

Thames Valley Allied Masonic Degrees



Gridiron Gossip *Summer/Autumn 2026*



No sooner had the vernal equinox announced the arrival of spring than warnings of Arctic conditions followed. May then brought cold weather and extraordinary rainfall, prompting the familiar grumbles as we urged the jet stream to move north.

The impact of global warming is now impossible to ignore. The UK has experienced extreme temperatures, drought conditions leading to a hosepipe ban, and fans and air-conditioning units in short supply.

Having wished the jet stream away, we are now demanding its return!

To cap it all, mid-August gave us the opportunity to witness an almost complete eclipse of the sun; the presence of which, created a shortage of colanders in the shops! Who would have thought it?

Collaboration Across the Companion Orders

Over the past twelve months, the Heads of the Companion Orders in Buckinghamshire and those with responsibilities that stretch into Oxfordshire, Berkshire, and Middlesex, have held several meetings, chaired by the Craft Provincial Grand Master for Buckinghamshire, (RW Bro Tim Anders) alongside the Grand Superintendent of the Royal Arch (E Comp Graham Dearing). Such collaboration has emanated from the 2 Grand Lodges, that of the United Grand Lodge of England, and the Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons, in an attempt to demonstrate that the Craft and Royal Arch are not in opposition to the Companion Orders but are in amity with each, able to work together, whilst gaining an insight of the teachings and understanding of how each Companion Order fits into the whole structure of Freemasonry, ie sharing the same principals of Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth..

By sitting down together and sharing with each other the concepts that govern our respective Orders, we have been able to reflect on:

- the strengths and weaknesses of each Companion Order;
- methods to improve recruitment and to increase memberships;
- how to raise the level of enjoyment at each meeting;
- the style and conduct of the festive board that reduces the formality, whilst keeping in due bounds;
- supporting and working together and highlighting the raison d'être of each Order that encompasses the teachings and concepts gained from our respective rituals;
- and where the morals and values taught can enlighten the discerning Mason along his Masonic journey.

While the District has welcomed new candidates, we have also mourned the loss of several members to higher service. Their memory and Masonic achievements remain with us, especially in the Councils most affected. May our departed brethren rest in peace.



Invitations for promotions/appointments in Grand Rank and District Grand Rank will now have been received by the recipients and, I'm assuming, have been accepted. Each of the recipients of Grand Rank will be announced at the District Grand meeting whilst those receiving District promotions/appointments will be invested with their new ranks. The offer of any appointment is made after careful consideration by the District Executive and approved by me and will only be awarded if the recipient has been found worthy of the honour.

Next month, the District Grand Secretary will be issuing the summons for the District meeting. Brethren, this is your meeting and you are encouraged to attend, not only to show the support for your Council, but to come and cheer loudly in support of your Brethren who will be receiving District honours. Reserve Saturday 17 October in your diary for the District meeting at Bletchley.

RW Bro Robert W Chevin – District Grand Prefect

Around the District

Bocardo Council begins the Installation season on Saturday 13 September, which will be followed by Rollright Council on Tuesday 16 September: both Councils would welcome your support if you can attend.

Cowper & Newton Council Installation Meeting – 10 June

Wednesday 10 June, W Bro Paul Harrison was installed as the seventh Worshipful Master of the Council. In the absence of the Worshipful Master, the District Grand Prefect used the opportunity to take the Chair and open the Council, which was followed by installing Brother Paul into the Chair of the Council. There followed the installation of Officers for the ensuing year and on completion of all business, the evening was concluded by a short drive to the 'Inn on the Lake' for an excellent pub meal in pleasant company.



Officers for 2026-2027



WM congratulated by the DGP



**appears to be an unscheduled GPC
.....with the DC leading**



**with the DC leading a Q&A
session to ascertain that all were aware of
their role**



**The DistGJW and DepDistGDC
seem uncertain as to where they are going to sit**



**The escorting DC eventually called a
halt to all the confusion and normal
service was resumed!**



Annual Sunday Luncheon – 5 July



The annual Sunday luncheon was held this year at the Uxbridge Masonic Centre and was attended by 35 members of the District, together with their families. Those present enjoyed an excellent carvery, followed by an impressive selection of desserts that would have tested the resolve of even the most committed weightwatcher.

The occasion was well organised and ably managed by the District Grand Junior Warden, W Bro Silverio Ostrowski, to whom we are most grateful for his efforts in making it such an enjoyable event. Sincere thanks are also due to everyone who donated prizes for the raffle, which raised £175.

In 2027, the luncheon will be held in either Oxfordshire or Berkshire, at a venue yet to be confirmed.



Middlesex Council No 108 – 1 July



Opening of the Meeting

As the Worshipful Master was unavoidably delayed and unable to arrive in time to open the lodge, the District Grand Prefect took the Chair. By the time he had opened the lodge and dealt with the administrative items on the agenda, the Worshipful Master arrived safely and was able to take his rightful place.

Ceremonial Business

The meeting had been scheduled to undertake the Degree of Knights of Constantinople; however, the candidate was unable to attend on this occasion. The lodge therefore prepared the room to admit the following members as Grand Tilers of Solomon:

- Bro James Payen
- Bro Bhadresh Patel of Walpole Council

The work was very well carried out by the Secretary, W Bro John Stribling, with able assistance from W Bro Keith Bristow and W Bro Graham Seeman.

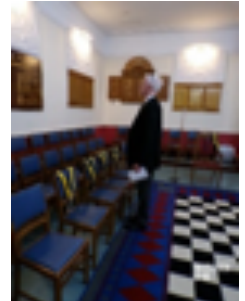
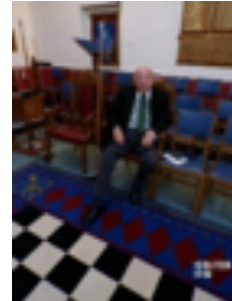
On resuming a lodge of StLM, the District Grand Prefect accepted an invitation to present a Grand Council certificate to Bro Gill Singleton (DistGOrg). The District Grand Prefect had been responsible for introducing Bro Gill into the Order and was delighted to be able to undertake this next step in Bro Gill's Allied journey and to explain the content of the certificate.

By now, the Brethren were expressing signs of hunger and thirst and on the closing the lodge, there followed a swift beeline to the bar. Once thirsts had been slaked there was only a delightful festive board to attend, which was duly undertaken.



Veran Council – 18 July

This meeting was the first since the amendment of the By-Laws to reflect that the Council was no longer a Past Masters' Council and had returned to being a Council open to new members. This meeting was also the occasion when it met at a temporary venue, Caversham Masonic Centre, following the issues surrounding the condition of the building at the regular venue in Wokingham.



Some meetings can be a waiting game hoping that everybody else arrives on time to open the lodge!

Everybody expected did arrive in time and having opened a lodge of StLM, the first candidate to be admitted was Bro Simon Jeffery. Simon is well known throughout other Orders, in particular the Royal and Select Masters; a Berkshire Mason. Having been Admitted into the Order, Simon was subsequently Created a Tiler of King Solomon and was accordingly received and welcomed into the Order of the Allied Degrees by the District Grand Prefect.



New and Joining Members

In addition to welcoming a new member into the Lodge, the District Grand Prefect was equally pleased to welcome two joining members into the Council. Bros Jarrad Lewis and Julian Cox, both members of Richard Mordant Council, regularly demonstrate their support for the District as a whole and for its Councils in particular. They are always willing to play their part in ceremonies whenever called upon.



*Bro Jarrad Lewis,
DGP, Bro Julian Cox*



Effect of the By-Law Change

Following the amendment of the By-Laws, the Council is now able to admit and welcome members who have not previously been installed as Worshipful Master in the Order.

Before this change, the Council had been holding its own, with Past Masters continuing to join as members. However, the Covid pandemic, lockdown, and the gradual return to Masonic business changed the position considerably.

Many Worshipful Masters, across every Order, remained in office for longer than usual—some for two years and others for three. This slowed the installation of successors and reduced the number of newly qualified Past Masters available at the time. As a result, some Past Masters did not feel compelled to join another Lodge, having become accustomed to a reduced meeting schedule.

District.

Presentation of the District Grand Prefect's Certificate of Merit



W Bro Peter Rawlinson (DGSec) & RWBro Bob Chevin (DGP)

The occasion provided an ideal opportunity to celebrate the 40th anniversary of W Bro Peter Rawlinson's admission to Veran Council. Peter was admitted on 19 July 1986 and later installed as Worshipful Master on 13 October 1990.

Many will know Peter through his role as District Grand Secretary, where he works tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure that the District runs smoothly — while also helping to keep the District Grand Prefect in check!

The District Grand Prefect was therefore delighted to mark the occasion by presenting W Bro Peter with his Certificate of Merit, in recognition of all that he does for the District and in celebration of 40 years a member of Veran Council.



Chiltern Hundreds Council No 142

This year's annual Red Cross of Babylon was hosted by Chiltern Hundreds Council for three new members, with District Officers supporting a ceremony, performed in accordance with the ritual of the Degree, though without the banquet.

At its conclusion, the District Grand Prefect welcomed Bros Simon Jeffery, Reg Austin, and Peter Payen, the latter having completed all five Degrees and being presented with his breast jewels.

On resuming the lodge of StLM, the Worshipful Master invited the District Grand Prefect to present to Bro Paul Hathorn with his Grand Council certificate.



District Visits

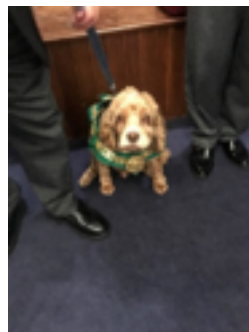
Devon & Cornwall – 25 July

The annual visit to the Devon & Cornwall District meeting was an extremely 'warm' affair this year, with temperatures into the thirties – thank goodness for air-conditioning!



The District was represented by the District Grand Prefect, the Deputy District Grand Prefect, and District Grand Director of Ceremonies.

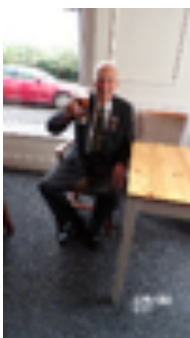
Six District Grand Prefects made the journey to Plymouth in support of RWBro Barry Slade – District Grand Prefect Devon & Cornwall. Again, the hot weather prevailed and with the bar working overtime, this weekend jaunt was rounded off nicely with an excellent luncheon.



This meeting is not the same unless Rufus 'The Grand Keeper of the Kennels' is in attendance. The look on his face is stating he'd had enough of the meeting and just wanted to get to the bar – we were all in agreement!

East Midlands – 15 August

Saturday 15 August, the District Grand Prefect represented the District at the East Midlands District meeting in Derby accompanied by W Bro Paul Rush (DepDGP), W Bro Peter Rawlinson (DistGSec), W Bro Silverio Ostrowski (DistGJW), W Bro Tim Hatton (DistDepGDC) and W Bro Paul Harrison (PDistGStwd).



When visiting Derby we are always assured that our Past Deputy District Grand Prefect, VW Bro Keith Parker, who now resides in Derby, is always in attendance when we visit and we are delighted to be able claim him on the day 'as one of ours'.



W Bro Tim Hatton meets with The DistGSec sits with that coven of Bros Paul Harrison and Silverio W Bro Jeff Chambers (EMids)



District meetings offer the opportunity of meeting with those we know, whilst making new acquaintances of others we have yet to meet. This usually happens at the luncheon when 'the breaking of bread' can always result in making the acquaintance of someone new.



The DistGSec sits with that coven of secretaries (the devil has cast his net)



W Bros Paul Harrison and Silverio Ostrowski now ready for more

Secretary's Musings

One of the great fibs in Freemasonry is that Freemasonry is free, another (for District secretaries at least) is that there is a summer break! Whilst attendance at meetings is minimal, there is still plenty to be done. Having just sent out the offers of District appointments, it is now time to work on the organisation of the District Annual Meeting and in due time you will be receiving the summons to attend. The District meeting is your meeting and gives you the opportunity to support your respective Councils, whilst supporting your own members who will be honoured with District appointments and promotions. Brethren who have joined the Order during the past 12 months will be particularly welcomed and presented to the assembly. At this time (I am sure) your Council Secretaries will be confirming that the Keystone-on-line records for members are up to date so that when MMH issue their annual invoices the Councils are not overcharged. I'm sure our District Grand Treasurer is looking forward to receiving the District dues too.

Dates for your diary:

- District Meeting – Bletchley – 17 October
- Grand Council meeting – FMH – 27 October
- Bocardo Council 50th Anniversary – Witney – 9 January

100 Club

The '100 Club' made a modest first-year start, raising £335 over the 12-month competition. Of this, £165 was paid out in prizes and £170 set aside for charity.

The draw is now open for the coming year, and we hope more members, wives, and partners will take part. Each number costs £5, and you may buy as many as you wish. Every number will be entered into the three draws held during the year. The more people who participate, the larger the prizes and the greater the amount raised for charity.

An application to register is at the end of the newsletter.



Grand Masters Keystone Fund



At last year's District meeting, the District Grand Prefect received the collarette and jewel on behalf of the District, which he now wears at every meeting he attends. Since then, three Councils have subscribed to the award and received their own collarette and jewel, to be worn by the Worshipful Master during his year in office.

The subscription cost for a Council is £25 per member, plus £60 for the jewel. Where funds are limited, some Councils are holding raffles or using the alms collection from one of their meetings to raise the required amount. Whatever method is used, it is hoped that as many District Councils as possible will work towards achieving this aim.

Individuals may also become patrons of the Fund by making a personal donation of £150, for which they receive a breast jewel associated with the Order.

and finally,

I am delighted to congratulate W Bro Paul Gausden (DistGSwdB), who was honoured by the Grand Sovereign of The Masonic and Military Order of the Red Cross of Constantine and the Orders of the Holy Sepulchre and of St John the Evangelist, when on Saturday 6 June, he was installed as the Intendant-General for the Thames Division of the Red Cross of Constantine.

The members of the Thames District of the Order of the Allied Masonic Degrees extend their warm congratulations on his preferment and wish him every success in his future endeavours.





THAMES VALLEY DISTRICT

100 CLUB

**To all members of the Thames Valley District
an opportunity to win cash**

Three draws per annum

Three prizes to be won each time

£5 a ticket (no limit) enters you into the 3 draws

The more tickets purchased, the greater the prizes

50% of funds raised returned as prize money

50% to charity

**To enter, complete the attached application form and email
to the District Treasurer**

(newellupton@gmail.com)



THAMES VALLEY DISTRICT

100 CLUB

(registration form)

Name:

Council:

Email:

Tel:

No of tickets:

Payment by BACS:

Sort code: 30-98-97

Account No: 32944763

Use reference: '100 Club' with initials and surname



**THAMES DISTRICT
ANNUAL GENERAL
MEETING**

**SATURDAY
17 OCTOBER 2026**

**BLETCHLEY CENTRE
11AM**

Make a note in your diary