

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

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DEGREES SOUTH



MAY 2022



COMMUNICATIONS 2022

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

COMMUNICATION
2022 1

DGM THOUGHTS 2

BOARD REPORT 3

FAMOUS MASONS 4



IMPORTANT DATES

- Installations
Phoenix - June 11th
Winchester—June 27th
Dunedin—Aug 20th
Canterbury RAC—Aug 24th



CELEBRATING
1717 2017
300 YEARS
UNITED GRAND LODGE
OF ENGLAND

DGM THOUGHTS

Brethren it is wonderful to see our Lodges working once more following the interruptions of last year. I hope that you are all managing to meet safely and revitalising your Lodges after the periods of inactivity.

At our Communications meeting I reminded the attendees that last year I had mentioned that we may now appoint a District Grand Membership Officer who, at a District level, could work with the lodges on their various approaches to attracting and engaging new members. At the time I asked for expressions of interest but, sadly, there were none. Over the last four and a half years it has of course, been my constant concern that some of our Lodges are struggling and have been for a number of years. This situation is hardly surprising given that we are operating, and have been for 132 years, as one of the minority Constitutions here on the South Island. Believe me our Brethren in the District of the North Island are dealing with the identical problems and also have several Lodges whose survival is equally threatened. The system within which we work forces us down the route that, once a Lodge is no longer viable, we seem unable to readily accept that it is no longer viable, given that we do not have the freedom to replace that Lodge at some point in the future.

I look back to my home province with some measure of jealousy as I see various special interest Lodges being founded, based on such common interests as Football, Rugby, Motorcycling and Fly Fishing to name a few. Equally I look back sadly that three of the eight craft Lodges that were still meeting in my home town of Chichester when I left in 2004, have now closed when their members concluded that they had no future. Nevertheless one new Lodge has been consecrated there last year, the Artemis Lodge, founded by members with a passion for all things shooting and hunting. The six remaining craft Lodges draw their membership from a population similar to that of Timaru or Nelson Districts, of around 50,000, a population which also sustains six Royal Arch Chapters and fourteen other Masonic Orders.

My concern in all of this, is that I see many of our members prioritising the survival of their lodge over all else. Gone is the enjoyment of their Freemasonry, only to be replaced by a constant worry as to where a new candidate can be found. Gone are so many new members who find that they have joined an organisation focussing so much

energy on an existential dilemma they wonder why they bothered to join? Gone are the enthusiastic Masons who have been worn down by the endless nostalgic reminiscences of how big the Lodge used to be. Gone are the sons following their fathers into the craft. All that seems to matter is that the Lodge remains in existence...regardless. Regardless of the quality of Candidates, regardless of the quality of ritual, regardless of the enjoyment of the members and regardless of any sort of Lodge Plan for the future.

It seems to me that the solution must lie within all of us. It cannot just be left to those vulnerable Lodges to solve on their own. It would be wrong for our stronger Lodges not to involve themselves in considering possible strategies for these vulnerable Lodges and to share their own methods of attracting and engaging members and how they keep their Lodges thriving. From my perspective I have seen examples of a huge reluctance to change anything and a blind faith that repeating the mistakes of the past will yield a different result, which deep down we know it can never happen. In the recent past we have seen a number of unviable Lodges prepared to change, such as Pacific Lodge of Hokitika, Dunedin Lodge, Port Chalmers Marine and most recently Canterbury. That doesn't necessarily mean to say that in order to survive a Lodge should relocate, however a great deal of original thought should be invested into exploring the question "What could we do differently today to what we have done in the past?" so we can break this cycle of employing hope over innovative action. Take some time to describe a vision for your Lodge's future, what sort of Lodge would you like it to be? Make a plan that would give you the best chance of achieving that vision. If the Lodge hasn't grown in the last three years then please change something or you'll be destined to fail. I hope soon to appoint that District Grand Membership Officer who could work with all Lodges on this type of planning. An instrument of change who would be willing to challenge the status quo at every turn in order to secure a future for our Lodges.

Meanwhile I wish you all a safe and comfortable winter and I look forward to catching up with many of you over the coming months.

Faternally,

Richard

BOARD REPORT

Usually when compiling this report , the hardest part is to what to leave out after such a busy year This time due to circumstances beyond our control it is what to put in the report.

The past year has been eventful to say the least holding meetings by zoom and spending time discussing how we can function with the ever changing and challenging Covid situation Since the beginning of the dreaded Covid pandemic we have missed catching up with fellow board members in person , and it's fair to say doing our business via zoom meetings are not as easy as face to face.

Without dwelling on the challenges of Covid , it has meant that unfortunately not everything planned for the year was achieved.

Included in our to finalise list were plans to digitalize Lodge archives held in storage at The Amberley Lodge Rooms. They are deteriorating, so a small task force has been set up to organise and rectify the problem.

Our new website is still being worked on , and we must continue with our focus on this.

Without wanting to miss anyone , there are people I sincerely want to thank for their assistance throughout the year including Our District Grand Master Richard . I have found Richard to be extremely helpful to communicate with regarding Board matters , and although we have from time to time had different views , we have always been able to discuss and arrive at the best conclusion for the Boards.

It is now common Knowledge that after five years of dedicated service our Secretary is standing down When Karl Moen came into the position , he was following on from Ron Sutherland , which were very large shoes to fill. Karl has quietly gone about his business and has put a huge amount of successful and appreciated effort into his secretarial duties. His diligence and loyalty goes with out saying , but I will say it . Thanks Karl

Two of our longest serving senior members are also retiring and I thank them both for their assistance . WBros Stenning and Borland.

Both Ken 17 years and David 13 years , have been long serving Board Members , who in all the years I can remember , have hardly if ever missed a meet-

ing , if at all.

David put many years and a lot of time into developing our original website , amongst his other contributions and District work on The West Coast.

Although known by Masons throughout New Zealand , Ken is extremely popular in Mid and South Canterbury , for the work he has performed He has put an incredible amount of work in liaising with The Midland Masonic Group , which has strengthened our relationship with Sister Constitutions there I would like to thank all Board members for their tolerance , shown during the year , when we have had to change plans and meet by zoom.

In conclusion , I would like to thank all my fellow Board Members and Masonic friends , for the kindness and concern shown to me during the year before and after I had my back operation last year

Without being dramatic , I was told I would probably be in a wheel chair by last Christmas if not operated on , so it's so great to be able to stroll around and to greet you all well

Fraternal regards

John Woolcott

President Of The Board Of General Purposes

**When you retire from the Board, we
will find you a new position**



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The views expressed in these pages do not
necessarily reflect those of the District Grand Lodge

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FAMOUS MASONS

Harry Albert Atkinson 1831-1892

Soldier, farmer, politician, social reformer. Premier 1876, 1877, 1883 and 1887.

Family information has it that Harry Albert Atkinson was born in Broxton, Cheshire, England on November 1st 1831 and was educated at Rochester School, Blackneath. He was the seventh of 13 children born into the “uneasy classes” of mid-Victorian England. His father was a stonemason and architect and taught his children to be self-reliant and independent as is evidenced by Atkinson senior, a Unitarian, inviting his children to choose for themselves their own religions.

Harry chose Church of England as did Arthur, his brother nearest him in age. At school, Harry became interested in New Zealand and on December 9th 1852 departed England, bound for New Zealand, on the *Sir Edward Paget* amongst a party of ten family and friends, including Arthur.

The journey was unusually slow even by the standards of the times and they finally reached New Plymouth on June 18th 1853.

The brothers did not arrive in New Zealand penniless or without practical skills. One of Harry’s first tasks in New Zealand was to make six-dozen pairs of boots for a local cobbler; he also worked as the “under-man” on a pitsaw.

By the end of 1853, the brothers had purchased 200 acres

on the Grey Block, at 10s an acre, and were busy clearing it.

The following year saw Harry’s house built at Hurworth, as the settlement was then called, and on March 25th 1856 he married Amelia Jane Skinner at New Plymouth. The pioneer life suited Harry and he was soon busy raising bullocks, pigs, cows, ducks, turkeys, and fowls to help feed his young family of three sons and a daughter. His industry saw him set up a dairy on the farm to process his own cheese and butter. He also contracted to supply firewood for the troops stationed in Taranaki and he had a contract to carry mail between New Plymouth and Wellington.

When military activities started to escalate in 1860 he joined the Taranaki Rifle Volunteers on their formation, and in 1863, he was given a command in the Forest Rangers and promoted to the rank of Major.

His political life began in 1857 with his election to the provincial council. He once told a friend that he went “to speak for the bush.”

Atkinson was elected to the House of Representatives in 1861. Three years later he became Minister for Colonial Defence in the Weld administration.

Retiring in 1866 due to Amelia’s death he stated that his children’s well being was to be his chief concern.

In 1876, Harry Atkinson became Premier. He was awarded the K.C.M.G in 1888 and was appointed the Speaker of the Legislative Council in 1891.

Sir Harry Albert Atkinson died in office on June 18th 1892.

He had been made a Mason at **Mount Egmont Lodge Number 670, New Plymouth**, on May 11th 1864.

His career took him to Wellington where he joined **Wellington Lodge Number 1521**, sometime after 1875 as the Lodge opened on April 23rd that year.

On May 28th 1888, he was installed as the **District Grand Master for Wellington**, a position he held until his death.

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