



PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE
OF HAMPSHIRE AND ISLE OF WIGHT

Coronavirus Bulletin 1

25 March 2020

Dear Bro Secretary,

You are aware of the MW Grand Masters announcement that *'In view of the latest Government advice on the coronavirus pandemic, all Lodge and Chapter meetings within England and Wales are suspended for a period of four months with immediate effect'*.

The message from the Provincial Grand Master and the rest of the Provincial Cabinet is 'Please don't panic', both the Province and Grand Lodge are working hard to support our vulnerable brethren, maintain communications with all our members and ensure that Freemasonry will continue to thrive once the coronavirus pandemic is over.

In the meantime, please will you note the following points and communicate them to the relevant members of your Lodge:

1. Provincial Communications

We will be sending out regular communications to all Lodge Secretaries in a similar format to this Bulletin. In addition, the Provincial Almoner will be communicating with to your Lodge Almoner (via the Provincial Almoners), the Provincial Grand Superintendent of Works and his team will be supporting the Masonic Centres and the APGMs will be in constant communication with their teams of ACs, AV-Cs and Visiting Officers; so please be assured of their full support.

2. Communicating with your Lodge Members

It is clearly important that all your Lodge members, especially the elderly and those with an underlying medical condition, feel that they are being fully supported by their Lodge. It's also important to communicate with newer members and potential initiates in order to demonstrate the caring nature of Freemasonry.

Will you please draw up a list of your members by age and health status and identify those who may be lonely or vulnerable - ensure that you have their correct details and arrange for them to be regularly contacted, preferably by telephone, over the coming months. Once the pandemic is over, no brother should be in a position to complain that his Lodge had forgot him!

You may also wish to consider using technology: here are a few suggestions:

- i. Set up a Lodge 'WhatsApp' group – a great way of keeping in constant contact.
- ii. Use Facetime or Skype to encourage brethren living alone to chat with their friends (assuming of course that they have a PC).
- iii. Some Lodges are already setting up a virtual 'Lodge of Instruction' where brethren are encouraged to practice ritual on-line.

3. Provincial Office

For the safety of the staff, the Provincial Office will close on Monday 23rd March until further notice. However, we have a sophisticated telephone system that will enable us to divert calls to staff working from home. Service will therefore continue as normal, with the exception that we will not be able to receive visitors.

For your information, if you telephone the Provincial Office there will be five options:

- 1) Frank Milner ProvGSec (for general and technical advice)
- 2) Joh Hobman (Dues Returns and Appointments and Promotions queries).
- 3) Roger Curtis (Form Ps and Installation Returns not yet processed)
- 4) Provincial Treasurer and his staff
- 5) Provincial Almoner and his staff

We will endeavour to answer your calls during office hours (i.e. 09:15 to 17:00), however all parties will monitor voice messages on an ongoing basis.

We will be collecting post weekly, so if you have any outstanding paperwork (Form Ps etc.) please send them to the Provincial Office in the usual manner.

4. Virtual meetings and LOIs

Please see the attached letter from the Grand Secretary, David Staples regarding on-line meetings and LOIs. Whilst on-line communications and limited rehearsals are to be encouraged, please refrain from any demonstrations of those elements of the ceremonies covered in the Obligation, or any attempt to reproduce the 'choreography' online. We have no doubt that our Directors of Ceremonies will have no difficulty in putting our Brethren right on such things when we are happily able to meet again. For these reasons please do not try to hold a genuine Lodge or Lodge of Instruction in a virtual form, but feel free to practise those elements outlined in the Grand Secretary's letter.

5. Questions and Answers (Q&As)

An initial list of 'Q&As' has been developed (as attached) and this will be expanded to include further common questions going forward. This Q&A sheet will be posted on the Provincial Website, issued on the Information Service and the latest version attached to each Secretary's Newsletter. Please distribute to all members of your Lodge as you received them.

6. Installation of VW Bro Jonathan Whitaker and Provincial AGM

Both these meetings have been cancelled along with the Consecration of the Country Sports Lodge. They will all be re-scheduled at a later date once the pandemic has subsided.

Further information will be published from both the Province and Grand Lodge going forward, in the meantime, please take care and keep safe.

Fraternal Regards
Frank Milner
Provincial Grand Secretary