

Vivary News

No 19

December 2020

As we approach Christmas the ongoing Covid-19 crisis means that we have all been subjected to another national Lockdown and ongoing regional Tier restrictions. In this edition of the Vivary News the Worshipful Master and his Wardens take a look back at how their life has been affected by the pandemic. The reports from our Almoner and Charity Steward give updates on Lodge activity and welfare.

And for a bit of seasonal fun our Director of Ceremonies and I take a nostalgic look back at Christmases when life was a lot simpler.

Bro. Mike Marshall Lodge Communications Officer

From the East



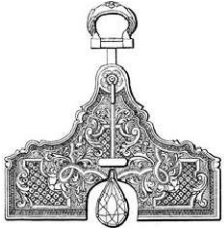
This year has been something of a trial to us all. The mostly enjoyable Spring, Summer and Autumn are now only memories. The prolonged lockdown in March prevented Ann and I seeing Ian and Caroline in Wales as well as Sally although we did manage to meet several times at the Marine Pool in Clevedon while Caroline was training for her Channel swim. Generally, the weather was good and we turned up with food and hot tea for all and was most enjoyable. The next obstacle was the Welsh lockdown only to be immediately followed by the latest English one which we are, of course, still working through. We are hoping that at Christmas, preceded by a birthday, there will be an opportunity for us all to gather together although it is more likely that for various reasons this will have to happen piecemeal. However, we live in hope.

I have very much missed our meetings as I am sure you all have too. It would seem possible with the vaccine research that is in progress there may be some hope on the horizon. Work is in progress to re-open the Masonic Hall hopefully in January but under the latest Government regulations outside lockdown there would be a limit of six maximum present. This would at least enable us to hold business and committee meetings and to comply with our bylaws relating to meeting dates.

I take this opportunity of wishing you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy, Prosperous and Healthy New Year in the hope that we may soon be able to meet again in safety.

W Bro John Rudge Worshipful Master

From the West



After an exhausting 2019, I looked forward to finding harmony in 2020. After all we had recently moved to Wales. Our first marital home of our own, with plenty of love required. By 23rd March, work had become very busy; and we were told to work from home. An interesting concept for a bunch of civil servants whose minds were wiped at the gates!

Well very quickly my waistline and bank balance started to feel less pressure. I ventured out once every 10 days to pick up supplies. The sun was shining, and I enjoyed spending some time at home. My view of Avonmouth and Portbury Docks out of my new office window, created a fascination of the various ships coming and going. The more challenging bits were supporting those less advantaged - those younger colleagues living in shared accommodation confined to their rooms day upon day during the summer, due to work sensitivities. Others who felt isolated, unable to adjust to the new ways of working and those who weren't as fortunate who had no IT to engage with work for 3 months whilst we rolled out IT that had previously been on the rare list.

Of course this does mean I didn't have my own challenges – bringing the family on the Zoom journey. Working out how my wife could train for her channel swim in lockdown – 12 foot swimming pool on the drive, with her tied to the fence! Most importantly to us, how we could keep on track with our adoption hopes. It makes you reflect for all those without the freedoms we experience, during these times.

The other major change to my life has been the adjustment to life of living in another country. It has required fortitude, prudence and balance; not just during the 6 nations. Working in England and living in Wales has unexpectedly highlighted devolution in a way I don't think anyone could have expected. I now read the Welsh news and the English news else I have little idea what rules I should follow. Meeting up with Mum, Dad and Sally has at times required a law degree. Although Clevedon sea pool became a great meeting spot where Caroline could train, and we could hold family picnics and I could provide IT Support.

All we can now hope is that the treatments and vaccines that should be reaching the population by Christmas will help close this exceptional chapter in our Masonic history. Clearly in any normal year I would have ascended to the position of WM. I have faith that we might meet in late winter or early spring so that we can bring our fraternity back in person.

Bro Ian Rudge Senior Warden



From the South



As many of you know I work in construction, so I have not been furloughed, but have been working from either my study at home or my company's very empty office. It has been interesting, as many of the properties I manage have been empty, and normally when I arrive, I would have difficulty parking, not the case earlier this year. There is something eerie walking around what was once full and bustling offices and business parks now deserted and empty. It's not all doom and gloom, the commute to either Bristol or Exeter was great and took about half the time it would normally take.

I have been very lucky throughout lockdown having been able to move about and work, which has definitely helped my mental health and at the same time severely dented my wine and spirit cabinet.

Many of you already know Sarah from visiting Lakeland, you can only imagine what wonderful things she has been cooking up over lockdown, we've had fresh baked bread, homemade sausage rolls, cakes and pies and all with the equipment we have gathered from Lakeland. Never again am I going to say "what have you bought home now"

With both daughters now moved out the house has seemed empty. Emma has been hard at work in Southmead Intensive Care Unit, where she has been looking after many Covid 19 patients. She has worked all through the pandemic and now unfortunately she is busy again. We have not seen her for some time now. I did visit her new house back in the summer in Bristol where I laid 40 paving slabs built a pergola and did some decking, for which I nearly ended up needing hospital treatment myself. I did not realize how hard manual labour was.

Katie my other daughter also moved into a new house over the summer, well I say house rather first floor flat to a second floor flat. Like dads do, full of I can move you, it will not take long, I nearly killed myself again. I hate walking up stairs at the best of times but when carrying a Sofa ****.

The only other love of my life is my Series 3 lightweight military Land Rover which for the past 9 years has been rusting away in my garage. Many a happy day was had trying to work out why it would not start, and where the oil was coming from, but during lockdown I managed to find someone who restores them and loves them as much as I do. So, it was trailered away 6 weeks ago to have a new chassis fitted and be restored. Happy news arrived last week as I should get it back just in time for Christmas.

Masonic activity has been very quiet; I still have to do the meter readings and tenant re-charges as part of my role for the Taunton Masonic Hall board which means I have sneaked into the temple a few times over lockdown. I can assure you it has not changed, and everything is where you left it, although it is sad to see the place empty. I have also appeared in a Somerset Freemasonry article for Richard Huish Lodge, where I handed a cheque over to the Richard Huish Tigers. For some reason they had me stood on a Basketball court, a place I am not familiar with.

And if you haven't heard I did a little homemade spirit sampling with Mike Marshall over the summer, it was great at first but then after many Clan Marshalls and Mike's Big Grin Gin I lost all feeling in my legs and the lower half of my body, mind you so did Mike. Never have I been that drunk not even at Mark Crawley's installation where I am sure it was daylight when we left the bar, and that is another story.

Well I hope you have enjoyed my lockdown story and if Mike has any space left to add a photo, three loves of my life are in the picture on the right.



Bro Richard Wilson Junior Warden

Almoner's Report



Bearing in mind the seemingly never-ending coronavirus emergency we are enduring, I am happy to be able to say that I have received no reports of illness or welfare problems among the brethren of Vivary Lodge. May this gratifying situation continue.

Recently I have been in telephone contact with the more elderly brethren of the lodge. Thankfully they all seem to be keeping well and reasonably cheerful and coping well with the problems thrown up by this awful pandemic.

Finally, this past week I have phoned each of our lodge widows for a pre- Christmas chat. They all say they are well and I found them all in good spirits. The lodge widows send their good wishes and thanks to the brethren for the card and cheque they receive from us at Christmas. Last year, where possible, I delivered the cards by hand. This is my and I think their preference. This year the mode of delivery will have to depend on the prevailing coronavirus situation.

Bro. Bob Town, Almoner

Charity Steward's Report

Since the last report in the May Newsletter, we have had several requests for assistance all deserving of support.



Recently Province appealed to all Lodges in the Province to support the Somerset Branch of the Royal British Legion which we did with a £200 donation.

We have given £200 to the Wells Cathedral ' Bounce Back' appeal, a cause strongly supported by Province.

Taunton Lodges have also been asked to contribute again to help Taunton Food Bank to whom we have now given £200 being part of a total of £900 raised.

In August Province appealed for financial help for charities involved in helping Domestic Abuse Refugees and Homeless or Family Eviction.

Having already with other Taunton Lodges donated to Taunton Women's Refuge earlier in Lockdown which raised with Matched Funding £7000 it was decided to give £500 to Taunton Association for the Homeless or as it is called now Arc and £500 has also been given to Taunton Salvation Army. Both these charities were Matched Funded with an extra £250 each. Needless to say, both these local charities were delighted.



Photo: W Bro John Rudge, Vivary Lodge No. 8654 presents £500 cheque to ARC's Rosie Hather at Lindley House, Taunton.

As we now know the Lodge has given a total of £23,040.55 to the Somerset 2020 Festival, many thanks to all our Brethren who have contributed over the years. Well done Vivary Lodge.

W Bro Henry Besley, Charity Steward

Windows to the Past

Christmases Past in East Africa – W Bro Barry Woodside

My very first Christmas in East Africa the year is 1953 and here I am sitting at the front of our house in Kampala, Uganda with my younger sister and our parents amongst our Christmas present, many of them handmade by both my mother and father.

As you can see my sister seems to have fared far better than me. Christmas in the sun was a whole different



experience for us all and my mother in her attempt to make it as normal a Christmas as possible asked our houseboy if he could locate a tree. Sure, enough the following day a magnificent tree appeared, we were only later to find out that it had been felled from a neighbour's garden several doors away. My mother's next request was a nice plump chicken for the table and sure enough the very next day a chicken mysteriously appeared bound up in a hessian sack, but once the sack was opened it became apparent that the chicken was still alive. **"I wanted it dead and plucked" she said "so I can cook it"** and with that the house boy picked up the chicken marched outside to collect a panga (similar to a machete)

and promptly chopped off its head, my sister screamed the houseboy let go and the chicken now headless ran across the garden with my sister screaming throughout.

Moving on to Christmas 1956 here we are again, but this time we are at the front of our house in Nairobi, Kenya this particular year I received a new bicycle, it appears that on this occasion I came off best. Looking back over time and the period that we were fortunate enough to spend in our young lives growing up in East Africa will always be considered to be amongst some of the best times of yesteryear.



Finally, here we are in 1961 only this time we are in Dar-es-salaam, Tanganyika. My sister and I had been competing in the local Christmas gymkhana both winning rosettes. On this occasion, we are joined by my baby brother who was born in Nairobi, Kenya.

All this is now long behind us, but the happy memory will always remain with me which is a far cry from where we find ourselves today now back in another lockdown wondering just when it's all going to end.



Despite the uncertainty of what the new year will bring, we sincerely hope you all have a wonderful Christmas

Barry and Peggy

Christmases Past in London – Bro Mike Marshall



We all seem to be looking back to the days when life seemed so less complicated than it is at the moment and with that in mind I should like to share my memories of a typical Christmas from my early childhood in London. A time where the world seemed to be black and white (just look at the photos from then!) and the only other colour in winter was the yellow from the smog.

So let's set the scene, imagine a world without Computers, Mobile Phones, Game Consoles, a world where less than half of the population have a TV Set, about the same amount with Telephone and a time where there were so few cars that kids could play in the streets and you're somewhere near the mark of my childhood years.

On Christmas Eve, as we prepared for bed, we would write our present requests and holding them above the flame allow them to drift up the chimney in the smoke to Father Christmas. We would put our pillowcases at the end of the bed – never mind stockings, you could get more in a pillow case! And we tried to sleep while all the time thinking of all the toys that we had been looking at for weeks in Mum's Littlewoods mail order catalogue - because everyone knew that this was where Father Christmas bought his toys from!

While we lay there waiting to hear the sound of sleigh bells that would signal the arrival of Father Christmas we would wonder about such things as "Why did we have to go to bed so early when we knew that Father Christmas only came when the pub across the road closed?"

I had a secret that I kept from my younger brother and sister, I knew Father Christmas' real name! And I can tell you it wasn't Chriskringle or Nicholas, because one year I had heard one of Santa's helpers hiss his name, she whispered "Ssh Vic you will wake up the kids" as Father Christmas stumbled up the stairs. – His name is Vic! Coincidentally the same name as my Dad's! And here's the thing, why did Father Christmas come into the house through the living room fireplace if he found stairs such a problem?

Christmas morning – it's early and still black outside the window and white on the inside of the window – ice (remember this was before central heating) at least the ice meant that we were still breathing! There at the bottom of the bed would be the pillowcases which were now bulging. 'Has he been yet?'

'Yes!'

We would grab our pillowcases and run to our parent's room. Only to be sent back because it was too early. We'd sit on our beds feeling every bump and shape. What was in there? We would never dream of unpacking them on our own.

Eventually the shout would go up from Mum and Dad's room.

'He's been!'

Dragging our pillowcases we'd all tumble into my parent's bed. Who would get the best place, in between Mum and Dad? It was warm enough there to stop you from getting cold when the excitement began to fade, and there was no danger of falling out when someone got over enthusiastic. Then, officially at least, we'd take it in turns to remove a present and show it to the others.

So what did Father Christmas bring back in those far off days that caused excitement?

Balloon, the first thing out was always a balloon; there was always a balloon because it served to fill up a lot of room in the pillowcase, and this balloon didn't fly on its own because helium hadn't been invented!

Tangerines, you only ever got them at Christmas and unlike oranges they were easy to peel and so much better than the apples that were stored under everyone's bed.

Nuts! There were always nuts in the days before anyone had heard of nut allergy. Nuts that were the source of conflict amongst us kids because there was only ever one nutcracker in the house. Luckily I was the oldest so I could make my brother crack the nuts open for me!

Knitted jumper with sleeves that were too long and looked suspiciously like the one that you saw your Nan knitting when you went round to visit her and which you would be made to wear under protest.

Long Socks which could be pulled up over your knees really handy especially in winter as us boys didn't get our first pair of long trousers until we went to senior school at the age of 11 and remember it used to snow every Christmas or is that just my imagination?

Handkerchiefs, handy things after all winter meant colds and runny noses; I don't remember asking Father Christmas to bring me hankies I think that Mum must have asked him to give us hankies to save her work in scrubbing our sleeves clean!

A Kaleidoscope, in those black and white days, remember there was no colour television, we looked forward to anything that brought colour into our life and one of those things was a kaleidoscope, hours of fun holding it up to the light and turning it to watch all the marvellous patterns appear and disappear.

Plasticine, something that promised so much! It was bright, it was sticky, it could be turned into anything that your fingers and imagination could manage but after a few days all the bright colours turn into one large brown ball - but it was still magic because although it went brown the colours of the rainbow are revealed when you cut the ball in half.

Spud gun, the must have for all boys in the 1950's! The Spud gun was not only a cap gun or a water pistol it was both of these and it had the added extra of actually firing bullets, well not real bullets but in our imaginations nearly as good as, it fired pellets of potato – try telling the kids of today that you could have so much fun with a potato! (Remember to only use a potato, never use fruit as it will jam!).

Life, culture and society changes and so it should, but I guess those of any age always class their childhood Christmases as the best ones!

Christmas Stateside



In 2016 we spent Christmas in New York and I sought out the nearest Masonic Lodge. Although I didn't go inside I thought it was a magnificent building and on some future occasion I'd like to see inside.

There are some of the internal photos online. If anyone wants to look here's the address.

Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the State of New York.
Located 71 W 23rd St, New York, NY 10010, United States.

W Bro Mark Crawley

And finally

After 9 months I have decided to bring the weekly quizzes to an end. The last one for Vivary Lodge will be sent out on Sunday 13th December with the final answers back in time to announce the person who has scored the most points overall at the Lodge's Christmas Virtual Meeting.

It's been fun compiling the various and diverse quizzes but we should be looking forward to a better New Year and these weekly brain teasers are firmly lodged in 2020 and hopefully we can look back on them as providing a bit of sunshine in days that were clouded by the threat of Covid.

Remember the weekly Zoom meetings instigated by WM W Bro John Rudge and facilitated by Bro Ed Richings are continuing every Friday evenings, 8.45pm start – see you there!

Bro Mike Marshall Lodge Communications Officer

Contributions for future editions will be welcome by the Lodge Communication Officer – Bro Mike Marshall mikejohnmarshall@btinternet.com . Back numbers of Vivary News can be viewed on Vivary Lodge web page on the Provincial web site www.pglsom.org. If any recipient does not wish to be included in the emailing list for Vivary News then please contact the LCO.