came back to our Province totalled over **£1,000,000** the exact figure to come back to assist those in need was **£1,005,772.**

### **PLEASE REMEMBER:**

***"WHAT IS RAISED IN WEST LANCS STAYS IN WEST LANCS"***

## Crafting the Arch – a Wigan perspective

Many towns and cities in this Province, and across the country, will all have a story to tell in the way that Craft Masonry and the Royal Arch has developed in each of these localities. The ancient and loyal town of Wigan is no different, and from humble beginnings back in 1786, Craft and Royal Arch was established and continues to have a strong presence in the town to this day.

In his recently published booklet, 'Crafting the Arch', Ray Pye provides a glimpse of the way that Royal Arch came to life in the borough, and in fact Royal Arch was being worked almost immediately its first lodge (Antiquity – an Ancients lodge) was established. This was soon followed by a second (Sincerity – a Moderns lodge). Intriguingly, in the booklet you can read about a 'subterfuge' ceremony called 'Passing the Chair' which was worked in these early years to increase the flow of (unqualified) candidates into Royal Arch. Such ceremonies were unscripted and local variations appeared to be practised in different lodges.

Sincerity took this one step further and, being a major player in the Liverpool Rebellion/Grand Lodge in Wigan, there is evidence to suggest that this lodge continued to practice a version of the 'Passing the Chair' ceremony until around 1911, just prior to its re-admittance to UGLE. The booklet incorporates a witness transcript of this ceremonial which also seems to include references to the Mark Degree. Strange goes on for a lodge previously attached to the Moderns.

Royal Arch in Wigan is therefore completely intertwined with its lodges of the late 18th century. The booklet sets out this story within a framework of early Wigan social history and within a context of the national development of Craft and Royal Arch Masonry.

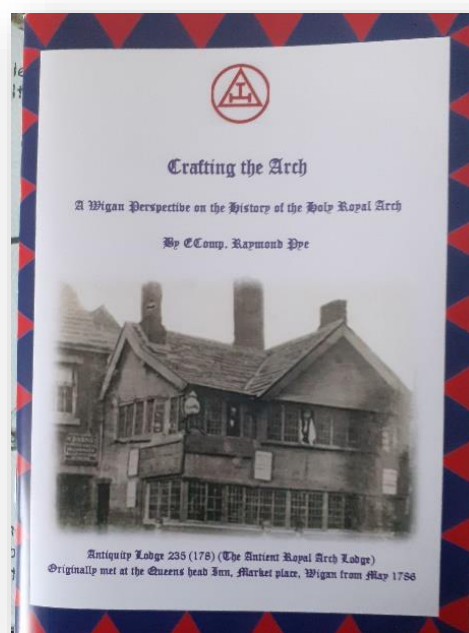
There are a few other interesting asides included in the booklet, including comments on the earliest Wigan RA chapter, which was erased in the early part of the 19th century; an early Wigan lodge, now erased which could also have been part of the 'Liverpool Rebellion'; St John's Lodges and their practice of holding two installations per year; the Grand Lodge in Wigan (including some of the host pubs for its meetings); early 'Dermott' Royal Arch Certificates; and you may enjoy reading a list of the many changes in Royal Arch over the years in an appendix entitled 'We've always done it that way?'

If that's not enough, what about solving a conundrum of the oldest surviving RA Chapter in the Wigan Group, consecrated in 1826, not being able to celebrate its bi-centenary until 2077. A mystery of Sherlock Holmes proportions?

Ray was greatly assisted in this labour of love, (made more complicated by the pandemic, but that's another story) by a number of companions and sources, fully acknowledged in the booklet.

If this has whetted your appetite to read more, the booklet is available at a cost of £10, including postage and packing, with all proceeds to be donated to the MCF 2021 West Lancashire Festival Appeal.

Roy Kholi, who arranged the printing, has also kindly agreed to be the contact for enquiries and distribution. His email address is: 'roy@lavision.co.uk'. Please include your own name and address on any emails requesting a copy or requiring further details. Payment details can also be obtained from Kholi by dropping him an email.



**Please keep your contributions coming via either *Stewart Cranage, Provincial Grand Mentor:* [mentor@provinceofwestlancs.org](mailto:mentor@provinceofwestlancs.org) or *Paul Renton, DepGSupt:* [paul.renton21@btinternet.com](mailto:paul.renton21@btinternet.com)**