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Editor: Alan Gale PJGD.
Features Editor: David Beagley PM.
Advertising Co-ordinator: Ray Walka PGStdB.
Page Design: Deanna Vener.
Cover Picture: Joe Castro.
Magazine E-mail: magazine@freemasonsvic.net.au

Grand Lodge contact details
Email: grandsec@freemasonsvic.net.au
Website: www.freemasonsvic.net.au
Telephone: (03) 9419 2288
Toll Free: 1800 068 416
Fax: (03) 9416 1468

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April 1, 2004

Front Cover:
The unique interior of Lodge Zetland.
Picture: Joe Castro.
Support your Lodge mates as they take their next “big step” and celebrate with them at the Proclamation Banquet at Dallas Brooks Hall on March 20. Tickets ($10 for the Proclamation and $60 for the Banquet) can be booked through Lodge Secretaries or by phoning the Grand Secretariat on 9419 2288 or 1800 068 416.

Saturday March 20
Proclamation: 5pm
Banquet: 7.00pm
Bookings Essential

Bayside and South Eastern
Garry Brad, AGPurs.; Harry Pitaro, SCD; Gary Aarons GStwd; John Maynard, SGw; Perry Cohen, DGDC; Eric Green, JCD.
Team Members are captioned with their offices for 2004-5

Geelong and Westgate
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Memorial Plaque unveiled by GM

On Remembrance Day last year, Grand Master John Evans unveiled a Memorial Plaque to Freemasons who served in the Armed Forces and Merchant Navy in armed conflict, emergency and peace.

The plaque, which grew from a discussion between John Wilson PGM and Ken Davison PGIW, is placed in the memorial garden at the Austin Hospital and made possible through the continued generosity of the Board of Benevolence.

“We may never know how many Brethren served in WW II or WWI, which makes a form of memorial which covers all Freemasons essential,” VWBro Davison said.

The plaque (pictured above, right) reads: “In recognition of the Leadership and Loyal Service rendered to Australia by Freemasons as members of the Australian Armed Forces and the Merchant Navy, in periods of armed conflict, emergency and peace. Greater love of country has no man than this.”

Future issues of Freemasonry Victoria will be carrying articles about members’ military contributions.

Coaching the community

During one of the Masonic Ceremonies reference is made to the “advantages of discipline and education by which means alone we are rendered fit members of every well organised society”.

Past Masters from Melbourne’s Eastern Suburbs had the same words in mind when they formed Ionic Coaching in 1951.

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Classes are held at the Uniting Church, 44 Blackburn Road, Blackburn, on Saturday mornings from 9am to 11am.

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Grand Master John Evans unveils the Memorial at Austin Hospital.
Progressing the Strategic Plan

An Open Letter from the President of the Board of General Purposes

It is clear Brethren are looking forward to the implementation of the Strategic Plan, because I am hearing questions like:
“What is happening with the Strategic Plan?”
“Has the Strategic Plan been pigeon-holed?”
“When are we going to hear more of the Strategic Plan?”

Well Brethren, the answer to these questions is very positive: The Strategic Plan is being actioned.

Initially, the processes of improving the administration of Grand Lodge are being addressed. The current management systems are being sifted and being brought into the 21st Century. The process is infiltrated with the needs of at least the foreseeable future and beyond.

A number of the working parties commissioned by the Board of General Purposes have critical tasks and are advanced in their work. Board of General Purposes.

Under the Chairmanship of Bruce Bartrop Deputy Grand Master, this group is charged with shaping the Board’s future structure. It is also charged with seeking to ensure Brethren with the right skills and vision become members of the supreme administrative body of Freemasons Victoria.

Very focal in the deliberations of this working party is the need to retain some form of democracy involving the general membership of the Craft; yet ensuring the most suitably qualified Brethren are members of are Freemasons Victoria’s major decision-makers.

The present Board is large by community and business benchmarks and a downsizing is likely to be adopted and constitutional amendments will be sought to meet future requirements.

A final report is expected to be submitted to the February Board meeting for consideration.

Financial Management.

Under the Chairmanship of Grand Treasurer John Chanter, this working party has been reviewing issues such as future levels and sources of revenue, anticipated expenditure, financial risk and possible liability. Its wide-ranging charter explores the full range of the Craft’s finances and assets.

Naturally, this entails some overlap with other working parties and joint meetings of their Chairmen have obviated duplicity and clarified areas of concern.

Although the task is complex, the Financial Management working party is progressing steadfastly and no delay is expected in the submission of its final report to the Board.

District Structure.

The present structure has been in place for some five years and a review of the system is appropriate. Under the Chairmanship of Brian Tarrant Past Deputy Grand Master, a small working party has been reviewing the Districts’ function.

Over those five years, Masonic demographics have altered, revision of district boundaries has become necessary, areas where a commonality of interests is a bond call for specific consideration and the workload of District Coordinators must be assessed.

A great deal of discussion has been held with District Coordinators and feedback sought from affected Lodges. It is apparent the District system has generally been well accepted and facilitated identification within a homogenous area. The final recommendations to the Board are expected to capitalise on the strengths of the present system. The task is well underway and no delay in the final recommendations is expected.

Lodge Accreditation & Quality Management.

Under the Chairmanship of Barry Reaper Grand Secretary, this working party is reviewing the current quality standards within Craft Lodges in general.

It is a very sensitive task that includes a review of ceremonial activity, standards in the South, quality management of Lodges, the need for a vital and positive culture, and a vibrant and active membership. Lodges are the basis of membership and it is recognised that future growth fundamentally impinges on such issues. Despite the range of activities to be reviewed and discussed, the group is well advanced in its task.

Other working parties with deadlines to meet include: Membership & Marketing, Charity & Benevolence, Communications & Information Technology, Asset Management, Dallas Brooks Hall Review, Corporate Governance, Risk Management and Occupational Health and Safety.

What can be gleaned to date is that the Strategic Plan is indeed active in the future interests of Freemasons Victoria and its membership. Much has been done but a great deal remains before the plan can be fully implemented. It is pleasing to report the implementation process has not been delayed and deadlines are being met.

Further progress reports will be made through the magazine and at Quarterly Communications. Indeed, any Constitutional amendments which arise will ensure this takes place.

Some early signs of an awakening and a rejuvenation of Freemasonry are becoming evident. As this is a membership plan, the responsibility rests with every member to ensure Freemasonry is viably recognised in a well-organised society.

Vaughan Werner, PSGW
President, Board of General Purposes

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The new operatives

Travelling to a nation like East Timor is a humbling experience. One cannot help be struck by the enormity of the task facing this fledgling nation, which has been so harshly handicapped at the starting gate. While I was there, I learnt a new slogan … A Luta Continua! The Struggle Continues!

That Freemasons Victoria has, in this way, been able to assist this nation in its struggle, has been an experience which I think has helped us as much as it has helped them. It helped us discover working partners from a source hitherto unexpected and, to some, very unlikely: the Roman Catholic Church.

The slogan “Working Tools for East Timor” comes from the Working Tools in our ceremonies. We say that, because we are not using our Working Tools to shape stones but rather to think about the human condition by applying symbolism, we are Speculative rather than Operative Freemasons.

However, among the ways this project has helped us, I believe, has been to remind us we have never really ceased to be Operative Freemasons – we have never ceased working; but rather that our work site has moved: … from stone quarries to places of need. Just as for quarries, so labourers are required for the places of need. And I am proud to say that is where, today, you find the new Operative Freemasons: Working Charitably. Working as Operatives with a will to make a meaningful and practical improvement in the lives of those we touch or of whom we are made aware.

My request is to develop further this Modern Operative Freemasonry, which shoots from the tenets and principles of our order and takes root in the world in which we live. It can be a struggle against the conflicting demands of work, of time and priority. But there is great satisfaction in the results of this Charitable, Operative Freemasonry which makes the struggle worthwhile.

A Luta Continua! The Struggle Continues!

Freemasons Victoria gave one of its biggest ever thank-yous in December when around 1,400 Freemasons, families and friends heard from East Timor’s first lady Kirsty Sword Gusmao just how useful the project has been.

Under the narration of Wesley Turnbull, the story of the project was told from its beginnings under previous Grand Master John Wilson, who approved the project, to its conclusion in East Timor with a historic meeting between President Xanana Gusmao and current GM, John Evans.

History was made several times during the project, which combined corporate sponsorship estimated at around $400,000 with the might of a motivated membership and the forging of a unique link with a group once considered more of a traditional rival than a partner: the Knights of the Southern Cross.
First of all, I very sincerely thank you all and particularly the Grand Lodge of the Freemasons for inviting us here tonight to be with you to celebrate what we are celebrating.

I wonder if we ever thought this night could be possible. After what we have heard from so many wonderful people we can answer confidently with a resounding: Yes!

Masons? Knights of the Southern Cross?
Catholics and Freemasons?? Together??
For God sake, what’s happened?
Well, it has happened, what ever it is.
Along the way, we discovered a creative and a friendly mutuality.
One of the most precious things human beings can discover when trying to express themselves psychologically and socially is that there is in fact a togetherness of goodness that is possible if we only stop, look and listen.

Some found it difficult to shake off the loads that years and years of misunderstanding can place upon human shoulders. But, tonight, we demonstrated the opposite: and that is where the mutuality is expressed and illustrated.

We’ve all discovered a friendship, because there is so much of goodness in all of us and we needed to see it. And now, we are beginning to respect and perhaps understand the differences we still have when we are putting them into a different context.

What happened was so simple: We did it. We didn’t talk about it; we didn’t hold a Committee to think about it, we didn’t have a study group: we just did it. And we did something worthwhile: that’s the precious aspect.

Even ten years ago we did nothing for East Timor; but, inside us, because things happen, people learnt and began to listen. We found a generous heart and a sensitive giving to help people in their time of need. Hopefully, we gave a gift that will be the first of many.

In return, they gave us a gift: Masons and Catholics with the opportunity to be friends. May tonight be just the beginning of a journey of togetherness for all of us.
Primus inter pares

One of Victoria’s most respected Freemasons, John Occo, celebrated his 50th year as a Royal Arch Freemason with a little help from his friends. November’s meeting of Lord Somers Australasian 1 Chapter attracted a brace of PGZs and other friends of MEmComp Occo to witness the historic presentation. MEmComp Occo was visibly touched by the turnout, describing it as one of the real highlights of his time as a Freemason.

Rapid sceptre

Wow! they are keen down Gippsland way.
The Travelling Sceptre has been claimed five times with seven attempts since the last edition of the journal. One Chapter turned up twice but was beaten each time when another Chapter arrived with more members. It has been to South Gippsland 25 (twice) and Leongatha No. 50 since the last edition. It is now back with South Gippsland with Rev Phillips keen to keep it in Wonthaggi.

Robert Mc Gregor, Scribe S (Sceptre)

Who’s got the Sceptre now?

South Gippsland Chapter 25

Meets at South Gippsland on the 4th Monday in June, August, October, February and April, and on the 2nd Monday in December.

Thanks for the brochures

“Would you please give our thanks for providing the financial support to allow the publishing of the Understanding Brachial Plexus Palsy booklet.

As the parents of a child who had suffered this injury at birth six years ago, you cannot imagine how much such a booklet would have helped us at that time.

Maybe because it is not a “life threatening” condition, but for whatever reason, it is a common cry from parents looking for answers and solutions that “we thought we were the only ones”.

A seemingly simple step like the free availability of this booklet will not only let parents know “they are not the only ones”, but even more importantly, help provide guidance as to the best way ahead. Your support will assist a lot of people.”

Noel Heritage, Glen Waverley

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**Mark and Chapter**

**Mystic Journey**

Freemasonry has often been described as "theatre in the round" and this was certainly the experience at the last Grand Chapter Convocation.

Those present were taken on a journey which explains the links between the Excellent Master and Holy Royal Arch degrees.

Prepared by MEx Comp Bob Corner, the Scribe of Centenary Chapter 52, the relevance, symbolism and purpose of the degrees were thoroughly but concisely explained.

First Principals seeking "something different" for a meeting night could well consider inviting the Centenary team to stage its performance.

Originally, both degrees were worked on the one night, but this was changed in the interests of making the Order more accessible.

_The Mystic Journey_ re-forges that link, providing Royal Arch Masons with a chance to appreciate the interconnectedness of the two unique degree ceremonies.

Any Craft Freemason who feels they were left “hanging” with substituted information at the end of the Third Degree can satisfy that curiosity in a Royal Arch Chapter.

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Having been appointed Co-ordinator of the Freemasons’ Task Force, following the retirement of Russell Bradd, it is appropriate I remind all Freemasons in Victoria that the Freemasons’ Task Force will continue with the same aims and goals as under the guidance of my predecessor.

We will continue to be pro-active and to work with the community.

Allow me to briefly explain some situations constantly brought to the notice of members of the Executive of the Task Force.

It is essential that we have a solid communication chain, linking FTF Lodge Representatives, FTF Masonic Centre Representatives, the FTF Representative on District Panels and the Executive. This is vital for either a major call out or a local Lodge initiative.

The Executive co-ordinates major and State wide projects on your behalf and local projects are passed to Districts, to encourage local participation. The Executive will then support that local group.

A recent illustration of this policy is the most successful Working Tools for East Timor project, handled by the Maroondah District and the WT4ET committee supported by the Task Force Executive. This formula can be used for all projects.

Another major item constantly under discussion is the Tabard or High Visual Jacket. As an organisation, we work both in conjunction and compliance with State Emergency Services, Victoria and our Insurers. The tabards, as distributed by the Founders and Life Governors’ Association, are compliant with their requirements.

We request each Lodge purchase at least one tabard for their District’s use.

The cost can easily be covered by the proceeds from one or two special efforts. If you are incorrectly dressed for a project, you could negate any insurance claim. These Tabards are essential to show Freemasonry at work in the community.

I look forward to taking the Freemasons’ Task Force to the next stage and in so doing, further cement relationships with the Knights of the Southern Cross, Uncle Bob’s, Variety Club of Victoria and the general community.

Rick Dwyer – State Co-ordinator
The Task Force was once again privileged to be able to help host 5,000 disadvantaged and special needs children at the 2003 Variety Club Special Children’s Christmas Party.

The event enjoys support from a wide range of celebrities and community figures, including Premier Steve Bracks, team members from the Kangaroos and Bombers, Paralympians and long time supporters Greg Evans and John Blackman.

Everyone had a fantastic time mingling with the kids and their carers.

The best time of all, however, was had by the children themselves who enjoyed staged entertainment, face painting, carnival rides, and roving performers.

Each child took home two Christmas presents from Santa to the value of $100.

The Variety Club of Victoria and the Task Force have a long-standing relationship which this year was bolstered by the presence of PBB Bill Hayes.

Merv Cohen
Task Force Secretary

Freemasonry Victoria has middle-ranking in the Red Cross Summer Blood Challenge and wants Brethren and their families to give their blood for the cause.

At the moment, the Firefighters are leading the Summer Blood Challenge, a friendly competition between approximately 35 Victorian organisations, clubs and businesses to see who can donate the most blood over the summer period.

Can’t Freemasonry Victoria show our community spirit and be the Victorian organisation which donates the most?

Encourage Lodge members, families and friends to name Freemasonry Victoria when they give blood any time between 1 December and 28 February. Why not arrange for all the Lodges in one District to donate during the challenge period?

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VWBro Athol Hillier & his 13 yo grand-daughter Samantha Hillier.

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