

The DGM/s Corner

DISTRICT GRAND MASTERS WORDS

Brethren, as this is my first notice for 2026. I welcome you all back for the advancement of our masonic journey.

Brethren we certainly are in uncertain times as world events unfold.

As a nation we may be well isolated from the actual war going on far from our shores, but we are not immune to its effects. As we have noticed, the prices of goods are beginning to increase. This is particularly evident in the expenses associated with maintaining our vehicles. While supporting our lodges is important, our families must come first. We need to protect our family's interests and make sure we care for them properly. With this I hope to see you all around the district as conditions allow.

The one thing I get out of all the lodges I visit is the differences in how you run your lodges, from the opening and closing, business section, initiations, passing and raising. Although No lodge is generally doing things wrong there is always room to improve what we do. We must always remember that new candidates coming in are looking at how we conduct ourselves. In other words, first impressions are important and can influence how a new mason experiences their time with your lodge. We have lodges who have multiple instruction nights to prepare for the degree they are working and some that do not practice at all. I hear that we are only a few and it is hard to practice. While this point may be valid, effective leadership begins with the master, who should ensure that instruction is provided so your candidate receives the best initiation possible. Brethren as masons we should always take pride in who we are and what we do. Small numbers do not mean we drop our standards. This is the same for both the lodge room and the refectory.

Our annual communications are scheduled for weekend 15 / 16 May. On this auspicious occasion we will have the honour of Bro. George Francis PAGM from Grand lodge present. I ask for your support with this annual event which is the highlight of our masonic year finishing with the banquet on the Saturday night.

I also ask that you encourage your Master Masons to attend especially all those raised during this last year so they may be welcomed into the district.

A special meeting is scheduled for Tuesday the 19th, following communications, to provide our esteemed visitors with an opportunity to experience Freemasonry in the South Island. More details on this shortly. Please put this in your calendars and join what should be a great evening.

The following weekend in Taupo is the 150th celebrations of the DGLNI. This is on the weekend of 23RD May. I understand flights are getting more expensive, but I'd be grateful for your company if you can make it. A good weekend awaits.

Bro. J.O Soper DGM

Lodge Roundup

Southern Star 735

Southern Star Lodge continues to enjoy a steady flow of candidates, with a First Degree ceremony conducted in March for Mr. Emiliano Garcia.

This follows the initiation of Mr. Louis Picot at the February meeting, and the Lodge is already preparing for another First Degree in April for a further candidate.

It is encouraging to see continued interest in Freemasonry in Nelson, with new members joining and taking their first steps in the Lodge.



Canterbury 1048

Saturday 14th March: The Canterbury Lodge No. 1048 EC held its mid-afternoon Installation with WBro Robert (Bob) Frame being installed as Master for the first time as an E.C. Master. Bob was previously a Master of the St Augustine Lodge No. 99



L to R

WBro Noel Howard, S.W., WBro John Woolcott, I.P.M., RWBro John Soper, DGM, (Installing Master.) WBro Fran Van Zoggel, DDGM, (Opened the Board.) WBro Aird Muir, J.W. WBro Bob Frame, Master, in his chair.

As Bob was a first time Master in the English Constitution he was given the full Installation Ceremony.

Visitors

The Scottish Constitution was represented by Bro Grant Riddell, Substitute District Grand Master, NZ South. The NZ Constitution was represented by VWBro Dau Hansen, Past District Grand Director of Ceremonies. There were also Masters from Winchester, St Albans, Caledonian and Thistle.

Ladies were present and entertained in refectory. After the customary toasts most adjourned to the Formosa Restaurant at 6pm for a most enjoyable banquet.

Pacific Lodge of Hokitika 1229

Installation meeting held for W.Bro Andrew Mitchell followed by a meal at the Crazy Horse.



Greymouth

Greetings Brethren All.

The Greymouth Lodge held its regular February meeting on Saturday, 07th, & we were very fortunate to again be joined by our DGM, Rt. Wor. Bro. J.O. Soper.

This meeting proved to be a productive one, with a lot of topics discussed, incl some insight as to why in our lodge in particular, the minutes of the last regular meeting of the lodge, are always read aloud in open lodge. Thank you very much Wor. Bro. Smith for the daily advancement in Masonic knowledge for us all.

The highlight of our meeting was without a doubt, the presentation of a 50 yr jewel to Wor. Bro. G.Sara, this was a very special occasion for us & our Lodge, as we all know these are not an every meeting occurrence.

50yrs service, regardless of what organisation is a tremendous commitment to give, & we are very honoured to have the caliber of a brother like Wor. Bro. Sara amongst us, his knowledge & expertise is something that can't be bought & only comes with time, experience & applying yourself as Wor. Bro. Sara has done.

He has held many an office within these years & always been happy to step up & fill any role, I was fortunate enough to have the honour & privilege to be the current sitting Master for this occasion, in the presentation of his jewel. Wor. Bro. Sara we truly hope you will wear this jewel with the pride & honour it deserves, congratulations to you an achievement this momentous milestone, well done, especially given the Lodges recent history, it wasn't too long ago we weren't even sure the Lodge would survive as the future looked bleak but to say the least. However, things are slowly changing & the future is again starting to look positive for the Greymouth Lodge, we hope we continue to do both yourself & the brethren of the Lodge that have gone before us proud.

Fraternally.

Wor. Bro. P.D.Brewer ADGDC

WM. Greymouth Lodge #1233



Lazar Lodge 1689

On Monday 2nd March, Lazar held its Installation in the Nelson-Tasman Masonic Centre. W Bro Tam Hazan became Master for the coming two years.

Lazar is now a dining lodge, holding four meetings per year, allowing wives and partners to enjoy the social aspects of Freemasonry. One of those meetings is held in the Tiny Lodge at Willow Bank Heritage Village,

and is in the form of a family BBQ (following the ceremonial part). This is the February meeting, so all enjoy the warm balmy evening in an historical setting.

<https://www.willowbankwakefield.co.nz/mini-lodge/>

Members of Lazar are drawn from the three more 'regular' Lodges in Nelson, but who still participate in charity and community work as part of Lazar. A couple of examples from this year are the annual two day Dog Show in Richmond, at which we run the catering BBQ, and - very recently - assistance with traffic management when Willow Bank hosted classic car enthusiasts (an international rally involving over 550 vehicles). For the latter, a Lazar Mason was stationed inside the Tiny Lodge to talk to guests about Freemasonry in general.

The Kirkpatrick Masonic Trust (scholarships at Nelson College for Girls) normally has at least one current Trustee who is coincidentally a Lazar Freemason.

Special thanks this year go to W Bro Ray Maloney for being the Installing Officer, and to District Grand Master RW Bro John Soper and his wife who joined us for the evening.



Phoenix 1690

Late February W. Bro. Tyler hosted our friends and family afternoon which we made into a bus excursion to Hector and very well supported by brethren and partners

Produced for the table was home smoked fish, mussel patties and battered rig, snapper, gurnard and hot chips all swilled down with whatever took your fancy on the day.

Phoenix had a regular meeting for March with RW Bro. J. O. Soper DGM in attendance

March friends and family we had Taj Neil (a young man that the Lodge had sponsored) give a talk about his sailing trip on the Spirit of Adventure over the New Year which sailed out of Picton.

There were a couple that had been invited to attend and from that we have a new candidate for the Lodge with the possibility of another in the wings

We followed it all up with a Chinese, fish and chip meal which was enjoyed by everyone

Winchester 1737

Domestic Meeting

Ashburton 1811

No details provided.

Conyers 1916

Brother Isaac Foster was Installed as the Worshipful Master for the ensuing year.

He then installed his Officers.



As part of the Ceremony, a suitably inscribed Masonic Bible was presented to Brother Tana Nitayawan who is joining the Defence Forces.



Amberley 2007

A domestic meeting.

St Albans 2597

A different night was held where members did their favourite charges night. Marty Gerkin did the First Degree Tracing Board for them.

The new WM of Conyers was in attendance.

**No meeting**

Dunedin Lodge 931

Canterbury Royal Arch Chapter 1048

St John 1137

Greymouth Lodge 1233

The Knowledge Corner

The Tyler and the Cowan

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I'd like to address the significant role played by an individual whose presence at the entrance of our Lodge is crucial to protecting the integrity, dignity, and future of our organisation: the Tyler.

The Tyler's responsibilities extend beyond mere ceremony.

Serving as one of the primary guardians of our secure environment, the Tyler ensures that only individuals who are properly prepared and qualified are admitted to our meetings.

Equipped with the traditional sword, the Tyler represents our initial safeguard against unqualified persons and potential intruders who might compromise the harmony and sanctity of our fellowship.

We're all familiar with the term "Intruder"—one who attempts to enter uninvited.

So, let's pause to ask: what precisely is a "Cowan"?

The Masonic answer, while rooted deep in our ritual, extends far beyond the walls of the Lodge.

According to the Dictionary the Noun "Cowan" has a few definitions:

- A worker in un-mortared stone; a stonemason who has not served an apprenticeship.
- A person who attempts to pass himself off as a Freemason without having experienced the rituals or going through the degrees.

- (*slang*) A sneak; an inquisitive or prying person.
- (*common*) One who is uninitiated, outside, “profane”

Yet, “Cowan”; carries a more nuanced meaning and is sometimes replaced by “Eavesdropper”; in different rituals.

The word “eavesdropping”; itself comes from villagers standing beneath the eaves of cottages to overhear conversation inside.

Though Cowans historically have been associated with eavesdropping, there is little evidence they were more prone to such behaviour than others.

To understand the Cowan, we must look to our Masonic origins in Great Britain.

In rural regions, skilled labourers called Cowans constructed stone walls and sometimes cottages without mortar, their artistry is still evident in the walls that still divide paddocks and mark boundaries in Britain and can even be seen in parts of New Zealand today.

For centuries these builders, the Cowans, were respected tradesmen, supplementing their incomes from the land with hewing stone from quarries and serving their communities.

Meanwhile, urban stonemasons banded together in tightly knit guilds, transmitting the secret knowledge of mortared stonework and architecture to their apprentices.

Their great works—cathedrals, castles, city halls—were bound by mortar and designed by tradition, their lodges reserved for those “free” and “accepted”.

Interaction between Masons and Cowans was rare until historical events, such as the Black Death and the Norman conquest, brought them together on rural worksites and in guilds.

During the Plague the churches discovered that the disease was most prevalent in urban areas and cities which were densely populated.

So, the church started ordering cathedrals and churches to be built outside of the city, in the countryside, and urban Masons collaborated with rural Cowans for the first time.

This policy is reflected in the names of many churches in Britain, such as “St Martins in the Field” in London, “St Michael in the Hamlet” in Liverpool, “St Anne on the River” and “St Nicholas in the Meadow” or “Saint Pauls Outside the Walls”.

We know that only those Craftsmen possessing the necessary skill and knowledge were admitted into the guilds.

Cowans, while respected for their craftsmanship, were not considered full members and were kept at a distance, usually confined to the quarry.

Some operative lodges chose to admit Cowans during periods of declining work opportunities or to complete nearly finished structures; however, when Cowans comprised the majority of the membership, such lodges often dissolved. Alternatively, admitting members of the gentry became a preferred approach, and as they formed the majority, Speculative Masonry emerged, characterised by the symbolic and allegorical use of Masonic tools—a tradition that persists today.

Thus, the Cowan in our history was not an adversary, but an outsider seeking the same recognition and status as a qualified Stonemason within a Stonemasons Guild.

What, then, does the Cowan symbolise in our fraternity, in our Ritual?

The Cowan, in Masonic terms represents those who, lacking faith or spiritual values, cannot progress in the Craft as intended.

Like ancient Cowans who built without mortar, we consider a Mason without a stable foundation of beliefs and commitment to Freemasonry may struggle to attain true growth.

If we admit candidates without the necessary faith or spiritual foundation, we risk admitting Cowans.

Even attaining the degrees of initiation, passing, and raising does not transform a Cowan into a true Mason unless his intention is based on our tenets and principles and not on selfish personal gain or prejudiced motivation.

As history shows us, entry into the lodge does not confer mastery of the Craft.

There are presently Cowans within the Craft, but they rarely pose a significant challenge as very few persist in the fraternity when their expectations of material or social gain are unmet. Most drift away, leaving our lodge to continue its work unhindered.

Brethren, the role of the Tyler is therefore both historic, symbolic and crucial to the wellbeing and integrity of the Craft.

The Tyler serves as a vigilant and diligent overseer, responsible for admitting only those individuals who are qualified, prepared, and deserving to enter. While this responsibility is also supported by others such as the Inner Guard and the Wardens, it is primarily the Tyler who maintains continuous vigilance at the entrance.

His dedication to fulfilling the duties of his office, adherence to the principles of the Craft, and commitment to upholding established traditions contribute significantly to the integrity and foundation of the organization.

By maintaining these principles, Freemasonry will endure and thrive with integrity, regardless of the presence of Cowans.

Let us honour our Tyler, it is through his dedication that our lodge remains secure and our fraternity strong.

Thank you, Brethren, for your attention—and for your continued support of our Brother Tyler.

District Charity (Nigel Paterson – nigpat@extra.co.nz)

District Charity Update

Hard to believe how fast the year is already moving! Hopefully you all managed to get a bit of downtime over Easter, spend some time with family, and sneak in a few treats along the way.

Cholmondeley Children's Charity

Back in February, Cholmondeley ran their annual golf tournament (sponsored by Ilam Toyota), and we were lucky enough to get a team together. Jason Young and I, along with a couple of others, had a great day out at Russley Golf Course. The weather turned it on for us... the golf, not so much! Still, 6th out of 24 teams isn't something to complain about.

They've already got next year's tournament lined up for March 2027, so if that sounds like your kind of day, keep an eye out and get involved. There are a few other events in the pipeline too, so I'll keep you posted as they come up.



One Mother to Another (OMTA)

OMTA has come out of the gates pretty strong this year, with a real focus on bringing in more sponsors and increasing the number of care packages they deliver.

They've got a number of events planned to help with that, including a great one coming up for Mother's Day.

Stuck on a Mother's Day gift?

Cholmondeley Founders Gin – Perfect if there's a gin lover in your life. A portion from each bottle goes straight back to supporting the charity, and they'll deliver anywhere in NZ.

OMTA Mother's Day High Tea – A really nice event celebrating motherhood and the people who support it. High tea, bubbles, a live panel, plus raffles and auctions—should be a great afternoon.

I'll share more as the year rolls on.

In the meantime, I'd love to hear what your lodge has been up to on the charity front. If you've got something happening or need a hand with anything, just give me a shout—always happy to help.

Faternally,

Nigel Paterson

Membership Officer (Alister MacPherson - alistermacnz@gmail.com)

UGLE has produced some very information on membership. As some examples, there is a brochure that can be given to new potential members, an Initiates guide and the Royal Arch. The District Secretary has copies of these.

District Mentor (Nigel Howard – nigelflyer@extra.co.nz)

ATTENTION ALL LODGE MENTORS

I will be holding a meeting for all Lodge Mentor's at our Annual Communications meeting on Saturday 16th May.

Venue, is the 2nd Lodge room at Canterbury Freemason's centre Start time 10:15am for up to 1 hour, and time available afterwards for individual discussions.

I have important information to hand out and the meeting is an opportunity for feedback from all Lodge Mentors including how I, and District can support you in your important office.

If a Lodge Mentor from any Lodge is unable to attend, then the Senior Warden of the Lodge will be expected to attend.

As announced by our DGM, the Senior Warden is the ostensible Mentor of each Lodge and must assume that role in the absence of the duly appointed Lodge Mentor.

Further details will be distributed via your Lodge Secretaries.

I look forward to meeting you all at our Annual Communications.

THE PUBLICATION OF THE DISTRICT GRAND LODGE OF THE SOUTH ISLAND

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

Degrees South Deadline:

4th May for the April Edition.