

The quarterly newsletter
of the District Grand
Lodge of the South Island

DEGREES SOUTH



FEBRUARY 2016

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

SHIRLEY FREEMASONS CENTRE 1/2

MORE SPEED-BOATS 3

THEATRE BECKONS 3

PHIL JACKSON AND REFECTORY 4

OBITUARY 4

IMPORTANT DATES

- **Wed March 9th - Conyers Lodge Installation**
- **Monday March 14th - Lazar Installation**
- **Fri 29th April - PMH Players St Alban's Lodge evening. (See inside)**
- **Monday 9th May - Amberley Lodge Installation.**
- **Saturday 14th May - Annual Communications Christchurch (SFC)**

MEMBERSHIP FOCUS GROUP LAUNCHES NEW PAPER: OUR STRATEGY 2015-2020

The UGLE's Membership Focus Group's (MFG's) new paper, *Our Strategy 2015-2020*, sets out Freemasonry's core strategic objectives over the next five years, introducing plans for the organisation's governance, membership and masonic halls.

The Pathway Programme will assist lodges and chapters to attract and retain members by evolving the interview process so that candidate expectations are in line with lodge culture. Lodge development of effective governance at all levels. The MFG aims to review, overhaul and clarify responsibilities, accountabilities, reporting relationships, leadership style, terms of reference and succession planning at every level. Proposed changes include reviewing performance in key roles and the creation of a succession-planning model that meets modern-day needs.

The MFG wants lodges to be more rigorous in their leadership selection and development programmes, and will provide training to help grow masonic skills in key lodge positions. There will also be a review of rules and regulations, with a consideration of a rewrite of the Book of Constitutions to better reflect the future needs of Freemasonry.

Attracting and retaining members is a central plank in the new strategy and the MFG will be introducing a membership pathway programme as well as Membership Officers in each Province, lodge and chapter.

Crucial to retention will be developing a mentoring culture in all existing members as well as ensuring Almoners are proactive in contacting members that do not attend a meeting to ensure they still feel included and cared for. Provinces will also be encouraged to implement a retrieval strategy with exit interviews and to assist disaffected members to find a lodge that meets their expectations.

In our own District the Board of General Purposes has established a Strategy group, charging it "to investigate and make recommendations on a strategic approach to be adopted by District Grand Lodge which will result in English Freemasonry in the South Island achieving a higher public profile and lead to increasing and retaining our membership and any likely costs arising from the investigation."

"WORKING TOGETHER FOR THE BETTERMENT OF FREEMASONRY..."



Well, that's a big statement! Yet on reflection it appears to me that for the most part it is exactly what the Brethren in our Districts, regardless of constitutional affiliations, have been striving towards since the first ships pulled into Akaroa and had an "Ad Hoc" meeting in colonial Aotearoa. From that first meeting a Masonic Legacy was created, added to, enhanced and handed on eventually to we 21st Century Masons.

Freemasonry gained a strong presence in New Zealand from the 1840's with the early lodges forming under Warrants from the Grand Lodges of England, Ireland and Scotland. (Continued over)

“WORKING TOGETHER ...” CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

This legacy gained momentum until 1890 when the Grand Lodge of New Zealand was created. At first Lodges met wherever they could, often combining their resources to build or convert spaces that could be a home for their meetings.

The various constitutions shared the available accommodation and generally worked well together. Consequently Freemasons throughout New Zealand inherited an eclectic collection of lodge rooms. Many were purpose built others were buildings adapted to suit. The ongoing care and maintenance often fell to enthusiastic volunteers or committee appointed individuals who did their very best to keep the cold weather out and the fraternal warmth inside. However, as membership fell or contributing lodges closed or moved away, some rather impressive buildings were reduced to only being used a handful of times a month.

The series of devastating earthquakes which began in 2010 reduced us to meeting in warehouses, bowls clubs, church halls and even private homes. We lost much of our heritage and the “bricks and mortar” endowments left to us by our forefathers.

Prior to the quakes there were already plans afoot to build a Freemasonry Centre on the site of the Shirley Masonic Hall but a commitment to occupy by sufficient lodges to make it financially viable was difficult to achieve. These same quakes now became the catalyst for several lodges to become partners in the new Shirley Freemasons Centre and for others to move their meetings to this venue in support. But first it had to be built!

What was required was a viable, safe, compliant, future proofed, bespoke and modern facility that could give the freemasons a place to call home and be commercially viable for the future. From day one a group of brethren “working together for the betterment of Freemasonry” embarked on a project to deliver the requirements on time and within budget.

It took time to get up and running but the end result is a facility that every freemason should be justifiably proud of. The new building well exceeds the post-quake building standards; it has a fully tenanted ground floor providing a revenue stream and two new lodge rooms with a refectory and boardroom.

Don't be fooled!, that extra non-masonic generated revenue is essential to the future of the project; it gives us a buffer against being solely reliant on the fickle fortunes of masonic membership and it gives us the ability to pay off the building mortgage more quickly.

The Shirley Freemasons Centre was officially opened by the Grand Master, Most Worshipful Brother Selwyn Cooper on 11 May 2013.



2015 has seen 395 lodge related meetings held in the Lodge Rooms at the Centre and the general feeling is that the complex is delivering what it should.

There were also 148 non-masonic hires of the Refectory, Boardroom or Foyer areas in 2015. Those hires are not only important in holding the rental charged to the lodges at an acceptable level but also in balancing the books for “upstairs” as there are still rates, electricity, phone, insurance, maintenance, custodial services and compliance bills to attend to! The goal was to have “upstairs pay for upstairs” and we've achieved that.

So, what of that legacy that started in Akaroa, continued in Christchurch in 1916 with the Masonic Hall in Gloucester Street through to 1993 with a new home in Latimer Square which served our needs until 2002?

It continues with the Shirley Freemasons Centre being the latest chapter (no pun intended!) in the ancient but living and breathing story of Canterbury Freemasons “Working together for the betterment of Freemasonry in Christchurch” and is indeed a legacy worthy of passing on to likeminded men yet to be introduced and admitted to the Craft.

Long may we all strive to work together in that love and harmony that characterises Freemasonry and that has the potential to produce such impressive results as demonstrated in our past, our present and hopefully well into our future. *Frans van Zoggel*



“Long may we all strive to work together in that love and harmony that characterises Freemasonry and that has the potential to produce such impressive results...”

FASTEST FREEMASON ON WATER? (PART 2)



Our readers may remember that several months ago I published the above picture of W Bro Graeme Gibbons' first racing boat, Mar-Jac, which was raced from 1975–80. This boat was capable of reaching speeds in excess of 70 mph (110km/hr) and is pictured here on Lake Kaniere in 1979. At the time I promised to include further pictures of Graeme's subsequent boats and have at last found a bit of space for them.

Graeme became interested in speedboat racing shortly after opening his garage, which he ran for some 30 years prior to retiring. Graeme built and raced all four of these boats himself, travelling to race meetings from Karapiro in the north to Dunedin in the south. In all the 25 years that he was racing Graeme only suffered two accidents and a broken shoulder.



MarJac II 1980 - 1986 75mph +



Piping Hot 1986 - 1992 85mph +



Totally Hot 1993 - 2000 100mph +

A NIGHT AT THE THEATRE



Written and Directed by Chris Coleman

OPAWA SCHOOL HALL
Crn Newbery St & Ford Rd
Doors open 7.30
SHOW 8.00pm
Ticket sales:
pmhplayers@paradise.net.nz
<https://sites.google.com/site/chchpmhplayers/>

TICKETS:
Adults: \$20.00
Children \$10.00
(12 years and under)

BYO REFRESHMENTS
NO REFUNDS

SHOW DATES 2016:
Wed 27th April
Thu 28th April
Fri 29th April
Sat 30th April
Wed 4th May
Thu 5th May
Fri 6th May
Sat 7th May

“Soul Mates will bring your childhood memories alive as you sit back and laugh at four men and women, as they share their stories from their various eras, sing, and wait...”

Once again St Alban's Lodge is inviting us all to a fundraising evening with the PMH players and their latest production, Soul Mates.

Come and relax and capture your imagination. Soulmates will bring your childhood memories alive as you sit back and laugh at four men and women, as they share their stories from their various eras, sing, and wait....

When their wait is finally over there are more hurdles to climb as they enter into a new realm where the atmosphere is divine, an odd mix of people, some familiar faces, and plenty of spiritual advice. Will they fit in?

Will they be allowed in? Is it everything they expected? Come along and find out.

The date that St Alban's have booked is Friday 29 April. Please contact Raelene Moore, phone 384-9941 to book. Tickets are \$20.

There will be tables of 6 available, and you may bring nibbles and wine or other refreshing drinks!

It will be at the Opawa School Hall, corner of Newbery St and Ford Road, Opawa. More details available from Lodge secretary Ben Parr at 03 942 6736

NB. The PMH players have, for many years, raised money for the Princess Margaret Hospital. Their productions are all home made, written by very talented members of the group. The audience are seated cabaret style and usually fuelled by some alcoholic beverages. Very little advertising is needed and they often have a waiting list.

40, Tancred Street,
Geraldine
7930

Phone: 03 693 9793

Mob: 021 1589 021

E-mail: richardtaylor@btinternet.com

Degrees South Deadlines:

April 25th for the May edition

July 31st for the August edition

Oct 31st for the November edition

Jan 30th for the February edition

W BRO ROB MCMURTRIE



Ceased Labour 25th January, 2016

W Bro Robin McMurtrie died as a result of his mobility scooter colliding with a car. Rob, as he was known, is survived by his wife Barbara and an adult family. He was born and was schooled in Hokitika.

Rob was initiated into the Pacific Lodge of Hokitika in February 1955, was WM in 1967 and for 61 years was a member of that Lodge, as were his father and brother. At the request of his family W Bro Doug Stapleton, also an honorary member of 1229, delivered a Masonic tribute at Rob's funeral service.

PACIFIC LODGE OF HOKITIKA 150TH

A fabulous evening was enjoyed on the 31st January at the banquet held in honour of the 150th anniversary of the Pacific Lodge of Hokitika No 1229. 104 people sat down to a sumptuous buffet at the Shirley Freemasons Centre, entertained by W Bro Bill Grubb on the keyboard and enthralled by W Bro Doug Stapleton's brief history of the Lodge. These events don't just "happen" and our sincere thanks go out to the lodge members who put in so much hard work to make the evening such a success. Members also took the opportunity to invite a number of non masons and their families who all seemed to appreciate the fellowship and company of our "Secret Society".

SOUTH ISLAND REFECTORY CUSTOMS

It has been said that refectory proceedings are as important as the ritual. We won't debate that today but a good refectory does complete a great meeting. So why do we have some somewhat strange customs and what are they?

Most will know that you should not eat or drink at the table until grace has been said. And the correct response to grace is "So mote it be".

Some of the customs of yore are now redundant, but did you know that you could not smoke in refectory until after the loyal toast?

Toasts are another interesting aspect of refectory and while not peculiar to Freemasonry are not nearly as common as they once were. But like everything else Masonic there are customs to be observed.

Formal toasts are given when the recipient is not present. Toasts that fall into this category would usually include the loyal toast, the toast to the Grand Master, and the Tyler's Toast. A formal toast is proposed and honoured, but the proposer does not "talk to the toast".

The procedure goes like this; the Director of Ceremonies announces the toast and all stand while the proposer gives the toast. The proposer starts by addressing those present and always addresses the most important first. The most important person is always the Worshipful Master. After that you have a wide choice depending upon who is in attendance. That is where the Masonic tradition of equality comes in and you can capture the lot with "distinguished brethren" followed by "brethren all". Don't fall into the trap of trying to name everyone as it is bad form to miss someone and it takes too long.

The toast is now given. All drinking vessels should remain untouched on the tables until the very last moment when you pick them up to directly drink to the toast. If the recipient is not present, then no Fire is given.

The toast to the visitors is the classic example of toasts given to people present and follows a similar format with these differences. The first and most important point is that the responder should always be asked before refectory to respond and never just announced after the toast has been given. The larger the event, the more notice should be given.

This time only the proposer stands as he should always say something of substance which may be replied to. And after the brethren have toasted those present a "Fire" is given. The proposer should always lead the fire, not the DC. Unless Ladies are present in which case no fires are given.

A joke may be told, but it should always be appropriate. If you are wondering if it is appropriate, then it is probably not.

Applause is another custom peculiar to Freemason's refectories. Applause is given by tapping the table with you hand. In days gone by you only tapped the table once, but with fewer numbers you can tap three or four times. This is done so that all applause is equal as all try equally to give the best addresses that they can.

Finally we end with the Tyler's Toast followed by a silent fire. Originally introduced as a mark of respect when toasting the memory of a deceased brother. A writer commented in the 1880's that it used to be the custom in his Province (Northants. and Hunts.) to have 'silent firing' for the toast to Absent Brethren until it was forbidden by Provincial Grand Master, Lord Euston, who said, 'It was quite bad enough for them to be in distressed circumstances, we do not want to bury them!'

Did you know there are now words attributed to that fire? The last nine moves of three by three represent are said to represent the following: brotherly love, relief, truth, faith, hope, charity, glory to God, peace on earth, and goodwill towards all men.

W.Bro Phil Jackson

